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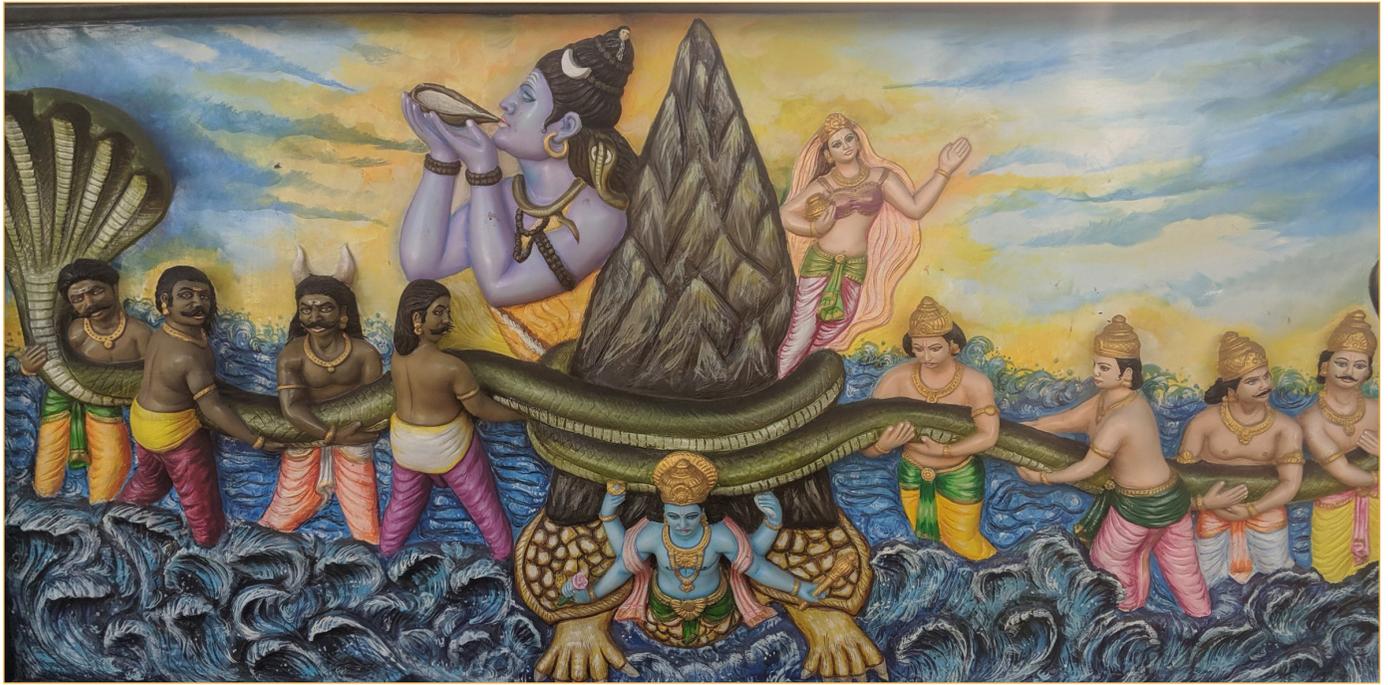
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THE CHURNING OF MILK OCEAN
Sriḷa Sukadeva Goswami

Sukadeva Goswami said: Upon Lord Siva's drinking the poison, both the demigods and the demons, being very pleased, began to churn the ocean with renewed vigour. As a result of this, there appeared a cow of the type known as surabhi. O King Parikṣit, great sages who were completely aware of the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies took charge of that surabhi cow, which produced all the yogurt, milk and ghee necessary for offering oblations into the fire. They took charge of surabhi for the sake of pure ghee, which they needed for the performance of sacrifices to elevate themselves to the higher planetary systems, up to Brahmaloḷa.

Thereafter, a horse named Uccaiḥśrava, which was as white as the moon, was generated. Bali Maharaja desired to possess this horse, and Indra, the King of heaven, did not protest, for he had previously been so advised by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As the next result of further churning, the king of elephants, named Airavata, was generated. This elephant was white, and resplendent with four tusks it defied the glories of Kailasa Mountain, the wonderful abode of Lord Siva. Thereafter, O King, eight great elephants, which could go in any direction, were generated. They were headed by Airavana. Eight she-elephants, headed by Abhramu, were also generated. Generated thereafter from the great

ocean were the celebrated gems *Kaustubha-maṇi* and *Padmarāga-maṇi*. Lord Viṣṇu, desired to possess these two jewels to decorate His chest.

Generated next was the *pārijāta* flower, which illuminates the celestial planets. O King, as you satisfy everyone on this planet by fulfilling all their desires, the *pārijāta* fulfills the desires of everyone in the celestial realm. Next there appeared the heavenly society girls called *Apsaras*. They were fully decorated with golden ornaments and lockets and were dressed in fine and attractive clothing. The *Apsaras* move very slowly in an attractive manner which bewilders the inhabitants of the heavenly planets.

Next appeared the goddess of fortune, Rama, who is absolutely dedicated to bringing pleasure to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. She appeared like electricity, surpassing the lightning that might illuminate a marble mountain. Because of her exquisite beauty, her bodily features, her youth, her complexion and her glories, everyone, including the demigods, the demons and the human beings, desired to be her master. They were attracted because she is the source of all opulence.

The King of heaven, Indra, brought a suitable sitting place for the goddess of fortune. All the rivers of sacred water, such as the Ganges and Yamuna, personified themselves, and brought their pure waters in golden pots for the use of mother Lakṣmi, the goddess of fortune. The land became a person and collected all the nat-

ural minerals and herbs needed for installing the Deity. The cows delivered five products, namely milk, yogurt, ghee, urine and cow dung, and spring personified collected everything produced in time of reigning upon the earth. The great sages performed the bathing ceremony of the goddess of fortune as directed in the authorized scriptures, the Gandharvas chanted all-auspicious *Vedic mantras*, and the professional dancing women very nicely danced and sang authorized songs prescribed in the *Vedas*. The clouds in personified form beat various types of drums, known as *mṛdaṅgas*, *paṇavas*, *murajas* and *ānakas*. They also blew conchshells and bugles known as *gomukhas* and played flutes and stringed instruments. The combined sound of these instruments was tumultuous.

Thereafter, the great elephants from all the directions carried big water jugs full of Ganges water and bathed the goddess of fortune, to the accompaniment of *Vedic mantras* chanted by learned *brāhmaṇas*. While thus being bathed, the goddess of fortune maintained her original style, with a lotus flower in her hand, and she appeared very beautiful. The goddess of fortune is the most chaste woman, for she does not know anyone but the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The ocean, which is the source of all valuable jewels, supplied the upper and lower portions of a yellow silken garment. The predominating deity of the water, Varuna, presented flower garlands surrounded by six-legged bumblebees, drunken with honey. Visvakarma, one of the *prajāpatis*, presented varieties of decorated ornaments. The goddess of learning, Sarasvari, proffered a necklace, Lord Brahma a lotus flower, and the inhabitants of Nagaloka submitted earrings.

Thereafter, mother Laksmi, the goddess of fortune, having been properly honored with an auspicious ritualistic ceremony, began moving about, holding in her hand a garland of lotus flowers, which were surrounded by humming bumblebees. Smiling with shyness, her cheeks decorated by her earrings, she looked extremely beautiful. Her two breasts, which were symmetrical and nicely situated, were covered with sandalwood pulp and *kunkuma* powder, and her waist was very thin. As she walked to different places, her ankle bells jingling softly, she appeared like a creeper of gold. While walking among the Gandharvas, Yaksas, asuras, Siddhas, Caranas and denizens of heaven,

Laksmidevi, the goddess of fortune, was carefully examining them, but she could not find anyone naturally endowed with all good qualities. None of them was devoid of faults, and therefore she could not take willingly shelter of any of them. Examining all in the assembly the goddess of fortune thought in this way: Someone who has undergone great austerity has not yet conquered anger. Someone possesses knowledge, but he has not conquered material desires. Someone is very elevated, but he cannot conquer lusty desires. Even a great personality depends on something else. How, then, can he be the great monarch?

Someone may possess full knowledge of religion but still not be kind to all living entities. In someone, whether human or demigod, there may be renunciation, but that is not the cause of liberation. Someone may possess great power and yet be unable to check the power of eternal time. Someone else may have renounced attachment to the material world, yet he cannot compare to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore, no one is completely freed from the influence of the material modes of nature. Someone may have longevity but not have auspiciousness or good behaviour. Someone may have both auspiciousness and good behaviour, but the duration of his life is not fixed. Although such demigods as Lord Siva have eternal life, they have inauspicious habits like living in crematoriums. And even if others are well qualified in all respects, they are not devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Sukadeva Goswami continued: In this way, after full deliberation, the goddess of fortune accepted Mukunda as her husband because although He is independent and not in want of her, He possesses all transcendental qualities and mystic powers and is therefore the most desirable husband. Approaching the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the goddess of fortune placed upon His shoulders the garland of newly grown lotus flowers, which was surrounded by humming bumblebees searching for honey. Then, expecting to get a place on the bosom of the Lord, she remained standing by His side, her face smiling in shyness. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the father of the three worlds, and His bosom is the residence of mother Laksmi, the goddess of fortune, the proprietor of all opulence. The goddess of fortune, by her favourable and merciful glance, can increase the opulence

of the three worlds, along with their inhabitants and their directors, the demigods.

The inhabitants of Gandharvaloka and Caranaloka then took the opportunity to play their musical instruments, such as conchshells, bugles and drums. They began dancing and singing along with their wives. Lord Brahma, Lord Siva, the great sage Angira, and similar directors of universal management showered flowers and chanted *mantras* indicating the transcendental glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All the demigods, along with the progenitors (*prajāpatis*) and their descendants, being blessed by Laksmiji's glance upon them, were immediately enriched with good behaviour and transcendental qualities. Thus they felt very satisfied.

O King, because of being neglected by the goddess of fortune, the demons and Raksasas were depressed, bewildered and frustrated, and thus they became shameless and acted recklessly.

Next there appeared Varuṇī the lotus-eyed goddess who presides over all intoxicating beverages. With the permission of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, the demons, headed by Bali Maharaja, took possession of this young girl.

O King, thereafter, while the sons of Kasyapa, both demons and demigods, were engaged in churning the Ocean of Milk, a very wonderful male person appeared. He was strongly built; his arms were long, stout and strong; his neck, which was marked with three lines, resembled a conch shell; his eyes were reddish; and his complexion was blackish. He was very youthful, he was garlanded with flowers, and his entire body was fully decorated with various ornaments. He was dressed in yellow garments and wore brightly polished earrings made of pearls. His hair was anointed with oil, and his chest was very broad. His body had all good features, he was stout and strong like a lion, and he was decorated with bangles. In his hand he carried a jug filled to the top with nectar. This person was Dhanvantari, a plenary portion of a plenary portion of Lord Visnu. He was thoroughly conversant with the science of medicine, and as one of the demigods he was permitted to take a share in sacrifices. Upon seeing Dhanvantari carrying the jug of nectar, the demons, desiring the jug and its contents, immediately snatched it away by force. When the jug of nectar was carried off by the demons, the

demigods were morose. Thus they sought shelter at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari. When the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who always desires to fulfil the cherished intentions of His devotees, saw that the demigods were morose, He said to them, “Do not be aggrieved. By My personal energy I shall bewilder the demons by creating a quarrel among them. In this way I shall fulfill your desire to have the nectar.”

O King, a quarrel then arose among the demons over who would get the nectar first. Each of them said, “You cannot drink it first. I must drink it first. Me first, not you!” Some of the demons said, “All the demigods have taken part in churning the Ocean of Milk. Now, as everyone has an equal right to partake in any public sacrifice, according to the eternal religious system it is befitting that the demigods now have a share of the nectar.”

O King, in this way the weaker demons forbade the stronger demons to take the nectar. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Visnu, who can counteract any unfavorable situation, then assumed the form of an extremely beautiful woman. This incarnation as a woman, Mohini-murti, was most pleasing to the mind. Her complexion resembled in color a newly grown blackish lotus, and every part of Her body was beautifully situated. Her ears were equally decorated with earrings, Her cheeks were very beautiful, Her nose was raised and Her face full of youthful lustre. Her large breasts made Her waist seem very thin. Attracted by the aroma of Her face and body, bumblebees hummed around Her, and thus Her eyes were restless. Her hair, which was extremely beautiful, was garlanded with *mallikā* flowers. Her attractively constructed neck was decorated with a necklace and other ornaments, Her arms were decorated with bangles, Her body was covered with a fresh sari, and Her breasts seemed like islands in an ocean of beauty. Her legs were decorated with ankle bells. Because of the movements of Her eyebrows as She smiled with shyness and glanced over the demons, all of them were overcome by amorous intentions, and every one of them desired to possess Her.

— *Srimad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 8: Withdrawal of the Cosmic Creations » Chapter Eight » Verses: 1-46.*



THE FAVOUR AND MERCY OF LAXMIDEVI
His Divine Grace
A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

According to the desire of Laksmidevi, the goddess of fortune, the Supreme Personality of Godhead made His bosom her residence so that by her glance she could favor everyone, including the demigods and ordinary human beings. In other words, since the goddess of fortune stays on the bosom of Narayana, she naturally sees any devotee who worships Narayana. When the goddess of fortune understands that a devotee is favourably inclined towards devotional service to Narayana, She is naturally inclined to bless the devotee with all kinds of opulence. The fruitive workers (*karmīs*) try to receive the favor and mercy of Laksmi. However, because they are not devotees of Narayana, their staying with opulence is short lived. The opulence of devotees who are attached to the service of Narayana is not like the opulence of such *karmīs*. Conversely, the opulence of devotees is as permanent as the opulence of Lord Narayana Himself.

— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 8: Withdrawal of the Cosmic Creations » Chapter Eight » Verses : 25 Purport

PERFECT EXAMPLE OF SURRENDER
Sri la Santana Goswami

Goddess Laksmi worships Lord Narayana with pure devotion. Only devotional service to the

Supreme Lord can attract Her attention. Though Goddess Laksmi willingly accepts any difficulty and any menial service to please Him, Lord Narayana, being satisfied in Himself, does not need anyone's help to fulfil His desires. Many *Vaiṣṇavas* look to Mother Laksmi's example of perfect surrender, hoping to follow in her footsteps. The wives of the Kaliya snake, for example, prayed to Sri Krishna:

*kasyānubhāvo 'sya na deva vidmahe
tavāṅghri-ṛeṇu-sparaśādhikārah
yad-vāñchayā śrīr lalanācarat tapo
vihāya kāmān su-ciraṁ dhṛta-vratā*

“O Lord, we do not know how the serpent Kaliya has attained this great opportunity of being touched by the dust of Your lotus feet. For this end, the goddess of fortune performed austerities for centuries, giving up all other desires and taking austere vows.” (Bhāgavatam 10.16.36)

The supreme goddess Maha-laksmī is the eternal beloved of the Lord of Vaikuntha; She does not have to worship Him to achieve Him. But Her expansions descend as *avatāras* to accompany the various incarnations of Narayana, and some of these *avatāras* of Maha-laksmi, such as the daughter of Bhrgu Muni, are described in Vedic scriptures as performing penances to obtain the Lord as their husband.

— Śrī Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta of Sri la Santana Goswami, Volume One. Translated by Gopiparanadhana Dasa. 1.3.67

INTERNAL PLEASURE POTENCY
Sriḷa Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura

*jagat-svarūpā tumi, tumi sarva-śakti
tumi śraddhā, dayā, lajjā, tumi Visnu-bhakti*

In Śrī Bhagavata-sandarbhā (117) it is stated: “The Lord was also served by His principal internal potencies—Śrī, Puṣṭi, Gīr, Kānti, Kīrti, Tuṣṭi, Ilā, and Ūrjā His material potencies, Vidyā, Avidyā, and Māyā, and His internal pleasure potency, Śakti.’ (Bhāg. 10.39.55). The word śakti refers to the internal potency, internal energy, in the form of Lakṣmi. When the word śakti is mentioned, it refers to the first internal energy, or mahā-śakti, and māyā is the external energy. However, the above energies headed by Śrī have two propensities, because all energies are of two types—material and spiritual. It is to be understood that the energies headed by Śrī act both in the form of consorts and in the form of māyā. Among them, Śrī of the former category is the opulence of the Supreme Lord, but she is not the form of Maha-lakṣmi because Śrī is the mūla-śakti, or original energy. This will be explained later on. The latter category is the opulence of the material world. Regarding her, the Supreme Lord has said (in Bhāg. 3.16.7): *na śrīr viraktam api māṁ vijahāti*—‘The goddess of fortune [Śrī] does not leave Me, even though I have no attachment for her.’ This is also stated by Sri Narada at the end of the Fourth Canto (4.31.22) [*śriyam anucaratiṁ tad-arthinaś ca, dvipada-patīn vibudhāṁś ca yat sva-pūrṇahna bhajati nija-bhṛtya-varga-tan trahkatham anum udvisrjet pumān kṛta-jñah*], “Although the Supreme Personality of Godhead is self-sufficient, He becomes dependent on His devotees. He does not care for the goddess of fortune (Śrī), nor for the kings and demigods who are after the favours of the goddess of fortune. How can a genuinely grateful person not worship that Personality of Godhead?].

Among the above potencies, Ilā, or Bhū-śakti, has the same features as Līlā-śakti. Of the two, the former, Ilā, is a manifestation of Bhū-śakti and is the cause of knowledge regarding the truth. She is a particular aspect of the saṁvit potency. The latter, or Līlā-śakti, is the gateway to knowledge. She is the aspect of ecstatic love based on motherly affection that helps one forget the Lord’s majesty and opulence. That is why the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad*

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya

has described this energy’s role as bewildering the cowherd residents of Vraja. The other [material] aspect of Līlā-śakti is the covering potency that causes the conditioned souls to forget their personal identities. By the use of the word *ca* in the verse beginning *śriyā pustyā*, it is to be understood that energies of Bhū-śakti like *sandhinī, saṁvit, hlādinī, bhakti, mūrti, vimalā, jayā, yogā, prahvī, īśānā, and anugrahā* are included. These are also known as *sandhinī, satyā, jayā, yogā, yogamāyā, saṁvit, jñānājñāna, and śuddha-sattva*. *Prahvī* is the cause of variegated bliss and ability. *Īśānā* is the cause of the energy of full control. This is the difference.

In the same way, the energy Līlā has many different propensities. The propensities of Māyā are not described herein because they serve the external energy. But in the original text those propensities have been generally counted as limbs of service. The external position of Māyā is because of her remaining in the distance under the shelter of the plenary portion of the Supreme Lord. Otherwise, in the original verse (Bhāg. 10.39.55) the word śakti has been used as a noun. The energy śrī is the original form, and energies like *puṣṭi* are her parts and parcels. *Vidyā* means knowledge, not ignorance. This knowledge is described in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.2) as follows:

*rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyam
pavitram idam uttamam
pratyakṣāvagamāṁ dharmyam
su-sukham kartum avyayam*

‘This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.’

The word māyā in the original text refers to the external energy. Her aspects like Śrī are separate from her. The others are the same. Although all these energies are counted among the aspects of the internal, spiritual energy of the Lord, it should be concluded that since the Absolute Truth is described as *sac-cid-ānanda*, (composed of eternity, knowledge and bliss) the energy is one yet divided into three.”

— Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata-Madhya-khaṇḍa Chapter Eighteen: Mahāprabhu’s Dancing as a Gopī Verse: 170



THE GLORIES OF GODDESS LAKSMI
Sri Sri Sanatana Goswami

The goddess Lakshmi is glorified in many scriptures, including *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.38.8):

*yad arcitam brahma-bhavādibhiḥ suraiḥ
śrīyā ca devyā munibhiḥ sa-sātvataiḥ*

“The lotus feet of the Lord are worshiped by Brahma, Siva, and all the other demigods, by the goddess of fortune, and also by the great sages and *Vaiṣṇavas*.” Such statements indicate that she is more respected among the worshipers of the Supreme Lord than even liberated sages and pure *Vaiṣṇavas*. Why then is she sometimes disparaged as material and inferior? In this verse and the next, Narada answers this doubt. Among the many expansions of the goddess of fortune, there is one Lakshmi who presides over all the plenitudes of the material world. All the residents of the universe, including the rulers of the various planets, owe their powers to her. Even the mystic *siddhis* of *yogīs* proceed from her. *Mumukṣus* (persons striving for liberation) and *muktas* (persons who have already achieved it) neglect this particular form of Lakshmi because the plenitudes she bestows are nothing but favors for sense gratification. For the genuine

mumukṣus and *muktas* this kind of mercy is not at all attractive for they know well that entanglement in mundane sense gratification is the main obstacle to liberation.

According to the *Purāṇas* and other scriptures, even neophytes, what to speak of mature, experienced devotees, are more favored by the Lord than is the material expansion of Lakshmi. How is that? The reason is that under the pretext that Durvasa cursed her, or on some other plea, that Lakshmi is always “unstable”, disappearing from one place and appearing in another. Thus at any moment she can abandon persons who have taken shelter of her. Nonetheless, because she is an incarnation of Maha-lakshmi, she has many of the exalted qualities of the original goddess of fortune. Thus we hear that during the churning of the Milk Ocean, when the material Lakshmi appeared from it, Lord Visnu accepted her as His wife and she took up residence on His chest.

In contrast with this Lakshmi, the original Maha-lakshmi is Lord Narayana’s most dear servant. Always fully dedicated to His service, she remains on His chest eternally and is never fickle. The Lord’s devotees always worship her with the greatest reverence; they never neglect her as they do her material expansion.

— Śrī Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta of Sri Sri Sanatana Goswami, Volume One. Translated by Gopiparanadhana Dasa. 2.4.170 & 171

!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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