



Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

Fortnightly email mini-magazine from Gopal Jiu Publications

Issue No. 223

Śrī Kāmadā Ekādaśī

26 March 2010

Circulation 2,856

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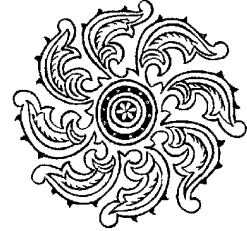
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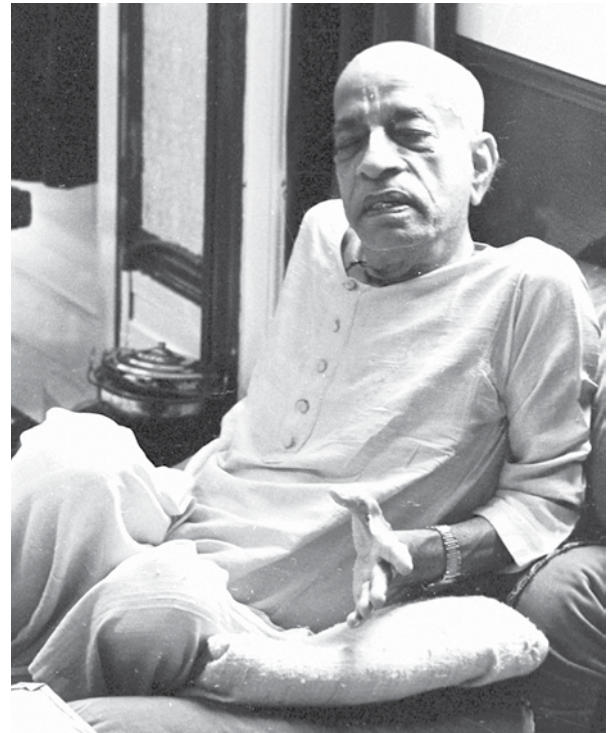


ADVANCEMENT IS NOT DEPENDENT ON EXTERNAL CONDITIONS

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

We should never think of our so-called advancement as being conditioned by or dependent upon material circumstances such as marriage, *vānaprastha*, or this or that. A mature understanding of Krishna consciousness means that whatever condition of life I am in at present, that is Krishna's special mercy upon me, therefore let me take advantage in the best way possible to spread this Krishna consciousness movement and conduct my spiritual master's mission. If I consider my own personal progress or happiness or any other personal thing, that is a material consideration.

... One mistake of judgment often made by the neophyte devotees is that any time there is some disturbance or difficulty they consider that the conditions or the external circumstances under which the difficulty took place are the cause of the difficulty itself. That is not the fact. In this material world there is always some difficulty, no matter in this situation or that situation. Therefore simply changing my occupation or status of life will not help anything. The real fact is that if there is any difficulty with others; that is due to my lack of Krishna consciousness, not theirs. Is this clear? Krishna says that his dearest devotee is one who does not put others into difficulty.



*His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
In Bury Place, London*

... Of course, our occupational duty is as preachers of Krishna consciousness. So we must stick to that business under all circumstances. That is the main thing. Therefore married, unmarried, or divorced — whatever condition of life — my preaching mission does not depend on these things. ❀

— Letter to Madhukara, 4 January 1973.



WHO ARE YOU, KRISHNA?

Viṣṇu-Purāṇa, 5.13.1-13

After the pastime of lifting Govardhan hill, Indra worshiped Krishna, whose activities are completely effortless, and then departed for the heavens. Thereafter, remembering that he had lifted the hill, the *gopas*, cowherd people, were completely amazed. They lovingly said to Krishna, “O extremely virtuous Krishna! O adorable Krishna! By lifting Govardhan hill you have protected us along with our cows from a great impending danger.

O dear Krishna! Your sudden exhibition of divine prowess amongst your sweet childhood pastimes, that too for the sake of protecting us low-born cowherd folk, does not make sense. Please tell us what is happening! Previously, you tamed the deadly serpent Kaliya in the waters of the Yamuna, and then you also slew great demons like Dhenukasura. Now, you just lifted Govardhan for protecting us. All these pastimes have completely bewildered us.

O extremely heroic Krishna! We truly swear by the lotus feet of Lord Hari that by seeing these exhibitions of great prowess we cannot consider you as an ordinary human. O killer of Keshi! All of us *vrajavāsīs*, including the women and the small children, love you as their very own. However, whatever activities you are performing are impossible even for the demigods!

O Krishna! Your displays of amazing strengths in tender childhood, and that too for the sake of the socially detestable *gopa* caste, puts us in a state of great doubt. Therefore, O great one, we are confused.

Are you a demigod? Or do you belong to the dynasty of great *asuras* like Bali Maharaja and Prahlad? Are you one of the Yakshas, or are you a Gandharva? All glories to you! Whoever you may be, for us you are still our near and dear Krishna.”

After the *gopas* spoke in this way, the most intelligent Krishna stood silent for some time. Thereafter, out of love for the *vrajavāsīs*, he spoke with affectionate anger:

*mat-sambandhena bho gopā, yadi lajjā na jāyate
ślāghyo vāham tataḥ kiṁ vo, vicāreṇa prayojanam*

*yadi vo' sti mayi prītiḥ, ślāghyo' haṁ bhavatām yadi
tad-ātma-bandhu-sadṛśī, buddhir vaḥ kriyatām mayi*

*nāhaṁ devo na gandharvo, na yakṣo na ca dānavah,
ahaṁ vo bāndhavo jāto, naitac-cintyā mito 'nyathā*

“O *gopas*! Do you feel ashamed of being associated with me? If not, then, considering me as your own, please do not glorify me in this way. If you really love and admire me, then consider me as one of your own. Neither am I a demigod, nor do I belong to the dynasty of the powerful *asuras*. I am also not a Gandharva nor a Yaksha. Please never consider me as anyone other than your intimate village relative.” (Texts 10-12)

Hearing these statements spoken with affectionate anger, the *vrajavāsīs* could not say anything and they quickly returned to Vrindavana. ❀

— Translated by Bhakta Harshad Marathe from the Gita Press edition, published by Motilal Jalan, Gorakhpur.



Nāma-tattva

SEVEN AND FOURTEEN DELIVERED

Dvāarakā-māhātmya

*aṭītaḥ puruṣāḥ sapta bhaviṣyāś ca caturdaśa
naras tārayate sarvān kalau kṣṇeti-kīrtanāt*

[From a conversation between Prahlad and Bali:]
In *Kali-yuga*, a person who chants the holy name of Krishna delivers seven generations of ancestors and fourteen generations of descendants. ❀

— Cited in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 11.492. Translated by Kusakratha Das.



RULES AND DEVOTION

Sri^la Thakur Bhaktivinode

In the second verse of his Upadeśāmṛta, Sri^la Rupa Goswami warns about six things that are detrimental to bhakti, the fourth of which is called niyamāgraha. Depending on how the word is divided, niyamāgraha has two meanings: niyama-agraha — neglecting the rules and regulations of devotional life; or niyama-āgraha — too much attachment to following the rules and regulations. In the following discussion, Sri^la Thakur Bhaktivinode is speaking of this second meaning.

In the process of devotional service, the rules prescribed for each level are all subordinate to one primary regulation, which is given in the *Padma Purāṇa* as follows:

*smartavyaḥ satatam viṣṇur viśmartavyo na jātucit
sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ syur etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ*

Remembering Krishna is the eternal duty. All other prescriptions mentioned in the *śāstras* have arisen from this main prescription. Forgetting Krishna is never allowed. All other prohibitions mentioned in the *śāstras* have arisen from this main prohibition.

Keeping this main prescription in mind while advancing, the practitioner should give up his attachment for the prescriptions of the previous level and accept the prescriptions of the next level. Otherwise he will be guilty of *niyama-āgraha* and be weak in reaching the next level. The practitioner of devotional service must always remember this point. In the conclusion of *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* a special instruction is given in this regard:

*kṛtyānyetāni tu prāyo grhiṇām dhaninām satām
likhitāni na tu tyakta-parigraha mahātmanām*

The activities written here in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* are mostly meant for householder devotees who possess sufficient wealth. There are no rules written for renunciates.

Although the rules for renunciates are not dealt with in this book, renunciates should still follow those rules in order to perfect their position.

The first symptom of one who has attained *śraddhā*, faith, is surrender to the feet of Lord Krishna. That surrender is of two types — for the householders and for the renunciates. *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* mentions only those rules that are meant for householders. That is why observances such as *Śiva-caturdaśī* are given therein. The surrendered renunciate should

follow whichever observances are appropriate for renunciates.

It is said in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.18.28), the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (20th *vilāsa*), and the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (11.20.36):

*jñāna-niṣṭho virakto vā mad-bhakto vānapekṣakah
sa-liṅgān āśramānis tyaktvā cared avidhi-gocaraḥ*

A learned transcendentalist dedicated to the cultivation of knowledge and thus detached from external objects, or my devotee who is detached even from desire for liberation — both neglect those duties based on external rituals or paraphernalia. Thus their conduct is beyond the range of rules and regulations.

*ekāntitām gatānāntu śrī-kṛṣṇa-caraṇābjayoḥ
bhaktiḥ svataḥ pravarteta tad vighnaiti kiṅ vratādibhiḥ*

When one becomes a pure devotee of the Lord, devotion is spontaneously established in his heart. What then is the need to observe rituals that simply obstruct one's devotional service?

*na mayy ekānta-bhaktānām guṇa-doṣodbhavāḥ guṇāḥ
sādhūnām sama-cittānām buddheḥ param upeyusām*

Material piety and sin, which arise from the good and evil of this world, cannot exist with my unalloyed devotees, who, being free from material hankering, maintain steady spiritual consciousness in all circumstances. Indeed, such devotees have achieved me, the Supreme Lord, who am beyond anything that can be conceived by material intelligence. ❧

— Bhaktivinode Thakur. *Śrī Bhaktiyaloka*. Translated by Bhumiapati Das. Edited and Published by Pundarika Vidyanidhi Das. Vrajraj Press. Vrindavan. 1996.
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THE GLORY OF SRILA VRINDAVAN DAS THAKUR'S WRITING

The Poet Uddhava Das

Uddhava Das is one of the most famous Gauḍiṇya poets. He was born in the village of Tenga Vaidyapur in the Mursidabad district of West Bengal. His birth name was Krishnakanta Majumdar, and he was a disciple of Radhamohan Thakur, one of the great-grandsons of Srinivas Acharya.

In the following song, Uddhava Das glorifies the writing of Sri^la Vrindavan Das Thakur. Although there are a few other books that are also sometimes ascribed to him, it's generally considered by scholars and devotees that Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata was the only book written by Vrindavan Das. Still, that single work is one of the most greatly revered literatures in Gauḍiṇya

Vaiṣṇavism due to its excellence in devotion, writing style, and historical accuracy in presenting the life of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. For the vast majority of followers of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata is considered second in importance only to Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviraj Goswami's Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. In Cc. ādi 8.34, Kaviraj Goswami has compared Vrindavan Das to the great sage Vyāsadev, the compiler of the Vedic literature.

(Dhānāśī-rāga)

*dhanya dhanya vṛndāvana dāsa
caitanya maṅgala yāra kavita prakāśa*

Śrīla Vrindavan Das Thakur is the most praiseworthy of all glorious persons, his poetic ingenuity has manifested Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala [the original name of Caitanya-bhāgavata].

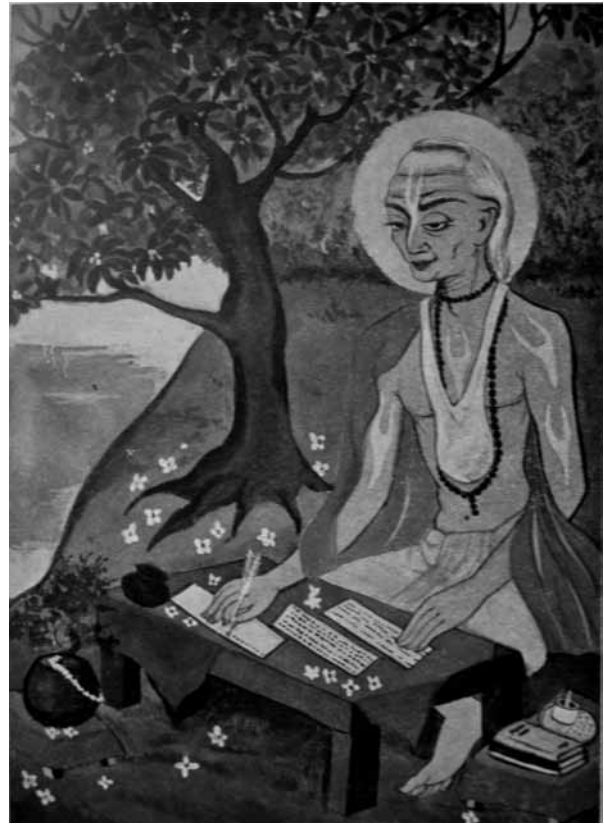
*mahāprabhu līlā rasāmṛta
yāra gune jagate vidita*

Through this book Mahāprabhu's nectarean pastimes became famous throughout the world.

*bālyā paugaṇḍa ādi līlā
yā śuni daravaye śilā*

The *ādi-līlā* of the book describes Mahāprabhu's childhood, and youth. Hearing these pastimes makes even a stone melt.

*avaīṣṇave vaiṣṇava karaya
nāstika pāṣaṇḍī nāhi raya*



Śrīla Vrindavan Das Thakur

Through this book, Śrīla Vrindavan Das has made non-devotees into devotees. Even the atheists and non-believers cannot remain so.

*ki madhura se līlā kāhīnī
mo adhama ki kahite jāni*

How beautiful is the description he gives of the Lord's pastimes! How can a fallen wretch like me describe what he has written?

*emana madhūra itihāsa
āche āra kothā pāba parakāśa*

Such a sweet history cannot be found anywhere.

*yāra rasamaya padāvalī
śunite pāṣaṇḍa yāya gali*

The *rasa* filled songs of Vrindavan Das can instantly melt stone-like hearts.

*dayā kara vṛndāvana dāsa
purā o e uddhāvera āśa*

Oh Vrindavan Das! Please be kind to this Uddhava Das and fulfill his desire. ❀

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SRI KRISHNA KATHAMRITA BINDU

A free bi-monthly service provided by:

Gopal Jiu Publications

c/o Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir

National Highway No. 5, IRC Village

Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India, 751015

Phone: (0674) 2553250, 2557026

Email: katha@gopaljiu.org

Website: www.gopaljiu.org

Subscriptions: minimag@gopaljiu.org

Gopal Jiu Publications is a branch of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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