



तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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Highlights

• **HAVE YOU READ THIS BOOK?**

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• **BALARAM'S RETURN TO VRINDAVAN – PART ONE**



HAVE YOU READ THIS BOOK?

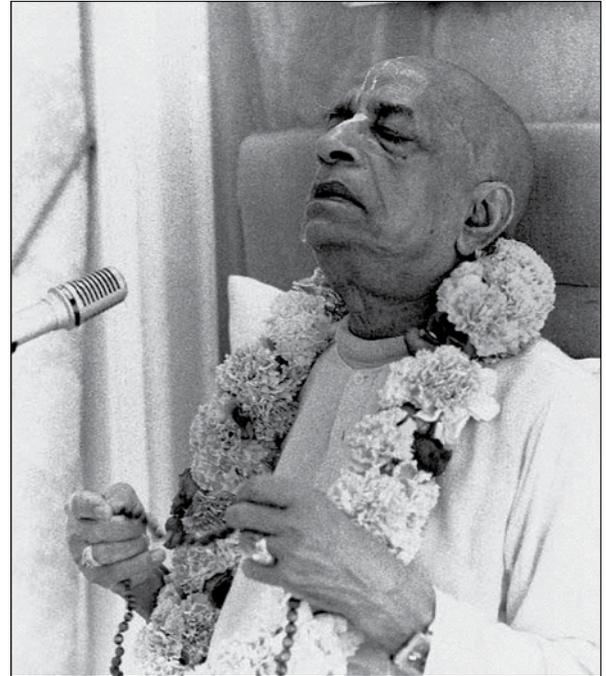
*His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupada*

GBC member means they should see that in every temple these books are very thoroughly being read, discussed, understood, and applied in practical life. That is wanted. Not only to see vouchers, “How many books have you sold, and how many books are in the stock?” That is secondary. You may keep vouchers, but if one is engaged in Krishna’s service there is no need of vouchers. Everyone should be doing their best. That’s all. We have to see that things are going on very nicely. The GBC members should divide some zones and see that things are going on nicely, that they are chanting sixteen rounds, that the temple management is acting according to the routine work, and that the books are being thoroughly discussed, read, and practically understood. These things are required. Suppose you go to sell a book and someone says, “Have you read this book? Can you explain this verse?” then what will you say? Will you answer, “No. It is for you. It is not for me. I have to take money from you. That’s all.” Is that a very nice answer? ❏

— From a lecture in Melbourne. 5 April 1972

BALARAM'S RETURN TO VRINDAVAN PART ONE

Various aspects of Lord Balaram's return from Dwarka to Vrindavan are described in chapter sixty-five of the tenth canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, in Hari-vamśa, and by various Gaudiya ācāryas.



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

After the departure of Krishna and Balaram for Mathura and Dwarka, the residents of Vrindavan were experiencing intense pangs of separation. But what was unknown to all but a few intimate devotees of Dwarka, was that Krishna and Balaram were feeling similar burning feelings due to being separated from the *vrajavāsīs*. According to Srila Jiva Goswami, one day Baladev revealed to Krishna his eagerness to return to Vraja. Krishna pacified him, saying, “Be patient, my brother. Today or tomorrow I will send you there.” ❏

A few days later when they were alone together, Balabhadra began to weep. He told Krishna, “My dear brother, how is it that you have not returned to Vraja? Our father and mother’s hearts have been burning in separation from you. I don’t understand your intentions. It seems that you have forgotten them.”

Krishna said, *hanta! hanta! nirantaram antaritam katham antaritam karavāṇi?* – “Alas! Alas! Vrindavan dwells always within the chambers of my heart. How can I ever forget Vrindavan and the residents there?” But *bāpa*, father [Nanda Maharaja], has instructed me that I should not disobey our parents here in Dwarka [Devaki and Vasudev], who will never be willing to allow me to return to Vraja. Unable to go against the wishes of my parents, I cannot return and am greatly suffering. If somehow you can get them to adjust their desires, then in great happiness I’ll depart for Vraja immediately!

Permission Denied!

Balaram went to Devaki and Vasudev to ask them permission to return to Vraja. After some contemplation they agreed that he could go, but no matter how Baladev tried, out of fear that Krishna would not come back to Dwarka, they would not agree to allow Balaram’s younger brother to go.

In his *Sārārtha-darśini* commentary, Srila Viswanath Chakravarti explains:

*preyasīḥ prema-vikhyātāḥ pitarāv ativalsalau
prema-vaśyaś ca kṛṣṇas tānis tyaktvā naḥ katham eṣyati
iti matvaiva yadavaḥ pratyavadhman harer gatau
vraja-prema-pravardhi-sva-līlādhīnatvam iyuṣaḥ*

[The senior members of the Yadu dynasty thought:] “Krishna’s beloved girlfriends are famous for their pure ecstatic love, and his parents [in Vraja] are extremely protective toward him. Krishna is controlled by pure love, so how will he be able to leave them and come back?” With this in mind, the Yadus prevented Lord Hari from going, because he allows himself to become subservient to the pastimes he has in reciprocation with the ever-increasing love of the inhabitants of Vraja.

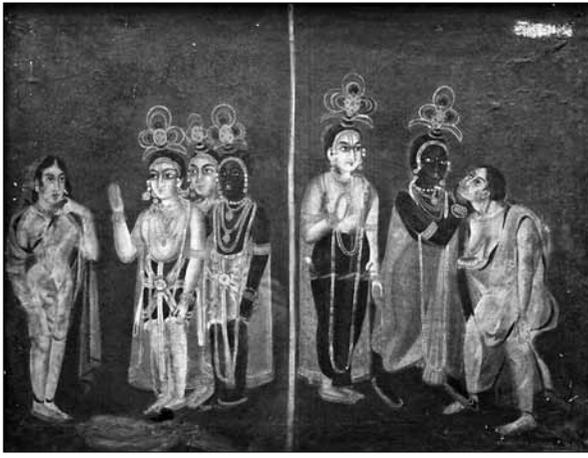
At this point, one may question how Balabhadra could leave Krishna behind and return to Vraja alone. After all, the nature of the love of the residents of Vraja is so powerful that, unable to tolerate the thought of being separated from him, the *vrajavāsīs*

would not allow Krishna to go to Mathura. How then could Baladev who is *dvitīya-deha*, the second body of Krishna (*Cc. ādi 5.4*), bear to break apart from his beloved younger brother? The answer is found in the first verse of the sixty-fifth chapter of the tenth canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. When describing this pastime, the word *utkaṅṭhaḥ*, “eager”, is used. According to Vishwanath, Balaram had developed such an intense longing to return to Vraja that his own sobriety, discrimination, and sense-control had vanished.

Thinking that a great disaster might take place in Vraja if he returned alone without Krishna, Balaram felt frustration and anxiety. He thus spoke a little strongly to Devaki and Vasudev, “O mother and father, what is the difference between Krishna and me?”



Lord Balaram with his plow



Krishna, Balaram and Kubja

I am also a child of the king and queen of Vraja. You should allow him to accompany me.” However, in spite of Baladev’s impassioned appeal, Devaki and Vasudev were silent and uncompromising in their decision not to allow Krishna to leave.

Returning to his younger brother, Ramabhadrā said, “Although I spoke many things to convince them, our parents are not giving you permission to return. On your request, for a long time I have stopped my feet from moving in the direction of Vraja, but now I very much want to return. Please allow me to go to see the people of Vraja.”

Thinking of Nanda and the others in Vraja and lamenting what he considered to be his own hateful, ungrateful nature, Krishna embraced Balaram. Then, speaking in a sweet way that had more than one meaning, Krishna recited a verse that he had previously uttered in Vraja. Krishna spoke the glories of Baladev’s presence in Vrindavan, and in particular Baladev’s favor shown to the cowherd damsels there:

*dhanyeyam adya dharaṇī tṛṇa-vīrudhas tvat-
pāda-spr̥śo druma-latāḥ karajābhīmṛṣṭāḥ
nadyo 'drayaḥ khaga-mṛgāḥ sadayāvalokair
gopyo 'ntareṇa bhujayor api yat-spr̥hā śrīḥ*

This earth has now become most fortunate because you have touched her grass and bushes with your feet, touched her trees and creepers with your fingernails, and because you have graced her rivers, mountains, birds and animals with your merciful glances. But above all, you have embraced the young cowherd women between your two arms — a favor hankered after by the goddess of fortune herself! (*Bhāg.* 10.15.8)

Krishna then began speaking to his elder brother about the Holi pastimes that he and Balaram performed with the *vraja-gopīs* the night that the demon Sankhachuda was killed (*Bhāg.* 10.34.20). By citing that pastime, Krishna was again speaking in a way that had various meanings. On one hand he was remembering the pastimes of Vraja and feeling separation from the residents there. On the other hand it is curious that Krishna cited this pastime, because Balaram was generally not together with Krishna during the latter’s pastimes with the *gopīs*. By reminding him of their previous happy loving exchanges of singing and joking with the *gopīs*, Krishna was giving Balaram a hint of his upcoming service in Vraja.

“You Will Bring Me”

With tears in his eyes, Krishna said, “My dear elder brother, the creator is against me. Thus you must go from Dwarka to Vraja alone. You will bring me to Vraja. Your going first will bring me there quickly.” This is the mood of the famous *Ratha-yātrā* festival in Jagannath Puri, wherein Krishna, Balaram, and their sister Subhadra go in chariots to visit Vrindavan. As in this description of the *Bhāgavatam*, during the festival in Puri it is Baladev who goes first, followed by Subhadra and finally Jagannath Krishna.

In his *Krama-sandarbhāḥ* commentary, Srila Jiva Goswami offers another intimate reason why Balaram decided to go alone to Vraja: *tena saha svāgamanasya sampraty ayogyatāyām, tat-tad-vrajastha-sāntvanārtham tam ekam eva śrī-kṛṣṇaḥ svayam anugataḥ iti bhāvaḥ* — “The reason why it was unsuitable for Krishna to go along with him at this time was that he (Baladev) wanted to console the various residents of Vraja [In other words, if Krishna had also come along, then the sweet pastime of consolation would not have taken place.] But it is implied that Lord Krishna himself followed behind him.”

Krishna then told Balaram, “Although I have consoled the people of Vraja through the mouth of Uddhava, you must give sweet instructions to them, for you are more attracted to Vraja than I. If you cannot completely satisfy them with your words, then promise them that I will return. If you see that they are still troubled, then I will appear there as a *sphūrti* by my power. If none of these

methods of consolation work, then, on my request, do something else — accept for yourself those *gopīs* who are still quite young. I have already reminded you of them in my description of our previous pastimes during the Holi festival. Filled with ecstatic love, those younger *gopīs* have not yet fulfilled their desires.

“Until we have both permanently returned to Vraja, establish yourself in this way with some of the *gopīs* who are objects of your mercy. But do this secretly to cheat cruel people. Get on your chariot alone and go quickly, so that no one will see.”

Eager to be reunited with his beloved friends and family in Vraja, Ramabhadra at once mounted his chariot to leave Dwarka. Hankering in his heart to go with him, Krishna, accompanied Balaram for some distance. Then, with tears in his eyes, Krishna returned to his home.

Gopa-vesh

Balabhadra went so quickly on his chariot that other travelers on the road could barely see him. Finally, he reached the houses on the edge of Vraja. *Hari-vamśa* says that before entering Vraja, Baladev secretly changed his opulent princely dress of Dwarka into that of a cowherd boy of Vrindavan.

Understanding the intense longing of the *vrajavāsīs* for Krishna, and not wanting to disturb

them when they found that he [Balaram] had returned without his younger brother, Baladev, who is the best of the intelligent, sent a message ahead informing Nanda and others of his arrival. Word quickly spread that the beloved son of Rohini had returned to Vrindavan, and in great joy all the residents gathered around him. Everyone was happy to see Balaram dressed as a cowherd boy, but their hearts all felt pained upon seeing that Krishna was not with him.

All the men embraced Balaram, and the people of Vraja offered him prayers:

*nityānanda-svarūpo 'pi prema-tapto vrajaukasām
yayau kṣṇam api tyaktvā yas tanī rāmanī muhuḥ stumhaḥ*

Let us repeatedly glorify that Lord Balaram, who although being Nityananda, the original personality of eternal bliss, felt pained by love for the residents of Vraja and went to see them even at the cost of leaving Krishna.

Then they brought Baladev to a quiet place and satisfied him with fragrant water. To relieve him from the fatigue of travel, they had him bathe, fed him, and offered him betel nuts. After resting, Balaram accepted a comfortable seat and everyone gathered around him. Affectionate Balaram became the center of everyone's focus. He offered respects to the elders present, such as Nanda's brothers Upananda, Abhinanda, Sunanda and Nandana. After the priests and elders offered blessings, their sons gathered around Balaram. Boys such as Krishna's beloved servant Raktak offered respects to Balabhadra with great joy. Those of Baladev's age had friendly loving exchanges as equals. Everyone had heart-felt discussions, uttering Balaram's and Krishna's names. While offering respects and speaking Krishna's name, they took Balaram as the equivalent of Krishna in the confusion of their bliss. With voices faltering out of love for him, those cowherds, who had dedicated everything to lotus-eyed Krishna, asked about the health of their dear ones in Dwarka, and Baladev in turn asked about the welfare of all the residents of Vraja (To be continued.) ॐ — MD

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