

Gopal

Protector of The Cows

jaya yaśodā - nandana

kṛṣṇa gopāla govinda

jaya madana - mohana

hare ananta mukunda

All glories to Kṛṣṇa, the son of Mother Yaśodā, the cowherd boy Gopal, Govinda who gives pleasure to the cows! All glories to the conquerer of Cupid, Lord Hari, who takes away all inauspiciousness, who is unlimited, and the awarder of liberation! ¹

I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first progenitor who is tending the cows, yielding all desire, in abodes built with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of purpose trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds of thousands of lakṣmī's or gopis.²

May that Lord of the cows be satisfied by us. Who is Indra when compared to Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa is the master of Indra. And yet He has appeared as the master of cows; the Supreme Absolute Truth has accepted a simple position as the keeper of cows.³

Superficially, He is a mere cowherd boy. But let that cowherd boy, who holds within Him the power of controlling the whole universe, be satisfied with us. We want to worship that Lord who has taken the humble position of the King of the cows.³

Abandoning their calves, the young cows joyfully worship Krsna with abundant nectarean milk. With great love Krsna always protects them. In this way Lord Krsna, who always protects everyone, became eternally famous as Gopal, protector of the cows.⁴

Out of great affection for the cows of Vraja, Kṛṣṇa became the lifter of Govardhana Hill. At the end of the day, having rounded up all His own cows, He plays a song on His flute, while exalted demigods standing along the path worship His lotus feet.⁵

Hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, the cows and boys in the forest become filled with bliss and the demigods in the celestial worlds become filled with wonder. Kṛṣṇa has become glorious like the moon. With the sound of His flute He made the cows stunned with bliss.⁵

The gopis said: "By hearing the melodies of Kṛṣṇa's flute, we gopis attain a condition like that of the cows when they hear Kṛṣṇa's flute. Still, there is a difference between us and the cows. The cows respond by gazing in Kṛṣṇa's moonlike face at every moment. We gopis cannot gaze at Kṛṣṇa's face in that way. In what yuga will we be able to always gaze at His face?"⁶

When Lord Kṛṣṇa plays the flute, the surabhi cows become completely enchanted. The cows then make many great rivers of fragrant milk flow from the great mountains of their udders, rivers that join to become an ocean, an ocean of milk like a great moat surrounding Goloka on all sides. These cows are kamadhenu cows, cows that fulfill all desires, for from them flows an ocean of milk.⁷

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, wanders on the banks of the Yamunā to please the gōpīs, the cowherd boys, the birds, the bees, and the cows and calves. These are not ordinary birds, bees, cows, calves, or men; they have all reached the summit of self-realization and thus, after many, many lives, have attained a position whereby they can play with Kṛṣṇa.⁸

The exalted status of these cows and the other residents of Goloka is only attained by persons who have pure love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. It cannot be attained by performing severe austerities or by any method. For this reason Goloka is very difficult to attain.⁹

Because it is the home of the cows and cowherd people, Lord Kṛṣṇa's abode is called by the name "Goloka" (the world of the cows). Goloka, the realm of surabhi cows, is very difficult to attain. Only one who is always active in service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, is qualified to enter Goloka.¹⁰

Kṛṣṇa is most complete in the pastimes of Vraja. Therefore objects of sweetness like cows, gopaṣ, gopis, cowherd's dress, butter, forests, fresh leaves, the Yamunā, and the flute are the only wealth of Vraja-Gokula, or Vṛndāvaṇa. What is the need for opulence there?¹¹

Surrounded by His cows Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoys pastimes on the Yamunā's banks. The powerful young hero Kṛṣṇa is surrounded by Dāmā, Śṛidāmā, Sudāmā, and the boys and cows.¹²

The cowherd boys accompanying Him chant His glories. His garland is powdered by the dust raised by the cows' hooves. His beauty, enhanced by His fatigue, creates an ecstatic festival for everyone's eyes. Eager to fulfill His friends' desires, Kṛṣṇa is the moon arisen from the womb of mother Yaśodā.¹³

I desire to go to the abode of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, where the cows have big horns and fulfill the desires of the devotees. This supreme abode of Kṛṣṇa reveals itself completely.¹⁴

The abode of Kṛṣṇa is full of bliss. His wealth is its fruit, flowers and twigs. His citizens are the cows. His friends are the cowherd boys and His associates are the gopis. His food is butter, yogurt and milk.¹⁵

When the cows wander onto the mountainsides and Kṛṣṇa calls out to them with the sound of His flute, the trees and creepers in the forest respond by becoming so luxuriant with fruits and flowers that they seem to be manifesting Lord Viṣṇu within their hearts.¹⁶

The beautiful cows and bulls are of various checkered colors - red, black, green, yellow, ash, etc. And because of their colors and healthy smiling features, the atmosphere is enlivening.¹⁷

One cowherd man said, "Kṛṣṇa!
The expert cowherds fail
to milk the cows and the
calves cannot drink even a
drop of their mother's milk,
being very morose. The cows
are looking down the road
for You to come, they are
waiting, licking
their calves, filling all
directions with their
mooing, unable to tolerate
another moment without You"¹⁸

Bowing His head and with
a smile
mixed with tears,
Kṛṣṇa said, "O My
mothers, what can I do?
The cows do not know
what to do.
Without Me they will
not even eat a
mouthful
of
grass."¹⁹

O moon faced One, the other cows became very anxious when they saw that Kṛṣṇa had finished milking one of them. Look! Kṛṣṇa's hips and thighs are marked with drops of milk. The cows and calves drink the nectar of His fresh, youthful luster with tear-filled eyes, keeping their necks bent.²⁰

Kṛṣṇa counts His cows on a mala of gems. For each of the four colours of cows - white, red, black and yellow - there are twenty-five subdivisions, making a total of one hundred colours. Such qualities as being coloured like sandalwood pulp tilaka [speckled] or having a head shaped like a mrdanga drum create eight further groups.²¹

To count these 108 groups of cows, distinguished by colour and form, Kṛṣṇa uses a mala of 108 jewel-beads. Thus when Kṛṣṇa calls out 'Hey Dhavalī' [the name of a white cow], a whole group of white cows come forward, and when He calls 'Hamsī, Candanī, Graṅgā, Mukṭā' and so on, the twenty-four other groups of white cows come.²¹

The reddish cows are called Aruṇī, Kuṅkuma, Sarasvatī, etc.; the blackish ones are called Syāmalā, Dhūmalā, Yamunā, etc.; and the yellowish ones are called Pītā, Piṅgalā, Haritālikā, etc. Those in the group with tilaka marks on their foreheads are called Citra-tilakā, Dīrgha-tilakā and Tiryak-tilakā.²¹

There are groups known as *Mrdan-ga-mukhi* [mrdanga-head], *Simha-mukhi* [lion-head] and so on.

Thus being called by name, the cows are coming forward, and *Kṛṣṇa*, thinking that when it is time to bring them back from the forest none should be forgotten, is counting them on His jewel-beads.²¹

Deluded by their divine love, each cow thought: "Kṛṣṇa is walking behind us with His friends." Although they moved slowly because of their full udders and their love for *Kṛṣṇa*, the cows moved quickly when *Kṛṣṇa* called them. Their faces, tails and ears were raised, they kept bunches of grass in their mouths, and the blankets on their necks rocked when they ran towards *Govinda*.²²

The cows, headed by Gaṅgā, always drank the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's beauty with their eyes and smelled the fragrance of His beauty with their noses. It was as if they embraced Govinda with their bodies and licked Him with their tongues. Mooing in great joy they surrounded Him.²²

Overwhelmed by affection, Kṛṣṇa scratched and caressed His cows with His hand and said:
"Now You are satisfied with grazing, the day in Vraja is almost over. Oh Mothers! Your calves are suffering from hunger! Let's go back to Vraja!"²²

The cows had bells with different shapes and sounds around their necks and feet. Headed by their group leaders, they went back to Vraja. The cows walked on Kṛṣṇa's right side and the buffaloes on His left side. The residents of heaven mistook the cows to be the white Gaṅgā and the buffaloes to be the black Yamunā.²³

Who will not be happy to see Kṛṣṇa slowly walking behind His cows, showering them with nectarean flute songs, His restless locks of hair turned grey by the dust thrown up ^{by} their hooves?²³

When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu visited Vrindavana, the cows and calves surrounded Him and began licking His body. All the cows relished the nectarean taste of His body and cried in ecstatic love. Seeing this, Lord Caitanya said, "Vraja has inconceivable qualities. The residents of Vraja all have natural devotion to Kṛṣṇa."²⁴

Lord Caitanya then touched the cows with His lotus hand, and the cows all began to dance almost like gopis. Seeing the dancing of the cows, He was inundated with love. He chuckled and danced like an intoxicated person.²⁴

Anyone who meditates
on
Lord Kṛṣṇa's birth,
His protecting
the cows,
His singing
charming songs with the
gopas,
and His other pastimes,
will find
himself overcome with
bliss
and love.²⁵