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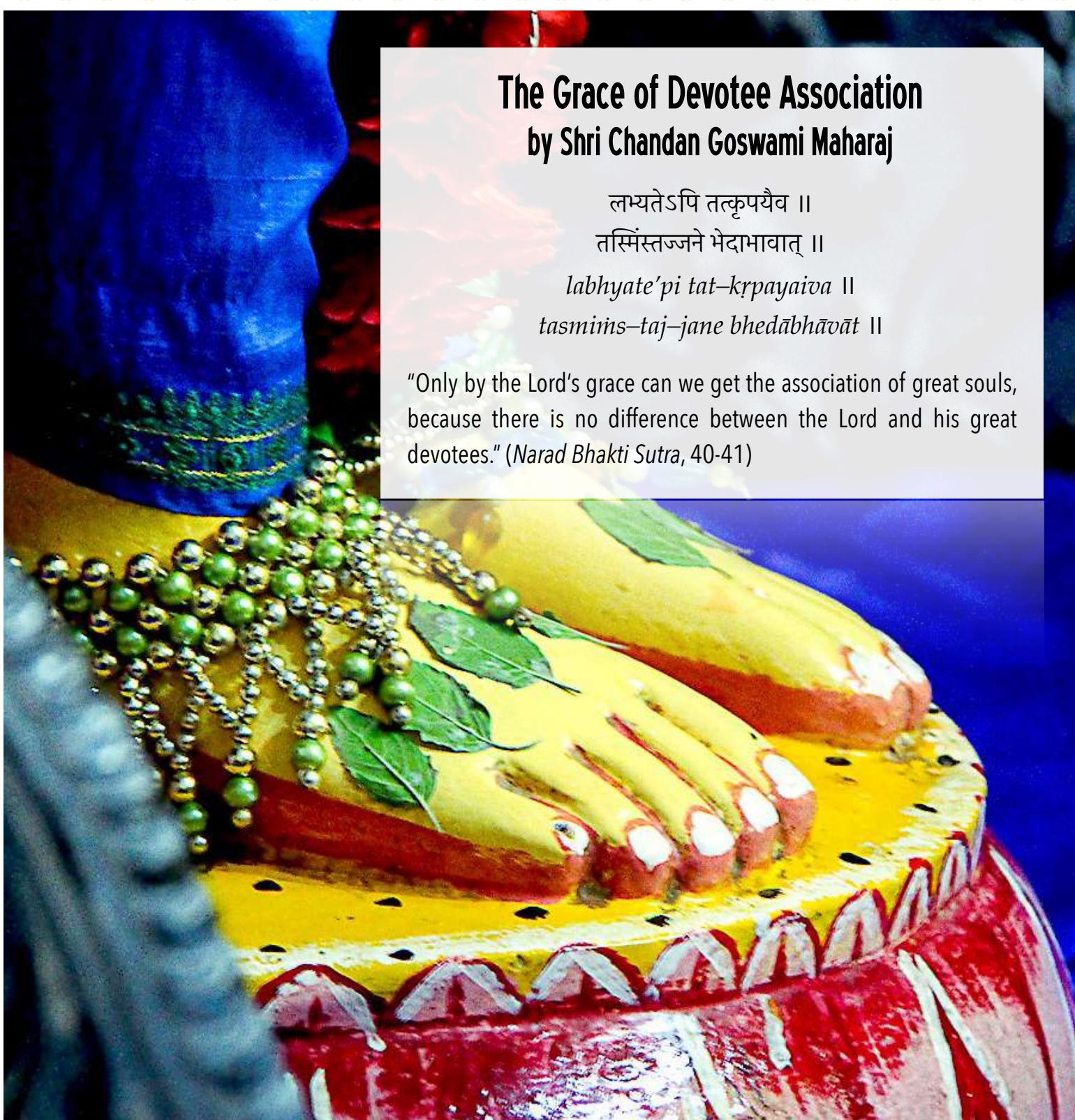
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## The Grace of Devotee Association by Shri Chandan Goswami Maharaj

लभ्यते पि तत्कृपयैव ॥  
तस्मिंस्तज्जने भेदाभावात् ॥

*labhyate'pi tat-kṛpayaiva ॥  
tasmiṁs-taj-jane bhedābhāvāt ॥*

"Only by the Lord's grace can we get the association of great souls, because there is no difference between the Lord and his great devotees." (*Narad Bhakti Sutra*, 40-41)



Sage Narad has explained that without the association of great souls, it is difficult to attain the Lord, and we cannot meet them without his grace.

A story from the *Mahabharat* illustrates the Lord's love for his great devotees. One day King Yuddhishtir went to see Krishn, who was sitting on his bed with his eyes closed, in a meditative pose. Yuddhishtir stood before him for some time. When Krishn came out of his meditation, Yuddhishtir asked who he had been meditating upon. Krishn replied, "My great devotee Bhishm was meditating upon me and I was also meditating on him."

In the *Shrimad Bhagwatam* (9.4.68), Krishn

says, "My loving devotees are my heart and I am their heart. They know nothing but me and I know none but them." When someone attains sacred love, he is adored by Krishn, and being in the association of such an elevated devotee is non-different from being in Krishn's presence. The blessing of a holy person is none other than the grace of the Lord. Hence, great souls and the Lord himself are non-different from each other. Therefore, Krishn says, "They (great devotees like the gopis and Shabri) did not study the *Veds* nor did they worship the saints. They did not perform vows or austerities either. But just by associating with me and my devotees, they attained me." (*Shrimad Bhagwatam*, 11.12.7)

## Ma Mani - Part 1

Sarojini Mitra, later known as Ma Mani, was born in March of 1882 C.E. Her father, Hareshwarnath, was the commissioner of Barddhaman in West Bengal. For unknown reasons, Sarojini's parents sent her away to live with her grandmother in their ancestral village of Galsi. This, however, was a blessing in disguise. Sarojini's grandmother was a great devotee, and the two spent their days in worship, *kirtan* and Hari Katha. This experience awakened a deep love for Krishn in Sarojini's heart.

Unfortunately, at the age of ten, Sarojini's parents decided to get her married. At just thirteen, she went to live with her husband and in-laws. After experiencing a wealth of devotional association in childhood, Sarojini was now confined to the company of her husband's family and the four walls of their home.

Young Sarojini was, unsurprisingly, unable to bear children, so the family arranged for her to adopt her four-year-old niece. Sarojini bonded deeply with her, but sadly, she passed away at the age of eighteen. The loss was so devastating for Sarojini, she prayed that she would never again

become so attached to anyone in this world.

When Sarojini was thirty years old, she read a book by Haridas Vasu, a distant family member who was a disciple of Shri Vijaykrishn Goswami.\* The teachings moved her deeply, and helped her understand the importance of having an enlightened spiritual guide. She wrote a letter to Haridas Vasu, asking him to help her find her guru.

### Sarojini's Initiation

Haridas Vasu replied that it was possible to arrange for Sarojini to take initiation from a great soul in Vijaykrishn Goswami's line. But he was only willing to help if Sarojini's husband gave his blessings. This was a major obstacle, because although Sarojini's husband was kind and religious, he did not have much faith in gurus in general.

In her anxiety, Sarojini prayed intensely to Vijaykrishn Goswami for help. It was not long before a solution appeared. Sarojini's husband told her he wanted to move to a faraway city, and asked if she agreed to do so. She replied, "We can go, but only if you allow me to take initiation." Her husband was compelled to give his blessings.

Even though her husband had agreed, Harinath Vasu made her wait one year before arranging her initiation. This was done to test her eagerness, but her desire for spiritual shelter was fierce. At last, she received initiation from Vijaykrishn Goswami's disciple Jagadbandhu Maitra. Her guru taught her

*raganuga bhakti* – Mahaprabhu's Path of Love – and instructed her to chant the Holy Name of Krishn with every breath.

Sarojini dived deep into *bhajan*. During the day she would attentively care for her family members and complete all the household chores. But while others slept, she performed *jap* and meditation from three to six o'clock in the morning. The family knew never to disturb Sarojini while she sat on her *asan*.

### No Shelter but the Lord

In 1941, when Sarojini was 59, her husband passed away. Her in-laws had died long before, and so she was left alone in her house in Kolkata.



Sarojini Mitra (Ma Mani)

\*To read more about Vijaykrishn Goswami, please see [Sandarshan 40](#) and [Sandarshan 41](#).

As she sat beside her husband's lifeless body, Sarojini had a vision of Vijaykrishn Goswami. He gave her the following instructions:

"Do not leave this house for a year, and do not accept any support from your family members. I shall personally provide whatever help or support you need. Do not worry."

Sarojini's brother was a wealthy professor. As soon as he heard of her husband's demise, he invited her to come live with him. But due to Vijaykrishn Goswami's order, she didn't go. Perhaps it was around this time that she began to be known as "Ma Mani."

The following years saw increasing turmoil in Bengal. The second world war brought Kolkata under threat of being attacked by Japan, and there was increasing tension between Hindus and Muslims leading up to the 1947 partition of India.

Sarojini continued to live alone in Kolkata throughout this intense period. One day, an unknown man came to the door with a cart filled with almost 700kgs of coal. He said, "Ma, here is the coal you ordered."

"I didn't order any coal," Ma Mani replied.

"But that young boy said he was ordering it for you . . . that adorable boy with large eyes and dark skin! Well, it would be very difficult for me to transport such a large order back to the store. I would be very grateful if you would purchase it." Thinking this to be Vijaykrishn Goswami's special arrangement, she agreed.

Soon after, the government decided to ration the use of coal, and people had to wait in line long hours to get it. At her age, this would have been impossible for Sarojini, but

Vijaykrishn Goswami's stock of coal lasted until these restrictions ended.

On another occasion, Ma Mani's night watchman said, "A good friend bought about four kilos of *daal* to take back to his village, but now his plans have changed and he does not need it anymore. It would be very helpful if you can purchase the *daal* from him."

Thinking this was again Vijaykrishn Goswami's arrangement, Ma Mani purchased it. Added to her already ample stock of rice, she now had enough food to last a long time.

The very next day, riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims in Kolkata. As Ma Mani was the only Hindu living in a Muslim neighbourhood, she was effectively under a full lockdown, completely cut off from society. Ma Mani's world became limited to whatever she could see from the windows and rooftop of her house. All she could see was blood, dead bodies, smoke and flames, and all she could hear was the screaming of men, women and children.

As the world burned down around her, Ma Mani dived into the nectar of the Holy Name. She was sustained by the rice and *daal*, given by Shri Guru, and the nectar of *Shrimad Bhagwatam*.

To be continued . . .

#### References

*Ma Mani: Jivan Darshan aur Divya Lila Anubhutiyan*  
published by Shri Vijaykrishn Bhakt Sangh  
*The Saints of Bengal* by Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor



# Braj Animal Care



India is currently experiencing its rainy season and the Braj Animal Care team is seeing an increase in internal and external parasite cases. Last month, we treated a cow in Mathura whose horn was infested with maggots. Maggots cause gruesome wounds and if left untreated can cause extreme deep tissue damage. In this particular case, when the doctor grabbed the cow's horn to try and restrain her, the horn came off completely and we discovered that it was entirely rotten and worm-infested inside. We were able to remove the remaining maggots from the cow's head, which allowed the wound to heal nicely. Thankfully, our patient will be absolutely fine and most maggot cases can be treated with great success as long as we intervene early.

We're pleased to report that all of the Braj Animal Care team members have now received the second dose of their COVID-19 vaccines and will now have that extra protection against the virus as they are out in the field treating animals.

In other news, without disruption to its usual services, Braj Animal Care is now accepting limited private cases at reduced cost compared with normal veterinarian fees. All proceeds will go back into the charity.

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## Maharajji's Latest Updates



Radharamanji being pushed on his swing by Maharajji on Raksha Bandhan

In early August, Maharajji began recording his series of talks on *Shri Govind Lilamrit*. Enjoy the nectar of these special discourses from the end of September on Maharajji's [Facebook page](#).

On 15<sup>th</sup> August, our most-awaited Jhulan Utsav was held in New Delhi. Shri Radha and Krishn were seated upon a swing decorated with green leaves and garlands of fragrant jasmine. In his *pravachan*, Maharajji revealed the Divine Couple's blissful *jhulan lila*, after which devotees continued the meditation by singing ancient *jhulan lila pads* in Braj Bhasha. Devotees danced long into the night, as the sweet raindrops of Vrindavan *lila* filled their hearts.

We are ecstatic to announce that Maharajji and his family will serve Radharamanji on his altar from September 26<sup>th</sup> through October 1<sup>st</sup>. You are cordially invited to attend along with your family.

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### Vaishnav Calendar

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