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Make Katha Your Companion

by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami

Shukdev Muni has said that those who love Krishna always bathe in the nectar of his sweetness. Drinking that nectar, they are nourished and blissfully spellbound by its taste. Nothing else gives them joy or delight.

Devotees who face any kind of obstacles listen to the stories of Krishna's *lilas* and meditate upon them. No matter what happens, they never lose their attachment to *katha*.

Similarly, there are times when we encounter difficulties in our lives, or when we feel we are not progressing on our devotional path. At times like this, we must say to ourselves, "No matter what challenges may come, I will never leave my Krishna's *katha*." This attitude is extremely important.

When a person has such firm attachment to *katha*, it becomes the foundation of their life. So, no matter how blocked you feel, if you keep listening to *katha*, you will always

remember the goal of your life. You will always remember that your life and soul, your only treasure, is Radharaman and nothing else.

Even the greatest devotees, the *gopis*, felt that it was possible to live without Krishn, but they could never live without Krishn *katha*. The *gopis* sang:

तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनं कविभिरीडितं कल्मषापहम् ।
श्रवणमङ्गलं श्रीमदाततं भुवि गृणन्ति ते भूरिदा जनाः ॥

*tava kathāmṛtaṁ taptajīvanam kavibhirīḍitaṁ kalmaṣāpaham ।
śravaṇamaṅgalaṁ śrīmadātataṁ bhuvi gṛṇanti te bhūridā janāḥ ॥*

"From the stories of your pastimes flows nectar of the sweetest kind. Great devotees proclaim that the joy of heaven or *moksh* does not compare to this delight. Not only do your tales soothe the pain of sorrows in this world and destroy the sins of listeners, they also provide precious relief to those whose hearts ache in separation from you. Your pastimes bless the hearts of those who hear them with sacred love. Thus, the great souls who tell your stories are the givers of all givers." (*Shrimad Bhagwatam*, 10.31.9)



Shrinivas Acharya, Part 4 of 12: Shrinivas in Navadwip



In the previous edition, Shrinivas went to Puri and met Mahaprabhu's parikars there. He had hoped to learn Shrimad Bhagwatam from Gadadhar Pandit, but Gadadhar, along with Nityanand Prabhu and Adwait Prabhu, left this world for nitya lila, leaving Shrinivas utterly devastated. In this article, Shrinivas comes to Bengal and meets more of Mahaprabhu's dearest companions.

After many days of walking, Shrinivas reached the small town of Navadwip, where Mahaprabhu was born and raised. This is where he was married and taught children in school; where he gave glimpses of his true identity as Krishn, and where he began to experience Radha's mood of separation from Krishn. Here he performed *kirtan* in the courtyard of Shrivast Pandit, along with all his closest companions (*parikars*).

Shrinivas was devastated by the loss of Mahaprabhu and his dear Gadadhar, Nityanand and Adwait. But as he bowed down to the *dham*, its holy dust seemed to embrace him tightly. Near the

Ganga riverbank, he curled up in that dust like a child in his mother's lap. The *Anuraag Valli* (2.203) says that the maidservants of Mahaprabhu's wife, Shrimati Vishnupriya, who bathed there daily, found him. They comforted him and asked him to come with them to Mahaprabhu's house.

Vishnupriya's Bhajan

Mahaprabhu had left home years before, and now he had left for *nitya lila* too. Vishnupriya now lived a life of seclusion. She was totally immersed in feelings of separation from her beloved Mahaprabhu, and every action she performed was for him. She rarely slept, and she always chanted the Holy Name.

She used to chant the *mahamantra* by counting with rice grains, and however many grains she counted, she would offer them to Mahaprabhu's *shaligram shila*. There was very little *prasad*, and with that, she and her maidservants sustained their lives. And if any devotees came to visit, whatever *prasad* there was would be distributed evenly amongst them.

The house was bolted shut, and there were two ladders by which Vishnupriya's maidservants could come and go. At certain times, devotees could meet Vishnupriya in the courtyard, but she would always stand behind a veil, with only her feet showing, and only for a short time before the veil was closed. The only ones allowed to see her full form were her maidservants.

When Shrinivas came to Mahaprabhu's house, Vishnupriya was expecting him. She came to grant him the *darshan* of her lotus feet. From the other side of the veil, Shrinivas bowed. He offered prayers and teardrops to Mahaprabhu's wife as his body shivered and his hair stood on end in ecstasy.

Suddenly, as if in a trance, Vishnupriya lifted the veil. She granted Shrinivas the *darshan* of her lotus face and graceful form. This overwhelmed him and he fainted. When he regained consciousness, Vishnupriya lovingly placed her lotus foot upon his head.



Vishnupriya blesses Shrinivas with her *darshan*

Shrinivas Travels Throughout Bengal

Shrinivas spent a lot of time traveling around

Bengal and meeting Mahaprabhu's companions. After meeting them in Navadwip, he went to Shantipur and met Adwait Prabhu's wife and children, and in Khardah he met the wives and children of Nityanand Prabhu. He also visited many remote villages where different companions of Mahaprabhu still lived. In the village of Shrikhanda, Shrinivas was reunited with his *shiksha* guru, Shri Narahari Sarkar. He embraced Shrinivas and wept, not wanting to let him go.

The *Anuraag Valli* (2.78) says:

मोनेते कोरिलो जबे जाबो वृन्दावन ।
पुनर्बार ना आसिबो गौड़ भुवन ॥

*monete korilo jabe jaabo vrindavan ।
punarbaar naa aasibo gaud bhuvan ॥*

"He felt that, once I go to Vrindavan, I will never again return to Bengal."

For this reason, Shrinivas tried to meet as many of Mahaprabhu's *parikars* as he could and receive their blessings and teachings.

On the way to Vrindavan, he stopped in Jajigram and sought permission from his mother. He stayed with her for a week and consoled her to the best of his ability before leaving on Agrahayan Shukla Dwitiya. On the way, he visited Gaya, Kashi, Ayodhya and Prayag. By the time he reached Mathura, many months had passed.

As he arrived in Mathura, Shrinivas was overjoyed that he would finally receive permanent shelter under the lotus feet of Shri Roop and Sanatan Goswami. Nearby, a group of Brajwasi Brahmins were talking; they seemed upset. When he asked what the matter was, they told him that Shri Roop and Sanatan had recently returned to *nitya lila*. Hearing this, Shrinivas fell senseless to the ground.

To be continued . . .

References

Anuraag Valli by Manohar Das

Bhakti Ratnakar by Narahari Chakravarti



Braj Animal Care



Braj Animal Care aims to relieve the suffering of street animals in Vrindavan, India. This is the story of one of Braj Animal Care's oldest friends; Fluffy.

Fluffy's Miraculous Recovery

"Hi, I'm Fluffy! I live just outside the Shri Radharaman Temple in Vrindavan, India, where I spend my days begging for food and love.

"Last summer, I got a skin disease called mange. There were lots of tiny bugs burrowing inside my skin. It was so yucky to feel them moving around inside me. My skin itched all the time, and I ended up scratching off most of my fur and lots of my skin too. My wounds got infected and I thought I was going to die.

"Lots of people saw me as they walked by. They looked sad, but they didn't think they could help me. Luckily, Braj Animal Care came to the rescue. They gave me medicine and applied a brown liquid on my body that helped the infection and pain go away. It took a couple of months, but now I am healthy and strong. My hair has grown back and I must say, I look very handsome!"

With your help, we hope to extend our program to serve as many animals as possible, so that all of them can live a healthy, happy life. For more information about how you can help, please call or WhatsApp on [+91 89237 37924](tel:+918923737924) or visit www.brajanimalcare.com. You can also follow us on Instagram at www.instagram.com/braj_animal_care and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/braj_animal_care.



Fluffy enjoys a quiet moment



Maharajji's Latest Updates



Amiya Nimai's New Silver Chhatri

On the morning of February 9th, Maharajji's disciples offered a new silver *chhatri* (parasol) to Amiya Nimai Mahaprabhu. A special *puja* was held, and several of Vrindavan's prominent *mahants* attended, including Shri Padmanabh Goswami, Shri Padmalochan Goswami, Shri Anuraag Goswami, Shri Dhananjay Goswami, Shri Premdas Shastri, Shri Swami Maheshanandji and Mahant Shri Sacchidanand Das ji. It was also attended by Pranav Awasthi Ji, Baldev Anuragi, Shyamsundar Anuragi and others.



Mahaprabhu's new *chhatri*

Blissful *kirtan* was performed as the *chhatri* was installed, followed by a special *aarti*. At the end of the program, devotees were treated to Amiya Nimai's *rajbhog prasad*.

Bhakti is in the Details

On the evening of February 9th, Maharajji spoke at our Shri Radharaman Sankirtan in Noida. On the subject of devotion, he said, "In the Shri Radharaman Temple tradition, Goswamis are assigned *seva* according to their abilities. Are you good at making flower garlands? Are you good at making Thakurji's *phool banglas*? Or are you good at cooking for him? Can you dress and ornament him well? Would you be able to look after his store room well or not? All this is considered.

"In my life, I have gotten the opportunity to serve as his *shringariya* (one who dresses and adorns him with ornaments). In this material world, people keep looking at what other people are wearing, and that's how fashion develops. But where I come from, we always try to find new



Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami (Maharajji)

inspiration for different kinds of cloth to dress him in. *Bhakti* is in the details. Many people say "I practice *bhakti*." I see. So, what exactly do you do in the name of *bhakti*? You just light a lamp and fold your hands, and that's it? Is that *bhakti*?

"The definition of *bhakti* is to love. Love means pampering your Beloved. It means love in action. Imagine; a man says, "I love my wife so much!" Then someone asks, "How do you show your wife that you love her?" He replies, "I go up to her once a day with folded hands." Of course, the wife would not be satisfied with this so-called display of love. She would want some real attention from her husband. He should talk to her, listen to her, take care of her. In the same way, *bhakti* is all about serving the one you love."

Overseeing Seva in the Shri Radharaman Temple

From February 21st through March 3rd, Maharajji's family was in Shriji's *seva*. This period falls within the forty days of Braj Holi, thus, every day, coloured powder or *gula* was offered to Radharamanji's lotus cheeks and then sprinkled upon the devotees. Special folk songs or *rasiyas* were sung to the beats of the *daph* drum.

Chefs Learn About Radharamanji's Prasad

On February 24th, a group of prominent chefs were invited to experience the magic of Radharamanji's *prasad*. They learned about his kitchen with its eternal flame, which has been burning continuously for half a century. They were also amazed to learn about the songs or *pads* that are offered to Radharamanji at mealtimes, which describe the various *bhogs* he enjoys. After hearing about about Radharamanji's eating schedule and preferences, they had the unforgettable experience of tasting his divine *prasad*.

Upcoming Radharaman Sankirtans

Maharajji and his disciples most cordially invite you and your loved ones to attend ODev's regular Sankirtans in India (New Delhi and Kanpur), UK (London and Birmingham), Argentina (Buenos Aires) and Uruguay (Montevideo). For more information on upcoming programs, please contact us at odev108@gmail.com or call or WhatsApp us on [+91 83687 83201](tel:+918368783201).

Upcoming Utsav: Holi in Radharaman Ghera

On March 9th and 10th, our ODev family is organising our annual Holi Utsav in Radharaman Ghera from 10am onwards. All are welcome! Come and play with us!



होली Holi



Translation by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami from the book
Shri Radharaman Gita

श्री राधारमण छैल गैल पिचकारी छोरे ॥
केसर की तकि मारे सजनी सबरे अंगन बोरे ।
मूठ गुलाल लाल कर देत हैं लाज सकुच को तोरे,
आवत मुख माडन धोरे ॥
अंग अनंग को वरषै भरो जोवन के जोरे ।
प्राणप्रिया की सैन पाइके लेत जु सबकि अकोरे,
करै जो सो कछु थोरे ॥
लेकर ढपहि बजाबै रसिया गावै गीत अप जोरे ।
भागन फागन आय गयौ है बोलत वचन कठोरे,
पिये छवि नैन कटोरे ॥
होली को मिस पायके हेली खेल करे सब ठोरे ।
गुणमंजरी प्रिया रँग में भरो है होय सबै इक ठोरे,
रसिक बर नंदकिसोरे ॥

*śhrī-rādhāramaṇ ḥhail gail piḥhkārī ḥhore ॥
keśhar kī taki māre sajanī sabare aṅgan bore ।
mūṭh gulāl lāl kar det haī lāj sakuḥ ko tore,
āvat mukh māḍan dhore ॥
aṅg anaṅg ko varaṣhai bharo jovan ke jore ।
prāṇ-priyā kī sain pāike let ju sabaki akore,
karai jo so kaḥhu thore ॥
lekar ḍhapahi bajābai rasiyā gāvai gīt ap jore ।
bhāgan phāgan āy gayau hai bolat baḥhan kaṭhore,
piye ḥhavi nain kaṭore ॥
holī ko mis pāyke helī khel kare sab ṭhaure ।
gunmañjarī priyā raṅg mē bharo hai hoy sabai ik ṭhore,
rasik var nandakiśhore ॥*

In the narrow lanes of Vrindavan, the handsome Radharaman is spraying coloured water from a *pichkari*!¹ Seeing Shri Priyaju freshly bathed and dressed in clean clothes, he completely soaks her with the saffron-tinged water; then, without any modesty or shame, he smears red *gulal*² all over her lotus face. The *sakhis*³ are glowing with youthful romance, each one with a unique mood; some are shy, some are quiet, others extroverted and so forth; but none are spared. As soon as Shriji receives Priyaju's company, they form a team and drench every *sakhi* with colours in such a way that not a single part of their bodies is left uncovered; even then, the *sakhis* still feel as if it isn't enough! After Shriji has finished throwing colours, he starts to sing sweet *rasiyas*⁴ whilst playing the *dhap*.⁵ Then, looking at each other lovingly, they enjoy another Holi tradition – teasing each other with many *gaalis*.⁶ Throughout this Holi festival, everyone is free from chores and responsibilities and they all come together to play games of love. Shri Gunmanjari says, "Shriji and all the *sakhis* are completely drenched in the colour of Priyaju's love!"

¹ A traditional water pistol

² Powder

³ Shri Priyaju's girlfriends

⁴ Holi folksongs

⁵ A large, flat drum that is only played during the Holi season

⁶ Playful insults



Shri Radha and Krishn play Holi with the *sakhis*



Upcoming Events March 2020



Tuesday, March 3rd

Beginning of the Main Holi Festival

This is the first of eight days of intense Holi play. Special Holi songs called *rasiya* and *dhamar* are sung. Every day, Radharaman wears golden yellow (*kesariya*) clothes, sits on a silver throne and plays Holi with everyone. A special *bhog* of sweet, fried flatbreads (*pua*) is offered to him. On this day, Laddu Holi is played in Barsana.

Wednesday, March 4th

Lathmar Holi in Barsana

Thursday, March 5th

Lathmar Holi in Nandgaon

Friday, March 6th

Rangbhari Ekadashi

Monday, March 9th Choti Holi and Gaur Purnima

A bonfire is lit, symbolising the destruction of the demoneess Holika, and this is called *holika dahan*. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's *abhishek* is held at the Amiya Nimai Temple in Gopinath Bazar, Vrindavan, and his *prasadi* cloth is brought out for *darshan* in the Shri Radharaman Temple.



Mahaprabhu's seat (left) and *prasadi* cloth (right)

Tuesday, March 10th Holi

Holi is celebrated in Radharaman Ghera by Goswamis using both wet and dry colours. This day is also known as Dolotsav, as Shriji dresses in pink and sits on a swing. Special *bhog* of *jalebi* (a type of funnel cake), *pua* and other items are offered. Shriji plays Holi on this day while sitting on the swing.

