

Śaranagati

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THE WONDERS OF VRAJA

Greetings from Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma – the land of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's ongoing *līlās* (pastimes).

I am happily situated at the side of Govardhana, where I have found ideal circumstances to wholeheartedly concentrate on my vow to chant the Holy Names from morning till evening during the month of *Kārtika*.

Although I like my service in the West, it is from my present perspective with a heart filled only with the Divine Names that the West appears to be a distant dream; something you wake up from and then question how real it really was. At least it was a good *seva* dream!

The scriptures say that here in Vṛndāvana every leaf chants the name of Rādhā – in glorification of the queen of Vṛndāvana.

Two days ago I visited a place called Tatiya-sthan in Vṛndāvana town – where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are said to appear every night. I asked one of the resident *sādhus* if one can actually perceive the Divine Couple. His answer was to the point:

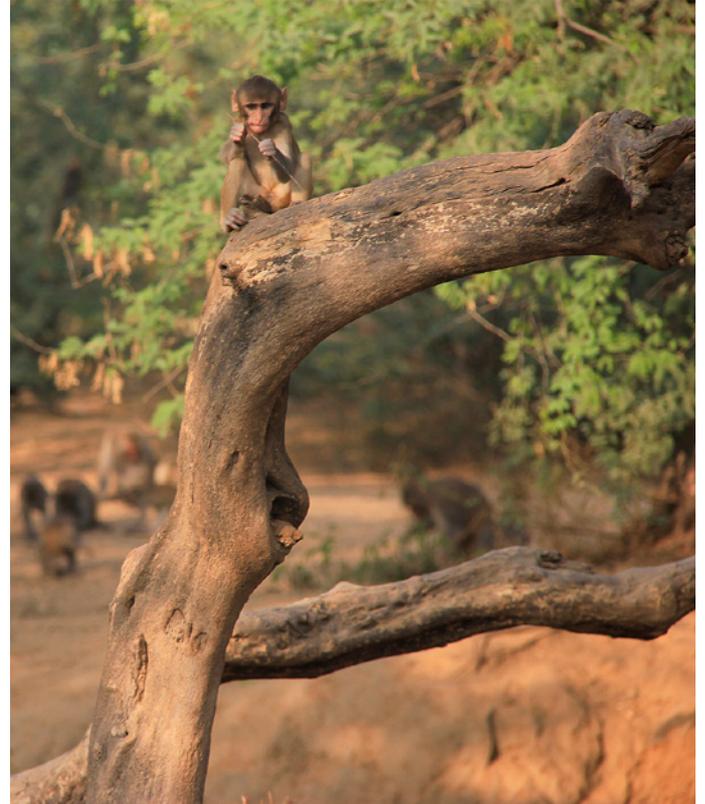
“If you have the eyes to see and the ears to hear.”

And he reminded me of Arjuna's vision of the Lord's universal form.

“Only after the Lord gave him ‘divya cakṣuṣā’, divine eyes, could he see, and not before.

Naturally, what I wanted to know was his answer to the point in question about how one could obtain this divine sensorium. Again he answered very briefly:

“Turn away from the world of māyā (illusion) and chant the Divine Names. Then one day...”



He belonged to a specific branch of ancient Nimbaraka lineage who cover their faces with a white sanctified sandalwood pulp apparently to protect themselves from material influences.

He looked quite otherworldly.

He noticed how I studied his face. He then smiled as if having read my thoughts and said:

“You don't have to smear your face like we do; but you need to chant. Chant with full absorption.”

Then he continued:

“Here, I'll show you someone who truly chants properly.”

He led me to a tall tree with bright bark.

“This tree is special. He has seen Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa only because he chants all day. Look at his bark.”

When I looked I saw the name of Rādhā grown into the bark. All over he was covered with the names of Rādhā.

Surprised and skeptical, I went in search for other trees of his species in order to check if they also had these marks; and yes, there were, but without the Rādhā names.

He was the only one! He was special. A good chanter!

The *sādhu* smiled:

“If your chanting becomes pure, the Lord will write his names all

over you. Then everyone who comes into contact with you will also chant. Remember the tree.”

As I write this, I wish to assure you that what I saw, the chanting tree, can be seen by anyone and everyone. You can visit this tree and see for yourselves. And perhaps you will also hear him chanting... Rādhe, Rādhe, Rādhe... But only if you have the right type of ears.

In that āśrama I have also seen self-manifested deities, and had the good fortune of hearing a beautiful and melodious kirtan sung by a group of well-trained monks with two tamburas. They do not use any electricity here and mobile phones are not allowed. The reason being is that they do not want to have any Western influences.

The ground of this spacious āśrama is covered with white sand and old shady trees. Some trees have even made a natural swing with their branches for the Divine Couple to use!

There are many inspiring things to see here. It is like moving inside a wonderland. But most of all I remember the chanting tree and his message to us all.

Chant with full absorption and miracles will happen in your life.

Let me end with a prayer by Śrīla Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī:

“May the wonderfully playful king and queen of Vṛndāvana enjoy transcendental pastimes in my heart.



*Sometimes they water the young trees and vines.
Sometimes they teach the male and female parrots to recite poems.
Sometimes they teach the peacock couples to dance.
And sometimes they observe the flood of artistic skills displayed by
a newly arrived gopī maidservant.
May all this become manifest within my heart one day.”*

So, now I shall return to my chanting. Then in the afternoon a cycle ride to Govinda-kuṇḍa for more chanting...

☪ Śācinandana Swami, Govardhana, India, November 2013.

GETTING BACK THE LOST AND FORGOTTEN

What do we do when we forget that we lost something? Normally, when we notice that we lost something we search for it. For instance, if we notice that we lost our chanting beads during a festival, we'll anxiously search for them everywhere until we find them. But if we forget that we lost something important, we are in trouble because we will not do anything. This is our situation: we lost Kṛṣṇa and we forgot that we were once with him and that we only need him.

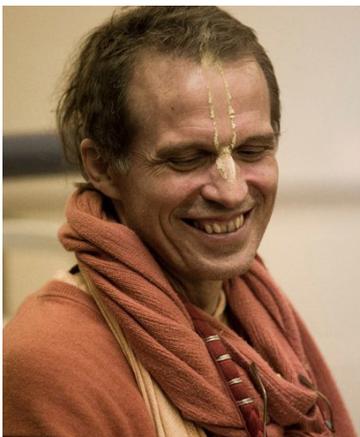
We can be compared to someone lying in a coma who forgot the real life he or she had and dreams of a wrong life. The person

gets more and more involved in this imagined life and even starts setting goals, “I must get my degree, I must find a partner, I must have a child.” etc. It is a serious situation.

The sacred scriptures tell us that just as a person who is in a coma can be awakened by a powerful mantra, the soul who has forgotten that it has forgotten Kṛṣṇa can be awakened by the sound of the Holy Name and Kṛṣṇa kathā.

☪ from a lecture by Śācinandana Swami in Fruska Gora, Serbia, July 8th, 2013.

Photo by Mickey Shah



MEET ŚĀCĪNANDANA SWAMI

upcoming seminars & events:

Nov. 20-25 Japa Retreat, Varṣāṇā, India

Nov. 29 - Dec. 5 Govardhana Retreat, Govardhana, India

Dec. 28 - Jan. 1 Saṅga Melā, Goloka Dhāma, Germany

Jan. 17-19 Yoga Expo, Munich, Germany

Read more: www.sacinandanaswami.com