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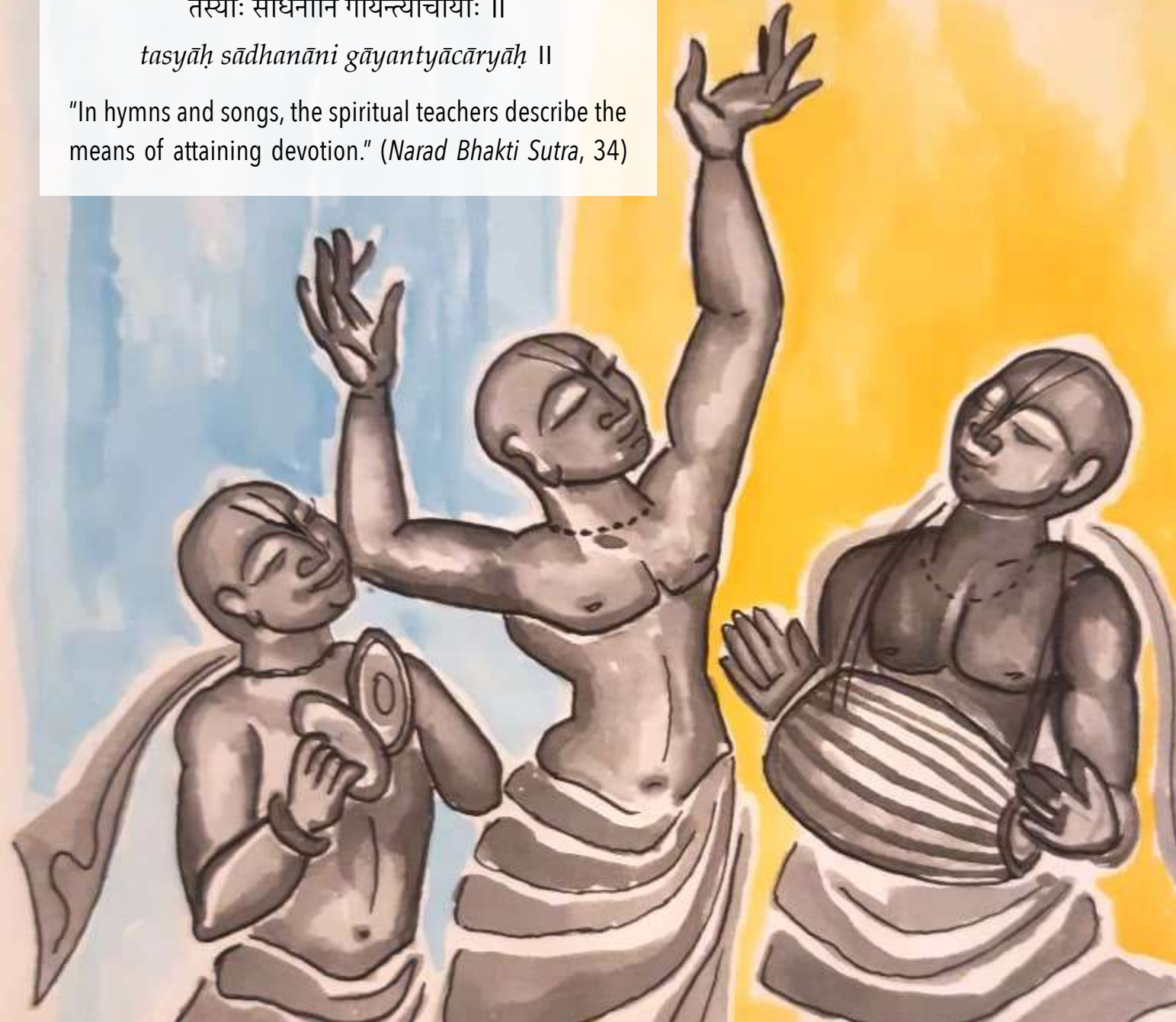
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## A Way to Attain Devotion by Shri Chandan Goswami Maharaj

तस्याः साधनानि गायन्त्याचार्याः ॥

*tasyāḥ sādhanāni gāyantyācāryāḥ ॥*

"In hymns and songs, the spiritual teachers describe the means of attaining devotion." (*Narad Bhakti Sutra*, 34)



"I praise the devotees who are devoted with exclusive focus, who have surrendered themselves completely to the Lord and ask nothing from him. They sink into the ocean of bliss as they sing of his amazing acts." (*Shrimad Bhagwatam*, 8.3.20)

On the path of devotion, the first step is to hear the Lord's glories through his devotees: "By serving the great devotees, one attains faith, shelter of a true guru, and a love for hearing the Lord's stories (Krishn katha)." (*Shrimad Bhagwatam*, 1.2.16)

Even if we wander into a holy place for some other purpose, we automatically get the opportunity to see or speak with the devotees who live there, and this in itself is a type of devotional practice. By the influence of such practice, we develop faith in the devotees' character. The devotees naturally glorify the Lord amongst each other, and whoever comes into contact with them develops a desire to hear. By hearing their conversations, we get a taste for them. Furthermore, when we hear

from devotees who have attained him, the effect is immediate. The following verse confirms this:

"The great souls have no attachment to anything worldly. You should seek their company, which destroys all the bad results of material association. In their excellent company, the stories of my pastimes reveal themselves as direct realisation; true nectar for the ears and heart. Thus, one quickly advances on the path, step by step, from faith all the way to sacred love." (*Shrimad Bhagwatam*, 3.25.24-25)

When the highest stage of devotion manifests in a devotee, he experiences supreme divine joy, which is mentioned in the scriptures, and expressed by saints and spiritual teachers through songs and hymns. These masters have attained the fruits of the practice for themselves, and thus, by sharing the nectar of their realisations, they define the path of devotion. (From *Way to Love*, Sutra 34, by Shri Chandan Goswami Maharaj)



## Jamai Thakur, Shri Radhavinod - Part 2



*In the last edition, we learned about Radhavinod's interactions with a devotee named Vancharam who served him lovingly for many years. Now we explore Radhavinod's lilas in a new home with his dear devotee, Radha.*

### **Radha's Heartfelt Seva**

When Radhavinod went to live with Raja Banwari Lal, his daughter Radha served him with all her heart. She always paid attention to his likes and dislikes. In the summer, she

dressed him in the most elegant yet light fabrics to keep him comfortable in the scorching heat, and in the winter she wrapped him in heavy velvets and silks to protect him from the cold. Radha poured her whole heart into every moment she spent with her Beloved and although she was so young, her love made her *seva* exceptional. Radhavinod was very pleased with her, and he expressed this through his loving mischief. For example, once Radha experienced Radhavinod wiping his dirty hands on her clothes after taking *bhog*!

For some time, the playful interaction between Radhavinod and Radha continued in this way until one day when Radhavinod made one last request. While Radha was offering Radhavinod a garland, he tugged on her *anchal* with his delicate lotus hand, pulling her close and declaring, "You must marry me!" Surprised, Radha told her mother, but of course she didn't believe her.

Soon after, Radha became very ill. The merciful Radhavinod appeared in her mother's dream and said, "Radha does not have much time left in this world. I can no longer live without her direct *seva*, so I will now take her as my eternal bride. Please make a deity of my eternal Beloved, Radharani, from the dried-up *devdaru* tree in the courtyard. Your daughter will merge into that deity and attain me. When the deity is ready, you must perform our wedding ceremony."

When Radha's mother told Raja Banwari Lal about the dream, they both wept. But they also felt a sense of joy, for they knew their daughter would soon attain Radhavinod's lotus feet, and that she

and the Divine Couple would all live together in their house in the form of the deities.

As soon as the new deity was ready, Radha left her body. Arrangements for her funeral and her marriage in the form of the deity were made simultaneously. After the wedding ceremony, Radhavinod began to be called "Jamai Thakur" or "Jamai Vinod" (Krishn, the son-in-law).



Shri Radhavinod

## Radhavinod Showers Mercy on Banmali Raibahadur

When Raja Banwari Lal died, his adopted son Banmali Raibahadur took over his position as head of the Tarash Estate. But at that time, Banmali followed the *bramho samaj*, which did not place importance on a personal God and instead favoured the formless Absolute. Because Banmali had no faith in deities, he totally neglected Radhavinod's *seva* and he hired a *pujari* to continue the worship just for the sake of family tradition.

Then, something most unexpected happened to Banmali. One day, he was making his way down the road to Pabna city, seated on the back of a richly-decorated elephant, surrounded by attendants and royal guards armed with guns. Suddenly, the group came across a saint named Jagadbandhu who was accompanied by many devotees performing *kirtan*. Hundreds sang with *khol* and *kartal*, following Jagadbandhu who was dancing in ecstasy.

Banmali felt so attracted to the beautiful *kirtan* and the grace of Jagadbandhu's dancing. It was something entirely new for him and the feeling was completely irresistible. Banmali surprised himself when he jumped down from the elephant, kicked off his royal slippers and started dancing in the midst of the *kirtan*. He didn't stop dancing until the *kirtan* party reached its destination. There, he bowed down at Jagadbandhu's lotus feet, and requested that he come to his royal villa.

From that time forward, Jagadbandhu visited Banmali regularly and showered his grace

upon him. He taught him the ways of *raganuga bhakti*, Mahaprabhu's Path of Love. Banmali became eager to serve Radhavinod, and started worshipping him with all his heart.



Banmali Raibahadur

### Banmali Questions the Hookah Seva

However, Banmali felt that one of the long-standing *sevas* - the offering of hookah\* - that was introduced by his adoptive father had to be discontinued. This practice was started after a wealthy devotee offered a silver hookah to the Lord and had been continued for many years, but Banmali felt it went against the scriptures and stopped offering it to Radhavinod.

However, by now Radhavinod had taken a liking to his hookah, and made his own arrangements to smoke. During this period a *siddh-mahatma* named Shri Krishnasundar Ray was living with Banmali. Krishnasundar

\*To read more about Radhavinod and the offering of hookah, please see [\*Sandarshan\* 43](#).

Ray remained absorbed in meditation on the pastimes of Radha and Krishna day and night, but externally he smoked hookah out of habit. Whenever Krishnasundar Ray lost external consciousness, which happened frequently, Radhavinod would take the hookah from his hand and smoke it. When Krishnasundar Ray eventually left this world, Radhavinod began to worry about his hookah seva. Determined to continue this *lila*, Radhavinod appeared in his *pujari's* dream and said poutingly, "You must give back my hookah! I used to smoke with Krishnasundar Ray. I have not smoked for four days now that he is gone!" When Banmali was informed of this dream, he made arrangements for the hookah seva to be restored, but in his heart, he doubted whether Radhavinod really smoked.



Jagadbandhu

Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor writes, "Once Jagadbandhu Prabhu was staying in Banmali's palace in a room adjacent to the temple of Radhavinod. After *rajbhog*, he called Banmali and said, 'Today let's enjoy the hookah-smoking *lila* of *lilamay* (the sportive Lord).' He took Banmali with him and sat in the verandah of the temple. After some time he said, 'See, Vinodji is smoking. Just listen to the hubble-bubble of the hookah.' Simultaneously, Jagadbandhu granted Banmali spiritual ears to hear the sound of the hookah's water boiling. As Banmali listened to the sound, he went into a trance and tears began to trickle from his eyes."

### Shelter of Shri Vrindavan

In 1897, Banmali Raibahadur received initiation from Shri Radhika Nath Goswami. Shortly after, he left the Tarash Estate in the hands of a manager and moved to Braj where he dedicated his life to Radhavinod's *seva*. There, he constructed two temples: Tarash Mandir in Vrindavan and Rajbari in Radhakund. Banmali and Radhavinod divided their time between both places.

By Radhavinod's grace, Banmali led an exemplary life of selfless service, using his vast wealth to sponsor Hari *katha*, *kirtan* and many religious festivals. He also built a free hospital for *sadhus*, Vaishnavs and Brajwasis, and a school that taught the *bhakti* scriptures and offered free room and board for all students. In an act of utmost generosity, he also started a press which published a special edition of the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* with eight essential commentaries, and other *bhakti* literature which he distributed for free.

## Why Are You Here?

By the grace of a saint, Banmali received Radhavinod, and by Radhavinod's grace, he received the association of many more saints. One of these saints was Siddh Jagadish Das Babaji, and the following interaction gives an idea of the extent to which Banmali was blessed.

Whenever someone came to visit Siddh Jagadish Das Babaji, he always made sure to speak first. This was because he never wanted to contradict anyone else's heartfelt opinions. On this particular day, when Banmali and some other devotees arrived to come and see him, Siddh Jagadish Das Babaji immediately said, "Mahaprabhu has said that, upon renouncing everything, one should take shelter of this divine land of Vrindavan.

Banmali, you are a rich man, so why are you here?" The shocked Banmali could find no words to reply, but Siddh Baba quickly answered his own question. "Because Radharani keeps you here in order to serve the great souls who are renounced."

Shri Radhavinod, or Jamai Vinod, is still worshipped at Tarash Mandir in Vrindavan near Shri Ramkrishna Mission hospital. There, you can still have *darshan* of Radhavinod and his miraculous silver hookah. In Radhakund, Banmali Raibahadur's "Rajbari" can be found not far from Jagannath Mandir. His large, sandstone *samadhi* is located just behind Rajbari.

### References

*Gaudiya Vaishnav Jivan* by Haridas Das Babaji

*The Saints of Braj* by Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor



## Braj Animal Care



### Why Injured Animals Need Shelter

Of the many patients we treated in June, one that required particularly close care was Ginger. Ginger was a dog that lived on the streets of Mathura. In a horrific accident, he was run over by a tractor and the tyre pulled off most of the skin from his back. Soon, maggots started growing in the space between his exposed muscle and the remaining skin. The Braj Animal Care team removed the maggots and cleaned the wound; we returned every day to repeat the



Ginger

treatment. Just as the wound was becoming clean, a bad rainstorm in the area where Ginger lived caused the ground to be flooded with sewage and when he laid down in the mud, the wound became contaminated again. Our team continued to attend to Ginger on a daily basis but without a shelter where he could get 24-hour care and protection from the elements, we were not able to save Ginger's life.

On a positive note, Braj Animal Care successfully facilitated the adoption of several puppies last month. When puppies are weened off their mother's milk they become susceptible to parvovirus and once infected, they usually only have a few days to live. Upon adoption, Braj Animal Care provided the puppies with multi-vaccines which protect against many canine-specific diseases like canine influenza and most importantly, parvovirus.

It's evident to us that the work we do would make a much bigger difference to the lives of our patients if they were able to recover in a shelter with medical facilities. Some of Braj Animal Care's June activities were captured on camera by our resident videographer, Siddhant Shekhar, for a new film highlighting the difference a shelter could make to our success rate. Stay in touch with us and receive regular updates on our work.

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## Expanding Our Feeding Program

For more than a year, Braj Animal Care has been feeding approximately 400 stray animals across 20 feeding points on a daily basis, in and on the outskirts of Vrindavan. Our goal was to expand our program to cover more areas each day, so that we could serve more animals in need. We are very pleased to announce that, with the help and support of our well-wishers, our new expanded feeding route was inaugurated on July 15th, 2021. Now we are able to cover 45 feeding points, serving about 850 homeless cows, bulls, dogs and monkeys each day.



Animals on our new feeding route enjoying fruits



## Maharajji's Latest Updates



This month, Maharajji attended the Guru Purnima Sankirtan organised by his disciples in Delhi. Disciples and followers sang together in the blissful *kirtan* and performed Vyas Puja. Maharajji also gave *katha* on the significance of Guru. You can listen to the *katha* on his [Facebook](#) page.

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### Vaishnav Calendar

For upcoming festivals and Ekadashi dates, please click [here](#) to view our Vaishnav calendar.

