



Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's Vision

*An Exquisitely Beautiful and Blissful Meditation
on Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and His Chanting of the
Holy Name.*

— Presented by Śrīmatī Dāsī and team
ISKCON, Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma



*śrī-caitanya-mano-'bhīṣṭam sthāpitam yena bhū-tale
svayaṁ rūpaḥ kadā mahyaṁ dadāti sva-padāntikam*

When will Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda,
who has established within this material world
the mission to fulfil the desire of Lord Caitanya,
give me shelter under his lotus feet?

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's Vision of Rādhā Govinda's *Jhūlana-līlā* at Rādhā kuṇḍa

Introduction

The vision of the *vraja-premī-bhakta* is very different than ours. We may also be living in Vṛndāvana, but maybe we don't have the potency and purity of heart to actually see the *dhāma*. But the *vraja-premī-bhakta* does. And in his *siddha-deha*, he can walk into that realm, even while embodied, and render service to the Divine Couple.

On some rare occasions, the absorption of the *vraja-premī-bhakta* is so intense that all space and time boundaries melt, and transcendental elements of the *līlā* he is absorbed in actually manifest on the material plane. That is the case with the *līlā* we are about to share with you. The *imli* tree upon which Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's swing hung, and which offered *sevā* to the Divine Couple, manifested in this world as a tribute to the purity and potency of Rūpa's devotional ecstasy and absorption. That *imli* tree continued living at Rādhā-kuṇḍa for more than 400 years and eventually entered into *aparakāṭa-līlā* in the mid 1970's. For at least the following 10-15 years, devoted *rūpānugas* were able to take *darśana* and embrace the remaining stump of that sacred tree. But unfortunately now even that has gone, and we have only the memory of this very sweet and powerful *līlā* of our *parama-ācārya*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.



Those of you who are familiar with *līlā-śāstra* will notice that within this rendition we are often quoting from the *śāstra* of our *ācāryas* and other great Gauḍīyas. Works cited are:

1. Śrīla Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura — Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta
2. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī — Lalita-mādhava
— Dāna-keli-kaumudī
3. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī — Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta
— Śrī Govinda-līlāmṛta
4. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī — Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta
5. Śrīla Kavi-karṇapūra — Kṛṣṇāhnikā-kaumudī



A Very Special *Japa* Session

About 475 years ago, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī was sitting on the southern bank of Rādhā-kuṇḍa absorbed in hearing and chanting *Harināma*. He'd been in Vraja for some twenty years, fully absorbed in serving the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Vraja had become so very, very dear to him.

It was early afternoon on a beautiful monsoon day. The clouds were Śyāma-colored and rumbled gently, but no rain came. They simply shaded Rūpa Gosvāmī from the heat of the sun and encouraged the limitless peacocks on the banks of Rādhā-kunda to dance exuberantly and call out loudly for the rain to fall. Despite this cacophony of sound, his heart was absorbed only in the beautiful, all attractive syllables of *Harināma*. In ecstasy, he thought:

“I do not know how much nectar the two syllables “Kṛṣ-ṇa” have produced. When the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. And when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert.”

(CC Antya 1.120)

Harināma Leads the Way

Overwhelming Rūpa Gosvāmī's heart with such sweet and deep euphoria, *Harināma* smiled and gently led him into the world of His captivating, playful pastimes. Illumined by *Nāma's* all-merciful loving glance, the eyes of Rūpa Gosvāmī's heart eagerly and carefully drank in the scene. It was very clear that the stage was set for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's *jhulana-līlā*. The dense grove of *kadamba* trees was exquisitely beautiful. High in the thick branches of those trees were countless golden *kadamba* flowers showering streams of honey. The blossoming flowers in the creepers added a gentle sweetness — and a sweet scent — to the scene. Many *mañjarīs* very expertly and artistically spread stemless, fragrant flowers over the swing seats and then covered them with fine, soft white silk cloth. Such a beautiful scene — but Rūpa Gosvāmī noticed that today something was very different. Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's elaborately decorated swing did not hang from the branches of two tall *kadamba* trees. Today the main swing hung from golden ropes tightly tied to the large branch of an *imli* tree. Interesting. And that *imli* tree was breathtakingly beautiful. His small, fine leaves stood on end in the ecstasy of anticipation. Anticipation that today he would render personal service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govindadeva.

A Very Special Meeting

Suddenly the sound of a very sweet and melodious voice attracted Rūpa Gosvāmī's attention. He looked in the direction of that mesmerizing sound and was charmed to see that it was Śrīmatī Rādhikā speaking. She was in the company of some of Her dearest *sakhīs* and was commenting on Śyāmasundara who was slowly but surely approaching Her, accompanied by Madhumaṅgala and Subala.

Rādhā continued speaking:

“Ah! Is this a dark tamāla tree, a fresh rain cloud or a dazzling sapphire pillar? Could it be a mountain of kājala, a cluster of blue lotus flowers, a swarm of intoxicated bees, or a stream of the Yamunā? Or is it the beautiful blue lotus eyes of all the vraja-gopīs combined? Is it the handsome demigod Cupid? No, because Cupid does not have a body.

“Could it be the king of śṛṅgāra-rasa? No, because that king is not righteous. Perhaps it is an ocean of nectar? No, it is much broader than an ocean. Maybe it is a blooming desire tree of divine love? No, a desire-tree cannot move! Is this My Prāṇa-priyatama Śyāmasundara? O, how could I be so fortunate?”

Rādhikā said to Viśākhā, *“Sakhī! I am bewildered! Is it My lover or a lotus for My thirsty honeybee eyes? Please tell Me the truth and do not tease Me. Please tell me the truth.”* Rādhā’s bodily hair stood erect in ecstasy. Her voice choked up and Her eyes darted restlessly because of the *sakhīs’* joking. **(Govinda-līlāmṛta)**

Seeing her dear most friend’s condition, Lalitā began to console Her with very well-chosen words:

“Behold the lustre of the youthful Kṛṣṇa who is nectar for the eyes! His hands are the śikṣā-guru teaching graceful gestures to the autumnal lotus. His hands and feet surpass the tenderness of the fresh red sprouts of the desire tree. The beauty of His eyes destroys the pride of all comparable things! (Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta)

“How astonishing! Śyāma’s beautiful complexion colors the whole world dark blue. The splendor of His face transforms everything into moonlight. Kṛṣṇa’s sweet words convert all ears into containers of nectar. His gentle glance turns the sky into a lotus. How wonderfully attractive is the form of Kṛṣṇa!” (Caitanya-candrodaya)

Lalitā’s words somewhat pacified Rādhikā and She gazed at Her beloved Śyāma and then expressed Her thoughts: *“All glories to Kṛṣṇa, My very life and the enchanter of the three worlds! His budding youth is adorned with the last flickering of childhood. His eyes are flashing with love’s delight. He bewilders Cupid with the nectar of His playful smile. His beauty beguiles at every moment. Out of deep love, He drinks from the mouth of His flute. (Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta)*

“Śyāma’s charming lotus hands hold a new flute. His guñjā-mālā defeats the lustre of rubies. The peacock feather on His head sways in the breeze. The charming beauty of Kṛṣṇa’s body thrills My heart. (Lalita-mādhava)

Vṛndā said, *“The crest-jewel of all nectar relishers, whose magnificent chest has taken a vow to make every virtuous gopī fall passionately in love with Him, and whose swinging arms have the power to fulfil the desires of every doe-eyed girl in all the worlds is now splendidly manifest before us.”*

Rādhā exclaimed, *“Sakhī! Many times Kṛṣṇa walked on the pathway of My eyes. However, never before have I seen such wonderful sweetness in Him. My eyes have no power to capture even a single drop of the splendid handsomeness that shines from even one of His limbs.”*

Vṛndā said, “O Rādhā! Whenever You see Govinda, You say He is a wonder You have never seen before. Is Kṛṣṇa really a new person every time You see Him? Or do Your eyes, astonished by love’s enchantment, forget that You have seen Him before?
(Dāna-keli-kaumudī)

Soon Govinda was standing directly before Rādhā, and the Divine couple became overwhelmed with ecstatic love by seeing each other. Their divine bodies, minds and hearts trembled with intense jubilation and They both stood still for a moment, stunned and unable to speak or act. Rādhā-Govinda remained stunned for a few moments due to rapturous emotions. Their aching hearts then melted with the desire to meet and talk together. Rādhārāṇī stopped walking and assumed an attitude of opposition when She saw Kṛṣṇa just in front of Her. She partially covered Her lowered face with Her blue veil to conceal Her eyes which were dancing in joy. Her graceful gestures, constituting the emotional ornament named vilāsa, greatly enhanced Her beauty and the pleasure of Her beloved. (Govinda-līlāmṛta)

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda’s Jhulana-yatrā Begins

But Kṛṣṇa’s plan was not to be side-tracked or thwarted. His mischievous glance and crooked, bold stance clearly indicated that a very special *jhulana* festival was about to begin. Rādhā grew fearful when she saw Her beloved’s aggressive and determined mood, but Lalitā and Viśākhā gently and persistently encouraged Her. “Don’t be nervous”, said Lalitā, “We will be there to make sure Govinda doesn’t push the swing too high. We will protect You.” And Viśākhā added, “We and our *mañjarīs* will personally push the swing. Today’s *jhulana* festival will be gentle and sweet. Just trust us, dear *sakhī!*”



Calmed and convinced by Her friends, Rādhā allowed Herself to be gently but firmly lead towards the Imli-tāla *jhulana* arena by Her beloved Śyāma. The unusual and highly ornamented swing was so designed that Rādhā-Govinda sat facing each other, rather than side-by-side. Kṛṣṇa first stepped onto the swing and gracefully sat down. He then took Rādhā gently by the hand and helped Her take Her seat. The *sakhīs* sprinkled very fragrant small flowers on the Divine Couple for Their pleasure, and offered Them *āratika*, delicious *pān* and beautiful very aromatic garlands. Then the *jhulana* festival began.

Two mañjarīs tucked their veils in their sashes and then stepped back and forth to push the swing, bending their bodies as they moved. Two other fortunate sakhīs stood on either side of the swing eagerly placing tasty betel-nut into Rādhā-Govinda's lotus mouths whenever the swing slowed down. Other virtuous mañjarīs, floating in a river of divine love, attained the pinnacle of bliss by intermittently dousing Rādhā-Govinda with colored flower pollen. (Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta)

And, true to their promise, Lalitā and Viśākhā occasionally pushed the swing for the Divine couple's pleasure.

Eager for sevā, the clouds showered misty rain that transformed into nectar when colliding with the flowers. The nectar drops, which looked like pearls, made friends with the pearl ornaments on Kṛṣṇa and the sakhīs when they fell on their bodies. For the pleasure of Rādhā Govinda, the sakhīs sang sweet songs accompanied by musical instruments. Their songs vibrated in the heavenly abodes. An incomparable fragrance flowered from their open mouths, which attracted the bees to buzz near their faces. (Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta)

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's hair become undone and snarled in Their earrings because of the swinging. The flower sashes around Their waists tangled in Their jewelled waist bells. Their wilted garlands snagged in Their bracelets. (Govinda-lilāmṛta)

As the moon of bliss gradually waxed during Rādhā-Śyāma's swing pastimes, Their necklaces, earrings and garlands danced. Their waistbells and anklebells jingled pleasantly like musical instruments and the Divine couple smiled in satisfaction. (Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta)

The tree branches, moving up and down with the swing's movements, served Rādhā-Govinda by fanning Them with their leaves. The many artistically strung flower garlands tied to the tree branches also moved along with the swing. Swarms of bees tried to land on the garlands. Failing in their attempts, however, the bees simply buzzed loudly while chasing the swinging garlands. (Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta)

Rādhā gained confidence and the sakhīs drowned in bliss watching Rādhā-Govinda move the swing faster and faster by kicking off with Their feet and leaning forward and backward. They sat facing each other and when the swing reached its highest point Rādhā was up and Kṛṣṇa down, and vice versa. Rādhikā's necklaces touched Kṛṣṇa's chest when He was below. Kṛṣṇa's Vaijayantī garland touched Rādhā's blouse when She was below. Witnessing this thrilled the hearts of the sakhīs and mañjarīs. (Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta)

But suddenly, Kṛṣṇa, the ocean of prankish sports, pushed the swing so fast that Rādhikā's back touched the leaves high up in the imli branches. Rādhā become afraid and cried out repeatedly along with Her sakhīs, “O Kṛṣṇa! O Kṛṣṇa! Stop! Stop, don't swing anymore!” Kṛṣṇa pretended not hear them and swung faster. Rādhā's braid loosened, Her veil fell off and Her ornaments flew here and there. Rādhā, fearing that Her petticoat might fly up, tried to hold it down by keeping Her feet together, but She could not. (Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta)

Impish Kṛṣṇa Has a Plan

Kṛṣṇa laughed in impish satisfaction seeing Rādhā's predicament. Again, Kṛṣṇa increased the speed. Her eyes anxious with fear, Rādhā slipped off Her seat and landed on Śyāma. He held Her tightly in His arms and continued swinging faster... and faster...and faster. Then He cast a very special glance at the *imli* tree which both frightened and enlivened His new servant. “Oh no! oh no!”, the tree thought, “Govinda is going to push the swing over the top of my branch. He wants to do a 360° circle on the swing, and He wants to do it a number of times!!!”

“Oh Govinda, Govinda, the golden ropes are tied very tightly to my branch. If You do as You plan, my branch may well break — then what will happen to You and Your beloved Rādhā?! What will happen to You and Your Rādhā then?!”

Overcome with fear of *seva-aparādha*, and not knowing what to do, the *imli* tree closed his eyes and intently meditated on the lotus feet of Baladeva. Taking his cue from seeing this, Govinda repeatedly took the swing in a full circle ride over the branch — and the branch did not break but simply twisted into a spiral shape. Seeing this, Govinda laughed in great satisfaction. But Lalitā and Viśākhā, worried that they'd broken their promise to Rādhikā and fearful for the safety of both Rādhā and Govinda, took hold of the swing ropes as soon as they could and quickly brought the swing to a halt.



Badly shaken, Rādhā stepped off the swing as soon as it stopped and took shelter of Her *sakhīs*. Govinda, giddy from the very special swing ride, took some time to sheepishly step off the swing and follow Her. All the *sakhīs* crowded around Rādhā-Govinda, happy to see Them safe and sound and once more on the ground.

A Very Special Forest Picnic at Rādhā-kunda

Seeing the fatigue of her beloved Rādhā Govinda, Vṛndā-devī, the personification of *līlā-śakti*, fast forwarded the usual daily program. Today there would be no walks in the seasonal forests of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, nor drinking of *mādhvika* nectar. Vṛndā-devī gently but firmly led Rādhā-Govinda to the banks of Rādhā-kunda, where their *sakhīs* deftly prepared Them for Their very much loved water sports.

Meanwhile another group of doe-eyed sakhīs who were expert in making picnic lunches, helped Vṛndā and her Vana-devīs to arrange a forest feast for the pleasure of Rādhā-Govinda. They brought fine quality, soft white rice. All the cooked grains were separate from each other as if they were enemies. The fragrant ghee and pure buttermilk sprinkled on the rice enhanced its attraction. Though all the items had been packed in new earthen pots and brought from the gopīs' homes early in the morning, they appeared spotlessly pure and fresh. The sakhīs arranged loads of excellent, nourishing yogurt, rivaling the moon in coolness and camphor in whiteness. The sweetness of the yogurt surpassed the ocean of nectar.

Vṛndā and her companions supplied emerald green palāśa leaf cups to hold the sweet succulent pomegranate juice; the ambrosial tāla fruit nectar; the white coconut pulp shining like the moon; the tender bījapūra; the tāla fruit pulp, which was as soft as cotton, various roots and sprouts; the peeled lotus seeds; fat, oily kaśeru; tangerine and sweet pīlu fruits; slices of tasty, juicy ripe mango; firm and fragrant sweet grapes; fresh mung sprouts with salt and ginger to give a zesty taste and bowls of juicy sugar cane pieces.
(Kṛṣṇāhnikā-kaumudī)

Śrī Rādhā and Her Sakhīs Serve Śyāmasundara



Refreshed by His watersports in Rādhā-kunda, Kṛṣṇa sat on an āsana of white flowers covered with soft white silk cloth. Subala and Madhumaṅgala sat on Kṛṣṇa's left and right. Rādhā and the sakhīs, ever eager for service, sat opposite Kṛṣṇa in order to serve the delicious preparations brought by Vṛndā. (Govinda-līlāmṛta)

The crystal glasses and decanters full of mango juice filled the air with a sweet fragrance. Cooling drinks prepared from camphor, pepper and ample sugar awaited Kṛṣṇa's tongue. Piles of coconut pulp cut in conch shaped pieces sat on the table. The pulp was covered with a damp cloth to preserve its sweetness and fragrance.

Rādhā deftly picked up a little of each sweet fragrant item and placed it in Kṛṣṇa's hand with a smile. Handling an excellent knife, She expertly cut a mango and blissfully offered the pieces to Her beloved's lotus hand. She squeezed the juice from the choicest mangos and offered it to Kṛṣṇa in a golden cup. (Kṛṣṇāhnikā-kaumudī)

Rādhikā served Her home-made cream sweets made to look like slices of orange, mango and rucaka ornaments. Some sweets had the shape of flower and fruit bearing trees like bilva, pomegranate, mango, orange and coconut. The gopīs gladly served Rādhā's laḍḍus named candrakānti and gaṅgājala, which fully satiated Śyāma's five senses. The sakhīs then distributed nectar drinks of mango and jackfruit mixed with honey, sugar and camphor as well as karpūrakeli and amṛtakeli. Kṛṣṇa, Subala and Madhumaṅgala thoroughly relished all the delicious items served by Rādhārāṇī, whose face beamed with joy while feeding Her sweetheart. Madhumaṅgala made the sakhīs laugh by contorting his face with disgust over one item, or praising another by showing a silly smile of appreciation. (Govinda-līlāmṛta)

While Kṛṣṇa Rests Rādhā and Her Sakhīs Relish His Remnants

Kṛṣṇa energetically ate whatever Rādhā's beautiful hands presented Him. His lotus face and eyes shining with joy, He finally finished His forest picnic and performed ācamana. Kṛṣṇa then filled His mouth with excellent scented spices mixed with camphor, and relaxed for a few moments on a jeweled platform beneath a tree near the entrance of a kuñja. (Kṛṣṇāhnikā-kaumudī)

Tulasī-mañjarī offered betel nuts to Hari as He reclined on a splendid flowerbed in the kuñja. Her friends massaged Govinda's feet, fanned Him with cāmaras and rendered other pleasing services. Madhumangala and Subala, while chewing pan strolled over to the southern side of the banks of Rādhā-kunḍa to rest on two pleasant flowerbeds. (Govinda-līlāmṛta)

The gopīs' hearts trembled in anticipation of honoring Śyāma's sweet remnants. They quietly said to each other, "First our Rādhā should eat and afterwards we will eat separately."

Rādhā, knowing their minds, said, "O faithful Vṛndā! We shall all eat together! Distribute Kṛṣṇa's remnants equally among all the sakhīs. I cannot do anything without all of you. You all saved My very life today. Indeed, you are My very life."

The sakhīs happily sat in a circle. Vṛndā served Rādhā first and then the sakhīs one by one, inducing every sakhī to relish Kṛṣṇa’s prasādam. While eating Kṛṣṇa’s remnants, everyone realized that the food had become exceedingly tasty due to the touch of Kṛṣṇa’s lips. Rādhā and Her sakhīs, enjoying the bliss of eating together, gradually finished all the items. They washed their mouths and then chewed some delicious camphor-scented tāmbūla. (Kṛṣṇāhnikā-kaumudī)

Rūpa Gosvāmī’s Vision Suddenly Broken

Rūpa Gosvāmī’s deep Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa remembrance and reverie was suddenly broken by a very melodious, gentle and familiar voice — that of his dear brother Sanātana. “Rūpa, oh Rūpa, oh my dear Rūpa.....” Rūpa Gosvāmī touched his *japa-mālā* to his heart with great affection and reverence, offered some heartfelt prayers of gratitude to *Harināma* and opened his lotus eyes to behold the effulgent and very beautiful form of Sanātana. “Dear Rūpa, I’ve been waiting for more than two hours for you. Have you forgotten that today we are to meet Jīva at Sevā-kuñja to discuss Mahāprabhu’s latest directive about the need for Rādhā-Govinda’s temple construction?”

“Please forgive me, my dear brother,” said Rūpa Gosvāmī as he very humbly offered him his heartfelt obeisances. Sanātana Gosvāmī brought his very dear brother to his feet and fondly embraced him. “My dear Rūpa, from the touch of your embrace and the tears glistening in your eyes I can understand that *Harināma* has been very kind to you today.”

Hearing his brother’s words, Rūpa Gosvāmī sobbed uncontrollably and uttered words that only he and his brother could hear and understand:

“Oh Sanātana, I do not know how much nectar the two syllables “Kṛṣ-ṇa” have produced. When the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. And when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert.” (CC Antya 1.120)

“Oh Sanātana, *Harināma* is so very very kind!”

***Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare***

The Exalted Position of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

Before the creation of this cosmic manifestation, the Lord enlightened the heart of Lord Brahmā with the details of the creation and manifested the Vedic knowledge. In exactly the same way, the Lord, being anxious to revive the Vṛndāvana pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, impregnated the heart of Rūpa Gosvāmī with spiritual potency. By this potency, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī could revive the activities of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, activities almost lost to memory. In this way, He spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world.

— CC Madhya 19.1