

## Summary.

### Prologue: Introduction

The play opens with a dramatically styled introduction. The Director introduces the performance and craves the audience's indulgence before bringing an Actress onto the stage. Immersed completely in her role, she speaks to both the Director and the audience as if they truly inhabit the world of the drama. She confidentially shares her anxiety over upsetting news: Lord Krishna's (the hero's) life is apparently in danger. Afraid to let anyone know she possesses this information, she expresses the details covertly. Playing along, the Director assures her he is confident Krishna is safe. Overhearing this from off-stage, Krishna's guardian, Purnamasi, utters a cry of relief. The Director and the Actress then exit to ensure the rest of the cast is ready to begin.

### Act 1: Beginnings

The prelude (Vishkambha) sets the scene through a dialogue between the wise, elderly Purnamasi and her granddaughter, Nandi. It is revealed that the gopis (cowherd girls) of Gokoola Vrindavan are actually of noble lineage; Radha and Chandravali are daughters of King Vindhya who were adopted by local cowherd women after being abducted. Furthermore, these girls are the eternal consorts of Lord Krishna. Though they assume they are married to different cowherd men, this arrangement is merely notional; their "husbands" only ever see them from afar. As Krishna returns to the village with his cows, the joyful reactions of the gopis are heard off-stage.

Upon their return, Krishna and his close friend Madhumangala are delighted to overhear the gopis serenading. They soon encounter the impish Kundalata, who has successfully chaperoned Krishna's beloved Chandravali past her suspicious mother-in-law. When Chandravali must depart, Krishna heads to see his own mother, who is waiting impatiently. There, Kundalata secretly discloses where Krishna can find his other beloved, Radha. After greeting his father, Krishna makes his way to a grove where Radha waits with her friend Lalita. Radha and Krishna share a moment of mutual admiration before they are abruptly interrupted by Radha's mother-in-law, Jatila, who whisks her away.

### Act 2: The Demon Slain

The wicked King Kamsa, having learned of Radha's legendary beauty from his spies, decides to kidnap her. Kamsa is also deeply anxious about the threat Krishna poses to his own life. Meanwhile, a demon employed by Kamsa to abduct Radha is spotted nearby, making it urgent for Krishna to reach her side. As Radha travels with Jatila to worship the Sun-god, Kundalata arranges for

Krishna to disguise himself as the officiating priest. Jatila departs, and Krishna briefly leaves the scene to settle his restless cows. Mukhara, Radha's grandmother, arrives to check on her and catches Radha and Krishna together. Krishna slips into a nearby grove, at which exact moment the demon strikes and captures Radha. Emerging from the trees, Krishna slays the demon, saves Radha, and claims the demon's Syamantaka jewel as a gift for her.

### Act 3: The Separation

King Kamsa summons Krishna and his brother Balarama to the city of Mathura. Knowing Kamsa's evil disposition, the gopis are devastated, fearing Krishna will never return. Though he promises he will, they remain convinced he is walking into mortal danger. After Krishna departs Vrindavan in the chariot of Akrura, Radha begins to lose her mind from grief. Desperate to comfort her, her friends suggest that Krishna cannot be serious and might just be hiding nearby. Radha embarks on a frantic, wide-scale search, repeatedly mistaking features of nature for sights of Krishna. Believing Krishna to be bathing in the River Yamuna, Radha wades into the water alongside her friend Vishakha; both submerge and fail to resurface. Lalita is stopped from following them by Mukhara and Vrinda, but later finds her way to a cliff edge, intending to jump. Mukhara also wishes to end her life, but is stopped by voices of the gods in the clouds. The deities assure her that all will be well, revealing that Radha has been transported to the sun-planet, where the Sun-god is personally caring for her.

### Act 4: The Play Within a Play

Having slain the wicked King Kamsa, Krishna is crowned the King of Mathura. His trusted counsellor, Uddhava, returns from Vrindavan with important news. He reveals that Chandravali was commandeered by her brother, Rukmi, and taken back to her father's kingdom of Kunderen. The remaining gopis have also returned to their respective aristocratic families, though a vast majority of them (16,100) have since been captured by the demon Narakasura. Krishna is deeply aggrieved to learn of Radha's apparent demise. Hoping to lighten his heavy mood, Purnamasi orchestrates a theatrical performance for him themed around his nostalgic Vrindavan pastimes.

Krishna watches the play, titled *A While With Radha*, alongside Uddhava, Madhumangala, Purnamasi and Mukhara. The performance depicts a secret rendezvous between Radha and Krishna that is interrupted by her mother-in-law, Jatila. In the play, Krishna ends up disguising himself as Radha's husband, Abhimanyu, to secure another meeting. When Jatila catches wind of a trick, she mistakenly chases away the real Abhimanyu, believing him to be the disguised

Krishna. Once this play-within-a-play concludes, Krishna retires for the evening, and Purnamasi departs for Kundern to locate Chandravali.

#### Act 5: The Rescue of Rukmini

In the kingdom of Kundern, Chandravali has been renamed Rukmini by her antagonistic brother, Rukmi, who fiercely opposes Krishna. Rukmi intends to force her into a marriage with his ally, Shishupala. Knowing how deeply Krishna is still mourning the loss of Radha, his companions have not burdened him with the plight of Chandravali and the other gopis. Consequently, when Purnamasi sends a message imploring Krishna to save the "Princess of Kundern," Krishna has no idea that this princess is actually his beloved Chandravali.

By coincidence, Krishna arrives in Kundern anyway, invited by two nobles who have arranged a grand ceremony to crown him Emperor. In gratitude, Krishna offers to grant the nobles any boon they desire. They request that he rescue Princess Rukmini, and he readily agrees. Krishna infiltrates the heavily guarded palace by disguising himself as a dancer. He arrives just as Rukmini, driven to utter despair, is about to throw herself into the sacrificial fire. Recognizing her, Krishna pulls her from the flames. Rukmini's father gladly offers her hand in marriage, on the condition that Krishna accepts her as his sole wife—unless Rukmini herself wishes otherwise. As Krishna whisks Rukmini away, a host of rival kings take up arms in outrage, but they are swiftly defeated by Rama's (Baladev's) army.

#### Act 6: New Vrindavan

Krishna establishes his grand capital in Dvaraka. Meanwhile, at Radha's request, the Sun-god's wife asks her father, Vishvakarma (the celestial architect), to recreate the beloved landscape of Vrindavan. Vishvakarma builds a perfect replica, known as "New Vrindavan," within the kingdom of Dvaraka. Radha has returned to Earth as Princess Satyabhama, but she remains entirely unaware that the King of Dvaraka is actually her beloved Krishna. She holds a prophecy from the Sun-god promising she will be reunited with Krishna once her Syamantaka jewel is returned; however, for the moment, Krishna's strict marriage vow complicates matters.

Satyabhama (Radha) is formally presented to Queen Rukmini (Chandravali). Assuming the King is a stranger, Satyabhama requests never to be introduced to him. Relieved, and jealously assuming that Krishna will avoid the replica forest out of painful nostalgia, Rukmini happily sends her to reside in New Vrindavan. Satyabhama enters the sanctuary accompanied by its caretaker, Navavrinnda. Outside the palace walls, Krishna explains to Madhumangala how he

successfully retrieved the stolen Syamantaka jewel that had been under the care of King Satrajit. He reveals that during this quest, he encountered Lalita, who had been under the protective care of the bear-king Jambavan. The bear-king had presented Lalita to Krishna in marriage, and Krishna temporarily settled her in the hills just outside Dvaraka.

#### Act 7: The Living Statue

Navavrinda brings Radha gifts of an exquisite garland and fine silks from Queen Rukmini (Chandravali). When Radha mentions how deeply she misses tending to her beloved deity, Navavrinda leads her to a stunning sapphire statue of Krishna, which the celestial architect Vishvakarma included in his recreation of Vrindavan. Radha is instantly enchanted. Meanwhile, Rukmini's assistant, Madhavi, enters New Vrindavan to see how Radha is. Upon discovering a fresh garland belonging to Krishna, Madhavi correctly deduces that the King has secretly visited the sanctuary and rushes to inform the Queen.

While Radha is briefly away from the shrine, Krishna and Madhumangala stumble upon the sapphire statue. Noting the fresh offerings, they realise someone has been worshipping there. Hearing the girls returning, Krishna removes the statue from its dais and stands in its place. When Radha approaches, Krishna is spellbound, believing Vishvakarma's magic has created a flawless, living imitation of Radha. Simultaneously, Radha believes she is beholding a miraculous, animated manifestation of Krishna. Their mystical encounter is abruptly cut short by Queen Rukmini's approach, causing Radha to flee. Spotting Krishna adorned with the exact same exquisite garland she had previously gifted to Radha, Rukmini grows highly suspicious. Finding Krishna entirely without a plausible excuse, the Queen angrily returns to the palace, leaving Krishna to figure out a way to placate her.

#### Act 8: The Celestial Garments

Krishna and Radha finally discover each other's true identities: Krishna now knows Radha's recent history, and Radha understands that the King of Dvaraka is her long-lost beloved. To appease a jealous Rukmini, Krishna procures a rare heavenly lotus for her. Around the same time, Vishvakarma tailors a stunning new outfit for Rukmini. Out of grandfatherly affection, he also creates a magnificent gown for Radha (Satyabhama). Correctly guessing that the garments meant for Radha will be far superior, the meddling Madhavi covertly swaps the two outfits before they are delivered.

Adorned with Rukmini's gift of heavenly lotuses, Krishna enters New Vrindavan to meet Radha and explains how he discovered the whereabouts of their companion, Vishakha. As the divine couple tours their favourite nostalgic

spots, Rukmini is alerted to Krishna's presence when a swan flies back to the palace carrying the distinct heavenly lotuses she gave him. Dressed in the swapped garments meant for Radha—which feature completely different colours than her usual attire—the Queen enters the forest with Madhavi. Mistaking her for Radha due to the clothing, Krishna openly professes his deep love to her. Navavrinda quickly signals his blunder. Pivoting on his feet, Krishna cleverly pretends he is merely embarrassed to have spoken so intimately to someone other than the Queen, claiming he must go find Rukmini to explain the misunderstanding before she hears false rumours. When Rukmini then confronts Radha, Radha gracefully shifts the responsibility, stating it is up to the Queen to protect her from the King's persistent advances. Satisfied, Rukmini promises it will not happen again.

#### Act 9: The Paintings in the Cavern

As construction begins on thousands of new palaces to house the 16,100 gopis newly rescued from the demon Narakasura, Madhavi is momentarily called away. Seizing this window of opportunity, Krishna excuses himself from Rukmini by claiming he has been summoned to the heavenly realm of Lord Brahma, using the cover to meet Radha instead. While relaxing in New Vrindavan with Radha and Madhumangala, the sudden, boisterous outburst of Madhumangala's pet talking parrot mimics Rukmini's voice. Terrified of being caught, Radha flees in such a rush that she slips into the Yamuna River and is thoroughly drenched.

A maid named Sukanthi, tasked with bringing Radha the garments made by Vishvakarma (which are actually Rukmini's swapped clothes), finds Radha hiding in a nearby cavern. Radha takes the dry clothes and steps into the shadows to change, asking Sukanthi to fetch a light so they can examine the cave walls. When Krishna enters, the swapped dress causes him to mistake Radha for Rukmini yet again. Once the error is corrected, the lovers pass the time admiring Vishvakarma's intricate wall paintings, which chronicle the bittersweet adventures of their early Vrindavan days. Missing her husband, Rukmini enters New Vrindavan, and utter chaos erupts as the swapped dresses create a dizzying maze of mistaken identities. Deeply embarrassed by the confusion, Radha exits the cave, and a frustrated Rukmini retreats to the palace.

#### Act 10: The Grand Reunion

Determined to keep the King away from Radha, Rukmini confines her close by in the inner palace. Desperate to see her, Krishna articulates his longing to Madhumangala, unaware that the clever pet parrot is overhearing his exact words. An opportunity arises when the maid Pingala arrives at the palace to

finally return the long-lost, protective Syamantaka jewel to Radha. Hoping to use this distraction, Krishna disguises himself as a female palace maid to secrete himself into Radha's quarters. He almost succeeds in bypassing Rukmini, but the parrot suddenly squawks, repeating Krishna's secret plan aloud. The ruse foiled, a furious Rukmini vows to banish Radha from the palace forever.

Overhearing the parrot repeat the Queen's harsh decree, a heartbroken Radha despairs and runs away, determined to end her life in the toxic Viper Lake. Deeply regretful of her harshness, Rukmini laments the rivalries and voices a profound longing for the simple, loving days of Vrindavan. At that exact moment, the original residents of Gokoola village arrive at the palace. After a joyful greeting with his mother Yashoda and the elders, Krishna rushes to Viper Lake just in time to save Radha, tying the Syamantaka jewel around her wrist. When Krishna's relatives and Purnamasi gather to inspect the mysterious girl, the jewel reveals her true, unvarnished divine nature: she is Radha. With all illusions shattered, the lovers are permanently reunited. Rukmini joyfully insists that Krishna marry Radha alongside all 16,106 rescued cowherd girls and the gods assemble in Dvaraka to witness the ultimate, grand divine wedding.

---

**CAST.**

## Male.

DIRECTOR, presenter of play's dramatic prologue, artistic director of the play.  
 KRISHNA (KANHAIYA), the hero of the play.  
 RAMA, Krishna's elder brother, aka Baladeva.  
 MADHUMANGALA (MADHU), son of Sandipani,<sup>1</sup> Krishna's unserious friend.  
 UDDHAVA, Krishna's principal counsellor.  
 BHISHMAKA, Chandravali's father.  
 ABHIMANYU, son of Jatila, husband of Radha.  
 SUNANDA, Rukmini's priest - her emissary to Krishna.  
 KRATHA/KAISHIKA, noblemen on the side of Krishna.  
 GARUDA, Bird king, and Krishna's means of aerial transport.  
 NARAD (NARADA), the sage of the demigods (gods).  
 SHANKHACHUDA, demon on the side of Kamsa.  
 VISHVAKARMA, landscaper of the gods, and a grandfatherly figure to Radha.  
 STEWARD, guard of the female quarters of Dvaraka Palace.

## Female.

RADHA (RADHIKA, RADHARANI, RADHE), daughter of the king of Vindhya, aka, Satyabhama, the daughter of Satrajit.  
 CHANDRAVALI, daughter of the king of Vindhya, aka, Rukmini, the daughter of Bhishmaka.  
 PADMA, daughter of King Nagnajita.<sup>2</sup>  
 LALITA, Radha's dear friend.  
 VISHAKHA, the embodiment of the Yamuna River, and friend of Radha.  
 MADHAVI, Chandravali's widowed friend.  
 NAVAVRINDA, Radha's companion.  
 BAKULA, Radha's friend and servant.  
 VRINDA, goddess of Vrindavan, and Radha's dear friend.  
 PAURNAMASI, Sandipani's mother.  
 NANDIMUKHI (NANDI), daughter of sage Garga.<sup>3</sup>  
 KUNDALATA, daughter of Krishna's sister, Subhadra.  
 YASHODA, Krishna's mother, and wife of Nanda.  
 ROHINI, Nanda's second wife, and mother of Rama.  
 JATILA, mother of Abhimanyu, and mother-in-law of Radha.  
 MUKHARA, associate of Jatila.  
 BHARUNDA, mother-in-law of Chandravali.  
 SHARAD, goddess of Springtime, associate of Paurnameasi.  
 SUKANTHI, Chandravali's servant.  
 MALATI, palace maid.

1

Sandipani Muni is Krishna's teacher at school

2 Sovereign of the state of Gandhara

3 Garga Muni is Krishna's family's priest

TULSI, palace maid.

PINGALA, friend of Radha as Satyabhama, and palace maid.

SHAIVYA, friend of Chandravali.

*Prologue.**Enter* DIRECTOR.

*Dir.* Moonrise signals the hour when shelduck pairs part company;<sup>4</sup>  
 But, what bodes ill for them makes the chakora birds<sup>5</sup> all happy;  
 May the moon of Krishna's renown that strikes fear in demons' wives,  
 Uplift you in the way the moon uplifts chakoras' lives!  
 To the one who showers glee on goddesses of merit,  
 Whose chest's a cloud for splendid Radharani to inhabit;  
 To that Supremely divine being, named Krishna,<sup>6</sup> I bow.  
 With great delight, it is, I share this new play with you now;  
 The guardian of the cowherd girls, Lord Shiva,<sup>7</sup> set me to it;  
 Same Shiva who understands Vrindavan<sup>8</sup> groves' great secret;  
 Whose shrine's found by the shore of lotus-flower filled Brahma Lake!<sup>9</sup>  
 He told me in a dream the kind of drama I must make;  
 And now Diwali's here, and here's the Radha-Krishna temple;  
 And Radha Lake,<sup>10</sup> and now we've bowed down to Govardhan Hill<sup>11</sup> -  
 The time's come to present you devotees of the sublime -  
*The Lalita Madhava* – my new play in verse and rhyme.  
 Permission first! I call upon the mercy of my Lord -  
 Present avatar of Krishna<sup>12</sup> – our own heart-beguiling ward;  
 Whose presence is the answer to all prayers for salvation;  
 By whose mercy we're imbued with divine inspiration,  
 And verily relieved of all unfortunate misgivings!

*[He apparently catches a comment from the audience.*

What's that you say? Audacious? These are confidential things?  
 Indeed. Quite right, but look – I'm well aware that I am lowly,  
 But Rupa<sup>13</sup> here's dependent on you masters here before me!  
 And I'm seeking your indulgence! Who has greater kindness,  
 Than devotees of Krishna, whom the Lord's chosen to bless?

4

Shelducks part company each night and pine for each other until morning

5 Chukar partridges subsist on moonlight alone

6 Cf Bhagavad-gita 10.8

7 Lord Shiva, among other things, is the tutelary god of dance-drama

8 The favourite forest of Krishna

9 Aka, Brahma Kunda

10 Aka, Radha Kunda

11 The principal geographical elevation in the realm of Vrindavan

12 The avatar (incarnation of Krishna) referred to here, is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu 1486-1534 BCE

13 Rupa Goswami is the play's author

So, be kind, my friends, for without you, there's none can help me,  
 My faults are dark, but you lend darkness eminence and beauty,  
 Like night-time stars, like stars purveying peace and harmony,  
 [*Folds his hands in prayer.*] And may the timeless teacher who has inspired all  
 of you,  
 My belov'd spiritual master,<sup>14</sup> every seeker's guru,  
 Accept my full submission and obeisance to his feet!  
 For now, dear gracious friends, there's someone you just must meet!  
 Our senior leading actress - who excels among them all!  
 Come on the stage, dear lady!

*Enter actor playing MUKHARA.*

*Mukha.* [*Out of character.*] Dear, I'm just not sure at all!  
 This part – I'm having doubts about it.

*Dir.* Not a grand reward?  
 It's no ordinary crowd, my dear, we've patrons of the Lord!  
 Lord's deity<sup>15</sup> before us, look! What more could luck afford?

*Mukha.* Too wonderful, dear sir – and I don't want seem untoward;  
 But I don't want to do something that's going to upset them!

*Dir.* I assure you, my dear lady, that there really is no problem;  
 Great souls as these are comfortable in any situation;  
 Wilderness, high heaven, hell – wherever they are taken;  
 The Lord is looking after them – they're happy – can't upset them.

*Mukha.* You're right. I know it's silly, dear, my judgement's wanting some;  
 [*The actress now begins to get into the role of her character, Mukhara.*  
 It's just, I'm so attached.

*Dir.* To who? You're so attached to who?  
 Well, good lady?

*Mukha.* The most divine cowherd boy is who,  
 [*She looks about furtively as she confides.*  
 You know the one - they note that He's as splendid as the moon.<sup>16</sup>

*Dir.* Ah, yes – we all know Him, the one whose dancing makes us swoon;  
 A prince of talent, there's a boy of fearsome bravery -  
 He shines alright!

*Mukha.* [*Confidentially.*] Fate has it that my granddaughter's<sup>17</sup> a beauty;

<sup>14</sup> Rupa Goswami's guru is his brother, Santana Goswami 1488-1588

<sup>15</sup> The play would have been performed beside, or in, a temple, in which stood the icons of worship, which in this case were deities of Radha and Krishna

<sup>16</sup> This reference is to Krishna

<sup>17</sup> Mukhara is referring to her granddaughter, Radha

Quite heavenly - my mind's made up that *He* should have Her hand.

*Dir.* Fate that does not bring those two together should be damned!

Fate knows it. One would think Fate would prefer to have acclaim.

*Mukha.* [*Anxious.*] The evil one<sup>18</sup> desires Her too ... the monarch we dare'nt name!

So dastardly is he, he schemes to slay our moon-like boy!

Inviting Him to dance at court's that evil monarch's ploy!

*Dir.* Lady, I'm an astrologer, I am. So, let me see.

[*He consults some papers he has with him.*

[*Gratified.*] Stars declare emphatically, you've no reason to worry;

The dancer slays the king! Dispatched upon a stage, he is!

That splendid dancer surely makes your fabulous girl His ...

*Purna.* [*Off-stage.*] Bless you! This is music to the ears of Purnamasi!

Radha will marry Krishna! That's the news you carry me!

Out of fear of Kamsa you have drummed us up a story -

And we have understood this lovely message very clearly.

Unknown harbinger of fortune, this is welcome mercy!

[*Director faces the wings.*

*Dir.* Why, it *is* Purnamasi! Do you see, now! Do you see!

There goes Narad's<sup>19</sup> disciple! Narad's favoured devotee!

There she is, bedecked in flowers, conversing with young Nandi!

We'd better get back stage. Make sure the actors are all ready ...

[*Exeunt Director and Mukhara.*

<sup>18</sup> A veiled reference to King Kamsa, who rules the district of Mathura in which the settlement of Gokoola-Vrindavan is located. Kamsa is the wicked uncle of Krishna

<sup>19</sup> Narad is the wise sage of the heavenly realms

*Act I**Joyous Twilight.**[Prelude.**Gokoola-Vrindavan.<sup>20</sup>  
Evening.**Enter PAURNAMASI and NANDIMUKHI.*

*Paurna.* Bless you! This is music to the ears of Paurnamasi!  
 Radha will marry Krishna! That's the news you carry me!  
 Out of fear of Kamsa you have drummed us up a story -  
 And we have understood this lovely message very clearly -  
 Unknown harbinger of fortune,<sup>21</sup> I cannot thank you enough!  
*[To Nandi.]* My grandchild, there is nothing like the nectar that we quaff!  
 A drop of which transports us from this world's offensive blows:  
 Nectar from the confluence of two sweet nectar flows,  
 Lord Krishna's loving glances and the smiles of Radhika.

*Nandi.* Good lady, why does Radha still desire to wed Krishna?  
 You married Her to Abhimanyu! I don't understand.

*Paurna.* That marriage wasn't real, my dear! Truth is, it never happened!  
 Smoke and mirrors, see? Now, let me put you in the know:  
 The truth about Radha – where She was born not long ago;  
 See, the Vindhya Mountain king<sup>22</sup> once craved a divine daughter,  
 Did many sacrifices to propitiate Brahma;<sup>23</sup>  
 And he was blessed with two girls, one of which was Radharani,  
 And a guarantee that Krishna'd be the one who She would marry.  
 There is nothing can change that.

*Nandi.* Just what was the king's idea?

*Paurna.* To have a son-in-law who'd be greater than Lord Shiva.  
 With his new, special daughters, He knew he could expect this.

*Nandi.* But wouldn't a divine *son* have better served his purpose.

*Paurna.* His purpose was to show off to his overbearing brother,<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>

Village near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>21</sup> This refers to the director's last lines spoken in the prologue

<sup>22</sup> King of the Vindhya mountain range, in west-central India

<sup>23</sup> Lord Brahma is the god (demigod) in charge of creation

<sup>24</sup> King of the Himalayan mountains

Who constantly reminded all *his* son-in-law was Shiva.

*Nandi.* King Vindhya's famous for his mountain-kingdom rivalry;  
Mount Meru<sup>25</sup> being tallest, to this day, makes him unhappy!

*Purna.* There you go - that's elite folk – they easily take umbrage.

*Nandi.* So how did Radha get from Vindhya mountains to our village?

*Purna.* The wicked witch<sup>26</sup> abducted Her – the fiend that hunts for babies.

*Nandi.* [*Shocked.*] How did She survive? Babies are eaten by such ladies;  
Most lucky, noble lady.

*Purna.* As it happens, deary, yes -  
King Kamsa told the witch to hunt for babes of extra fairness;  
Boys were to be killed, but girls were only to be stolen.

*Nandi.* What made King Kamsa tell her that?

*Purna.* Oh, he's an evil heathen.  
Got warned the one who'd bring about his demise had been born.<sup>27</sup>

*Nandi.* What was the pronouncement?

*Purna.* That his luck was overdrawn:  
That He who'd slain him in his last life had again appeared -  
His nemesis, the supreme Lord Krishna, the all-revered,  
Who showers happiness on those whose love for Him is true,  
But, furthermore, the consorts of the Lord were also due,  
That the fairest of them would take birth upon Mount Vindhya,  
And that they would wed their Lord once He was emperor.

*Nandi.* Was Radharani's sister safe?

*Purna.* Oh, yes - witch had to leave her,  
Vindhya's priest cast potent spells that scare an evil-doer;  
Luckily, that little goddess landed in a river.

*Nandi.* Good lady, it is obvious I've not been in the picture;  
I thought that Vrishabhanu<sup>28</sup> was Radhika's real father.

*Purna.* Cowherd Vrishabhanu did indeed conceive Radhika!  
But by divine arrangement, Brahma relocated Her.  
Radha then appeared to be the babe of Vindhya's queen;  
Her sister, too, was transferred to the womb of Vindhya's queen.

*Nandi.* [*Surprised.*] And, do the fathers know?

*Purna.* They do – a wise sage<sup>29</sup> let  
them know.

*Nandi.* And you – how did you come to know?

<sup>25</sup> Mount Meru is the mountain on which the chief gods (demigods) like Indra reside.

<sup>26</sup> Putana, the famous witch

<sup>27</sup> This warning to King Kamsa was pronounced by goddess Durga

<sup>28</sup> Vrishabhanu is the actual father of Radha, in who's house she was raised

<sup>29</sup> Durvasas Muni

*Paurna.* My guru<sup>30</sup> told me so;  
It's because of him I am with love for Radha filled!

*Nandi.* Is it true you took charge of Radha once the witch was killed?<sup>31</sup>  
Were there other orphaned babes? Was it just Radha only?

*Paurna.* I took charge of five more.

*Nandi.* Five! What are their names? Please tell me!

*Paurna.* There's Radha's friend the beautiful and radiant Lalita,  
Chandravali's companion, the sweet and dainty Padma,  
Gentle Bhadra, gracious Shaivya, ever-happy Shyama.

*Nandi.* All fostered by our women folk ...

*Paurna.* I hid them wherever.  
Our gentle ladies took the girls. Had to find homes quickly,  
Gave Radha to Mukhara – had to do so discreetly.  
Sweet memory of mine recalling how Mukhara smiled,  
When the old girl realised that she held her own grandchild.

*Nandi.* And Radha's friend Vishakha reached our village the same way?<sup>32</sup>

*Paurna.* She was borne up by the river, and adopted straight away.

*Nandi.* Who got Radha's sister – when the witch let go of her?  
Who rescued her?

*Paurna.* The lucky king of Kunderen and Vidarbha.<sup>33</sup>

*Nandi.* Poor thing will never get to see her sister, Radhika.

*Paurna.* On the contrary, she ended up here in Gokoola.

*Nandi.* She did?

*Paurna.* She's Chandravali! She's Karala's<sup>34</sup> granddaughter!  
Left Kunderen at five, she did – it was the will of Durga.<sup>35</sup>  
Long story,<sup>36</sup> but now, thankfully, the sisters are together!

*Nandi.* [Aside.] So it's true about the past each gopi-girl possesses,  
Radhika and her friends are cowherdesses *and* princesses!  
I had heard<sup>37</sup> These divine arrangements are extraordinary.  
Catching my breath – these things are a beguiling mystery.  
\_\_\_ So, all their husbands ... just pretend? No more than imitations?

*Paurna.* That's right, definitely only pale representations,

<sup>30</sup> Narad Muni is Paurnamasi's guru/teacher

<sup>31</sup> The wicked witch (Putana) was killed by baby Krishna when she came to try and poison Him

<sup>32</sup> Baby Vishakha was borne along by the river and adopted by the cowherdess Jatila. Vishakha is the embodiment of the Yamuna river which flows through Vrindavan

<sup>33</sup> Vidarbha is a region in Eastern Maharashtra, India

<sup>34</sup> Karala is a senior cowherdess

<sup>35</sup> Goddess Durga is the consort of Lord Shiva

<sup>36</sup> Durga ordered the bear-king Jambavan to bring Chandravali from Kunderen to Gokoola

<sup>37</sup> Nandi's father revealed this secret about the heritage of the cowherd girls of Vrindavan to her. Her father is named Sandipani Muni, and he is Krishna's teacher and the son of Paurnamasi

Their husbands think all's well, but they are under magic power,  
Truth is, they barely see their so-called wives but from afar.

*Nandi.* Those blessed girls must love Shree Krishna monumentally.

*Paurna.* There's *no* gorgeous Gokool girl does not love Krishna madly!

*Nandi.* Sixteen thousand one hundred plus, devotees – that is true!

All want to marry Krishna. And all know just what to do.

I've heard their petitions, I have heard their special prayer,

Seen some bowing down for this – entreating goddess Durga.<sup>38</sup>

*Paurna.* Well, they were well-advised - the sage who let them know's correct,<sup>39</sup>

Durga can grant desires of girls who pay her some respect.

*Nandi.* Sun-god can as well, he's who Radha adores intensely.

*Paurna.* My son shared that with Radha.

*Nandi.* He knows so much, good lady -

Said, the girls shall have their wish, but not without ordeal -

Along the way to ecstasy, heartaches will make them reel.

*Paurna.* To wit, we have the in-laws of Radha and Chandravali!

My dear, I am contending with the odds they set us daily.

*Nandi.* I wish those girls could live together – s'pose that's not an option.

*Paurna.* Not with Kamsa on the prowl – we cannot draw attention.

*Nandi.* Who else knows the background of the gopis?<sup>40</sup> Many others?

*Paurna.* Surely not! The only ones who know are Krishna's mothers<sup>41</sup> ...

[*The gopis are heard abandoning whatever they're engaged in to greet Krishna who is returning from the pastures.*]

*Kund.* [Off-stage.] Please get up, Padma! Bhadra – will you leave the feather crown!

Just leave your flowers, Shyam! Lalita – put the saffron down!

Vishakha – quiet the myna bird! Young Shaivya's braids are fine!

The yonder cloud of dust is one approaching herd of kine.

*Paurna.* That dusty cloud means Krishna's due – obscured, though - can't be seen;

No sight or sound of Him yet as the gopis scan the scene.

[*Sound of flute-playing.*]

*Nandi.* The mellifluous flute's a sound that overpowers Radhika,  
Drags Her heart from home, and leads her to the woods of Vrinda ...

<sup>38</sup> Some of the cowherd girls, particularly the close friends of Chandravali, worshipped goddess Durga to get Krishna as their husband

<sup>39</sup> The sage, in this case, is Garga Muni

<sup>40</sup> Gopis are cowherd girls/cowherdesses. 'Gopi' is the female case of 'go-pa', where 'go' means cow and 'pa' means protecting

<sup>41</sup> Krishna was raised by his foster mother Yashoda, and sees the mother of His brother Rama (aka Balarama) as His second mother

*Kund.* [Off-stage.] Mascara on both eyes! Dhanya? No, Pali - waistband neat!  
 What's one anklet Sarangi! Padma - no armlets on feet!  
 Lavangi's smeared her tilak,<sup>42</sup> Kamal's foot-lac's in her eye!  
 The mellifluous flute will be upon us by and by!

[*Nandi spots Krishna in the distance.*

*Nandi.* Ah, Vrindavan's moon's emerged before the dusty cloud!  
 The cowherds are His stars, His snow-white cows, His halo-shroud!

*Paurna.* Likewise, His dark-blue hue sets off His yellow clothes and staff,  
 Krishna exceeds blue-lotus excellence – and not by half -  
 For gopis of Vrindavan He personifies pure joy.  
 Let's visit Krishna's mother now.

[*Exeunt Paurnamasi and Nandimukhi.*

[*End of Prelude.*

*Enter KRISHNA, MADHUMANGALA, RAMA.*

[*Sound of lowing cows.*

*Krishna.* Madhumangal, My friend!  
 They've clearly had enough grass – any more moos, we'll be deafened,  
 Now the cows are adamant - they want the path back home,  
 Their eyes and faces say it – 'All we've done all day is roam!'

*Madhu.* All day in the woods and meadows – Your priest friend is weary.  
 Your cows and calves have a right kindly sympathy for me.

*Rama.* The big love the cows have for *You*, brother's, quite amazing,  
 Keep turning to look at *You* while all their calves are straying!

[*Krishna notes the setting sun.*

*Krishna.* Sun's going down at last, its softer rays caress the banyan.  
 Sky can't hold it – slipping 'neath the peaks of Govardhan.

[*Rama sees they are near their village.*

*Rama.* Our hamlet's lofty mansions aren't unlike little mountains.  
 Nearly home, dust everywhere - all over us, my cousins,  
 A cool Yamuna<sup>43</sup> dip, and once again we'll be all spry.

[*Exit.*

*Krishna.* The moon's invigorating all the quarters of the sky,  
 Melting moonstones, generating jewels in the sea,<sup>44</sup>  
 Showering stars. Madhu, inciting romance - readily.

*Madhu.* Why, friend, You've sixteen thousand spotless moon-like *ladies*,

<sup>42</sup> Tilak is a sacred body marking, usually made of clay

<sup>43</sup> The Yamuna River runs through Vrindavan

<sup>44</sup> Moonlight falling on the ocean is said to generate precious stones

What's great about that one old moon? Mark you the *local* beauties!

*[Their attention is drawn to a cowherd girl in the distance.]*

*Krishna.* You're right. So many. And every one fairer than the moon.

Moon's heavenly, beholding it's a very welcome fortune,

It's beauty and prowess make lotus flowers melancholy,

Moon's pure and charming, clear and bright, and beaming beautifully,

But the beauty of Gokool girls surpasses moon-beauty.

*[Off-stage, a small flute starts to play.]*

*Madhu.* She has Your attention, friend. Her artistry is magic.

Among the bur-flowers there.

*Krishna.* That's Shaivya's lovely pipe-music,

I won't flute when she's fluting – she's so much better at it.

*[A lute begins to play elsewhere, and Krishna goes towards the sound.]*

And Bhadra's lute! It takes you. Every note so exquisite.

*[Madhumangala spots another girl playing a vina<sup>45</sup> by the river.]*

*Madhu.* Going to wet that vina, playing waste-deep in the river!

*[Krishna listens.]*

*Krishna.* *[Smiles.]* An ode to love, is that. The choicest chords. To make you shiver.

Shyama's highly regarded for the way she plays the vina.

*[Strolling on, they hear the sound of bracelets.]*

Hear the sound of bangles there? Whatever sound was sweeter?

That's Padma heading out of doors. And nothing's going to stop her.

*[Scanning.]* No Chandravali, My friend. Surprised We haven't seen her.

But, she may well be in grandmother Karala's<sup>46</sup> garden.

*[They head towards the garden. Madhu sees Kundalata coming.]*

*Madhu.* Here's gopi Kundalata<sup>47</sup> – it's the ever-helpful one!

*Enter KUNDALATA with an ashoka flower.*

*Kund.* Ashokas aren't in season, Krishna.

*[Points to an ashoka tree.]*

Why has that one flowers?

Well?

*Krishna.* *[Aside.]* Chandravali did that! She does that to ashokas.<sup>48</sup>

*[Hears Chandravali coming.]*

<sup>45</sup> A kind of stringed instrument

<sup>46</sup> Karala is the grandmother of Chandravali

<sup>47</sup> Kundalata is the wife of the cowherdsman Upananda

<sup>48</sup> The touch of a beautiful maiden instantly makes an ashoka tree come into bloom

\_\_\_ There *is* the gentle call of Chandravali's chiming anklets!<sup>49</sup>  
Love it. We're about to greet the conjurer of florets.

*Kund.* Chandravali got locked in, handsome – courtesy Bharunda,<sup>50</sup>  
Was me who saved the day.

*Krishna.* What's got into Ma Bharunda?  
Harsh these days.

*Kund.* Not just Bharunda – all the elder women!  
Especially Jatila ...

*Enter CHANDRAVALI and PADMA.*

*Chand.* [To Padma.] My dear friend, what can I do then?  
My mother-in-law scolds me, and my reputation's tarnished.  
My bumble-bee eyes won't give up the-prince-who's-lotus-faced.

[*Krishna gleefully approaches Chandravali.*

*Krishna.* I'll tell you why the moon arose and fled into the sky:  
Chandravali's enchanting and delightful face, is why,  
The moon, in fact, still serves you as the dazzle in your smile.<sup>51</sup>

*Kund.* Chandravali's luck's derived from Kundalata's guile,  
Since the jewel next to Your heart has captured her reflection,  
It means she's in Your heart, so she'll marry You, no question.

*Krishna.* [Smiles.] How, dear Kundalata, will I marry Chandravali?

*Kund.* [Audacious.] But my sibling Govardhan<sup>52</sup> is not her husband, really!  
It's You who are my brother-in-law, Prince - seriously!

*Chand.* [Frowning.] I can't believe you said that – this one's fickle as a bee!  
Why would you encourage a gallant to bother me?<sup>53</sup>

*Kund.* She's being funny, brother. You're a very genteel bee -  
Hovering in awe around the flower-like Chandravali.

*Padma.* See here – though this gallant might get to Radha easily,  
Chandravali's different.

*Kund.* No need be shy, Chandravali,  
You give the prince a hug – you know you want to, so feel free.<sup>54</sup>

*Chand.* [Indignant.] Why don't you You put your own necklace round Him,  
Kundalata!

<sup>49</sup> In Sanskrit poetry, as herein, the sound of anklets is compared to the rhythmic sound of swans

<sup>50</sup> Bharunda is Chandravali's mother-in-law

<sup>51</sup> Literally, Krishna says the moon has become many little moons - the tidy rows of Chandravali's gleaming teeth

<sup>52</sup> Govardhan is the 'husband' of Chandravali, and the brother of Kundalata

<sup>53</sup> This is an example of how demure the damsels of Vrindavan profess to be

<sup>54</sup> Literally, 'decorate Krishna's chest with your own necklace' (by holding Him close)

*Kund.* Yes, yes - she deserves flowers for her lovely ear, Kanhaiya!<sup>55</sup>

*Chand.* [*To Kundalata.*] You're holding up the Prince, who's on the way to meet His lover.

*Kund.* Sweetheart - who but you's His lover?

*Padma.* Her name is Radhika.

'Nough said, my friend.

*Krishna.* My lovely, if you're not inside my heart,

Radhika's in My thoughts and so my heart's no cause to smart.

[*He now tries to adjust His inadvertent disclosure.*

I mean - I am distraught because My heart's falling apart!

*Padma.* And the noble tell the truth ...

*Bhar.* [*Off-stage.*] Fie on you, Kundalata!

You're about to know the ire of Govardhan, your brother!

*Kund.* Uh-oh - Bharunda's angry. She's as angry as Durga!

*Chand.* [*Alarmed.*] Come on, Padma! The old biddy's growling like a tiger!

[*Exeunt Chandravali and Padma.*

*Kund.* I think I will find Yashoda. [*Exit.*

[*Krishna and Madhumangala proceed, and hear more foot-bells.*

*Krishna.* More auditory bliss.

More becoming the object of Cupid target practise.

[*Listens.*] Vishakha's bells. [*Looking back.*] Sakhe,<sup>56</sup> it's true what Kundalata said.

Radha's being kept at home, no doubt. To be expected.

Have to see Her somehow.

[*Exeunt.*

*Yashoda's house.*

*Enter YASHODA and ROHINI. Re-enter PAURNAMASI and NANDI.*

*Yasho.* Rohini, why is my son late ...?

*Re-enter KUNDALATA.*

*Kund.* [*Smiles.*] Don't worry, Queen Yashoda - you should celebrate this date - Our cowherd girls are as divine as angels of the sky,

They're showering Him with showers of smiles<sup>57</sup> - He'll be here by and by.

*Rohini.* [*To Yashoda.*] I spied beautiful Radha and Chandravali today,

<sup>55</sup> = Krishna

<sup>56</sup> A sakhe is a male companion

<sup>57</sup> Goddesses used to show their appreciation for anything they approved of, by showering flower petals from the sky

My friend, even an angel's breath would be taken away -  
I've no doubt that angels would be jealous of that pair.

*Yasho.* Radha and Chandravali are like flowers that scent the air,  
Love to see Radha same way's I love to see my son -  
How it is, noble lady.

*Purna.* My dear queen, we think as one -  
Everyone in Gokoola has Radha-Krishna passion.

*Nandi.* Kundalata has Radha visiting Yashoda's mansion -  
Why's that so, Kundalata?

*Yasho.* Because that is *my* request -  
Whoever eats what Radha cooks lives long – Radhika's blest!<sup>58</sup>  
She's a truly blessed girl, and that is why I have Her.

*Purna.* My queen. Jatila's having some concerns about your Krishna.

*Yasho.* [*Smiles.*] How on earth could she have doubts about my lovely little son!<sup>59</sup>

*Kund.* [*Softly.*] Whose lifting of Mount Govardhan was merely playground fun;<sup>60</sup>

She only ever sees Him as her hapless little one ...

[*Purnamasi sees Krishna coming.*

*Purna.* Who should be celebrated as the Lord of everyone -  
Here *is* the precious jewel of Gokoola's blessed queen ...

*Re-enter KRISHNA.*

*Krishna.* I'm here mama, so dry your eyes!

[*Rohini worships Krishna with a lighted lamp.*

*Rohini.* Not good, how long You've been!  
Your mother's distraught – can't stop herself scanning the cow-way.  
And twice as late this evening, child – make her stress go away!  
She loves You more than anyone – hold her close up to You!

[*Krishna yields to being mothered, and puts His head in Yashoda's lap .*

*Krishna.* Where's My trinket, dear mama? I've been meaning to ask you.

[*Yashoda is emotionally moved to express milk.*

*Purna.* Mother's milk to wash off all the dust the cows have raised,  
Your chalk-mark decorations<sup>61</sup> are going to be erased;  
With her pure precious milk Your mother is anointing You.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> This particular blessing was given Radha by sage Durvasas

<sup>59</sup> Literally, 'my son, who I breast feed'

<sup>60</sup> Mount Govardhan was raised up and balanced on the little finger of Krishna's hand for seven days to save the cowherds from torrential rain

<sup>61</sup> Krishna decorates His body using various chalk pigments from Govardhan Hill

<sup>62</sup> Anointing icons (deities) with milk and other pure substances is still practised in holy places today

*Kund.* [*Impishly.*] You need Your milk, dear Krishna – some refreshment's surely due -

Your exploits in the groves are definitely thirst-making ...

*Yasho.* Don't laugh, my dear! So what! What could be wrong with Him breast-feeding?

He's, after all, a boy.

*Kund.* Queen is correct, noble lady,  
Rasa dancing's<sup>63</sup> just Him and other little children, really.

*Yasho.* Rasa dancing? What is that? Can you tell me, good lady.

[*Krishna becomes abashed, frowning at Kundalata.*]

*Paurna.* [*Smiles.*] Folk dancing, dear queen ...

*Kund.* [*Whispers to Krishna .*] You should think of  
Radharani,

Like a starved chakora bird<sup>64</sup> she's been - locked in a cage!

But She's in the ashoke grove now – been waiting there an age -

Your job, as Her moon's, to come and save Her with a ray ...

[*Krishna acknowledges He has got the message.*]

*Nanda.* [*Off-stage.*] If I can't see His handsomeness each moment of the day,  
I'm actually in hell! Son – cool me with a strong embrace!

*Krishna.* My loving father. I will put a smile upon his face.

[*Exeunt Krishna, Yashoda, Rohini, Paurnamasi and Nandi to see Krishna's foster-father Nanda.*]

[*Kundalata makes her way through the forest to a grove of rattan palms, and comes across Radha and Lalita.*]

*Kund.* Lalita's brought Radhika to the palm-grove<sup>65</sup> sanctuary ...

*A grove of rattan palms.*

*Enter RADHA and LALITA.*

*Radha.* Lalita, I do think this night you're bound to be lucky.

*Lal.* Indeed. Supposedly ...

[*Kundalata approaches.*]

*Kund.* Lalita, sun's in evening skies!  
Have neither of you offered Krishna love-light from your eyes?

[*Radha is captivated by Krishna's name.*]

*Radha.* Krishna's name, Lalita. I'm incensed incorrigibly -

<sup>63</sup> Rasa dancing is the name of the kind of folk-dancing enjoyed by the cowherdesses and Krishna

<sup>64</sup> Again, the legend of the chakora bird (chukar partridge) who subsists only on moonlight, is used in this context

<sup>65</sup> Specifically, a sanctuary of rattan palms, which grow to a height of 10 metres, and expand up to 200 metres horizontally

Just catching it ...

*Kund.* Of course so, friend! Affects us uniquely;  
Conjures an experience that's unlike any other.

*Lal.* Awakens love – that's the effect it has, Kundalata!  
In all kinds of ways, any time one's in its range, I fear.

*Radha.* And? You've more to say, Lalita. I have more to hear.

*Lal.* Gokool's belov'd young prince has the most fabulous complexion,  
Monsoon-cloud dark-blue lustre's nothing by comparison,  
His flute-playing, my friend's, the same impact on every lady,  
It expertly deprives us of all sense of decency.

[*This comment brings Radha close to tears.*]

*Radha.* I love to *hear* of Him, but won't I *see* Him, Kundalata?

*Kund.* Tomorrow evening – yes! Little patience - not much longer.  
Vishakha's arranged it.

*Radha.* She has. Thanks for reminding Me -  
You gave Me the pleasure once before – albeit briefly,  
I am obliged you've helped me see the young prince, noble sakhi ...<sup>66</sup>

*Re-enter KRISHNA.*

[*Krishna catches the sound of bracelets.*]

*Krishna.* Sweeter song was never sung by sparrows in a tree -  
Lalita's bracelets say to make My way to *palm-tree*<sup>67</sup> heaven.

[*Attentive to the sound of Radha's foot-bells.*]

Radha's - more enchanting than a love-dove's invitation,  
Her ankle bells announcing that love poetry awaits,  
I'm treated to a cornucopia of happy states ...

[*Radha is taken aback on seeing Krishna.*]

*Radha.* Who's this? Whose eyes are these that overpower so readily?  
Would split diamond-hard chastity? Such a lustre, young lady!  
His glow's constructing vaults where We'll be secret guests of His!

*Lal.* Your sweetheart, friend.

*Radha.* Light of the lives of *all* lotus-gopis!  
Gokool's prince on His merry way - My heart takes wing and flies;  
Friend - immortal nectar's being lavished on My eyes!

<sup>66</sup> A sakhi is a female friend

<sup>67</sup> That is, to the palm grove rather than the ashoka grove

*Krishna.* [*Marvelling.*] I am under a spell - great waves of longing stir in Me;  
Great Cupid's pooled a vision of divine felicity!  
Difficult to make out what it is I see before Me -  
These lotus flowers features<sup>68</sup> – two rathangas<sup>69</sup> sitting pretty,  
These coy – they must be Radha's eyes. This lake of love enchants Me!

[*Radha becomes unsteady.*

*Radha.* I need a hand, dear friend - unsteady.

Lal.

Be careful, sakhi.

[*Lalita lays a steadying hand on Radha's shoulder.*

*Krishna.* [*Coming loser.*] Moon! In every way Radhika's fair beauty demotes  
you,

And your desire to match it means you've extreme rites to do -

Extreme indeed, you take care - you appear to've waned away.<sup>70</sup>

[*Krishna comes closer still, and Radha signals Lalita with a sidelong look.*

*Radha.* Lalita, help ...

*Krishna.* The looks You send take Krishna's breath away -

So, please do not deprive Me - turn Your eyes this way again!

*Radha.* [*Faltering.*] Keep Him at bay, Kundalata, or I'll be be woebegone!  
Our elders will punish Us – He's too absurdly handsome ...

*Enter JATILA.*

*Jat.* The wretched rogue who condemns good girls to opprobrium!

Well, this bride of my pious son's the one You shall not tarnish!

So help us - Your very name's something we have to banish!

[*Exeunt Jatila with Radha, Kundalata and Lalita.*

*Krishna.* My beloved has gone ... I'd better go and find My cows.

[*Exit.*

<sup>68</sup> Lotus-flower like face, hands and feet

<sup>69</sup> A Rathanga bird is the chakravaka bird, aka, shelduck

<sup>70</sup> Literally: 'O moon, you have gone to do penance in Lord Shiva's locks to gain the same beauty as Radha, and because of that, you are looking thin.' The crescent moon adorns the hair of Lord Shiva, which is why he is called 'Chandrashekhar'



*ACT II**Dispatching Shankhachuda.**[Prelude.**Gokoola Vrindavan.**Enter VRINDA.*

*Vrinda.* [*Studying the sky.*] Moon's dim and low, and heading to its lord, the sky out west,  
 Jupiter's waning slowly, listless, fading, lacking zest,  
 Stars follow – one last twinkle - and then disappear completely.  
 So ends the night, the world turns as if automatically.

*[As she strolls, she hears milk churns being pulled.*

Rumbling of the milk churns signals break of morning light,  
 Resounds right up to heaven, much to demigod delight;  
 Reminds them of the good times they had churning the milk-ocean.<sup>71</sup>

*[Her attention is distracted off-stage.*

Loud. Now, there's a churning - milk foam splashed all round the courtyard,  
 Malati knows how, she pulls the rope extremely hard.  
 Love the noise those bangles make.

*[She notes different cowherd girls returning to the village from the nearby forest.*

Here's Pali looking sleepy,  
 Hair scattered, head down, circumspect, exits groves carefully,  
 Night-time gone, she dons her shawl, and's back inside the cow-pen.  
 And Shyamala, making tracks to Gokool hamlet once again;  
 The artwork on her cheeks, the mark of an artistic hand,  
 She has on Krishna's earrings and His favourite cummerbund;  
 And necklace that's familiar to the broad chest of the prince.

*[She sees Padma.*

Padma's pretty markings have a clear, untouched appearance,  
 Perfect lipstick, braids all neat – but, this girl isn't happy;  
 Neglected, I imagine, walking home so lifelessly ...

*[An off-stage voice is heard being critical of Krishna:*

71

This refers to the legendary churning of the milk ocean by both gods and demons, undertaken to yield celestial trophies

*Shaivya.* [*Off-stage.*] Morning's come, and look at how she's wilted like the jasmine!<sup>72</sup>

Did You even notice her in fragrant bloom last evening?

Too late, her night-lotus glory's gone unfortunately.

Anything to say? Please don't cow-tow as if You're sorry.

*Vrinda.* That's Padma's friend denouncing Krishna ...

*Purna.* [*Off-stage.*] Haven't slept a wink!

Night came and went – this worrying will drive me to the brink!

*Vrinda.* Why, honourable Purnamasi's here!

*Enter PAURNAMASI.*

*Purna.* Not slept a wink!

Night came and went – my grave concerns will drive me to the brink!

[*She sees Vrinda.*]

The forest goddess, Vrinda! Now is the time to see her.

[*Vrinda pays respects as Purnamasi approaches.*]

*Vrinda.* Noble lady, what's the trouble?

*Purna.* Child - bad news from Uddhava,

It's most dis-concerting what our man in Kamsa's court says.

He told me King Kamsa enlisted two accomplices -

Witch Putana's demise made Kamsa think about his safety:

He enlisted the demonic Arishta and Keshi!

Those two have been spying on us here, unfortunately ...

Now Kamsa understands who killed the wicked witch Putana,

Now he fears his life's in mortal danger from Shree Krishna.

*Vrinda.* And what else?

*Purna.* Kamsa desires to kidnap Radharani!

Wants to raid Gokool! Been inspired by villainous Keshi,

Radhika and Krishna so amazed the emissary.

*Vrinda.* [*Alarmed.*] Go on ...

*Purna.* Arishta's urged the deranged monarch the same way!

Fiend Shankhachuda's here for that! Radha's in jeopardy!

*Vrinda.* You've got me worried now – that fiend does evil everywhere!

Who'd not be pained at how his evil touch has scorched the fair?

For girls he's an unmitigated cause of great despair!

Tormenting everybody – his mischief's beyond compare ...

<sup>72</sup> Specifically, night blooming jasmine

*Enter KUNDALATA, in a flurry.*

*Kund.* Noble lady! It's amazing! Well amazing!

*Paurna.*

What's amazing?

*Kund.* Everything's lit up - as far as far as Chandravali's dwelling!<sup>73</sup>

*Vrinda.* What do you know, good lady – it's the sun-god to the rescue!

Radhika's devotions have obliged. His help was due:

Sun-god's being pleased with Her's bound to save Her from danger.

*Paurna.* Not the sun-god! It's the same fiend's been sent here by Kamsa!

*Kund.* Light blinds the eyes. A fiend, you say? I can't say I could tell.

*Paurna.* The shining is from what he wears.

*Kund.*

What's that?

*Paurna.*

A divine jewel!<sup>74</sup>

*Vrinda.* Must be! How did he get it?

*Paurna.*

He stole it – he's a devil;

He got tempted while guarding heaven's riches one fine day -

Does he covet his dazzler.

*Vrinda.*

Radhika must be kept away!

She can't worship this morning like She thinks She's going to do!

That must be stopped, good lady!

*Kunda.*

Vrinda - She's now thither to!

Making for the sun-god temple!

*Paurn.*

Alright, Kundalata!

You go and tell prince Krishna that He's got to get to Her!

*[Kundalata makes her way (on stage) to find Krishna.*

His brother Rama must be there too – we'll see to it he is!

*[Exeunt Paurnamasi and Vrinda.*

**[End of Prelude.**

*[Kundalata continues on her way.*

*Kund.* Here's Radha 'longside Lalita, Vishakha and Jatila ...

*Near a sun-god temple.*

*Enter JATILA, LALITA, VISHAKHA and RADHA.*

*Radha.* *[Aside.]* Doubt I'll see My belov'd now – and now my spirits founder.

<sup>73</sup> Literally: 'as far as the house of Govardhan' - Govardhan being the 'husband' of Chandravali. This residence is in the South of Vrindavan at some distance from where they are in the North

<sup>74</sup> \*The name of this very important jewel is Syamantaka. Its role is crucial to the drama's denouement

*Kund.* Good Morning, Radha! All's well when one's in good company!

*Jat.* [*Irritated.*] Dolt! I wish you wouldn't say Radhika's name so loudly! Kanhaiya's going to hear, and then He's going to appear.

*Lal.* [*Smiles.*] It's true, lady.

*Jat.* Lalita, I shall prepare the mandir,<sup>75</sup>  
I'll start the incense going ...

[*Jatila proceeds to the sun-god temple.*

*Radha.* Kundalata? Where's the youth?

The one you said's your brother-in-law. Rare sight. That's the truth.

Well? Where is He? I believe that you know what He's up to.

*Kund.* Mean the one You're always with? Whatever will appease You?

*Radha.* Don't mock Me! Alright for you – don't face My kind of drama - Drink nectar through your eyes non-stop – where's I have no good karma! Can't even find out anything – my good luck's really gone!

*Kund.* Radhika, who has excess of nectar, says She has none ...

*Radha.* You're heartless, Kundalata! All I want's for you to tell Me: Have I the slightest, smallest chance of seeing Him? Truly? But perhaps I delude Myself? Please, please have sympathy, The blue moon<sup>76</sup> who, in blessedness, your fair eye imbibes freely - Give this wretch a chance to glimpse Him - you see She's unhappy ...

*Kund.* [*As if affronted.*] Quite frankly, this is unrighteous and excessive longing.

[*Hurries to Jatila, who is readying the temple.*

Let's get a good priest, lady – to do the sun-god off'ring!

*Jat.* Good idea that, my dear – you fetch a nice young brahman!<sup>77</sup>

*Kund.* And so I will, good lady.

[*Exit.*

*Lal.* Radhika, the lady's done -  
Sun-god worship time, sakhi - the temple been made ready.

[*Radha goes before the icon of the sun-god.*

*Radha.* [*Praying.*] Dear lord, grant My desire to see who I so long to see ...

*Enter KRISHNA disguised as a priest (brahman), and MADHUMANGALA.*

*Re-enter KUNDALATA.*

[*Krishna beholds Radha.*

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] Heavenly. Right sacred waters for the tusker of My mind!<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> = temple

<sup>76</sup> = Krishna

<sup>77</sup> = priest

<sup>78</sup> Literally, 'a bath in a heavenly pool for the royal elephant of my mind'

A moon, whose moonlight on My parched chakora eyes is kind!  
 O starry cluster - bespangle the cloud-bank of My breast!  
 My strong desire for Radha has made Radha manifest.

[Radha catches sight of Krishna.

Radha. [Aside to Lalita.] Who's the dark boy we have here? Most regal-looking one?

No idea in Gokool there was such a regal person.<sup>79</sup>

I'm anxious now, Lalita – it's as if He's thieves for eyes!

Patience isn't going to hold! [Looks again.] I fear right-thinking dies!

I can't help it - the sight of this priest stirs My wretched heart<sup>80</sup> -

Is life not worthless if one can't tell right and wrong apart?

Lal. My friend, the priest's presence here is really getting to You.

[Radha glances again at the 'priest'.

Radha. Krishna is getting to Me! It's no priest – it's Him! That's who!  
 It can't be any other – only He does this to Me;  
 Sure as moonstones melt in moonlight.

Vish.

Nicer news couldn't be!

Definitely Krishna, friend.

[Kundalata introduces Madhumangala and 'priest' Krishna.

Kund.

Jatila - goodly woman!

These two priests are most expert in sun-god veneration.

Madhu. At sun-god worship, Jatila, I'm your man – no question.  
 A few sweetmeats<sup>81</sup> to begin with.

Jat.

Now, look, harebrained young priest -

You're that young Krishna's helper – non grata, to say the least!

[Jatila does not recognise Krishna in His disguise.

[Referring to Krishna.] This nice dark votary will do the worship for my girl ...

Krishna. Good woman, why indeed's this young priest friendly with that churl!

That cowherd prince's nonsense is the talk of Kamsa's city.<sup>82</sup>

[He indicates Madhumangala.

Shouldn't be here.

Jat.

Let's begin the sun-god worship, deary.<sup>83</sup>

[Krishna glances sidewise at Radha.

Krishna. How shall I proceed, good lady?

[Krishna takes a small pot of perfumed water to present to the sun-god.

<sup>79</sup> Literally, 'who moves in the stately manner of an elephant'

<sup>80</sup> Radha thinks Her attraction to Krishna is improper by the standards of the time

<sup>81</sup> Specifically the Indian milk sweet called ladoo

<sup>82</sup> Mathura city – city nearest to Gokoola-Vrindavan, ruled by King Kamsa

<sup>83</sup> This is an offering of 'argha' – water scented with khusa perfume (shighram) and offered in a boat-shaped copper spoon

*Jat.* [In a low voice, indicating Radha.] With this one.

[Krishna feigns surprise recognition.

*Krishna.*

Oh, I see!

Here's the girl famed for Her dedication to chastity!

*Jat.* My girl maintains the goodly name of Gokool single-handed.

*Krishna.* Here's scented water, chaste one – I'll get the mantras started.

[Radha unsteadily receives the pot of scented water from Krishna who begins to pray ambiguously.

O sunny one - to Your disquieted eye and lip I bow,

Unworthy as I am, I'm craving one thing anyhow:

The fortune of Your artful glance! Our services forever!<sup>84</sup>

*Jat.* [Puzzled.] What kind of prayer's that, Kundalata? I'm not familiar.

*Madhu.* [Laughing.] You're fine with the old folk songs,<sup>85</sup> biddy – there's your expertise!

Don't worry 'bout the Vedas or such sentiments as these,

They're lines from Veda five,<sup>86</sup> for granting ladies happiness!

[All smile.

*Jat.* [Abashed.] Your good prayers guarantee my son's cows shall be numberless!

*Krishna.* [To Radha.] You may now offer up the scented water, blessed one; [Ambiguously.] Your gladdened well-wisher's right here with His splendid robes on.<sup>87</sup>

[Radha waves perfumed water and then a lotus, in circles, before the sun-god deity.

*Kund.* Of the glory of this Supreme Lord, many maidens sing,<sup>88</sup>  
This girl's lotus flower smile is in itself an offering.

[Radha looks sidelong at Krishna.

*Krishna.* Blest girl, now Your beloved god's nice worship is complete,  
He'd love it if You'd sprinkle some red flowers at his feet.

[Radha offers a palm-full of red noon flowers to the sun-god deity.

*Madhu.* Jatila, how's about the sweetmeats, now we've done the task?  
Our prayers were flawlessly pronounced – it's fair enough to ask.

*Krishna.* Always sweets – less chat, perchance! As far as I'm concerned,  
The favour of Gokool folk is all I need to have earned.

*Jat.* [Cheerful. To Krishna.] Good priest, please come to my place and I'll see that You enjoy:

<sup>84</sup> This is thinly veiled praise of Radha

<sup>85</sup> Specifically – 'ri ri' songs

<sup>86</sup> Specifically, chapter three of the Kusumeshu (cupid) scriptures. Scriptures outside of the four main Vedas are referred to as fifth Veda

<sup>87</sup> Meaning either the well-attired sun-god deity, or Krishna in His priestly disguise

<sup>88</sup> Literally, 'before You is He whose association is a blessing to maidens'

Haute-cuisine for You! And a jewel ring as well, my boy!

*Madhu.* [*Thrilled.*] For feeding priests, lady – may you be blessed with seven sons!<sup>89</sup>

*Krishna.* Feed My help, good lady – as for Me, I have instructions - I've news from My guru I've to give to Purnamasi.

*Jat.* What news?

*Krishna.* Noble mother, it's regarding Radharani, Seems this girl so dear to you faces some kind of trouble; Needs mantras and a wishing-tree to be safe – at the double ...

[*Kundalata exaggerates her alarm at this and points out a wishing-tree.*

*Kund.* [*Aside to Jatila.*] We've luck, dear lady – would you know! Nice wishing-trees.

[*She points out nearby wishing-trees.*

Right there!

You go and feed the help, and then get Purnamasi here - We cannot let this good priest go!

[*Exeunt Jatila and Madhumangala.*

[*Smiling.*] My recompense, Radhika!<sup>90</sup>

What You wanted - hard to get.

*Radha.* [*Frowning.*] I wanted, Kundalata?

*Kund.* Why, expert sun-god worshipping! Whatever's wrong with You!

*Krishna.* I'm due reward, Kundalata – the priest's stipend is due.

*Kund.* Radhe, your job is simply to requite Your superb priest.

*Vish.* [*Smiling.*] Kundalata, I don't think She's obliged in the least, You asked your brother-in-law to do some worshipping, So you should be the one who goes ahead with the rewarding.

*Lal.* Actually, Vishakha, Kundalata is not remiss, She's given Him His reward.<sup>91</sup>

*Krishna.* Lalita – point is this - I'd never deign to do priest work for My sister-in-law ...

[*Radha is unnerved, anxious to go.*

*Radha.* The worship's nicely done, Lalita – what's the delay for?

*Krishna.* To be with Radha, in itself's, a heart-uplifting boon, My heart soars in the presence of a love-wakening moon ...

*Rama.* [*Off-stage.*] Where are You, my dear brother – without You can't get things done!

*Krishna.* [*Concerned.*] What can't be done?

*Rama.* [*Off-stage.*] The cows - we've no idea where

<sup>89</sup> Jatila is too old to have more sons, which makes this is a conventional blessing expressed in jest.

<sup>90</sup> A priest is due a stipend., or 'dakshin', for overseeing a religious ceremony

<sup>91</sup> That gratuity/stipend being Radha's company

they have gone!

*Krishna.* The cows must have got out of hand while I was worshipping.

Lalita, sit below'd upon the sapphire wishing-seating.

*[Exit Krishna. Lalita points out a jewelled sitting place beneath the wishing trees.]*

*Lal.* Beneath the tree, sakhi.

*Radha.* Lalita – now I'm worrying.

Later on My folk will fret, and quiz what I've been doing -

I do not want to put My own good name in jeopardy,

Your fickle friend is friendly with every single gopi!

Sakhi, please – don't keep Me in this unsafe situation!

*Kund.* No one is chaste as You, Radhe – we know! Don't need go on.<sup>92</sup>

*Vish.* Who's more addicted to the flute than you are, Kundalata!<sup>93</sup>

*Kund.* That's why - out of concern for you - I have a fervent prayer:

That you all stick to being saintly wives unfailingly;

That the mellifluous flute rob no one's decency ...

*[They proceed to the wishing-trees.]*

*Re-enter KRISHNA without His disguise.*

*Krishna.* Radhika's beguiling eyes entranced Me in a second;

Her bewitchments subjugate, thus My heart's Hers without end.

*[Radha starts considering why Krishna's berry-necklace deserves the good fortune of always being very close to Krishna.]*<sup>94</sup>

*Radha.* *[Aside to Kundalata.]* How's that berry necklace get to be on Krishna's chest?

Clearly hard and dry – of what dress-merits is it possessed?

I see none, Kundalata – lucky thing sits there regardless.

Must have sentimental value.

*Kund.* *[In a low voice.]* You've a gemstone necklace ...

Not like it's not hard, Radhe – why so opposed to hardness ... ?

*Vrinda.* *[Off-stage.]* Nothing close to Krishna's chest adorns Him as does Radha,

No necklace can compare, the Radha pearl is like no other ...

*[Kundalata faces Vrinda.]*

*Kund.* That is true, but there's still more to say of Radha, Vrinda,

The Lord, infatuated by Radha's, always under Her power.

<sup>92</sup> Kundalata is inferring that Radha is protesting too much, and is actually very happy to have Krishna's company

<sup>93</sup> Vishakha retorts that Kundalata is, as it were, in a glass house throwing stones

<sup>94</sup> Made from red and black gunja berries, aka, rosary peas

*Lal./Vish.* Don't embarrass our dear friend – She's blushing now, you villain.

*Kund.* [To Radha.] But, all's well, sakhi – and You will prevail in Your mission!

The grove here is where You win Lord Shree Krishna's affection,<sup>95</sup>  
Tomorrow gopis will all praise the sentiments You've won.

*Krishna.* [Smiles.] Whereas a nectar-drink quenches the thirst of the thirsty,  
When I take in the nectar-stream of Radha's moon-like beauty,  
It only ever ensures I am *more* intensely thirsty.

*Radha.* [Aside to Kundalata.] How will I face the elders? My folk famed for piety?

It frightens Me when I can't keep His handsome face from Me,  
Smiling. Earrings flashing. Don't know what to do, dear sakhi.

*Kund.* Here is the sapphire seat, handsome – invite Radha to sit?

[*Krishna invites Radha to sit.*]

*Lal.* [To Radha.] Your bracelets – careful, sakhi – keep the jangles down a bit.  
Draws attention.

*Enter SHANKHACHUDA, concealed by forest cover.*

*Shankh.* Girl on the seat? Must be. Yes – 'tis the one!  
As Govardhan<sup>96</sup> explained. All good. The task may now be done.

[*Krishna sits beside Radha on the wishing-tree seat and indicates His lap.*]

*Krishna.* You can sit here too, My precious – I'm sapphire-ish,<sup>97</sup> You see.

*Radha.* Good gentlemen, like You, O prince, behave responsibly,  
They know good girls have standards that must be maintained each day ...

*Mukha.* [Off-stage.] Granddaughter! What's keeping You? Too much time, Radhe!

*Krishna.* [Frustrated.] Mukhara's never, ever happy - why, Kundalate?

*Kund.* [With a smile.] Krishna, one like You, who roams in forest-groves all day,

Disposed to glancing amorously, this way and that way,  
Has no concern for biddies, or for what the biddies say ...

*Enter MUKHARA.*

[*Mukhara sees Radha and Krishna are together.*]

<sup>95</sup> This is the wishing-tree grove, referred to here as 'Cupid's arena'

<sup>96</sup> Husband of Chandravali. A ne'er do-well who works for King Kamsa

<sup>97</sup> That is, blue-ish in complexion

*Mukha.* [*Aside.*] Give up a tree of paradise<sup>98</sup> and wind a castor oil?<sup>99</sup>  
My honey-suckle girl – it's dreadful. What bad luck can't spoil!

\_\_\_ Child, You have become this first-class young dilettante's play-thing!

*Lal.* [*Acting innocent.*] We've been duped, good lady – it's just further  
Krishna-cunning!

*Mukha.* Bounder, don't You move!

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] I've got to go - the old girl's boiling.

[*Krishna slips into the wishing-tree grove, infuriating Mukhara.*

*Mukha.* Hold the rogue, Lalita! Stop Him!

*Lal.* [*To Krishna.*] Where d'You think You're going!

[*Mukhara shifts menacingly to the grove's entrance.*

*Mukha.* We have Him! That's good! Secured the perilous deer-viper!

*Krishna.* [*Confident. Aside.*] The old thing won't see Me in here – it's too  
shady for her.

[*Mukhara wobbles her head as she tries to see Krishna inside the arbour.*<sup>100</sup>

Old girl's well-befuddled.<sup>101</sup>

*Mukha.* Trouble is, His dark complexion. [*Krishna smiles.*

[*Mukhara looks in the arbour where Shankhachuda is, and thinks he is Krishna.*

[*Afraid.*] Purnamasi warned me – it's another incarnation!

The rascal's loads in store, she said – this one's a fearsome one!

This one is terrifying – it's as fiery as the sun!

*Shank.* [*Aside.*] 'Tis excellent! Young hero's been distracted, luckily ...

[*Shankhachuda approaches Radha.*

*Lal./Vish./Kund./Radha.* Save us! Save us, lady ... !

*Mukha.* Stop, dark boy! Enough  
already ... !

*Lal.* You're mad! Something that frightening and ghastly isn't Krishna!

*Shankh.* Not going to disappoint my dear good friend King Kamsa,  
I'll prize this beauty from Her seat without further ado!

[*Shankhachuda seizes Radha. Exeunt Shankhachuda with Radha.*

*Lal./Vish./Kund./Mukha.* [*Bewildered.*] Where are You, Krishna!

[*Krishna, badly disappointed, exits the wishing-tree grove.*

*Krishna.* Pretty one,  
this painful fate's undue!

So wanted time together in this verdant, fragrant place!<sup>102</sup>

Next I know, You're kidnapped by Shankhachuda – the scapegrace!

<sup>98</sup> Specifically, a sandalwood tree, one of the five trees that grow in the heavenly planets

<sup>99</sup> Opting for something inferior

<sup>100</sup> Krishna's dark complexion makes seeing him in the shady grove particularly difficult

<sup>101</sup> Literally – 'the old lady appears to have seen a sky-flower'

<sup>102</sup> Literally, on this day of the full moon (purnima), when the forest groves are especially fragrant

What is happening! [*Advances fearlessly.*] Alright - don't worry, noble lady - I'm here!

*Mukha.* [*Teary.*] Triumph my handsome boy! May You have victory!

*Krishna.* You've upset Me, scoundrel - I could torture you forever!  
You've wronged Radha, I won't hold back – you won't escape death, sinner ... !  
[*Exit Krishna.*]

*Kund.* Fiend's let go of Radha – braced to fight Krishna, Lalita ... !

*Rama.* [*Off-stage.*] Tree-trunk arms, mountainous chest – veritably a monster!

Our youngster there before him - what defence can He employ!

His mother's going to face excruciating agony ...

[*Hearing this, everyone is terrified.*]

*Re-enter PAURNAMASI, hastily.*

*Purna.* [*Tossing aside stage-curtain.*] Fear not, Lalita dear – it's just a spark to be put out ... !

*Rama.* [*Off-stage.*] Shree Krishna doesn't hesitate to start the forest bout!  
He pounds the proud and ugly fiend whose fearsome teeth are bared!  
Pounds! Then from that demon for whom no mercy's been spared,  
From Shankhachuda's crown Shree Krishna wrests the brilliant gem ...

*Purna.* The fiend can't live without the jewel in his diadem!  
Rejoice you hungry forest jackals – time now for the feast!<sup>103</sup>  
See? See the way his chest's caved in – the monster is deceased ... !

*Rama.* [*Off-stage.*] The fiend paid with his life for being corrupted within!  
With cracks of inspired punches, Krishna's deftly done him in ... !

*Purna.* Prince's bold assault has laid the raging jewel-fiend low!  
Glorious bout – look how the flowers from heaven start to flow!

[*Flowers rain from the sky.*]

Extraordinary to see ...

*Vish.* And here they come, virtuous lady -  
Friends led by his brother Rama, who's name is dear to many.

*Purna.* Lord has given Rama the fiend's bright gem – the Syamantaka!

*Lal.* There they go. Now Krishna's free to solace His Radhika.

*Purna.* Radhika holds Krishna fast, shaking with perturbation;  
Our plumed boy's happy face is sweltering with perspiration.

*Re-enter KRISHNA and RADHA.*

<sup>103</sup> Feast on Shankhachuda's dead body

*Krishna.* I'll not forget My Radha calling out to Her Govinda:<sup>104</sup>  
 To Her 'lotus-eyed one,' to Her 'darling son of Nanda'!  
 Those tender eyes, all spry with fear, demanding My protection.

[*Paurnamasi honours Krishna by circumambulating Him.*

*Purna.* My dear son of Yashoda, thanks to You our cares are gone.

[*Paurnamasi embraces Radha and Krishna, wiping Krishna's brow.*

*Lal.* A marv'llous thing - Your sun-god-worshipping, heroic one,  
 Radhika's saved because of it – well saved. Protecting done ...

*Re-enter MADHUMANGALA with the Syamantaka jewel.*

*Madhu.* Friend, Rama says the Syamantaka jewel should be Radhika's.

*Krishna.* So it should. My gem's same sort.<sup>105</sup> Finer stone never was!

*Lal.* So be it!

[*Lalita gives the Syamantaka jewel to Radha.*

*Krishna.* This triumph will delight My folks no end!  
 Shall we on?

[*Exeunt.*

### *Act III*

<sup>104</sup> Govinda is another name for Krishna, meaning, 'who makes cows happy'

<sup>105</sup> Krishna's favourite pendent is called the Kaustubha jewel

***Radhika's Madness.*****[Prelude.***Gokoola Vrindavan.**Enter PAURNAMASI and VRINDA.*

*Paurna.* Unwelcome dawn – look, Saturn glints. The East horizon brightening.

Moon speeds West as if it's trying to run away from something.

*Vrinda.* That awful sound, good lady. It was terribly disturbing. I need to know what's going on.

*Paurna.* And I'll say everything.  
It's news indeed, Vrinda, my dear.

*Vrinda.* Please tell me, good lady.

*Paurna.* It did not go well for the vengeful, raging Keshi, His trying to avenge Arishta ended grievously: Same fate as his friend – Krishna destroyed both – easily, But next Akrura<sup>106</sup> turns up at the house of Krishna's father, To deliver a mandate - evil Kamsa's binding order: Krishna and His brother Rama are summoned to the city!

*[Vrinda is silent for a moment and breathes a sigh.]*

*Vrinda.* Not a lot of point now – my making the woodland pretty. My pride in gorgeous flower-cots ... having flowers bloom year-round. If Krishna's being taken. If the Lord's now city-bound.

*Paurna.* Poor cowherd girls were up all night imploring Akrura, Pleading, weeping, wild-eyed. Dawn came on them swift, then swifter.

*Vrinda.* *[Tearful.]* Moon was commandeered once when Mount-Meru stirred the sea,<sup>107</sup>

The stir that spawned the moon and poison simultaneously. This Akrura Mountain has stirred Gokoola, violently, The Krishna-moon's been taken, Gokool poisoned thoroughly.

*Paurna.* Nanda's gate<sup>108</sup> – that's where the crying's coming from, my dear.

*[Crossing to Nanda's house she becomes tearful.]*

Krishna's mother cannot even say a travel prayer,

<sup>106</sup> Akrura is Krishna's uncle

<sup>107</sup> The milk ocean was churned and Mount Meru was contrived as an epic churning tool. The churning yielded the moon which was then procured by the demigod Shiva

<sup>108</sup> The gate at the entrance to the house of Nanda, the foster-father of Krishna

Has nothing for her son to eat, lady's sadly bewildered,  
Tears muddying the dust powd'ring the body of her cowherd,  
Holding Krishna tight, Yashoda cannot stop her crying.

*Vrinda.* [*Listening.*] Good lady, Shaivya's with her friend – what's that her friend is saying?

*Paurna.* What, child?

*Vrinda.* The news that milk-maid duties made young Shaivya miss:

The evil king's demand Krishna attends the town palace!  
The message of Akrura.

*Paurna.* Shaivya's shock is awful, dear -  
But I pity Shyamala.

*Vrinda.* What's she say? I didn't hear.

*Paurna.* The horses of Akrura's cart are going to break her heart,  
Their hooves will not just tear the earth, they'll tear her heart apart!  
She cries – Akrura continues to pray to bless the journey,  
The sun proclaims they're leaving as it climbs mercilessly.

*Vrinda.* What sort of prayer is Bhadra making ... ?

*Bhadra.* [*Off-stage.*] How now, my beloved -  
I can see You're getting on the carriage to be seated -  
I have a broken heart - I don't know how my soul stays in it ...

*Paurna.* [*Looking aside.*] Child, Chandravali's still making Krishna a midday chaplet -<sup>109</sup>

Padma's words agonising her ...

*Padma.* [*Off-stage.*] Chandravali, old thing,  
The chaplet won't be done 'til noon, don't you see Krishna leaving?  
Why can't you hear the other gopis' sobs and anguished cries ... ?

*Paurna.* [*Anxious.*] Straight-talking from her friend. It's glazing Chandravali's eyes.

Garland's sliding from her grip and so's her consciousness.

*Vrinda.* Oh, pity Chandravali – Padma can't bear to see this -  
Her friend's collapsed before the car ... !

*Padma.* [*Off-stage.*] Please get up, sorry one!  
Oh, open up your eyes a bit! Akrura won't listen!  
He's going to start the horses ... !

*Paurna.* Child – I cannot see Radha.  
Now I'm very worried.

*Vrinda.* [*Looking aside.*] How d'you think they're going to tell her?  
Vishakha and the others are afraid to tell Radhika.

<sup>109</sup> A small flower garland, usually worn around the head

Can't say the prince is going, and cannot not say either.

Look - stiff as boards. Whispering. Dazed. Picture of confusion.

*Purna.* [*Pained.*] Radha who admires how fishes' eyes are ever open;  
Radha-who-holds-back-Her-blinks when She's beholding Him.

What will happen, Radha? What befalls You now, love-pilgrim?

Fate's about to disappear with Krishna to Mathura.

*Vrinda.* Comes Radhika. Afraid, look – from Her porch. Toward the clamour.

*Purna.* You see – the madness? Divine, but it's madness, I'm afraid -  
Makes sense what Radha's saying? Doubt there's much sense to be made ...

*Radha.* [*Off-stage.*] Well, there's the prince and Rama. Oh, I see a chariot too.  
I'm slipping. Ground's shaking. Why are bur-flowers dancing? What to?

*Purna.* What's Lalita say ... ?

*Lal.* [*Off-stage.*] But Radhika, no need to worry,  
They're going for a spin around the hill, that's all.

*Purna.* I see.

What's my girl's response ... ?

*Radha.* [*Off-stage.*] My friend, I know what's going on.

I know you're very shrewd, so please do not put that look on.

It's fine – I'm not distressed at all, I don't mind Krishna's leaving,

You can see I'm definitely, confidently breathing ...

*Vrinda.* Vishakha's about to speak, good lady ...

*Vishakha.* [*Off-stage.*] He'll be back this evening!

He'll conquer Kamsa, sweetheart, so can You stop worrying?

You're famous for forbearance.

*Purna.* And what's our girl's reaction ... ?

*Radha.* [*Off-stage.*] It's not reassuring – it's fertile imagination,

And flattery. Besides which, twilight time's an age away.

Look at how the carriage wheels are tearing up the highway ...

*Purna.* Shree Krishna's going frightens Her - no composure at all -  
Poor poor Her.

*Vrinda.* Pleas are intense, the tears like raindrops fall -

Right before the car now - eyes intent on Krishna's face;

Begging Rama - who'd not be shattered? Who's heart to Her not race?

To witness Radha's state.

*Purna.* [*Teary.*] Before Her dear friends – openly!

Radha, who'll glance at Shree Krishna only in secrecy,

Who hides from prying elders who would make Her die of shame.

Can't bear it. Prince's carriage starts – what pain *His* tears proclaim -

His tearful eyes look just like lotus-flowers dripping nectar.

[*They see Krishna being driven off by Akrura.*]

*Vrinda.* Dear lady, these girls' hearts shall surely follow their hearts' master.

[*They see a note being delivered to the cowherd girls.*]

*Paurna.* He's left a message, Vrinda, look - a letter for their woe -

No doubt to say how many lonesome nights they'll undergo,

And when He'll be returning to enjoy their company.

Krishna holds the gopis' deer-like hearts eternally.

*Vrinda.* Bees won't sup, nor peacocks dance, with Krishna city-bound;

Wails from parting shelduck pairs are going to resound.

[*Paurnamasi starts following the chariot's tracks.*]

*Paurna.* Our Radha's cries are grieving everyone - the earth, even,

These chariot tracks, you see, are scars – the earth, even, is stricken.

*Vrinda.* Krishna leaves and straight away She's a dishevelled mess,

Dashing skittish, laughing, crying – seems resigned to madness -

Rambling away and then it's struck dumb suddenly ...

*Radha.* [*Off-stage.*] Where's My treasure gone? My sapphire prince? Your friend, sakhi?

Where's the maestro of the flute, the festival-day dancer?

We're truly out of luck ...

*Paurna.* Wretched - can't watch any longer.

I have to go.

*Vrinda.* Good lady – I am going to get Mukhara.

[*Exeunt.*]

**[End of prelude.]**

*Enter RADHA, VISHAKHA and LALITA.*

[*A while later.*]

*Radha.* [*Tearful.*] That I didn't banter freely with Him, sakhi – so pathetic;

To've not beheld Shree Krishna's face with steady nerve is tragic.

To've not embraced His grey-blue chest. I just can't stop regretting.

*Vish.* Kanhaiya's coming back. He's said – why're You self-torturing?

Sakhi, we're good friends and You're upsetting us needlessly.

*Radha.* You gopis be content that Krishna cares we miss Him, sakhi;

But I can't bear His going – just the thought tears into Me.

[*Visibly broken.*] Rent apart. Prince's leaving is confounding totally.

Hot poison, or a thunderbolt - a spear would pain me less;

The final throws of cholera'd not bring Me such distress ...

[*Radha cries.*]

*Vrinda.* [*Off-stage to Mukhara.*] Should let Her cry, Mukhara! Our girl is not in control.

Can't help Herself, Shree Krishna is Radhika's life and soul,  
This sharp-as-arrows want of Him is too painful for Her.

*Lal.* [*Looks to off-stage Vrinda.*] Mukhara nearly intervened – thank heaven  
for Vrinda ...

[*Radha spies a shelduck landing.*

*Radha.* Shelduck flying in – oh, yes – yes, I know where you've come from!  
Tell Me - Krishna's drive may well have made Him wearisome -  
Who tends Him? What kind-heart person's wreathing Him in flowers?

*Lal.* Ask the crow in the kadamba tree – he's from here – one of ours.  
But what is more, my good friend, he's leaving for Mathura.

*Radha.* Venerable bird – are you about to leave Gokoola?  
If so, tell the illustrious prince to give Me My release,  
My concern at the moment's that My life's about to cease,  
I'm hurt by burning embers with which Cupid's scorching Me.

[*Radha spies a myna bird.*

Wait – ah, yes, we've some eloquence from Krishna thankfully;  
Now then, myna bird – why, you can tell Me straight away -  
Did our hero smite the tyrant that He travelled to to slay?  
Does He call for a chariot, to return now to His friends? [*Cries.*  
What will the elders think of Me? This hurting never ends;  
How could it? I can't hear His flute – where is His silver tongue?  
No patience at all, will die for being this unstrung -  
Where's My love? I'm simply cursed - Shree Krishna isn't here ...

*Vish.* [*To Lalita.*] Lalita, it's bad, our friend cannot endure, I fear;  
She needs your help – please do something to relieve the poor dear thing.

[*Lalita approaches Radha.*

*Lal.* I suspect, beautiful one. It may be Krishna's teasing;  
You know what He's like – He's been colluding with Akrura!  
How could He leave Vrindavan's groves? I do not think He'd ever.  
'Xpect if we search the forest we will find Him straight away!

*Vish.* Lalita is the voice of reason.

*Radha.* Might be as you say ...

There's no doubt we should look, friends.

[*The three of them start searching Vrindavan forest and after some time come  
across deer.*

Why, these creatures have seen Him!

Hearts all stolen by Krishna – fact each deer here's a victim;  
Been addled by the flute, that's why they barely chew the grass.

[*Walking on they come across peacocks.*

[*Laughs.*] No beating round the bush, peahens – let there be no impasse!

Which grove? Where's Kanhaiya hid? It *is* His spell you're under!  
I know you love His fluting even more than monsoon thunder.

*[Vishakha finds a gunja berry necklace.*

*Vish.* Berry necklace by the pool, indeed!<sup>110</sup>

*[Retrieving the necklace, Radha breathes in its fragrance.*

*Radha.* How very pretty!

Beads of Krishna's chest that mirror Krishna's splendid jewellery;  
So, how is it you end up lying on this arbour floor?

*Lal.* Not looking where we are, look – we're near Chandravali's door -  
Come a fair way.

*Radha.* You mean our Chandravali, Vishakha?  
Prince adores Chandravali – I've never got to know her;  
I've wanted to do so.

*Vish.* No surprise – isn't that easy,  
Her grandmother Karala has her locked at home, generally.

*Radha.* I shall offer prayers then to the god who rules our hill;  
The good hill before us.

*[Walking towards the hill, she sees her own reflection in glassy quartz and  
thinks it is Chandravali.<sup>111</sup>*

*[To Vishakha.]* Why're you lying to Me still!

Chandravali's here, Vishakha!

*[Walking on, she questions Her own reflection.*

The lost prince here, sakhi?

Your friend with the flute, whose plumes are never fitted safely?  
Enjoying nature's beauty, and yet looking secretive ... ?

*Echo.* *[Off-stage.]* Enjoying nature's beauty, and yet looking secretive ...

*[She hears an echo of Her last line.*

Repeating back My words!

*[She hurries on.*

In which case Radha's going to live!

Chandravali is always with the Prince, embracing tightly!

Scented by His flower-earrings perfumed so fragrantly!

Time to place those scented slender arms of hers round Me ...

*[Radha goes to embrace what she thinks is Chandravali.*

*Lal.* You're reflecting, sakhi. Ledge of quartz – no Chandravali.

*Radha.* *[Checking.]* What you say is true ...

*[Pressing on delusionally, She thinks She has spotted Krishna.*

*[Laughing.]* In any case, I shan't expire!

<sup>110</sup> = Radha Kund

<sup>111</sup> Radha and Chandravali look similar. They are sisters

Lalita, right ahead's peacock-plumed crowned Prince Kanhaiya!  
By looks of it, those shining girls are giving Him embraces!

[Checks again and is dismayed.]

No beloved. Rainbow and a cloud ... with lightening traces...

[Faints.]

*Lal./Vish.* It's alright, sakhi – come now!

[Radha comes round.]

*Radha.*

Indeed - our hill's for Him!

These slopes are My Lord's, He lives upon and in them.

[Pitifully.] Hill, let Me see inside your cave wherein there may be Krishna,  
There is no other way at all to stop this angst I suffer.

[Listens.] No answer. Think the waterfall is Mount Govardhan's tears.

[Prays.] Dear Govardhan mountain, you touch the sky – so it appears;  
Scan everywhere and tell Me do, where Gokool's prince has gone?

[Takes a few steps.]

[To Lalita.] Krishna set a peacock feather in My hair here, fair one;  
Beneath this bur-flower dripping nectar ...

[Noting a cave.]

And cave of jasmine.

This jasmine by the entrance – memories are flooding in;  
The trouble is, they make Me lose the will to live, sakhi.

[Despondent.] So many groves and forest nooks have been searched  
thoroughly;

Whole banyan wood, sakhi – and every inch of Krishna's hill!

No hint, not yet the slightest trace of your friend's perfume, still!

*Lal.* Been outfoxed before when Krishna's hidden in the forest.

Don't need to be despondent, friend.

*Radha.* [Pressing ahead.] Lalita – you don't jest!

I see Akrura on the golden carriage with the prince!

Well, I'll make sure the prince gets down!

[Getting closer She realises She is again mistaken..]

But nothing's making sense!

No prince and golden carriage – golden flowers and one dark tree;

Not Akrura at all, friend, 'tis a tiger that I see!

Everything different from what, first off, it seems to be.

[Faints.]

*Vish.* [Urgently.] I'll get flowers, Lalita, and you fan Her with your saree ...

[Exit.]

*Paurna.* [Off-stage.] Aggrieved at Radha's plight, Govardhan Hill is losing  
height,

Great lake<sup>112</sup> beside it's drying up ...

[Radha is revived.

Radha. [Talking to Herself.] Radha – come on! Must fight!<sup>113</sup>  
All this useless orthodoxy – less piety, sakhi!  
Time's now!

[Sighing, Lalita bows her head in despair at Radha's madness.  
There's Kanhaiya's bells – oh, indeed, Radha sakhi!

Right in the grove now, silly-

[Lalita falls at Radha's feet.

Bumble-bee jasmine arbour!

[She has to avoid Lalita.

Mind Your friend as You go, release Your pride – and go with Krishna!

Lal. I can't take any more!

[Lalita cries.

Re-enter VISHAKHA.

Vish. [Flurried.] Lalita, what's wrong? Hold steady!

[Radha realises who it was she was avoiding.

Radha. [Surprised.] But, it's you, Lalita sakhi!

Lal. [Choked.] It is.

Radha. It's Radha! Me!

The girl who foolishly forgets the flowers for Krishna's ears!

I shall get the jasmine!

[Radha nears some jasmine flowers.

The buds are wilting, it appears;

Blossom fallen, desiccated – how the petals darken;

What is going on in Krishna's Forest of Vrindavan?

Lal./Vish. [Seeing the state of the jasmine.] Like a wildfire's torched the tender  
jasmine in the arbour!

Radha. I'm burning up inside Myself for self-same fire, Lalita!

Is Your friend behind us? Temperature's higher and higher ...

His eyes must be on Us – He whose glance sets things on fire!

Lal. No stopping. Let's continue, friend.

[Lowring of cows.

Radha. [Avid.] Now that means Krishna's near!

Cows stone's throw away.

[Going ahead, Radha sees the cows.

<sup>112</sup> = Manasi-ganga

<sup>113</sup> Radha, in her madness, is telling herself the only thing holding her back from seeing Krishna is Her obligation to being seen as a righteous person

[*Anxious.*] What's this? No eye without a tear?  
None grazing grass, no nuzzling - they look awfully perplexed;  
The lowing's right disturbing, Krishna's herd is very vexed ...

*Paurna.* [*Off-stage.*] May Krishna slay King Kamsa who has made the girls  
all suffer!

The gasping cowherd damsels writhe like fish deprived of water;  
Awful – what will become of them if Krishna stays away ... ?

[*Hearing this, Radha faints.*

*Lal.* It's going to be alright, sakhi.

[*Opening Her eyes, Radha looks to the sky.*  
Sun-god, bless Us today;

*Radha.*

Please give Radha what She wants.

*Vish.* [*Also prayerful.*] Counting on the sun-god's grace.

[*They reach the banks of the Yamuna River.*

*Radha.* [*Distracted.*] It was the prince's presence made this such a gorgeous  
place.

Now grief's the only thing I feel here by the river way.

*Lal.* But nonetheless, it is a very perfect place to pray;  
The river goddess, after all's, the sun-god's favourite daughter.

*Radha.* [*Distraught.*] But, Kanhaiya - You fired our love, and You'll do so  
forever!

We're suffering, where's Your embrace when we gopis so miss You?  
Why aren't You here?

*Lal.* [*To river.*] O River Goddess – direction is due.

Please tell us news of Krishna, dear good daughter of the sun!

*Radha.* You grace your lovely banks with forest-groves second to none;  
It's you provide His flower-dens, O goddess. [*Faints.*

*Vish.* Lalita!

What She needs is Krishna's garland's perfume to revive Her.

[*Lalita and Vishakha lift Krishna's garland to Radharani's nose.*

*Radha.* [*Revived at length.*] Lalita! What a dreadful dream. So bad – I'm so  
upset;

It really seemed was happening, sakhi! The thought of it!

Some herald from Mathura turns up here in Vrindavan;

Gets Krishna on his carriage ... [*Breaks off.*] pray joy here's never broken.

A swim, and thence to Krishna! And be off with you, nightmare!

*Vish.* Then, to the bathing place,<sup>114</sup> sakhi! Krishna likes to swim there.

[*They proceed.*

<sup>114</sup> = Khela-tirtha

*Re-enter VRINDA with MUKHARA.*

*Mukha.* My dear, what's Radha doing?

*Vrin.*

She's bathing with Vishakha ...

*Radha.* [*Right by the river.*] Here we are at the bathing place par excellence, Vishakha!

The lotuses are Krishna-blue - that's why Krishna's hidden.

Unless He waves His arms at Us.

*Vish.*

In that case, let's go in!

[*Radha and Vishakha wade in, and, watched in horror by Lalita, they submerge under the river's waters.*

[*Exeunt Radha and Vishakha.*

*Lal.* Help! Help us! I'm done for! Ah, Radhika! My Vishakha!

Not coming up! Completely gone! Oh, fie - they're under water!

Here's three, Yamuna River! [*Descends to the water to drown herself.*

*Mukha.* [ *Crying.*] Oh, my days! What's going on!

*Vrinda.* Heaven help! How? How's this happened! Lalita's woebegone!

Catch her quickly, good lady! She's going to go in too!

[*Vrinda and Mukhara go to restrain Lalita who sees them coming for her.*

*Lal.* [*Aside.*] It is unbearably dismal – got to get past these two.

Can't live without my friend – I've got a cliff edge to get to,

And thence to rocks below – this body's final wrecking's due.

[*Concealing her despair.*] \_\_\_ Good lady, let me go! I have to get to Paurnamasi!

It's too awful what has happened – she must know! Do not delay me ...! [*Exit.*

[*There is rumbling in the sky, followed by resounding voices of higher-realm beings.*

*Gods.* [*Off-stage.*] Who can adequately praise young Radharani's nature?

'Tis rare indeed to reach the realm She and Her friend enter -

Their passage to the sun-god's world took less than a moment ...

*Vrin.* Hear that? Oh, noble lady – Radhika is heaven-sent!

There are gods in the clouds!

*Mukha.* [ *Collapsing.*] Oh, child! Radhe, my girl! Where are You?

*Vrin.* But what about Shree Krishna, Radha! What is He to do?

He'll hear about this tale of woe ... thought of it destroys me ...

*Gods.* [*Off-stage.*] Now she who is the soulmate of beloved Radharani,  
Jewel-box of the jewel so adored by Lord Shree Krishna,  
The anguished, the heart-broken and yet beautiful Lalita,  
Has reached the hill-top's plunging cliff and leapt into the air ... !

*Mukha.* How could you leave us! Lalita! [*Wavering.*] You have left us  
nowhere!

Only thing's the river, Vrinda. Cooling down ... [*Makes to enter the water.*

*Gods.* [*Off-stage.*] Stay grandam!

Don't do what you're doing!

*Vrin.* Divine words – don't disobey them!

Good lady!

*Mukha.* Yes, alright ... I'll take the news to Purnamasi.

[*Resounding in the sky.*

My dear, I couldn't hear – what did the clouds just say to me?

*Vrin.* They spoke for the sun-god – he who's loved by lotuses;  
God who reunites love-birds<sup>115</sup> has just made clear his wishes:  
Forbidden you to drown yourself. 'Don't drown, lady!' he said,  
It's guaranteed you won't want miss the happy times ahead!

[*Exeunt.*

---

<sup>115</sup> = shelducks

*Act IV**A While With Radha.***[Prelude.***Mathura.*<sup>116</sup> *Near a playhouse.**Enter* UDDHAVA.

*Udd.* He who the wise revere's, become someone who's lost the clue;  
 The most capable of all finds little tasks hard to do!  
 The ebullient, radiant youth appears to be so solemn.  
 How Krishna's so deeply attached to those attached to Him!

*[Sees Nandi.*

Nandi is here! *[Approaches.]* My deep regards, dear lady.

*Enter* NANDIMUKHI.

*Nandi.* *[Paying him respects.]* Counsellor!<sup>117</sup>  
 May you keep advocating for Krishna-love forever!

*Udd.* You came from Gokool to see Lord Krishna's coronation!<sup>118</sup>  
 No doubt Rama's mother's with you, I do hope, good woman?

*Nandi.* *[Surprised.]* We're here for young Rama and young Krishna's  
 graduation!<sup>119</sup>  
 Just Yashoda and I ...

*Udd.* Why then, you missed the sensation!  
 Shree Krishna was incredible, ma'am!

*Nandi.* Let the scene be drawn!

*Udd.* To honest chakra love-bird<sup>120</sup> folk, was celebrative dawn,  
 Fire-fly demon-glimmer waned, the owlsh wrestlers shook;  
 Rogue elephant *Night Lotus Foe* (well-named)<sup>121</sup> to long sleep took;  
 Sun-like Krishna rose from the city arena's East;  
 And slew the black-night demon-king who writhed as he deceased.

*Nandi.* What then?

<sup>116</sup>

Aka, Madhura. in Uttar Pradesh, India

<sup>117</sup> = Uddhava<sup>118</sup> Having slain King Kamsa (Krishna's uncle), Krishna inherited his throne<sup>119</sup> This is the sacred thread ceremony that was due because Krishna and Rama had reached a specific age<sup>120</sup> Chakra birds (Shelducks) are reunited by the dawn light<sup>121</sup> Well-named because it was active at night, and feared by night-lotuses in danger of being trampled

*Udd.* Shree Krishna's grandstanding about the town's arena!  
 Brandishing the tusk of the unconscious ancient tusker;  
 Dotted with fine sprinkles of its blood and musth and sweat;  
 As if by aloe, sandal and saffron He'd been beset!  
 To see Him thus, induced a host of singular impressions,  
 Ten effects He had, on ten disparate-natured persons,  
 Chief-demons were appalled, and doughty wrestlers perplexed,  
 His friends became enraptured, top scoundrels all became vexed;  
 Devaki<sup>122</sup> cried, and wise men were transfixed as if in trance;  
 Gods gaped, and all the handmaids there took up a lively dance;  
 Hairs of soldiers bristled, sultry maidens gazed sidewise;  
 Imbibing centre-stage Shree Krishna through their sultry eyes.  
 Like a lion, Krishna'd killed the elephantine demon-king,  
 Like the hero that He is, He'd sent the mighty wrestlers packing.  
 All throughout, His lovely garland never even slipped.

*Nandi.* No tears for a monster from whom savagery dripped;  
 All good folk are pleased. Mentor – my Purnamasi's lucky -  
 Always around to witness Krishna's feats of bravery!

*Udd.* She is, although I dare say her son's even more lucky;  
 Krishna went to the school of her dear son Sandipani!

*Nandi.* Whose wife had Krishna going fetching kindling for her fire!  
 When Krishna can fulfil any and anyone's desire!  
 Why, who prays to touchstone<sup>123</sup> for a palm of sesame seed!

*Udd.* But Krishna was just showing how a student should proceed;  
 No fault on the dear lady's part at all, Nandi.

*Nandi.* Good point;  
 And when Krishna paid His student-dues He did not disappoint;  
 He managed to redeem His teacher's lost boy Madhumangal;  
 Saved him from the nether-world, I hear.

*Udd.* I heard as well;  
 Doing so He certainly well-gratified his teacher;  
 But gained a dear friend too, young lad of wit and pleasant banter;  
 Who also lived in lovely Gokool district, actually.

*Nandi.* Ah, you've been to Gokool, then?

*Udd.* I have.<sup>124</sup>

*Nandi.* What for exactly?

*Udd.* I went to find Chandravali.

<sup>122</sup> Krishna's real mother is Devaki, the wife of Vasudeva. Yashoda, queen of Gokoola, is Krishna's foster-mother

<sup>123</sup> Touchstone fulfils all desires

<sup>124</sup> This refers to Uddhava's celebrated visit to solace the gopis before Vrindavan was 'abandoned'. It is narrated in the Srimad Bhagavatam (Bhagavat Purana)

*Nandi.* I see, and she's not there?

*Udd.* [*Moved to tears.*] Her estranged brother Rukmi took her to Kundern, I fear;

She's gone.

*Nandi.* He knew that Chandravali was in Gokoola?

How?

*Udd.* Shishupal – his friend.

*Nandi.* How did he know?

*Udd.* [*Despairing.*] Knew from his mother.

*Nandi.* I must have been careless with the secrets of Gokoola ...

'Xpect she heard me speaking at our recent get-together.<sup>125</sup>

*Udd.* You can't be blamed, good lady - destiny's a pesky meddler; Especially in our case.

*Nandi.* You don't say! Fate helped out Rukmi - No one interfered when he kidnapped our Chandravali!

*Udd.* No one there to help her. Everybody's in Mathura - Krishna. Gokool villagers. Her husband might have helped her; Had he not have borne such animosity for Shree Krishna; Anyway, he's done for now – her husband was a wrestler.

*Nandi.* What of Padma and the others? Any joy in their case?

*Udd.* Gokool's king advised them to return to their birthplace; He had to, once their fathers found out where their daughters were; With the assistance of the all-seeing sage Narada - Your Padma's now with Nagnajit, Shyamal's with King Madresh, Kekayaraja took Bhadra, and Shaivyva's in Shaivyadesh.

*Nandi.* Did the rest of all the gopis keep praying to goddess Durga?

*Udd.* [*Teary.*] One day those poor girls arrived to pray down by the river, And mid-prayers got confronted by a lecherous arch-demon; Sixteen thousand one hundred young cowherd girls were taken!

*Nandi.* [*Aggrieved.*] Has Lord Krishna heard about this?

*Udd.* No, not everything; Best not.

*Nandi.* What's it He hasn't heard?

*Udd.* About the gopis leaving; Sixteen thousand one hundred and eight girls resided there; And all of them are gone.

*Nandi.* He has not had a thought to spare; Loss of Radha's thrown Him in an ocean of despair.

<sup>125</sup> Shishupal's mother is the sister of Krishna's father Vasudeva. When Vasudeva was released after being wrongly imprisoned, there was a family reunion

*Udd.* It's a fact, my dear – the Lord's beside himself, He is;  
But, Purnamasi's found a way to rid this woe of His.

*Nandi.* Do tell.

*Udd.* A unique play – the playwright Bharata<sup>126</sup> wrote it;  
And Narad briefed Tumburu<sup>127</sup> how the angels should perform it.

[*Nandi sees angel-actors arriving.*]

*Nandi.* Angels? Must indeed be them – bright shining beings there!  
And Purnamasi's talking to them.

[*They see Krishna entering the playhouse.*]

*Udd.* Who's mounting the stair?  
Lord Krishna's here to see the show with Madhumanagala;  
Through the playhouse<sup>128</sup> door He goes.

*Nandi.* Must run and get Mukhara!

*Udd.* I'll help Purnamasi lead the angel-actors in.

[*Exeunt.*]

[*End of Prelude.*]

*Inside the 'ruby' playhouse.*

*Enter KRISHNA and MADHUMANGALA.*

*Krishna.* [*Downcast.*] Enchanting. Brilliant. Fair-eyed. The treasure of  
Vrindavan.

Fairest of all. Blessed. Oh, Radha - whatever happened?  
How's fate dealt one so full of grace this mean and tragic hand?

*Madhu.* [*Encouraging.*] I vouch elusive Radha's, going to turn up, my dear  
friend.

*Krishna.* How I do wish, sakhe – this missing Her haunts Me no end.  
Can't forget the sun-god's divine news to old Mukhara;  
She too would have drowned had he not spoken to comfort Her;  
That sky-borne message buds in Me a shoot sharp as a blade;  
A shoot of hope that knifes My heart - sharpness I can't evade.

[*Is quiet for a moment, and relives His departure from Vrindavan.*]

Akrura's there, about to go – his reins tight at the ready -  
Girlfriends were trying to stop Her, but Her mind was too unsteady;  
She wanted to destroy that car and railed piteously!  
Though My beauty cried, somehow there was no mercy in Me;

<sup>126</sup> The sage Bharata wrote the definitive handbook on Vedic theatre called 'Natyashastra'

<sup>127</sup> A famous actor from heaven

<sup>128</sup> This playhouse is named The Ruby Theatre

And I went on – I didn't stop or slow down even slightly.

*Enter PLAYHOUSE DIRECTOR & actors followed by UDDHAVA, PAURANAMASI and MUKHARA.*

*Udd.* My Lord, You've here a fine, angelic acting company!

*Krishna.* Director - let the good work of your expert team begin!

*[Krishna, et al, get seated.]*

*Playhouse D.* *[From stage.]* Much is said about the soft, enchanting glance of Radha;

Its power's too clear – for by it She's in control of Krishna;

That's why the Lord has crowned Her the supreme goddess divine ...

*Krishna.* *[Moved.]* Indeed the way to start. Good lines – stirs this poor heart of Mine.

*Playhouse D.* *[To Paurnamasi.]* Good lady, I'm appointed by sage Narada of heaven,

We aim to please Lord Krishna with a play that's newly written.

*Enter PLAYHOUSE LALITA onto the playhouse stage, wearing a garland.*

*Playhouse L.* *[Out of character.]* And how's the play affect that, sir?

*Playhouse D.* We hope  
we'll transport Him!

To ferry Krishna to Gokoola – 'tis the purpose of it.

By name 'A While With Radha' – master-work of a poet.

Introduction, if you please!

*Playhouse L.* Sir - 'ccording to which season?

*Playhouse D.* Why, the beauty of your garland is the answer to that question!

Straight out of banks of jasmine - and, of course, we hear the cuckoo:

The mellifluous singing she's well-qualified to do!

Yes – banyan tree's without its leaves - a brilliant light pale!

So, Spring is here, my sprite – and all these splendours tell the tale.

*Playhouse L.* Though The Spring vine's found around the rough coarse shami

tree;

The bee's un-phased and loves the Spring vine uncondition'lly.

*Playhouse D.* Oh, very good, my dear – brava! A clever introduction!

Though in-laws might bind Radha with this or that restriction,

The happiness of Krishna's never subject to disruption.

[*Exeunt Playhouse Director and Playact Lalita.*]

*Enter PLAYHOUSE KRISHNA onto the playhouse stage.*

*Playhouse K.* How perfectly these pleasant breezes companion the season;

These happy birds and bees tell Me Vrindavan forest's smiling;

'Deed, meeting Radha here, I think My bliss would be unending,

Oceanic – the blissful rollers surging in and foaming ...

*Madhu.* [*Chuckling.*] Good show! Bravo Narada and his lively angel friends!  
My favourite comrade's double! Why, those features are my friend's!

*Udd.* [*Amazed.*] Dark actor is amazing – berry necklace, ruby-bright,

A hand so like a lotus one might second-guess one's sight -

Flute looks like a lily-fowl ensconced in petal fingers -

And, oh! Now here's a welcome breeze – look how His plume crown shimmers!

*Krishna.* [*Enthralled.*] How's he do it? Actor seems to imitate exactly;  
I'm looking at this cowherd boy and think that he is Me!

His beauty's hypnotising - My dear friend, I'll tell you this;

The cowherdresses have it right – to miss it *is* remiss.<sup>129</sup>

[*To Uddhava.*] I've really got to know, sir – how's he do the mimicry?

This phenomenal impression's fully bewildered Me!

*Udd.* Narada's behind it, Lord – got passion for Your service;

That bard so loves You, gracious Lord, he had to direct this.

*Krishna.* [*Puzzled.*] Am I acting on the stage, or am I watching from the crowd?

This stage-craft magic's skewed My bearings like a smoky cloud ...

*Playhouse K.* I'm an intoxicated bee – there's no containing Me;

My patience uncontainable as nectar round here's drippy!

Buds tell Me for joy to bloom I need My love's company,

<sup>129</sup> This desire of Krishna's to savour His own attractiveness is the intrinsic aim of Krishna's incarnating as Lord Chaitanya in the Kali yuga. Lord Chaitanya is Krishna Himself, imbued with the sentiments of Radha

And so I'll call Lalita with a flute-song-melody.

[Plays His flute.

Bring us Radharani, clever Lalita! Dear one -

Avail us of the radiant girl of lustre like the sun!

[Faltering.] I do so miss your faithful friend – it's in My voice, no less.

Though I've the status of a prince – I beg you, nonetheless ...

*Krishna.* What is impossible for Narad? Knows My very soul!

'Tis a mercy ...

[Sound of anklets.

*Playhouse K.* [Captivated.] Breath's taken – my heart's imprisoned whole!

Close by. Alright. I'm going to slip inside this Spring-flower arbour.

[Exit.

*Enter* PLAYHOUSE RADHA *and* PLAYHOUSE LALITA.

*Playhouse R.* Waves released that female swan from tangle-weed, Lalita,  
And now she'll freely join her partner in the lovely lilies!

*Playhouse L.* [With a smile.] What a lucky swan – go there with good faith, if  
You please!

The male swan stirred the waves by which you got freed with such ease ... <sup>130</sup>

*Krishna.* [Fervently.] My burning, feverish heat of woe had brought Me to My  
knees;

And now, at last – before Me – 'deed to greet My loving sighs -

The swan-like darling of My heart with swan-lake lotus eyes.

[*Krishna rises, fully intending to embrace Playhouse Radha, but is prevented  
by Uddhava.*

*Udd.* A play, my Lord! Play's all it is!

*Krishna.* [Calmed. Abashed.] But She's so beautiful!

All praise for moons will end now that her face is visible.

Glance merry as a tipsy doe, an agile brow to slay;

<sup>130</sup> Allegorically, Radha is free of the vigilance of her mother-in-law (tangle weed) by the waves of love generated by Krishna

This artist throws My patience in the same way as Radhe.

*Mukha.* My granddaughter Radhika lives! [*Presses forward.*

*Paurna.* [*Catches Mukhara by her sari.*] But look again and see:  
It's acting - it's an angel actor, friend!

*Mukha.* [*Teary.*] Oh, dear lady -  
Imagined Radhika was somehow back here from the sun;  
That perhaps these angels fetched Her from up there in heaven ... <sup>131</sup>

*Playhouse R.* Thanks for bringing me from home to gather flowers, Lalita,  
I do believe our leaving there was noticed by Mukhara.

*Playhouse L.* Of course Mukhara noticed You – so did old Jatila ...

*Mukha.* [*Choked.*] I was bad! My poor child – it was wrong to make You  
suffer.

*Madhu.* [*Nettled.*] What's the point in affecting soft-heartedness, old tiger -  
I couldn't pass your garden fence and not come under fire.

*Mukha.* How's it my fault, Madhu, my boy, if I wasn't clued in?  
Paurnamasi should have ...

*Playhouse R.* Let's assume that we were seen, then.  
What is the best plan, sakhi?

*Playhouse L.* That is easy to figure;  
We'll walk under the bur-flowers 'long the path beside the river!  
Skip the main road.

[*They walk along the riverbank.*

*Playhouse R.* Friend, these noisy foot-bells are a nuisance;  
I shouldn't wear them.

*Playhouse L.* Yes, poor strategy's Jatila's chance ...

*Enter PLAYHOUSE JATILA.*

*Playhouse J.* [*Looking about.*] No sign of Radharani – not sure which way  
this search goes.

[*Observing the path, she's inspired.*

<sup>131</sup> The sun planet is a heavenly realm. Its inhabitants have bodies suited to exist there

Ha! Footprints! Tell-tale branding by the rings upon Her toes!  
My daughter-in-law's on the path less travelled, it would seem.

*[She follows the riverbank.]*

*Playhouse R.* Sakhi – I've got to tell you My extraordinary dream.

*Playhouse L.* Indeed, my friend.

*Playhouse R.* You were picking flowers in a clove bower,  
And suddenly a rogue who was concealed in forest cover;  
Takes you by the hand, and goes and bites you on the lip!  
As if that weren't enough, next, he's your clove flowers in his grip...

*[Playhouse Radha bows Her head.]*

*Playhouse L.* *[Smiling.]* My love, the dream You had was absolutely about  
You!

Sleeping while I adorned your breast, Your vision came in view.  
A rogue You saw, for sure! Your dream's startling in content!  
An occasion, though – please tell me more of how it went,  
It must have been at the expense of dignified dress-sense?

*Playhouse R.* *[Aside.]* Sly-boots keeps seeing through Me. *[Frowns.]* \_\_\_\_ It's  
time you give Me credence!  
Always cynical.

*[Playhouse Jatila see a swan leave the river and head into the forest.]*

*Playhouse J.* Aha! A good swan - direct the way!  
Lured from the stream by ankle bells, into the woods you stray.  
Girl's close ...

*Udd.* *[In audience.]* Old thing's quick ... !

*Playhouse L.* *[Aside.]* Krishna's in this tulsi-bower.<sup>132</sup>

*Enter* PLAYHOUSE KRISHNA *and* PLAYHOUSE VRINDA.

*Playhouse K.* *[Scanning environs.]* There's is no other joy compares with

<sup>132</sup> = bower of holy basil

meeting Radhika;  
 Times any joy a thousandfold, and it does not match this -  
 Why, even the prospect of it gets Me locked into bliss ...

*Krishna.* [*Turns to Paurnamasi.*] Narad made this work of joy due to merciful  
 you;  
 My beautiful Gokool – your show transports Me there anew ... !

*[Playhouse Radha sees Playhouse Krishna.*

*Playhouse R.* [*Aside.*] For this, My eyes as thirsty as chakoras craving  
 moonlight;  
 Only the moon-rays of Your face – nought else can halt their plight.  
*[Abashed, Playhouse Radha behaves as if Playhouse Lalita tricked Her into  
 meeting Playhouse Krishna.*

*[Frowning.]* \_\_\_ Clever, Lalita – tricking a decent girl like Me.  
*[Playhouse Radha sniffles affectedly.*

*Playhouse L.* Destiny is what it is - nothing I can do, sakhi.

*Playhouse K.* [*Enchanted.*] With lotus-eyes brushing the boundaries of dainty  
 ears;  
 Curves that the gorgeous goddess Rambhoru's beauty fears,<sup>133</sup>  
 And stance to found the arching of the bow-like brows She bends,  
 The king of Radha's town named Girlhood's reign verily ends.

*Playhouse L.* Who'd not adore the way He's poised - head little to the side?<sup>134</sup>  
 How in such sidelong looks endearing messages abide;  
 My friend, right before You here's felicity-in-person;  
 Why, His flute-playing and handsome brow've made You His, fair one ... !  
*[Playhouse Jatila sees the two friends.*

*Playhouse J.* There's my honest daughter-in-law. [*Approaching.*] Goodness  
 me, Lalita!  
 My son Abhimanyu out too - quite the tryst-arranger!

<sup>133</sup> Rambhoru is a famously beautiful goddess

<sup>134</sup> A relaxed, three-fold bending stance Krishna often adopts

Lead Her off when no one's in – this young bride? Odd to me!

*Playhouse L. [Aside.]* Trouble-making, mean old bird – it's outright plain unlucky!

\_\_\_\_ Nandi said tulsi flowers are what we need today, good lady;  
For honouring the sun-god so that we receive his mercy;  
May grant us a hundred cows, or more – a thousand, maybe.  
And so I brought Radhika to this tulsi grove with me.  
You understand me, surely?

*[Playhouse Jatila sets about trying to stir ill-feeling between the friends.]*

*Playhouse J. [To Playhouse Lalita.]* Child - Radha's maligning you;  
She says Lalita's always coaxing Her to rendezvous;  
It's what She tells my son, indeed! I do regret, it's true ...

*[Playhouse Lalita finds this amusing.]*

Something funny?<sup>135</sup>

*Playhouse L. [Aside.]* The old weasel! Jatila-the-shrew!

*Playhouse K. [Aside.]* Get attached to something fine, and something's guaranteed:

Strong resistance! Saying goes - big meddlers intercede.

*[Playhouse Krishna regards Playhouse Radha sidewise as He approaches, startling Playhouse Jatila, who touches the tip of her nose to signal disapproval, and lets fly.]*

*Playhouse J.* Young viper! Who're You about to strike?

*Playhouse K.* Your noble ladyship!

Gokoola's demoness of pendant top and bottom lip ...

*[Uddhava smiles.]*

*Krishna.* The chides of Gokool's biddies are pure music to My ears;  
Sweeter than a saint's psalm, friend – it's music nothing nears ... !

*Playhouse V.* But, honoured lady, Shree Krishna sustains what's good and true;

He's the shining moonlight for the chakora-of-virtue!

You can't call Him a viper.

*Playhouse J. [Ironically.]* Oh, no – we should glorify Him!

Gokool's prince toying with wives – for this, all ought commend Him!

Praise be to heaven, He so loves well brought up, fair young ladies!

<sup>135</sup> Playhouse Jatila is trying to sow dissent

Won't let them go – no, sir! See, once He commandeers His beauties,  
They're subdued, knowing well, He's razor-nails to make them wince!

*Playhouse R.* [*Aside.*] Dear gods, you're punishing Me – why? I don't know  
My offence.

*Playhouse J.* Naïve girl, this serpent's gaze would discompose King Indra,<sup>136</sup>  
What might it do to You who are more fragile than a flower?  
We'll get You home. Come come!

[*Exeunt Playhouse Radha, Playhouse Lalita and Playhouse Jatila.*

*Playhouse V.* Young master – You needn't feel low!  
Your desire will come true for I've a plan that's set to go!  
My myna bird will put Lalita fully in the picture;  
All You have to do is take Your lead from our Vishakha.

[*Exit.*

*Playhouse K.* [*Despondent.*] Was melting like a moonstone with the Radha-  
moon in sight,

Jatila's like a moon-traumatising Rahu-blight!<sup>137</sup>

[*Sighs.*] I expect Vishakha's near Jatila's trumpet-flower yard.

[*Heads towards Playhouse Jatila's house.*

Abhimanyu's home already – standing in the courtyard!  
Best withdraw a moment.

[*Exit.*

*Enter PLAYHOUSE ABHIMANYU.*

*Playhouse A.* Those three hundred cows will cost me;  
I can't believe Mama's not home. She's got all the gold money!

*Re-enter PLAYHOUSE JATILA.*

*Playhouse J.* [*Raised spirits.*] Vrinda's myna-bird's nice diction - cannot keep  
a secret!

So ... dressed as Abhimanyu, Krishna's due to pay a visit ...

This I want to see.

[*A few yards on, she spies Playhouse Abhimanyu at her house door.*

The scoundrel's come indeed, by Vishnu!

I've got to have some witnesses!

[*Exit.*

*Playhouse A.* Vishakha? Where are you?

<sup>136</sup> = king of the heavenly realm

<sup>137</sup> Rahu is a malefic planet that sometimes eclipses the moon

*Re-enter* PLAYHOUSE LALITA.

*Playhouse L.* [*Aside.*] Vishakha's helping Krishna with the myna-bird's say-so.<sup>138</sup>

[*Nervous.*] Vishakha's not here, master ...

*Re-enter* PLAYHOUSE JATILA *with* PLAYHOUSE NANDI, PLAYHOUSE KUNDALATA *and* PLAYHOUSE BHARUNDA.

*Playhouse J.* Behold – the honest fellow!  
Your fine friend, Kundalata!

*Playhouse Kund.* [*Hangs her head. Aside.*] May the good earth swallow me!

*Playhouse B.* There He is. My word. It is your Krishna, my dear Nandi!  
Clever amorist is making out He's Abhimanyu!

Won't catch out my friend Jatila with this half-baked to-do!

*Playhouse J.* Chance to be put things straight, Nandi! Time we identify Him.

[*Approaching her son from behind, she yanks him by the arm.*

Pesterer of Gokool-girls! Looter! Think that You'd fool Me!?

Jatila's going to think that You're her son, eh? Not likely!

[*Embarrassed, Playhouse Abhimanyu backs away, shielding his face.*

You hide Your face, enticer – why? Routine's not that convincing?

[*Playhouse Jatila forcefully faces him.*

*Playhouse A.* [*Aside.*] Good grief! Poor mama's gone mad. Worse than  
excruciating!

I'm gone.

[*He starts to get away but Playhouse Jatila swiftly catches his sleeve.*

*Playhouse J.* Oh, but, I have you, thief! And you can't make a break!

*Playhouse A.* [*Perplexed, he is reigned back in.*] Bharunda, Mama's  
possessed! Ghost-ridden!

[*Recognising him, the others laugh.*

*Playhouse J.* [*Peering into her son's face. Aside.*] Terrible mistake!

My son took leave – wherefore he's back?

[*Exit shamefaced, beating her chest.*

*Playhouse B.*  
Imagining you're Krishna – crazy!

My boy, your mother's barmy;

[*Playhouse Abhimanyu smiles.*

*Playhouse Kund.* Abhimanyuji -<sup>139</sup>  
Radhika's a good, kind clever girl without a flaw;

<sup>138</sup> Vishakha is helping Krishna to get disguised as Abhimanyu

<sup>139</sup> To add 'ji' to the end of someone's name shows respect

So virtuous, your mother's now become Her mother-in-law;  
Need Purnamasi's help here – would do well that we inform her;  
Your mother's antics make for rather curious dance-theatre.

*[Exeunt Playhouse Bharuda, Playhouse Nandi and Playhouse Kundalata.*

*Playhouse A.* Lalita, please fetch mama – I'd like to get a move on!

*Playhouse L.* Sir, the lady is mortified – can't bear to face her son.

*Playhouse A.* Fine, I will get the gold myself. I really must press on ...

*[Exit.*

*Krishna. [To Uddhava.]* These actors know their trade, My man, I'm in seventh heaven ...

*Re-enter PLAYHOUSE VRINDA.*

*Playhouse V.* Lalita, go quickly! Look, he's coming back! Get going!  
It's livid Abhimanyu!<sup>140</sup>

*Playhouse L. [Hesitating.]* Same time as my heart's racing,  
The sight of him's so pleasing a suspicion dawns on me -  
It's Shree Krishna impersonating Abhimanyuji!

*Playhouse V. [Gratified.]* How do you suspect that's so, Lalita? Oh – I see!  
This Abhimanyu's glowing – like a sunset cloud, is He,  
His face – ah, yes - eyes deeply set, his nose – the perfect shape,  
He ambles in the grand style sporting pinkish<sup>141</sup> clothes and cape,  
A good disguise, but his own splendour's giving Him away!

*Re-enter PLAYHOUSE KRISHNA disguised as Playhouse Abhimanyu.*

*Playhouse K.* Now's my chance to see my gentle Radha properly;  
Behold She whose eyes go flashing everywhere and nowhere.  
*[Sees Playhouse Lalita.]* Your friend is My life-tonic, Lalita, I bid you - share!  
*Playhouse L.* Sakhi Radhe! Here a moment!

*Re-enter PLAYHOUSE RADHA.*

*Playhouse R. [Bashfully smiles at Playhouse Krishna's disguise. Aside.]* No difference to Me;

<sup>140</sup> Playhouse Vrinda already knows who it is

<sup>141</sup> Literally, bamboo-flower coloured

Shiva's wife loved Shiva soused on bitter poison-sea!<sup>142</sup>

This unexpected blessing's welcome very readily!

*Playhouse K.* Oh, Lalita – my priceless treasure has come back to me!

*Playhouse L.* Long's the old crone's at bay ...

Re-enter PLAYHOUSE JATILA.

*Playhouse J.*

[*Delighted.*] Rare model of discretion!

My child - how righteous you are seeking my boy's protection.

[*Everyone's astonished.*

Abhimanyu, darling, I can't see well in the evening.

[*Playhouse Krishna is delighted to be mistaken for Playhouse Abhimanyu, and replies in Playhouse Abhimanyu's voice.*

*Playhouse K.* Mother, I've a salve that promotes perfect<sup>143</sup> night-time seeing.

*Krishna.* You set Me on the shore of Gokool's sea of happiness, sir.

Thank you, counsellor!

*Playhouse J.* [*Gratified.*] What did you need me for, my dear?

*Playhouse V.* To take your leave for paying His respects to goddess Durga; Evening's the best time to gain the cowherd-blessor's<sup>144</sup> favour.

*Playhouse K.* [*As Playhouse Abhimanyu.*] My bride is not for gong to the shrine-grove with me, Mother.

*Playhouse J.* Be pleased to review the situation, daughter Radha: Accompany Your good husband!

*Playhouse R.* [*Aside.*] How very strange fate is ...

\_\_\_ Little shaken, Lalita - that's all the problem is;

Please let my mother-in-law know.

*Playhouse J.* Saintly – indeed You are.

*Playhouse K.* [*As Playhouse Abhimanyu.*] Let us do the honours at the sacred bower, Lalita,

We'll use the altar sandal-paste<sup>145</sup> to pacify Radha!

I'll lead the way ...

[*Exeunt.*

<sup>142</sup> A reference to Shiva's drinking an ocean of poison

<sup>143</sup> Literally: 'owl-like'

<sup>144</sup> = goddess Durga

<sup>145</sup> Sandalwood paste is a cooling unguent

*Krishna.* [*Bows to Purnamasi.*] Dear lady – I think I shall catch fire;  
I can't seem to contain Myself – my yearning's ever higher.

*Purna.* [*Aside.*] And so onto Kundern. And the return of Chandravali!  
My excuse will be to see my dear son Sandipani.

*Krishna.* Good lady, with your leave, I wish to retire to the tower.

[*Exeunt.*]

*Act V**Princess Chandravali**Kundeen.*<sup>146</sup> *Purnamasi's quarters.**Enter PAURNAMASI.**[Purnamasi is disturbed to see nobles of questionable character assembling in Kundeen.]**Purna.* These rogues' tents are a blight upon the city of Kundeen...  
Denigrating Krishna's all the rogue-kings do - so mean ...*Narad.* [*Off-stage.*] Lord Krishna, in the heart, is conquered by a little love,  
Then the mystic's secrets and the powers gained thereof,  
No longer seem astonishing – and same goes for the rest -  
The bliss of monists wrapped in bliss, and rewards of the bless'd.*Purna.* Ah, th'expert on the lute – how well he praises his good Lord!  
Bright Narad of the tumbling locks, and perfectly tuned gourd.*Enter NARAD.**Narad.* [*Repeats.*] Lord Krishna, in the heart, is conquered by a little love,  
Then the mystic's secrets and the powers gained thereof,  
No longer seem astonishing – and same goes for the rest -  
The bliss of monists wrapped in bliss, and rewards of the bless'd.*Purna.* Namas te, your grace.*Narad.* And may love for Krishna be with thee!*Purna.* Your grace, but, is it true? Did Krishna leave Mathura city?*Narad.* Lord Krishna's in lush Dvaraka with His kinsmen - by the sea!  
Dealt with two more wretched kings before He made that journey:  
He's finished Kalyavan and Jarasandh the blackguard too.<sup>147</sup>*Purna.* I must admit, I'm sad, your grace – but glad for meeting you.*Narad.* It's well you're named after the moon<sup>148</sup> - you radiate, my dear;  
What then of one named Chandravali?<sup>149</sup> She'll shine too, no fear!*Purna.* [*Teary.*] This town's teaming with Chandravali's foes, your divine  
grace!

---

<sup>146</sup>

Kundeen is in the state of Vidarbha, India

<sup>147</sup> Two arch-enemies of Krishna<sup>148</sup> Purnamasi means the day and night of the full moon<sup>149</sup> Chandravali means 'host of moons'

In view of that, how's Paurnamasi keep a happy face?

*Narad.* Those on our side are strong, dear – and our adversaries are not.

*Paurna.* But, how can I not fret when losing Krishna's been her lot ...

On top of losing Radhika ...

*Narad.* Must miss Radha badly.

*Paurna.* Rukmini loves her sister.

*Narad.* Chandravali's Rukmini?

My.

*Paurna.* Her brother, Rukmi, named her.

*Narad.* [*Aside.*] 'Tis amazing – truly.

Maya's<sup>150</sup> come to the aid of all the young Gokool gopis,

So's not to lose their Krishna, they'll all be noble ladies!<sup>151</sup>

Sixteen thousand one hundred and eight girls - good gracious me ...

Their past's going to become like a dream they recall vaguely:

Well, things are moving quickly on from what they used to be.<sup>152</sup>

Mind boggles. \_\_\_ What's her father's wish?

*Paurna.* Wed Krishna to Rukmini;

To marry her to Krishna.

*Narad.* Well then, why're you in a quandary?

*Paurna.* Her father's stuck with a great deal of pesky opposition.

*Narad.* Her brother Rukmi's up to something?

*Paurna.* Like he's on a mission:

He's determined to please Shishupal, the king of Chedi.

*Narad.* How d'you know, good lady?

*Paurna.* I've his letter to Rukmini.

*Narad.* Read away!

*Paurna.* 'Let love for dashing Shishupal awaken;

The toast of Chedi's kingdom<sup>153</sup> is the ultimate sovereign.'

*Narad.* How did she react?

*Paurna.* I'll read my girl's straightforward answer:

'I love the cowherd sovereign's son, who's youth will last for ever;

Ultimately everyone becomes His worshipper.'

*Narad.* [*Amused.*] Go on.

*Paurna.* The answer was most aggravating for her brother;  
Chandravali's note made Rukmi summon comrade scoundrels!

<sup>150</sup> Maya is the goddess of illusion, aka, Yoga Maya, who enables conditions conducive to the happiness of Krishna and His associates

<sup>151</sup> Narad is able to understand anything merely by deliberating on it. This is by dint of his elevated spirituality

<sup>152</sup> Uddhava's visiting the gopis to placate them, and the gopis' journey to meet Krishna in Kurukshetra (North India) to get Him back, are events which the gopis are beginning to forget under the influence of Maya. The gopis visit to Kurukshetra is the central theme of the Jagannath Rathayatra festival in Puri

<sup>153</sup> Shishupal is the sovereign of Chedi

Now Kunderen's full of barons without conscience and morals,  
I sent word to Lord Krishna through the priest - Sunanda brahman.

*Narad.* Saying?

*Paurna.* Saying come and route the sinful congregation,  
For the princess of Kunderen longs for You very badly.

*Narad.* And so has the priest returned?

*Paurna.* Alas – the luck's with Rukmi.

*Narad.* But you're the mastermind - it's you in charge! Forget Rukmi!

*Paurna.* My efforts have made Rukmi more heartless with his sister!  
He's Durga-worshipping so who *he* wants has his sister!  
It's fortunate the goddess has denied him his request,  
No matter how beseeched she is.

*Narad.* So why was he not blessed?

*Paurna.* Durga let him know his sister's sure to marry Krishna;  
And that Lord Krishna and Vishnu's<sup>154</sup> identities don't differ.

*Narad.* Durga over-ruled the fool!

*Paurna.* Your grace – how is that the case?  
Here we are in Kunderen with scoundrels all o'er the place!  
Krishna and His carrier are miles off - by the sea ... !

*Enter SUNANDA with a letter from Krishna.*

*Suna.* Krishna's with us, noble lady - in Kunderen already!

*Paurna.* Wonderful emissary! Salutations, Sunanda!

*Suna.* Do not praise me yet – I'm not sure you will like His answer.

*Paurna.* Indeed?

*Suna.* Here's His reply. You read what Krishna gave me.

*[Narad takes the letter.]*

*Narad.* 'Only Gokool girls know how to make Shree Krishna happy;  
Their love, and their love alone commands Krishna completely.'

*Paurna.* And Krishna doesn't realise Rukmini's Chandravali?

*Narad.* Didn't make it clear, Sunanda?

*Suna.* Chandravali? Who's she?

*Paurna.* Rukmi's sister in her gopi days was famed as Chandravali;  
Rukmi never liked her being there and kept it secret;  
When he's with his toxic friends, he's very quiet about it.

*Suna.* If he's not told his friends, there's no surprise he's not told me.

*Paurna.* So why *is* Krishna in Kunderen?

*Suna.* For the ceremony!

<sup>154</sup> Vishnu is the God of gods, and also Krishna's incarnation

Prince Kratha and Prince Kaishika-the-pious sent for Him.

*Purna.* And why exactly?

*Suna.* Because Lord Brahma ordered them;

The creator has arranged that Krishna's crowned as emperor:

In following the righteous way those princes are exemplar.

*Purna.* Now that's something I'd like see!

*Suna.* I'm so sorry, dear lady!

The grand event's taken place.

*Purna.* Can you describe it for me?

*Suna.* They sat Him on a splendid throne as gods sang out His praises,

Was very pleased with Shiva - who began the eulogies;<sup>155</sup>

And noble kings anointed Him with balms from splendid urns -

Lord Krishna rules us all from now, in no uncertain terms.

*Narad.* As he promised, Brahma has fulfilled the wish of Vindhya.<sup>156</sup>

*Purna.* Give me leave, your grace – I'll clarify things with Shree Krishna;  
He needs to be advised ...

*Enter STEWARD.*

*Stew.* [*Hotfoot.*<sup>157</sup>] Excuse us honourable lady!

Rukmini's father wants Krishna to kidnap Rukmini!

Princes Kratha and Kaishika are to ask the Lord and see.

Her father wanted me to let you know immediately;

He wants you by him when he's with the Lord he craves to see!

*Purna.* [*To Narad.*] Your grace, my goal is near at hand! [*To Steward and Sunanda.*] You both, please follow me ... !

*[Exeunt Purnamasi, Sunanda and Steward.]*

*Krath/Kaish.* [*Off-stage.*] Could not imagine any greater opportunity -

That we may wait upon our Lord as He's sits comfortably;

Astonishing to think the greatest thinkers of all time,

Miss this chance that is simply celestially sublime.

*Narad.* Kratha and Kaishika reciting a lovely prayer.

*[Krishna blows His conch-shell off-stage, and Narad sees Him approaching.]*

Krishna's moved by tender feelings for His loving mother:

That's the conch – reminds Him of when He was breast-fed by her.<sup>158</sup>

Walking over. Here He is with Kaishika and Kratha.

Always amazed how extraordinary Krishna is;

<sup>155</sup> This eulogy by Shiva also fulfils the prayer of King Vindhya to have a son-in-law (Krishna) who supersedes the status of Shiva (cf, act I)

<sup>156</sup> Cf act I

<sup>157</sup> This s an alternative to the original stage direction: 'tossing aside the stage-curtain'

<sup>158</sup> The shape and texture of the conch shell reminds Krishna of when He was breast fed as a child

And, how adorned – how it so glows, the bright pendant of His!  
 And how a lotus flower, a disc, a conch and sturdy mace -  
 Lord Krishna's divine insignias<sup>159</sup> - compliment His grace.  
 I'll catch the stunning scene from up above.

*[Exit up into clouds in the sky.]*

*Enter KRISHNA, KRATHA, KAISHIKA and GARUDA.*

*Krishna.* My royals of fame!  
 What you arranged today will win you heavenly acclaim;  
 Reach beyond the heavens! 'Dorn the ears of goddess Lakshmi!<sup>160</sup>  
 A beautiful investiture.

*Krath/Kaish.* You treat us much too kindly;  
 From Your pores the universes are breathed into being,<sup>161</sup>  
 Like dust specks though a lattice – why, our labours are nothing;  
 Your awesome form's the wonder – You are wondered at by us.

*Krishna.* I'm very pleased, dear princes, now - of what are you desirous?

*Krath/Kaish.* Lord, Princess Rukmini's prayers are deserving. Of merit;  
 Even Your trusted carrier Garuda's quite concerned about it!  
 Will You favour her? We're all concerned about her fate.

*Krishna.* How should I favour her?

*Krath/Kaish.* By taking her from Kunder state!  
 As she goes for worship, snatch her from the ring of foes!

*Krishna.* I'll marry her. Let it be so O best of royal duos!  
 'Tis done ... !

*[Exeunt Kratha and Kaishika on paying respects. Located in the sky, the famous  
 angel Tumburu announces the effects of Narad's devotions.]*

*Tumb.* *[Off-stage.]* Shiva's wife's just quit, 'fraid Shiva's not who he is;  
 Her husband actually lost that deep throat-mark of his!<sup>162</sup>  
 Brother Rama spurns his best robe that's turned white from blue;  
 And cowherd girls who're pleased their river turns a milky-hue -  
 Start plans for butter-making on a scale that's very new!  
 How curious things are, good Lord, when Narad's praising You.

*Gar.* *[Looks up.]* There's angelic for you!

*[Krishna surveys the skyline of Kunder which is littered with the erected tents  
 of enemies.]*

<sup>159</sup> These are the personal insignias of Vishnu, held, respectively, in each of His four hands

<sup>160</sup> = the consort of Lord Vishnu, aka, the Goddess of Fortune

<sup>161</sup> When Vishnu exhales, countless universes emanate from the pores of His skin. Lord Vishnu is one of Krishna's expansions (incarnations)

<sup>162</sup> Lord Shiva's throat turned blue when he consumed poison to save the world

*Krishna.* Garuda, fine feathered friend;  
Look! As if the white hoods of the proverbial snake<sup>163</sup> opened!  
Their never-ending canopies! Vile kings make the earth quake;  
The ne'er-do-wells assemble like a gargantuan snake.

*Gar.* 'Deed so, but Your trusty Garuda's going to sort it out;  
My swift beak and fearsome wing shall lay the viper out!  
You can rest Your weaponry,<sup>164</sup> dear friend ...

*Ladies of K.* [Off-stage.] Pity Rukmini!  
She's perfect for Krishna, why does fate treat her so badly ... !

*Gar.* Ladies of Kunderen are sore ...

*Ladies of K.* [Off-stage.] Rukmini's far too pretty!  
Shishupal's a fool and has the manners of a donkey!  
No garlands for donkeys ... !

*Gar.* She's Shree Krishna's – no one else's!  
Perfect match for Him, just like His shining pendant is ...

*Bard.* [Off-stage.] Krishna's countless gem-like charms bedazzle every  
maiden!

And surprise even the most heroic fighting-men,  
The sight of Him in battle has brave-hearts falt'ring within;  
Challenging the egos of the proudly masculine ...

*Krishna.* [Turning towards bard.] I recognise that playful style of clever  
poetry ... !<sup>165</sup>

*Bard.* [Off-stage.] When Krishna's saffron-sprinkled chest's graced by  
Radharani,  
It's like a blazing rain-cloud with a sprinkling of glister ...

*Krishna.* [Smitten.] Beloved – My desire-tree! O Vrindavan Radhika!  
Dear friend of Vishakha, where are You?

[*Krishna grips Garuda.*

*Gar.* [Aside.] Out of my depth now!  
It is too sorrowful for words. \_\_\_ Shanti,<sup>166</sup> Lord, please! Somehow ... !

[*Krishna composes Himself. Sighs.*

*Ladies of K.* [Off-stage.] Surrounded by the priests' wives and a rugged palace  
guard,

A chaperoned Rukmini's approaching the temple yard ...

*Krishna.* That dolt Rukmi's made it hard to get to Durga's temple;  
To wit, friend, you and I are going to need to be resourceful;  
It's dancing time for Us.

<sup>163</sup> The legendary gigantic snake (naga) named Takshaka

<sup>164</sup> By weaponry, Garuda is referring to Krishna's razor-sharp discus which has deadly power

<sup>165</sup> The style referred to is 'bhogavali'

<sup>166</sup> = peace

[*Exeunt Krishna and Garuda.*

*Near a temple of Durga.*

*Enter CHANDRAVALI, MADHAVI and BHARGAVI.*

*Chand.* Did you hear, Madhavi sakhi?  
My brother's Durga-worship will use up a ton of ghee.<sup>167</sup>

*Madh.* That's what the priest's wives say, princess.

*Chand.* [Aside.] A massive fire-pit,  
doubtless -  
Just the job.

*Madh.* Lord Krishna's so attached to you, princess,  
Why's He not marry you?

*Chand.* My dire, appalling destiny;  
I thought I was safe here, and my own brother turns on me;  
Not only does my Durga neglect me heartbreakingly;  
But so does my love too – He who's all-powerful and mighty!  
Nothing's going right, it is all going awfully badly.

*Madh.* Let's enter the sanctuary of the shrine of Durga-devi;  
Say our prayers.

[*They enter the temple of goddess Durga.*

*Chand.* Shree Bhargavi, appeal to goddess Durga!

*Bharg.* Dear Durga, grant the princess her intense and noble prayer.

[*Bhargavi prays.*

*Chand.* [Bitterly.] O goddess, I have worshipped you since I was very young;  
With ardent faith, for many years, your glories have been sung!  
I've prayed to marry Krishna, now you must show me the way!  
Please make it as clear as can be – do so without delay!

[*Madhavi pretends she thinks she sees the goddess smile.*

*Madh.* Durga is disposed, you see. I'm sure.

*Chand.* Pray on Bhargavi -  
I'm going to see the holy flames fuelled by the holy ghee;  
Such devotions are due.

*Re-enter KRISHNA and GARUDA disguised as dancers.*

*Krishna.* I used to dance a lot before,<sup>168</sup>  
In Gokool's glades – those past'ral skills have got Us through the door;

<sup>167</sup> Fire sacrifices involve offering ladles of ghee into the fire's flames which carry the oblation heaven-wards

<sup>168</sup> Krishna is referring to practising Rasa dancing in Vrindavan

Tough audience - but through, thanks to a little expertise.

*Gar.* Great moves, my Lord – guards captivated, ladies eyes well-pleased.

*Krishna.* [*Encouraged.*] Why, Garuda, my friend, look up, and tell Me what you see!

*Gar.* Rishis<sup>169</sup> in the clouds are all for praising young Rukmini!  
Who, by the way, could not care less about the king of Chedi;  
Lord Krishna is the hero of this young goddess of beauty ...

[*Sound of an uproar.*]

*Krishna.* Dear friend, that's going to actually deafen this whole city!  
Warriors yelling! Piercing incantations of the holy!  
Singers choring with such an intense gusto together.

*Gar.* Princess Rukmini is leaving the temple of Durga.

[*Krishna sees Chandravali from a distance.*]

*Krishna.* Why, there's beauty that commands one's absolute attention!

[*Krishna is rendered speechless.*]

We've a mission for the princes, My dear friend – let it be done!  
Wing the girl away!

*Gar.* Indeed - what an exquisite princess!  
She's even more alluring than the fair Fortune Goddess,  
Excels that sea-born beauty all the gods claim to have made,  
In fact, she leaves the fairest of goddesses in the shade!

*Krishna.* Yes, friend, but you know for Me it's not just about beauty.

*Chand.* Look after that sapling<sup>170</sup> I brought from Gokool, Madhavi;  
Take care of it for me, friend.

*Madh.* [*Tearful.*] Steady now, princess. Hold tight -  
Hold on for Sunanda who'll be here with us by midnight!

*Chand.* [*Teary.*] In Vrindavan He always wanted to be close to me,  
I'm so confused – all of those sweet things that He promised me!  
Deported to this place I've been deprived of Your affection;  
You're one who keeps their word, Krishna - how's it I'm forgotten?

[*Sound of a big commotion off-stage.*]

*Krishna.* The ladies of the palace getting restless.

*Gar.*

It is true!

<sup>169</sup> = mystic sages

<sup>170</sup> Specifically, a bakula (Spanish cherry) sapling from Vrindavan Chandravali kept out of sentiment

My Lord, the bright-faced girls have climbed up on the roof to see You;  
All the moon-faced girls together like a chandravali!

*Krishna.* Chandravali. I never knew such heartlessness was in Me;  
How on earth could I forget you? Well, My couriers are ready;  
When I'm back in Dvaraka, I'll send out for you directly.

[*Chandravali nears the sacrificial fire.*

*Chand.* It brings me to life to see this blazing pit of ghee.

[*Krishna hears the sound of Chandravali's ankle-bells.*

*Krishna.* I know that sound – it's like I've heard those anklets somewhere,  
friend.

*Gar.* She's for You, my Lord. I said – and only You contend;  
A diamond of a beauty. Peerless. Can only be Yours.

*Krishna.* Let Me look.

[*Observes Chandravali.*

But these charms are the charms this heart adores!

The lure of a Gokoola-maid!

[*Urgently checks again.*

My beloved – it's her!

[*Impetuous.*] Melter of My moonstone-heart, high-tide love's cool commander;  
Passion of My moon-flower eyes, the matchless Chandravali!  
I need to be closer to this glorious-moon beauty.

[*Krishna nears Chandravali.*

*Madh.* [*Sees Krishna.*] Why, who is this outrageously handsome master-  
dancer?

*Chand.* [*Addressing fire-pit.*] Fire-god, my one and only refuge is the Lord  
Shree Krishna;  
Kindly take me to Him!

[*Chandravali bows to the fire.*

Oh, where are you Purnamasi?

Oh, where are you now?

[*Chandravali circumambulates the fire.*

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] She's set her mind on something crazy!<sup>171</sup>  
Have to act right now – she's perilously near the fire!

<sup>171</sup> One of the Sanskrit words for fire is 'vahni' (meaning 'to carry') because the fire of sacrifice carries up offerings (like ghee) to the heavens. Chandravali's intention to throw herself in the sacrificial fire goes with the understanding that she is thereby making an offering of herself

*Chand.* [*Tearful.*] Goodbye to You forever Radharani, my dear sister!  
Where is Padma - my dear friend? Where is Gokool's noble queen?  
Beloved Krishna, why could it ...

[*Chandravali falters.*

Oh, why can it not have been?

Some day my eyes may linger on Your lotus handsomeness;  
Like bees, and own the luck that they don't presently possess;  
The luck to drink the honey of Your smile of gentleness ...

[*Krishna rushes to catch Chandravali.*

*Krishna.* Mind the fire, My love!

*Madh.* [*Affronted.*] Stop! Do You mind! Unhand the  
princess!

How dare you, young dancer!

*Krishna.* [*To Chandravali, teary.*] Darling girl – your loved one's here!  
Aggrieved to be without Me, yet My arms are round you, dear!  
You mustn't be so careless with this gorgeousness that's you,  
Were you to go that way, for sure, My heart would split in two.

[*Chandravali thinks it's Madhavi holding her.*

*Chand.* [*Heedless.*] Madhavi – things are already way difficult enough!  
Please, leave go!

[*Removes her ring.*

And look after this ring I'm taking off!

Show it to Krishna for me, so He knows it's Chandravali.

[*Goes to place ring on Krishna's finger.*

It is a firm hand, this. [*Beholding Krishna.*] The love of my life is with me!  
Arms around us. Holding ...

[*Overwhelmed, Chandravali falls faint.*

*Madh.* Why, how things are in the end!

*Enter BHISHMAKA on the heels of PAURNAMASI.*

*Purna.* With handsome Krishna here, heartache has gone, and love has  
blossomed;

Fair girl was completely lost, but now she's found Shree Krishna;  
The stranded little fish, thank heavens, made it back to water!

[*Approaching Chandravali.*

Paurnamasi's night's illuminated, Chandravali;  
Krishna's mercy. Now, up!

[*Paurnamasi raises Chandravali who notices Bhishmaka.*

*Chand.* [*Aside.*] My father, the king!

[*Abashed, Chandravali goes behind Paurnamasi.*

*Krishna.*

Good lady;

Glad you're here.

*Purna.* Well, Krishna, I am fond of Chandravali.

*Bhish.* [*To Krishna.*] When my girl came along, I'd no idea what luck would be;

The one the wise have in their hearts shall be my daughter's husband!

*Purna.* It's glorious you're giving Krishna Chandravali's hand;  
A jewel of a king you are.

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] Radha would understand;  
Chandravali's her sister, so I don't think I offend.

*Bhish.* [*Politely.*] The rule's that I must tell You what this girl's elders prefer,  
That You keep but one wife, dear Lord – this girl, and only her!

[*Krishna looks to Paurnamasi for a response.*

*Purna.* There's only Chandravali left – see how much fate lacks sense;  
There are no other Gokool girls, my Lord – makes no difference.

*Krishna.* Very well, O king!<sup>172</sup>

*Gar.* I would like to point out, dear sovereign,  
Your princess knew the status of this Lord she prayed to win;  
She knew the goddess of fortune's been long-married to Him;  
You've no need to urge this, king, it might well cause a problem.

*Bhish.* Quite understood. [*Approaching Krishna formally.*] Sir – she's Yours.  
Your devoted maidservant.

[*Bhishmaka presents Chandravali to Krishna who accepts her.*

*Krishna.* Intend to head for Dvaraka, king – do I have your consent ... ?

[*Bhishmaka consents.*

[*Exeunt Krishna, Garuda, Chandravali, Madhavi and Paurnamasi.*

*Rogue-kings.* [*Off-stage.*] I need a horse and chariot! Chariot! Elephant!  
Bring me my quiver! Where's my bow! My bow now! This instant!  
That loathsome scoundrel cowherd is abducting the princess!

*Bhish.* The kings are on the warpath now. Hair-raising rowdiness!

[*Looking on.*

Krishna's brother's army's here ... !

[*Bhishmaka smiles as he listens.*

*Rama.* [*Off-stage.*] There's nowhere you can hide!  
Puny kings, the world trembles when Krishna's dissatisfied ... !

[*Sound of haughty laughter off-stage.*

Nothing's funny, foolish creature - your pride ends with Rama!

<sup>172</sup> \*This commitment is very firm. Much of the drama in the latter part of the play results from Krishna's keeping this promise. In this part of history it was customary for kings/nobles to have more than one wife

Sir Dantavakra<sup>173</sup> is scared, and shrieking's his new dharma!  
 Windbag Jarasandha's speechless now his chariot's down.  
 Run for your lives, despots - not one of you deserves a crown!  
 May master-archer Krishna's laughter resound in your ears!

*Bhish.* [*Well-pleased.*] No worries now ...

*Rama.* [*Off-stage.*] With Rukmi bound, his pride no longer rears!

Battle-master Krishna has disfigured Kundeen's heir;  
 Shaved the prince's royal locks bit here, and a bit there.

*Bhish.* Should calm my proud, rogue-son Rukmi, in case he dies of shame.

[*Exit.*]

---

<sup>173</sup> A rogue king/baron

*Act VI**The Bear King's Protege.***[Prelude.***Dvaraka City.*<sup>174</sup>*Enter UDDHAVA.*

*Udd.* [Reflecting.] Lord Shree Krishna's behaviour's very contradictory;  
 Founding Dvaraka town here out of fear – well, that's the story.  
 Some pathetic roguish king's supposed to have made Him flee!<sup>175</sup>  
 And same time all the gods seek Krishna for security!  
 Strangest thing's He's Lord of all, yet seeks counsel from me!  
 I need to find my good friend Narad.

[Hears an off-stage comment telling him where Narad is.]<sup>176</sup>

Thank you – ah, I see.

Sage Narad's by the court-house - perfect. That's where I'll be heading.

[Uddhava heads for Dvaraka's court-house.

Here's the celestial sage ...

*Near the court-house**Enter NARAD.**Narad*

Who excels in Krishna-loving?

Many - still, the gopis' love goes surpasses excellence;

Their loving fascinates the Lord in all His omniscience.

[Sees Uddhava.] Ah, devoted Uddhava's always nicely turned out!

Sporting flowers Shree Krishna's worn's the wont of the devout;

Shoulders decked with holy marks and beads of shining tulsī!

*Udd.* Greetings, master.

*Narad.* [With a benevolent gesture.] Counsellor – what's wrong? You don't  
 look happy.

---

<sup>174</sup>

Dvaraka is on the coast of the state of Gujarat, India

<sup>175</sup> Krishna apparently fled from King Jarasandha to establish the fortification of Dvaraka

<sup>176</sup> The stage direction here, indicating something is being said by someone out of sight, is 'akashe' which means 'in the air'

*Udd.* I have offended Krishna, sir.

*Narad.*

I don't think you're the sort.

Krishna knows a random wrong by you amounts to nought.

*Udd.* It's because of me that Krishna headed to the forest.

*Narad.* You?

*Udd.* Yes, me indeed, as my request was too immodest.

To Satrajit.

*Narad.* For what?

*Udd.* To give his daughter to Lord Krishna,

But ... his famous gem as well.

*Narad.* [*Aside.*] Ah! Destination's closer;<sup>177</sup>

Now this move things along!\_\_\_ So then do tell me His answer!

Worked out as you expected?

*Udd.* Not at all – did not go well.

*Narad.* Even if compliant, Satrajit'll cause you trouble;

The nice get even nicer following a good man's pleas,

Wrong'uns aren't like that – more irresponsible than vasak trees;<sup>178</sup>

Nectar from a maiden's mouth makes cherry trees effloresce,

Same nectar on a vasak tree won't yield same bloom-success.

*Udd.* Satrajit did give his girl, but not the famous crystal -

Was most ignoble of him – well, his brother died as well!

*Narad.* Indeed, yes. Killed while hunting ...

*Udd.*

That's right, was misfortune's

blow ...

*Narad.* So Krishna headed to the woods to try and find the fellow ...

*Udd.* Krishna's good, it's wrong some now regard Him with suspicion;

Yes, was denied that gem, but for that He'd not slay someone!

Dreadful rumours - all my fault.

*Narad.*

Now see here, devoted one;

Krishna likes rash acts inspired by devotion for Him;

Your request sprang from good-heartedness – albeit a whim!

Time to celebrate – you'll see Vrindavan back again!

That divine land where charm invests itself in every season.

*Udd.* Would be very nice, but, dear sir - you know that can't be so -

Revive Vrindavan days, you say? The Lord's so full of sorrow.

*Narad.* Sorrow?

*Udd.*

For Radhika ...

<sup>177</sup> Narad, as a sage with mystic powers, was aware that Radha would eventually be with Krishna, something predicated on Radha's receipt of the jewel of Satrajit (the Syamantaka jewel). In view of this, Narad is pleased to get to know both of the jewel's whereabouts, and of the appearance of Radha as the 'daughter's of Satrajit

<sup>178</sup> The Malabar nut tree. This tree's foliage is not eaten by animals due to its bitter taste

[*Uddhava breaks off.*]

*Narad.* [Smiles.] Oh, but His grief need not go on!  
As it were, the lost gold ring's still definitely on!<sup>179</sup>

*Udd.* You raise my spirits, master – but, do please make yourself clear;  
Do you mean Radha is alive?

*Narad.* Exactly so – She's here;  
In Dvaraka town.

*Udd.* [*Delighted.*] How's that?

*Narad.* The sun-god's divine accord;  
Being pleased with King Satrajit he made him Radha's ward;  
And gave him the coveted gem they call Syamantaka,  
He advised him Radha was to be named Satyabhama,  
And if he would give Her to Krishna, he'd have fame untold!  
- And by the way, that Syamantaka gem gifts daily gold!

*Udd.* How did the sun-god come by the extraordinary gem?

*Narad.* When Radha reached the sun-god's realm, She offered it to him.

*Udd.* How'd She reach the sun-god's realm?

*Narad.* The river goddess brought  
Her:<sup>180</sup>

Soon as Radharani disappeared into the water.  
Knowing Radha's plight, of Her despair at losing Krishna,  
The sun-god engaged his helpful river-goddess daughter.

*Udd.* And Vishakha?

*Narad.* Vishakha is the sun-god's daughter!  
The sun-god's river-goddess daughter - living in Gokoola. .  
Because of her, the sun-god got much closer to Krishna.

*Udd.* I'm sure the sun-god's wife's became well fond of Radhika.

*Narad.* Yes. She's why there is a second Vrindavan in Dvaraka!  
Sun-god's wife commanded Vishvakarma<sup>181</sup> – the designer;  
Vrindavan-on-sea was the good sun-god's wife commission!  
Same river, gorgeous forests, wondrous peaks and great banyan;  
So Radha-Krishna magic would have continuity.

*Udd.* What set the good sun-god's wife to this, specifically?

*Narad.* Radhika's request.

*Udd.* Which was?

*Narad.* Something to make Her happy -  
Return to be the same places She and Krishna used to be;  
'I'm miles away from Vrindavan - I'm tortured,' She explained,

<sup>179</sup> From a saying about looking for your lost ring unaware that you still have it on your finger

<sup>180</sup> The goddess of the Yamuna River is the sun-god's daughter (Vishakha)

<sup>181</sup> The skilful artificer/landscaper of the gods

'Because of My misdeeds cruel fate's seen to it I'm drained.'

*Udd.* I'm so glad the sun-god is on Your side, Radharani -  
Vrindavan is the only place for You to ever be;  
Enjoying that supreme estate with Lord Shree Krishna;  
Imagine if there were no way to have Your heart's desire!  
Don't believe that You would have a reason to be living ...  
What else?

*Narad.* Well clearly, the sun-god's wife was very caring;  
Reminding Radharani Lord Vishnu was in the sun,<sup>182</sup>  
That Radhika was not far from the ever-honoured one ...  
Couldn't see how Radha could be sad with Vishnu near.

*Udd.* Expect Vishakha answered that.

*Narad.* She made it *very* clear:  
She smiled and said, 'Dear goddess, I shall tell you something true,  
'Not easy to grasp why gopis love Krishna as they do,  
'But He does not spell-bind them the same way when He's Vishnu;<sup>183</sup>  
'Not even with those four fine arms, and striking hue of blue!'

*Udd.* Did you speak to Satrajit?

*Narad.* He should think himself lucky -  
Denying Lord Krishna the gem! Yes, he knows the story -  
His brother wore the gem and was devoured by a great lion,  
Then the bear-king<sup>184</sup> got the gem after he slew the lion,  
And luckily, the bear-king then returned the gem to Krishna.

*Udd.* Phew.

*Narad.* He too was glad not to have lost the good Lord's shelter,  
To have denied the Lord the gem, he asked to play with fire.'

*Udd.* What will he do now, sir?

*Narad.* I've instructed the old trickster,  
'Mind your Satyabhama!' I said, 'Remember She's Radha!  
'Get Her to the palace of our Lord the King of Dvaraka!  
'That Lord of gods' arrival's due, so please do not delay!  
His mother's bringing Radha to the palace right away.

*Udd.* This is most encouraging – I am a restored person!

*Narad.* Though Purnamasi doesn't know – it is so sad she's gone -  
It was with a heavy heart she journeyed back to Gokool.

*Udd.* Then, who's going to keep young Radha's temperament cool?

*Narad.* Yes, a divine apprentice<sup>185</sup> will be taking care of Her.

<sup>182</sup> The manifestation of Vishnu who resides on the sun planet

<sup>183</sup> The cowherdesses cannot relate to the grandness of Krishna's incarnation as Vishnu

<sup>184</sup> Aka, Jambavan

<sup>185</sup> The disciple of Vishvakarma

*Udd.* Which young lady's that?

*Narad.* A young goddess of horticulture!  
Groves bloom all year round by Navavrinda's powers;  
Dvaraka can now boast to be home of the queen-of-flowers.

*Udd.* And does she understand the truth about the situation?

*Narad.* Oh, Navavrinda knows alright, in fact, she's on a mission;  
Grand mission of the sun-god's wife.

*Udd.* Aha!

*Narad.* She's well clued in;  
She knows how Lord Krishna loves the gopis of Vrindavan,  
How even the Goddess of Fortune's not blessed that way by Him;  
That Radha's the most precious girl of the cowherd kingdom;  
Lovelorn Radha surely needs the care of Navavrinda.  
Sun-god's wife's sent her to earth so Radha's safe in Dvaraka.

*Udd.* [*Tearful.*] All those abandoned gopis, though – all very tragic, sir.

*Narad.* It's very true that the gopis are lost without Lord Krishna,  
But Durga's sheltering them now in Mount Mani valley,  
Loved by them for her kind words that soothe their melancholy.

[*Uddhava sees a palanquin carrying Radha into the palace.*]

*Udd.* Sir – a covered palanquin is going in the palace!  
That's Satrajit's mother. Surely Radhika-the-goddess!

*Narad.* Let's hold on for Krishna in the assembly-house right here.

[*Exeunt.*]

**[End of Prelude.]**

*Dvaraka Palace.*

*Enter RADHA and MOTHER OF SATRAJIT.*

*Radha.* [*To heaven.*] No girl on earth is as poor-hearted as Me - nowhere near!  
No one. Anywhere. I got abandoned by Shree Krishna.

And still, hope to see Him burns – My shamelessness is utter ...

[*To Mother of Sat.*] What brings Us to the ladies' chambers, ven'erable lady?

*Mother of Sat.* It is Narad's wish, my dear.

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] I do know Narad likes Me,  
That's since he's very close to the devoted Paurnamasi,<sup>186</sup>  
Since he's told the sun-god to have Satrajit care for Me.

*Mother of Sat.* Come, child, let me introduce You to princess Rukmini.

<sup>186</sup> Paurnamasi is the disciple of Narad

*Enter CHANDRAVALI and MADHAVI.*

*Chand.* Lord's ages getting the Syamantaka gem, Madhavi.

*Madh.* Expect some important matter's distracted him, princess.

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] Sun-god said to hide My name whilst Syamantaka-less;  
'Ccording to the sun-god, Krishna's going to tie it on Me ...

[*Chandravali sees Radha.*

*Chand.* Who is the sublime beauty next the old lady, sakhi?

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] This empress has the same beauty as a Gokoola maid.

*Mother of Sat.* Rukminiji, my Satrajit's a sorry renegade;  
Regrets how mean he was to not have shared the Syamantaka,  
Now he wants to give your King his lovely Satyabhama;  
Please be a good and kind friend, for She deserves your favour.

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] The reason that I'm here's that I trust the sun-god's order;  
Old lady's no idea.

*Chand.* I'm In luck to have such a friend;  
I'll look after Satyabhama – on that you can depend.  
Be pleased to return home, good lady.

*Mother of Sat.* As you say, highness.

[*Exit.*

*Chand.* [*To Madhavi.*] Satyabhama's charms'l test my husband's steadfastness;  
Her beauty's overwhelming *me*.

*Madh.* It may be true, highness;  
That something of Her beauty reflects your own loveliness.

*Chand.* It's not about me, my dear friend – here's beauty of its own.  
A miracle - Her beauty will not leave the eyes alone;  
Takes the breath away – it stuns: the coppery-red lips;  
The conch-shell smoothness of her cheeks, the mind's full focus grips!

*Madh.* [*Supportively.*] Well, I believe this girl is very likely to be spurned<sup>187</sup> -  
I'm sure of it.

*Chand.* Well, from Her manner, here's what I've discerned;  
Someone who is missing Lord Shree Krishna rather badly,  
And, though sad and pained, still looks astonishingly lovely.  
Anyway, let us see. [*Approaches Radha.*] Sakhi – my heart goes out to You;  
Yes indeed, it does.

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] She speaks the truth. Mine to hers too.

I am very lucky, highness.

*Chand.* Then why d'You look distressed?

<sup>187</sup> Literally, in the same way Amba was spurned by Bhishma in the story from the Mahabharata

*Radha.* Here on my guardian's orders, highness – might say I was pressed.

*Chand.* It's alright, my friend, I'm going to introduce you to the King.

*Radha.* If you do love Me, highness, please don't suggest such a thing ...

*[Radha falters, lowering Her head..]*

*Chand.* Speak to me, friend – You need to say the reason that You're here!

*Radha.* Highness, I really need a place where no male dare come near;  
I've yet to see a promise through.

*[Chandravali is gratified to hear this.]*

*Chand.* *[To Madhavi.]* How fortunate, Madhavi;  
Her wish makes it easy to resolve things happily.

It's nice for Navavrinda too – you go and bring her here!

*Madh.* *[Aside.]* New Vrindavan's the very place the Lord will not go near:  
If She needs keep a promise, we are quite prepared to help Her!  
There'll be a secret guest in the estate of Navavrinda ...

*[Exit.]*

*Radha.* *[Aside.]* The queen's so like My sister Chandravali!

*Re-enter MADHAVI with NAVAVRINDA who is wearing a shawl that Krishna gave her.*

*Madh.* *[Presenting.]* Navavrinda!

*Chand.* Navavrinda – meet my dear friend Satyabhama.

*Nava.* *[Aside. Taken aback.]* Radha?  
Krishna just leant me His shawl! And now I've got to greet Her!

*Radha.* *[Aside.]* So this is Navavrinda ...

*[Radha slowly approaches Navavrinda.]*

*Nava.* *[Aside.]* Sense impending disaster!<sup>188</sup>  
She's not allowed to find out!

*[Recognising the shawl as Krishna's, Radha wells up.]*

*Radha.* *[Aside.]* And that's one amazing shawl ...

*Nava.* Her eyes are fixed on Krishna's cloth – won't look away at all,  
Her feelings can't be hidden though She tries, poor Radhika.

*Chand.* *[Apprehensive.]* What troubles Her about the yellow shawl,  
Navavrinda?

But, can you ask.

*Nava.* *[To Radha.]* You're looking rather spell-bound, young lady;  
What is so fascinating 'bout this yellow finery?  
You've little streaks of crystal tears – why, what is there amiss?

<sup>188</sup> Krishna vowed to marry Chandravali exclusively. Now Radha has come along, and sees Krishna's shawl on Navavrinda. This is problematic. Ongoing circumstantial issues will not be resolved until Radha is presented the Syamantaka jewel.

*Radha.* [*Off guard.*] Lost My sister, Navavrinda – with whom you share a likeness.

*Nava.* [*Aside.*] Rukmini might try, but she can't keep Radha from Krishna; No more than you might separate the Kaustubha<sup>189</sup> from Krishna.

*Chand.* [*Taking Radha by the hand.*] You see? A sister, Navavrinda - I give Her to you.

*Nava.* 'Tis a blessing, highness.

*Chand.* Satyabhama - luck is with You.  
Go with Navavrinda and enjoy her divine garden;  
My Bakula, the flower-girl's Your appointed handmaiden.

*Radha.* [*Slipping up.*] Radha *might* be lucky one day, majesty.

*Chand.* What, sakhi?

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] I can't believe I said that. \_\_\_ I'm your servant, majesty!

[*Navavrinda starts to leave with Radha.*]

*Nava.* [*Aside.*] With Gorgeous in His palace, Krishna's certain to claim Her - A bee needs no help finding a fresh, fragrant lotus flower.

[*Exeunt Navavrinda and Radha.*]

*Madh.* No need worry, queen, your King will never wed another - Made a vow.

*Chand.* Sakhi – I really want to please my master;  
Be a tender consort ...

[*Off-stage.*] Set the plantains 'long the walkway!  
And spray the courtyard misty with the cooling, scented spray!  
Armfuls of flowers, ladies, for a non-stop scattering!  
Comes He who every eye adores – let us hail Dvaraka's King!

*Madh.* All's well, queen – in strides the King! On to the dressing chamber!

[*Exeunt Madhavi and Chandravali.*]

*Near entrance to the palace.*

*Enter KRISHNA and MADHUMANGALA. Krishna has the Syamantaka jewel.*

*Krishna.* How am I supposed to sleep? How can I without Radha?  
Radhika is who fires My limbs like saffron unguent,  
Whose golden hue cools down My eyes e'en more than kajal<sup>190</sup> ointment;  
More fragrant than the best magnolias that ever dressed Me.

*Madhu.* Friend – how *did* the sun-god get the jewel of Radha sakhi?

*Krishna.* Radha's sun-god worship was ever Her daily task;

<sup>189</sup> = the Kaustubha pendant Krishna always wears

<sup>190</sup> Mascara

Presented him Her jewel too, My friend – he didn't ask.

*Madhu.* The jewel's changing colours, look!

*Krishna.*

It feels one's mood, sakhe -

Knows who you love – will help to marry her to you one day!

I once snagged Radha's sari late at night quite by error;

The jewel glowed knowing how much I was in love with Her,

When Radhika was lit up, She was charmingly embarrassed.

*Madhu.* Now, friend - You got the gem off of the bear-king, they attest.

*Krishna.* I did.

*Madhu.* Let's hear.

*Krishna.* The mighty bear assumed I was his foe;

I was right in his cave, friend, and he wanted Me to go;

Afraid I'd come to steal his jewel, he launched himself at Me.

*Madhu.* And, what happened then?

*Krishna.* After a while, he recognised Me,

Fighting stopped, and he began to praise Me eloquently.

'Our annexing Ceylon was a stupendous feat,' said He,<sup>191</sup>

'Playing catch with Ravan's heads, You cannot have forgotten!'

He said that I must have dropped by to catch up once again;

For old times, for his helping My Ramachandra incarnation.'

*Madhu.* Go on.

*Krishna.* Gives Me his golden, bijou-studded couch to sit on,

But while the burly bear's getting the Syamantaka jewel,

A grey-haired nurse appears there with a face wincing with trouble:

'Bear-king's girl will die, son – oh, don't take the jewel!' she cried,

'I know, for him, You are the One for whom nothing's denied,

'He'd not keep the jewel back, if it's what You want him to do -

'But, pity's sake!' she prays. I said, 'This hue and cry's undue -

'Such fuss about the gold the jewel gifts him, lady!' Says Me,

But she insists that wasn't it: 'Girl could die - believe me!'

She then recalled when the bear-king first showed his girl his jewel;

How the lass was mortified and rendered almost feeble;

How now, as the time passes by, she clasps it to her breast;

Like a dear companion - she sighs while her breast's so dressed,

She falters breathing in its fragrance, tears wetting her eyes.

*Madhu.* Go on.

*Krishna.* I had to find out what made this state arise;

The old nurse was nonplussed as well - 'No idea, son,' she said;

<sup>191</sup> The bear-king Jambavan assisted Krishna in His previous incarnation as King Rama in annexing Ceylon in order to retrieve Rama's wife Sita from the clutches of the demon Ravana.

Then tells Me that when asked, the girl would sob and shroud her head;  
Too upset to say why she was so fond of the jewel.

I pressed her more - 'Nurse, how's she cope? What's she do as a rule?'

'She's two dolls she carved,' nurse goes, 'Has them love-talk in verse -

'The girl-lost calls them Radhika and Krishna,' says the nurse.

'Plays with them all day!' Well, now I'm fascinated deeply!

'I'm curious, ma'am,' I venture, ' 'bout these dolls – do detail Me.'

'My dear,' she said, 'they're stunning - fact, their figures are divine;

'The boy,' she smiled, 'is endowed with the same features as thine;

'The maiden,' she surmised, 'must be someone from high heaven;

'Seen but once, Her lovely features cannot be forgotten.'

*Madhu.* Indeed!

*Krishna.* Then hurried to where the young girl was languishing,  
And told her her boy-doll's alive and on the gold throne sitting:

'Most alive, my child! It's true! A miracle!' went she,

Whereupon the girl passed her her doll of Radharani,

And hastened to a tree to spy behind – to check it's Me;

And turning pale, fell down at Our feet weeping piteously.

*[Krishna loses composure.]*

*Madhu.* [*Hand out.*] Hold my hand, dear friend.

*[Krishna takes his hand and carries on in a faltering voice.]*

*Krishna.*

Of course, I knew who that

girl was;

Our own, dear Lalita. And her girl-doll's form was Radha's;

The Syamantaka jewel's the jewel from Shankhachuda's crown<sup>192</sup> ...

It seems as if My power to keep a grip has broken down ...

*Madhu.* Ah - this maid's turning up is all-desirable, my friend!

You're overwhelmed but very happy. Woah! My heart has quickened!

Bliss! Steady me!

*Krishna.* Alright, sakhe! But, hear the rest – don't stir!

*Madhu.* [*Calmly.*] Go on.

*Krishna.*

Sweet words failed to pacify or calm Lalita;

Could not forget her dear friend who wears jasmine in Her hair,

Who used to doze off by Us near the grove of scented air.

Asked if I thought one day she'd again fan sleepy Radha,

I couldn't speak. At last, tear-streaked, I shared with Lalita,

The time when Radha, feigning sleep, had come to steel a kiss;

And just how cross Radhika was after I disclosed this ...

Just how much I missed the anxious frown of Radharani.

<sup>192</sup> Cf Act II -Shankhachuda's demise

*Madhu.* Ah...

*Krishna.* Bear-king was ecstatic to hear th'amazing story.  
Lalita'd been with him out of the good sun-god's<sup>193</sup> favour,  
When she tried to die, the god sent the bear-king to save her -  
Caught her falling from the cliff – saved her from death's threshold!  
The noble bear's presented Me his girl adorned in gold;  
Plus the fabled gem that yields its owner wealth untold,  
And I've settled Lalita in a fair glen famed of old,<sup>194</sup>  
Having vowed that Chandravali shall be My only bride.  
So, no one's to know about this – this news you must hide;  
No slips – none should be wise. What I've told you can't be said.

*Madhu.* Not say a word.

*Krishna.* [*Perplexed.*] My burning heart needs to be distracted;  
When I'm taking care of friends, it quietens down the fire;  
But Lalita's emotions have worsened My want of Radha.  
[*Despairing.*] Going to get a third eye painted; paint Myself all white;  
Make this necklace that I'm wearing shine Vasuki-bright;<sup>195</sup>  
When I am disguised as Shiva, Cupid will not hurt Me.<sup>196</sup>

*Madhu.* It's awful this - Your suffering – there seems no remedy.

*Krishna.* I've My beloved's pleasure grounds, My friend – Vrindavan groves;  
Where else can I turn? Please take this prize of treasure troves -

*[Krishna gives Madhumangala the Syamantaka jewel.*

Return it to Satrajit! I'm going in the palace.

*[Exeunt.*

---

<sup>193</sup> Lalita's tutelary god is the same as Radha's, namely, the sun-god

<sup>194</sup> A glen on Raivata mountain, near Dvaraka City

<sup>195</sup> Shiva always wears Vasuki around his neck, possesses a third eye in the middle of his forehead, and has a white-ish complexion

<sup>196</sup> Cupid is afraid of Shiva. Shiva once set him on fire with an angry glance

*Act VII**Devoted Navavrinda.**New Vrindavan in Dvaraka.**Enter RADHA and BAKULA.*

*Radha.* Each agonising moment goes on practically forever,  
Beloved Krishna's who knows where – nothing less than torture;  
Difficult - don't know what to do.

*Bak.* I know Satya sakhi,  
Navavrinda's confided Your situation to me,  
And I do so hope that You may find my suggestion welcome.

*Radha.* Go on, if you want.

*Bak.* It's just, our King is very handsome,  
Rules the lands – would You not like me to let Him know of You?  
Even if it might vex Rukmini - it's something I'd do.

*Radha.* Please don't! We do not care for Dvaraka's King, handsome or not!  
Ruler or not! Don't care about the powers anyone's got!  
How can I give Krishna up? Please stop the way you're talking!

*Bak.* Ask Navavrinda what to do, friend.

*Radha.* What I was thinking ...  
Where'd Navavrinda go?

*Bak.* Summoned to the queen's apartment.

*Radha.* [*Frustrated.*] Simply have no agency! It's beastly fate's arrangement...

*Enter NAVAVRINDA carrying gifts of silks and flowers from the queen.*

*Nava.* Don't You be overly concerned, now, Satyabhama sakhi -  
Spring-vines climb a mango via a prickly jujub tree!  
When a loving maiden longs to be with her beloved,  
All obstacles turn out helping her purposes instead.

*Radha.* Those nice things in your hand – what are they?

*Nava.* They're nice things  
for You!  
From heaven<sup>197</sup> – to be shared by all of the queen's retinue.

197

Gifts given to to Chandravali by the wife of Indra

Rare flowers and red silks from Indra's<sup>198</sup> consort to our queen.

*Radha.* I feel worse now – obliging Me with gifts like this – it's mean.

*Nava.* For sun-god worship, sakhi!

*Radha.* [Sceptical.] And what of the sun-god's promise?  
'In Dvaraka's pleasure grounds, You're going to find the one You miss!  
'New Vrindavan's waiting, child!' I can't believe he said this!

*Nava.* But, lovely girl, the sun-god's never known to be remiss.

*Radha.* Sakhi - Krishna rules Mathura,<sup>199</sup> I'm stuck here in Dvaraka!  
How will I ever get to see My beloved partner?

*Nava.* It is a trying circumstance, but think of it this way:  
We know the wagtails will arrive, but when, we cannot say;  
But, sure enough, they're playing by the swollen streams, one day.

*Radha.* But wagtails only go where they can do as they desire.  
Mathura's King will only go where He is lord and sire.

*Nava.* [With a smile.] It is not so there's anywhere Krishna's not lord and sire!

*Radha.* [Vexed.] The King of Dvaraka's suit's all you're about, and now I tire.

*Nava.* The King of Dvaraka is Mathura's King, innocent thing.

*Radha.* [Keen.] You mean that?

*Nava.* [Aside.] Oops! That's one secret I need to be keeping!  
He's King of kings, and so, of course, He is Mathura's King!

Many titles.<sup>200</sup>

*Bak.* That, sakhi's, the point that I was making;  
What's wrong with meeting Dvaraka's king? Don't be tied to the past.

*Radha.* Lord Krishna's wondrous handsomeness is simply unsurpassed -  
I belong to the flute-player whose flute-music steals My heart;  
My gunja-adorned,<sup>201</sup> peacock-plumed boy simply stands apart.

*Bak.* You're lost, sakhi, why love someone who's home's so very distant?

*Radha.* [Bridling.] Sakhi, for Me, thought of leaving Krishna's non-existent;  
For Me in any future life there's no such sentiment;  
Were He gone a thousand years, for Him I'd still be ardent.

*Nava.* She's loyal to the core, Bakula, so don't carry on.

*Radha.* No stranger to these bowers, flowers - these shores We'd amble on;  
But without Krishna, friend, I'm tortured by the sight of them.

*Nava.* Bakula, Her woe is starting to gather momentum -  
Prepare a petal-bed 'neath the bur-flowers by the river!

*Bak.* I'll do so, sakhi.

[Exit.]

<sup>198</sup> = the king of heaven

<sup>199</sup> Clearly, Radha believes that Krishna is still in Mathura

<sup>200</sup> Titles such as Rama and Upendra (also names of Krishna)

<sup>201</sup> Gunja berries strung into a necklace are a customary ornament of Krishna's

*Radha.* Where are My companions from Gokoola?  
Miss them very badly - it's a loss that pains Me deeply;  
Believing in the sun-god has been difficult for Me;  
There's no end to how much false hope has caused Me agony.

*Nava.* Where's Vishakha?

*Radha.* The sun-god let her come to earth with Me;  
Who I'm acutely worried for is My Lalita, though. [*She cries.*]

*Nava.* What happened to Lalita?

*Radha.* Something the gods let Me know.  
I found out while in heaven.

*Nava.* You talk of her in Your sleep.

*Radha.* What do I say?

*Nava.* 'That Akrura has got his way!' you weep,  
'Got Krishna to agree to board the chariot, Lalita!'  
Was too moved, pretty one, hearing you crying in Your slumber,  
Hearing the rain come down, it seemed that night was crying too.

*Radha.* [*Forlorn.*] Heartache, then at last, a dream where Krishna's in full  
view;  
Even in dreams, Akrura whisks Him off and makes Him gone ... !

*Re-enter BAKULA.*

*Bak.* The petal-bed is ready, sakhi! Shall we?

[*The three of them head to the riverside leaving the gifts of silks and flowers  
behind..*]

*Nava.* Don't get stung!  
Your beauty's going to make th'ashoka flowers blossom,  
Believe me, my dear friend, the bees that they attract are fearsome -  
They're can be deadly – best give space to the ashoka tree!

*Radha.* [*Avoiding an ashoka tree.*] If I can't see Krishna, living doesn't interest  
Me;  
Quite prepared to die, friend - it's a trying state I'm in,  
Had cruel hopes not interfered, I'd have died time and again!

*Bak.* Bed of petals!

*Radha.* [*Lies down. Aside.*] This Vrindavan is making things harder;  
Got to be a way through. \_\_\_ I'm not happy, Navavrinda;  
It's My deity I miss.

*Nava.* You do?

*Radha.* My Krishna-worship;  
My deity with feather plumes and flute held to His lip;

Hue of blue, an easy stance – gaze ever sidewise slanted-  
Used to worship Him at home the way Narad instructed.<sup>202</sup>

*Nava.* [*Aside.*] I'm sure there's such a Krishna's available readily -  
That New Vrindavan came with such a sapphire deity!  
I'll double check! \_\_\_ Going to show You Your deity, sakhi!

[*Exit.*

[*Radha's recollection is triggered on seeing a particular kind of lotus flower.*

*Radha.* The flowers from our dancing night!<sup>203</sup> With which Krishna adorned  
Me!

Friend, sadly these lotus flowers pain Me too - terribly.

*Re-enter NAVAVRINDA.*

*Nava.* Come see the Lord, friend!

*Radha.* Should we not bring him something lively?  
To adorn Him, Navavrinda.

*Nava.* Indeed we can – Bakula?  
Bring the silks and flowers from the queen left in the bower!

[*Exit Bakula.*

[*Smiling.*] Most offer Krishna prayers and bows, or incense and a flower;  
Worshipping's another thing for milkmaids of Gokoola -  
They offer Krishna tender looks and loving embraces.

[*They walk and come to a deity of Krishna on a dais.*

See – Your Lord's been waiting for You!

[*Radha stands back from the deity.*

*Radha.* Now existence pleases.  
It's been hard to survive, My friend. The struggle was worth it.  
The fragrant, shining, swarthy gopi master's at last met.

[*Radha approaches the deity.*

[*Faltering.*] My longing to see Him's made My being burn and smart;  
Such agonising showers of pain tore into My poor heart;  
And now He's here, sakhi – the one My life depends upon!  
Who I spent all My time with in these groves of Vrindavan.

[*Radha takes the deity to actually be Krishna.*

I thought You belonged to Me – You were so kind and loving;  
And then You turned away - the impact was too upsetting;  
I do doubt You even recognise that I belong to You!

*Nava.* [*Aside.*] Where love takes Her ...

[*Radha is surprised the sapphire deity is silent and unresponsive.*

<sup>202</sup> Specifically, when Radha lived at home

<sup>203</sup> Specifically, nights of the Rasa dance

*Radha.* [To Navavrinda.] You'd think, at least, a little quip was due;

He denies Me His arms, friend – to villainy He's allied ...

Faintly smiling, haughty brow - eyes from which I cannot hide.

*Nava.* He's *best* of villains, friend – one with an evil sense of humour;  
Sort Him with a dagger-look! And give Him damning censure!

*Radha.* That stony gem You wear next to Your heart has hardened You!  
Relieving Me from torture's something only You can do!

Why won't You? It is not right!

[*Radha now has a contradictory concern that Krishna's bamboo flute is too hard for His soft lips.*

[To Navavrinda.] This is hardly suitable -

Hard wood 'gainst His lips when Krishna's tender as a petal.

It is best away from Him.

[*Radha goes to remove the deity's flute.*

*Nava.* [Aside.] That's not a good idea;<sup>204</sup>

About time She realised Her deity's just sapphire.

[*With a smile.*] \_\_\_ His lips are not soft as petal, girl - they're made of sapphire!

If You hold him, You will see that I am not a liar.

Try, my friend.

[*Radha places Her hand on the deity.*

*Radha.* [*Disappointed.*] Very true – it is a gemstone deity ...

Why, I miss Krishna so much that I'm losing grip badly -

The stone was Him! I could have sworn ... !

*Re-enter BAKULA with flowers and items for worship.*

*Bak.* Got them. I have got them!

Here's perfumes, silks and flowers!

[*Radha receives the items, intending to decorate the deity.*

*Nava.* You're looking ever-so handsome;

The Lord has a cuckoo effect on You who are like Spring;

When a cuckoo's present Spring gets even more enchanting ...

*Enter MADHAVI, unseen by the other actors.*

*Madh.* Queen wants me to check how Satyabhama's getting on;

[*Admires the forest surroundings.*

So, this is it – the amazing New Vrindavan garden!

[*Madhavi comes across Krishna's footprints as she walks.*

<sup>204</sup> Not a good idea, because Radha's presence in Dvaraka has to be kept secret

The King is here? The King has come to Vrindavan as well!  
That is what the divine marks<sup>205</sup> in these here footsteps tell!  
I'll have to go and tell her highness – get her to come here!

*[Madhavi finds a garland of dark blue-lotuses left by Krishna on the ground.*  
His lotus flower garland! *[Calls out.]* Bakula? Madhavi here!  
Sakhi?

*[Madhavi's call is heard by Navavrinda.*

*Nava. [Flustered.]* It's Madhavi! Let us see what she wants, Satya.

*[Despite Her tears, Radha has continued to decorate the deity of Krishna.*

*Radha.* Not finished here. We can't be long.

*[Navavrinda, Radha and Bakula head towards Madhavi. Madhavi sees them.*

*Madh.*

Aha – there is Satya.

I am just gathering some flowers, my friend.

*[Radha is distracted by the fragrance of Krishna's garland.*

*Radha.*

*[Aside.]* Enchanting ...

Aroma ...

*[Radha sees Krishna's the dark blue garland in Madhavi's hand.*

*[Aside.]* The garland! Swear it's Krishna's scent I'm breathing!

No other scent shakes Me in such an unseemly manner!

*Madh. [Surprised.]* How's a garland's fragrance get You reacting all over?

Why goosebumps? My dear, friend, You look afflicted suddenly.

*Radha. [Aside.]* Keep calm.<sup>206</sup> \_\_\_ Oh, why, I saw the snakes in Viper Lake,<sup>207</sup>  
Madhavi;

Garland's colour triggered Me – it did. Momentarily.

*Nava. [Aside.]* Good answer.

*Radha. [Aside.]* Garland must have belonged to the deity.

*[Madhavi starts for the jasmine bower.*

*Madh.* Heading to pick flowers from the jasmine-bower, Satya sakhi!

*Radha./Nava./Bak.* With you, friend!

*[Exeunt Madhavi, Navavrinda, Radha and Bakula.*

*Enter KRISHNA and MADHUMANGALA.*

*Krishna.*  
completely;

This garland, too's, about to wilt

<sup>205</sup> Th permanent markings on the sole's of Krishna's feet include a conch shell and a discus

<sup>206</sup> Stay determined to not yet reveal Her true identity as the sun-god requested

<sup>207</sup> Viper Lake is Kaliya Lake – a replica of Kaliya Lake n the original Vrindavan

Chandan's<sup>208</sup> dried to powder – pendant's glowing is like a furnace,  
My heart smoulders like a fire. [*Looking aside.*] I think we're making progress.  
How far to Vrindavan, fellow?

*Madhu.* We're nearing that delight;  
Magnolia-dazzle, voice of dove – Your deer, one ... lovely sight!

[*Krishna hears 'dear-one' , ie, Radha.*

*Krishna.* Where, sakhe?

[*Pointing.*] Ahead – it's Your beloved ...

*Krishna.*

[*Interrupts.*] Where's My dear one?

Where is Radha, friend?

*Madhu.* Sir – there's Your beloved Vrindavan!

*Krishna.* [*Realises He's misheard. Sighs.*] When She comes to mind I look to  
find Her, and I don't ...

To deck Me with these jasmines here was My Radhika's wont;  
Now they make Me wince as if they're darts from Cupid's bow;  
The bees are like aggressors who intend to land a blow.

[*They walk on.*

I love the way the vines dress up the river-banks' tall teaks;  
Each flower-bud of the beauty of Radhika's earrings speaks.

*Madhu.* Spring's quite slow taking off, my friend.

*Krishna.* Quite so - you're right,  
sakhe;

The serenades of bees and cuckoos are not underway;  
Mango-buds aren't budding, ashokas only half-opened ...

[*They come across the spot where Radha was lying down.*

Spring had a little lie-down, is it? Wond'ring what's happened ...

*Madhu.* Petal-bed indeed – could be a lonely maiden's, maybe ...

*Krishna.* I'd say was made to sooth her by a good friend, probably.

[*Apprehensive.*] This riverside petal-bed's kindled a fever in Me;  
It's like Cupid's trying to relate something to Me ...

[*Madhumangala sees the bower containing the deity of Krishna.*

*Madhu.* This bower up ahead is something everyone should praise.

[*Continuing on, Krishna sees the statue of Himself (the deity) .*

*Krishna.* A deity of Me adorned in forest flowers! [*Inspects closer.*] My days!  
This carving's the high art of designer Vishvakarma!

*Madhu.* [*Admiring deity.*] Last my dear old friend's back! Me - I never change  
my nature -<sup>209</sup>

This acting like a king, of yours, well - isn't to my liking.

<sup>208</sup> Chandan is sandalwood paste - applied for cooling purposes

<sup>209</sup> Meaning his nature as a brahmana priest (by birth)

[*With a closer look at the deity.*]

Friend – this adorning's done by a maiden who's been crying.

*Krishna.* No denying that, friend – tears have made the chandan run;  
The garland's state would indicate her will to live has gone;  
The clay marks are askew – look, the poor girl's all of a tremble;  
I'd say this girl's affection's bound to be something special ...

*Nava.* [*Off-stage.*] We're here again, sakhi.

*Krishna.* The worshippers come on!  
You take the statue in the grove - I'll put its garments on;  
Must see what this girl's about – it's My time on the altar ...

[*Krishna replaces the deity on the dais with Himself. Madhu disappears with the statue into the groves.*]

*Re-enter RADHA, NAVAVRINDA and BAKULA.*

[*Radha is elated to see Krishna, but assumes that He is the sapphire deity.*]

*Radha.* Perfect replica – divine. He's as stunning as Krishna.

Wondrous ...

*Bak.* [*Aside to Navavrinda.*] Navavrinda, this deity is exquisite!

*Nava.* [*With a smile.*] Think Krishna is the deity as well, young girl – is it?  
Just like Satyabhama.

*Krishna.* Who's this? Bless Us - a mind-stealer!  
With sadness in Her face that says Her heart could not be sorer.  
Pearly teeth, darkest locks and flashing eyes – who can it be?  
[*Astonished.*] It can only be My one and only Radharani!  
[*Brushes tears.*] New Vrindavan's creator's magic's very convincing;  
This Radha's as heart-robbing as his Vrindavan's charming!  
Real Radha couldn't just turn up in the palace quarters -  
No one just enters Dvaraka ...

*Radha.* [*Gazing on Krishna.*] So much desire be-fools Us;  
I think the deity of Krishna's actually Krishna.

[*Tearfully folds hands.*]

Dear statue, how's Your counterpart? How's lotus-eyed Krishna?

*Krishna.* Magical Radhika, You are making Krishna happy ...  
To see You same as always – hear You asking after Me ...

*Radha.* [*Astonished.*] Perfect, Navavrinda. It is even sweetly speaking -  
Simply ingenious!

*Krishna.* This wizardry is riveting;  
It brings to mind the angels' skilful, supernatural acting;<sup>210</sup>

<sup>210</sup> Cf Act III's play within a play, where the actors are angels

How I'm made to think it's truly Radha I'm beholding.

*Radha.* How the air is thick with scent; how glorious the lustre;  
What kind words decorate My ears – for Me, I am with Krishna!  
[*Broken voice.*] Beloved deity of Krishna, Radha's asking You -  
To come to life – at long last ease My poor, sore eyes – please do!

*Krishna.* Fortune's mine, clever wizard! [*Becomes tearful.*

*Nava.* Dry beloved's tears, sakhi!

[*Radha gingerly dries Krishna's tears with Her sari.*

[*Aside.*] More and more tears come as Radha brushes Krishna softly!

[*Krishna straightens.*

He moves!<sup>211</sup> He moves!

*Radha.* Good grief – this deity's truly living! [*Faints.*

[*Peacocks cry loudly off-stage.*

*Bak.* Navavrinda – the noisy peacocks! Now what's happening!  
Scared to death ...

*Nava.* The queen and Madhavi are in Vrindavan!  
Their rowdy anklets have the swans and peacocks on the run!  
Quickly! Get Satya gone!

*Bak.* I will!

[*Exeunt Bakula with a light-headed Radha. Madhumangala comes out from his  
hiding place.*

*Madhu.* You gorgeous deity!

Incredible! Bravo, my friend!

*Krishna.* What's going on? Where is She?  
Where's the magic Radha? Please do bring Her back again!  
Can you, Navavrinda?

*Nava.* Yes, I will do.

*Krishna.* Well, go on, then!

Come on, sakhi!

*Nava.* Forgive me, I cannot just now, my King;  
Rukmini's rounding the corner – so I need be going!

[*Exit hurriedly.*

*Enter CHANDRAVALI and MADHAVI.*

*Chand.* I really miss my sister Radharani, Madhavi.

*Madh.* You're very tender-hearted, my queen.

*Chand.* At night, lately;  
King's calling out for Radha in His sleep – Radhe! Radhe!

<sup>211</sup> Literally: He straightens up, kadamba tree-like

*Madh.* Dreaming badly affects Him - not surprised He's been this way -  
Vrindavan's His home.

*Chand.* It is.

[*Madhavi sees Krishna.*

*Madh.* Look, queen – King's by the bower!

[*Both recognise Krishna is wearing the items gifted to Radha.*

*Chand.* 'Deed at home here, sakhi ... beaming – disposition's brighter.

*Madh.* It might just be He came across the lovely Satyabhama.

*Chand.* Correct, my dear friend – He sports the very silks I sent Her!  
Let's see if we're right.

[*They approach Krishna.*

My services, Lord!

*Krishna.*

Dear beloved!

Your coming to Vrindavan is much appreciated!

*Chand.* [*Aside to Madhavi.*] Krishna in the forest radiates amazing charm;  
But, sadly, it cannot disarm my unhappy alarm;

*Doesn't* make me happy, in fact, it makes me frustrated.

[*With a smile.*] You dazzle, my Lord. Appears that You've just celebrated;  
You've a new delight?

*Krishna.* [*With a smile.*] Past delight, in fact.

*Chand.*

A past delight?

[*Krishna senses Chandravali's suspicion.*

*Krishna.* Why, yes, My love - this magic forest's ever done Me right.

*Madha.* [*Sarcastic.*] That's because the forest's full of magic vegetation;  
Kind that drapes a garland on you.

*Krishna.*

Wherefore the suspicion?

Chandravali's no cynic, Madhavi - you can't spoil her.

Why, this garland's the handiwork of Madhumangala!

*Chand.* [*Innocent smile.*] The silks are nicely dyed, Madhu, dear sir - I must  
confess.

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] Seen them before?

[*Struggling to sound plausible.*

\_\_\_\_\_ No, these – these are from the forest  
goddess ... <sup>212</sup>

*Madh.* My Lord, please give the queen leave to retire to her chambers.

*Krishna.* Madhavi's got it wrong, highness! She's no cause to suspect Us.

*Chand.* Madhavi, my dear friend – I think that Truth is on our side.

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] Why, My own words have now left Us nowhere at all to  
hide.

<sup>212</sup> By forest goddess, Krishna means Navavrinda, but does not want to appear familiar with New Vrindavan's set up

*Chand.* Krishna ...

[Checks herself and adopts formality.

My King ...

*Krishna.* [With a smile.] My sweet, don't be like that - what's with 'my King'?

*Chand.* The delight that You afford us can't be measured, my King. How then could You distress us?

*Krishna.* I do hate if you're distressed;  
If sun-rays trouble you, it really puts Me to the test;  
If chandan then fails to cool you, I'm left in a sorry state.

*Madh.* Lord, the queen is very brave – knows how to tolerate;  
Remember as she stood there by that sacrificial fire?<sup>213</sup>  
Happy to leap into it as its searing flames grew higher?  
As if about to dive into a pool? You saw.

*Krishna.* [Aside.] I did.  
And that You're truly her good friend, Madhavi, must be said.

*Chand.* Spend as much time as You like, my King, with Your ... devotee.  
Going to my quarters.

[Exeunt Chandravali and Madhavi.

*Krishna.* Sir, the queen is very angry;  
Hard state of affairs.

*Madhu.* [Surprised.] To me She didn't seem that angry.

*Krishna.* Queen hides her anger well, old thing – she always smiles sweetly;  
Says lovely things – without she's soft, but she's stirred up inside;  
Her heated, wrathful mood's too clear – her deep breaths all confide.  
In order to calm My queen, I must ingratiate her.

[Exeunt.

<sup>213</sup> The sacrificial fire into which Chandravali wanted to throw herself in act V

*Act VIII**New Vrindavan.**[Prelude.**Dvaraka.**Enter VISHVAKARMA and NAVAVRINDA.*

*Vish.* Keen to see their Lord, the gods are desperate for entry;  
 Asking meekly; denied entry by the Dvaraka sentry;  
 Have to pinch myself - Brahma and Shiva made to wait!  
 And, dear, my sapphire sculpting's proved most effective of late;  
 The cause of Radha and Lord Krishna's becoming confounded!  
*[With a smile.]* Alright – I'm not the only reason those two are confounded -  
 Absence has made their love so intense, they cannot think straight.

*Nava.* Krishna's counsellor has made their longings escalate;  
 Both of them are in the picture, master Vishvakarma -  
 Krishna's driven desperate to see His treasured Radha,  
 Aims to grant Rukmini any thing she's ever wanted;  
 Basically, He's said to her, 'Let any wish be granted!'  
 Everything depends upon His good queen's special favour.<sup>214</sup>

*Vish.* Aye.

*Nava.* Madhavi let the Lord know what His queen was after:  
 'The queen's already many splendid things,' says Madhavi,  
 'But there's a flower the lady'd love a number of,' says she;  
 'A swan-bird bestowed one on us as it was flying by.'

*Vish.* Ah, yes – the 'heaven-lotus' flower,<sup>215</sup> - rarest thing to come by;  
 I told Krishna He might find some in wild Khandava wood.<sup>216</sup>

*Nava.* And Krishna's flower-finding mission certainly made good;  
 Madhu delivered those prize-lotuses to Madhavi;  
 Queen's chambers now look stunning - she's as happy as can be.

*Vish.* So, what are you up to?*Nava.*

I came to find you.

214

Chandravali's permission is required to release Krishna from the promise He made to Chandravali's father and elders, to have only one wife

215 Aka, Sura-saugandhika flowers

216 The immense Khandava Forest was geographically located near to present Delhi. Khandava refers to any natural geographical demarcation

*Vish.*

Oh, I see.

*Nava.* Are the special clothes that the queen asked you to make, ready? They're bound to be exquisite for your skill is next to none - Why, your forest of Vrindavan's even more divine than heaven.

*Vish.* The queen's clothes are ready, and I've made some for Satya too.

*Nava.* That may upset the queen, sir.

*Vish.*

All's well, dear, I assure you.

I let the queen know Satya's just like my own granddaughter - Sun-god's wife's my girl, and she stands in for Satya's mother! See? Have to dress my Satya up, so *two* baskets for you! Now come with me and take them!

[*Exeunt.*]

[*End of Prelude.*]

*Dvaraka Palace.*

*Enter KRISHNA, who is emotional.*

*Krishna.*

I can't help these tear-drops brew;

Then, ardour burns the drops away, then body's damp again.

Even in My dream's – I never *dreamt* that this might happen:

Suddenly My Radha has come back to Me once more.

[*Sees Chandravali coming.*]

Ah - My beautiful Rukmini lighting up the palace door.

*Enter CHANDRAVALI and MADHAVI bearing a small garland made of heaven-lotus flowers.*

*Chand.* My good husband's coming our way, my dear Madhavi;

Be sure you've the heaven-lotus garland for Him ready.

*Krishna.* [*Approaching.*] In so many ways you go on gracing Me with favours!

You're in My heart, My queen - the ruling swan of My heart's waters.

[*Madhavi is amused.*]

*Chand.* [*Apprehensive.*] But what He said was nice – why are you smiling, Madhavi?

*Madh.* A lesser water-fowl, too, claims His heart's waters, lady; What can I do but smile?

*Krishna.*

You shouldn't bother, Madhavi,

May carp as you like, it makes no odds to Chandravali.

[*To Chandravali.*] I love you very deeply, fair one – so love you so much -  
I'm truly unconsolable if you and I lose touch.

[*Madhavi gives the heaven-lotus garland to Chandravali to give to Krishna.*

*Madh.* Here are the heaven-lotuses, highness.

*Chand.*

For You, my King;

Wants to be next to the famous pendant You are wearing.

[*Chandravali places the garland around Krishna.*

*Krishna.* You're the garland there, no other garland's going to do;

My bright Kaustubha pendant wants your company – just you.

[*Seeing Chandravali abashed, Krishna lightly holds her hand.*

Permit Me to keep My word and take My leave, My lovely;

I'm obliged to check upon a trance-state hermit-lady.

*Chand.* As You please, my Lord.

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] All's well. And so, to New Vrindavan.

[*Exit.*

*Enter NAVAVRINDA with two baskets of clothes tailored by VISHVAKARMA.*

*Nava.* I have the new clothes, highness – this set in shades that you don.  
The other set in Satya's shades.<sup>217</sup>

*Madh.* [*Aside.*] And which are tailored best?

The clothes in which Satya-the-granddaughter's meant to be dressed!

And since the queen deserves the finest, I'll swap them about.

\_\_\_ I'll keep both, Navavrinda – see that Satya's get sent out.

[*Navavrinda gives Madhavi the baskets of new clothes.*

*Chand.* I'm going to the baths.

[*Exeunt Chandravali and Madhavi.*

*Nava.* It's time to prettify my forest -

It's time for all of Spring's glories to become manifest ... !

[*She begins walking towards New Vrindavan.*

*Sharad.* [*Off-stage.*] Most gratified to see the Lord so happy in His ardour,  
Spring decorates His favourite place and fills it full of colour ...

[*Navavrinda observes Radha and Krishna standing together.*

*Nava.* Here's delighted Radha in true glamorous condition;

And Krishna dressed in flowers from the woods of New Vrindavan!

A lovely Radha-Krishna tree of Vrindavan is blooming:

Motionless yet shimmering, with nectar-teardrops dripping,

And full of pearly fruits of sweat and love-bird sounds.<sup>218</sup> At last.

<sup>217</sup> Satyabhama (Radha) wears saffron garments and Rukmini (Chandravali) wears white garments

<sup>218</sup> In other words, loving talks

*New Vrindavan.**Enter RADHA, re-enter KRISHNA.*

*Krishna.* Found My goddess of fortune - My sorry past has passed!  
Lived in hope I'd come across something She wore to treasure;  
Instead I found the girl Herself - the treasure without measure.

*Nava.* How is She supposed to see Krishna with Her eyes streaming?  
Dumbstruck, can't even take His hand, or even speak, poor thing!  
Even though She's with Him, the girl's facing separation.

*Krishna.* [*Gently touches Radha.*] My saviour - you've imbued in Me absolute devotion;

Raise the dancing eyes that make Me hypnotised, enchantress!

*Radha.* [*Bashful.*] I'm in a dream in which I'm surfing waves of happiness;  
And, waking, Navavrinda, will mean lamenting non-stop.

*Nava.* The lamenting non-stop, my friend's, from what You've woken up!  
Note the moonstone-melt<sup>219</sup> glisten as it slips between the trees,  
Breathe lotus flower aromas that inebriate the bees -  
Whose hums have been petitioning Your presence in Vrindavan.

*Krishna.* Showcased here at one time are the glories of each season;  
It's wondrous, Navavrinda.

*Nava.* [*To Radha.*] It delights the peacocks well,

[*She points out a tree occupied by happy peacocks.*

They love that tree, my friend – the tree that shines there in the dell;  
Its each and every flower as bright as the Vishakha star.

[*This mention of Vishakha triggers Radha.*

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] Vishakha. My dear friend – would so love to know where you are.

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] Navavrinda's upset Her just by saying Vishakha;  
I have news to tell. \_\_\_ My love, please be prepared to wonder.  
I was with My dear cousin<sup>220</sup> in the wild Khandava wood,  
He hunted while I searched for flowers, for hunting there is good.  
Well, on My way, I hear the calls of two birds who faced dying;  
Victims of a hawk, this swan and parrot could do nothing;  
'No more tasting the lilies from Radha's shrine!' wept the swan,  
'No shiny oranges, old friend!' the parrot cries along.

*Radha.* Then?

*Krishna.* I freed the birds, of course, and then began to wander,

<sup>219</sup> Moonstones melt into a trickle under the moonlight

<sup>220</sup> Krishna's cousin, Arjuna, the warrior to whom Krishna later imparted metaphysical insights (Bhagavad Gita)

Chancing on an elderly lady of calm demeanour;  
 Was in a little sanctuary of which she was care-taker.  
 She told Me a girl with powers had made the fair enclosure,  
 And fair it was, the trees there all had nectarine fruits growing,  
 In the pool nearby, heaven-lotus flowers were blooming,  
 She said this girl'd been meditating in that fragrant pool;  
 And following the principles of the ascetic school;  
 But disappeared for penance in the name of Radhika.

*Radha.* Go on.

*Krishna.* I then found out in which mountain cave I'd find her;  
 And when I got there, there she was – an ascetic before Me:  
 Adorned in mottled teak-tree bark, her limbs all dark and dusty,  
 Her hair in knots, and holding out a wreath of lotuses;  
 'It is so very good to see You once again!' She says,  
 'Beloved of gopi hearts!' she cries – 'It's really You!  
 'Radha's love, Radhika scent, Gokool Prince I belong to,'  
 And through her tears she stammered, 'I'm Vishakha!'

*Radha.*

Oh - My friend!

Vishakha – I am sorry.

*Krishna.* Was lost too, for a second;  
 Vishakha propped Me up as I welled tears both cold and hot,  
 A large number of tears - My yellow cloth was wet somewhat,  
 But I consoled Your fair friend, 'deed, soon as I'd appeased her;  
 I'd her robed in finery, and settled her in Dvaraka.

*Radha.* I'm so obliged, My handsome one - show Us Vishakha, please!

[*Krishna looks to Navavrinda for the answer.*]

*Nava.* Sakhi – Vishakha told Me she won't stop austerities<sup>221</sup> -  
 It's since she knows she can't see You 'til Your jewel is restored;  
 The sun-god's will could not be changed, no matter she implored!

*Radha.* The sun-god's wife said same – that the jewel must come back to Me,  
 I live in hope that when it does, all's reconciled fully.

[*Navavrinda brings their attention back to her forest.*]

*Nava.* Observe, Lord – now look around! Cornucopia of blooming!  
 I've Jasmine! Royal jasmine! Bur-flowers! Siris!<sup>222</sup> Everything!  
 In one place - the very best of each and every season.

*Krishna.* [*To Radha.*] In one place - the dove, the crying peacock and the  
 swan,

The haritak lilt,<sup>223</sup> the macaque, and field-grasshopper song,

<sup>221</sup> Vishakha's austerities continued in Dvaraka

<sup>222</sup> Aka, Acacia Sirissa

<sup>223</sup> Aka, the yellow pigeon, native to the region

The best of every season's sound, My love, has come along!

*Nava.* Because of You, the serpents have now all gone far away;<sup>224</sup>  
And we're refreshed by breezes from sandal-woods of Malay.<sup>225</sup>

*[Krishna comes across familiar trees.]*

*Krishna.* And rejoice with the bur-flowers. Be happy, kesara trees!

Priyangu,<sup>226</sup> palm-trees, figs and mangoes – My tree-devotees:

Lord Krishna is with you again at long last – have missed you!

*[Navavrinda points out a landmark.]*

*Nava.* Shiva Mound<sup>227</sup> here's pleased to lend a place to rendezvous -

A fine nook too!

*Krishna.* Fairest - recall the deer on Shiva Mound?

Who took Your jewels for edibles, and followed You around?

*Radha.* How could I forget that deer – My pretty fawn, Rangini ... ?

*[They arrive at a sitting place.]*

*Krishna.* And My sitting place, sweetheart – good vantage point for Me;

To watch the cowherds wrestle from this rose-quartz-crystal chair!

*[Radha stops and admires 'damsel-brow' flowers.]*

*Radha.* And are these not rose-chestnut blooms? They look about as fair.

That right, Navavrinda?

*Nava.* They're called 'damsel-brows',<sup>228</sup> actually ..

*[Radha picks one with a bee inside.]*

*Radha.* Oh! Krishna-bee<sup>229</sup> in this one!

*Krishna.* Must release him, young lady!

It is well known, the Krishna-bee finds damsel brows are scary.

*[Radha is amused.]*

*Nava.* *[Aside.]* Radhika likes the Lord's quip, but Her eyes are quizzing me.

Ask the Master what He means - I'm sure He'll explain, sakhi.

*Krishna.* Something not clear, Navavrinda? What's She want to ask Me?

*Nava.* She fully doubts that damsel-brows are scary for the bee -

Bee likes damsel-brows!

*[The bee now buzzes around Radha's face.]*

*Krishna.* *[Smiles.]* It seems She is right, Navavrinda:

Your friend's sweet face enchanting him – can't keep away from Her ...

*Radha.* *[Startled.]* Shoo, bumble-bee! I'll strike you! That's an awful lot too

<sup>224</sup> The serpents have led in fear of Krishna (whose carrier is Garuda, the enemy of serpents) to Padma Lake, in the South of India

<sup>225</sup> Sandalwood forests grow in Malay, which is West of the district of Malabar (Western India), and the breezes from that direction are sandalwood-scented

<sup>226</sup> Aka, 'the five-leaved tree of beauty'

<sup>227</sup> = Nandishvara Hill

<sup>228</sup> Aka, kujvaka flowers. The word kujvaka means curved

<sup>229</sup> Krishna also means 'dark'

bold!

*Krishna.* [To Radha.] Palash<sup>230</sup> blooms just don't please him, priyangu just leave him cold,

And likewise, jasmine, lotus, madhuka and laveli!<sup>231</sup>

Your sweet face's scent, however, sends the bee half crazy.

[The bee is shooed away and they near New Vrindavan's largest hill.

*Nava.* Lord Krishna loves the hillside boughs that shade us from the sun!

So many pleasing things here on this mount of Govardhan,

Where gems are mirrors, spring-heads surge, and chinks streak crystal seats.

*Krishna.* This is where My pet peacock<sup>232</sup> likes to showcase dancing feats!

[*Krishna points out a familiar-looking peacock.*

[To Radha.] The purpose of his showtime's to shed plumes for lovely You:

Give You feather earrings – that is what he wants to do.

*Radha.* [To peacock.] Keep on dancing, belov'd peacock – you live long and prosper!

*Krishna.* Know the way to River Yamuna from here, Radhika?

*Radha.* How could I forget the shady footpath through the trees?

'Side orchids, laurels, jambus,<sup>233</sup> and great bur-flower tree grandees!

Here's the way We get from these hill slopes to the Yamuna.

*Krishna.* [Smiles.] On then to the Yamuna!

[*They walk along a woodland path, and arrive at the River Yamuna.*

*Nava.* That's lotus-lily river!

A current full of flowers. Gorgeous. The eyes cannot but caper ...

[*Krishna admires the banyan tree growing there.*

*Krishna.* And the greatest, most splendid of superb banyan trees ever.

I estimate this banyan has boughs that are without number -

Shimmers like a host of peacock fans in windy weather.

[*There is a strong smell of jasmine.*

*Radha.* Frenzied bumble-bees shows just how sweet the jasmine is;

A heady scent.

*Krishna.* Heady indeed - and very sweet, it is!

Mad bees ...

[*Navavrinda sees a swan flying off with a heaven-lotus flower from the garland*

*Chandravali gave to Krishna earlier on.*

*Nava.* [Pointing up.] Swan's away with Krishna's heaven-lotus, sakhi!

Snaffled. It's the lotus that was tangled in Your jewellery.

[*Krishna looks up.*

<sup>230</sup> Aka, flame-of-the-forest

<sup>231</sup> Aka, Star berry Tree

<sup>232</sup> Krishna's peacock is called Tandavika

<sup>233</sup> Aka, Rose-apple tree

*Krishna.* Heading for the palace baths.

*Nava.*

Now, who'd leave New Vrindavan?

Every little jasmine shrubs thinks being here is heaven.

*Krishna.* Well, I've not seen jasmine bloom like this before, beloved.

Going to round some up to decorate Your pretty head:

I learned the art in school.<sup>234</sup>

*[Krishna walks towards the jasmine and catches sight of His own image in reflecting sapphire.*

What's in this glassy gem<sup>235</sup> before Me?

Incredible.

*[Krishna peers closely into the gemstone that mirrors Him.*

But it is just a reflection of Me!

Extraordinary ... well, well, I never realised before,

Now I know why Radhika wants to see Me more and more ...

*[Krishna continues on towards clusters of jasmine.*

Ah - jasmines stuffed with bumble-bees! Just like goddess-eyes ...<sup>236</sup>

*Enter CHANDRAVALI and MADHAVI with Krishna's heaven-lotus garland.*

*Chand.* The swan came flying in from these same New Vrindavan skies.

Here was where the swan retrieved this lotus flower, Madhavi.

*Madh.* And the fragrant scent it bears will steer you helpfully;

That there is a damsel's scent.

*[Chandravali realises she is wearing the saffron coloured clothes made for Radha.*

*Chand.*

Why, these are Satyabhama's!

But, why have I got these on?

*Madh.*

*[Lying.]* Ah, yes - my mistake, that was ...

*[Chandravali sees Krishna's reflection in the glassy gemstone.*

*Chand.* The King. But, there He is, sakhi!

*Madh.*

I don't think that's the King.

It's His reflection in the mirror.

*Chand.*

So it is. Striking.

*[Chandravali continues.*

He's collecting flowers, sakhi – the King's collecting jasmine.

I'll go on ahead. *[She approaches on her own.*

*[Krishna sees Chandravali in saffron clothes, and assumes she is Radha.*

*Krishna. [Aside.]* Aha – 'tis the love with whom I'm smitten!

<sup>234</sup> Krishna went to school. His teacher is Sandipani Muni

<sup>235</sup> Specifically a gemstone of sapphire

<sup>236</sup> The eyes of gods/goddesses do not blink

\_\_\_ No distancing, My lovely! Here! I'll tell you something true:  
You are ever-precious – it's you I depend on - you!

*Chand.* [*Very pleased. Aside.*] Nice. But what's He up to? He'll reveal more if I'm silent.

[*Navavrinda has concealed herself in the bushes.*

*Nava.* [*Aside.*] Why's the queen's in Radha's clothes? Those clothes are not *her* present!

[*Navavrinda scribbles a note on a leaf.*

Grab it, haritaka!<sup>237</sup> Krishna thinks the queen is Radha!

[*Throws the note off-stage, to a pigeon, who drops it in Krishna's lap.*  
That a bird - my pigeon. Note's right in the lap of Krishna;  
And I had best keep out the way.

[*Exit.*

*Krishna.* [*Reads note to Himself.*] 'My Lord, please check again,  
That laburnum there's in fact a lotus coloured saffron' ... ?<sup>238</sup>

[*Krishna takes another look at Chandravali and realises His mistake.*

[*Aside.*] Good one, Navavrinda! Spotted. Am I grateful to you!

Powerful initiative. \_\_\_ My queen, tell Me what's new -

And don't withhold yourself from Me, merciful liberator!

You're far more delightful than are both the moon and camphor!

*Madh.* [*Concealed. Aside.*] How wearing Satya's clothes evokes such tender poetry!

*Krishna.* Wrap Us in your loving arms ... !

[*Krishna advances, then stalls as if confused by the dress Chandravali is in.*  
Disaster! Calamity!

This young lady's not Our queen – how hapless can One be!

Who is she? [*Thinks.*] She's the one recently pointed out to Me,

That's it! Vishvakarma told Me she was his granddaughter.

[*Chandravali casually shows she has one of the heaven-lotus flowers she  
garlanded Him with.*

[*Aside.*] It's the swan's fault! \_\_\_ That's My flower that floated down the river!

How did she get hold of it? Must get to the queen's quarters!

Queen needs hear of this from Me in case there's any rumours ...

[*Exit.*

[*Madhavi crosses to Chandravali.*

*Madh.* [*Approaching.*] What's going on, your highness?

*Chand.*

He's besotted – that

is what.

<sup>237</sup> = pigeon

<sup>238</sup> In other words, not who you think it is

*Madh.* It's malarkey, your, highness – the King obfuscates a lot;  
Let's go see Satyabhama.

[*They find Radha who is looking happy.*

*Chand.* [*Disquieted.*] And where's the tortured soul gone?  
Lot of joy within - look at Her jolly disposition!  
Beauty's eyes are shining now that She's spent time with Krishna.

[*Radha sees Chandravali and becomes unhappy.*

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] Jealous swan intends to claim this duckling's lily-treasure  
...<sup>239</sup>

*Chand.* [*With a smile.*] Why, Satya – d'You find the Lord's Kastaubha jewel  
distressing?

Imagine that it could be if You're tightly embracing?

*Radha.* Please pity your poor servant, queen.

*Madh.* [*Aside.*] She's fairness next to none.

No surprise at all to find the King is charmed by this one;  
This maiden's ravishing beauty enthral the noble King,  
Any other maiden's beauty's simply not as charming.

*Chand.* [*With a wry smile.*] You should have mentioned you enjoy a  
challenge, eager one!

*Radha.* Your failure, queen, to safeguard Me, may generate you fun,  
But I do not believe it's how a royal should carry on.

I came to your fair city at the behest of the sun,  
I'd no idea its monarch is a threat to righteousness -

I am not safe - please favour Me. Don't withhold Me kindness.

*Chand.* [*Aside.*] Well proposed. \_\_\_ What then, sakhi?

*Radha.* Safeguard me  
properly

If you please, highness - 'til Syamantaka comes to Me.

*Chand.* Well, I will not be hoodwinked twice, my friend – I can assure thee;  
Madhavi is too clever, and she's never far from me.

*Madh.* I'll make sure You have all Your fine new clothes, beauteous one.

*Chand.* Alright, sakhi, repose yourself a while among the jasmine;  
Madhavi and I are due inside the palace chambers.

[*Exeunt.*

<sup>239</sup> Lilies are edibles for swans (and ducks)

*Act IX**Vishvakarma's Paintings.**[Prelude.**New Vrindavan in Dvaraka.**Enter NAVAVRINDA.*

*Nava.* It's the goddess of Springtime, usherette of brightest night!  
Spring-moonlight purifies the earth and brings the swans delight ... !

*Enter SHARAD.*

*Sharad.* Where were you, Navavrinda?

*Nava.* On a visit, goddess Sharad;<sup>240</sup>

To my master, Vishvakarma.

*Sharad.* Why?

*Nava.* His skills are needed;

The Lord's in need of some new homes.

*Sharad.* And, what new homes are they?

*Nava.* Mansions in the nearby hills<sup>241</sup> – construction's on the way;  
Sixteen thousand mansions.

*Sharad.* And who for, particularly?

*Nava.* The sixteen thousand one hundred fair maids Krishna's set free;  
Those Gokool girls the Nara demon<sup>242</sup> stole unlawfully?  
As mighty as the cad was, the Lord slew him, thankfully.

*Sharad.* [*Surprised.*] You say Gokool girls?

*Nava.* Yes. Those who love Krishna  
intensely;

With just a little love for Him, good things are bound to be.

*Sharad.* Were they not wed by princes?

*Nava.* Not quite, but very nearly,  
Their beauty robbed fell Nara of thinking capacity -  
Had a plan to marry them to haughty demon princes;  
Really thought that he could defy Durga-devi's wishes.

240

= the goddess of Spring

241 = the Raivataka hills

242 A demon by name of Narakasura, who was a son of mother Earth (Bhumi)

*Sharad.* Was Durga's full intention to home all the girls in Dvaraka!

*Nava.* So, she complained to Krishna it was time to dispatch Nara,  
And the Lord did dispatch the rogue and save the cowherdresses.

*Sharad.* All here – very good, sakhi! A host of Gokool gopis.  
Just four to go.

*Nava.* But the last four are here with all the rest!

*Sharad.* They are?

*Nava.* Were prized in trials for putting heroes to the test:  
To win the lovelorn Padma, Krishna had to tame wild bulls;  
To win Shaivya and Bhadra He astounded suitor-hopefuls -<sup>243</sup>  
Whisking off those gopis in His cart, while smiling sweetly,  
When it came to Shyama, the Lord excelled in archery:  
When Krishna hit the target, Shyama beamed in ecstasy!

*Sharad.* [*Elated.*] Again - the bliss of Gokool times returns for me to see!

*Nava.* So liven up Vrindavan, sakhi – make this forest sing!

[*Sees Radha and Krishna coming.*

It's Radhika and Krishna, see? Just who I've been expecting.

*Sharad.* Queen knows?

*Nava.* Madhavi's absence from her left the queen disarmed -  
One smile from Lord Krishna and her majesty can be charmed;  
She believes that Krishna's paying lord Brahma a visit!  
Lord said He'd be most grateful should her highness permit it.

*Sharad.* There's going to be trouble, friend!

*Nava.* Why's that? You're looking  
worried.

*Sharad.* Just that Radha's tailored clothes have not yet been delivered,  
Sukanthi-the-singer's got them – be coming this way!

*Nava.* Sukanthi loves Radhika, so there's no need for dismay.

*Sharad.* That's good to hear - that case, I'll press ahead without delay.

[*Exit.*

[*End of Prelude.*

*Near the Yamuna River.*

*Enter RADHA and KRISHNA.*

*Krishna.* My love, Your lips defy the taste of celestial nectar;  
And fairest – Your dulcet voice outdoes a spring-dove songster;

<sup>243</sup> Brides could be won through a competition called 'svayamvara' which means 'self-chosen'

You're loveliness incarnate, with the sandalwood-cool touch!  
With You, Radha, My being is made happy near too much.

[*Daylight fades.*

Ah, the way is dim and all the lotuses are closing;  
The stars are nearly ready to begin their glimmering.  
I dare say the moon's about to rise on the horizon.

[*Navavrinda approaches.*

*Nava.* The rays of this becalming moon have dimness on the run;  
Gently casting nectarine moonbeams far and wide!<sup>244</sup>

[*The sound of a shelduck's doleful cry disturbs Krishna.*

*Krishna.* Poor shelduck. His wife's left – what can be done at eventide?  
Only thing to get her back's to conjure up a sun-rise.  
Illume, Kaustubha gem of mine! No more pitiful cries!

[*At once, His Kaustubha gem becomes very bright.*

Bright as shining sun, My, angel! So much for the the dark!  
Midday again beside the river of Vrindavan park.  
Might be night, but these shelducks think day's already here,  
Here she comes! Once more they unite – nature's loving pair ... !

*Enter SUKANTHI with the basket of white-coloured garments supposed to have  
been made for Chandravali.*

*Suk.* [*Aside.*] So nice to see Lord Krishna enjoy being with Satya.  
Very nice ...

[*Sukanthi remains watching from a concealed vantage point.*

*Nava.* Why, pearly-smile, I see You shed a tear;  
Your eyes are melting moonstones with the Krishna-moon about.

[*Radha is surprised at what She thinks are daytime flowers opening at night.*

*Radha.* It's evening. And yet all the red lotuses flowers are out ...

*Krishna.* No - rubies on the shore!<sup>245</sup> Red-lotus glory day and night ...

*Parrot.* [*Off-stage.*] Oh – Vrindavan's in bloom, I see ... !

[*The parrot talks in Chandravali's voice.*

*Krishna.* The queen! Let us  
take flight ...

[*Exeunt Radha, Krishna and Navavrinda, hurrying in different directions.*

*Parrot.* [*Off-stage.*] Squawk! My Lord Shree Krishna needs Spring flowers

<sup>244</sup> The moon's rays are responsible for the succulence of vegetables

<sup>245</sup> Red lotuses are named after the colour of rubies

around Him, Madhavi ... !

*Suk.* Madhumangal's pesky talking parrot! What a pity;  
Satya's disappeared. She must have slipped into the cavern.

*Re-enter RADHA.*

*[Radha slips in the shallows of the river before entering a cavern.*  
*Radha.* I think I'm followed – someone's there ... !

*[Sukanthi follows Radha into the cavern.*

*Suk.* There's no cause for  
concern -  
Lady, it's Your handmaid, Sukanthi.

*Radha.* It is Sukanthi!

*Suk.* You're so wet - what happened, lady!

*Radha.* Been a little clumsy;  
This paddling wasn't planned.

*Suk.* These are from Madhavi to You.

*[Radha takes the clothes basket from Sukanthi, and at same time notices some  
paintings on the cavern walls.*

*Radha.* Nice murals in the cave here - there's no light. What can we do?

*Suk.* I'll get something for You to see.

*Radha.* Should change – I'm soaking wet ...  
*[Exit Radha from the cavern, with the basket.*

*Enter PARROT - on the wing.*

*Parrot.* Squawk! Oh, yes! It's Madhu and the Lord ... !

*Re-enter KRISHNA with MADHUMANGALA.*

*Krishna.* Friend, where's your  
awful pet?  
Where is that trouble-maker?

*Madhu.* Rascal flew off way up there -  
In the pomegranate tree ...

*[They walk towards the pomegranate tree.*  
*Krishna.* Beloved's round here somewhere;  
*[Krishna takes in the sandalwood-scented breeze.*

Fragrant breeze – you're devoted to the dear goddess of Spring -  
Where is Radharani, please?

[*Madhumangala hears nothing and makes a facetious comment.*

*Madhu.* Spring's very slow replying.

[*They pass by a dear:*

*Krishna.* That deer's teacher's surely Radha. [*Calls to it.*] Isn't it, young hind!  
Your furtive glances are a very pleasing Radha kind.

[*They arrive at the tree where the parrot is perched.*

Trying to spot My Radharani too, My wing-ed friend ... ?

*Parrot.* Squawk! Krishna's seeking shrimati<sup>246</sup> Radharani, with His friend!

*Madhu.* As You see, sakhe – the bird is ready with an answer ...

Not always the helpful sort ...

[*Sukanthi approaches them.*

*Suk.* Good evening to You, master.

*Madhu.* [*Apprehensive.*] Is everything alright?

*Suk.* I'd hoped the parrot might say

more -

Fascinating talking.

*Madhu.* You ... you heard what it said before?

*Suk.* Not just.

*Madhu.* What else?

*Suk.* [*Mischievous.*] Well, what informs me, is what I have *seen*.

*Krishna.* [*Unsettled.*] Sukanthi, don't concern yourself with worrying the  
queen;

Aim to make you undisputed singing-star of Dvaraka!

*Suk.* But, I'm already idolised by choirmasters of Durga.

*Krishna.* Then ask for anything you want!

*Suk.* Here's the thing, then, master.

*Krishna.* Go on.

*Suk.* The angel who I serve's a challenge facing Her:

Lighting up the paintings in Her cave – without You She can't;

Nice if You could light things up with Your Kaustubha pendant!

[*They proceed to the cavern, and upon entering, Krishna's pendant lights up.*

*Krishna.* [*Smiles.*] My precious jewel pendant does things without My asking!

*Madhu.* The cavern's getting bright as noon ...

*Re-enter RADHA.*

*Radha.* [*Checking Her clothes.*] What are these I'm wearing?

<sup>246</sup> Shrimati is an honorific

Madhavi's delivered the *queen's* clothes, and royal makeup!

[*Walking on, She sees Krishna.*]

A small fish's prayer for water has the heavens open up ...

[*Madhu sees Radha, and thinks it is the queen.*]

*Madhu.* [*Aside to Krishna.*] Our woodland-wanderer is treacherous,<sup>247</sup> I am afraid.

*Krishna.* But, why are you afraid, sakhe?

*Madhu.* Strange question to have made.

Look around ...

[*Krishna looks, and sees who He believes is Chandravali outside the cavern.*]

*Krishna.* Queen's here!

[*Radha takes this as a warning..*]

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] Queen's there!

[*Radha darts out of sight.*]

*Krishna.* You see! Now she *is* angry!

*Madhu.* [*Sotto voce.*] I'm blowed! [*To Sukanthi.*] You lousy singer! Treating well-wishers this way!?

*Suk.* [*Aside.*] Why, it's the clothes – Satya should know they think that *She's* the queen ...

[*Sukanthi goes to Radha and whispers She's been mistaken for the queen.*]

*Radha.* [*With a smile.*] But why not have some fun!

[*Sukanthi crosses over to Madhu.*]

*Suk.* Madhu – the queen is

being mean -

She's making awful threats, sir.

*Madhu.* What?

*Suk.* What she intends to do;

She says you're a joke. She wants to tie you up and gag you:

She wants to lock you up!

*Madhu.* [*Shaken.*] And yet You say nothing, my friend!

*Krishna.* [*Shocked.*] Simply can't believe the good queen's self-restraint's abandoned!

Where's the gentle one I know? [*Reflects.*] I've heard that these things happen;

There comes a point the self-restrained find their patience all gone;

Long suffering mother earth's been known to lose her patience.

*Suk.* [*Aside.*] May be being too forthright in my Lord Krishna's presence.

I'll tell him.\_\_\_\_ [*To Madhu.*] Look, it's not the queen, it's Satyabhama, sir ...

*Madhu.* Imp! Oh, what a disingenuous sarcastic talker!

*Krishna.* But, it's an honour to be queen's confidante, Sukanthi.

<sup>247</sup> Meaning, Sukanthi

This is quite irregular – you could offend her badly ...

*Madhu.* Sukanthi means 'sweet spoken,' no? You think that describes you!  
'Rude', is what describes you, sad case! 'Sweet-spoken' will not do!  
Your character belies your name – the jest's on you, I fear ...

*[Krishna humbly approaches Radha, still thinking She's the queen.]*

*Krishna.* Forgive Me, My queen.

*Radha.* *[With a smile.]* But I am not the queen – she's elsewhere;  
I'm quite ordinary.

*[Krishna recognises Radha.]*

*Krishna.* Can't thank you enough, Sukanthi!

*Madhu.* Vulgar handmaid, you equivocate with great dexterity -  
Shrewd-yogi talk -<sup>248</sup> no less than that.

*[Krishna sees the paintings on the cavern wall.]*

*Krishna.* Behold them, beloved!

Here's art that's worth a look at!

*Radha.* How beautifully painted;  
These are Navavrinda's master's - maestro Vishvakarma ...

*Re-enter NAVAVRINDA.*

*[Everyone begins studying the murals.]*

*Nava.* *[To Radha.]* That's one amazing piece, my friend, but every one's a charmer;

These chronicles of Vrindavan are beautiful – each one ...

*[Admiring the first painting.]*

*Madhu.* Day Krishna was born! Now here's what you call an occasion.<sup>249</sup>

*Nava.* The little baby melting all the cowherds' hearts away;  
They're melting like the butter offered to the gods that day ...<sup>250</sup>

*[She points out the next mural.]*

Oh - the witch!<sup>251</sup> Whose death brought her what the saints seldom see!  
Slain by baby Krishna, off to high-heaven<sup>252</sup> went she!

*[Peering closely.]*

He's like a little sapphire on that great big monster's neck ...

*[Krishna moves to the next mural.]*

*Krishna.* Mother. Same as ever – characteristically frantic ...

<sup>248</sup> Sukanthi's guru is Narad, whose instructions are often equivocal. Madhumangala asks whether Sukanthi learned her equivocating from Narad

<sup>249</sup> This occasion is the well-known festival called 'Nandotsava'

<sup>250</sup> On holy days, milk products are offered to tutelary gods. The butter is removed from the altar, and smeared on the worshipper's person

<sup>251</sup> Specifically, the witch Putana

<sup>252</sup> High-heaven refers to 'Vaikuntha' from where no one returns to the world of birth and death. The status of being in conventional heaven is inevitably lost

I'm kicking down the haunted chattel-cart left in the yard ...

[Navavrinda moves to the next mural.

*Nava.* It's the howling whirlwind fiend!

*Krishna.*

It's blackguard after blackguard ...

He tried to devastate Vrindavan – darkening out skies;

Dark'ning My kinsmen's spirits. Blowing dust and blinding eyes ...

*Madhu.* Here's Gokoola's queen again, prepared to make the butter ...

*Radha.* How you're deprived, dear queen ...

[Radha is almost in tears.

*Krishna.*

Sorely afflicted seeing her;

Wasn't manageable - always tested My poor mother ...

[Navavrinda sees a verse written beside the painting.

*Nava.* Here's how much the maestro's full of admiration for her:

[Reads.

'What can be said about your greatness, dear queen of Gokoola?

'You chained the God of gods up to a mortar – took His freedom!'

[Madhumangala points out the next mural.

*Madhu.* It's the trees<sup>253</sup> felled when You dragged the big mortar between them!

*Nava.* Those two gods<sup>254</sup> who were trapped as trees were grateful to be free!

Why didn't they free *You*?

*Krishna.* [Teary-eyed.] Couldn't possibly unchain Me;

Those ropes were made of mother's love and bound Me without mercy;

If I couldn't free Myself, none else could do it, sakhi ...

[Continuing on.

*Nava.* Oh so cute, this demon calf!<sup>255</sup> But full of such aggression.

Still, fond as You are of calves, it got its place in heaven.<sup>256</sup>

Mind, You killed the demon bird,<sup>257</sup> which also got salvation ...

*Krishna.* [To Radha.] Us boys loved tending cows around the river's location;  
I miss those days so much, my love. So much for memories ...

*Nava.* Who'd not want to bow down to the cows and cowherdresses;

Krishna lives to taste the milk of their love and affection;

That's the milk He wants, though He owns an entire milk ocean ... !<sup>258</sup>

[On to another mural.

*Krishna.* [To Radha.] Well, here he is - the murd'rous serpent - mouth big as a cave;

Was only nice once dead. Alive he was a frightful knave!

<sup>253</sup> Arjun trees, aka, terminalia arjuna, grow up to 80 feet tall

<sup>254</sup> These two demigods are Nalakuvera and Manigriva

<sup>255</sup> = a shape-shifter named Vatsasura

<sup>256</sup> Specifically to Vaikuntha, which is the world of actual immortality

<sup>257</sup> Bakasura was a shapeshifter who masqueraded as a monstrous heron

<sup>258</sup> One of Krishna's incarnations is Kshirodakashayi Vishnu, and He dwells upon an ocean of milk

Once he was dead, sweetheart – We had fun climbing in his jaw;  
Hot gusts that rose up, blasting Us, would rush out through his maw ...

[*On to the next mural.*

*Nava.* [*To Radha.*] Lord Brahma's lionising Krishna<sup>259</sup> here – notice, sakhi!  
His hymnal is the Veda, and he sings in ecstasy,  
Lord Brahma loves to glorify the One eyes crave to see ...

[*Continuing.*

*Madhu.* Oh, this one's the fragrant palm tree forest - really charms me ... !

*Nava.* [*Looking closely.*] Where Rama slew the demon-cow<sup>260</sup> – of that, there's  
no forgetting -

Surprising for a cowherd – but he couldn't avoid fighting -.

Look at all the palm-trees felled in taking on that demon!

And Rama loves palm-trees! Was born with palm-tree birthmarks on ...

*Krishna.* That's My brother for you – he likes tests of strength, does Rama,

[*Pointing to the painting.*

This banyan's where he literally pulverised Pralamba ... <sup>261</sup>

*Nava.* [*Aside.*] My teacher hasn't painted Krishna's battling the Hydra<sup>262</sup> -  
Radhika'd be too upset ...

[*Krishna proceeds to the next.*

*Krishna.* Good one here, though, treasure!

Cowherds in the dry reed grass, here, look - the arid forty!<sup>263</sup>

Fearful wild-fire started there - did those boys cling to Me!

On Us like a lotus-garland - gripping frantically ...

[*They continue.*

*Nava.* [*To Krishna.*] Look - it's You hiding gopis' dresses while they're  
bathing, see?

*Krishna.* Who's behind Vishakha there, My love ? With Her hands on head?

*Radha.* [*Embarrassed. Aside.*] Why, He knows jolly well it's Me, and now I'm  
going red.

It's Padma.

*Krishna.* No, to Padma's left, My love ...

*Radha.* That's enough said!

*Krishna.* [*Looking at painting.*] Glaring as You gather Your things in the  
altogether ...

You're beautiful - I won't forget the way You shed that tear;

I'll not forget the shaky lip, wan smile and furrowed brow ...

<sup>259</sup> Lord Brahma has four mouths with which to praise Krishna

<sup>260</sup> Aka, Dhenukasura

<sup>261</sup> Pralamba shape-shifted into a cowherd boy, but reverted to his original form as a giant monster when challenged by Rama

<sup>262</sup> This Hydra is Kaliya, with whom Krishna had had a perilous, but victorious battle

<sup>263</sup> An area of land

[On to the next mural.

*Radha.* There's ladies here with water-pots – wonder who they are, now ...

*Nava.* They're priests' wives.

*Krishna.* I behaved with them – with steady eye, no smile;  
Though I soon realised they preferred My convivial style.

*Madhu.* [Salivating.] Frankly, I would rather not be reminded of them;  
No use craving sweets – we're in a priest-wife vacuum -  
The treats<sup>264</sup> those priest-wives came up with - gastronomic heaven ...

[Continuing on..

*Nava.* Raising up the big hill here.

*Radha.* Our halcyon days were seven -  
We gopis had our beloved in full view night and day;  
We wondered at our Lord keeping the mountain up that way ...

[Navavrinda points out a verse inscribed on the painting.

*Nava.* I'm not surprised – this verse describes a big faux pas of His:

[She reads.

'Catching sight of the cowherd girls' delightful bodices;  
'The Lord's hand that held the hill just could not help but shudder;  
'The great hill roared and all the cowherds took to desperate prayer;  
'All except for Rama, who smiled, and Krishna knew for why;  
'Now he knows,' He rued, and could not help but feel well shy ... '

[Krishna observes a mountain-cave depicted in the painting.

*Krishna.* [Smiles.] Oh, look! The cave where You embraced Me twice, My pretty one!

The dice were tampered with – and so You lost and Krishna won.  
What else could You do with Your best friends as witnesses?  
Recall how I obliged You to afford Me those embraces ... ?

[Radha, embarrassed, moves swiftly along.

*Radha.* Necklace-less, why's that? It's surely Us beside the mountain.

*Krishna.* Just beside the grove-pool, sakhi! You can't have forgotten;  
Where We slipped into gentle slumber – Lalita was there -  
Undid our necklaces so We would sleep without a care ...

[Navavrinda studies the next.

*Nava.* Here's rescuing Your father who was taken out to sea.<sup>265</sup>  
Not hard for one who can grant liberation easily;  
Glimpse of You is all it takes for sweet emancipation ...

[Next mural is rasa dancing by the Yamuna River.

<sup>264</sup> In particular, the sweets the wives made were jalebis

<sup>265</sup> The god of the sea, Varuna, captured Krishna's father on the pretext of an oversight in his father's ritual observances. Varuna's real objective was to get a chance to honour Krishna when He came to collect His father

India's<sup>266</sup> nice, and therein, Mathura's the finest region,  
 Vrindavan's heaven, but then there's Vrindavan's riverside.  
 Place the gopis rasa-danced with Krishna by their side!

Nowhere compares – its grounds are worshipped by the sage Narada ... <sup>267</sup>

*[Radha has a flash back to when Her elders used to get suspicious about where  
 She was going.]*

*Radha.* Flute beckons. But the tune makes Me more anxious than ever;  
 My family will hear. I want to go. They'll stop Me going,  
 If I can't unbolt the door, then life's just not worth living ...

*[Radha falters.]*

*Krishna.* Only takes two words to trigger highest inspiration:  
 'Rasa-dance,' the words set off great prospects of elation.

*Nava.* No dancing now, sakhi – rather we have here a nice painting.  
 A painting of said rasa-dance.

*Radha.* Oh, I see. Yes. Painting ...

*Krishna.* *[To Radha.]* We lost track of time in our first meetings in the bowers;  
 Radhe was so at ease in those bless'd Springtime nights and hours.

*[Nostalgically.]* The groves beside the Yamuna; the gopis' pleasing ways;  
 Radhika – will We ever see again those happy days ... ?

*[Navavrinda is at the next mural.]*

*Nava.* Where<sup>268</sup> You freed the angel<sup>269</sup> who'd been turned into a snake!  
 You're very kind. Amazingly, You're touch's all it did take ...

*[Madhumangala is at the next.]*

*Madhu.* It's Shankhachuda!

*Radha.* *[Clings to Krishna.]* Heaven help!

*Krishna.* *[Gratified at being clung to.]* My dear Shankhachuda!  
 Killed you, now you're doing Me an exceptional favour ... !

*[Navavrinda is impressed by the next mural.]*

*Nava.* Monstrous bull - the one they say caused Shiva some concern!  
 Had to hide his own marvellous bull-ride<sup>270</sup> in a cavern.  
 Still, Krishna takes no time dispatching the raging demon -  
 All over in a trice - another chancer dashed and gone ...

*[She points.]*

Look - around the cowherd girls, Your hands are very lotus;  
 Strangling the horse-fiend<sup>271</sup> they're stronger than those bolts of Indra's ... !<sup>272</sup>

<sup>266</sup> India used to extend as far as Afghanistan and Indonesia when it was named Bharata. Cf Mahabharata

<sup>267</sup> Honouring holy ground entails holding dust to the head

<sup>268</sup> = Durga Wood

<sup>269</sup> By name of Sudarshan – a Vidyadhara

<sup>270</sup> = Shiva's bull-ride, Nandi

<sup>271</sup> Aka, Keshi

<sup>272</sup> Thunderbolts

[*They continue.*

*Krishna.* Ah, yes - the sky-scraping giant<sup>273</sup> being dealt with by Me ...

*Madhu.* [*In another work.*] Here's Akrura<sup>274</sup> ... !

[*Madhu breaks off.*

*Radha.*

[*Fading.*] I can't help it.

*Krishna.*

[*Quickly taking hold of Radha.*] All is well,

My lovely!

It's a harmless mural, that's all.

*Radha.*

Such a bad occasion;

Don't know why an artist would want to take such a theme on ...

[*At the next mural.*

*Nava.* Mathura-bound at this point ...

*Krishna.*

Now look here, Navavrinda,

Leave Akrura, move on to a more uplifting picture -

I don't want My sweetheart pained by bitter recollections ...

[*They continue to the next.*

*Nava.* Welcomed to Mathura! It's the florist's<sup>275</sup> decorations;

The tailor's prayers, the raiments of the cretinous old dyer.<sup>276</sup> [*She bows.*

[*Krishna skips this mural and affects interest in the next.*

*Krishna.* [*Smiles.*] The betel's good, My love, but here My mouth's tinged with red ...

*Radha.* Sir!

Why did You miss this one?

*Krishna.*

[*Aside.*] How I wish I could divert Her;

She's onto the town-temptress.<sup>277</sup>

*Radha.*

What's she doing, Navavrinda?

Has Krishna by the shirt-sleeve here – and on the thoroughfare!

[*Navavrinda smiles, lowering her head.*

*Krishna.* [*Creative.*] Leading Me to Gokoola – very touching – had a care, Girl's idea was that I should be safely returned to You.<sup>278</sup>

*Radha.* The universe is always broadcasting the things You do; Can't hide things from Us ...

[*They reach the last mural.*

*Nava.*

Bees still in valiant Krishna's flowers!

<sup>273</sup> Aka, Vyomasura

<sup>274</sup> Anything that reminds Radha of Akrura upsets Her. Akrura took Krishna away from Vrindavan

<sup>275</sup> This florist was named Sudama

<sup>276</sup> The dyer was in league with the demon king Kamsa, and, as such, antipathetic to Krishna. It did not go well for him, and after Krishna casually dispatched him, He appropriated some of the dyer's clothes

<sup>277</sup> A beautiful, hunch-backed lady named Kubja, who was openly attracted to Krishna, and who Krishna cured of her deformity

<sup>278</sup> Krishna pretends that Kubja, out of concern for Radha's loss, and His safety, was getting Him go back to Gokoola rather than face Kamsa

Who's resisting brave Lord Krishna's garland's perfume powers!<sup>279</sup>  
 In midst of fray! Brave Lord, dark as a vitalising cloud,  
 And what a cloud - the wrestlers flee just like a gander-crowd!<sup>280</sup>  
 Vitalising as He is, He drains the life of Kamsa.

*Radha.* Who's this dragged off by the hair? De-throned by handsome Krishna?

*Nava.* That is King Kamsa.

*Radha.* [Gratified.] My love did well.

[They've arrived at the end of the murals.

*Krishna.* Gorgeous cave-painting.

Got to the end. It's night-time. River's beckoning again.

[All come out of the cave and arrive at the river again.

Not far from where You took Me for a sapphire deity,

Arbour of miracles. [Indicates.] Between the mango and tamal tree ...

[Taking in the scene.] Not short of moons tonight, bright face. You're shining in  
 My pendant!

You're shining in the shoreline jewels ...<sup>281</sup> the ripples of the current ...

*Enter CHANDRAVALI and MADHAVI.*

*Chandravali has gone back to wearing white clothes, the same colour clothes*

*Radha is wearing.*

*Chand.* I have to come to Vrindavan – I miss Him already.

Going to avail myself of My sapphire deity.

*Madh.* Heard you have to enter heaven at a timely moment -

Probably a fair chance the King's still with us at present ...

[Chandravali detects the aroma of Krishna's perfume.

*Chand.* He's so here! Oh, yes, sakhi! Unmistakable fragrance ... !

[While Krishna's reached the arbour, Radha's lagged behind, having spied  
*Chandravali.*

*Krishna.* Come, beloved – join Me in our arboreal pleasance!

[Radha goes behind the mango tree. Navavrinda is frustrated at the situation.

*Nava.* [Aside.] Oh deary me, now Radha's gone behind the mango tree ...

<sup>279</sup> When Krishna was about to face King Kamsa, bumble-bees enjoying the sweet secretions on the temples of Kamsa's elephant, flew straight to Krishna's garland

<sup>280</sup> Geese flee monsoon clouds

<sup>281</sup> The banks of the river Yamuna studded with rubies

[*Chandravali and Madhavi are concealed by forest cover.*

*Chand.* But there! You see, you see! The noble King's right there, sakhi!  
Entrance of the arbour ... !

*Krishna.* [*Appealing to Radha.*] We'll take our time in this fair den!  
Rukmini's in the palace!

[*Chandravali hears 'Rukmini'.*

*Chand.* Madhavi ... we've been seen, then ...  
He just said 'Rukmini'.

*Madh.* No. With all this woody cover?  
He's thinking of you. It's longings prompted Him to utter.  
You go up and surprise Him – He'll like that, 'll make Him happy ...  
[*Chandravali crosses to the arbour's tamal tree.*

[*Krishna addresses Radha who is behind the mango tree.*

*Krishna.* Do bless Me dainty, golden girl<sup>282</sup> with Your proximity!  
My heart's desire, I cannot think why You would keep from Me.

[*Sees Chandravali by the other tree and assumes she is Radha.*

[*Impressed.*] Well done - from mango to tamal tree ... but, mysteriously!

[*Puzzled, Chandravali quizzes Navavrinda with a look.*

*Nava.* This be the queen, my Lord.

[*Krishna does not take Navavrinda seriously.*

*Krishna.* How right you are, Navavrinda!  
Dressed her way *and* adopting her gravity of manner!

*Chand.* [*Aside.*] I am just not getting this ...

*Krishna.* [*Looks to Navavrinda.*] Why, what's wrong with  
Satyabha- ... ? -ma ...

[*Krishna realises it is Chandravali. Navavrinda lowers her eyes.*

*Chand.* [*Mortified. Soft-spoken.*] Now I see how much You love me.

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] It is the  
queen! 'Tis her!

So – there's nothing for it but to improvise somehow.

[*Krishna acts overly afflicted.*

<sup>282</sup> Radha's complexion is a hue of molten gold

\_\_\_[*To Navavrinda.*] Oh, dear – I've badly alarmed her!<sup>283</sup> [*To Chandravali.*]  
Please don't be sorry now ...

Gentle queen, do tell – I cannot bear see you unhappy ...

*Chand.* Where are you, Madhavi?

*Madh.* [*Joining Chandravali.*] I'm here ... !

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] I owe you, mango tree,

But grow more leaves! Keep Satya hid! Save Her from Rukmini!

*Madh.* Your royal highness there's your double. Underneath that tree!

[*Upon seeing Radha by the mango tree, Chandravali is subdued.*]

*Chand.* Fair enough.

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] Mango's no help – I'll try some angel-acting.

\_\_\_Don't hide that face that is so very beautiful, fair thing!

I live for you – don't like it when you're troubled by something.

*Madh.* So You know, my King, I must point out she's not Your darling.  
That's right.

*Krishna.* That Navavrinda keeps on playing tricks on Me!  
Magician! Well fooled, though – thanks for telling Me, Madhavi!  
Alright, My proper queen, in fact's, beside the mango tree!  
Her she is!

[*Krishna hastens over to Radha and addresses Her as if She were Rukmini.*]

Glad you've dropped by from the palace, Rukmini.

Wonderfully kind! Though, I cannot help think there's a mood.

But, who needs jealousy! There's no valid reason to brood.

*Nava.* The queen's by Madhavi, my Lord.

*Krishna.* Sorry, Navavrinda?

Then *this* one's illusory!

*Nava.* No – real. Friend of her highness;

Her name is Satyabhama.

*Krishna.* But, the queen is generous!

Shares her wardrobe with her friends. To be frank, I feel dizzy.

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] Nothing for it but to leave ...

[*Exeunt Radha and Navavrinda.*]

*Chand.* [*With a knowing smile.*] Krishna's speckled<sup>284</sup> lips, sakhi!  
His red lips are dotted here and there with black mascara!

*Krishna.* My queen, I got these from our hill's fragrant hibiscus<sup>285</sup> flower;  
Sweet smell, but can leave marks - that's really all there is to tell.

*Chand.* My Lord, I know what happens with hibiscus very well,

<sup>283</sup> Krishna is using words that sound like His previously spoken line: 'what's wrong with Satyabhama'

<sup>284</sup> The original reads 'gunja-lips'. The black and red of Krishna's lips reminds Chandravali of gunja berries, which are both black and red.

<sup>285</sup> Aka, fragrant albermosk and kasturi.

Since a child I've known, no need to tell me what I know.

*Madh.* Durga worship beckons, highness – it is now time to go;  
That's if the King allows us – worship's not something we miss.

*Krishna.* Madhavi. It's curious. You mix your craftiness,  
With worship, and the like.

*[Krishna folds His hands in supplication.*

My love, you cannot be angry!

But anger cannot touch your illustrious majesty.

*Madh.* Don't need go on – we know Your love's faint in passion!

*[Krishna takes 'Your love' to mean Chandravali.*

*Krishna.*

'Deed so!

My love's the mildest woman!

*Chand.*

My Lord, do not pander so;

It hurts a little – still, all's well – enjoy without a care!

I'm going to my quarters now, alright? I shall be there.

*[Exeunt Chandravali, Madhavi and Sukanthi.*

*Krishna.* Queen's taken to her rooms – suppose We too should go along.

*[He begins to make an exit with Madhumangala.*

How We were interrupted badly – Radha's face was wan.

Her eyes were calling out when the queen emerged suddenly;

So downcast by the mango tree! Sweet image stay with Me!

*[Exeunt.*

*Act X**Hearts' Desires.***[Prelude.***Dvaraka. Behind the palace. Early evening.**Enter TULSI and MALATI.**Tul.* Did you hear the excellent good news, Malati sakhi?*Mal.* Tell me, Tulsi.*Tul.* We shall see the likes of Purnamasi -  
Nanda's folk – the Gokool folk are on their way to Dvaraka!*Mal.* That is good news, Tulsi, I had better tell Radhika.

Expect She's with the flowers ...

*Tul.* She's not in the flower-yard, lass.*Mal.* Where is She?*Tul.* Since the cavern art, She's been kept in the palace.  
Queen keeps teasing Radha 'bout the state she found Her in.*Mal.* Teasing?*Tul.* Yes. Constantly remarking on it with a grin,  
Guessing about where scratches on Radhika had come from,  
Why She'd no necklace – her comments are laden with sarcasm.  
'Parrot must have thought You were a ripe fruit - pomegranate!  
'Probably, a peahen thought Your pearls were good to eat,<sup>286</sup>  
'I'm worried when You're in the woods!' And so on, and so on.*Mal.* So much for scorn – I say, in fortune, Radha's number one ...*[Tulsi see Krishna.**Tul.* And so She is. There's Krishna with His pendant bright as sun!  
Back of the palace. He'll be meeting Radha later on.  
Let's get to the jasmine yard.*[Exeunt.***[End of Prelude.***Enter KRISHNA and MADHUMANGALA. Madhumangala holds a stick upon which*

286

Snakes are food for peacocks. Chandravali loosely conjectures that Radha's necklaces was mistaken by a peacock for a snake

*his pet parrot perches.*

*Krishna.* When will I be brightened by the love-light of My lover?  
Constrained by the queen. My love's light's potted! 'Neath a cover ... !

*Madhu.* Not so loud! The queen's handmaids are all around us, sir.

*Krishna.* Dim it down, Kaustubha! That is just way too much shimmer!  
Getting noticed ...

*Enter NAVAVRINDA.*

*Nava.* Queen's sent me, my Lord.

*Krishna.* I'm at her service.

*Nava.* She wants the parrot.

*Krishna.* Sakhe – have her take the parrot from Us.

*[Madhumangala hands Navavrinda the parrot.]*

*Krishna.* *[Wistful.]* Satya's been confined to rooms, then, Navavrinda sakhi.  
The girl who they call Satya's My beloved, fragrant beauty.  
Recall the way those earrings of Hers make Her visage glimmer?  
That's the thought that makes Me desperate to see Radhika ...

*Nava.* You can't, Lord – the queen's let-downs have made her shrewd and  
canny;

Claims being Satya's shadow is just being sisterly.

*[Madhumangala is dazzled by the proximity of the Syamantaka jewel. He thinks  
it is light from the Kaustubha pendant.]*

*Madhu.* *[Squinting.]* Pendant never listens – why so independent, pendant!  
Can't light the palace like this!

*Krishna.* Excuse Me – not My pendant -  
Don't blame My gemstone, sakhe.

*Nava.* *[To Madhu.]* The treasured Syamantaka!  
The jewel of Satrajit's with Satyabhama's friend – Pingala ...

*Enter PINGALA with the Syamantaka jewel.*

*Ping.* *[Shy.]* Satrajit's surrendering his gem, my Lord – for Satya ...

*[Krishna takes the jewel, clasping it to His chest.]*

*Krishna.* You see! Beloved's jewel is giving Me the chance to reach Her.

*Madhu.* How?

*Krishna.* Dressed up. Be the girl who bears the jewel for Pingala!  
Queen lets Us into Satya's rooms, and - once again – with Satya!

*Nava.* Tricky ...

*Krishna.* It's already evening, Navavrinda sakhi!

Get down to the queen's quarters! I'm going to don a sari;  
We'll need a quiet space for that.

[*Exeunt Krishna and Madhumangala.*

[*Navavrinda gets to the queen's quarters, and sees the queen and Radha.*

*Nava.* How very glorious:  
Majesty and Satya in the splendour of the palace ...

*The queen's quarters.*

*Enter CHANDRAVALI, RADHA, MADHAVI and STEWARD.*

*Chand.* [*Warmly.*] But my stately chambers are so comfortable, Satya;  
Exquisite. Friend, don't let Your mood be spoiled by distemper,  
Leave the grounds of New Vrindavan woodland for the deer.

*Radha.* [*Smiles artificially.*] Your rooms are fantastic, highness – I'm very  
happy here;  
No need for the woods ...

[*Navavrinda, with the parrot, approaches Chandravali.*

*Nava.* I've got the talking parrot, highness.

*Chand.* Then, let's look at pretty boy!

*Nava.* And clever boy, your highness.

*Chand.* Steward, what this fine bird needs now is some pomegranate.

*Stew.* Of course, majesty ...

[*Steward takes the parrot from Navavrinda and exits with it.*

*Re-enter MADHUMANGALA followed by PINGALA and KRISHNA (disguised as a  
girl, holding the Syamantaka jewel).*

*Madhu.* My queen, a gift from Satrajit:  
These two have Satya's Syamantaka for Her delectation.

[*Chandravali is struck by the 'girl' with the Syamantaka jewel.*

*Chand.* [*Aside.*] Beauty. \_\_\_ Who is that girl with the sapphire-blue  
complexion?

The one that lights my doorway.

*Nava.* That one's Rathangi, highness;  
A lucky girl – She's Satya's friend.

[*Recognising Krishna, Radha smiles.*

*Madh.* Does dusky suffer shyness?  
Why's She got a veil on in the women's quarters, Madhu?

*Ping.* Shrinking violet, sakhi.

*Nava.* [*To Madhavi.*] Rathangi's so with you;

But, She's not shy at all when She's with Satyabhama sakhi.  
Should think the golden chamber's a good place for them to be;  
For Rathangi, Satya's company's something She's come to treasure.

*Chand.* Catch up with Rathangi in the golden chamber, Satya.

*Radha.* [*With a smile.*] As you say, highness.

[*Exeunt Radha, Krishna, Pingala, Navavrinda and Madhumangala.*]

*Chand.* Makes me think of Radharani;

Sister Radha also had a splendid gem, Madhavi ...

*Parr.* [*Off-stage.*] When will I be brightened by the love-light of My lover?  
Constrained by the queen. My love's light's potted! 'Neath a cover ... !

*Chand.* What's the parrot say?

*Parr.* [*Off-stage.*] Satya's been confined to rooms, then, Navavrinda sakhi.  
The girl they're calling Satya's My beloved, fragrant beauty.

Recall the way those earrings of Hers make Her visage glimmer?

That's the thought that makes Me desperate to see Radhika ...

*Chand.* [*Hurt.*] Now we know, sakhi ...

*Parr.* [*Off-stage.*] I'll dress up. Be the girl who bears the jewel for Pingala!  
Queen lets Us into Satya's rooms, and - once again – with Satya!

*Chand.* Madhavi! Did you hear!

*Madh.* I did. Saw as well – distinctly ...

*Chand.* While Satya's in the palace there's no happiness for me!

Kundeen is the answer – father's house for Her, it must be!

One way or another!

*Madh.* You're right. It's true, your majesty!

*Chand.* The gall! Upon my soul – were on our guard and still undone!  
Let us to the golden chamber!

[*Exeunt Chandravali and Madhavi.*]

### *The 'golden' chamber.*

*Re-enter RADHA, KRISHNA, NAVAVRINDA, PINGALA and MADHUMANGLA.*

*Krishna.* Please favour Us, dear one;

Your fair eyes are a wonder, so please raise them to Me, do!

And smile. Your moon-light smile's the cure for separation-ague.

*Radha.* [*Abashed.*] Your poetics are pale, handsome. What's wrong with You,  
My King?

Has the thunder of Your drum of love reduced to nothing?

*Krishna.* I can't be charmed by any girl, however fair, but You -  
The sunshine of My life – there can't be joy without You.

Can stars and moon illumine My day? That only You can do.

*Nava.* He means it, gorgeous.

*Krishna.* Beloved, Your beauty is matchless;  
Against Yours, any thing of beauty's beauty is much less:  
Your pretty toes are lovelier than lotus-flower petals,  
Gems don't shine as brightly as those radiant bright nails,  
Your face, sweetheart's, due worship much as anything that's holy;  
Dare say rings of splendid moons might fail to fete You rightly ...

*Re-enter CHANDRAVALI and MADHAVI, having caught the last few words of Krishna.*

*Chand.* Did you hear, Madhavi!

*Madh.* Oh, yes.

*Krishna.* [*Sees the queen.*] Her highness is at hand ...

[*They all try to appear composed.*]

*Chand.* [*Approaching.*] Satya. I am here to see Satrajit's gem of legend.

[*Navavrinda takes the jewel from Krishna and shows it to Chandravali.*]

Steeped in mystery. Hails from the times of the milk-ocean.<sup>287</sup>

*Madhu.* 'Tis so, queen.

*Chand.* Good times for My King.

*Nava.* Your highness, please go on.

*Chand.* The time He incarnated as a voluptuous woman;  
Legend'ry. Her famous antics known about in heaven.  
The phenomenal, fair Mohini ...<sup>288</sup>

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] Queen's discovered Me ...

*Chand.* Even Shiva was taken by Her ravishing beauty!  
We too'd be foxed if we encountered ravishing Mohini!

*Radha/Ping/Madhu.* [*Aside.*] Queen's figured out what's going on!

*Chand.* [*With a smile.*] Dear Satyabhama sakhi,  
If we wished to meet Her too, how might we be successful?

[*Radha gives Krishna a look of frustration.*]

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] Words fail Me now – this effort really hasn't ended well.

<sup>287</sup> The legend of the milk ocean describes how it was churned by the gods and demons to generate a number of wonders, among which was the Syamantaka jewel. The elixir of immortality was also yielded, and Krishna incarnated as a beautiful woman called Mohini, in order to secure the nectar exclusively for the gods

<sup>288</sup> Mohini is the name of the 17<sup>th</sup> incarnation of Krishna

\_\_\_ Test, My queen. Dressed up to see if *you'd* identify Me ...

[*Chandravali pretends to be astonished.*

*Chand.* Oh heavens! It's my husband!

[*Chandravali pays her respects.*

*Madhu.*

Why, brava, your majesty!

[*To Krishna.*] My friend – looks like You aren't the actor that You thought You were.

*Madh.* Sir, that's known as clubbing the disabled<sup>289</sup> with a chopper.

*Chand.* Not at all, Madhavi – great success, He's simply gorgeous!

*Radha.* [*Aside.*] The worst kind of subjugation ...

*Chand.*

Dear Lord – please forgive

us,

It wasn't such a great idea to want to see the jewel.

*Krishna.* Upbraid Me do, dear queen - always find you kind and helpful ...

*Parr.* [*Off-stage.*] Now we know, sakhi ...

*Madhu.*

My parrakeet. The steward has

him ...

*Krishna.* [*Aside.*] That talking bird's a downright nuisance ...

*Parr.* [*Off-stage.*] While Satya's in the palace there's no happiness for me!

Kundeen is the answer – father's house for Her, it must be!

One way or another!

*Radha.* [*Aside. With a sigh.*] Well done, chatty friend – verbatim!

So, to Viper Lake - and let the great serpents there have Me,

That is My sincere desire - dying there would suit Me ...

[*Exeunt Radha, Navavrinda and Pingala.*

*Chand.* I have a pressing need, my Lord.

*Krishna.*

My dear queen, please fire away.

*Chand.* I hate the fact I keep on spoiling things for You this way;

I want to make You happy, Lord, and things just retrogress -

Would You mind if I went back to being a cowherdess ...?

*Tul.* [*Off-stage.*] It's Nanda Maharaja! Yashoda Ma! Shree Purnamasi!

The village of cow-herders here for Krishna's company!

Their golden chariots about to enter Krishna's city!

[*Krishna's elated.*

*Krishna.* [*To Madhu.*] Our queen has done a miracle, My friend. My family!

Come!

[*Exeunt Krishna and Madhumangala.*

[*Chandravali and Madhavi observe that the arrivals have now entered the city.*

*Chand.* The noble cow-herders are here ... !

<sup>289</sup> Literally, clubbing someone who has just been bitten by a deadly snake. In other words, merciless

*Tul.* [Off-stage.] Hail Purnamasi!  
 Leading Yashoda to the rooms she'll share with Rohini ...  
*Madh.* Just see! Your difficulties surely reached Rohini's ears.  
*Chand.* Let's go and greet the elders.  
 [They head to the guests' quarters.  
 We're at Rohini's quarters ...  
*Tul.* [Off-stage.] Yashoda's son is overwhelmed by mother's milk and tears ...  
 [Chandravali sees Yashoda with Krishna.  
*Chand.* My husband's in His mother's arms - this tender moment's hers.  
 I'll wait a bit.

*Guests' quarters of palace.*

*Enter YASHODA, PAURNAMASI, MUKHARA and ROHINI. Re-enter KRISHNA (no longer disguised).*

[Tearful Yashoda is holding her son, and enjoying the scent of His head.  
*Yasho.* [Sitting.] I've been terribly forgotten, my son;  
 For too long. Wondered how You've been.  
*Krishna.* [Sitting, tearful.] Ashamed, Ma – don't go on ...  
*Mukha.* Makes no difference Purnamasi says Krishna's Almighty.  
 To me, He's just a cowherd prince.  
*Krishna.* [Smiles.] Thank you, splendid lady;  
 Very touched, Mukhara - I do love that disposition;  
 Carry on, continue with the admirable notion.  
*Paurna.* Been waiting far too long to see Yashoda holding Krishna.  
*Krishna.* Do My pets not comfort you in any way, dear mother ... ?  
*Paurna.* Comfort! My dear boy, Your pets have been a source of torture.  
*Yasho.* Was dreadful for that helpless fawn - the one You used to nurture.  
 Every day You'd give it milk, and then You disappeared;  
 Its cries were terrifying – something all the cowherds feared.  
*Paurna.* Poor cowherds have to see Your plume-providing peacocks too,  
 See those peacocks dancing when dark clouds remind them of You.  
 Boys' anguish is palpable.  
 [Krishna remains silent for a moment.  
*Krishna.* How are they now, dear lady?  
 My comrades?  
*Paurna.* Well, Your old companions yearn to see You badly,  
 They're in the courthouse with Your father. Don't know where You are.  
*Krishna.* I go to them, noble lady.  
 [Krishna starts for the courthouse.]

[*Aside.*] Need Lalita and Padma -  
I'll have someone get them to pay their respects to My mother ...

[*Exit.*

*Chand.* [*Aside.*] Now's my opportunity ...

[*Chandravali approaches.*

*Purna.*

Chandravali, Yashoda!

[*Purnamasi hugs Chandravali.*

*Yasho.* [*Rising.*] My child – 'tis a blessing to be seeing you once more!

[*Yashoda hugs Chandravali, who touches her feet.*

*Chand.* [*Tearful.*] Your kindness, mother's, something there's just no accounting for;

For me, the chance to touch your feet is truly a good fortune.<sup>290</sup>

*Yasho.* Beloved child, please don't forget the cow-herders' commune.

*Chand.* Your loving's the loving of a thousand mothers, Ma;  
I'd have to be a fool to not keep track of where *you* are.

[*Mukhara embraces Chandravali.*

*Mukha.* Radhika's gone so long!

[*Mukhara weeps.*

*Yasho.*

Why must you be like this, Grandma?

Why unleash great landslides of grief by mentioning Radha?

*Chand.* I'm lost without my sister – suddenly ... away She flew ...

*Rohi.* [*Re: Radha.*] That cherished beauty of the universe. Where to? Where to?

*Purna.* I should have died ... my heart's too hard.

[*Chandravali is especially upset.*

*Rohi.*

[*Calm.*] Please see to her,

Yashoda;

Relieve my Chandravali – simply must take care of her.

[*Yashoda embraces Chandravali again.*

*Yasho.* Please do not be downcast, my dear – it won't change destiny ...

*Re-enter STEWARD and LALITA, with PADMA slightly behind.*

[*Seeing who is ahead, Padma is intrigued.*

*Pad.* [*Aside.*] That exceptional young girl looks familiar to me.

[*She approaches Lalita and is moved to tears.*

I'm sorry, beautiful – I'm welling up just seeing you -

'Deed. Much like my friend Lalita – Lalita number two.

[*Lalita struggles to reply.*

<sup>290</sup> In vedic culture, blessings of superiors are available by touching their feet

*Lal.* Why, Padma - is it you!

*Pad.*

I can't believe it! Lalita!

*[The two embrace and remain thus.*

*Lal.* [*Teary.*] You lost your Chandravali!

*Pad.*

Sakhi, fate's been so bitter.

*Stew.* You have reached the quarters of the honoured guests now, ladies.

*Lal./Pad.* And that is why we are both here – to greet the noble mothers!

*[Lalita and Padma enter the guests' quarters. Rohini turns.*

*Rohi.* This arrival's very like Lalita, Purnamasi.

*Purna.* [*Breath-taken.*] But it is Radha's Lalita!

*[Purnamasi, Yashoda, Rohini, Chandravali and Mukhara rush to Lalita's side.*

*Lal.*

Mother Yashoda – bless

me!

The Gokool family is here ... !

*[Lalita falls at the feet of her relatives who raise her up and hold her.*

*Chand.*

'Live and well Lalita!

*[Chandravali embraces Lalita.*

*Lal.* Chandravali!

*[Lalita hugs Chandravali back.*

You! Our precious people!<sup>291</sup>

*Chand.*

Lalita!

Padma!

*Lal.* [*Going to Mukhara.*] Just become so hard to find my Radharani ...

*[Lalita, tearful, embraces Mukhara.*

*Pad.* [*Hugs Chandravali.*] It's good to see you, sakhi!

*[Chandravali cries.<sup>292</sup>*

*Purna.*

We've, a melting

Rukmini ...

Dissolved into tears.

*[Lalita is surprised to hear Chandravali addressed as Rukmini.*

*Lal.*

Is *she*, 'Rukmini', noble lady?

My dear friend, Chandravali?

*Purna.*

Yes.

*Lal.*

My goodness - now I see!

It's *she* who's troubled by Satya, the sun-god devotee,

She's the royal princess Satyabhama makes unhappy.

*[Purnamasi turns to Chandravali.*

*Purna.* You're in secure hands – I do assure you, Chandravali;

<sup>291</sup> Literally, 'it is as if I have unexpectedly come across a gem (Chandravali) in a nectar ocean (the residents of Gokoola)'

<sup>292</sup> Chandravali and Padma are close friends

I'm entirely in the picture now, thanks to Rohini.

*Yasho.* You're loved as much as Radha, child – we'll make sure you're happy.

*Chand.* [To Lalita.] And I love Radhika, She who has disappeared from Me -  
Not one moment of her lovely presence have I ever,  
Who have I? A princess who, seems, wants to make me suffer,  
Who's always there, Lalita - who's co-habiting with us ...

*Enter BAKULA, flustered.*

*Bak.* [To Chandravali.] Satya is nearing Viper Lake, O queen! It's perilous!  
She's incorrigible!

*Paurna.* Be alright – no fear of snakes' teeth -  
The lotus-chilling breezes keep the snakes in holes, beneath.

*Bak.* I saw the King approaching when He heard the situation,  
The news from Navavrinda made Him full of consternation.

*All.* To Viper Lake! Enough delay!

[*Exeunt, in great haste.*]

*Viper Lake.*

*Re-enter RADHA and PINGALA.*

*Radha.* Cannot do anything!  
What's the point of life if Krishna can't give Me His loving?  
My mind's made up ...

*Ping.* Aren't we being over-hasty, princess ... ?

*Radha.* [Dismissive.] You see the way the waters stir? A lovely thing. No less.  
*Long* wanted to admire this realm of bright-black snakes, have I ...

[*Radha experiences a tremor in Her left eye.*<sup>293</sup>]

What's this superstitious nonsense! I defy My quivering eye!  
Hoping is a cruel tormentor - just won't let Me die.

*Ping.* Fact is, a trembling eye's a sign that good fortune is nigh,  
Just bear with it a moment.

*Radha.* This eye's a treach'rous one ... !

[*Radha enters the lake from the shore.*]

*Re-enter NAVAVRINDA (holding the Syamantaka jewel) and KRISHNA.*

*Krishna.* You're hard-hearted! This is wrong! My one and only haven!

<sup>293</sup> A trembling left eye, for women, is an auspicious sign

Why, what has meant to be for so long's only just begun!<sup>294</sup>

Don't end it all – be kind. But You must show some compassion!

*[Krishna goes in the lake after Her.*

*Nava.* This will bring good luck, my King.

*[Navavrinda ties the Syamantaka jewel on Krishna's wrist.*

*Radha.*

One unfortunate person;

Snakes won't even bite me!

*[Radha looks for snakes in the water. Krishna swiftly reaches Her.*

*Krishna.*

Reckless girl, what's the idea!

*[Krishna places His hands round Radha's shoulders. Radha is too upset to realise it is Him, and assumes Krishna's arms to be snakes.*

*Radha.* *[Gratified.]* Blessed are the snakes! It's wonderful - I don't feel fear; These vipers give Me solace. Good fortune's favouring Me! Now anguish will be banished for all of eternity!

*[Radha looks more closely at Krishna's wrist, upon which is the Syamantaka jewel.*

*Nava.* *[Quizzical.]* She surely knows who holds Her ...

*Radha.*

This bejewelled

snake's not biting ...<sup>295</sup>

*Nava.* Krishna's arms around You, fair one – that is what You're wearing! That's Your jewel, and it's His arm. With which You *are* familiar,<sup>296</sup> That's Krishna's arm - I do assure You. Not a gleaming viper!

*Krishna.* So, why would You deprive eyes from what eyes are s'posed to do? The real purpose of seeing, fair one's, seeing lovely You; The gorgeous You who's beauty makes the Fortune Goddess<sup>297</sup> tremble ...

*[Radha turns towards Krishna.*

*Radha.* I'm unforgivable! Now the entire world's in trouble! Krishna will be poisoned by serpents because of Me!

*[Krishna leads Radha ashore, ties the Syamantaka jewel around Radha's wrist and makes the following complaint with a smile.*

*Krishna.* Your liking for vipers seems inordinate, quite frankly, Why is it that the same regard for Me cannot be given? Let's get You to the jasmine garden.

*[Exeunt Radha, Krishna and Pingala.*

*Re-enter PAURNAMASI, YASHODA, CHANDRAVALI, LALITA, PADMA, ROHINI and*

<sup>294</sup> The literal metaphor: Krishna's life breath is a sparrow who has found its shady refuge. Krishna complains that His tree of refuge (Radha) is mercilessly trying to destroy itself

<sup>295</sup> Certain snakes bear jewels in their hoods

<sup>296</sup> Krishna has a birth mark on His arm of a discus weapon

<sup>297</sup> Aka, Goddess Lakshmi

## MUKHARA.

*Yasho.* [Tearful.] Rotten luck goes on -  
For our sins, Viper Lake again - yet more vipers to fear!<sup>298</sup>

*Nava.* [Aside.] Syamantak's on Radha now – She's nearly in the clear.

\_\_\_ All's well beloved ladies – absolutely guarantee!

Satya came ashore, Lord Shree Krishna brought Her to safety.

*All.* All's well! All's well indeed ... !

[All are greatly relieved.]

*Tul.* [Off-stage.] 'Deed all is well - most certainly!

Lord Brahma's come to honour Lord Shree Krishna zealously!

As have Shiva and his wife, atop their bull-ride Nandi ...

[Navavrinda directs everyone's attention off-stage.]

*Nava.* Look how Lord Krishna receives Shiva so graciously!

[Everyone's gratified.]

*Paurna.* Where is Satya, Navavrinda?

*Nava.* In the jasmine garden.

*Paurna.* Shree Krishna's busy at the moment – let's get Satya gone.

We'll send her to Kundeen.

*Mukha.* I'll bring Her now, so it is done.

[Mukhara heads for the jasmine garden.]

*Jasmine garden near the palace.*

*Re-enter PINGALA and RADHA.*

[Radha catches the last few words of Mukhara.]

*Radha.* Did I hear right, sakhi?

*Ping.* It's Rukmini and her people ...

They want to banish You ...

*Radha.* Why is death unattainable ...

[Radha veils Her face with Her sari and weeps. Observing Radha from a distance, Mukhara is surprised and returns to Paurnamasi.]

*Paurna.* Why're you back, Mukhara?

*Mukha.* I must say something, good lady.

I daren't say.

<sup>298</sup> Yashoda has fearful memories regarding the original Viper Lake in which lived a venomous, gargantuan Hydra named Kaliya, whom Her son Krishna faced in a dangerous battle



*Radha.*

Fate's been a mean deluder!

*Re-enter KRISHNA.*

*Krishna.* To be a cow-herder again - now that's My kind of joy!

[*Yashoda brings Krishna by her.*

*Yasho.* Close call in Viper Lake for You and this fair girl, my boy.

*Nava.* Ma, there's no snakes in Viper-Lake. There just appears to be.

[*Everyone smiles.*

*Lal.* Radhe, where's Vishakha?

*Nava.*

Here's somebody looking happy -

[*They see Vishakha approaching.*

Vishakha – the goddess of Vrindavan's mountain river!

*Enter VISHAKHA.*

[*All go to greet Vishakha who pays the senior ladies respects. Vishakha embraces Radha.*

*Lal.* And, you too, Vishakha! Oh!

[*Vishakha and Lalita embrace.*

*Chand.* [To *Paurnamasi.*] My king must wed my sister.

Can you tell Him, dear lady.

*Purna.* [To *Chandravali.*] None are tender as you are.

It's always been in the stars that Krishna'd marry Radha;

My queen, I guarantee will be a divine occasion,

Bells will loudly proclaim the ecstatic celebration.

*Chand.* [To *Paurnamasi.*] Would be good, dear lady, to get Yashoda to ask.

[*Paurnamasi quietly informs Yashoda.*

*Yasho.* My son, darling Chandravali's set us a little task.

*Krishna.* Well then, please let Me know, and I will grant her wish, mama.

*Yasho.* Alright ...

[*Yashoda whispers the request to Krishna.*

*Krishna.* I surely will, mama.

[*Krishna crosses to Chandravali and speaks to her in a hushed voice.*

A task master, you are.

Not sure I'm up to it, My queen - ask for some other thing.

*Chand.* [*Affectionately stern.*] Frankly, if the chance is there, should take it while it's going.

[*Chandravali takes hold of Radha's hand.*

Here's my sister, Lord – treat Her with great love and affection!

[*Chandravali brings Radha by the hand to Krishna.*

*Krishna.* [*Quietly.*] Who doesn't want your favour, queen ... ?

[*Krishna takes Radha's hand.*

*Tul.*

[*Off-stage.*] Announce the

great occasion!

Bear-king breaks the news – here comes the father of the bride!

Through the hills, and striding our way - kinsman at his side -

The luckiest of mountain kings - the king of Vindhya land ... !<sup>299</sup>

[*All look out over the approaching throng of visitors.*

*Purna.* With Krishna's brother Rama and Krishna's father,<sup>300</sup> hand in hand!

The chieftains of Lord Krishna's famous moon-dynasty clan!<sup>301</sup>

Their lovely consorts<sup>302</sup> nearing Dvaraka's nuptial-maidan ... <sup>303</sup>

*Nava.* And with a zealous Shyama linked arm in arm with her peers!

Bhadra right and Shaivya left – a Gokool trio nears ... !

*Tul.* [*Off-stage.*] And, having pronounced her wish her sister Radha's married;

The terms that the queen's father made are now promptly discarded,

And so, noble Garuda's happy leading in a throng,

Sixteen thousand one hundred beautiful maidens strong ... !

*Yasho.* My word! All at the same time, marvels blossom everywhere ... !

*Purna.* And one ecstatic Nanda – Krishna's Gokool-father's here!

And Subal and Shridam, of course, on either side of him!

*Enter NANDA, SUBAL and SHRIDAM.*

*Nanda.* [*To Purnamasi.*] Ah, me! My heart's desire, good lady – feel bless'd to the brim!

[*Nanda embraces Krishna. Purnamasi leads Nanda between Radha and Chandravali. They offer him respects.*

Girls, attend Your belov'd Lord, and You're in luck for ever!

[*Purnamasi continues to behold the arrival of the wedding attendees.*

*Purna.* Countless loving ladies! Arundhati!<sup>304</sup> Lopamudra!<sup>305</sup>

The carriageway is full!

*Nava.* The gods are dropping into Dvaraka!

Now Indra and his consort!<sup>306</sup> Agni and goddess Svaha!<sup>307</sup>

<sup>299</sup> Radha's father, the king of the Vindhya mountains, was escorted to Dvaraka by the god of Govardhan Mountain, through the (Raivata) hills near Dvaraka. The god of those hills also accompanied him .

<sup>300</sup> Krishna's real father's is Vasudeva

<sup>301</sup> Krishna appeared in a family lineage descended from the god of the moon (Chandra)

<sup>302</sup> = Devaki and Revati

<sup>303</sup> Wedding arena

<sup>304</sup> Arundhati is the famously happily married wife of sage Vasishtha

<sup>305</sup> Lopamudra is the famously faithful wife of sage Agastya

<sup>306</sup> Goddess Shachi

<sup>307</sup> The fire god and his consort

The sun-god and his consort!<sup>308</sup> Yamaraj and Dhumorna!<sup>309</sup>  
 And Riddhi and Kuvera!<sup>310</sup> And the moon-lord and his partner!<sup>311</sup>  
 Marut<sup>312</sup> and Varuna<sup>313</sup> with their faithful goddesses ...<sup>314</sup>

*Tul.* [Off-stage.] And Mathura's town-temptress with her balms and fragrances!

Our florist and his garlands, in a spirit of largess,  
 An outfitter with fine high styles of fashionable finesse -  
 The scene's set for a festival of supreme bliss in Dvaraka ...

*Lal.* What more's to see for us than these two married, Vishakha ...

*Paurna.* Greatest moment of all time's right now, Yashoda's son;  
 You'll wed Radha first, then all the young girls one by one!

[All rejoice.]

*Krishna.* [To Radha.] I'm Yours, Radha. Ask anything. Instruct Me how to please You ...

[Radha sees goddess Durga approaching.]

*Radha.* Oh, my!

*Enter DURGA and NANDI, in haste.*

*Durga.* O Radharani! Do not doubt what I say's true:  
 Your divine Vrindavan realm and family's back with You!  
 There may've been some delay, but that's not set to continue!  
 Shree Krishna here, is also of the same opinion too.<sup>315</sup>

*Nandi.* [Aside.] My dear papa was right, then.<sup>316</sup>

[Radha is overcome by this understanding and is comforted by Nandi.]

My dear friend, it's surely true.

*Krishna.* I want to know how I can please You more and more, beloved.

*Radha.* [Reflective.] How more? Why, I've My friends – I am so perfectly delighted.

Yashoda's My dear mama, My sister's right with Me;  
 You're mine in these Vrindavan's groves – I'm in bliss already!  
 But, it would be very kind if You'd grant something further,  
 To loving devotees of Yours who live in Gokoola:

<sup>308</sup> Goddess Samjna

<sup>309</sup> Dhumorna is the wife of Yamaraj

<sup>310</sup> The god of riches (Kuvera) and his wife

<sup>311</sup> The moon-god's consort is goddess Rohini

<sup>312</sup> The wind god

<sup>313</sup> The god of the oceans

<sup>314</sup> Goddesses Shiva and Gauri

<sup>315</sup> Because all Krishna's relatives and friends are reunited in the New Vrindavan created by Vishvakarma, Vrindavan is effectively up and running again

<sup>316</sup> In the prelude at Act 1, Nandi mentions that her father knew about the dual identities of Krishna's consorts as cowherdesses and princesses

Never be a stranger, never stray far from their eyes,  
 Remain the young and genteel cowherd Lord they idolise!  
 And since this Vrindavan is the most precious place on earth -  
 Where aromatic flowers spruce the air for all they're worth -  
 And deck the groves where gopis love to hear you play the flute -  
 Please kindly serenade Us here. So rests Our prayerful suit.

*Krishna.* Shall be so, My love. Come - let Your sister's will be done!

[*Exeunt.*

*Enter* DIRECTOR.

*Dir.* It's rarely that the Supreme Lord's disclosed to everyone;  
 But truly, Krishna's charm, and His good humour's next to none;  
 Well worthy as a theme for a dance-drama presentation!  
 It was with this in mind, Lalita Madhava was written,  
 Keeping to the rules of dramaturgical tradition,<sup>317</sup>  
 And finished in the Lord's name, May, fifteen forty seven;  
 In Bhadravana forest in Gokoola-Vrindavan.  
 I do hope the adepts will be kind and understanding -  
 Of how I've opened up the realm of transcendental feeling.

[*Exit.*

---

<sup>317</sup> The fine arts are represented in Rupa Goswami's play. These are detailed as totalling sixty four in all