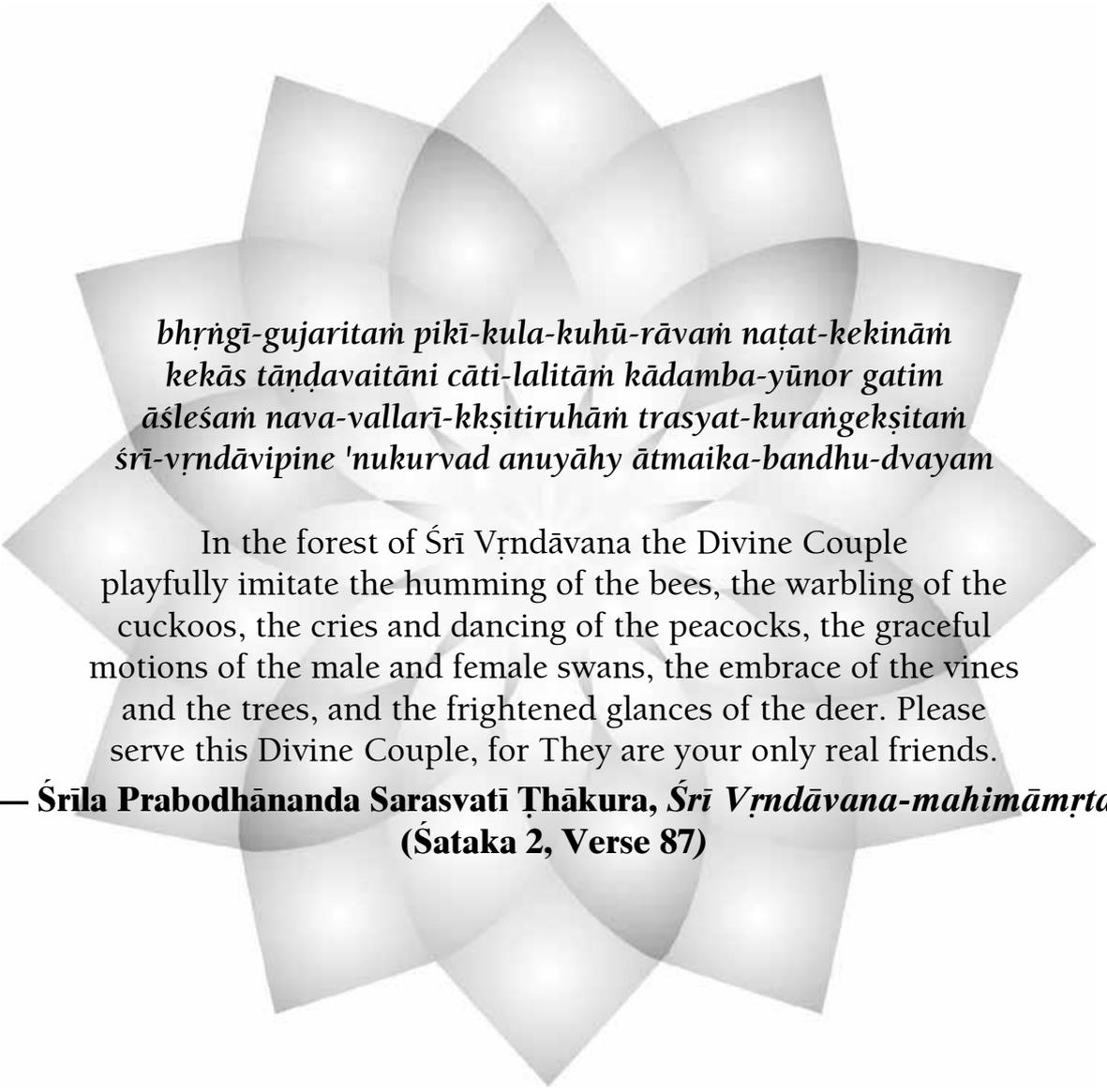




# *The Sweet Speech of Vraja*

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



*bhṛṅgī-gujaritaṁ piki-kula-kuhū-rāvaṁ naṭat-kekinām  
kekās tāṇḍavaitāni cāti-lalitām kādamba-yūnor gatim  
āśleśaṁ nava-vallarī-kkṣitiruhām trasyat-kuraṅgekṣitaṁ  
śrī-vṛndāvipine 'nukurvad anuyāhy ātmaika-bandhu-dvayam*

In the forest of Śrī Vṛndāvana the Divine Couple playfully imitate the humming of the bees, the warbling of the cuckoos, the cries and dancing of the peacocks, the graceful motions of the male and female swans, the embrace of the vines and the trees, and the frightened glances of the deer. Please serve this Divine Couple, for They are your only real friends.

— Śrīla Prabhānanda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, *Śrī Vṛndāvana-mahimāmṛta*  
(Śataka 2, Verse 87)

# The Sweet Speech of Vraja

In any relationship, the nature of the reciprocation and *rasa* that evolves between loved ones will naturally be very much influenced by their quality of speech — their verbal exchanges. This is particularly so in Vraja — a land where the culture is sublimely subtle and ever-so-fascinatingly sweet. It's a land where Kṛṣṇa not only loves everyone and has loving exchanges with everyone but speaks to them all in their own language!

An old woman in Vṛndāvana, present at the time of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, once stated in surprise, "*How wonderful it is that Kṛṣṇa, who owns the hearts of all the young girls of Vrajabhūmi, can nicely speak the language of Vrajabhūmi with the gopīs, while in Sanskrit He speaks with the demigods, and in the language of the animals He can even speak with the cows and buffalo! Similarly, in the language of the Kashmir Province, and with the parrots and other birds, as well as in most common languages, Kṛṣṇa is so expressive!*" She inquired from the gopīs as to how Kṛṣṇa had become so expert in speaking so many different types of languages.

— Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 21

Before we dive heart first into this ambrosial ocean of the sweet speech of Vraja, it would seem appropriate to become at least somewhat aware of the MYSTERY of the speech of Vraja. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura touches on this exquisite aspect of Vraja culture in his *Śrī Vraja-rīti-cintāmaṇi*. Let's see what he has to share with us...

## — The Mystery of the Speech of Vraja —

When the Vrajavāsīs say the word "*matsara*", they do not mean "envy", but "my lake". When they say "*khala*", they do not mean "demon", but "a woman's sash". When they say "*mala*" they do not mean "defect", but "gentle and delicate". In this way they never speak anything unpleasant, but everything they say is pleasing and auspicious.



When the Vrajavāsīs say the word "*pradoṣa*" they do not mean "fault", but rather "evening". When they say "*doṣākara*" they do not mean "rascal", but

“moon”. When they say “*roṣa*”, they do not mean “anger”, but “love”. When they say “*moṣa*” they do not mean a cruel thief, but Kṛṣṇa’s playfully stealing of the *gopīs*’ yogurt. In this way they never speak anything unpleasant, but everything they say is pleasing and auspicious.



When the Vrajavāsīs say the word “*pañka*” they do not mean “mud”, but aromatic ointments such as musk, *kuṅkuma*, and sandalwood paste. When they say “crookedness” they do not mean the crookedness of a thief, but the beautiful shape of spiral earrings or some other ornament. When they say “hardness” they do not mean the hard-heartedness of a cruel person, but the hardness of a gem or stone. In this way they never speak anything unpleasant, but everything they say is pleasing and auspicious.



When the Vrajavāsīs say the word “*rajaḥ*” they do not mean “material passion”, but “the pollen of flowers”. When they say “*tamaḥ*” they do not mean “ignorance”, but “the pleasant darkness of night”. When they say “*dvandvam*” they do not mean “the material dualities of happiness and distress”, but “a happy couple”. When they say “slowness” they do not refer to the intellect, but the wind. When they say “restlessness” they do not mean anything inauspicious, but rather “great eagerness to see Lord Hari,” or else “the charmingly restless glances of the Lord.” In this way they never speak anything unpleasant, but everything they say is pleasing and auspicious.



When the Vrajavāsīs say the word “cows” they refer to the celestial *kāmadhenu* cows. When they say “trees” they mean *kalpa-vṛkṣa* trees that fulfill all desires. When they say “rocks” they mean *cintāmaṇi* gems. How is it possible to describe the limitless opulences of Vraja?

— *Śrī Vraja-rīti-cintāmaṇi*, 1.33-34, 1.36-37, 1.39

**From these insights from Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, we can clearly understand that nothing is straightforward or crass about the words spoken in Vraja. Having said that, let’s begin our journey into the world of the sweet speech of Vraja.**

## — An Introduction to Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana —

**Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us that**

*Kṛṣṇa's age is considered in three periods: from His appearance day to the end of His fifth year is called **kaumāra**, from the beginning of the sixth year up to the end of the tenth year is called **paugaṇḍa**, and from the eleventh to the end of the fifteenth year is called **kaiśora**.*

*As far as Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes are concerned, they are mostly executed during the kaumāra, paugaṇḍa and kaiśora periods. His affectionate pastimes with His parents are executed during His kaumāra age. His friendship with the cowherd boys is exhibited during the paugaṇḍa period. And His friendship with the gopīs is exhibited during the age of kaiśora.*

— Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 26

Many of Kṛṣṇa's *kaumāra* pastimes involve His wonderful mother, Yaśodā Māi. And how she sees Him at that age is breath-takingly attractive.

*His scattered hairs were touching His eyebrows, and His eyes were restless, but He could not express His feelings with proper words; still, when He was talking, His talk was so nice and sweet to hear. When Mother Yaśodā looked at His little ears and saw Him naked, trying to run very quickly with His little legs, she was merged into the ocean of nectar. Kṛṣṇa's ornaments at this age are a pearl hanging from the septum of His nose, butter on His lotuslike palms, and some small bells hanging from His waist. It is stated that when Mother Yaśodā saw that the child was moving, ringing the bells on His waist, smiling at her with a pearl between His nostrils and with butter on His hands, she became wonderfully pleased to see her little child in that fashion.*

— Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 43

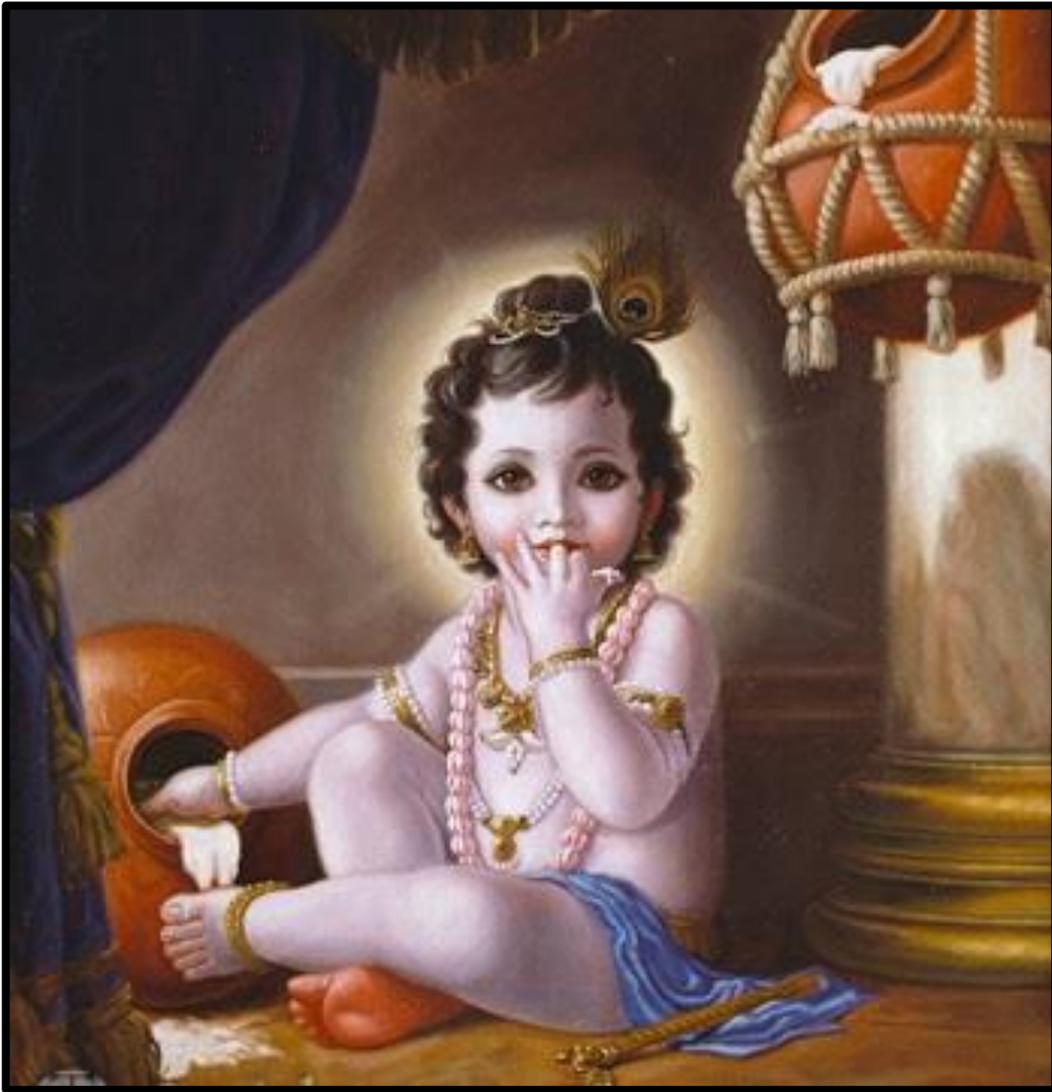
So let's now relish just a glimpse of the nature of baby Kṛṣṇa's loving verbal exchanges with His mother.

### — He's a Greedy Boy, Mātā! —

One day when no one was looking, Kṛṣṇa began His pastimes of stealing fresh butter. Startled upon seeing His own reflection in a jewelled inlaid pillar, He shivered in fear and said, "*O dear brother, do not tell mother. I will save some butter for You and You may enjoy too.*" Watching her mischievous son from a hidden place, Mother Yaśodā heard these sweet broken words with great relish. Then she innocently appeared before Kṛṣṇa and Rāma.

Pointing to His effulgent reflection, Kṛṣṇa said, ***“O Mātā! Being very greedy, this boy came here today in order to steal your butter. Although I forbade him, He did not listen to Me. And when I got angry with him, He also got angry. He’s a greedy boy, but I’m not at all greedy for your butter, Mātā!”***

— Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū



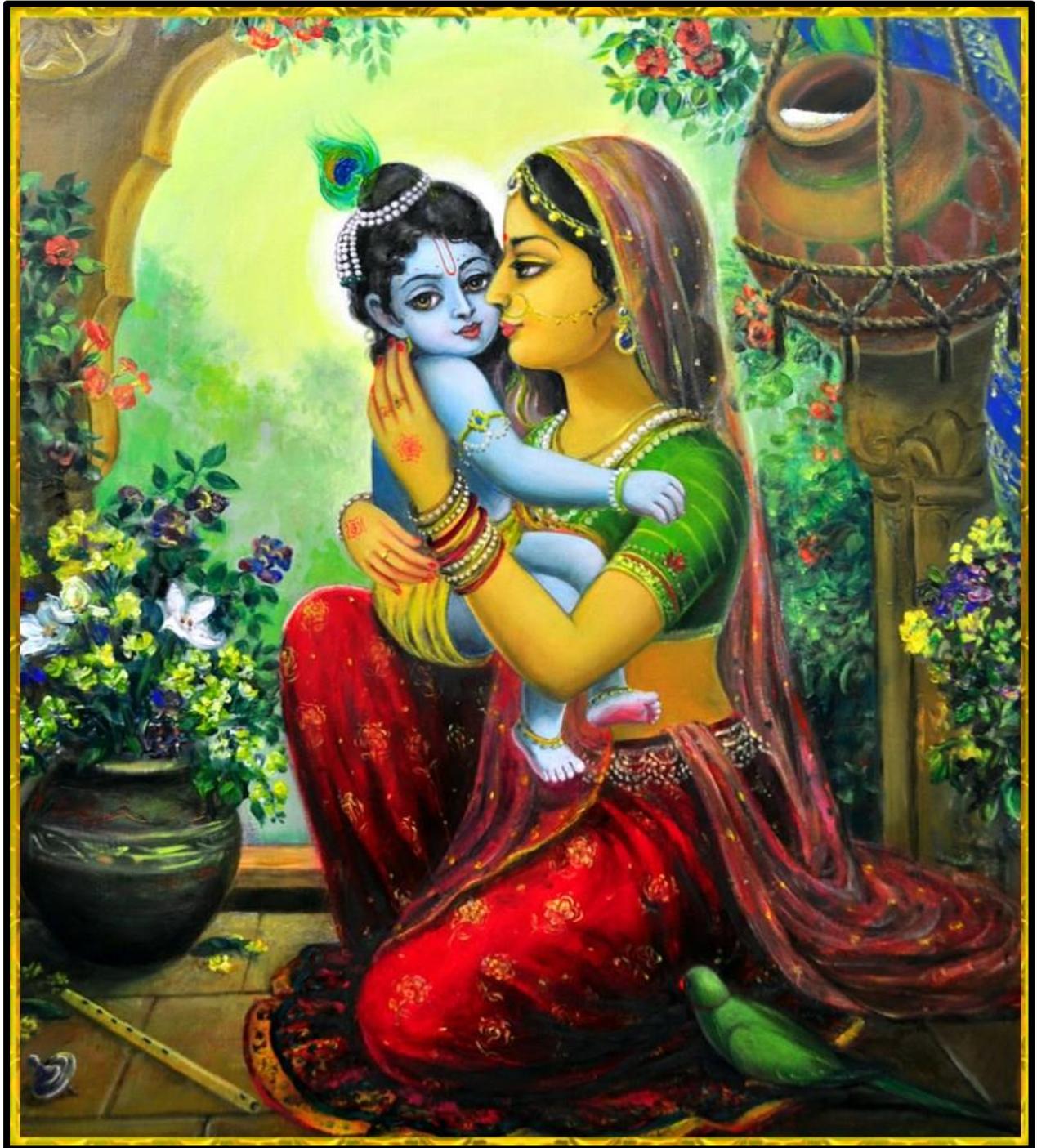
— **Oh My Darling, Show Me the Burns on Your Hand** —

One day while Yaśodā was outside the house engaged in some domestic activities, inside the house Kṛṣṇa stole butter again. When Yaśodā returned and called out, ***“O my darling Kṛṣṇa! Where are You and what are You doing?”*** Hearing her, Kṛṣṇa became afraid and stopped stealing butter. Pausing for a moment, He answered, ***“Mother! My hand started burning from the shining effulgence of My ruby bangles, so I stuck it in this butter pot to relieve the pain.”***

Pleased by her son’s clever words, Yaśodā said, ***“Hey Vatsa! Please come sit on my lap. Oh my darling, show me the burns on Your hand.”*** Then Yaśodā kissed Kṛṣṇa’s hand and

consoled Him, saying, “Ahh...ahh...Look, Your hand has been burned. So let me remove these ruby bangles.”

— Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū



— Mother, Please Drop that Big Stick! —

Kṛṣṇa kept looking fearfully back over His shoulder while running away from Yaśodā. Though Yaśodā felt fatigued and mentally distressed, her body, arms and legs looked very beautiful as she pursued her mischievous son. Full of pride and anger, Yaśodā continued

calling out to Kṛṣṇa, ***“Stop, You thief and liar! How can You carry on like this? Where are You going? Just stop running and stand where You are!”***

Kṛṣṇa said, ***“I will stop if you drop your stick.”*** After saying this Kṛṣṇa stopped running away, but kept a safe distance from His mother. Yaśodā then said, ***“If You are afraid of being punished, why did You break my yogurt pot today?”***

Kṛṣṇa said, ***“Mātā, I will never do it again. Now just drop the stick from your hand.”*** Yaśodā’s mind turned into an abode of amazement as she tried to approach her son. But seeing her angry mood, Kṛṣṇa quickly ran away again while speaking in a distressed tone, ***“Mother! Please drop that big stick and do not punish Me! O sinless one, if you do this I will come to you.”*** After hearing Kṛṣṇa’s innocent appeal Yaśodā dropped the stick and seeing this, Kṛṣṇa stopped running.

— *Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū*



— O Best of Thieves with Clever Words! —

***“Mother! Do not beat Me!”***

With a hidden smile Yaśodā Māi said, ***“But You are a thief.”***

In this way a quarrel began.

***“Ah! You are the king of thieves!” “Your father’s lineage is all thieves.”*** In this way the mother argued with the infant who had stolen the ghee.

***“How did the yogurt pot break?”***

***“It was the Supreme Lord’s stick.”***

***“Who gave ghee to the monkeys?”***

***“He who created monkeys gave it to them.”***

***“You always like to taste and eat the fresh ghee meant only for sacrifices!”***

After Yaśodā scolded the infant as a thief in this way, her heart softened a little.

Smiling, but with anger she said, ***“You should tell the truth and give up Your pride.”*** When His mother said this, her son began weeping (and speaking in broken words).

***“Mātā, when You ran quickly, the pot broke because of it being struck by your anklets. What is My fault in this?”***

***“Inspired by the Lord, the monkeys entered the house to steal. When they pulled at the ghee, I just caught it. What is My fault?”***

***“Seeing you holding a stick, I ran away like a thief and seeing that I was frightened you tried to mercilessly beat Me without justice.”***

Yaśodā spoke with repentance, ***“O best of thieves with clever words! Though You are the son of the king of Vraja, You are fond of monkeys and have the nature of a monkey.”***

Fearful, and to give fear to his mother, He said, ***“If I am a monkey, then I will go to the forest and stay there.”***

His mother then began to worry with anxiety. She thought: ***“Who can understand Him? A proud child will do what He says. I must tie Him up to prevent this. I am alone and cannot continue to pay attention to both the house and this child.”***

But then she spoke aloud: ***“O thief who bewilders everyone with Your restless eyes! Do not think of avoiding me again (I am going to bind you with ropes). And after binding You up, I will go into the house. If You want to show Your strength again, then now try to steal something else.”***

— Gopāla-campū

— So enchantingly sweet! —

**...But Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us there’s something even sweeter!**

— It's Kṛṣṇa's Kaiśora dealings in Vraja —



*Kṛṣṇa is beautiful at His different ages—namely His childhood, His boyhood and His youth. (But) out of these three, His youth is the reservoir of all pleasures and is the time when the highest varieties of devotional service are acceptable. At that age, Kṛṣṇa is full with all transcendental qualities and is engaged in His transcendental pastimes. Therefore, devotees have accepted the beginning of His youth as the most attractive feature in ecstatic love.*

*At this age Kṛṣṇa is described as follows: “The force of Kṛṣṇa’s youth was combined with His beautiful smile, which defeated even the beauty of the full moon. He was always nicely dressed, in beauty surpassing even Cupid, and He was always attracting the minds of the gopīs, who were thereby always feeling pleasure.”*

*It is at this age that devotees generally most appreciate Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa with Rādhārāṇī is worshiped as Kaiśora-kiśorī.*

— Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 21, 42

**At this age, Kṛṣṇa is sold out to the gopīs, He is their property and He is their dhīra-lalita.** *A person is called dhīra-lalita if he is naturally very funny, always in full youthfulness, expert in joking and free from all anxieties. Such a dhīra-lalita personality is generally found to be domesticated and very submissive to his lover.*

— Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 23

**Śrīla Prabhupada also gives some insight into Kṛṣṇa’s appearance and dealing at this age.**

All the *gopīs* said, “*Kṛṣṇa is the killer of the attraction of Cupid, and as such He disturbs the patience of all newly married girls. Kṛṣṇa’s bodily features have become so exquisite — it is as if they were all manifesting an artistic sense of the highest sort. His dancing eyes have dimmed the brilliance of the most expert dancer, and so there is no longer any comparison to the beauty of Kṛṣṇa.*” Learned scholars therefore describe the features of His body at this time as *nava-yauvana*, newly invented youthfulness. At this stage of Kṛṣṇa’s bodily features, the conjugal loving affairs with the *gopīs* and similar pastimes become very prominent.

There are six features of conjugal loving affairs, called peacemaking, picking a quarrel, going to meet one’s lover, sitting together, separation and support. Lord Kṛṣṇa expanded an empire of these six features, of which He was the ruling prince. Somewhere He was picking quarrels with the young girls, somewhere He was scratching them with the nails of parrots, somewhere He was busy going to visit the *gopīs*, and somewhere He was negotiating through cowherd friends to take shelter of the *gopīs*.

Some of the *gopīs* addressed Him thus: “*Dear Kṛṣṇa, because of Your adolescent age, You have just become the spiritual master of these young girls, and You are teaching them to whisper among themselves. You are teaching them to offer solemn prayers, as well as training them to cheat their husbands and to join You in the gardens at night, without caring for the instructions of their superiors. You are enthusing them by the vibration of Your enchanting flute; and, as their teacher, You are teaching them all the intricacies of loving affairs.*”

— Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 26

In his *Padyāvalī* (344), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī tells us that:

*Among the Vrajavāsīs the gopīs are the best, and their best quality is their sweet words. And among the gopīs there is one who is the best....and so let’s now explore just a drop from the ocean of Her sweet verbal exchanges with Kṛṣṇa.*

## — The Sweet Speech of Vraja in Meeting — (Sambhoga)

**“Who taps on My door with one finger?”**

**“O crooked girl, it is Mādhava.”**

**“Mādhava is a name of spring. Has springtime come knocking on My door?”**

**“Certainly not. It is the holder of the Sudarśana wheel.”**

**“Potters hold wheels. Are You a potter?”**

**“I am not. I am the person who holds up the entire world.”**

**“The forked-tongued serpent king Ananta holds up the world. Are You He?”**

**“No. I am a person who crushes serpents.”**

*“The bird-king Garuḍa crushes serpents. Are You he?”*

*“No. I am Lord Hari.”*

*“Hari is a name of the monkey-king Hanumān. Are You he?”*

*May Lord Kṛṣṇa, who holds the Sudarśana cakra, and who smiled to hear these clever words from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, protect you all.*



One morning, when Kṛṣṇa came to Rādhā, Rādhā asked Him, **“My dear Keśava, where is Your vāsa at present?”** The Sanskrit word “vāsa: has three meanings: one meaning is residence, one meaning is fragrance, and another meaning is dress.

Actually Rādhārāṇī inquired from Kṛṣṇa **“Where is Your dress?”** But Kṛṣṇa took the meaning as residence, and He replied to Rādhārāṇī, **“My dear captivated one, at the present moment My residence is in Your beautiful eyes.”**

To this Rādhārāṇī replied, **“My dear cunning boy, I did not ask You about Your residence, I inquired about Your dress.”**

Kṛṣṇa then took the meaning of “vāsa” as fragrance and said, **“My dear fortunate one, I have just assumed this fragrance in order to be associated with Your body.”**

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī again inquired from Kṛṣṇa, **“Where did You pass Your night?”** The exact Sanskrit word used in this connection was “yāminyāmuṣitaḥ”. “Yāminyām” means “at night”, and *uṣitaḥ* means “pass.” Kṛṣṇa, however, divided the word “yāminyāmuṣitaḥ” into two separate words, namely “yāminyā” and “muṣitaḥ”. By dividing this word into two, it came out to mean that He was kidnapped by Yāminī, or night, Kṛṣṇa therefore replied to Rādhārāṇī, **“My dear Rādhārāṇī, is it possible that night can kidnap Me?”** In this way He was answering all of the questions of Rādhārāṇī so cunningly that He gladdened this dearest of the *gopīs*.

May smiling Lord Kṛṣṇa protect you all.



*“Rādhā, You have become kupitā (angry).”*

*“Ku means earth, and pitā means father. It is You who are father of the earth.”*

*“And You are the mother of all the universes.”*

*“You are the actual mother of the universes. You are omniscient. No one is Your equal.”*

*“O Goddess, Your skill in joking lover’s quarrels is ananta (unlimited).”*

*“**Nan** means bowing down, **ta** means the state of being, and **a** means without. It is You who possess this quality of ananta (refusing to bow down).”*

May Lord Kṛṣṇa, who smiled as He then bowed down before the beautiful  
gopī Rādhā, grant auspiciousness to you all.

—*Padyāvalī 283,284,285*



— The Sweet Language of Vraja in Separation —  
(*Vipralambha*)

**Kṛṣṇa's Message to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī — Delivered by Uddhava**

*On the day We met Your love suddenly appeared without the slightest cause. Your love is not diminished by My offenses, nor increased by My prayers. It is full of nectar and it destroys the sufferings of the three worlds. How can I easily describe Your intense love for Me?*

*The possibility of Our conversing is very distant. So be it! The possibility of My embracing Your transcendental body is also distant. So be it! However, again and again I bow down before You and beg: Please always count Me among Your friends, and please write a line to Me.*

—*Padyāvalī* 345-346



## A Return Letter to Kṛṣṇa From Rādhā's Gopī-friend

**Śrīmatī Rādhikā was overwhelmed heart and soul by separation from Kṛṣṇa and was hence unable to respond to His letter. But one of Her very dear gopī friends chose to reply to inform Kṛṣṇa of His beloved Rādhā's condition.**

*The gentle breeze blowing from the place where You stay makes the hairs of Her body stand on end. She satisfies Her eyes by showing them the beautiful picture of Your transcendental form. Her ears are sprinkled with the nectar of Your name. Her words filled with songs in the fifth raga. Day and night this slender girl stays by the window overlooking the path where You might return.*

*Flames of amorous yearning burn in Her body. The mark of rapt meditation rests in Her eyes. Her life rests in Her throat. Her cheek rests for a long time on Her flower-bud hand. Her braid rests on Her shoulder. Sandalwood paste rests on Her breasts. Silence rests in Her words. These things rest firmly in their places, but Her heart and mind cannot rest anywhere without You.*

*When She sees that You, Her beloved, the splendid moon that dispells the darkness in the courtyard of the sky, have gone far away, Her sighs become like lotus buds, Her face becomes like a lotus flower with petals closed, Her love for You becomes like a churning ocean of milk with great waves, and Her eyes become like two melting candrakānta jewels.*

*O cheater Kṛṣṇa, You eternally stay in Your lover Rādhā's heart, which burns with flames of separation from You. Still, Rādhā cannot stay for even a moment in Your heart, which is as cool as ice and snow.*

*O Mukunda, how will I describe the sufferings of this doe-eyed girl? Her sighs constantly fan the flames of Her suffering. When a beautiful lotus petal is placed on Her burning breast it first become dried, then shriveled, then turns to powder, and then becomes a blazing dust-fire.*

*One evening one of the gopīs fainted, and then a second, and gradually all the gopīs fainted. O handsome Kṛṣṇa, one gopī tried to write a love letter to You, but she became overwhelmed and was unable to complete the first word "svasti" (greetings).*

*When She meditated on You in order to draw Your picture, Kāmadeva drew his bow. When Her two fingers moved to grasp the paintbrush, Kāmadeva placed an arrow on the bowstring. When She began to draw, Kāmadeva shot an arrow. She was severely wounded. O Keśava, She fainted and for a long time She was as motionless as a painted picture.*

*Constantly meditating on You in Her heart, and imagining that You had appeared before Her, She made Her arms like a bracelet around You. Her hairs standing up, She passionately embraced Her own body for a long time. When I saw Her, I thought Her tears were a monsoon rain in disguise.*



*In the presence of some friends She sheds continual tears, to other friends She narrates Her grief, to other friends She humbly begs mercy, and because of Her superiors and elderly relatives She is anxious. These are the ways She suffers in separation from You. Please become peaceful. She will become happy today or tomorrow. She is really only tortured by Her constant sighing.*

—*Padyāvalī* 357-361, 365-368

### — Sweetest Words Spoken Even in Greatest Pain —

When Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa finally met in a solitary place at Kurukṣetra, Kṛṣṇa tried to console His beloved with sweet words. But the depth of Śrī Rādhā's bitter/sweet reply moved His anguished heart to cry an uncontrollable deluge of tears. She said

***Why have You fallen in utter remorse at My feet? The husband is always independent. He may stay for some time, and then He may also go away. What fault is there on Your part? It is I who am the sinner, for I remained alive even when separated from You. The wife should always consider her husband to be her very life and soul. It is I who should apologize to You.***

—*Padyāvalī* 385

— ŚRĪ VRAJEŚVARĪ RĀDHĀ —  
Why Is Her Speech Always So Sweet?

So much could be said about this — but for now let’s just take a precious glimpse of Her heart as revealed through Her own divine words.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has become indifferent to Me just to test My love, and My friends say, “Better to disregard Him.”

(But) I am a maidservant at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. He is the embodiment of transcendental happiness and mellows. If He likes He can tightly embrace Me and make Me feel oneness with Him, or by not giving Me His audience He may corrode My mind and body. Nevertheless, it is He who is the Lord of My life.

My dear friend, just hear the decision of My mind. Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of My life in all conditions, whether He shows Me affection or kills Me by giving Me unhappiness.

Sometimes Kṛṣṇa gives up the company of other *gopīs* and becomes controlled, mind and body, by Me. Thus He manifests My good fortune and gives others distress by performing His loving affairs with Me.

Or, since after all He is a very cunning, obstinate debauchee with a propensity to cheat, He takes to the company of other women. He then indulges in loving affairs with them in front of Me to give distress to My mind. Nevertheless, He is still the Lord of My life.

**I do not mind My personal distress. I only wish for the happiness of Kṛṣṇa, for His happiness is the goal of My life. However, if He feels great happiness in giving Me distress, that distress is the best of My happiness.**

**Kṛṣṇa is My life and soul. Kṛṣṇa is the treasure of My life. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa is the very life of My life. I therefore keep Him always in My heart and try to please Him by rendering service. That is My constant meditation.**

— CC Antya 20.43, 48-52, 58

— A Heart Fully Surrendered in Love, is Always a Sweet Heart —  
And a Sweet Heart’s Speech Is Always Sweet!