



तव कथामृतं तसजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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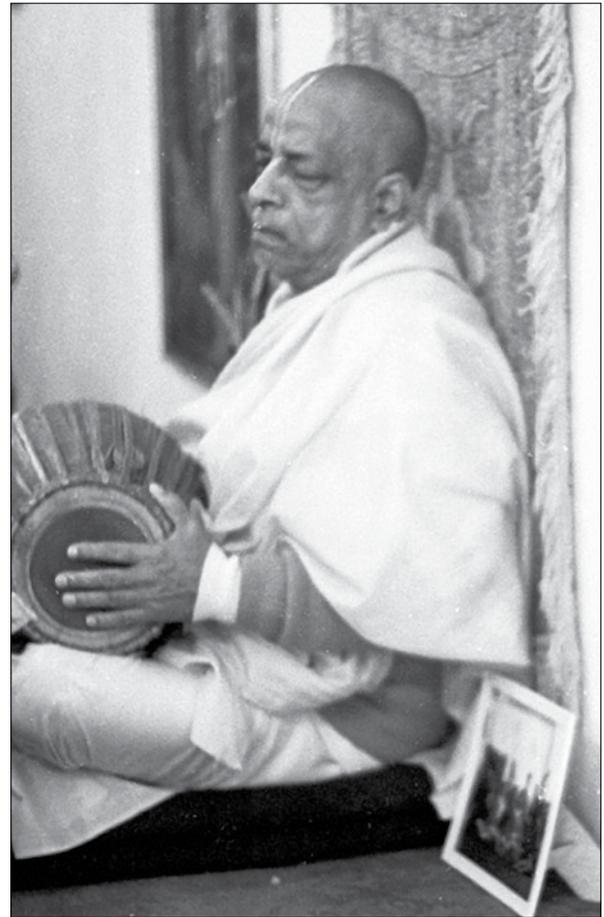
Sri Srimad Purnachandra Das Goswami



RELISHING KIRTANA

*His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

I am very glad to receive your letter dated February 28th and have noted the contents with great pleasure. The transcendental experience which you had during *kīrtana* performance at Loyola University is very nice. Relishing the transcendental sweetness of *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* is only possible when one is actually advanced towards perfection. Srila Rupa Goswami used to say that if he possessed millions of ears and billions of tongues he could relish the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra. In the conditioned stage we chant the Hare Krishna mantra officially without any attachment and try to finish the rounds as soon as possible. Sometimes we also forget to chant the prescribed number of rounds. Even at the last stage of his life Haridas Thakur was chanting 300,000 beads. Lord Chaitanya personally asked him not to labor so hard, but Haridas Thakur said that he would continue the practice until the end of his life. So that is the position of transcendental taste. Please therefore chant very sincerely with your present aptitude of mind, and Krishna will bless you more and more in understanding this secret of transcendental vibration. Of course, sometimes the public may misunderstand such tears of bliss, so it may be better to check such things from the vision of ordinary persons. Regarding the strange



*His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

colors, etc., it is better that when you see all these things that you chant and hear. That will help you to understand what they are. (Also it may be some effects of your past drugs habit.) ❀

— Letter to a new devotee, 11 March 1969.

MOOD OF THE VAISHNAVAS

Sri Srimad

Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Mahaprabhu has taught in *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (Cc. ādi 17.31):

*ṭṛṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

This is the most important teaching in *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. *uttama hañā āpanāke māne ṭṛṇādharma* — This is the nature of a real *vaiṣṇava*. He is the topmost *paramahansa*, but he thinks, “I am the lowest of the low, much humbler than a blade of grass in the street. All those who are walking on the street may step on me.” A real *vaiṣṇava* submits and tolerates everything. He never retaliates against anyone. *dui-prakāre sahiṣṇutā kare vrkṣa-sama* — One should be as tolerant as a tree. There are degrees of tolerance. A tree doesn’t ask for water. In the summer season when the scorching heat of the sun is drying everything up, the tree will never ask for water. It tolerates. It may dry up and die, but still it never asks for water. A *vaiṣṇava* is as tolerant as this.

Madhavendra Puri is the example. He never asked for anything. If he was hungry or thirsty he tolerated. He never asked Krishna to help him. One who tolerates like this becomes as tolerant as a tree and becomes much humbler than a blade of grass lying on the street. He can chant the pure name. The pure name means Krishna. So Krishna comes.

Krishna told Madhavendra Puri, “What sort of *sannyāsī* are you? A *sannyāsī* goes out to collect some *bhikṣā*, *mādhukarī*. You are thirsty and hungry. Why are you not going out to beg alms?”

“Who are you?”

“I am a cowherd boy. I live in this village. I tend the cows here.”

“How do you know that I am hungry and thirsty?”

“I heard. Some women were taking bath in that pond. They were talking amongst themselves: ‘That *sannyāsī* sitting underneath the tree is very hungry and thirsty.’ So I have brought this pot of milk for you. Take it.”

Caitanya-caritāmṛta (antya 20.24) states:

*yei ye māgaye, tāre deya āpana-dhana
gharma-vṛṣṭi sahe, ānera karaye rakṣaṇa*

A *vaiṣṇava* is as tolerant as a tree. A tree gives its cool shade to whoever sits under its branches. It gives flowers, fruits, leaves, twigs, and branches. It will give its whole body for someone to cut. It never complains. It tolerates the scorching heat of the sun, torrential rain, the pelting of stones, beatings. He tolerates and gives everything. He always does good to others. A *vaiṣṇava* should be like that.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta (antya 20.25) states:

*uttama hañā vaiṣṇava habe nirabhimāna
jīve sammāna dibe jāni’ kṛṣṇa’-adhiṣṭhāna*

A *vaiṣṇava* is *uttama*, *paramahansa*, the topmost person, but he thinks, “I am the lowest of the low.” He never demands respect, rather he respects one and all thinking that Krishna is there in the heart of every living entity. He never demands respect. This is *amānī mānada*. ॐ

— From a lecture in Bhubaneswar, 23 April 1992.

STEALING THE CLOTHES OF THE GOPIS PART ONE

Sri Srimad Purnachandra Das Goswami

When the *gopīs* were very young, they developed an intense love for Krishna. Hankering to directly meet Lord Krishna before actually meeting him is a kind of love in separation called *pūrva-raga*. The *vraja-gopīs* desired to have a relationship with Krishna as their husband. Such was the desire of Dhanya Sakhi and the other virgin girls of Vrindavan. Individually, they secretly supplicated various deities with the object of having Krishna as their husband, but they were confused by the apparent failure of these efforts. Each of them prayed to reside in Nanda Bhavan with Nanda Baba and Yasodamayi as their parents-in-law and Krishna as their husband birth after birth. In due course of time, these girls met each other near the Yamuna. Though from different places, if many people simultaneously seek out the same goal, they come in contact with each other, just as students meet at the residence of their guru. When these girls met, they immediately felt a deep empathy for each other.

When this friendship was established, they revealed their heartfelt desires to each other. Although the hearts of those in love may be concealed, they are clear to those who are experiencing the same feelings. One day, as they were divulging their heart’s desire to each other and weeping, their well-wisher Vrinda



The gopīs plead with Krishna

arrived there in the dress of a female ascetic. Vrinda had been thinking, “The mutual love between these girls and the prince of Vraja possesses an indescribable power to bring them together. This love is far beyond the common affection of people in this world. Therefore they should worship some other god, other than Krishna personally.”

Upon arriving amongst the *gopīs*, Vrinda accepted their respectful greetings and gave them her blessings. She said, “I am a resident of this forest and I couldn’t help but see how you are suffering due to your love. My heart has been torn with compassion, so I have come here. I ask you to carefully listen to my knowledge of magical ritual by which you will be able to fulfill your desires. It will not require extreme effort as you shall only have to exert yourselves for a month. I learned of these things from the compassionate Yogamaya, the reservoir of all spells and incantations, after I entreated her through austerities.”

Thus thinking of the girls’ welfare, Vrinda initiated the *gopīs* by whispering a *mantra* into their ears and by instructing them in the rules and regulations for austerities meant to accompany the chanting of the *mantra*. She then disappeared. As soon as she left, the *gopīs* joyfully began applying her instructions.

The mothers of these young girls wanted them to get married and so encouraged them to perform worship. But the mothers were worried that any austerities would be too much for the girls due to their tender and fragile young bodies. Thus their mothers affectionately warned them, “How can your young bodies endure austerities? And how will you get the needed determination? We have never seen you do such things before.” Their mothers’ doubts, however, simply increased their determination to perform the *vrata*. Their mothers also asked them, “O girls, who will you worship? Will you worship Uma or Umapati or maybe Lord Brahma? What type of *pūjā* will you do? Will you need any wealth to perform the *pūjā*? And who will be the *ācārya* to guide you in the chanting of the Vedic mantras? Please consider all these details and then tell us your decision.”

A *vrata*, vow, is specified by *kāla*, *deśa*, *saṅkalpa*, *mantra* and *iṣṭa-deva*. The *vraja-gopīs* were planning to perform a specific *vrata*, and, by the mercy of Vrinda-devi, they knew all of the particulars for that *vrata*. The time (*kāla*) was set for the first day of the waning moon at the beginning of the month of *Mārgaśīrṣa* (November-December). The place (*deśa*) to perform it was also planned: the pristine and beautiful banks of the Yamuna River. Their *saṅkalpa*, desired goal, was deeply established in the core of their hearts: to attain the son of Nanda as their husband. The *iṣṭa-deva* to whom they would offer worship was to be goddess Katyayani, and the *mantra* they were going to chant during the offerings began with the words *kātyāyani mahā-māye*.

It was the first month of the Hemanta season, winter. The girls briefly told their mothers, “We are going to worship Katyayani.” They did not tell their mothers much more because they were afraid that if their mothers would keep asking questions then the secret in their hearts would be revealed. That is one of the meanings of the word *gopī*. The Sanskrit root *gup* means “to hide”. Therefore, a girl who hides her love for Sri Krishna is known as a *gopī*. The *gopīs* knew that if one reveals the flavor of one’s love to others, it dissipates, just as spices lose their flavor if the lids of their containers are not kept tightly closed.

The *vrata* required that they eat only boiled rice and *dal* without any spices and to rise early every morning and bathe in the cold waters of the

Yamuna River. There on the banks of the Yamuna they would worship goddess Katyayani and offer her prayers. They walked together every morning at dawn to take their morning baths, and then they worshipped goddess Katyayani. Every morning they made a *mūrti* of Katyayani from sand.

The bodies of the *gopīs* revealed a special kind of beauty during this time of austerity. They did not use oil while bathing, and thus their skin and hair appeared dry, clean and fresh like *aśoka* leaves washed by rain. They also did not chew any *tāmbūla*, so the natural hue of their lips was manifest. From eating only once a day their bodies became thin and lost their natural effulgence. Seeing their emaciated condition, the *vrajavāsīs* felt pity for them.

Their burning desire to obtain Krishna caused them to often lay awake at night. And before they took rest they would secretly discuss how and where they would meet the following morning. Then when they would meet in the morning they would respectfully greet one another and lovingly embrace. They would sometimes call out to each other by name, “O fortunate girl, where are you? Why are you wasting time? Come!” As they walked together in the early morning toward the Yamuna,



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they would hold hands and sing songs about Krishna, teasing each other by exposing their own goals in song. Because they were effulgent, they appeared like a garland of lightening bolts moving on the earth.

Yamuna Devi could directly perceive the desire in their hearts. She knew that they all wanted Krishna as their husband. She welcomed them with her waves, desiring to embrace them, and respectfully called, “Come, come *sakhis!* Welcome!” When the eager *gopīs* arrived at the bank of the Yamuna, they immediately threw off their woolen *cadars*, revealing their thin white underclothes for bathing. Thus they appeared more beautiful than fallen snow. Shivering and sighing due to the chill morning air, the young girls smiled and giggled at one another upon noticing that their friends felt the same way. Their lips quivered, revealing their jasmine bud-like teeth. They further reacted to the cold, making a comic scene by slapping their arms together and crossing their legs in a contorted, humorous fashion. They offered obeisances to Yamuna Devi before entering the river, and after bathing they gleefully ran back up the river bank, feeling elated at having bravely tolerated her icy waters.

After coming out, the water dripping from their garments fell onto the earth. It appeared that their garments were shedding tears after being tortured by the cold water. As they gracefully dried themselves with soft cloths, the *gopīs* looked very beautiful. Their beauty was enhanced by their chanting of the sweet names of Krishna. The sweetness from their breath attracted bees that flew in front of their faces. But the *gopīs* became annoyed, blinking and twitching their eyebrows, because the bees were creating a breeze by flapping their wings. Feeling compassionate, Suryadev gradually dispersed their chill by caressing them with his gentle, warm rays. Thus Suryadev offered more affection for the *gopīs* than to his own daughter Yamuna Devi. (To be continued.) ❀

