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ASSOCIATION IS THE BEGINNING

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

In order to become a devotee of Krishna we must associate with devotees — *satāṁ prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvidah* [associating with pure devotees through discussions of Krishna's wonderful activities] [Bhāg. 3.25.25]. If there is some piety in ones background then one will come in contact with a devotee. By mixing, associating with a devotee, our knowledge about salvation — getting out of the clutches of *māyā*, this repetition of birth and death — increases. *Satāṁ prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvidah* — discussion on *kṛṣṇa-kathā* is *vīryavān*, potent. Just like when there is sex life, if the man is *vīryavān* then there will be pregnancy. Similarly, if we hear from a devotee then immediate action will be there. One will think, “Why not become Krishna conscious?” That is *vīryavān*, potency. One will develop *śraddhā*, faith. *Śraddhā bhaktir anukramiṣyati* — from faith, *bhakti* develops [Bhāg. 3.25.25]. Hearing from devotees makes one inclined to become Krishna conscious. *Ādau śraddhā* — faith is the beginning of spiritual life. If you want to develop your spiritual life more and more, then *satāṁ prasāṅgāt*, you have to associate with devotees — *ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgaḥ* [Cc. madhya 23.14]. ❀

— Lecture in Bombay. 25 November 1974.



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

MOOD OF THE VAISHNAVAS

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Mahaprabhu has taught in *Śikṣāṣṭaka* [cited in Cc. ādi 17.31]:

*ṛṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

One can chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street. One should be more tolerant than the tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.

This is the most important teaching in *Śikṣāṣṭaka*.
uttama hañā āpanāke māne ṛṇādharma — An

uttama-bhakta, the topmost *paramahansa*, thinks, “I am the lowest of the low, much humbler than a blade of grass lying on the street.” [Cc. *antya* 20.22] This is real *vaiṣṇavatā*, vaishnavism. Those who are walking on the street tread on the grass with their feet. But the grass never pinches back. Rather, it submits and tolerates. And then, *dui-prakāre sahiṣṇutā kare vṛkṣa-sama* — one should be tolerant just as a tree is tolerant [Cc. *antya* 20.22]. In the summer season, in the scorching heat of the sun, a tree is drying up. Still, it never asks for water. It tolerates. It may die, but it will never ask for water. A *vaiṣṇava* is as tolerant as this. ❀

— From a lecture in Bhubaneswar. 23 April 1992.

BHAKTI IS FOR EVERYONE

Srila Rupa Goswami Prabhupada's **Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.60**

*sāstrataḥ śruyate bhaktau nṛmātrasy ādhikāritā
sarvādhikāritān māgha snānasya vruvatā yataḥ
dṛṣṭāntitā vaśiṣṭhena hari-bhaktir nṛpaṃ prati*

According to *śāstra*, every human being has eligibility for performing *hari-bhakti*. To establish this truth, Vasishtha Muni gives an example to King Mayuradhvaj that anyone can perform the devotional activity of taking bath in the Ganga during the month of *Māgha*. ❀

BALARAM'S RETURN TO VRINDAVAN PART FOUR

Various aspects of Lord Balaram's return from Dwarka to Vrindavan are described in chapter sixty-five of the tenth canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, in Hari-vamśa, and by various Gauḍīya ācāryas.

Chastising Yamuna

After dancing with the *gopīs*, the Supreme Lord Ananta, desiring to perform pastimes in her pristine waters, called for the Yamuna. Considering Balaram to be drunk, Yamuna did not take him seriously and disregarded his instruction. Srila Viswanath Chakravarti comments that as one does not take seriously the instructions of an intoxicated person, similarly Yamuna Devi thought, “He is calling me because he wants to play in my waters, so let him come here himself.” This angered Baladev, who then took his plow and began to drag the Yamuna.

Angry Balaram said, “O sinful one! You move only by your whimsical desire. Because you have dared to disobey me, refusing to come even after I have called you, therefore I will force you to come by pulling you apart into hundreds of channels.”

The *Hari-vamśa Purāṇa* describes that Balaram then inserted the tip of his plow and began to forcibly pull Yamuna towards him as if she were an unchaste wife. Trembling in fear, Yamuna Devi fell at the feet of the Lord and said, “My dear Lord, be kind to me! Your unconventional behavior is frightening me! Now my form and direction of flow have been altered.”

*asaty ahaṃ nadī-madhya rauhiṇya trayā kṛtā
karṣaṇena mahābāho svamārga vyabhicāriṇī*

“O son of Rohini! O mighty armed one! By pulling me in this manner you have made me unchaste among rivers. You have diverted me from my prescribed path.” (*Hari-vamśa Purāṇa*, *Viṣṇu-parva* 46.45)

Yamuna Devi begged, “Please be merciful to me. Please give up your anger and forgive me.”



Balaram with a lotus and plow



The original deities of Krishna Balam worshiped by Mahaprabhu's associates Kunja Bhagavan Das and Chota Haridas at the Krishna Balam Math, Saptasan Road, Jagannath Puri.

Srila Jiva Goswami and Srila Viswanath Chakravarti raise an interesting question: Yamuna became the wife of Krishna and went with him to Dwarka. How then is it possible that she is appearing before Balam in her personified form? The answer is that the Yamuna who appeared before Balam was a *chāyā-yamunā*, a shadow of the original Yamuna. The Yamuna who appeared before Balam was the wife of the demigod Varuna and an expansion of Kalindi Yamuna. She was not Yamuna herself.

Thus for two continuous months Balam enjoyed pastimes with thousands of *gopīs* other than Krishna's, during which time he showed bold actions such as pulling the Yamuna. Coming to give joy to Nanda and the others residents of Vraja, he nourished their bliss.

The *Bhāgavatam* (10.65.16) describes:

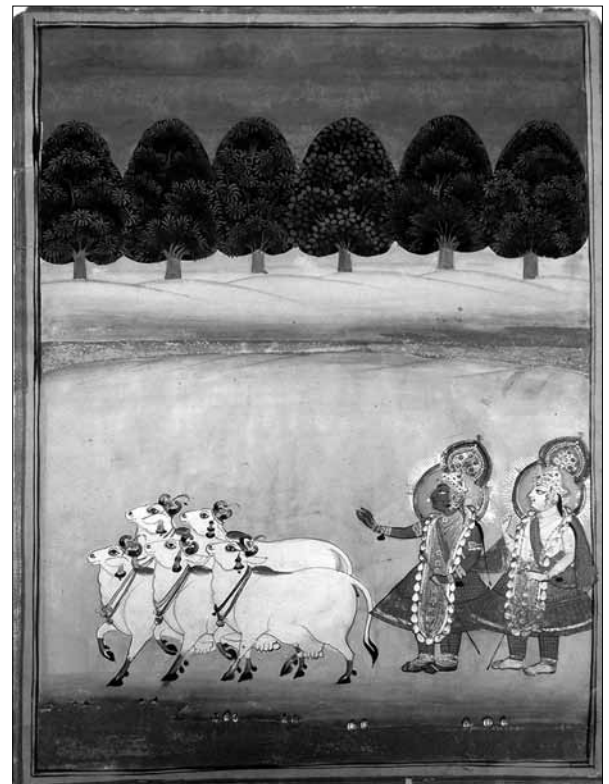
*saṅkarṣaṇas tāḥ kṣṇasya sandeśair hṛdayam gamaiḥ
sāntvayām āsa bhagavān nānāmunaya-kovidaḥ*

The Supreme Lord Balam, the attractor of all, being expert at various kinds of conciliation, consoled the *gopīs* by relaying to them the confidential messages Krishna had sent with him. These messages deeply touched the *gopīs'* hearts.

Aside from being a name of Balam, the word *saṅkarṣaṇa* means to draw or attract. Srila Jiva Goswami comments that the use of the name Sankarshan in this verse implies that Baladev had attracted Krishna to appear in his mind and in this way he showed Krishna to the *gopīs*. This is the inner purport of Balam's consoling Sri Krishna's beloved girlfriends.

Another purport to this pastime is that if we want Krishna to return to Vrindavan, we have to take shelter of *ādi-guru* Balam, the original spiritual master. Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami has described the importance of Balam's role:

Balam has a plow in His hand and Krishna has a flute. First, cultivation is needed, *karṣaṇa*. Then all nasty weed-like things will be rooted out. The field of the heart, *hṛdaya-kṣetra*, should be cultivated properly with the plow of Balam. Then it becomes fertile and the seed of the devotional creeper, *bhakti-latā*, may be sown. ... After proper cultivation by Balam's plow, when the land is fertile,



Krishna and Balam herd cows in Vraja

then the seed should be sown. When the seed sprouts and you develop *prema-bhakti*, then you will be attracted by Krishna's flute. The flute represents *ākaraṣaṇa*, attraction. (From the article, *Plow and Flute*, from "Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu" issue 5.)

In this pastime Balaram is teaching us that if we want to make our hearts Vrindavan so that Krishna will come to dwell there, we have to first accept the chastising plow of Sri Guru in the same way that the Yamuna was chastised by Baladev. Once a devotee's heart is pure through this plowing, Sri Guru Balaram acts as Sankarshan and brings the devotee to Krishna. — MD ❀

GARDENER OF THE DESIRE TREE

Ray Shekhar

*jagannātha miśrera sukr̥tī-bīja haite
janamila gaura kalpa-taru nadīyāte
yatane nitāi māli sei taru sevila
nānā sākhā upasākhā tānhāra ha-ila*

In the town of Nadiya, the seed of Jagannath Mishra's good fortune was born in the form of the desire tree known as Gaura. With great efforts, the gardener Nitai served this tree, and as a result it blossomed into various branches and sub-branches.

*dharila tāhāte adabhuta prema-phala
rase paripūrṇa tāhaṅ mādaka kevala*

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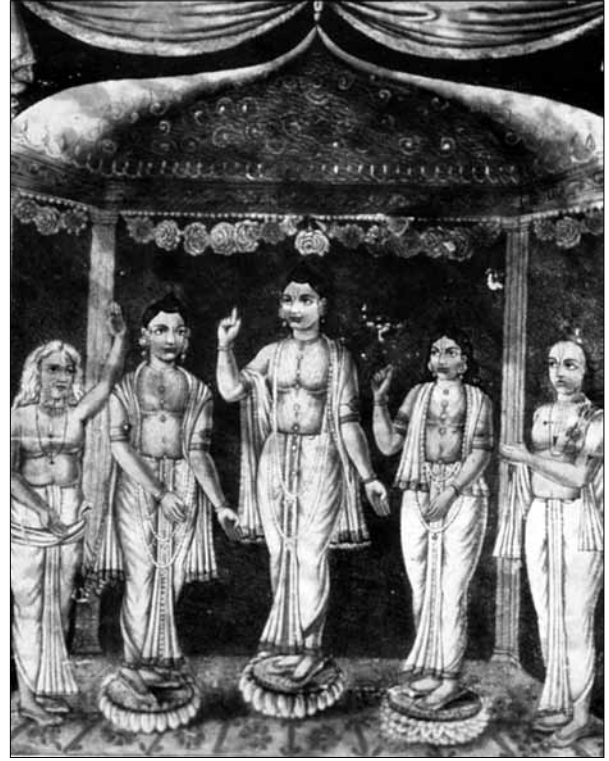
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Unknown artist. Bengali school

Sri Pancha Tattva

*ānande nitāi māli sei phala pādīyā
dīna-duḥkhī jane deya duhāte vilānā*

This desire tree bore wonderful fruits of love of Godhead, full of maddening ecstatic *rasa*. The gardener, Nitai, then picked these fruits and with his own hands distributed them to the fallen and distressed souls.

*sei phalera rasa yena sudhākara-sudhā
yei jana cuṣiyā khāya yāya tāhra kṣudhā
āpani sei phala khāiyā nityānanda male
unamatta haiyā nāce māthe kari dāli
dhara neo neo bali sei phala vilāya
kevala vañcita tāhe ei śekhara rāya*

The ecstatic *rasa* of that fruit of love was just like the cooling rays of the moon. Anyone who tasted or ate that fruit was fully satisfied in all respects. The gardener, Lord Nityananda, first ate this fruit himself and then danced in a maddened state with a basket of those ecstatic fruits on his head, saying to everyone, "Come and take! Come and take!" He distributed those fruits to everyone, but the unfortunate Ray Shekhar alone missed the opportunity. ❀

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