

— *The Science of a Smile* —

**An Introduction to Ecstatic Loving Laughter (*hāsyā-bhakti-rasa*)
based on Srila Prabhupada's *Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 45.**

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

An Introduction

Everything about Vṛndāvana is magical mystical spontaneous and sublime. It's the land of Kṛṣṇa and His *premī-bhaktas* — those whose hearts are eternally and fully blossomed in love for Him. Here every step is a dance, and every word is a song. All arts are perfected and all sciences are known. But the atmosphere is not stilted or stifled, nor sober and grave — it reverberates with clever jokes and much laughter. It's ecstatic loving laughter – and the center of it all is KRŚNA!

One day an old mendicant approached the door of Mother Yaśodā's house, and Kṛṣṇa told Yaśodā, “***My dear mother, I don't want to go near this skinny villain. If I go there, he might put Me in his begging bag and take Me away from you!***” In this way, the wonderful child Kṛṣṇa began to look at His mother, while the mendicant who was standing at the door, tried to hide his smiling face. But he could not do so. He immediately and very openly expressed a full smile.

Once one of Kṛṣṇa's friends informed Him, “***My dear Kṛṣṇa, if You open Your mouth, I shall give You a nice sugar candy mixed with yogurt.***” Kṛṣṇa immediately opened His mouth, but instead of giving Him sugar candy with yogurt, the friend dropped a flower in His mouth. After tasting this flower, Kṛṣṇa turned His mouth in a disfigured way, and upon seeing this all His friends began to laugh very loudly.



Kṛṣṇa, in the dress of a young girl, told Rādhārāṇī, “***Oh, You hardhearted girl! Don't You know that I am Your sister? Why are You unable to recognize Me? Be merciful upon Me and embrace Me with love!***” Kṛṣṇa was speaking very sweet words, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī could understand His purpose. But because She was in front of many of Her superiors, She simply smiled and did not say or do anything.

Exploring the Science of a Smile

According to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, laughter in ecstatic love can be broken down into six divisions. These divisions, according to different degrees of smiling, are called in the Sanskrit language ***smita, hasita, vihasita, avahasita, apahasita*** and ***atihasita***. These six classes of smiling can be further classified as major and minor. The major division includes ***smita, hasita*** and ***vihasita*** smiling, and the minor division includes ***avahasita, apahasita*** and ***atihasita*** smiling.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī also tells us there's a pattern to all this smiling. ***Smita*** (mild smiling) and ***Hasita*** (overt smiling) usually appear on the faces of Kṛṣṇa's superiors (sages, confidential advisors or older friends). ***Vihasita*** (soft laughter) and ***Avahasita*** (intense laughter) appear sometimes in Kṛṣṇa's messengers or servants. ***Aphasita*** (uncontrollable laughter) and ***Atihasita*** (extreme laughter) usually appear in children or old Vrajavāsīs associating with young children. But of course, the pattern may break at any time to accommodate the mood and pastime — and Kṛṣṇa's desire. Such is the delightful nature of Vṛndāvana!

1. Smita

When one is smiling but his teeth are not visible, one can distinctly mark a definite change in the eyes and in the cheeks. This is called smita smiling.

Once when Kṛṣṇa was stealing yogurt, Jaratī, the headmistress of the house, could detect His activities, and she was therefore coming very hurriedly to catch Him. At that time, Kṛṣṇa became very much afraid of Jaratī and went to His elder brother, Baladeva. He said, “***My dear brother, I have stolen yogurt! Just see — Jaratī is coming hurriedly to catch Me!***”

When Kṛṣṇa was thus seeking the shelter of Baladeva because He was being chased by Jaratī, all the great sages in the heavenly planets began to smile — and so did Baladeva! This smiling is called ***smita*** smiling.



2. *Hasita*

Smiling in which the teeth are slightly visible is called *hasita* smiling.

One day Abhimanyu, the so-called husband of Rādhārāṇī, was returning home, and at that time he did not know that Kṛṣṇa was there. But Kṛṣṇa immediately changed His dress to look exactly like Abhimanyu and approached Abhimanyu's mother, Jatilā, addressing her thus: ***“My dear mother, I am your real son Abhimanyu, but just see — Kṛṣṇa, dressed up like me, is coming before you!”*** Jatilā, the mother of Abhimanyu, immediately believed that Kṛṣṇa was her own son and thus became very angry at her real son who was coming home. She began to drive away her real son, who was crying, ***“Mother! Mother! What are you doing?”***

Seeing this incident, all the girlfriends of Rādhārāṇī who were present there began to smile, and a portion of their teeth was visible. This is an instance of *hasita* smiling.



Our search for an *hasita* smile on the face of one of Kṛṣṇa's beloveds was unsuccessful. However Kṛṣṇa, captured on canvas in His later *kaumāra* years, kindly gives us a glimpse of how enchanting such a smile can be.....



3. *Vihasita*

When the teeth are distinctly visible in a smile, that is called vihasita.

One day when Kṛṣṇa was engaged in stealing butter and yogurt in the house of Jatilā, He assured His friends, “*My dear friends, I know that this old lady is now sleeping very soundly, because she is breathing very deeply. Let us silently steal butter and yogurt without making any disturbance.*”

But the old lady, Jatīlā, was not sleeping — and so she could not contain her smiling. She audibly laughed and her teeth immediately became distinctly visible. This is an instance of *vihasita* smiling.

Such smiles are often found on the faces of Kṛṣṇa's playful *gopa* friends.



And such *vihasita* smiles are even found on the moonlike faces of His beloved *gopīs*.....



4. *Avahasita*

In a state of smiling when the nose becomes puffed and the eyes squint, the smiling is called *avahasita*.

Once, early in the morning when Kṛṣṇa returned home after performing His *rāsa* dance, Mother Yaśodā looked upon Kṛṣṇa's face and addressed Him thus: ***"My dear son, why do Your eyes look like they have been smeared with some oxides? Have You dressed Yourself with the blue garments of Baladeva today?"***

When Mother Yaśodā was addressing Kṛṣṇa in that way, a girlfriend who was nearby began to smile with a puffed nose and squinting eyes. This is an instance of *avahasita* smiling.

The *gopī* knew that Kṛṣṇa had been enjoying the *rāsa* dance and that Mother Yaśodā could not detect her son's activities or understand how He had become covered with the *gopīs'* makeup. Her smiling was in the *avahasita* feature.

5. *Apahasita*

When tears from the eyes are added to the smiling (and laughing) and the shoulders are shaking, the smile is called *apahasita*.

When child Kṛṣṇa was dancing in response to the singing of the old maid-servant Jaratī, Nārada was astonished.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who controls all the movements of great demigods like Brahmā, was now dancing to the indications of an old maid-servant. Seeing this fun, Nārada also began to dance, and his shoulders trembled, and his eyes moved.

Due to his smiling, his teeth also became visible, and on account of the glaring effulgence from his teeth, the clouds in the skies turned silver.

6. *Atihasita*

When a smiling person claps his hands and leaps in the air, the smiling expression changes into *atihasita*, or overwhelming laughter.

An example of *atihasita* was manifested in the following incident.

Kṛṣṇa once addressed Jaratī thus: “*My dear good woman, the skin of your face is now slackened, and so your face exactly resembles that of a monkey. As such, the King of the monkeys, Balīmukha, has selected you as his worthy wife.*”

While Kṛṣṇa was teasing Jaratī in this way, she replied that she was certainly aware of the fact that the King of the monkeys was trying to marry her, but she had already taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa, the killer of many powerful demons, and therefore she had already decided to marry Kṛṣṇa instead of the King of the monkeys.

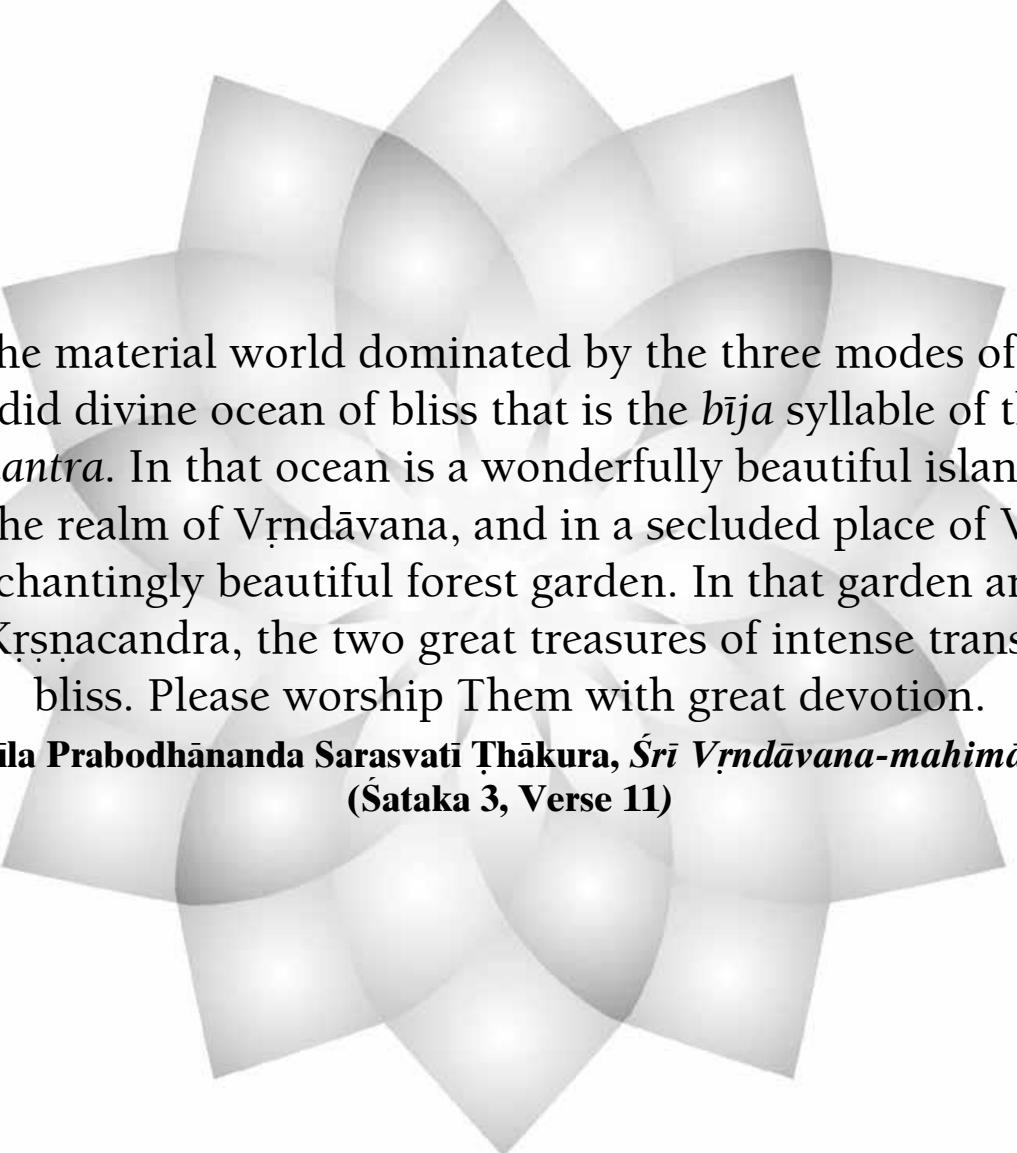
Hearing this sarcastic reply by the talkative Jaratī, all the cowherd girls present there began to laugh very loudly and clap their hands. Such laughter, accompanied by the clapping of hands, is called *atihasita*.

Concluding Words

It's a fascinating science, isn't it?! Just hearing about it is enough to lighten a troubled heart and put a smile on a tired face! And it's not a rare or exclusive science. There are 82 hits for *smiles* and *smiling* in Kṛṣṇa Book alone. That's close to a smile a chapter – even though so many chapters deal with killing demons! Ecstatic loving laughter — with all it's smiles! — is DEFINITELY a delightfully prominent and pervading aspect of Vṛndāvana culture and pastimes.

— Jaya Rādhā! Jaya Śyāma! Jaya Vṛndāvana-dhāma! —





Beyond the material world dominated by the three modes of nature is the splendid divine ocean of bliss that is the *bīja* syllable of the Kāma-gāyatrī *mantra*. In that ocean is a wonderfully beautiful island. In that island is the realm of Vṛndāvana, and in a secluded place of Vṛndāvana is an enchantingly beautiful forest garden. In that garden are Śrī Śrī Rādhikā-Kṛṣṇacandra, the two great treasures of intense transcendental bliss. Please worship Them with great devotion.

— Śrila Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, *Śrī Vṛndāvana-mahimāmrta*
(Śataka 3, Verse 11)

**(jaya) śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita
gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda kī jaya**

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