



तव कथामृतं तसजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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NOT REQUIRED TO JOIN

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

With reference to the boys holding *kīrtanas* independently, our propaganda should be that people may open different centers of their own. Each and every householder may have his own class at home. Not that everyone is required to join the society; they may take the idea from the society and introduce in their private life. And if possible, let us sell to them the paraphernalia of *kīrtana* — *karatālas*, *mṛdaṅga*, deities, etc. ❀

— From an undated letter to Rayaram.

SEEING THROUGH THE EARS

*Sri Srimad Gour Govinda
Swami Maharaja*

If you hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* regularly you will develop the vision to see Lord Krishna. *kalau naṣṭa-dṛśām* — You are enveloped by and groping about in the dense darkness of *Kali-yuga*. You have no enlightenment. If there was some light then you could say, “Oh, yes. Here is Mr. Chavet. Here is this, here is that.” In *Kali-yuga*, those who are blind, devoid of pure transcendental knowledge, can get light from this *Bhāgavata-mahā-purāṇa*. By hearing *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* their eyes can open, *śrutekṣita*. Their *bhakti-caṅṣu*, devotional eye,



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

and *jñāna-caṅṣu*, eye of knowledge or intuition, can open. Only then is it possible for them to see Krishna, *īkṣita*. If you do not hear, how can you see? ❀

— Lecture, New Vrindavan, West Virginia, 30 May 1993.

GOPI VASTRAHARANA LILA PART SIX

Sri Srimad Purnachandra Das Goswami

Their Hearts Stolen

By association with their dearest Krishna, the *gopīs* were captivated; they became more attached to him than ever. Their glances, now full of shyness, became fixed upon him. And being so situated, they could not move due to being stunned by ecstatic love.

After they put their clothes on they did not move. They just stood there completely captivated by Krishna. And as Krishna stole away their garments, similarly his mind was stolen away by them. Their love was mutually dependent. They remained there, shyly glancing at him. Actually, this incident made them more humble in front of Krishna than they were before. Why? Because the *gopīs* had viewed this incident as proof that Krishna was as attached to them as they were attached to him. Thus they felt, “Krishna also loves us, by the grace of Katyayani.”

The shyness that was driven out by Krishna and also rejected by them had gone far away. But that same shyness again returned, and being led by their eyes to the vicinity of Krishna, again assumed dominion even more than before. They became shy again because their love for Krishna had increased more and more. They became stunned by *prema-bhakti*, and so they could not move.

The *pūrva-raga* in the hearts of the *gopīs* was now blossoming into a beautiful flower of love. Krishna did not simply steal the clothes of the *gopīs*, but he also stole their hearts. The stealing of their clothes was a pretext; it was the medium by which they could surrender fully to him and develop their love. The fact that they were young girls and that they were naked was just the circumstantial medium of exchange, a secondary feature of the pastime. Any common man would have become lusty in such a situation. But Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, tested the love of the *gopīs* and made it come out from their heart. Krishna, being the Supreme Lord, is never controlled by lust.

In their past lives, many of the *gopīs* were religious and austere sages, fully attached to conventional *dharma*. Now Krishna was breaking through that conventional *dharma* and bringing them above it by

invoking their pure love. Although others would be lusty to see the naked forms of women, Krishna was not interested to enjoy material, sexual affairs. He was only interested in what was inside their hearts.

The *gopīs* said, “O Krishna, topmost enjoyer of loving reciprocations, we have now obtained the fruit of our vow because after you have created this extraordinary fraud and driven the very life air out of our bodies, again by your grace we have become fully satisfied. By making us come out of the water you used clever devices to insult us in every way. But then you took our garments on your own shoulders and gave them back to us together with the jewel of your own heart, as expressed by you. In response to this we can only offer you our shy glances. We are simply foolish girls and cannot discern whether this is an offense against you or if it satisfies you. You know perfectly well the differences of time, place and candidate. Therefore, please speak whatever you desire to say. After hearing from you, we will go to our homes.”

At this point the other soft-hearted cowherd boys spoke amongst themselves, “There is nothing more for us to do here. Come on, let’s go.” They playfully pulled each other by the hands, clothes and belts, and left. Krishna, who was now even more beautiful due to his charming act of thievery, prepared to give the *gopīs* a wonderful boon.

Krishna knew of the great determination possessed by the *gopīs* that enabled them to perform the difficult austerities to achieve him. Therefore he reciprocated with them. He told them, “I knew everything before the desire tree of your determination grew. I have performed this pastime to increase your love for me. By ordering you harshly, I tested your love for me. Attracted to me, you submissively obeyed my order. And therefore I have manifested eternal love in your hearts. Your desire is pure.

“I reciprocate differently with different people in this world. The desire of those who fix their minds on me does not lead to material desire for sense gratification, just as barleycorns burned by the sun can no longer grow into new sprouts. If a pure-hearted person displays such an intense desire for me then I will transform that desire into *prema*. Then he will taste the nectar of experiencing my qualities. This well of nectar

exists independently of any other type of *rasa*. Even Lakshmi Devi hankers for the love you have clearly displayed.

“And whatever worship of me is done even temporarily, although it may be insubstantial and improper due to duplicity, still it is fit to become true by my arrangement, since I am full of transcendental qualities. Even if such imperfect worship can become successful, then what to speak of the worship of me by your good selves, which is imbued with the most exalted pure love.

Krishna continued, “O saintly girls, I knew that your real motive was to worship me, focused simply upon my happiness. And even though you have not stated this because of your shyness, that desire is approved by me, and it will come to pass. Because of your purity it must therefore come true since such great souls as yourselves are intent simply upon my happiness. And I myself am under the control of your love. Therefore what is impossible in such a case? So now you should return to your homes in Vraja. Your desire is fulfilled because you will enjoy with me in the coming nights.” Krishna concluded by saying, “You have now attained perfection, so stop chatting like *cataki* birds.”

The *gopīs* cried tears of happiness, and could return home only with great difficulty. Their desires were now fulfilled because Krishna said, “You will enjoy with me in the coming nights.” A young lady never spends the night with anyone except her husband. By saying this it was clear that Krishna had accepted them as his wives. They would dance together in the *rasa* dance in the near future. This was his promise.

Another View

The *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* describes the pastime in a different way. There it is stated that the *gopīs* chanted “*hrīṁ durgāyaiḥ namaḥ*” a thousand times. When Krishna came to them and was joking with them from the tree, he challenged the ability of the goddess to fulfill their desires. He said, “Your goddess did not have the power to protect your clothes, so how will she have the power to give you the result of your vow? This *Purāṇa* mentions that Sri Radha calls upon her young girlfriends to tie up Krishna and bring him to her. The *gopīs* rise up from the water and chase Sridama, who is holding the *gopīs*’ garments. He starts running to where all of the other cowherd

boys are standing. The *vraja-gopīs*, although naked, surround all of the cowherd boys and stand ready to attack them. Sridama quickly gives Krishna the garments, and Krishna climbs into the tree. Then he starts joking with the girls as follows, “What can you or your leader do to me? Nothing! You must all come before me and beg for your clothes.” The *gopīs* then run back to the Yamuna to inform Srimati Radharani of Krishna’s demand.

Srimati Radharani begins laughing and then sits down like a yogini on the bank of the Yamuna to meditate on Krishna’s lotus feet. Upon opening her eyes, she sees Krishna everywhere. She also sees all of the *gopīs*’ garments where they were originally placed and all of the goddess’s offerings on the river bank. She considers that her vision was a dream or perhaps a hallucination due to exhaustion. But then the *gopīs* return to the bank only to find the garments exactly where they had first placed them.

Two Kinds of Lilas

We often find that there are two types of *līlās* found in the scriptures: one predominated by *aiśvarya-bhāva*, the reverential mood of worshipping the Lord’s opulent feature, and the other predominated by *mādhurya-bhāva*, the intimate mood focusing on the Lord’s sweetness. If Sri Radha was meditating on Krishna’s lotus feet from within the river it indicates that she was aware that he is the Supreme Lord. And if she was ordering her *sakhīs* to capture Krishna and tie him up, that also indicates her mood to be like that of an angry queen, similar to Lakshmi’s behavior in the *Herā-pañcamī* festival in Puri. In different scriptures you will find different pastimes in one of these two categories.

If you hear a description of Vrindavan where one devotee is cursing another devotee to fall to the mortal world, that pastime is not taking place in Goloka Vrindavan. Rather, it is taking place in Radha-Krishna Vaikuntha (*Aiśvarya-vṛndāvana*). Or if you read about a divine spacecraft taking a devotee back to Godhead, or about demigods requesting Lord Krishna to advent on the earth, such a description is not about the original Goloka Vrindavan. There is also a divine abode in Vaikuntha where Radha and Krishna reside. In that place we also find the celebrated Govardhana Hill, the Yamuna River, the *gopas* and *gopīs*, but there are no sweet, intimate pastimes as found in Goloka Vrindavan.

Rather, there the eternal residents serve Radha and Krishna in opulence as if they were a king and queen.

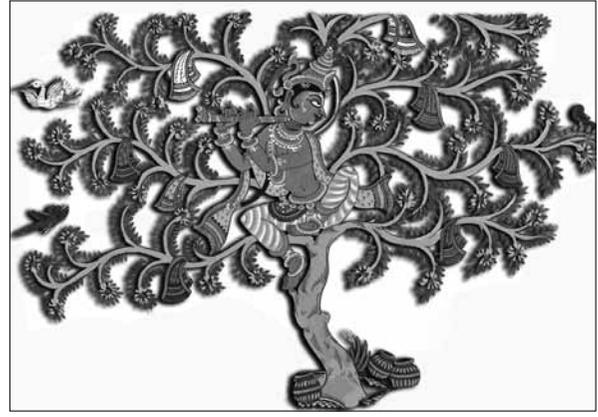
Srila Vishwanath Cakravartipada has referred to this abode in his commentary on the pastime in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* of Nanda Maharaja being rescued from Varunadeva's abode (*Bhāg.* 10.28.17) as follows:

And seeing that Vaikuntha-loka, they became overjoyed with supreme bliss. This is because of their noticing that the Vrindavan present in the Goloka of Vaikuntha has the same nature as their own Vrindavan. This is just like millionaires who sometimes lose all their wealth and then by chance they see some token of their wealth and become overwhelmed in bliss.

Thus they were searching out, 'Where is Krishna, a mere drop of the perspiration from whose lotus face is more worthy of homage than thousands of lives?' Then they saw him. Seeing Krishna present there, being praised by the personified Vedas, they became astonished.

"Indeed, where have we arrived, that there are all these luminous personalities offering prayers? We have never seen such persons in Vrindavan. But who are they, whom seem incapable of being approached by us? And in the midst of them is our Krishna. Yet even though he is looking upon us, his many parents and relatives, he is not manifesting his childhood behavior. Neither does he come near to us. He doesn't take our necks in his arms. And we also feel embarrassed to approach him and place him on our laps. How is it that we are just now forgetting the

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Painting by Gokul Bilhari Pattnaik

Krishna spoke joking words to the gopis

disturbances of hunger and thirst? And how is it that his mother, unable to feed him, is able to maintain her life? They were expressing such surprise. The implied completion of the idea is that they were again brought back to Vrindavan by Yogamaya, who was inspired by the Lord's *līlā-sakti*.

One should discriminate while reading and hearing *vraja-līlās* because our Gaudiya *ācāryas* generally did not refer to nor meditate upon the *aiśvarya-līlās* found in books like *Garga-saṁhitā*, *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, and so on. One may occasionally use them for a particular purpose, but they do not present the pure mood of Vraja that our Gaudiya *ācāryas* promote for the cultivation of *vraja-bhakti*. We can accept these *aiśvarya-līlās* as true accounts since they are given in *sāstra*, but there is a great difference between them and the *mādhurya-līlās* meant to be cultivated by us. Knowing these facts, one may judge various accounts in other *Purāṇas* as favorable or unfavorable for *vraja-bhajan*.

One great devotee may mystically envision a pastime and record it differently than another great devotee. Their revelations of a Bhauma Vrindavan pastime may be from one *yuga* or another *yuga*. Their revelation may also be from Radha-Krishna Vaikuntha or from Goloka Vrindavan. Thus different activities, moods, and results in envisioned *līlās* may be perceived and later recorded in various *sāstras* from different devotees' revelations. And even if a number of great devotees envision the same *līlā* from Goloka Vrindavan, they may envision it differently according to their own level or mood of *prema*. Therefore there are variegated accounts of the same *līlās*, and we may accept all of them as factual and real without being confused. ❀



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Phone: (0674) 2553250, 2557026

Email: katha@gopaljiu.org

Website: www.gopaljiu.org

Subscriptions: minimag@gopaljiu.org

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