



Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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A DEVOTEE'S BUSINESS

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Your appreciation for the service of your godbrothers is very much laudable. This is actually a devotee's business that everyone should appreciate the value of other devotees. Nobody should criticize anyone because everyone is engaged in the service of the Lord according to one's capacity. Krishna wants to see how

much one is sincere in rendering him service. Materially we may think that one person's service is greater than another's. That is our material vision. On the spiritual platform there is no difference between the service rendered by a calf to Krishna and the service rendered by Radharani and her associates. Krishna is so kind and liberal that everyone's service, when it is sincerely offered to him, he accepts. This is the statement in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He accepts a little flower, fruit, and water offered to him with devotion and love. He wants our love and devotion. Otherwise, he is the proprietor of everything, so what can we give him? This position of our subordination should always be maintained and we should always give respect to our pure devotees who are engaged in devotional service. That will enable us to make a progressive march in the devotional line. 🙏

— Letter to Tamala Krishna, 19 August 1968.

THE ORNAMENT OF CRAFTY PRAISE

Sanskrit poets from time immemorial have used a variety of *alaṅkāras*, literary ornaments, to decorate their poetry. One such ornament is named *vyāja-stutiḥ* which literally means "crafty praise". This literary ornament occurs when a poet disguises praise as criticism or vice versa. The straightforward meaning of the poetry may criticize something while the actual intent is to praise it, or the straightforward meaning may be to praise something while the actual intent is to criticize it. Śrīla Jīva Goswami defines this ornament in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-śeṣa* (chapter 4) as follows:

nindā-stutibhyāṁ vācyābhyāṁ gamyatve stuti-nindayoḥ

[Vyāja-stutiḥ occurs when] criticism or praise is ultimately expressed by words which initially seem, respectively, like praise or criticism.

Srila Kavi Karnapur gives a definition which helps makes the subject matter clear. He says:

mukhe stuti, nindā vā hṛdaye vyāja-stutiḥ syāt tat tad-anythingā

When a poet exhibits praise or criticism through his mouth but within his heart exists the very opposite of that mood, then such an ornament is known as vyāja-stutiḥ. (*Alaṅkāra-kaustubha*, chapter 8)

Srila Baladev Vidyabhushan defines the same ornament in his *Kāvya-kaustubha* (10th chapter) as follows:

vyāja-stutis tu nindāyāḥ stuter vā vyatyayād bhavet

Vyāja-stutiḥ occurs when an expression of criticism or praise achieves the opposite effect.

The poet Jayadev (not to be confused with Jayadev Goswami) in his *Candrālokaḥ* (5.71) defines and gives an example of vyāja-stutiḥ in the same verse:

uktir vyāja-stutir nindā-stutibhyām stuti-nindayoh

kas te viveko nayasi svargaṁ pātakino 'pi yat

Vyāja-stuti is the expression of criticism or praise through the medium of praise or criticism respectively. For example, a poet says: “[O Ganga!] Just see the lack of discrimination that you exhibit when you deliver even the sinners into heaven.”

In this example, although Ganga is being externally criticized for delivering the sinners into heaven, the ultimate aim of the poet is to praise her purificatory powers. The example given by Jayadev covers only one type of vyāja-stutiḥ (praise disguised as criticism). He has not given any example of the other type (criticism disguised as praise).

Srila Jiva Goswami gives examples of both types of vyāja-stutiḥ in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-śeṣa* (chapter 4). His example of praise disguised as criticism is as follows:

na doṣa-leśo 'pi guṇair lasantyām

śrī-rādhikāyām iti gīr na satyā

keśeṣu kauṭilyam uroja-kumbhe

kāthinyam akṣṇoś ca yad asti laulyam

The statement, “There is no trace of fault in the lady named Sri Radha, who shines forth due to her good qualities,” is not true at all. There is definitely a lack of straightness — in her curly hair; there is hardness — in her firm breasts; and there is fickleness — in her restless eyes.

All the negative qualities mentioned here actually add to the attractiveness of Sri Radha. Srila Jiva Goswami gives the following example of criticism disguised as praise:

padme yūyam puṇyavatyaḥ śaraj-jyotsnāsu yāḥ sphuṭam
niṣpratyūhaṁ harmya-prṣṭhe labhadhve svāpajam sukham

O greatly respected Padma! How fortunate you are to be relishing the joy of unobstructed peaceful sleep at the rooftop of your mansion in the presence of the beautiful rays of the autumnal moon.

This is a statement made by a *gopī* to the *gopī* named Padma. The terms *yūyam*, *puṇyavatyaḥ* and *labhadhve* are all in plural case to denote sarcastic respect for Padma. In Sanskrit literature, plural case is often used to denote respect for a person. The actual meaning of the verse is that in the romantic autumnal night lit by the brilliant rays of the moon, all other *gopīs* are enjoying pastimes with Krishna whereas Padma is busy sleeping on her rooftop, and thus she is most unfortunate.

Srila Kavi Karnapur also gives examples of both types of vyāja-stutiḥ in his *Alaṅkāra-kaustubha* (chapter 8). He first gives an example of criticism disguised as praise:

na niḥsprhas tvat sadṛśo viraktaḥ

svakīya-kīrtāv api nānuraktaḥ

ḍṛi-mātra-nispādyā-paropakāre

na kṛṣṇa! kīrtim yad urī-karoṣi

[A *gopī* says], “O Krishna! There is no person as detached as you. You are not at all interested even in increasing your glories. [I say this because] you do not even accept



Nāma-tattva

NO HARM FROM YAMADUTAS

From Bhagavan-nāma-māhātmya-saṅgrahaḥ

devakī-tanaya-pūjana-pūtaḥ

pūtanāri-caraṇodaka-dhūtaḥ

yady ahaṁ smṛta-dhanañjaya-sūtaḥ

kiṁ kariṣyati sa me yama-dūtaḥ

Purified by worshiping the son of Devaki and cleansed by drinking the water that has washed the lotus feet of the enemy of Putana, if I am constantly remembering the names of the charioteer of Arjuna then what harm will the *yama-dūta* inflict upon me?

— Translated by Hari Parshad Das from *Bhagavan-nāma-māhātmya-saṅgraha*. Princess of Wales Saraswati Bhavana Text No. 56. Edited by Mahamahopadhyaya Gopi Natha Kaviraja. Printed at Vidya Vilasa Press, Benares City. 1934.





Unknown artist

Virahinī-rādhā — Radha in separation

the glory that will be accrued in the benevolence of casting your side-long glances [upon me].”

Here, the *gopī* seems to be praising Krishna externally, but is ultimately criticizing Krishna for not even casting a simple side-long glance on her. Srila Kavi Karnapur then gives an example of praise disguised as criticism:

*tvad aṅghri-mūlaṁ bhajatām mukunda!
lābho 'stu dūre vapuṣo nijasya
cirantanyāpi bhaved vināśaḥ
svabhāva evaiṣa tava prasiddhaḥ*

[A devotee says], “O Mukunda! For those who are worshipping your feet, all benefits remain far away. Forget about benefits, the devotee ends up destroying his very body that he had been acquiring since time immemorial. Your nature is thus well known to everyone.”

This example has also been quoted by Srila Baladev Vidyabhushan in his *Sāhitya-kaumudī* (chapter 10).

The devotee seems to externally criticize Krishna by saying that his devotees do not obtain any benefits in this world and instead end up losing their material body. However, the end result of losing one’s material body is acquisition of a spiritual body in the spiritual world. Hence, such criticism culminates in praise of Krishna.

Srila Baladev Vidyabhushan gives another example of criticism disguised as praise in his *Sāhitya-kaumudī* (chapter 10):

*jagati tvat-samo nānyaḥ sphā-sūnyaḥ samikṣyate
kṛṣṇa-kīrtana-ratnāni kaṅṭhe yat kuruse na hi*

[A devotee says to a non-devotee], “There is no person as detached as you in this world. You do not even accept decorations of jewels of beautiful *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* around your neck.”

The actual intention is to say that the non-devotee is a degraded soul who will be further degraded due to not being favorable to Lord Hari.

Some other examples of *vyāja-stutiḥ*:

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.240):

*śaṅke nītāḥ sapadi daśama-skandha-padyāvalīnām
varṇāḥ karṇādhvani pathikatām ānupurvyād bhavadbhiḥ
haṁho ḍimbhāḥ parama-śubhadān hanta dharmārtha-kāmān
yad garhantaḥ sukhamayam amī mokṣam apy ākṣipanti*

[A devotee pretends to verbally chastise some devotee children:] “O naive children! I surmise that you have sequentially turned all the syllables of the poetry occurring in the tenth canto of the *bhāgavatam* into travelers who now traverse on the pathways of your ears. For this reason, you now disrespect even *mokṣa* (impersonal liberation) while completely deriding *dharma* (religiosity), *artha* (economic development) and *kāma* (fulfillment of material desires).”

[**Translator’s Note:** The verbal chastisement is merely a pretense to praise the excellent devotional qualities that devotees acquire by reading the tenth canto of the *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*.]

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (3.1.44):

*advaita-vīthi-pathikair upāsyāḥ
svānanda-simhāsana-labdha-dikṣāḥ
śaṭhena kenāpi vyaṁ haṭhena
dāsi-kṛtā gopa-vadhū-ṣiṭena*

[Bilvamangal Thakur said:] We were transcendentalists situated on the highest lion-like thrones of impersonal experience. We were worshiped by travelers walking on

the path of impersonal scriptural knowledge. However, we were forcibly turned into young maidservants by a certain cheat who lusts after the wives of the cowherds.

[**Translator’s Note:** The cheater lusting after the wives of the cowherds is Krishna. Although the poet criticizes Krishna externally, the ultimate mood is to glorify his merciful nature.]

Srila Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur’s Ānanda-candrikā commentary to Ujjvala-nīlamanīḥ (8.94):

*padme kutaḥ sva-sadanāt kurute sakhī te
kiṁ sāmprataṁ sudati roditi ko ’tra hetuḥ
gāmbhīrya-dhairya-jaladhis tvam ivāstu kānyā
yan nāśru kānta-virahe ’pi bahiṣkarōṣi*

[Conversation between Radha and Padma],

Radha: O Padma! Where are you coming from?

Padma: From my mansion.

Radha: What is your friend [Chandravali] doing right now?

Padma: Burning in anxiety and crying.

Radha: What is the reason?

Padma: Well, who besides you is the great reservoir of calmness and gravity? You are so calm that you do not even shed tears on being separated from your beloved!

[**Translator’s Note:** In other words, you are so hard at heart that you do not even cry when Krishna leaves you.] 🌸

Article compiled by Hari Parshad Das from the following sources:

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