



Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

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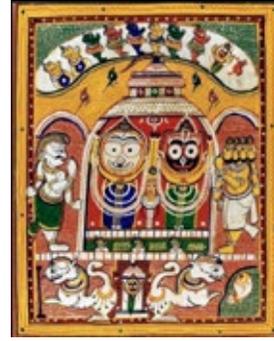
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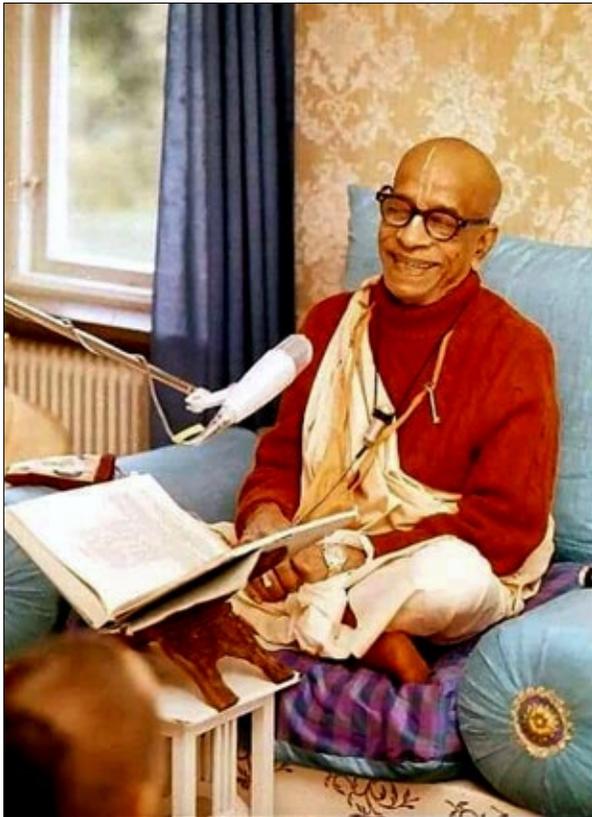
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Unknown artist. Late 19th century. Puri



THREE LEVELS OF DEVOTEES

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Affection for god-brothers is nice. It is a good sign. Affection for god-brothers as well as for all other living entities, even if they are not god-brothers, are signs seen in advanced devotees. There are three kinds of devotees:

The lower-grade devotees, they have high regard for the deity in the temple, but not very much regard for devotees or people in general. The second-grade devotee takes compassion with innocent non-devotees. In that stage, he has got four kinds of vision: one is that he always keeps Krishna as the most lovable object, second is that he makes intimate friendship with his devotee god-brothers or any other devotees, third is that he takes compassion with innocent non-devotees, and tries to convince them about the importance of Krishna Consciousness, and fourth is that he does not take any serious interest for the atheist class of men. The first-grade devotee, of course, sees everyone in relationship with Krishna and as such, he makes no distinction between a devotee or non-devotee. His vision is high grade, because he sees that everyone is engaged in Krishna's service directly or indirectly. This position of high-grade devotee should never be imitated. It was possible only in Lord Chaitanya or Lord Nityananda, or Haridas Thakur. Thakur Haridas was so powerful that he could convert even a harlot. But we should not try to imitate Haridas Thakur or Lord Chaitanya. Our position is in the second-grade platform. We should not be satisfied remaining in the third-grade platform. But we should try to elevate ourselves in the second-grade platform. So far the first-grade platform is concerned, it is not attained by our endeavor, but it is possible when we have full grace of Krishna. It completely depends on the causeless mercy of Krishna. 🍊

— Letter to Madhusudan. 29 July 1968.

THE DANGER OF SECTARIANISM

*Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode's
Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta, chapter 3 part 3*

To be controlled by superstition causes many problems. From superstition arises prejudice; with prejudice, there is no respect for truth. Wearing the signs of the *vaiṣṇava* is one of the methods of cultivating devotion, involving the body. But to think that it is the distinguishing characteristic of a *vaiṣṇava* is a superstition arising from *sampradāya* prejudice. Controlled by such false beliefs, a person may not respect a real *vaiṣṇava* who is not wearing those marks. If a devotee cannot find good association within his own organization he will not venture to find good association elsewhere if he has such a prejudice. Since without good association nothing can be accomplished, such a devotee falls into a dangerous position. Those who are bound to the *varṇāśrama* system by prejudice also fail to develop a taste for the higher level of *bhakti*. Sometimes hatred, which degrades a person even more, may also appear. 🍌

— Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta. English translation by Bhanu Swami. Unpublished manuscript.

THE TRADITION OF DEVOTIONAL PAINTING FOR LORD JAGANNATH

Art and devotion are like distinct yet interwoven notes in symphonies of the heart; their high points have been reached whenever they are original, individualistic, and with no cause other than creative or divine madness. Both are pleasing to the heart and both provide a shelter and release from life's anxieties. In the words of U. S. novelist Willa Cather (1873–1947), “Art and religion (they are the same thing, in the end, of course) have given man the only happiness he has ever had.”¹

In India, the Vedic tradition placed great emphasis on art as a form of religious expression. According to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.27.12):

*śailī dāru-mayī lauḥī lepyā lekhyā ca saikatī
mano-mayī maṇi-mayī pratimāṣṭa-vidhā smṛtā*

The deity form of the Lord appears in eight ways — stone, wood, metal, earth, paint, sand, the mind or jewels.

Thus, in *Bhāgavata* culture,² painting is one of the eight mediums into which God can be invoked. The origin and various aspects of painting are discussed in the Sanskrit scripture *Citralakṣaṇa*. The first chapter therein describes the important role of paintings in Vedic heritage and spiritual life:

*caityānām karaṇāyaiva citraṁ saṁlikhyate yataḥ
vedāc citraṁ prajātaṁ vai tasmād jñeyam tathaiva tat*



Photo of the wall of a house in a village near Puri

Jagannath peeks out

According to the Vedas, artistic drawings, referred to as “*citra*”, are required for the creation of sacred places [such as monuments, monasteries, and places of religious ritual and worship]. (1.90)

Brahma-sāṁhitā (5.37) refers to sixty-four different arts:

ānanda-cinmaya-rasa-pratibhāvitābhis

tābhir ya eva nija-rūpatayā kalābhiḥ

goloka eva nivasaty akhilātma-bhūto

govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi

I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, residing in his own realm, Goloka, with Radha, resembling his own spiritual figure, the embodiment of the ecstatic potency possessed of the sixty-four artistic activities, in the company of her confidantes [*sakhīs*], embodiments of the extensions of her bodily form, permeated and vitalized by his ever-blissful spiritual *rasa*.



Nāma-tattva

A PRAYER FOR CHANTING

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

*daśa aparādha yena hṛdaye nā paśe
kṛpā kara mahāprabhu maji nāma-rase*

May the ten offenses never touch my heart! O Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, please be merciful and grant that I remain submerged in the mellow of the holy name!

— Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi. 13.59. Gaudiya Mission. Bagh Bazar, Calcutta. 1992. Bengali.





Unknown artist

Old paṭa-citra painting on the wall of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house in Jagannath Puri

In his commentary on this verse, Thakur Bhaktivinode elucidates on the sixty-four various arts and explains that they are all meant to be devotional offerings to the Lord.

Citralakṣaṇa (1.94-95) says that among the arts, painting has a special position:

*himālayo yathā śreṣṭho nageṣu sakaleṣu ca
gaṅgā naḍīṣu śreṣṭhaiva graheṣu soma-bhāskarau
sameṣu vainateyaṣ ca mahendro deva-vṛndake
tathā śreṣṭhaṁ bhavec citraṁ savasti hi kalāsu ca*

As the Himalayas are the greatest of mountains, the Ganges the best of rivers, the sun and moon the best of planets, Garuda the best of birds, and Indra the best of the demigods, similarly, painting is the best of all the arts.

The above scriptural references give us some idea of why throughout India one finds multifarious and rich artistic traditions all closely connected with worship of different forms of God.

Place of Great Art

The synthesis of art and devotion is conspicuous in the worship of Lord Jagannath, the ancient deity of Krishna accompanied by his brother and sister that is established at Puri in Odisha. Indeed, one of the names of Odisha is “*Utkala*”, which means “the place of excellence of art”. Odisha is famous for its artistic carvings, dance, music, architecture, literature, weaving, and paintings, all of which are intimately related to the worship of Jagannath.

Traditional Odishan painting is known as *paṭa-citra*. “*Paṭa*” means “canvas”, and “*citra*” means “picture”.³ The use of paper did not come to Odisha until the end

of the sixteenth century, and was not the common medium for use in writing and painting until the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century.⁴ Prior to that, writing was done in the age-old system of etching on palm leaves, and the palm leaf manuscripts of scriptural texts were often illustrated with original *paṭa-citra* art.

Due to centuries of continuous Hindu rule under the protection and patronage of strong local kings and zamindars, Odisha has managed to retain much of its *vaiṣṇava* culture, of which *paṭa-citra* art has been an inseparable part since the earliest recorded times. *Paṭa-citra* style paintings have been found in ancient caves such as those at Udayagiri near Bhubaneswar, which historians date to around 200 BC. Many of the oldest temples in the state, such as the Mukteshwar Mandir in Bhubaneswar, bear on their walls and ceilings faint remnants of *paṭa-citra* paintings made long, long ago.⁵ 🍌 — MD (to be continued)

Notes

1 Godfrey St. Peter, in “The Professor’s House”, book I, ch. V (1925).

2 The Vaishnava culture based on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

3 “Odishan style paintings” may be a more accurate term than *paṭa-citra*. According to the materials used, there are three broad categories of paintings found in traditional Odishan art: *bhitti-citra* (wall paintings); *paṭa-citra* (textile paintings); and *talapatra* or *pothi-citra* (paintings on palm leaves). Fischer and Pathy in their article “Traditional Painting”, *Odisha Revisited*, 109. Following common usage, in this article we will use the phrase *paṭa-citra* to indicate all of these.

4 J. P. Das, *Puri Paintings*, 163. Also B. Ray in his article Pictorial Art in Moghul Odisha.

5 More details of ancient temples in Odisha decorated with paintings are found in Subas Pani’s *Illustrated Palmleaf Manuscripts of Odisha*, 5-6.

A WOEFUL PRAYER TO NITAI

The Medieval Gauḍīya Poet Krishnadas

It's not clear who the author of this song is. There are many poets in the Gauḍīya line with this name, and there are many who used this as a pen name to avoid fame. The song is found in some of the earliest collections of Gauḍīya poetry.

jaya jaya nityānanda rāya
aparādha pāpa mora tāhāra nāhika ora
uddhāraha nija karuṇāya

(Refrain) All glories! All glories to Nityananda Ray!
O Lord, please do not consider my sins and offenses.
Kindly deliver me.

āmāra asata mati tomāra nāme nāhi rati
kahite nā bāsi mukhe lāja
janame janame kata kariyāchi ātma-ghāta
ata e se mora ei kāja

My heart is very sinful. It is not attracted to your holy names. I do not like to speak of these things. Shame fills my mouth. In how many births after births did I kill any chance to make spiritual advancement? That is why I am in such a state.

tumio karuṇā-sindhu pātaki janāra bandhu
ebāra karaha yadi tyāga
patita-pāvana nāma nirmala se anupāma
tāhāte lāgaye baḍa dāga

॥

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Unknown artist

Sri Nityananda Prabhu

You are an ocean of mercy. You are the friend of the sinners. If you abandon me now, then your peerless and glorious reputation as *Patita-pāvana* (purifier of the fallen) is only a great trick.

pūruve yavana-ādi kata kata aparādhi
tarā-icha śuniyāchi kāṇe
kṛṣṇa-dāsa anumāni thelite nāribe tumi
yadi ghrṇā nā karaha mane

How many *yavanas* and other offenders have you already delivered? With my own ears I heard how you delivered them. I, Krishna Das, think this, O my Lord, if in your heart you do not hate me, please do not push me away. 🙏

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