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Shri Gunmanjari Das Goswami (1828-1891 AD)

Over a century has passed since Shri Gunmanjari Das Goswami sang to Shri Radharaman Lal in his temple in Vrindavan, but his songs still offer their melody in Shriji's eternal worship. This humble and gentle soul has left a most precious legacy in the Radharaman dynasty. Not only did Gunmanjari Dasji write songs glorifying Radharaman's daily *lilas* and all of Shriji's major festi-

vals, but he lived every word by singing them in the temple's *bhog-raag seva*, to give endless happiness to his beloved Lord.

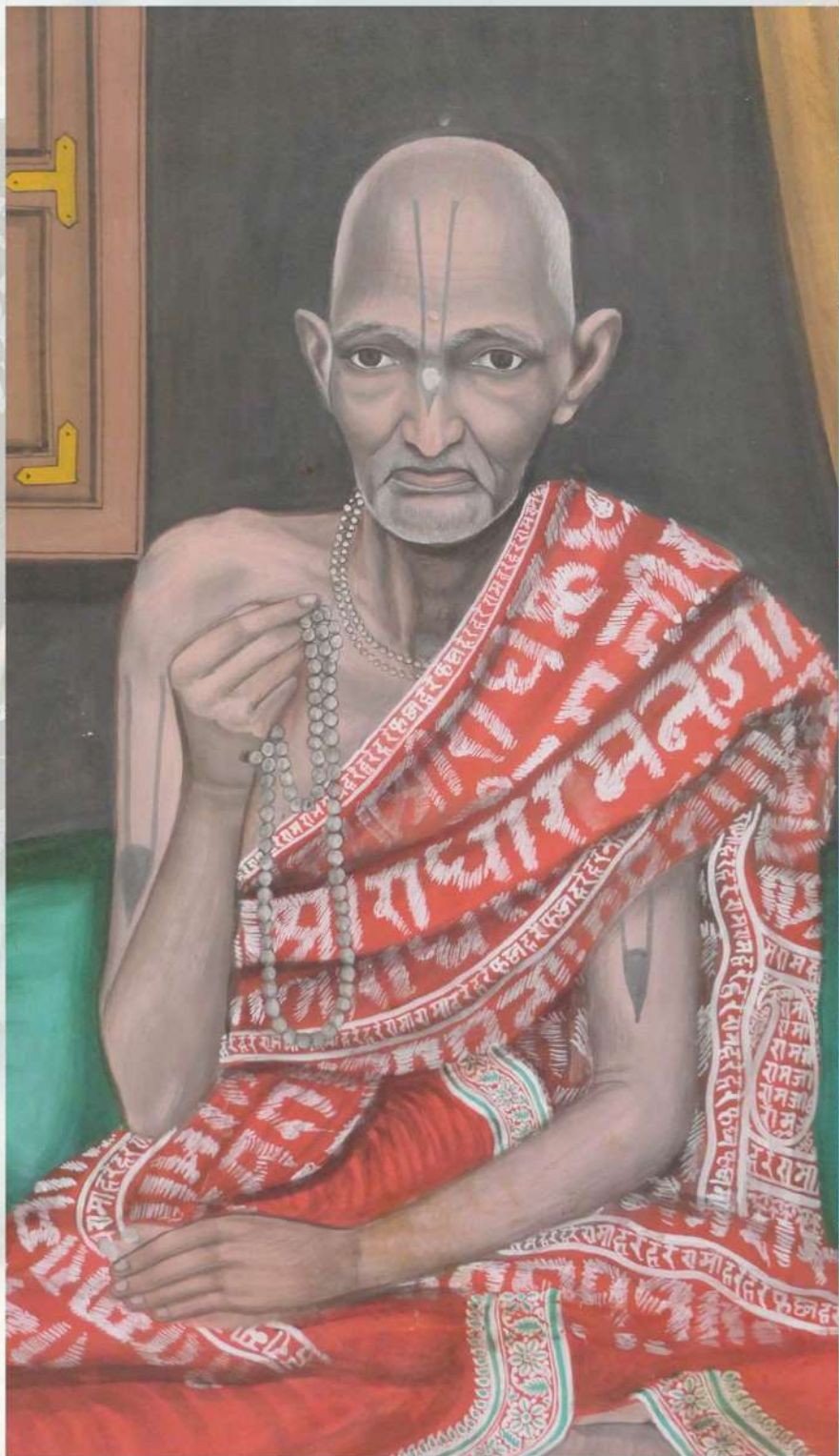
The Brajwasis were so charmed by Gunmanjari Dasji's pure nature, that from childhood he became known as "*mahatmaji*". But although he was spiritually blessed, there was a serious problem in his material life. His father, Shri Raman



Dayal Goswami, did not earn enough to support his family, so they moved to Farrukhabad (about 300 kilometres from Vrindavan) where there were more opportunities to make money. Thus Gunmanjari Dasji had to leave Vrindavan at a young age.


After completing his primary education in Farrukhabad, Gunmanjari Dasji began to study the scriptures. But he always burned in separation from Vrindavan and thought of ways to go back home. At the young age of 10, Gunmanjari Dasji began to travel and give *katha*. His very first *katha* was at the home of the prestigious Shah family of Lucknow, who gave him 500 rupees in *dakshina*. This was a large amount at the time. With this money he was able to clear his father's debts, paving the way for his family's return to Vrindavan.

Even at such a young age, Gunmanjari Dasji's *katha* was so enchanting that he captured the hearts of all who heard him speak. His fame as a *katha vachak* (speaker of Krishna's stories) spread quickly. Unfortunately, some people found it hard to see his success. At the age of 16, a family member tried to kill Gunmanjari Dasji and his parents by mixing poison in some sugar (*bura*). Luckily, they realised something was wrong and got treatment in time to save their lives. The perpetrator was caught, but the soft-hearted Gunmanjari Das-



ji begged everyone not to turn that man in to the police. His request was granted.

As he grew older, Gunmanjari Dasji became a leading scholar and guru of the Shri Radharaman Temple, one of the seven oldest temples in Vrindavan, and he dedicated himself fully to his spiritual prac-



tice. He was a family man, yet the passions of the world never touched his lotus-like heart. Most of the time he kept silence (*maun*), and whatever he said was always sweet. He used to greet even the cats and dogs in the street with "Haribol!" and he would welcome the cows by saying "Jai Radhe!"

Gunmanjari Dasji never wasted time. His *seva* for Radharaman Lal was his only treasure, and he always remained absorbed in temple service, in the *lilas*, or in his writing. Every spare moment was spent serving the cows, the Brajwasis and those less fortunate. For their sake he lived a simple life, only eating a single flatbread (*roti*) every day with a small amount of cooked vegetable, and he often gave his belongings away.

One year there was a severe flood of the Shri Yamuna river in Vrindavan. The water came all the way up to Gunmanjari Dasji's garden. When he saw that Yamuna Maharani was coming, to welcome her, he quickly went and performed her *aarti*, and lovingly offered his garden to her. Although Yamunaji came into the garden, not a single flower, fruit, or even a leaf was swept away.

Even though Gunmanjari Dasji had no attachment to material things, he was very protective of any possession that was needed for Radharamanji's *seva*. For example, he owned a number of scriptures that were very dear to him. Once as he was travelling from Farrukhabad to Vrindavan, some thieves robbed Gunmanjari Dasji's carriage. He started screaming, "*Bhai!* Please take whatever you want, but just don't take my books!" The robbers took everything but left the books

scattered on the ground. Gunmanjari Dasji carefully collected each one and took them home.

Gunmanjari Dasji also loved Brajbhasha because it is the language of Krishn's homeland. He always spoke in Brajbhasha alone, and deliberately avoided using words from other languages.

Despite his position, he was very humble and any recognition or love from the public made him sad. Once when he went to Varanasi for *Shrimad Bhagwatam Katha*, the people gave him a royal welcome. They even made him ride on an elephant's back to *katha*. Receiving so much honour hurt his heart, and he wept in humility.

During that visit to Varanasi, many famous scholars visited Gunmanjari Dasji. Often, they tried to persuade him to have a debate on the scriptures with them. But Gunmanjari Dasji was not interested at all. Radharamanji came in Gunmanjari Dasji's dream and instructed him to answer only one question from the scholars. The next morning, the scholars came and asked, "What is the spiritual duty (*dharm*) of a householder?" Gunmanjari Dasji replied, "Hari *bhajan* and the search for Shri Krishn is the only spiritual duty." Just by hearing these simple words, all the scholars began crying, and they bowed down at his feet. All of them felt that Gunmanjari Dasji was a true *mahatma* or a great soul.

At the end of his *katha*, the devotees in Varanasi gave him a pot full of silver coins. Gunmanjari Dasji refused to accept such a large amount of money. When his disciples insisted, Gunmanjari Dasji asked them to keep the coins there in Varanasi. "This money will come of use in Vrindavan one day," he said. Taking only one coin from the pot, he left for Vrindavan. At the train station, he

met a Brajwasi, and he gave that single coin to him. Years later, the money returned to Vrindavan as Gunmanjari Dasji had predicted. Af-

ter he left his body, the money from the Varanasi *katha* was used to take care of his family and his Shadbhuj Gaurang deity.

Gunmanjari Dasji's Love for Mangla Aarti Seva

The service of Radharaman Lal in Gopal Bhatt Goswami's tradition is allocated to Goswami families on a rotating schedule throughout the year. Gunmanjari Dasji was so fond of serving Shriji during *mangla aarti* (rituals before dawn) that he used to humbly request each family for the honour to perform that *seva*. Almost everyone agreed. Unfortunately, some Goswamis reacted angrily towards Gunmanjari Dasji's request, and some even raised a hand to him.

But the family lines of any Goswami who reacted harshly towards Gunmanjari Dasji have since died out.

Whenever Gunmanjari Dasji did not get his beloved *mangla seva*, he would go and sweep the courtyard of the temple and weep.

When devotees asked him, "Maharaj, why are you not serving in temple this morning?" Maharaj would softly reply:

मोते कुछ अपराध है गयौ है तौ राधारमण ने नहीं बुलायौ ।

"I have committed some offence. That's why Radharamanji didn't call me today."

One day a Goswami denied Gunmanjari Dasji's request for *mangla seva*. Later, when that Goswami's son went to offer Shriji his morning meal, he strongly felt that Shriji didn't want to eat. When he went near the door of Shriji's di-

ning room, he heard the sound of someone weeping with great pain. Later, when he went out of the temple, he heard the exact same sound; it was Gunmanjari Dasji crying in separation from Shriji.

His Bond with Radharaman Lal

Gunmanjari Dasji's bond with Radharaman Lal was very strong. It is said that Radharamanji used to give him *darshan* and speak with him, and if ever he made a mistake in his *seva*, Shriji would correct him personally.

Gunmanjari Dasji established many temples in Farrukhabad, Bharatpur, and other cities of

India. When he was about 50 years old, he established an ancient deity of Shadbhuj Mahaprabhu at his home near the Shri Radharaman Temple in Vrindavan. That same year, he took a vow never to leave Braj again.

Gunmanjari is the *gopi* name of the Shri Radharaman Temple's founding *acharya*, Shri

Gopal Bhatt Goswami, but Gunmanjari Dasji was blessed with the same name by Radharamanji. In Indian song, the poet often "signs" his work by weaving his name into the final li-

ne of each piece. At the beginning of Gunmanjari Dasji's service as a writer, Radharaman appeared to him in a dream and said:

तू गुणमंजरी है । सब पदन के छोर में लगा तब मौये स्वीकार होयगौ ।

"You are Gunmanjari. Sign this name at the end of each *pad*. Only then I will accept them."

From then on he became known as Shri Gunmanjari Das Goswami. Gunmanjari Dasji's works include many Brajbhasha songs and beautiful Sanskrit prayers such as *Gopal Bhatt Shatakam*, as well as the worship manual *Nitya Seva*

Manjari, which is still used in the temple today. But his masterpiece is *Shri Radharaman Pad Manjari*, his songs of Radharamanji's daily *lilas* and festivals.

Gunmanjari Dasji's Songs and Shri Radharaman Gita

"If one wishes to sleep under a tree where inauspicious birds live and cause disturbance with their unpleasant noises, one must drive them away by shouting and clapping. Similarly, if one wishes to go deep in meditation on one's beloved Lord, one must sing songs about him to drive away all the negative influences from one's heart and life."

(*Sūkti-muktāvalī*)

From his birth until now, as part of their loving devotion for the eternal youth of Vrindavan, Shri Radharaman's devotees sing beautiful Brajbhasha songs to him that glorify his enchanting and eternal pastimes. In the Gaudiya Sampradaya, the Shri Radharaman Temple in Vrindavan is the only place of worship that still continues this blissful tradition. In service of its followers, *Shri Radharaman Gita* has been compiled. *Shri Radharaman Gita* presents the original texts and translations of the delightful songs and prayers that are sung to Radharaman Lal during the temple's daily worship.

Shri Radharaman Gita includes extracts from two important texts of the Shri Radharaman

Temple lineage, by two of its most celebrated scholars: Sarvabhaum Shri Madhusudan Goswami's *Shri Radharaman Prakatya*, and Shri Gunmanjari Das Goswami's *Shri Radharaman Pad Manjari*.

The *Shri Radharaman Pad Manjari* depicts Radharaman's daily pastimes (*nitya lila*) from morning to night in song, as well as all his festivals (*naimittik lila*). And in *Shri Radharaman Prakatya*, Sarvabhaum Shri Madhusudan Goswami tells the miraculous story of Radharaman's manifestation from a *shaligram shila*. He also reveals Radharamanji's identity as Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is Radha and Krishn in one form, and how the lineage

of Goswami servants of Shriji was established by Shri Gopal Bhatt Goswami himself. The deity of Radharaman is unique in Vaishnav history,

and his living presence is felt intensely by many devotees around the world.

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My Relationship with Shri Radharaman Gita: A Personal Account by Shriji's Aspiring Anuragini

"I received my copy of the *Shri Radharaman Gita* book and CD during one of my first visits to meet my *prandhan*, Shri Radharaman Lal in June of 2016. I remember clearly how captivated I was by the beautiful *darshan* of Radharamanji on the CD cover.

"As soon as I went back to Delhi, I started reading the book. The next day my father and I listened to the CD on our way to work. Even though we could not understand all the lyrics in the Brajbhasha songs, we felt a deep connection to them. Listening to the CD each morning became our family tradition.

"*Shri Radharaman Gita's pads* and their translations paint a detailed and beautiful visual of Shriji's routine from the moment he wakes up to the moment he falls asleep. Whenever I hear or read them, Gunmanjari's loving service for Shri Radharaman Lal unfolds before my eyes. Now that I am able to meditate on his pastimes with the help of the songs and translations, I feel that my relationship with Radharaman Lal

has become stronger. I cannot imagine what my devotional practice would be without my beloved *Shri Radharaman Gita's pads*.

"When I sit and think about which song is my favourite, I cannot choose just one! They are all truly precious. Each song makes me feel as if Gunmanjari ju is holding my hand and gently guiding me into the loving service of Shri Radha and her Raman.

"I used to hear the songs being sung in the temple. Though I found them beautiful, I couldn't understand them at the time. Now with the mercy of *Shri Radharaman Gita*, I can read the translations and perform *raag seva* for Radharaman Lal along with the other devotees in the temple.

"*Shri Radharaman Gita* is nothing but Shriji's grace, bringing me closer and closer to Shri Radha and Krishn and all of their eternal servants."

