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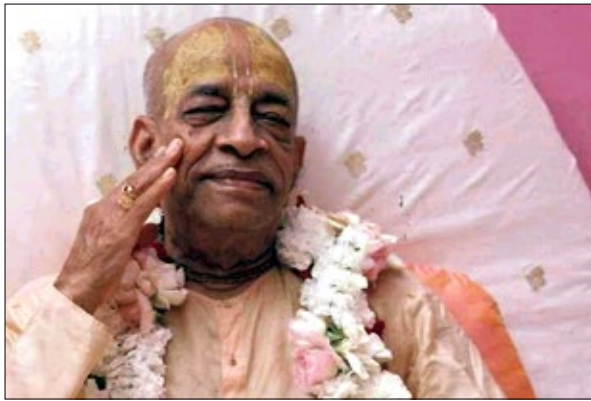
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DIFFICULTIES AS KRISHNA'S BLESSING

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Krishna is so nice. He is the all-attractive. He hypnotizes his devotee in spite of ... Just like the Pandavas. They were Krishna's friends. Arjuna was a very intimate friend, but the other four brothers were also Krishna's friends. Kunti, the Pandavas' mother, was the aunt of Krishna. So they were established in relation with Krishna. But they were banished for twelve years. They lost the dice game, so they were banished. Their wife, Draupadi, was insulted when the Kauravas tried to make her naked in the assembly. They lost their kingdom and they were banished for twelve years. So when Narada met Krishna he spoke to Krishna with a little criticism, "My dear sir, Krishna! By becoming your devotees the Pandavas are very happy. They have lost their kingdom. Their wife is insulted. And now they are banished for twelve years. It is a very good thing. [Prabhupada and

the devotees laugh.] But the wonderful thing I see is that in spite of all these inconveniences, they have increased their love for you." Narada was astonished. "What kind of hypnotism you do, I do not know. [Prabhupada and the devotees laugh.] In spite of being placed in so much inconvenience, their love for you has increased." That is the position of the Pandavas. This is Krishna consciousness. *tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇaḥ* [Bhāg. 10.14.8]. The devotees, pure devotees, if they are put into difficulty they take it, "Oh, it is Krishna's grace. It is Krishna's grace." *Tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtāṁ vipākam*. They take it in this way: "Krishna, I was to suffer hundred times more than this due to my bad activities in my past life, but you are only giving me a little out of it. It is your grace."

Therefore *nārāyaṇa-paraḥ sarve na kutaścana bibhyati*: [Bhāg. 6.17.28] — "One who has become *nārāyaṇa-paraḥ*, Krishna conscious, he's never afraid of any condition of life." In *Bhagavad-gītā* also, Krishna says, *yasmin sthito na duḥkhena vicālyate* — "If one is situated in Krishna consciousness then he is never disturbed." *Guruṇāpi duḥkhena*: [Bg. 6.20-23] "Even if he is put in the severest type of difficulty, he's never shaken." Just see the Pandavas! That is the effect of Krishna consciousness. 🍌

— Lecture in New Vrindavan. 22 June 1969.

THE TRADITION OF DEVOTIONAL PAINTING FOR LORD JAGANNATH PART 7

Love in Separation

For many Vaishnavas, the highest limit of ecstatic devotional love is manifested in the sentiment

of separation from ones beloved. Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, known also as the “Hare Krishna Movement”, has written: “Worship in separation is considered by the *Gauḍīya-madhva-sampradāya* to be the topmost level of devotional service.”¹ This theme of love in separation is found both in *paṭa-citra* art and in the *citrakāra*’s worshipable deity, Lord Jagannath.

Jagannath’s form, with his big smile, round eyes, and sunken hands and feet, is difficult to understand. There are many different conceptions as to his ontological position. According to Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy, the apparent contradictions in these conceptions can be reconciled by understanding Jagannath’s position as the fountainhead of all incarnations of God, who reciprocates with everyone according to how they relate to him. In his *Caitanya-bhāgavata (madhya 23.465)*, Vrindavan Das Thakur has stated, *je rūpa cintye dāse sē rūpa haya* — according to the conception the devotee has of the Lord, the Lord manifests himself for his devotee.

According to the Gaudiyas, Jagannath is Krishna in the mood of separation from his consort Radharani, his unusual form being a manifestation of his internal ecstasies. Dr K. C. Mishra in *The Cult of Jagannath* (p. 81) writes:

The Gaudiya Vaishnavas offer the following explanation regarding the incomplete forms of the deities, Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra. Once, the eight *paṭṭa mahiṣīs* (chief queens) of Sri Krishna were listening to his *līlā* at Vrindavan as narrated by Vrinda (Rohini/Devaki according to other versions) in the inner apartment of the palace of Nanda.² They had posted Subhadra at the gate to guard against any male person coming in. As the narration proceeded from *vr̥ndāvana-līlā* to the greatness of the *gopīs*, the two brothers Krishna and Balaram arrived at the gate and wanted to go in, but they were prevented by Subhadra. As the narration further continued, quite within the hearing of Subhadra and her brothers, they were all inspired by *mahābhāva* (the supreme feeling) and the eight *sātvika vikāras* (religious manifestations) appeared in their persons. Their bodily forms underwent change, the hands and feet becoming smaller and smaller, and the eyes more and more expanded in divine wonder. The transformation reached its climax as they heard about the greatness of Radha.

At this stage, when Narada came to the spot, he found them in the mystic posture, caused by the supreme feeling with fully expanded eyes and devoid of hands and feet, Subhadra being placed between Krishna and Balaram. Overwhelmed at this divine revelation, Narada



Unknown artist

Devotees doing kirtana in front of the Ratha cart in Puri

fell at their feet and prayed them to grant such a vision to the people in *Kali-yuga*. Being pleased with his devotion, they granted his prayer with a promise that they would appear in that mystic form at Nilachal (Puri) to the people of *Kali-yuga*. Kahnai Khuntia relates this Puranic incident in his *Mahā-bhāva-prakāśa* (Chap III)...³

Gaudiya Vaishnavas thus consider Jagannath to be *mahābhāva-prakāśa*, the ecstatic form of the Lord in separation from his divine energy and eternal consort Radharani. The Odishan sadhu and author Gour Govinda Swami (1929-1996), described in his book, *Embankment of Separation*:

In that form, he is feeling the acute pangs of separation from Radha. That is the form of Jagannath, *rādhā-bhāva sindhure bhāsamāna*, as if the Lord is a log of wood floating in the ocean of Radha’s love. (102)

Jagannath’s position as the personification of separation is also seen in the chorus line of the



Kāñci-vijaya, painting from the 1960s

famous *Jagannāthāṣṭakam* prayer: *jagannātha-svāmī nayana-patha-gāmī bhavatu me* — “May Jagannath Swami kindly appear before my eyes.”⁴ This prayer thus expresses the emotions of the votary who hankers for audience of his worshipable Lord.

Art in Separation

Aside from the basic principle of paintings being a reminder of an absent loved one, the theme of separation is a principal element in some of the most oft-used subjects in *paṭa-citra* art, as seen in the following examples:

Aṅasara-paṭi: As previously described, this painting is made to provide a form of Jagannath to be worshiped in his absence during the time of his *anavasara* period.

Kāñci-vijaya: Illustrates a scene from a local story regarding the conflict between the Puri King Purusottam Dev⁵ and Sallwo Narasingha, the king of Kanchi in South India.⁶ Purusottam Dev and a portion of his army attacked the Kanchi Raja’s forces and were badly defeated. Barely escaping, the Puri king along with a few soldiers started back to Odisha, broken and dispirited. On the way, Purusottam Dev stopped at the ashram of a famous saint, Saikatacharya, a householder ascetic and ardent devotee of Jagannath. After hearing what had happened, Saikata asked the king if he had taken the blessings of Jagannath before departing on his mission.

When the king replied in the negative, Saikatacharya suggested that the king return to Puri and pray to Jagannath. Purusottam Dev returned and spent that night alone in the temple, crying and submitting himself to the deity. He is said to have had a vision wherein the Lord instructed him to again go to fight, “But this time”, Jagannath told him, “My brother Balaram and I will personally accompany you.” Purusottam Dev woke up refreshed and excited the next morning and quickly collected a force to accompany him to Kanchi. The army began the journey south, but as they progressed, the king became more and more concerned as he saw no sign of Jagannath and Baladev. “Has the Lord abandoned me?” he wondered.

Meanwhile, Krishna and Balaram in human forms had gone ahead. The most frequently painted scene from this incident shows the two Lords on horses, stopping to take yoghurt from the devotee Manika. When asked for payment, the brothers give a valuable ring and instructed her to pass it on to the king who would be coming soon. “He will pay you,” they tell her. The king arrives shortly thereafter, and upon seeing the ring, which he recognizes as belonging to the deity of Jagannath, he becomes filled with bliss.⁷ The picture invokes ecstatic jubilation and hope after the despair of the Lord’s apparent neglect of his devotee.

Mathurā-vijaya: A favorite topic of *paṭa-citra* art, it depicts Krishna and Balaram leaving Vrindavan,



Painting by Bhaskar Mahapatra

Mathurā-vijaya, Krishna leaves Vrindavan as the gopīs throw themselves in front of the chariot

surrounded by their beloved girl friends, the *gopīs*. The beautiful damsels are seen trying to stop Krishna's chariot by grabbing hold of the horses, throwing themselves on the ground in front of the wheels, beseeching the Lord with upraised arms, and in various other poses tearfully pleading with Krishna not to go. The painting expresses the poignant fear and pain of the *gopīs* faced with the unthinkable prospect of Krishna's absence. 🍌 — MD.



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Endnotes

- 1 Purport to Cc. *madhya* 4.197. See also Sanatan Goswami's *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.7.125-128 with his own purports and Rupa Goswami's *Padyāvalī*, 240.
- 2 Sometimes this story is given as taking place in Dwarka, not in Nanda Maharaja's palace in Vrindavan.
- 3 Gour Govinda Swami in his book *Embankment of Separation* (chapter 8) relates a longer traditional Odishan story that gives a similar explanation of how Jagannath manifested his form.
- 4 *Jagannāthāṣṭakam* is one of the most popular prayers offered to Jagannath and is recited every day in the temple in Puri. However, there is some dispute about its authorship. Many of the older manuscripts say that it was written by Adi Shankaracharya, other manuscripts indicate that it was spoken by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. It seems very unlikely that it was composed or originally spoken by Sri Chaitanya, as there are no commentaries on the prayer nor are any of the verses cited in any of the standard biographies about him. Compare that to the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers, which are accredited to Mahaprabhu. There are dozens if not hundreds of commentaries on *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, and verses from it are quoted in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and later works of the Gaudiyas.
- 5 Ruled 1470-1497.
- 6 Scholars have mixed opinions on this account. Some dismiss it as mere legend and others accept it as an historical account that took place in 1476-1477 AD. See R. D. Banerjee's *History of Orissa*, vol I, (1930), p. 317, in which he speaks against the account; and R. Subramanyam's *The Suryavamsi Gajapati's of Orissa*, (1957), p. 185, in which he favors the story as true.
- 7 An elaborate version of this story is found in our article, "King Purushottam Dev", *Sri Krishna Kathamrita magazine*, no. 4.