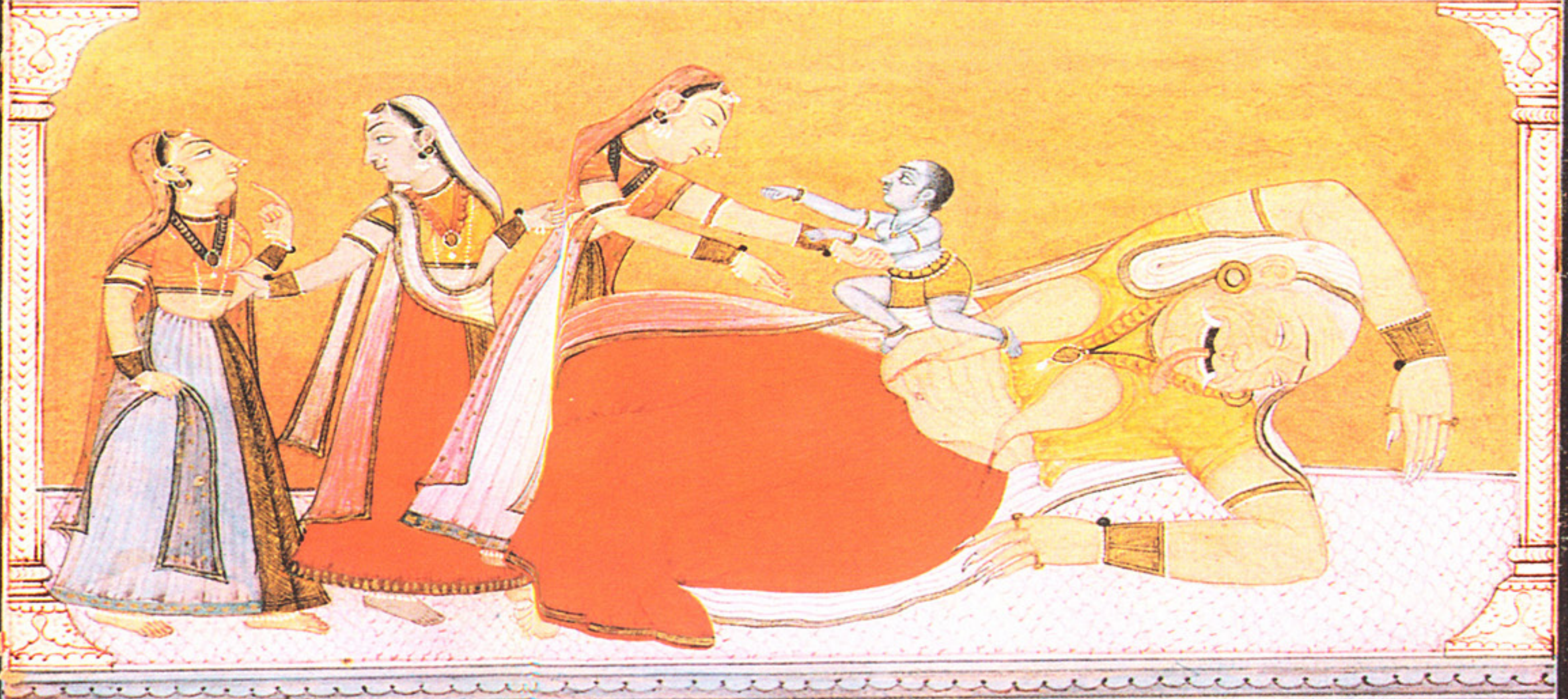


tava kathāmṛtam tapta-jīvanam

Sri Krishna Kathamrita

Putana

No. 10



FALSE GURUS
INSTITUTIONS
AND THE
HOLY NAME

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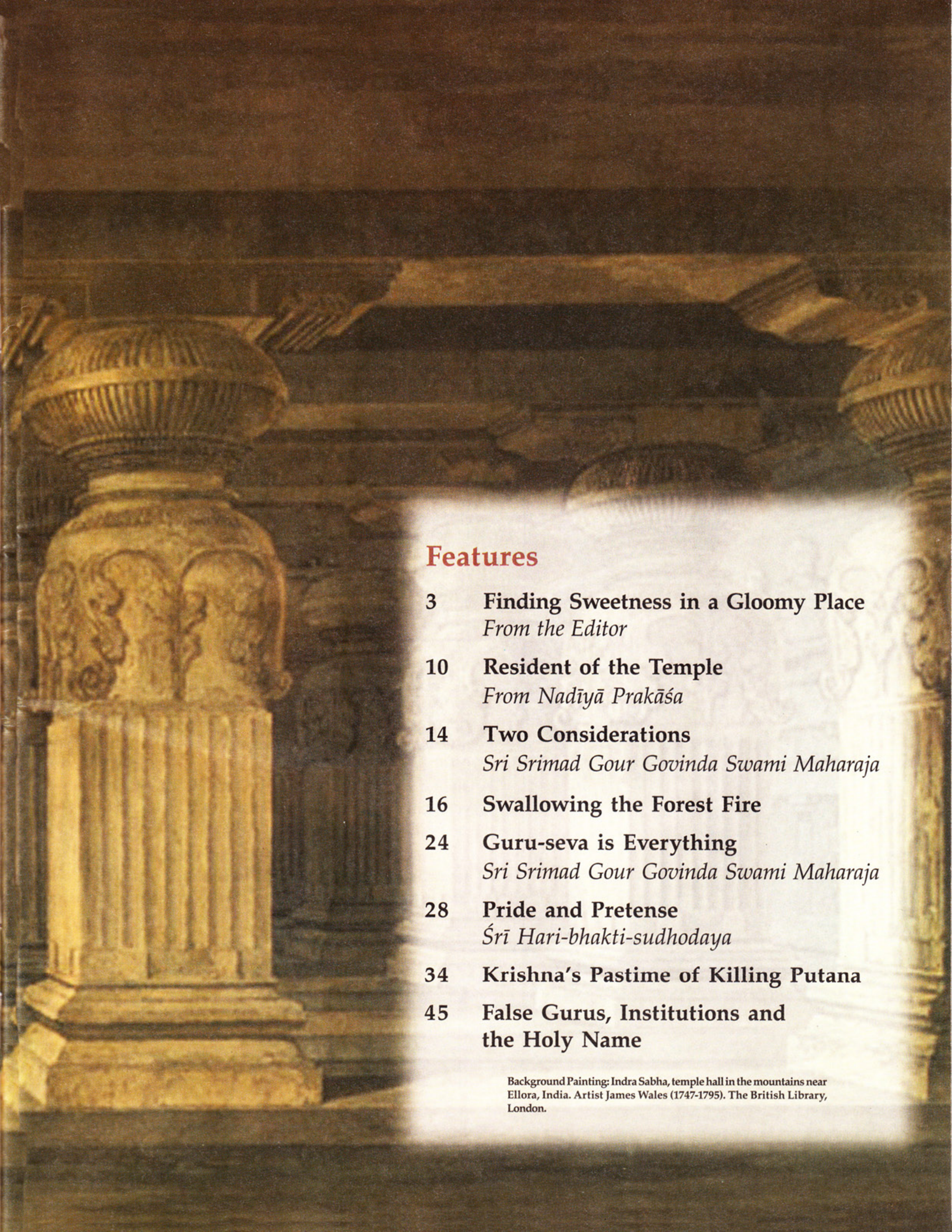
Sri Krishna Kathamrita

Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Gopinātha Jayati

PUTANA, FALSE GURUS, INSTITUTIONS, AND THE HOLY NAME

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Background Painting: Indra Sabha, temple hall in the mountains near Ellora, India. Artist James Wales (1747-1795). The British Library, London.



*His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of
the International
Society for Krishna
Consciousness*

Statement of Purpose

Srila Prabhupada states in the introduction to his Krishna Book:

It is essential for persons who are actually liberated to hear about the pastimes of Krishna. That is the supreme relishable subject matter for one in the liberated state. Also, if persons who are trying to be liberated hear such narrations... then their path of liberation becomes very clear. ...Lord Chaitanya has therefore advised his followers that their business is to propagate *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.

In keeping with this desire of Srila Prabhupada, the purpose of this magazine is simply to propagate *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. For that end we intend to research the history and literature of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, particularly in Orissa. Through the medium of this journal we want to help establish how everything is in Srila Prabhupada's books, and we will consider our efforts successful if this publication is a source of inspiration for the preachers of Krishna consciousness to continue their efforts to push on Lord Chaitanya's movement.

Sri Krishna Kathamrita

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Our humble thanks to all of the many saintly persons whose blessings and help have made this issue possible: Sri Fakir Mohan Prabhu, Sri Gopal Chandra Ghose Prabhu, and a number of senior *vaiṣṇavas* contributed by discussing the topics of this issue with us. Thanks to all of our kind donors who have continued to support this project with their financial contributions. Sri Bhakti Gaurava Narayan Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu, Acharya Samskritananda and Trailokyanath Prabhu helped translate the excerpt from *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*. Madhavendu and Krishna Balaram Prabhus of Vrindavan ISKCON have continued to offer their translating assistance. Once again, Matsya Avatara and Gopiparanadhana Prabhus of Govardhan helped by correcting some of the Sanskrit translations. Payonidhi Prabhu of Washington DC helped in various ways. Ekanatha and Ranjit Prabhus of the Bhaktivedanta Archives and Bhakta Charles of Vrindavan donated some photos. Finally, we offer our special thanks to His Holiness Bhaktitirtha Swami. Maharaja always encouraged and inspired us in this service. Even though suffering great inconvenience from his failing health, a few days before his departure he sent us a letter of support. We will greatly miss his benevolent association. As we are preparing to go to press, we have just received news of the departure in Vrindaban of another dear friend and well wisher, His Grace Kusakratha Prabhu. Practically single-handedly, Kusakratha Prabhu translated, produced, printed, and sold hundreds of different Gaudiya Vaishnava titles. Although a very private and shy person, through his work he had great influence on the lives of thousands of devotees. He kindly allowed us to be his friend and he gave us permission to reprint whatever we liked from his books. We offer our heartfelt thanks to this great soul.

Letters

Your wonderful writings have been so inspiring to devotees all around the world. I can truly say I have always looked forward to every new presentation. My own copies have been marked many times. I have shared them with so many other devotees. Somehow each time they have appeared it has been so timely.

— Bhakti Tirtha Swami

I went through your new magazine (KK #9) and I found it absolutely fantastic. By reading through it I could understand all of the effort you have put into it. It shows on each and every page.

— Naam Sankirtan Das

Front cover: Ascribed to Laharu of Chamba, c. 1750-75. Found in the Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. The bottom section of this Pahari painting shows Putana entering the house of Nanda Maharaja in her form as an owl. The middle section shows her after being killed by Krishna, and the top shows the Vindhya Mountains where Putana found Radharani before bringing her to Vraja. For explanations of these points, see the article "Krishna's Pastime of Killing Putana", page 34.

Back cover: Verse translation by Sri Kusakratha Das. Painting in Bikaner style, 1773. From the National Museum, Delhi. Artist unknown.

From the Editor

Finding Sweetness in a Gloomy Place

We have been contemplating this issue of *Sri Krishna Kathamrita* magazine for a number of years. In 1994 we first came across Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's article "Putana". Therein, he compares the demoness Putana to a false or cheating guru, and he compares Kamsa to the materialistic head of a religious organization. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's thoughts were astonishing, and we immediately felt a desire to develop his article into an entire magazine issue. Yet, the subject — a blood-sucking witch whose purpose in life is to kill innocent children — did not seem like a topic we could bring to a positive conclusion. Srila Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur in his commentary on *Bhāgavatam* 10.90.1-7 instructs:

One rule of poetic composition practiced by *vaiṣṇava* authors is *madhureṇa samāpayet* — a literary work should conclude in a mood of special sweetness.

After some years of contemplation, however, we felt that the brilliance of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's article, along with its philosophical implications, could be presented, provided we could satisfactorily address an important question: Why, knowing well the evils of religious institutions, did Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada and his disciples create religious institutions like the Gaudiya Math and ISKCON?

This volume of *Sri Krishna Kathamrita* attempts to provide a sweet answer to this question. But to do so we must first peer into a dark and terrible place — the realm of tragically misplaced faith. A cruel fiend poses as a devoted nurse and is thus granted entrance to the room of a helpless newborn babe. Once inside, she manifests her real intention — to mercilessly kill the child by offering him her poison-coated breast. This is the false guru, Putana.

In exploring this topic, we felt a responsibility to examine the inherent problems in religious organizations frankly and philosophically, without institutional gloss or sectarian bias, through the light of *śāstra* and the writings of our previous *ācāryas*. It is our hope that the message herein will inspire devotees to steadfastly serve the *seva/saṅga* missions of their respective gurus, in spite of the Putanas and Kamsas that are inevitably found in such societies.

Finally, we must confess to having another more selfish motivation for presenting this subject. Finding all of the tendencies of Putana and Kamsa in our own heart, producing this issue has been an opportunity for self-purification. We pray to you, dear *vaiṣṇava* readers, to kindly overlook our many shortcomings and bless us that we may give up pretension and duplicity and one day gain the rare gem of *śuddha-bhakti* — pure unalloyed devotion for the Lord.

Śrī guru, *vaiṣṇava-kṛpā-prārthī*
Madhavananda Das

(Letters, continued)

I just received Sri Krishna Kathamrita issue number 9. It was so enlightening; the best thing I have ever read. Thank you, and keep up the great work.

— Navanita Taskara Dasi

Your magazine on Lord Shiva was excellent. This method of picking a theme and developing it with an entire issue is wonderful. The artwork was also a sweet and attractive addition. Thank you for your first class service to the Vaisnava community.

— Badrinarayan Das, San Diego

The Krishna Kathamrita magazine on Mahaprabhu taking *sannyāsa* is liquid nectar, very soothing for the soul! You are keeping the whole world alive with this nice *kathā*.

— Purusottama Tirtha Das, Belgium

Someone recently directed me to your site and it is encouraging to see this kind of preaching continuing some years now after Sri Gour Govinda Maharaja's departure.

— Swami B.V. Tripurari

Please don't send Krishna Kathamrita magazine to me ever again, as after reading it I was not able to sleep last night, having "nightmares" of Gauranga Mahaprabhu dancing in the ecstasy of *prema-nāma saṅkīrtana*. Are you trying to finish my last hopes for a happy householder life with this kind of "illicit" *kṛṣṇa-kathā* literature that is totally "poisoning" my consciousness with thoughts of surrender to Sriman Mahaprabhu? Shame on you for trying to disturb this worm mired in stool and forcing him to taste the nectar for which he is always anxious!

— Goloka Vrindavan Das, England

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Published letters may be edited for clarity and length.



Sugar-Coated Pills

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

The Lord's devotees can save even those whom the Lord himself rejects. This is their unique character. Therefore, the devotees of the Lord arrange various means to save the fallen, reprobate souls from perdition. In fact, they live among these spiritual derelicts to encourage them toward spiritual perfection, using any means at hand — even tricks. His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada wanted to open a students' hostel in London, the logic being that it was necessary to give sugar-coated pills, in the form of a little sense gratification, to those debauched students in order to attract them to the path of God-realization.

If they so desire, powerful spiritual masters, or pure devotees of the Lord, can instantly deliver the entire universe and take everyone to the shelter of the Supreme Lord's lotus feet. Srila Vasudev Datta declared to Lord Chaitanya that he was prepared to take on all the sinful reactions of every living entity in the universe and suffer eternally in hell if the Lord was willing to liberate all the living entities at one time. The pure devotees are so magnanimous that they are always concerned about the spiritual well being of every soul. The only way to receive the Supreme Lord's mercy is to bathe oneself in the dust of the lotus feet of such unalloyed devotees.

The devotees of the Lord understand that *māyā's* influence has spoiled the people and made them demoniac. Thus, the inherently noble disposition of the devotees leads them to think only of the demons' benefit, without a tinge of envy. The devotees are therefore known as *patita-pāvana*, the saviors of the fallen. In fact, the devotees are more compassionate than the Supreme Lord himself. Of course, the Supreme Lord's grace alone makes them more compassionate. But by the mercy of such devotees, the lowest sinful men and women can attain the lotus feet of the Lord.

On the other hand, offending such pure devotees finishes all possibility of salvation. If one offends the Supreme Lord, only a pure devotee can save the offender, but if one offends the pure devotee, then even the Supreme Lord will not save the offender from doom. For this reason alone, pure devotees never feel offended. When Jesus Christ was being crucified, he did not blame anyone for it. Haridas Thakur was severely lashed in twenty-two marketplaces by the Muslim Kazi's sentries. Still he prayed to the Lord not to punish his tormentors. Lord Nityananda was wounded by the two rascals Jagai and Madhai, yet the Lord stood his ground, bleeding profusely. He delivered the two notorious brothers and thus brilliantly exemplified the title *patita-pāvana*. Such is the profound compassion of the pure devotees.

Therefore, the reprobates' only means of attaining any piety is through the association of devotees. We are looking forward to that time when the stalwart disciples of that illustrious crest jewel of all *vaiṣṇavas*, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada, having received the blessings of their spiritual master, will come together again for the benediction of the whole world and, without wasting any more time, preach the message of Srila Rupa Goswami and Srila Raghunath Das Goswami. Srila Gaurakishore Das Babaji always tried to dissuade his disciple, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, from going to Calcutta, which he considered a bastion of Kali-yuga. Yet, though some might think Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur disobeyed his guru's order, he preached

not only in Calcutta but also in other capitals of Kali-yuga, such as London, Berlin, Bombay, Madras, and Delhi. He vehemently opposed the idea of constructing a temple in some quiet spot and leading a passive and uneventful life in the monastery. He represented perfectly the ideal of using one hundred percent of one's energy in God's service for the spiritual upliftment of humanity. A certain Gujarati friend offered to build him a temple in Ville Parle, a quiet and remote section of Bombay. He immediately refused. We had the greatest good fortune of seeing him act and preach in this way. And now it is our ill fate that after the passing away of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, the exemplar of *patita-pāvana*, we have returned to our lowly, fallen ways. Is there a glimmer of hope for our deliverance?

From the ocean of loving compassion, which had been completely dammed up, Lord Nityananda cut a canal of love of Godhead and flooded the entire world. And then some persons called caste Goswamis, claiming to be the Lord's descendants, again dammed up that ocean of mercy with their malpractice of fruitive activities and rituals. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur once more cut open the canal of love of Godhead and brought in the floodwaters. And now are we, of all persons, trying once more to dam it up like the caste Goswamis? By the influence of the good association of the Lord's devotees, even a fool and rascal like me, possessed of a destructive, demoniac mentality, can accumulate enough piety to become inspired to serve the Supreme Lord.

By nature, children are restless and playful. So, in the kindergarten they are given toys and games to interest them in learning. Similarly, a neophyte is trained to perform activities in the mood of sacrifice, and he is encouraged to worship the deities according to the scriptural injunctions. The expert *vaiṣṇava* preceptor then gradually draws him toward the platform of pure devotion by narrating the spiritually potent topics of Krishna consciousness and giving him the remnants of food offered to the Supreme Lord. These two aspects of devotional life act like medicine on the neophyte, who, like the rest of the world, is affected by the material disease. Devotional service to Lord Krishna is the living entity's eternal birthright; it is not a new subject fabricated by the human mind. A base fool thinks that devotion to Lord Krishna is merely a mundane psychological state of mind. But in truth, devotional service is our eternal spiritual substance— "the essential spiritual reality" (*vāstava-vastu*), according to the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (1.1.2). Devotion to Lord Krishna can be invoked naturally in the purified hearts of devotees. When a disease is cured, the patient feels hungry; similarly, when a neophyte accrues sufficient piety by associating with devotees, he feels attraction for devotional service within his heart. 🙏

— Excerpted from *Renunciation through Wisdom* 2.3.

ODE TO THE FALSE RENUNCIATE

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

Bāul Saṅgīt, song ten

*balān vairāgī ṭhākur, kintu grhīr madhye bāhādūr
ābār kapni pa're, mālā dha're, vahen sevā-dāsīr dhūr*

O you who dress yourself as a great and venerable renunciant, but who are even more of a sense-gratifier than the householders! Although you dress in a loincloth and carry *tulasī* beads, you wear the yoke of the desire to engage women in your personal service.

*acyuta-gotra-abhimāne, bhikṣā karen sarva-sthāne,
ṭākā-payasā gaṇī' dhyāne dhāraṇā pracur
kari' cutkī bhikṣā, karena śikṣā vaṇig-vṛtti piṇḍīśūr*

You beg alms everywhere, claiming to be a spiritual descendent of the infallible Lord Krishna. However, your thoughts dwell not on Lord Krishna but on monetary calculations. And you do not beg for self-purification. Instead, like a selfish merchant, you give instructions to others only to fill your belly.

*bale tāre bāul-cāṇḍa, eṭā tomār galār phaṇḍa,
jīvera ei aparādha śīghra kara dūr
yajī' grhīr dharmā, su-svadharmā, śuddha kara antahpur*

Chand Baul [Bhaktivinode] advises you — your activities are offensive to other souls, and they have become a noose about your neck. Give them up quickly, and worship the Lord to the best of your ability in the honest role of a householder, thus purifying your heart.

*nyāsī-māna-āsā tyajī', dīna-bhāve kṛṣṇa-bhaji',
svabhāva-gata dharmā yajī', nāśa' doṣāṅkura,
tabe kṛṣṇa pābe, dukkha jā'be ha'be tumi su-catur*

Renouncing your desire for being honored as a renunciant, just worship Krishna in a humble state of mind. By performing regulated activities according to your natural propensities the seedlings of your vices will be destroyed. Then you will attain Krishna, your unhappiness will go away, and you will attain true intelligence. 🍃

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The Thakur as a grhastha magistrate

"ALL GLORIES TO FINE RICE AND GHEE"

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur

Upākhyāne Upadeśa is a collection of short stories with explanations that were commonly used by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. It was compiled by Sri Sundarananda Prabhu, a prominent disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, and first published in 1940.

There was once a landlord in whose house no servant could ever continue to work for long. The landlord used to appoint new servants frequently, and they would leave the job only after a few days. The landlord was much perturbed at this. It was almost impossible for him to maintain the household work without any servants.

One day he was lamenting to one of his friends, "How unfortunate I am! Not even a single servant will stay! What is the solution?"

The friend advised him, "If you follow my advice, then your servant won't leave you, even if you want to get rid of him. Recruit any servant and feed him a fine variety of rice with cow ghee twice a day. After maintaining him in this manner for six months, then you can give him any kind of job you desire."

The landlord did as his friend advised. After relishing the fine rice with ghee for six months, no other variety of rice was palatable to the servant. Then the landlord, after six months had passed, started pressuring the servant with all sorts of rigorous jobs. The servant started complaining to the assistants of the landlord, "If so much pressure is continued to be put on me then I'm going to go elsewhere."

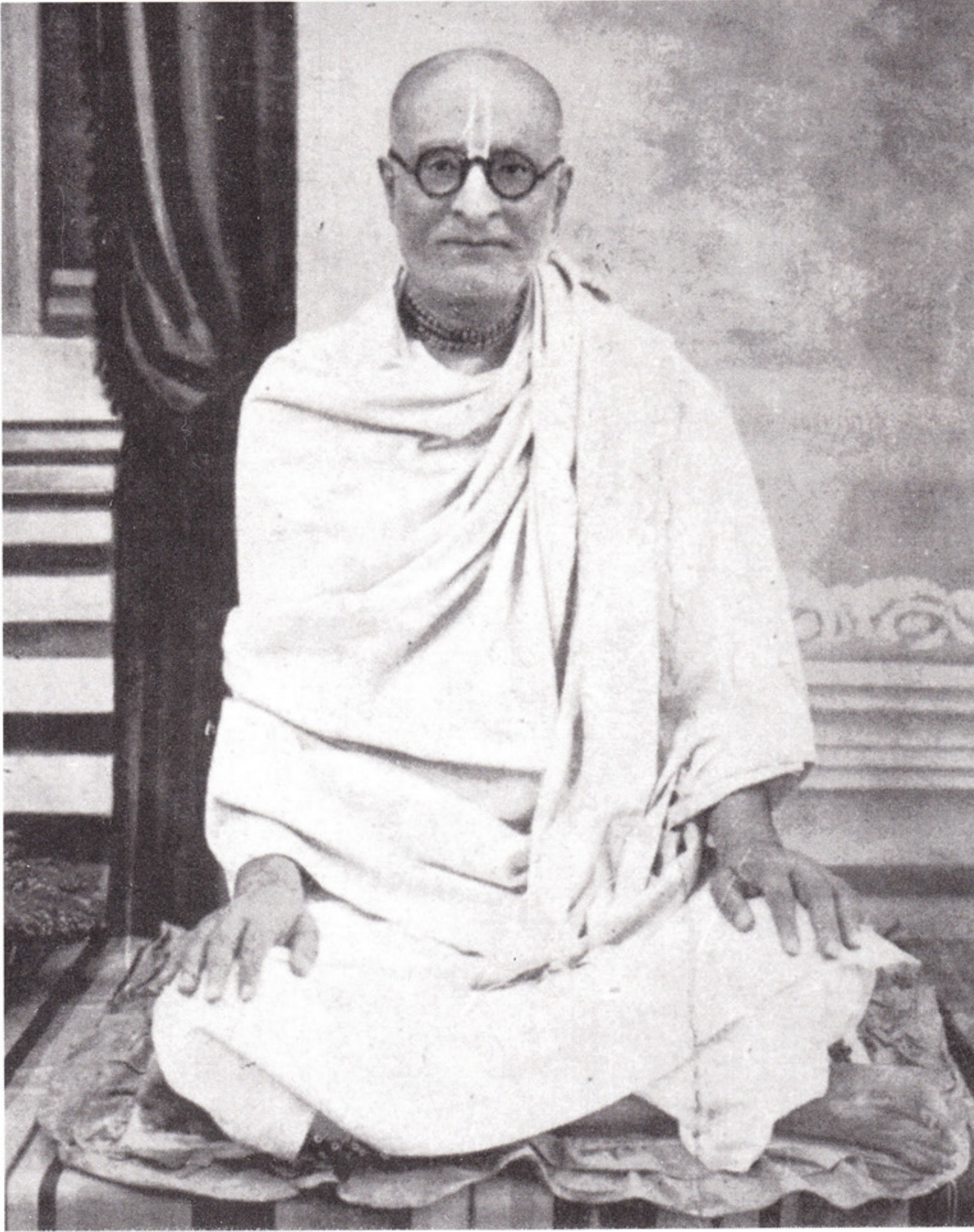
In this way, whenever there was a little more work to do, the servant would complain, "I won't stay here any longer."

One day the landlord told him, "Go wherever you want!" The servant looked for some alternative job elsewhere, but wherever he went he could not have the satisfaction of the fine quality rice and cow ghee.

At last he helplessly came back to the house of the landlord and continued to stay for a long time. Whenever there was some additional workload, he would leave to go elsewhere, but



March 29th, 1918, just after taking sannyāsa



At the Satchidananda Math in Cuttack, Orissa

as soon as he remembered the satisfaction of the fine rice and cow ghee, he would immediately return to the landlord's house. He would then say that he had developed a sentiment for the landlord, and that's why he was unable to stay anywhere else in peace.

After a few years, when the landlord happened to meet his friend, he shouted out in great joy, "All glories to fine rice and cow ghee!"

PURPORT

This anecdote gives us a moral about the influence of women, money and reputation, for which people are desirous. It is very difficult to find a person willing to offer causeless devotional service to the Supreme Lord

Hari in this world. Not a single person wants to stay steadfastly in the devotional institution of Lord Sri Krishna's family. Motivated by material sense gratification and mundane desires, for a few days some people like to pretend to offer services in Lord Krishna's family. But then they revert to different aspects of material gain, position, and reputation, religion, wealth, fruitive work or liberation to satisfy their thirst for sense gratification.

With the purpose of attracting such persons by any means and to enlighten them of their latent potential, all benevolent spiritual masters arrange to feed them fine rice and ghee. In other words, the guru makes every attempt to retain those truant persons within the family environment of Lord Krishna by providing various sorts of position and reputation for them. In the beginning, such persons may often be truant and desire to go away from Lord Krishna's family, but when they continue to receive some award, prestige, position, honor, etc. then some of them pretend to show some sort of sentiment towards the guru. Thereafter, such persons are not likely to go away even if they are asked to. Therefore, all glories to fine rice and cow ghee!

The earnest enterprise on the part of the landlord for the performance of his essential services is comparable to the earnest desire of a spiritual master or a sincere devotee to satisfy Lord Gauranga. The servant is compared to those servitors who merely pretend to serve their guru with a firm attitude. And the fine rice with cow ghee is compared to the position, honor, and reputation given to the disciple. 🍌

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WHO SHOULD LIVE IN THE MATHA

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta
Saraswati Thakur



Our *matha* is not meant for wrestlers; nor do aristocrats need to live in the *matha*. Only Lord Hari's devotees should live in the *matha*. If we remove the people in the *matha* who are fond of eating and enjoying intimate association with women, the *matha*'s expenditures and problems will diminish. We have to send home those proud and independent people who do not follow the *matha*'s rules and regulations, and who neither follow the spiritual master's orders nor display humility. If the result is that we have less manpower, we are content. We should not allow those who are not interested in worshiping Hari but who aspire for profit, adoration, distinction, women, and wealth to live in the *matha*. Such people are opposed to the *matha* in their hearts. They think, "I have been living in the *matha* for a long time. I have worked hard for the *matha*. Now I can eat nice foods, dress opulently, demand respect from others, and be given a share in the *matha* administration." We should never encourage such ideas, because they are opposed to devotional service. Such mentalities develop when living entities indulge in doubt, blasphemy, and idle talk. We should not be proud and think, "I am expert, intelligent, a good speaker, and a good singer." These thoughts are averse to devotional service. We need to feel ourselves lower than the straw in the street. If anyone attacks or criticizes us, we should tolerate it and simply chant Hari's holy name. We should think that today the Lord has mercifully awarded us the opportunity to become humbler than a blade of grass. When someone blasphemes us, we should know that the Lord is awarding us a benediction through those from whom trouble is inevitable. ☂

— *Amṛta Vāṇī* pages 95-96. Compiled by Sripad Bhakti Bhagavat Mayukha Maharaja. Published by Isvara Das and Touchstone Media. Mumbai, India. 2004.

WEAKNESS AND DECEITFULNESS

Questions and Answers with
Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur

Question: What is the difference between weakness and deceitfulness or hypocrisy?

Answer: Weakness is one thing and deceitfulness is another. They are not the same. Good things happen only

to a person free from deceitfulness. A deceitful person does not get any benefit. Another name for straightforwardness is *vaiṣṇavatā*, or the quality of a *vaiṣṇava*. A straightforward person can be weak, but he is not deceitful. A person who is deceitful says one thing and thinks another. A weak person is always ashamed, sorry, and mortified because of his own inadequacies, but a deceitful person is proud of his own tricks.

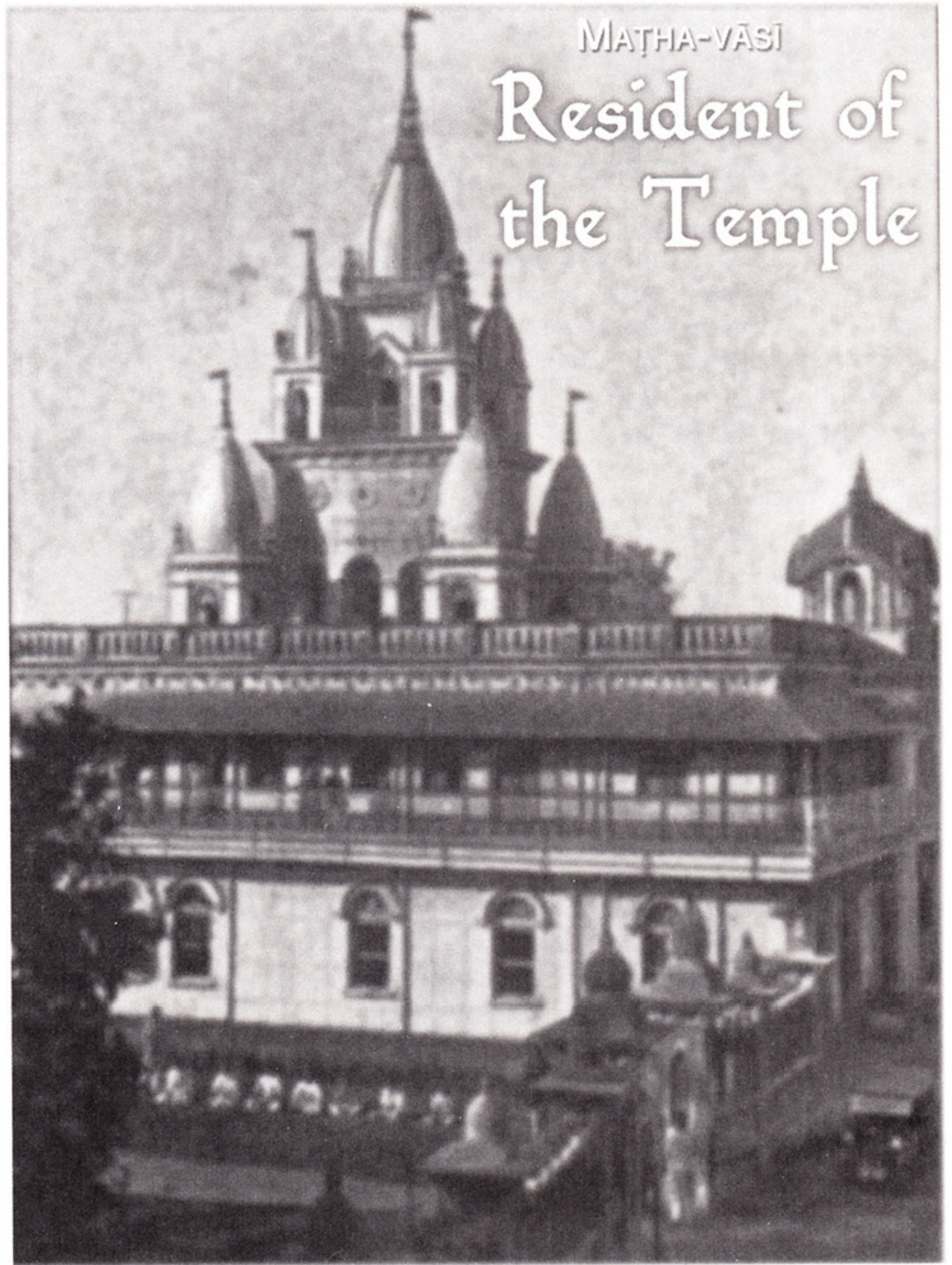
"I will deceive the *ācārya*. I will fool the doctor. I will hide the poisonous snakes of my bad tendencies in the dark recess of hypocrisy and will not let anyone know about them, and I will get some name and fame from other people by pretending to be saintly." This kind of mentality is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of terrible deceitfulness. Such people will never benefit. One gradually receives the grace of God by listening to the pure words of a *sādhu* in a humble, sincere mood. If we put on the garb of a devotee and become busy with non-devotional activities, if we are absorbed in material enjoyment and that becomes a priority, or if we take the *tridaṇḍa* and want to kidnap Sita, like Ravan, then we are stabbing ourselves to death. We are doing something terrible in the name of *hari-bhajana*. If for millions of births we have some weakness, some bad habits, that is not so harmful. But if once we take to the path of deceitfulness — we pretend to be devotees, but secretly engage in sinful enjoyment — then all troubles will remain with us. It is better to take birth among millions of other species, as a bird or a beast or an insect. To take the path of deceitfulness is never good. ☂

— Mandala Publishing Group. *Prabhupada Saraswati Thakur*, page 98-99. Eugene, Oregon. 1997.

“Maṭha” is a Sanskrit and Bengali word referring to a monastery, temple, hermitage, school, or college. The following essay speaking about the qualifications, activities, and attitude of the residents of a maṭha is translated from a Bengali article that first appeared in an issue of Naḍīyā Prakāśa, the daily devotional newspaper started by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. As was common practice for the journals started by Srila Saraswati Thakur, no name was given for the author of this article. Nor did the book we found it published in give a date of publication. However, it is clear that it was written some time after the disappearance of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta.

Maṭhanti vasanti chātrā yasmin iti maṭhaḥ— the term “maṭha” implies a place where students reside under the subordination of an ācārya. A general house is for sense enjoyment, but a maṭha is an institution for the service of the Supreme Lord Hari. A general house is a place where the mood of enjoyment is very prominent, where everyone is busy trying to establish their superiority, and where the residents are full of anxiety how to become the lords of others. In contrast to that is a maṭha, a place of non-duplicitous topics of service to the Lord where the principal of subordination is fully present and everyone is trying to be good.

For the service of the supreme object of devotion, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada, the follower of Sri Rupa Goswami, has established maṭhas or missions under the subordination of the personifications of devotion, the Gaudiya Vaishnava followers of Sri Krishna Chaitanyadeva, the inaugurator of the saṅkīrtana movement. In the sense that a word referring to a container also designates that which is known to be contained, since the word “maṭha” indicates the abode of the Lord, and since the Lord is always surrounded by his devotees, “maṭha” therefore also refers to the pure devotees, the personifications of the Lord’s shelter, that reside there. Thus, a maṭha is a place where the Lord’s deity form is surrounded by many pure-hearted devotees who are always engaged in discharging loving service under the guidance and



Temple in Baghbazar, Calcutta, established by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta

instruction of their spiritual master. It is a regular, permanent assembly or mission of devotees where everyone is engaged wholeheartedly in the congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Hari. Following the instructions of their spiritual master, the resident devotees engage twenty-four hours a day in preaching the holy name, and thus maintain perfect transcendental harmony, enjoying themselves along with others in loving devotional service to the deity of the Lord. Even in ancient times, Vishnu temples were called maṭhas. So the maṭha is not an imaginary modern concept.

Subservience is the very life of the maṭha. The principle of ānugatya — subservience, fidelity, or obedience — is the backbone of devotional service and is another name for

bhakti. The residents of the *maṭha* render non-duplicious devotional service to the spiritual master, twenty-four hours a day. Unless one's *ānugatya* is genuine, one cannot be addressed as a *maṭha-vāsī*, a resident of the *maṭha*. The word "*maṭha-vāsī*" can also be taken to mean "*ante-vāsī*", one dwelling in the guru's *āśrama*, or "*śikṣārthī*", one who is desirous of learning, or "*śiṣya*", a student or disciple. The *maṭha-vāsī* strives to understand the desire of his guru by rendering menial service unto his lotus feet. To fulfill the guru's desire is the only duty of a *maṭha-vāsī*.

One who is artificial or duplicitous in the service of the *ācārya* is not eligible to live in the *maṭha*. Such artificial behavior leaves the religion of *brahmacarya*, *sannyāsa*, *vānapraṣṭha*, and *gṛhastha* unprotected. The extent that one is actually a *maṭha-vāsī* can be determined by one's pure love and devotion to the lotus feet of the *ācārya* of the *maṭha*.

In spite of unbearable troubles, severe calamities, and immense humiliation, a real *maṭha-vāsī* will never give up the service of his guru. He never feels discouraged to see the reluctance of the common masses of people of this universe to accept non-duplicious devotional service. Rather, he remains steady in his own *sādhana*. Considering himself lower than the straw in the street and being more tolerant than a tree, in order to satisfy the transcendental senses of the absolute truth such a devotee always engages in the *kīrtana* of Hari under the guidance of the *āśraya-vigraha*.

Āśraya-vigraha:

The technical term *āśraya-vigraha*, when used in Gaudiya Vaishnava literature, refers to a dear devotee of the Lord. This is because the quality of *bhakti*, love of God, has taken up residence (*āśraya*) in the body (*vigraha*) of such a dear devotee.

He knows that life after life the dust of his guru's lotus feet is his eternal position and his everything. He is not attached or detached to anyone in this material world. "So much danger may come. Everyone in this world may selfishly declare their independence. Still I will not give up my vow of serving Sri Guru and Gauranga." That kind of sincerity and determination will always be present in the heart of a real *maṭha-vāsī*.

A *maṭha-vāsī* should always consider himself as fully under the maintenance and protection of his guru. Considering himself lower than the straw in the street, his attitude is, "I am the property of my spiritual master." He is always hankering for mercy and is more tolerant than a tree. He is forgiving. He has neither enemies nor friends in this material world. He sees

everyone equally. He considers any kind of danger and distress to be the mercy of the Lord, and he remains undisturbed. Considering himself a wretched beggar, he is always praying for mercy. He is always free from desires for false prestige and position. Knowing that guru and Krishna reside in every living entity, he respects everyone accordingly. Carrying on his head the order of Sriman Mahaprabhu, he chants the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking himself lower than the straw in the street, being more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respect to others. In this state of mind, he chants the holy name of the Lord constantly.

Maṭha-vāsīs never speak gossip or frivolous talks unrelated to Krishna. They always practice *yukta-vairāgya*, engaging everything in the service of the Lord. They are loyal servants and are decorated with humility. They never consider themselves the lord of anyone, but rather see everyone as guru. They always recognize the sincere service attitude of those *vaiṣṇavas* who are rendering non-duplicious service at the lotus feet of Sri Guru as the *hlādinī-kṛpā-vṛtti*, the mercy of the Lord's internal potency. As such, the *maṭha-vāsī* offers sincere respects to them while he himself, decorated with a mood of non-duplicious humble servitorship, always remains eager to follow the ideal constant service attitude exhibited by his spiritual master. He never criticizes or talks about others. Since his heart is always strongly searching for the absolute truth, the faultfinding nature does not touch him. Concentrating his mind upon the Lord, he is always chanting the holy name of Krishna. He is determined to give up materialistic association and is always associating with and hankering for more association of devotees. He remains in anticipation of the mercy of the Lord.

Based on his internal realization, he has strong faith that there is no recourse other than getting the mercy of *sādhu-guru*. A beggar of mercy, he is always engaged in loving service with his body, mind and speech. He always offers respect to others with folded hands. The consideration, *āmāra samān hīna nāhi e saṁsāre* — "no one in this world is more fallen than myself," naturally arises in his heart. He never forgets the lotus feet of the Lord even for a fraction of moment. In happiness or distress, good fortune or danger, in all situations, he is always absorbed in devotional service. He considers everyone his guru. He never acts for himself. He is always engaged in the service of guru and Krishna. Sri Guru and Gauranga are the objects of his love, and he considers them his own. He is affectionate and clever. *kṛṣṇa kṛpā karibena dr̥ḍha kari jāne* — "He has full faith that Krishna will shower his mercy." He is always connected with his worshipable deity.

Describing Srila Raghunath Das Goswami, Shivananda Sena said (Cc. *antya* 6.253):

*rātri-dina kare teṅho nāma-saṅkīrtana
kṣaṇa-mātra nāhi chāḍe prabhura caraṇa*

“He chants the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* all day and night. He never gives up the shelter of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu even for a moment.”

There is a difference between the *maṭha-vāsī* and the *niṣkiñcana nirjana-vāsī* — those who have no material possessions and stay in a solitary place, or the *vrkṣatala-vāsī* — those living under the shade of a tree. The *maṭha-vāsī* follows certain rules and regulations under the guidance of a bona-fide *ācārya* and thereby obtains the most auspicious thing. The *niṣkiñcana nirjana-vāsī* does not act under anyone’s guidance.

The *maṭha* is a spiritual hospital. To gain eternal benefit, various types of *bhava-rogi*s, patients suffering from the disease of conditioned life, stay there. One should not consider that all of the patients are in the same category. Among the *bhava-rogi*s, some are suffering from chronic disease, some are getting better, and some are almost well. So one should not consider them all on same level. In this hospital there is a *sādhu-vaidya*, spiritual doctor, and he has assistants. One should not consider this doctor and his assistant as patients. The diet and accommodation for a patient is not the same as that of a healthy man. So one should not become bewildered seeing different arrangements in the hospital. To advance spiritually, one should follow the prescribed rules and regulations under the guidance of the spiritual doctor.

Also, one should not become concerned seeing patients act independently, fall down, and increase their sickness. Rather, one should always strive his best to get mercy and act for ones own self-purification. The *maṭha-vāsī*’s attitude should be: “No one knows when and to whom Sri Guru Gauranga will shower their mercy. Any patient may achieve the mercy, become healthy, and attain *sevādhikāra*, the qualification to serve, before me. So I should not criticize or find fault with others.”

If a *maṭha-vāsī* unknowingly makes a mistake in his *seva*, he should not be criticized. Rather, with good intention, with simplicity and sweet words, one should instruct him, and if necessary teach him by one’s own exemplary behavior. Although out of ignorance *maṭha-vāsī*s may have committed offenses, still they should never be punished with beatings, harsh words, or neglect.

One who has even a drop of genuine love for the *ācārya* will never neglect, disregard, hate, commit violence to, or envy any *maṭha-vāsī*, nor will he tolerate seeing such things done by others. He never considers the *kaniṣṭha* devotees to be sinners. Rather, with affection and compassion he offers them advice to evoke their attachment to the transcendental service of Sri Guru

and Gauranga. Externally he may play the part of a teacher, but internally he is never deviated from the consciousness that he is a student, a servant of his spiritual master. He never falls down from that position.

Every *maṭha-vāsī* should be well behaved and compassionate to other *maṭha-vāsī*s in all respects. “The *maṭha-sevaks*, devotees serving in the temple, are not under me, nor are they my assistants. I’ll not see them in that way.” This is the attitude of a genuine *maṭha-vāsī*. The *maṭha-vāsī*s help each other, and in *iṣṭagoṣṭhi* they discuss together about topics of Krishna. In this way, their enthusiasm for service increases. They are all *sevāra-janya sevā karena* — serving for the sake of service. And for the satisfaction of Sri Guru, they help each other. They do not possess even a tinge of desire for their own *lābha-pūjā-pratiṣṭhā* — profit, adoration and distinction.

The principal of subordination is the backbone of living in the *maṭha*. The daily behavior of a *maṭha-vāsī* should be one of subordination. A *maṭha-vāsī* must be very humble and a beggar of mercy. After offering *bhoga* to Sri Guru Gauranga, the *maṭha-vāsī* accepts the remnants as *mahā-prasādam*. A *maṭha-vāsī* never thinks for his personal benefit. He is always busy giving pleasure to Sri Guru and Gauranga. He considers the activities of *nava-vidha-bhakti*, nine types of devotional service, as the work of Sri Guru Gauranga and he performs these activities for their pleasure.

A *maṭha-vāsī* is fixed in chanting the holy name. With his body, mind and speech all free from duplicity, he renders service for the *maṭha* and does *sādhu-saṅga* daily. He must develop a taste for hearing *hari-kathā*. Unless he is behaving properly, he should not preach. He must have attraction for the words of his guru; then he will repeat what he has heard. Hearing the disciple repeat those words, simple-hearted persons will become attracted. A *maṭha-vāsī* must be intimate with and have love for *sādhu-guru*. He must perform service to guru and the *vaiṣṇavas* with sincerity. He must be fixed and one-pointed. He should be free from doubts and very determined. In all circumstances and times, he acts to preserve proper etiquette. The residents of the *maṭha* engage themselves 24 hours a day in service to the Lord and show proper respect to each other. This observance of proper etiquette is not limited to only higher persons but is displayed for lower persons as well. Desiring auspiciousness for them, the *sannyāsī*s and *vānaprasthas*, with proper etiquette, display to the *brahmacārī*s and neophytes how to perform service to *hari-guru-vaiṣṇava* in a natural meditative way with love, affection, and respect. Conversely, the neophyte devotees offer respect to the *sannyāsī*s and *vānaprasthas* with natural faith and affectionate proper etiquette. This displays their attachment to the lotus feet of *hari-guru-vaiṣṇava*. Thinking, “This is a



Painting attributed to Motilal Pal, c. late 1920s

Kīrtana of Mahaprabhu and his associates

respected servant of my gurudeva," the *maṭha-vāsī* honors those householder devotees who have taken shelter at the lotus feet of Sri Guru. Having faith in them, he displays proper etiquette towards them.

A resident of the *maṭha* never looks for the faults of others. He accepts only the good qualities in others and never sees others' faults. A *maṭha-vāsī* offers respect to everyone in the world. He endeavors to be good instead of great. He prays for the mercy of Sri Guru and Gauranga to help him give up his attitude of being a controller and to increase his humility. Humility and the mood of service is the ornament of a *maṭha-vāsī*. The *maṭha-vāsīs* speak *hari-kathā* according to their individual qualifications, and they are always attentive to behaving properly. They are not disturbed upon receiving respect or disrespect, happiness or distress. Although from time to time his mind may become disturbed, still a *maṭha-vāsī* remains fully dependent on mercy and continues his service. Whatever service he performs he does so steadily and enthusiastically. In the initial stage, he does not find *sādhu-guru* to be like-minded association, at that time he associates with whomever among the *maṭha* residents that he has some liking for.

A *maṭha-vāsī* deeply understands that there is not even a tinge of despair in *bhakti*. Despair occurs on the mental platform, whereas spiritual life is full of tremendous hope. His attitude is:

*āmāra prabhura prabhu śrī gaura-sundara
e baḍa bharasā cite dhari nirantara*

The Lord of my master is the beautiful Gauranga.
I always keep this conviction in my heart.

A resident of the *maṭha* has ideal character. He is fully surrendered and completely dependent on mercy. If anyone harms him, he will do good in return. He is praying for mercy at every moment. He hears *hari-kathā* very attentively and carries it in his heart. For the pleasure of his *iṣṭadeva*, the beloved deity of his heart, he only speaks about subjects of his beloved Lord before faithful persons. At every moment he is careful to avoid committing offenses. He is absorbed in service and is completely detached from both sense gratification and renunciation. He considers himself to be the most fallen and begs mercy from others. His consciousness will be:

*jagāi mādhāi haite muñi se pāpiṣṭha
purīṣera kiṭa haite muñi se laghiṣṭha*

I am more sinful than Jagai and Madhai and even lower than the worms in the stool.

*mora nāma śune yei tāra puṇya kṣaya
mora nāma laya yei tāra pāpa haya*

Anyone who hears my name loses the results of his pious activities. Anyone who utters my name becomes sinful.

*emana nirghṛṇa more kebā kṛpā kare
eka nityānanda vinu jagat bhitare*

Who in this world but Nityananda could show His mercy to such an abominable person as me? 🍌

— Translated by Sri Madhavendu Das and Sri Krishna Balaram Das. From *Nadiyā-prakāśera Prabandhāvalī (dvitīya-khaṇḍa)*. Gaudiya Mission. Bagbazar. Calcutta. 2001. Pages 288 to 291.

In this article, we pose certain commonly asked questions about institutions and spiritual life, with answers from the teachings of Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja.

TWO CONSIDERATIONS

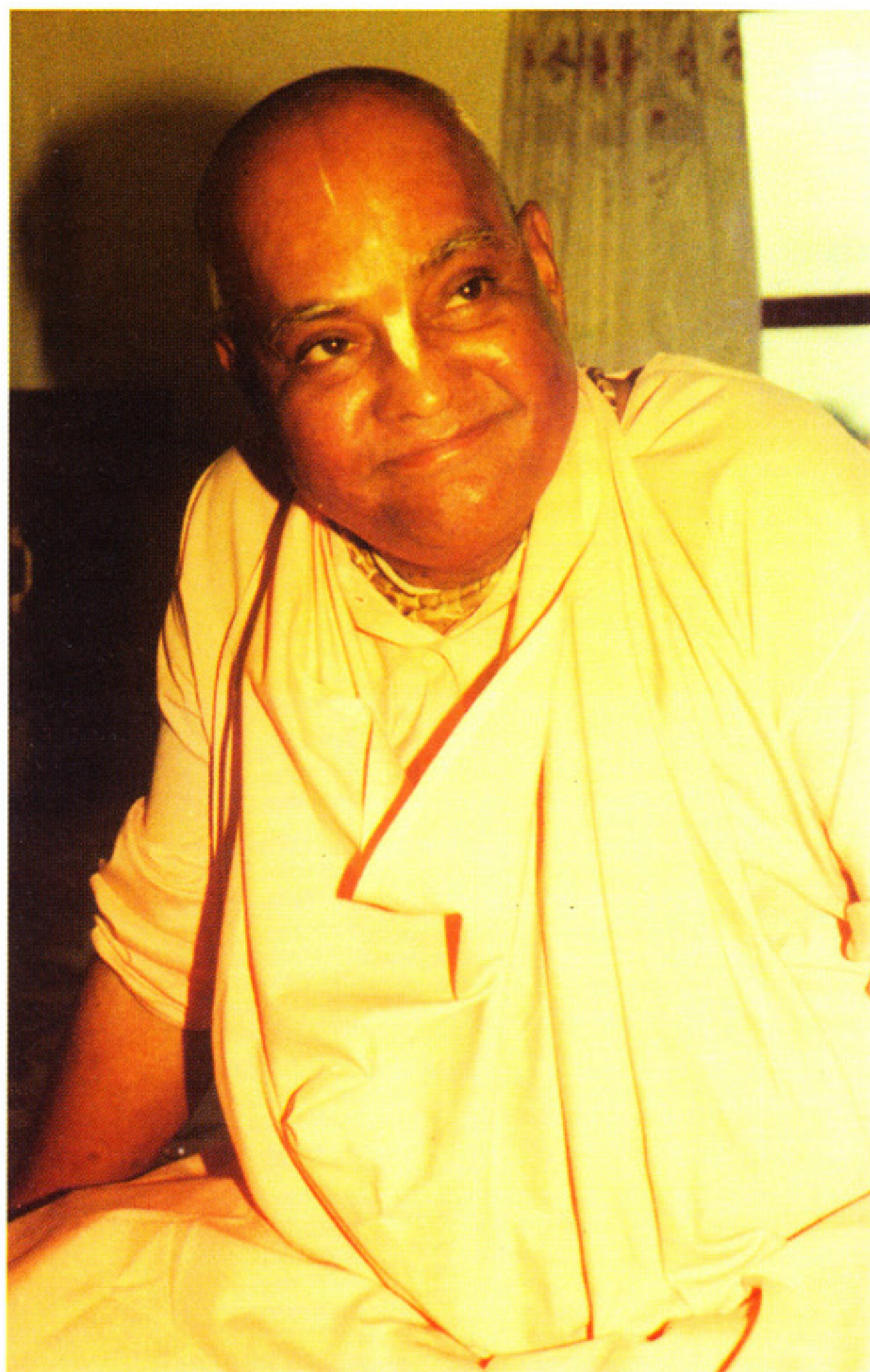
Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Should we accept someone as an authority if they have material attachments and are not situated on the spiritual platform?

We accept because we are in a society. Someone may be GBC of some region of the world, so according to the management system he is authority. But by the spiritual system, unless I am convinced, I cannot accept him as authority. That is up to me. I have independence. It is my choice. As far as the management system goes, I accept him because he is GBC. But as far as spiritual things go, unless I am convinced I cannot accept. "Please excuse me." Acceptance of someone as a spiritual authority should not be forced or compulsory. That is a principle. For me to accept someone as a spiritual authority my heart must be convinced, because it is based on the desire of the heart. It is not an external thing. It is internal. Acting in that way is not offensive. I am not disregarding him. He is a *vaiṣṇava*, so I offer him obeisances. We pay obeisances to all *vaiṣṇavas*, regardless if they are *kaniṣṭha*, *madhyama*, or whatever. That is etiquette. But accepting someone as spiritual master, that is something else. (Evening *darśana*, Bhubaneswar, 1990)

Is there any harm in going and hearing from a saintly person outside of the guru's mission?


My opinion is that Srila Prabhupada will not be happy with these senior devotees going outside of ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada has said that everything is in his books. If you try to understand this, then by the mercy of Srila Prabhupada it will all be made clear to you. It is a fact that if an elevated *vaiṣṇava* is there, then one should go and take his association. There is no harm in that. But in this case, there is a danger



that the discipline in our organization will be adversely affected. If the leaders are going outside of ISKCON, how will we be able to maintain discipline? Srila Prabhupada has formed this society, and this threat to his society will only cause him pain. With this consideration, they should not go. That will only lead to indiscipline in our society.

Two sides are there — philosophical and organizational. On the organizational side, this practice is not good. Therefore, we have this GBC body, which makes so many rules to maintain the discipline of the members of our society. But how will we be able to keep discipline now? No one will listen. "If the leaders are going, why should we listen. We will also go". This will create only trouble. (Letter dated 3 November 1994)

It is often said that a genuine guru must be a pure devotee. Understanding that, how do we see that today so many persons are accepting the position of guru?

Two sides are there: the spiritual side and the organizational side. This is an organizational matter. Unless they are allowed to accept disciples, the organization will collapse. There will be no cooperation. Only quarrelling and dissension. "Oh, he wants to be guru. All right, you do this thing." Anyhow, maintain the society. This is an organizational matter. They want to be gurus. They want some position. This is all material and nothing else. They are doing some work for the society. They are general heads, managing the zone. So how else can a worldwide organization be managed? (Evening *darśana* in Bhubaneswar, 4 July 1992) 

Opposite page: *Bankim Raya, Radha and Jahnava Devi (on his right). These deities are said to have been established by Lord Nityananda Prabhu at his birthplace in Ekachakra Gram. It is said that at the end of his manifest pastimes, Lord Nityananda entered into the deity of Bankim Raya.*



Swallowing the Forest Fire

The tenth canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, chapters seventeen and nineteen, relate two different pastimes of how Krishna saved his devotees from forest fires. The following account is adapted primarily from "Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead" by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and is supplemented with extracts and commentaries from different Vedic literatures and ācāryas. Because of these pastimes, Krishna has become celebrated as agni-pāna — "the swallower of fire, and dāvāgni-śamana — "the extinguisher of a forest fire."

Sanatan Goswami describes these līlās in Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta (2.5.131):

tīre hradasyāsya davānalena yā
krīḍādbhutā muñja-vane 'py ato 'dhikā
bhāṇḍīra-saṅkrīḍana-cāturī ca sā
jyeṣṭhasya kīrtiyai racitā tanotu śam

The pastime of the forest fire took place on the shore of the Kaliya lake, and a pastime with an even greater fire took place in the forest known as Munja. In the Bhandirea forest the clever arrangements for sporting magnified the glories of Balaram, the Lord's elder brother. May all these pastimes expand our good fortune.

Fire by Davanala Kund

One day, after Krishna had gone out to herd the cows, the *vrajavāsīs* observed various evil omens and went searching for him. They found Krishna, the essence of their lives, in the water of the lake in the Yamuna known as Kaliya-hrada. Seeing that Krishna was captured in the coils of the Kaliya serpent, in great anxiety the *vrajavāsīs* prepared to enter the water with him. Knowing Krishna's power, Balaram stopped them. Krishna then danced on the hoods of the giant serpent and benedicted both Kaliya and his wives. When Krishna emerged from the water, the *vrajavāsīs* embraced him with great happiness. Since it was almost night and all the inhabitants of Vrindavan, including the cows and calves, were very tired, they decided to take rest there on the riverbank. While they were resting in the middle of the night, suddenly there was a great forest fire that seemed like it would soon devour all of them. As soon as they felt the warmth of the fire, they immediately took shelter of Krishna, the Supreme

Pahari painting from the Kangra valley. Unknown artist, c. 1780-1800. *Bhāgavatam* illustration. Found in the National Museum, New Delhi.





Krishna swallows the forest fire

Personality of Godhead, although he was playing just like their child. They began to say, "O dear Krishna! O dear Balaram, reservoir of all strength! Please try to save us from this all-devouring and devastating fire. We have no shelter other than you. This fire will swallow us all!" Being compassionate upon his own townspeople, Krishna immediately swallowed up the whole forest fire and saved them. This was not impossible for Krishna, because he is unlimited. He has unlimited power to do anything he desires.

Kamsa's Friend?

This pastime is also related in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* and in the *Garga-saṁhitā*. The details are basically the same, except that *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (4.19.169) describes that the fire started just after Krishna chastised Kaliya and emerged from the water. *Garga-saṁhitā* (2.12.29) says that the forest fire that erupted after Krishna's chastisement of Kaliya was caused by the natural friction of bamboo, and it came in the middle of the night.

In his *Daśama-ṭippanī* commentary on the tenth canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Srila Sanatan Goswami mentions some interesting points about this pastime. In his purport to *Bhāg.* 10.17.21, he says that some say that the fire was a friend of Kaliya's who assumed this form, and others say that he was a demon who was a follower of Kamsa.

In his *Sārārtha-darśini* commentary Srila Viswanath Chakravarti elaborates on the *Bhāgavatam* 10.17.20 as follows:

The *vrajavāsīs* looked at Krishna with unblinking eyes, and said, "Let us rest here tonight. By good fortune Kaliya has gone, but if he comes back to take revenge then all of us can fight him with clubs." The *vrajavāsīs* situated themselves at another place on the bank of the Yamuna due to fear of the poisonous water in Kaliya's lake.

Dāvānala means "forest fire". The place where Krishna swallowed this first forest fire is known as Davanala Kund. Davanala Kund is about a half kilometer east from the Vrindavan *parikramā* path and just south of the railroad tracks. Srila Narahari Chakravarti has described in *Bhakti-ratnākara* 5.3757:

*ei dāvānala-sthāna ye kare darśana
saṁsāra-dārāgni haite haya vimocana*

Whoever sees this place known as Davanala Kund is relieved from the fire of material life.

Fire in the Munjatavi Forest

About fifteen kilometers north of Vrindavan is the forest known as Munjatavi, which is within a bigger forest area known as Ishikatavi. *Muñja* is a type of reed or sedge-like grass. It is sometimes used to make baskets and the flowers are used for ornamentation. "*Aṭavi*" means forest. The Munjatavi forest was a place full of

muñja grass. One day while Krishna, Balaram and their friends were engaged in pastimes in the Bhandira forest, the cows, being unobserved, began to wander off on their own, entering farther and farther into the deepest part of the forest, allured by fresh grasses. The goats, cows and buffalo traveled from one forest to another and entered the forest known as Ishikatavi. This forest was full of green grass. But when they entered, they saw that there was a forest fire, and they began to cry. When Balaram and Krishna, along with their friends, could not find their animals, they became very much aggrieved. They began to trace the cows by following their footprints, as well as the path of eaten grass. All of the boys were fearing that their very means of livelihood, the cows, were now lost. When searching out the cows in the forest, they themselves became very tired and thirsty. Soon, however, they heard the crying of their cows. Krishna began to loudly call the cows by their respective names. Upon hearing Krishna calling, the cows immediately replied with joy. But by this time the forest fire had surrounded all of them, and the situation appeared very fearful. Srila Sanatan Goswami comments that some say the forest fire was a friend of the demon Pralambha. The flames increased as the wind blew very quickly, and it appeared that everything movable and immovable would be devoured. All the cows and the boys became very frightened, and they looked toward Balaram and Krishna the way a dying man looks at the picture of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They said, "My dear Krishna! My dear Krishna! You and Balaram are very powerful. We are burning from the heat of this blazing fire. Let us take shelter of your lotus feet. We know that you can protect us from this great danger. Krishna, we are your intimate friends. It is not right that we should suffer in this way. We are all completely dependent on you, and you are the knower of all religious life. We do not know anyone except you."

"Close Your Eyes"

Hearing these pitiful words from his friends, Krishna told them, "Just close your eyes and do not be afraid." Then Krishna, the supreme mystic, the powerful Personality of Godhead, immediately swallowed up all the flames of the fire. The cows and boys were thus saved from imminent danger.

Sanatan Goswami says that Krishna asked the boys to close their eyes because if they saw him swallowing the fire, out of love they would feel concerned for his safety, and would have entered the fire to protect him and been harmed. Some *vrajabāsīs* say that there is another reason why Krishna told the cowherd boys to close their eyes. They say that Krishna was thinking to

Krishna: Supreme Monarch of Mystic Powers

Srila Sanatan Goswami's
Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava, texts 206-207

*jaya munjātavī-bhraṣṭa-mārga-paṣvārti-nāśaka
dāvāgni-bhīta-gopāla-dṛṇ-nimīlana-deśaka*

O Lord Krishna, all glories unto you! When the cows became distressed and lost their way in the tall grasses of the Munjatavi forest, you removed their distress. When the cowherd boys became afraid of the blazing forest fire, you instructed them to close their eyes.

*munjātavayāgni-śamana pītōlvana-davānala
bhāṇḍīrāpita-go-gopa-yogādhiṣa namo 'stu te*

O Lord Krishna! You swallowed the great forest fire in the tall grasses, and the cows and cowherd boys in Bhandiravana forest considered that you were certainly the supreme monarch of all mystic powers. I offer respectful obeisances unto you.

himself, "Previously when the cowherd boys saw me eat dirt, they told Mother Yasoda and she became very angry. What will she say if they tell her that I ate fire?" Thinking thus, Krishna told them to close their eyes.

Out of fear, the boys were almost unconscious, but when they regained their consciousness and opened their eyes, they saw that they were again in the Bhandira forest with Krishna, Balaram and the cows. They were astonished to see that they were completely free from the attack of the blazing fire and that the cows were saved. They secretly thought that Krishna must not be an ordinary boy but some demigod.

Srila Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur has commented that when the boys became fearful at seeing the fire, they thought, "Krishna knows the means of counteracting fire, poison and other fearful things by using gems, mantras, magic and the like. These things, however, cannot be carried out without secrecy. Thus, even though we are all here, if we simply close our eyes, Krishna will have the privacy he requires to do his magic."

Tasty Drink

Sanatan Goswami says that by Krishna's potency, the fire became like a single mouthful of a beverage. Viswanath confirms this by mentioning a story that Krishna was very thirsty at this time. Therefore, the forest fire, being both afraid and incapable of going against the will of Krishna, turned into a very cool and tasty drink. Since he is the

supreme controller of all mystic power, the fire became a small drop on Krishna's tender hand for him to drink.

Viswanath continues to comment that based on Sukadev Goswami's words in *Bhāgavatam* 10.19.12, some say that Yogamaya appeared at this time and she took the fire from Krishna's hand and swallowed it. However, this interpretation gives sorrow to the truthful devotee. In the word (in verse 10.19.12) *yogādhiṣo*; "yoga" refers to *yogamāyā* and "adhīṣa" means the master. Therefore the proper meaning is that Krishna, the master of Yogamaya, swallowed the fire in his mouth.

In *Saṅkalpa-kalpadruma* (1.50), Srila Jiva Goswami says that it was Krishna himself who created the forest fire for the following reason:

*yas tadā dahanam goṣṭha-premṇākṛṣṭa-vivecanaḥ
premṇas tasya parikṣārtham iva drāg apibat prabhuh*

Krishna quickly swallowed the forest fire that he had expertly created to test Vraja's love for him.

Party Spirit Amongst Vaiṣṇavas

Some persons think that quarrel and party spirit amongst the *vaiṣṇavas* is a new development. However, considering the following statement written in 1874 by F.S. Growse, an Englishman who served the British government in the mid-1800s as the magistrate and collector for the area of Mathura, it seems to be an old problem. While staying in Mathura, Mr. Growse fluently learned several languages, including Sanskrit and the local Vraja-bhasa. His "*Mathura — A District Memoir*", contains many in-depth, sympathetic and fascinating descriptions of the Gaudiya Vaishnava temples, literature and culture in the Vraja area. Observing the *vaiṣṇavas* in Vrindavan, Mr Growse wrote:

... precisely as in Europe, so in India, no two men of the reformed sects, however immaterial their doctrinal differences, can be induced to amalgamate; each forms a new caste more bigoted and exclusive than any of those which it was intended to supersede, while the founder has become a deified character, for whom it is necessary to erect a new niche in the very Pantheon he had labored to destroy. The only point upon which all of the *vaiṣṇava* sects theoretically agree is the reverence with which they profess to regard the *Bhagavad-gītā* as the authoritative exposition of their creed. — "*Mathura — A District Memoir*". Page 191.



Modern day Davanala Kund in Vrindavan where Krishna swallowed the first forest fire

While describing Mahaprabhu's visit to the place of this pastime, Srila Murari Gupta offers another purpose behind this *līlā* in *Śrī Caitanya-carita* (4.7.11):

*atraiva vatsa-pālānām dāvāgneḥ parimocanam
kutaṁ nanda-kumāreṇa bhakta-duḥkhāpahāriṇā*

At this spot, while the boys of Vraja were engaged in protecting the calves, Nanda Kumar delivered them unharmed from the flames of a forest-fire. He did this because he is celebrated for his promise to relieve his devotees from all distress.


Sectarianism

In *Kṛṣṇa Saṁhitā* (texts 4.29 and 8.22), Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode draws an interesting parallel here:

*paraspara vivādātmā dāva-vahnir bhayaṅkaraḥ
bhakṣito hariṇā sāksād vraja-dhāma-śubhārthinā*

The formidable forest fire, the form of quarrel amongst *vaiṣṇava sampradāyas*, was swallowed by the Lord in order to protect the land of Vraja.

sampradāya-virodho 'yam dāvānalo vicintyate

The eleventh obstacle of the *vaiṣṇavas* is sectarianism, which takes the shape of the forest fire. Due to sectarianism, a person cannot accept anyone outside of his own group as a *vaiṣṇava*, and as a result he faces many obstacles in finding a guru and associating with devotees. Therefore, extinguishing the forest fire is most important. 

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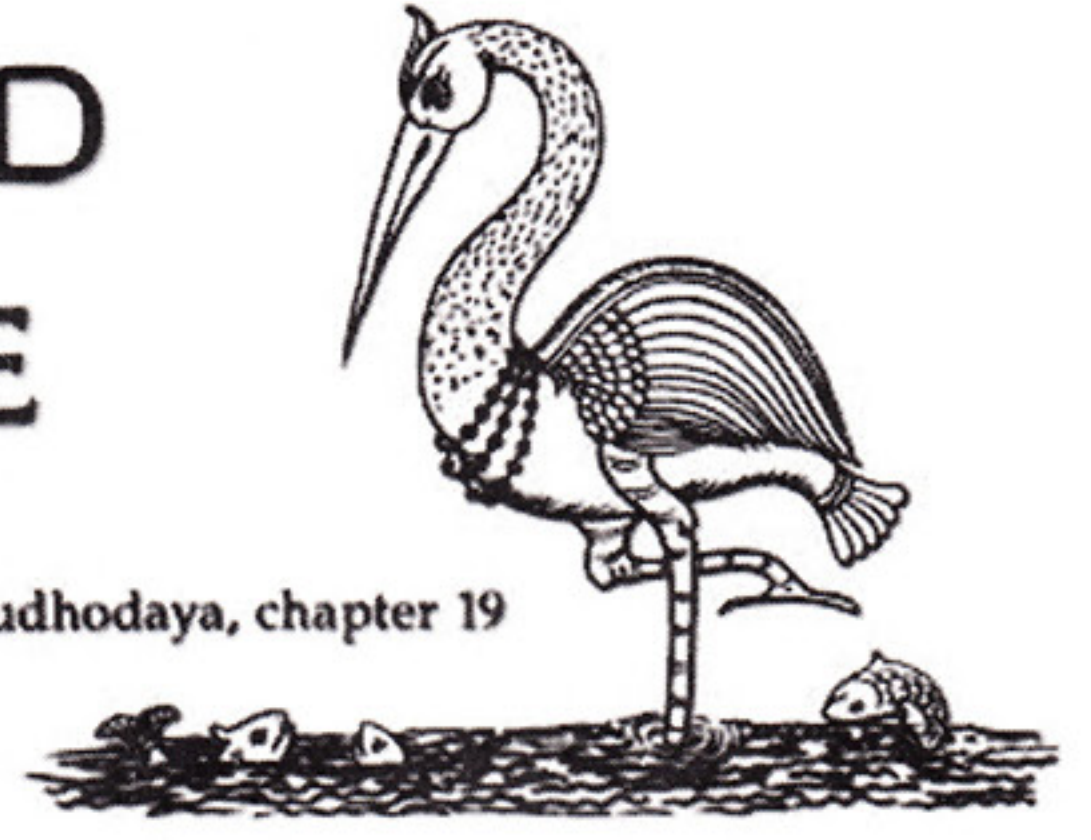




PRIDE AND PRETENSE



Śrī Hari Bhakti-sudhodaya, chapter 19



*dambhākṛāntāscaranty ete sadācāra-ratā iva
svārthaika-sādhakā hy ete muni-veśā naṭā iva*

Deceitful and hypocritical persons may exhibit a high standard of external behavior. Motivated only for the fulfillment of their selfish desires, they wear the dress of saintly persons like actors upon a stage. (54)

*dāmbhikā bahula-dveṣāscaritaiḥ ślāghitā janaiḥ
samrambhiṇo 'ntar nihsārāḥ kṛtrimebha-nibhā dvijāḥ*

O brahmāṇas! Such hypocritical persons are jealous of others and are always busy planning evil works. In spite of this, the people in general praise them. But like an elephant made of wood, they cannot accomplish anything worthwhile. (55)

*vistārya vāgurām vyādho mṛgānākāṅkṣate yathā
prapañcya sat-kriyām evam dāmbhikā dhaninām dhanam*

As a hunter spreads a net, desiring to capture a deer, in the same way these hypocrites capture the wealth of rich men by spreading a net of ritualistic activities. (56)

*haranti dasyavo 'ṭavyām vimohy āstrair nṛṇām dhanam
pavitrair atitikṣnāgrai grāmeṣv evam vaka-vratāḥ*

As plunderers take away the wealth of men in the forest by threatening them with sharp weapons, similarly, the charlatan meditators take away the wealth of people in the villages by the sharp-pointed kuśa grass used in the ritualistic ceremonies that they perform. [The term used here for charlatan meditator is "vaka-vratāḥ", which means "the vow of the crane". A crane appears to perform great austerities by standing very still on one leg for a long period of time, but its only desire is to catch fish.] (57)

*prakaṭam patitaḥ śreyān ya ekoyātyadhaḥ svayam
vaka-vṛttiḥ svayam pāpaḥ pātayaty aparān api*

One who commits a sin openly falls down alone, but those who act like the crane make many people fall. (58)

*channa-paṅke sthala-dhiyā patanti bahavo nanu
baidāla-vratiko 'py evam saṅga-sambhaṣaṇārccanaiḥ*

Just as many fall into quicksand along the riverbank, mistaking it to be dry land, similarly, many spiritual aspirants are doomed by following these hypocrites, for they are like a cat who recites a vow to be a saintly vegetarian in order to attract the worship of the mice. (59)

*ātmanai vopahasitā mithyā-dhyāna-samādhibhiḥ
nirlajjā vañcayantīman lokam dambhena vañcitāḥ*

Although they make fools of themselves by pretending to perform meditation and trance, being without shame they cheat the people of this world through hypocrisy. (60)

*ko jayed abhimānam ca mahatām api durjayam
janānā-kramya bahudhā sthitam śreyobdhi vāḍabam*

Who can conquer pride? It is unconquerable even by great personalities. Having attacked in many ways, the fire of pride resides within men, continuously destroying the auspiciousness in their lives. (61)

*kulena vidyayārthena rūpa-khyāti-valaiḥ pṛthak
abhimānena bahudhā bhava-bhāk ko 'tra mucyate*

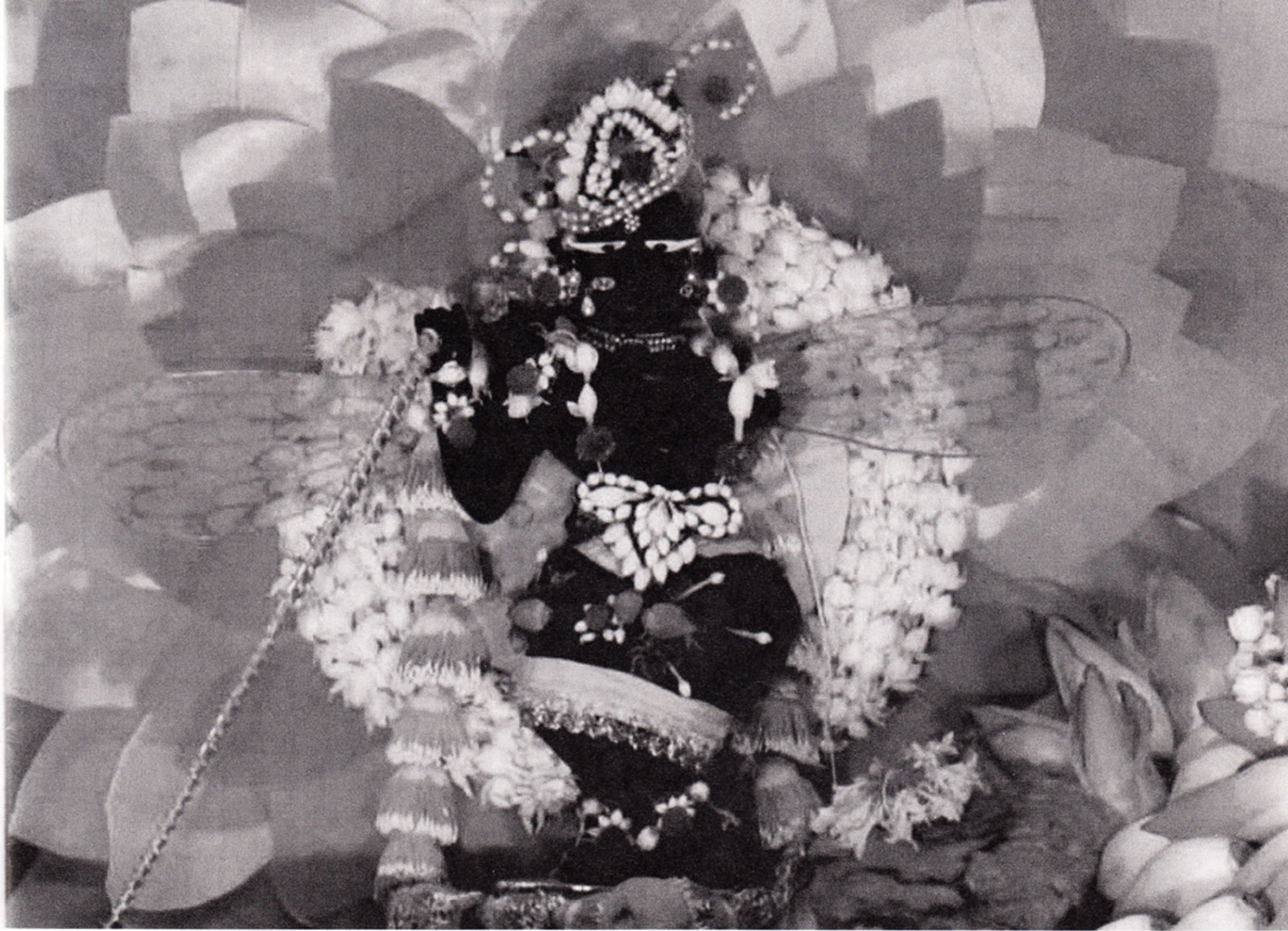
Pride may be due to one's caste, scholarship, knowledge, wealth, beauty, fame, strength or any similar quality. After experiencing it, who here in this world can be free from its clutches? (62)

*dhanābhimāne tyakte 'pi guṇinā kenacit sadā
guṇī tapasvy aham ceti punar mānaḥ pravartate*

One may give up the pride of possessing wealth, but the pride of thinking oneself to be the possessor of good qualities or of being a great renunciate will continue. (64)

*atha kaścin na sahate stutiṁ māna-svabhāva-vit
stutyo 'py astuti-kāmas tvam ity uktaḥ satu tuṣyati*

Understanding the pitfalls of pride, some people do not like to hear others speaking their praise. Yet if someone says, "You are so humble that you don't want to hear your own glorification," they become very pleased to hear that. (65)



Radharaman dressed as a bumblebee

*uktābhimāna-tyakto 'pi yoga-mārga-rataḥ śamī
tṛpyate mānavān eva brahma-jñō 'smīty aho punaḥ*

What a wonder it is that although a yogi who has acquired tranquility of mind may have given up all egotism and vanity from his heart, yet still he may feel proud, thinking, "I am a knower of the truth." (66)

*sarvābhimāna-tyakto 'tha niḥsaṅgah kaścīd ātmavān
nirmamo 'smīti tasyāpi bhūyo-mānaḥ pravartate*

Some persons have managed to give up all kinds of pride and worldly attachments, yet pride still affects them, as they think, "I have no material attachments." (67)

*tyaktaḥ ko nāma mānena kliṣṭo dīno 'pi bhikṣukaḥ
bhikṣā-bhāgyaṁ mamāny ebhya bahv astīti ca mānavān*

Therefore, who can be totally free from false ego? Even a poor beggar whose suffering knows no bounds still feels pride, and thinks, "I have a right to beg and I am a deserving person to receive charity and gifts." (68)

*iti kāmādibhir doṣair janā vyākulitāntarāḥ
kliṣyanti deha-bhinnārtha vārtāmātre 'py akovidāḥ*

Thus, people suffer from this fault, stimulated by lust, anger, greed, etc. They are foolish and cannot discuss subject matters other than the gross material body. (69) 🌸

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GURU-SEVA IS EVERYTHING

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda
Swami Maharaja

A lecture in Towaco, New Jersey, 24 June 1994

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (1.2.10) it is said:

*kāmasya nendriya-prītir lābho jīveta yāvatā
jīvasya tattva-jijñāsā nārtho yaś ceḥa karmabhiḥ*

What is inquiry and what subject should one inquire about? *jīvasya tattva-jijñāsā nārtho yaś ceḥa karmabhiḥ* — Don't inquire about the comforts and pleasures of the body, material enjoyment. These are not inquiries. "How can I fulfill my material desires?" "How can I enjoy?" Don't inquire about these things. *kāmasya nendriya-prītir lābho jīveta yāvatā* — "What is the purpose of my survival?" "What is the goal of my life?" "What is the purpose of the rarely achieved human birth?" "What is the supreme attainment?" That is inquiry. All of your activities should center on this *tattva-jijñāsā*. This is inquiry about *tattva*.

Srila Sanatan Goswami is a *mahājana*: *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* — The *mahājanas* have shown us the path, so we follow in their footprints. When he met Sriman Mahaprabhu, what did he inquire? He asked, "Who am I?" "What is my real identification?" "Why have I been afflicted with the three *tapas*, *ādhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika*, *ādhidaiivika*?" "What shall I do so that I will achieve all auspiciousness?" "What is the goal of my life, and what shall I do to achieve that goal?" "What is my duty?" "What is my necessity?" These are all inquiries, *tattva-jijñāsā*.

How to Find Guru

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

Bhagavad-gītā (4.34) describes who it is that knows the perfect, correct answers to your questions: *jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ* — He who is a seer of the truth. What is the truth? *advaya-jñāna-tattva vraje vrajendra-nandana* — "The absolute truth is Vrajendra-kumar, the son of Nanda Maharaja in Vrajabhumi." Only one who is a seer and knower of that truth can answer these questions perfectly. Otherwise, no one can answer them. One should meet such a guru. [Speaking to a devotee in the audience:] Do you know where he is available? Do you know? If you don't know, how can you get him? We don't know him. The conditioned soul has no knowledge



HDG A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada with his disciples, including Gour Govinda Swami, in Mayapur, 1974

about such a person. The conditioned soul has four defects — *bhrama*, *pramāda*, *karaṇāpaṭava*, and *vipralipsā* — the tendency to commit mistakes, the tendency to be illusioned, imperfect senses, and the tendency to cheat. *Karaṇāpaṭava* means defective senses. If you think, “Oh, I will see with my eyes, then I can accept.” Then you will be cheated. What you see is not correct. You have defective senses. Sitting in a fast-moving train, when you look at the trees outside, what do you see? The trees seem to be swiftly running backwards. Is it correct? You are moving and the trees are standing still, but you see a different thing. So how do you think, “I will see”? You have defective senses, so how can you see who is guru?

Devotee 1: Krishna will send him to us.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, that is a fact. Pray to Krishna, Krishna knows. “O Krishna, I am your servant. You are my eternal master. I want to serve you. How can I serve you? Where are you and where am I? I am rotting in this whirlpool of *māyā*, here in the material world. It is impossible on my part to serve you. Who is there to help take me to you? That is guru, your dear devotee, pure devotee. You know him. I don’t know him. You know who is dear to you. You know your own men. I don’t know. Please help me. I need such a person, and if I get him, surrender to him, render service to him, and if he is pleased, then he will introduce me to you. Otherwise, how can I be introduced to you?”

This is the only process — completely depend on Krishna. *kṛṣṇa-karuṇā-maya* — Krishna is very merciful. Krishna is the supreme father. We are his children. We have forgotten him. We have been put here in this dreadful ocean of material existence. But Krishna always thinks of us, how his children will come to him. He is very merciful. You have to cry and cry before him. “Krishna please help me! Please send one of your own very dear men who will take me to you!” Then Krishna will make that arrangement. Krishna’s arrangement is the perfect arrangement. If you make your own arrangement, then it is defective. You should completely depend on the mercy of Krishna and you should cry for it in your heart. Not that you will sleep soundly, snoring, “Yes, Krishna will send me.” No, you should feel restless, “How can I get? When will I get the mercy of Krishna that I’ll get his dear devotee, guru?” You should always be feeling restless and crying in your heart. If your head has caught on fire, can you sit still? No. You will run, “Where is water! Where is water!” You cannot sit still. In a similar condition, you should cry, “Oh Krishna, O Krishna! Please, please shower your mercy on me! Send your dear devotee to me! I am burning! I am burning here in a frying pan! The material world is *saṁsāra-dāvānala*, a blazing forest fire.”

Krishna will understand, “Yes. Now he is crying for me.” Krishna will make an arrangement. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*madhya* 19.151) says:

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bija*

This word “*bhāgyavān*” is very significant. After wandering through many, many universes, a *jīva* who is *bhāgyavān*, fortunate, by the mercy of Krishna gets guru. Then by the mercy of guru he gets Krishna. *Guru-kṛṣṇa-kṛpā* — by the mercy of Krishna and the mercy of guru, the seed of the *bhakti* creeper will be available. So according to one’s *bhāgya*, good fortune, guru is available. One who has good fortune gets Krishna’s mercy and gets a guru sent by Krishna. If one has bad fortune, how can he get Sri Guru?

When Maya Sends Guru

Krishna is the all-knowing person, *sarvajña*. He knows that different persons have different tastes and temperaments. They are not all equal. Your taste is not the same as his or his. All individuals differ. Krishna knows all these things. So accordingly, an arrangement is made. Whatever type of guru he needs, Krishna sends him that type of guru.

[Indicating a devotee sitting in the class:] This devotee needs a different type of guru. He wants to marry this lady. He has that taste. Since Krishna knows all these things, an arrangement will be made accordingly. That type of guru will be made available, “Yes. Nice lady. All right, marry.” But that is not the business of guru. That is Maya’s business. So Krishna says, “All right, Maya, you send a guru to him. He needs that kind of guru.”

But simplicity is Vaishnavism — *saratā ei vaiṣṇavatā*. Those who are simple have no other desire in their heart. “No, Krishna, I only want to serve you. I don’t want anything.” Mahaprabhu has said in *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (4):

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye
mama janmani janmaniśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi*

O Krishna, I don’t want material wealth from you. I don’t want material followers from you. *na sundarim kavitam* — I don’t want a beautiful woman from you. I don’t want liberation from you. *janmani janmaniśvare bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi* — Life after life, I only want to render loving service unto you, giving you all pleasure and happiness. I don’t want anything from you.

This is *niṣkapaṭa-sevā*. There is no duplicity in such service. Such a servant is *bhāgyavān*, a fortunate soul. He is completely dependent upon the Supreme Lord. He is simple-hearted, without duplicity. He doesn’t want anything from Lord Krishna. He only wants to give all pleasure and happiness to Krishna and wants

nothing for himself. Krishna becomes very much pleased with him. He is a fortunate soul, *bhāgyavān jīva*. Krishna appears before him as guru. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.2.23) states:

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām*

You cannot understand *ātmā-tattva*, *paramātmā-tattva*, by dint of material scholarship, learning, merit, or intelligence. *na bahunā śrutena* — you cannot understand it by hearing from many so-called orators, *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, *yogīs*, and pandits. They speak things that are very sweet to hear. One may then wonder, “How can I understand you, Krishna?” “How can I get you, Krishna?” “How can I serve you?” For one who only has this desire and nothing else, Krishna manifests before him as guru — *yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas*, *tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām*. Krishna is there in the heart as *paramātmā*. He understands, “Oh, he is crying for me.” So he assumes a body and appears as guru. *Tanu* means body. Such a person is a *bhāgyavān jīva*, a fortunate *jīva*. Krishna himself assumes a body and appears before him.

Cheater, not Teacher

But for those who are not simple-hearted, who have some crookedness, some other desires, Krishna knows, “Oh, he has some other desire.” [Pointing out different devotees in the class:] “He has some other desire.” “He also has some other desire.” Krishna knows all these things very well. So Krishna says, “Maya, you send a guru to these two. They are not simple-hearted. They are very crooked-hearted. They have other desires.” *Māyā* then makes an arrangement, and instead of getting real teachers they get cheaters.

But for those who are pure, without duplicity, simple-hearted, who have no other desire, who are crying in their heart how to get Krishna, how to understand him and serve him, Krishna himself appears before them as guru. This is how you can get guru.

How can you get strength? Here I am not talking about physical strength, but spiritual strength. How can you get it?

Devotee 1: By the combined mercy of guru and Krishna.

Gour Govinda Swami: If you serve guru with love and affection, you will get immense strength. *guru-sevā*, *nāma-sevā* — Service to guru and service to the holy name. If you can do that then you will get immense strength.

To whom does Krishna listen? One who says, “O Krishna, I don’t want anything from you, *na dhanam na janam na sundarīm kavitaīm*. I don’t want anything for my pleasure and happiness from you. I am completely

dependent on your will. Whatever you want from me, even if it is very, very difficult on my part to fulfill your will, still I want that. It is my happiness to fulfill your will.” Krishna listens only to his prayers.

Krishna is all-auspicious. There is nothing inauspicious in his arrangements, but we cannot understand them. We are on the bodily platform. We always want bodily comforts and enjoyment. Anything uncomfortable for the body — “Oh, I don’t want it.” Krishna will never listen to such a person. Krishna listens to one who with an open heart says, “O Krishna! I don’t want anything from you.” Bhaktivinode Thakur sings (*Gītāvalī* 12.4.1):

*prabhu tava pada-yuge mora nivedan
nāhi māgi deha-sukha, vidyā, dhana, jana*

O Lord, this is my prayer at your lotus feet. I don’t want *deha-sukha*. I don’t ask you for my bodily comfort, happiness, enjoyment. *vidyā, dhana, jana* — I don’t ask you for material education, material wealth or *jana*, material followers.

This is the same prayer Mahaprabhu gave us, *na dhana na jana*. Bhaktivinode sings, *nāhi māgi svarga, āra mokṣa nāhi māgi* — I don’t ask you for heavenly enjoyment, *svarga-sukha*. The demigods are having an abundance of enjoyment in the heavenly planets. I don’t want it. I am not asking for that. I also don’t want liberation. I am not asking for that.

*nija-karma-guna-doṣe je je janma pāi
janme janme jeno tava nāma-guna gāi*

Bhaktivinode continues (*Gītāvalī* 12.4.3), “I don’t want you to destroy the reactions to my karma. I am not asking for that. If according to my karma I deserve to take birth as a worm, *kīṭa*, let me have it. But, in that birth I also want to serve you. *janme janme jeno tava nāma-guna gāi* — Whatever birth I deserve according to my karma, in that birth I want to sing your holy name. I want to serve you.” Krishna only listens to devotees who pray in this mood. Otherwise, Krishna won’t listen. “Krishna give me a good wife.” “Krishna give me this, give me that.” Jumping from one branch to another branch. He will not listen to you.

How can one understand the Supreme Lord?

Devotee 2: By devotional service.

Gour Govinda Swami: Do you know what is devotional service? You have to hear, *śravaṇam*. You have to hear *bhagavān-kathā* with strong, unflinching faith from the lips of *sad-guru*, *śrī-guru*. You have to surrender yourself completely at the lotus feet of guru and hear. There is no other way to understand Krishna.

Great Pretenders

Devotee 2: Does such a guru have to be physically present?

Gour Govinda Swami: Oh yes. He is a person. He is not impersonal.

Kangra painting from the court of Gulfer, c. 18th century. Found in the Chandigarh Museum. Artist unknown.



Devotee 2: One may say, I'll read books and ...

Gour Govinda Swami: The books say, *śāstra* says, accept guru. You have to accept. You have to go there and do *praṇipāta*, *paripraśna* and *sevā* — surrender, serve, and inquire. Who will you inquire from, the book?

Devotee 2: Prabhupada initiated about 10,000 disciples, and perhaps 95% have gone. What is their destination?

Gour Govinda Swami: Why they have gone?

Devotee 2: No faith.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, they had no faith.

Devotee 1: So is Prabhupada still responsible for them?

Gour Govinda Swami: If you have no faith in guru, why will he be responsible for you? No faith in guru and not surrendered. They were great pretenders. They pretended that they were surrendered, but they were not surrendered. Otherwise why did they go away?

Devotee 1: If Prabhupada knew that this would happen, why did he initiate them?

Gour Govinda Swami: The devotee wanted it.

"I want it, father! I want it!"

"That's fire."

"No, I want it!"

The father says, "Hey! That is fire! Don't touch it!"

But the child, cries and says, "No, nooooo! I want it!"

"All right. Take it." What to do? Let him be burnt. Then he'll learn. Then he'll cry for help.

Complete surrender is needed — not partial, not conditional, and not artificial — at the lotus feet of guru, and hear *bhāgavata-kathā* from him with firm, unflinching faith. Then you'll understand Bhagavan. Otherwise, no.

And what is the most severe *nāma-aparādha*? Disobeying the order of the spiritual master. Who commits that *aparādha*? Krishna says:

*ācāryam mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guru*

Krishna says, *mām vijānīyān* — "Guru, *ācārya*, is as good as myself." Don't think of him as an ordinary mortal being — *na martya-buddhyāsūyeta*. He is as good as me. All the demigods are manifest in his person. Krishna says, "This is guru." But if one thinks, "How is it that he is not a mortal being, that he is as good as Krishna? I cannot see this. He feels hungry. He eats, as I eat. He feels tired, as I feel. He passes stool and urine, as I do. Sometimes he falls sick, as I do. How is it that he is not a mortal being? I cannot see it. I cannot accept it." One who thinks like that commits the most severe *nāma-aparādha*. He disobeys the guru's order.

He was asking, "Prabhupada initiated thousands of people. Where have they gone? Why did they go?" They committed this *aparādha*. They did not follow Prabhupada's order. They did not

understand Prabhupada. They did not understand him at all. Prabhupada said, "Chant sixteen rounds of names. Don't commit offense." Are they following the regulative principles very strictly? They are all breaking the regulative principles. And they are not chanting sixteen rounds. Because they are not surrendered, they have not accepted guru like that. They are thinking, "Oh he is like us. So we may break his order."

The material world is such a dangerous situation, *pade pade vipada* — at every step there is danger. We have unlimited material desires. They are dragging us, pulling us, and keeping us in the dreadful ocean of material existence. We have been drowning, drowning, drowning! Who is there to save us, to protect us in such a precarious, dangerous situation? *Guru-pāda-padma*, the lotus feet of guru. No one else can save us from this dangerous, precarious situation. If you think of guru as an ordinary human being then you commit the most severe *nāma-aparādha*. Then you cannot have faith in his words. You cannot surrender unto him. You will only be a pretender. That is the reason these devotees left. Nothing else.

What is *sannyāsa*? To be constantly engaged day and night, twenty-four-hours, in *hari-bhajana*. For those who are pretender devotees, their *sannyāsa* is for *bhukti* and *mukti*, material enjoyment and material liberation. But *sannyāsa* means no material desires, no material enjoyment, no material liberation. *bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi* — "Life after life I only want unalloyed devotion. Nothing else." That is *sannyāsa*. Such persons get the mercy of Bhakti-devi.

No Deliberation

What sort of understanding should we have so that everything will be auspicious for us? Guru gives the understanding that whatever you find here is all paraphernalia for Krishna's enjoyment, not for your enjoyment. One who has this understanding gets all-*auspiciousness*. He utilizes everything in Krishna's service. There will be no suffering for him. He has no independence. Once you surrender completely, your independence is gone. If you retain your independence then you are not surrendered. You are a pretender. Minute independence has been granted to you for this purpose, to surrender to guru and Gauranga. That is the proper use of independence. Then, once you surrender completely, independence is gone. Now you are in the hands of guru.

One who completely surrenders gives up all his crookedness and duplicity. With a simple heart and mind he serves guru and Gauranga and engages himself in *hari-bhajana*. It is guaranteed that in this life he will



Morning walk in Mayapur, 1974

get Krishna. But how many are doing that? All are pretenders. Guru knows that they are pretenders. They are retaining their independence. They do as they like. They don't listen to guru. They only say, "Yes, yes, yes, Guru Maharaja. Yes, yes, yes. I understand. Oh, all right, all right. I'll do. I'll do. I'll do. But just now I am in a dangerous situation. Such a problem is there. Monetary difficulties are there. Family difficulty is there. I am trying to solve this. Then I'll do." If you behave like that, then how can you get mercy? *guru ādeśa nirvicārare grahaṇīya* — "Whatever the guru orders, immediately do it. Don't add any of your deliberation to it."¹

Lord Ramachandra

We cite the examples of Lord Rama and Lord Parasuram. They are the Lord, Bhagavan, and are not ordinary human beings. It was declared in Ayodhya that Lord Rama would become king the next morning. But in the night, everything changed completely. When the day dawned, instead of the order that he would sit on the throne, the order came, "Bharat will be king and

Rama will go to the forest for fourteen years." Without any deliberation, Lord Rama accepted it. "Yes." He didn't say, "Why shall I go to the forest? It is my birthright that I shall sit on the throne." Immediately he accepted. "Yes, I'll go." And immediately he started out. He didn't add any deliberation to the order. He just immediately executed it.

When Bharat returned to Ayodhya, he said, "How is it that this has happened?" He understood that it was the conspiracy, politics, of his mother Kaikeyi, and he got angry with her. Bharat is the ideal brother. He said, "No! Ayodhya belongs to Rama. Rama is the king. Only he can sit on the throne. I am Rama's servant. How can I sit on the seat of my master? It cannot be."

Centerfold on next page: *Setting the example of the ideal son/disciple, Lord Ramachandra went to the forest on the order of his father.*

Pahari painting c. 1775-80. Ascribed to the first generation after Nainsukh. Artist unknown.







Morning walk in Mayapur, 1974

He went to Rama, who was staying in a nearby forest, to bring him back. But Rama wouldn't return. He told Bharat, "Whatever is the order of your *guru-janas*, just follow it as it is. Don't add any of your deliberation to it. That is good for you and good for me. For fourteen years I must live in the forest. I am banished. This is guru's order. However difficult it may be, I must carry it out. And for fourteen years you have to rule. Just follow as it is." Then there was nothing to say.

Bharat said, "All right. I am your servant. Ayodhya belongs to you. Only you can sit on the throne. I cannot. I'll rule. I'll carry out that order. But I'll not sit on the throne. I'll rule as your servant. You are my Lord and master and you order me. For fourteen years I'll rule on your behalf, as your servant."

He took Rama's wooden sandals, put them on his head, and then put them on the throne and declared, "Rama is king. I am ruling in his absence for fourteen

years as his representative or servant. I am carrying out his order." This is the process.

"Kill your Mother"

Jamadagni is the father and *guru-jana* of Parasuram. He had many sons. He ordered all of them, "Cut off the head of your mother, Renuka." Everyone denied except Parasuram. "How is it that we will cut off the head of our mother, kill our mother, *mātrā-hatyā*?" They deliberated on his order, and all of them but Parasuram denied following it. Parasuram immediately chopped off the head of his mother with an axe. He didn't deliberate. This is how to execute the order of the guru.

[Speaking to a devotee in the class:] You are thinking, "Oh, this difficulty is there. This problem is there now. I am in this condition. I cannot follow guru's order." But at every moment there are problems in the material world. This material platform

is such a nasty platform. In the words of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada Maharaja, it is not a fit place for any gentleman to live. Always there are problems. The body gives problems. The situation gives problems. The environment gives problems. The so-called bodily relations give problems. There are so many problems.

Execute the order of guru as it is. Don't add any of your deliberation. That is what you should understand. Then you will get the mercy of guru and Gauranga. This is the consideration. Give up your independence. Completely surrender unto the *tattva-darśī-guru*, who has seen the absolute truth, and render service to him without duplicity, *niṣkapaṭa-sevā*. I say that if you do so, in one life it is guaranteed that you'll go back home, back to Godhead, and get Krishna. It is guaranteed. If you can engage yourself in the service of such a personality day and night, twenty-four-hours, without duplicity, and hear *bhagavān-kathā* from him, then you'll definitely get Krishna. This is the only consideration. There is no other consideration.

Such a *premi-bhakti* has bound up Krishna in his heart with the rope of love.

kṛṣṇa se tomāra, kṛṣṇa dite pāro,
tomāra śakati āche
āmi to' kāṅgāla, 'kṛṣṇa' 'kṛṣṇa' boli',
dhāi tava pāche pāche

Bhaktivinode Thakur sings,² “O *vaiṣṇava thākura!* Krishna belongs to you. You have bound up Krishna. Only you can give me Krishna. A poor man runs behind a wealthy man, ‘Oh sir, please give me one penny. Please give me one penny.’ Similarly, I am *kāṅgāla*, a pauper, since I am bereft of Krishna. O *vaiṣṇava thākura!* Krishna belongs to you. Only you can give him to me. Give me Krishna, give me Krishna.” Running behind him with leech-like tenacity, not leaving him — that is needed. Then *sādhu-guru* will shower his mercy on you, because Shyamasundar is there in his heart. If you can serve such a guru and get his mercy, then he can transfer Krishna from his heart to your heart. He has the *śakti* to do so. Krishna listens to him. Otherwise, how can you get Krishna?

Importance of Personal Instructions

Devotee 3: What if someone says that they did not receive any specific instruction from Prabhupada ...

Gour Govinda Swami: The guru gives general instructions to everyone. But there are specific instructions to individuals. You must ask for it. “How can I serve you?” My Guru Maharaja asked Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada, “How can I serve you?” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati told him,

“You must go to the Western world and preach the science of Krishna consciousness in English.” That is a specific order

Devotee 3: What if you never got a specific order from Prabhupada?

Gour Govinda Swami: That means you have been cheated. You wanted to be cheated, and you are cheated. You should have asked, “Please instruct me. How can I serve you? What do you want from me?” Then the guru will give specific instructions. General instructions are for one and all, for the whole world, even those who are not disciples.

Devotee 3: The movement was so big at that time. Unless you were a big leader, you couldn't get a personal instruction.

Gour Govinda Swami: When you are a disciple, you have a right. You must approach guru. Offer millions of *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* to him, and say, “Please, what do you want from me? How can I serve you? What will please you? Please tell me.” You must do that. If you don't, it means that you want to be cheated. You are an easy-going person. You are thinking, “Why shall I go and bring such danger for myself? If I go near then some hardship will come on my head.” You keep yourself away from guru. You say, “Oh, his instruction is in the books. It's all right. I'll get whatever instructions I need from whoever gives the lecture.” This is the mentality of an easy-going person who is not prepared to undergo hardship for the service of guru and Gauranga. How will such a person advance?

tomāra sevāya duḥkha haya jata
se-o to' parama sukha
sevā-sukha-duḥkha parama sampada
nāśaye avidyā-duḥkha

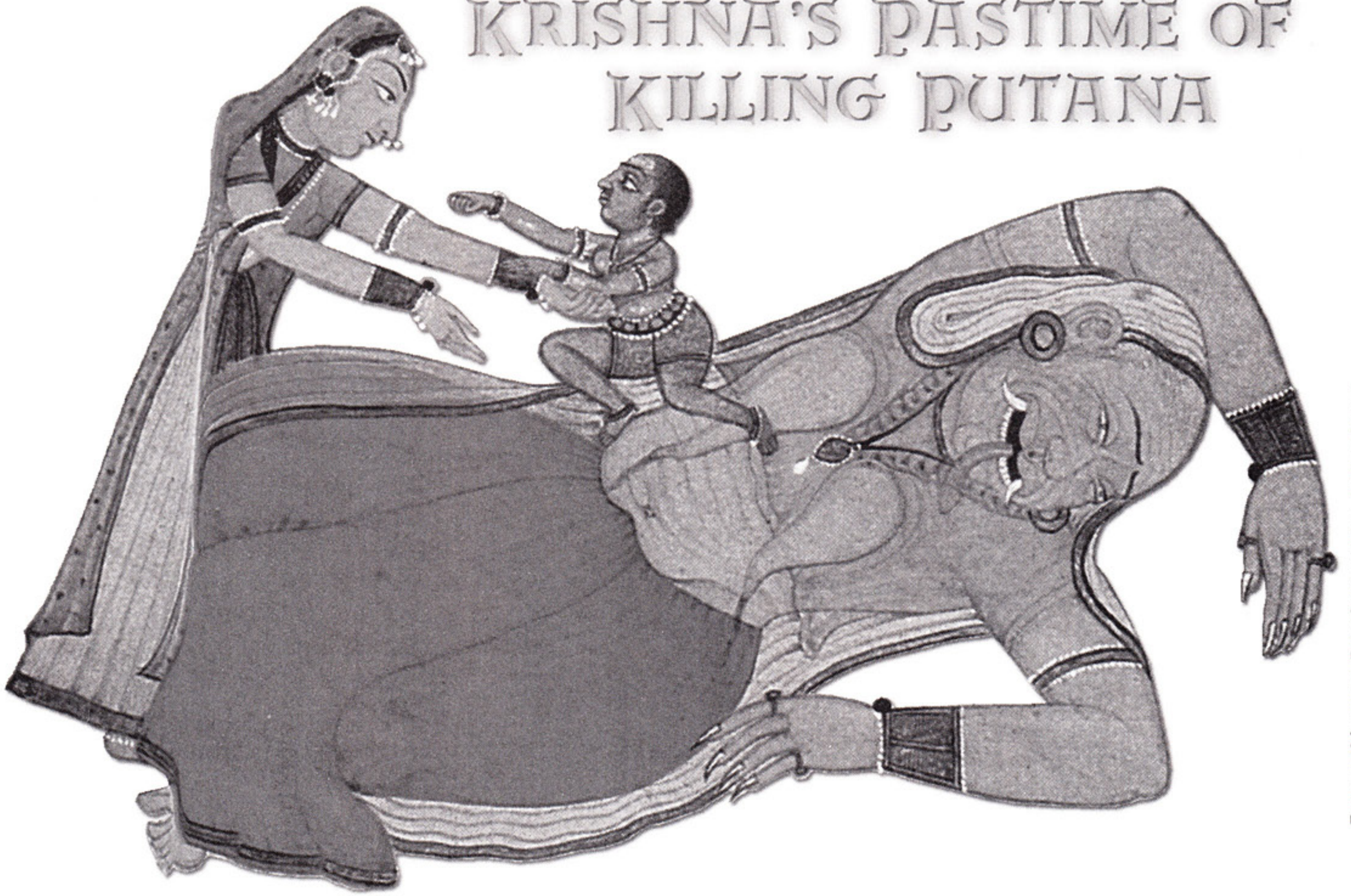
All the troubles encountered in your service shall be the cause of great happiness, for in your devotional service joy and sorrow are equally great riches. Both destroy the misery of ignorance.

Bhaktivinode Thakur gives us instructions (*Śaraṇāgati* 2.8.4), “O Lord, O guru and Gauranga! Whatever distress comes, whatever hardship comes in your service, those hardships are my greatest pleasure. That distress and hardship are *parama sampada*, my supreme asset. *nāśaye avidyā-duḥkha* — all of your ignorance will be dispelled and your eyes will be opened. There will be enlightenment, no darkness. You will be able to see clearly. 🙏

Notes

- 1 *Rāmāyaṇa (ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* 22.9) quoted in *Cc. madhya* 10.146.
2 *Śaraṇāgati* 7.7.4.

KRISHNA'S PASTIME OF KILLING PUTANA



From an 18th century Rajasthani painting. Artist unknown.

The Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.6.44 describes:

ya etat pūtanā-mokṣaṁ kṛṣṇasyārbhakam adbhutam
śṛṇuyāc chraddhayā martyo govinde labhate ratim

Any person who hears with faith and devotion about how Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, killed Putana, and who thus invests his hearing in such childhood pastimes of Krishna, certainly attains attachment for Govinda, the supreme, original person.

In addition to Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, the pastime of child Krishna killing the witch Putana is related in many different Vedic literatures, including Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Brahma Purāṇa, Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa, Garga-saṁhitā, and Hari-vaṁśa Purāṇa. The following account is primarily adapted from the translation of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada of the tenth canto, chapter six of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam and from the sixth chapter of Srila Prabhupada's Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We have supplemented with extracts and commentaries from different Vedic literatures and ācāryas.

Nanda Maharaja once visited his dear friend and brother Vasudev in Mathura. As he was returning, he considered Vasudev's warning that there might be some

disturbance in Gokula. The advice was certainly friendly, so Nanda thought, "There is some truth in it." Out of fear, he began to take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is quite natural for a devotee in danger to think of Krishna, because he has no other shelter. When a child is in danger, he takes shelter of his mother or father. Similarly, although a devotee is always under the shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, when he sees some specific danger he quickly remembers the Lord.

After consulting with his demoniac ministers, Kamsa instructed a witch named Putana, who knew the black art of killing small children by ghastly, sinful methods, to kill all kinds of children in the cities, villages and pasturing grounds. Such witches can play their black art only where there is no chanting or hearing of the holy name of Krishna. It is said that wherever the chanting of the holy name of Krishna is done, even negligently, all bad elements — witches, ghosts, and dangerous calamities — immediately disappear. And this is certainly true of the place where the chanting of the holy name of Krishna is done seriously — especially in Vrindavan when the Supreme Lord was personally present.

In his *Śrī Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* commentary on the second verse of this chapter, Srila Jiva Goswami writes:

The word *nighnanti* in this verse means, “completely destroying”. That is, Putana would instantly kill children by giving them her poisoned breast. This is described in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (5.5.8):

*yasmai yasmai stanam rātrau pūtanā samprayacchati
tasya tasya kṣaṇenāṅgam bālakasyopahanyate*

Unto whichever child Putana supplied her breast at night, that child’s body would perish in a moment.

In the Form of a Bird

Putana was the sister of the demon Baka, who came in the form of a bird to kill Krishna. Like her brother, Putana also assumed the form of a bird when she entered Vraja. The *Hari-vaṁśa Purāṇa* (2.6.22-23) describes:

*kasya-cintvatha kālasya śakunī-veṣa-dhāriṇī
dhātrī kamsasya bhojasya pūtaneti pariśrutā
pūtanā nāma śakunī ghorā prāṇa-bhayaṅkarī
ājagāmārdha-rātre vai pakṣau krodhād vidhunvati*

Once upon a time, in the middle of the night, Kamsa’s nurse,¹ the dreadful Putana, who created fear for one’s life and was capable of assuming different forms at will, went in the shape of a bird to the village of Vraja, angrily flapping her wings.

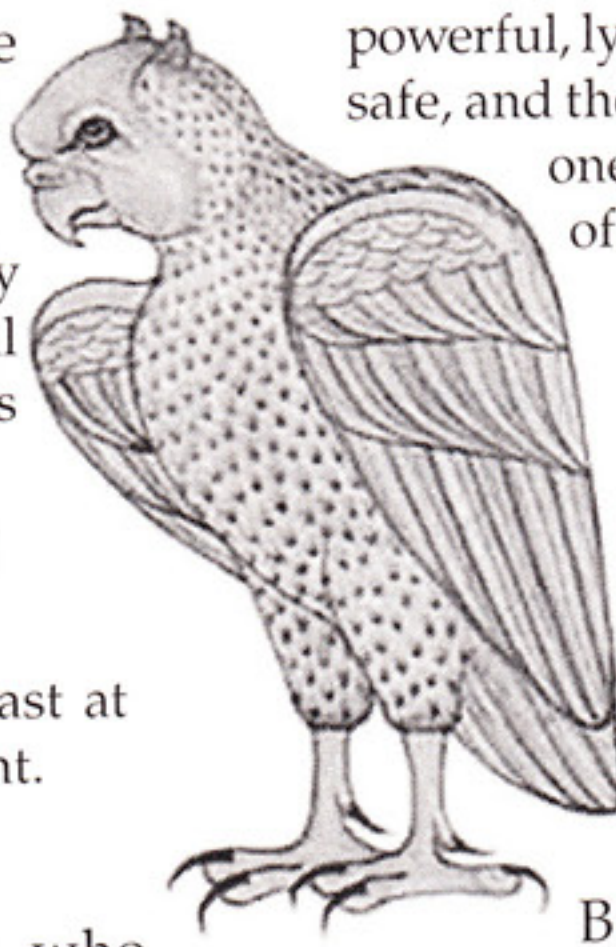
*tato rddha-rātra-samaye pūtanā praty adṛśyata
vyāghra-gambhīra-nirghoṣam vyāharanti punaḥ punaḥ
nililye śakaṭas yākṣo prasravotpīḍa-varṣiṇī
dadāu stanam ca kṛṣṇāya tasmin supte jane niśi*

Entering Vraja in the middle of the night, roaring again and again like a tiger, Putana assumed the form of a woman. While all of the inhabitants of Vraja were sleeping, she lay down under the wheel of a cart and offered her breast to Krishna to suck. (24-25).

While the *Bhāgavatam* describes Putana as coming to Krishna in the house of Nanda Maharaja, *Hari-vaṁśa*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (canto 5, chapter 5) and *Brahma Purāṇa* (75.6-22) say that she came to Krishna under a cart. *Hari-vaṁśa* (2.101.30-32)² says:

*uttānena śayānena śakaṭāntara-cāriṇā
rākṣasī nihatā raudrā śakunī-veṣa-dhāriṇī
pūtanā nāma ghorā sā mahā-kāyā mahā-balā
viṣa-digdham stanam raudram prayacchanti janārdane
dadṛśur nihatām tām te rākṣasīm vana-gocarāḥ
punar jāto yam ity āhur uktas tasmād adhokṣajaḥ*

When baby Krishna was sleeping in a cradle under the axle of a cart, the demoness Putana, who could assume the form of a bird, came to kill him. She gave her poisoned breast to baby Krishna, but Krishna killed her. The residents of Vraja saw Putana, who was terrible-looking, gigantic, and



powerful, lying dead in the forest. But Lord Krishna was safe, and the people called him Adhokṣaja, referring to one who has taken another birth under the axle of a cart.³

Radharani and Putana

In the first act of *Lalita-mādhava*, texts 4 to 41, Srila Rupa Goswami describes that Putana brought Srimati Radharani to Vraja. He writes that the king of the Vindhya Hills had performed austerities to have two daughters who would marry Krishna. To satisfy his desire, Lord Brahma requested Yogamaya Devi to transfer the daughters of the wife of Chandrabhanu and the wife of Maharaja Vrishabhanu to the womb of the wife of the king of the Vindhyas. These two girls, who hence became sisters and the daughters of the wife of the king of the Vindhyas, were Srimati Radharani and Chandravali. Kamsa’s order to Putana was that she should kill only the small boys. The small girls were to be kidnapped.⁴ Hence, when she passed by the Vindhya Hills and saw the two beautiful small girls, Putana kidnapped them and carried them with her on her way to Vraja. While she was flying away, though, the chief priest of Mount Vindhya chanted a demon-killing mantra. Hearing this, Putana became frightened and dropped the first daughter, Chandravali, who fell into a river’s current.⁵ When Krishna killed Putana, Purnamasi quietly took Radharani and five other girls⁶ from Putana’s lap and placed them in different parts of Vraja. In a secret place, Purnamasi gave Radha to Yasoda’s nurse Mukhara, and told her, “O elderly one, here is your son-in-law Vrishabhanu’s daughter.”

Putana and the Children of Vraja

In *Bhāgavatam* 10.6.3, Srila Sukadev Goswami describes that since Krishna was present, the residents of Vraja were not actually in any danger from Putana:

*na yatra śravaṇādīni rakṣo-ghnāni sva-karmasu
kurvanti sātvatām bhartur yātudhānyaś ca tatra hi*

My dear King, wherever people in any position perform their occupational duties of devotional service by chanting and hearing, there cannot be any danger from bad elements. Therefore there was no need for anxiety about Gokula while the Supreme Personality of Godhead was personally present.

Jiva Goswami comments in *Laghu-toṣaṇī* that as the previous verse described that Putana was wandering around all the cities, towns, and villages murdering children, one may ask, “What happened to the children in Vraja? Were they killed by Putana?” In response, Sukadev Goswami spoke the above verse. The implied

meaning being that Krishna arranged that Putana only killed the children of those who were averse to Krishna and were on the side of Kamsa. Thus Kamsa's foolishness is shown, because in effect he engaged Putana to kill the children of his own men. Another implied meaning in this verse is that upon being directly instructed by Krishna, the *līlā-śakti*, who acts in accordance with the Lord's inclinations, arranged the approach of such a wicked woman to effect a special pastime of the Lord, who is the giver of joy to all the worlds. She also arranged such an event to expand the special love that the Lord's mother and other devotees show towards him.

The *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (4.10.11) says that Putana was able to change her form at will and go wherever she liked due to the power of a mantra she had gotten from Durvasa Muni. When Putana entered Gokula, the abode of Nanda Maharaja, she converted herself into a very beautiful woman. It's described that her hips were full, her large, firm breasts seemed to overburden her slim waist, and she was dressed very nicely. Her hair, adorned with a garland of *mallikā* flowers, was scattered about her beautiful face. Her earrings were brilliant, and as she smiled very attractively, glancing upon everyone, her beauty drew the attention of all the inhabitants of Vraja, especially the men. When the *gopīs* saw her, they thought that the beautiful goddess of fortune, holding a lotus flower in her hand, had come to see her husband, Krishna.

According to *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (4.10.21-27), when Putana entered Vraja, Yasoda, Rohini and the other ladies there inquired as to her identity. Putana told them that she was the wife of a *brāhmaṇa* from Mathura and that she had come to bless the newly born son of Nanda Maharaja. Hearing that, the simple ladies became happy and allowed her access to Krishna. In his purport to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 10.6.9, Srila Prabhupada comments that Rohini and Yasoda's bewilderment was not the act of the external energy *mahā-māyā*. Rather, their captivation was the work of the internal energy, *yoga-māyā*, and was for the purpose of developing the Lord's pastimes.

Why Krishna Closed His Eyes

Searching for small children to kill, Putana entered the house of Nanda Maharaja unobstructed and went into Nanda Maharaja's room. There she saw the child sleeping in bed, his unlimited power covered like a powerful fire covered by ashes. Seeing him, Putana could understand that this child was not ordinary but was meant to kill all demons.

Sri Krishna, the all-pervading supersoul, who was lying on the bed like an ordinary human child, understood that Putana, a witch expert in killing small children, had come

to kill him. Therefore, as if he were afraid of her, Krishna closed his eyes. Putana then took him on her lap, just as an unintelligent person places a sleeping snake on his lap, thinking the snake to be a rope.

Srila Jiva Goswami comments on the significance of Krishna closing his eyes, citing several reasons:

1. He wanted to demonstrate his extreme childishness and fearfulness.
2. He wanted to avoid looking at such a wicked being.
3. He wanted to avoid her fiendish, hypnotizing glance.
4. To hide his visible shame and confusion at having to kill someone who was coming to him in the role of a mother, even though the killing was necessary to benefit her. This is because he is an ocean of good qualities.

In *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*, Prabhupada comments:

This closing of the eyes is interpreted and studied in different ways by the devotees. Some say that Krishna closed his eyes because he did not like to see the face of Putana, who had killed so many children and who had now come to kill him. Others say that Putana hesitated to take the baby on her lap because something extraordinary was being dictated to her from within, and in order to give her assurance, Krishna closed his eyes so that she would not be frightened. And yet others interpret in this way: Krishna appeared in order to kill the demons and give protection to the devotees, as stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā: paritrāṇāya sādhuṇām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām*.⁷ The first demon to be killed was a woman. According to Vedic rules, the killing of a woman, a *brāhmaṇa*, cows, or a child is strictly forbidden. Krishna was obliged to kill the demon Putana, and because the killing of a woman is forbidden according to Vedic *śāstra*, he could not help but close his eyes. Another interpretation is that Krishna closed his eyes because he simply took Putana to be his nurse. Putana came to Krishna just to offer her breast for the Lord to suck. Krishna is so merciful that even though he knew Putana was there to kill him, he took her as his nurse or mother.

The fiercely dangerous *rākṣasī* took Krishna on her lap and pushed her breast into his mouth. The nipple of her breast was smeared with a deadly poison, but the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, becoming very angry at her, took hold of her breast, squeezed it very hard with both hands, and sucked out both the poison and her life. In his *Sārārtha-darśini* commentary, Srila Viswanath Chakravarti states:

Krishna was filled with anger knowing that Putana planned to kill all of the children of Vraja by offering her breast to them. Therefore Krishna's power of destruction, *sainhāra-śakti*, sucked out her impure life. Krishna did not personally do this. Though we say a man cuts down the tree, actually it is the axe held by the man that cuts down the tree. Similarly, it is stated that Krishna sucked out Putana's life airs, but actually his *sainhāra-śakti* performed the work.

Unbearably pressed in every vital point, the demon Putana began to cry, "Please leave me, leave me! Suck my breast no longer!" Perspiring, her eyes wide open and her arms and legs flailing, she cried very loudly again and again. As Putana screamed loudly and forcefully, the earth with its mountains, and outer space with its planets, trembled. The lower planets and all directions vibrated, and people fell down, fearing that thunderbolts were falling upon them. In this way the demon Putana, very much aggrieved because her breast was being attacked by Krishna,

death. Jiva Goswami says that the word *nija-rūpam* in the verse, "her own form", means *ulūki-svarūpam*, "in the form of an owl".⁸

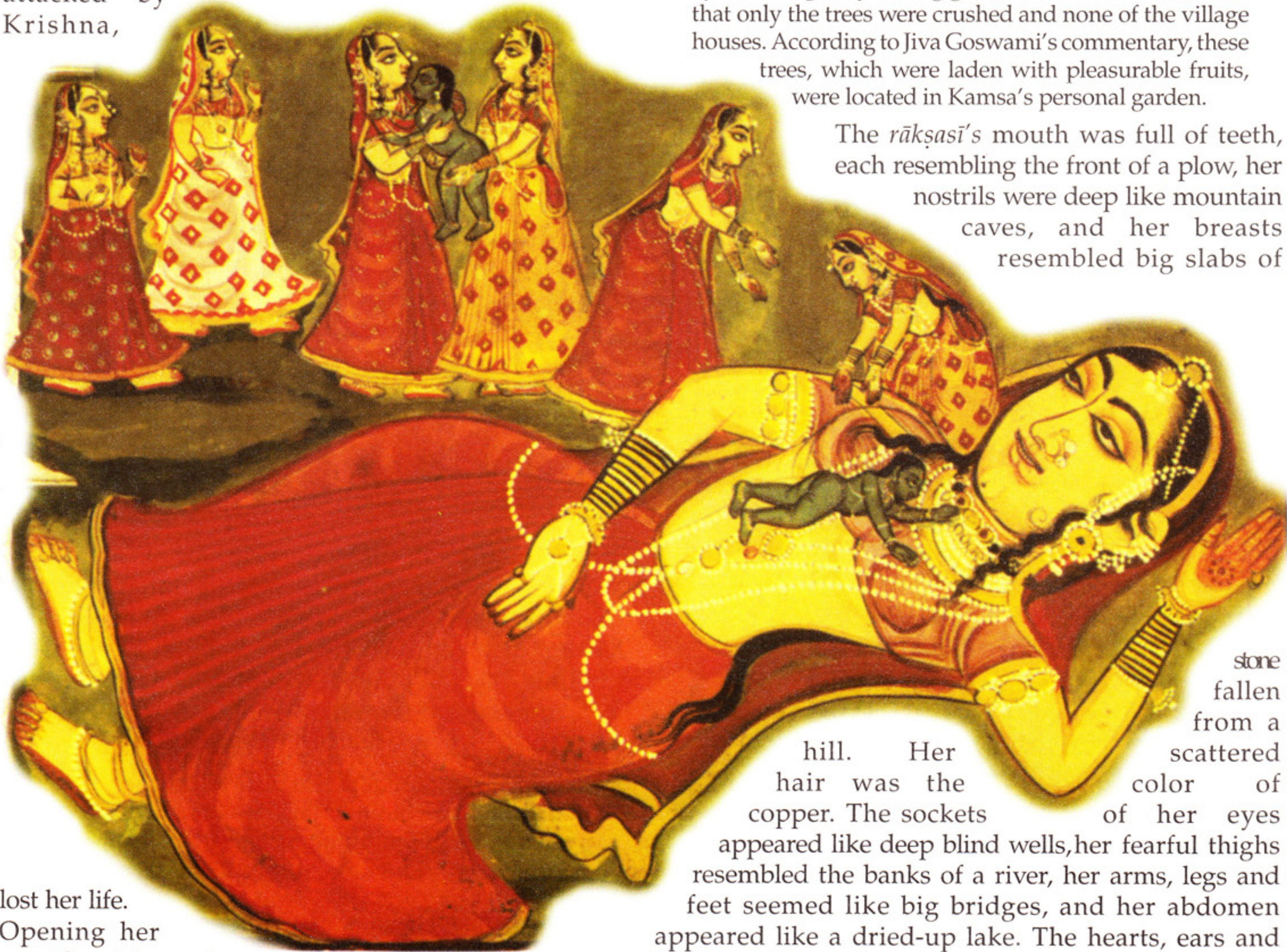
Kamsa's Garden

When the gigantic body of Putana fell to the ground, it smashed all the trees within a limit of twelve miles. Appearing in a gigantic body, she was certainly extraordinary. Srila Viswanath Chakravarti remarks:

All of the trees within an area of twelve miles were crushed by the falling body of the gigantic witch. It was remarkable that only the trees were crushed and none of the village houses. According to Jiva Goswami's commentary, these trees, which were laden with pleasurable fruits, were located in Kamsa's personal garden.

The *rākṣasī's* mouth was full of teeth, each resembling the front of a plow, her nostrils were deep like mountain caves, and her breasts resembled big slabs of

From an 18th century Rajasthani painting. Artist unknown.



lost her life. Opening her mouth wide and spreading her arms, legs and hair, she fell down in the pasturing ground in her original form as a *rākṣasī*, just as Vritrasura fell when killed by the thunderbolt of Indra. Srila Prabhupada comments:

Putana was a great *rākṣasī* who knew the art of covering her original form by mystic power. But when she was killed her mystic power could not hide her, and she appeared in her original form.

Sridhar Swami comments that Putana assumed her original form because deceit is improper at the time of

stone fallen from a scattered hill. Her hair was the color of copper. The sockets of her eyes appeared like deep blind wells, her fearful thighs resembled the banks of a river, her arms, legs and feet seemed like big bridges, and her abdomen appeared like a dried-up lake. The hearts, ears and heads of the cowherd men and women were already shocked by the *rākṣasī's* screaming. But when they saw the fierce wonder of her body, they were even more frightened. Without fear, the child Krishna was playing on the upper portion of Putana *rākṣasī's* breast, and when the *gopīs* saw the child's wonderful activities, they immediately came forward with great jubilation and picked him up. Prabhupada comments:

Here is the Supreme Personality of Godhead — Krishna. Although Putana could increase or decrease her bodily size by her mystic abilities and thus gain proportionate power,

the Supreme Personality of Godhead is equally powerful in any transcendental form. Krishna is the real Personality of Godhead because whether as a child or as a grown-up young man, he is the same person. He does not need to become powerful by meditation or any other external endeavor. Therefore when the greatly powerful Putana expanded her body, Krishna remained the same small child and fearlessly played on the upper portion of her breast. *Ṣaḍaiśvarya-pūrṇa — bhagavān*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is always full in all potencies, regardless of whether he is present in this form or that. His potencies are always full. *parāśya śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate*.⁹ He can display all potencies under any circumstances.

Protecting Krishna

Thereafter, mother Yasoda and Rohini along with the other elderly *gopīs* waved a cow's tail about to give full protection to the child Sri Krishna. The child was thoroughly washed with cow urine and then smeared with the dust raised by the movements of the cows. Then different names of the Lord were applied with cow dung on twelve different parts of his body, beginning with the forehead, as done in applying *tilaka*. In this way, the child was given protection. The *gopīs* first executed the process of *ācamana*, drinking a sip of water from the right hand. They purified their bodies and hands with the *nyāsa-mantra*, and then applied the same mantra upon the body of the child. According to the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (1.13.23), this mantra was originally given by Brahma, who then gave it to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva gave it to Durvasa Muni, and Durvasa Muni gave it to Yasoda in Nanda Maharaja's palace. Srila Prabhupada comments:

Even in the houses of the cultivators, who were not very advanced in the modern ways of civilization, the ladies used to know how to chant mantras to give protection to children with the help of cow dung and cow urine. This was a simple and practical way to give the greatest protection from the greatest dangers. People should know how to do this, for this is a part of Vedic civilization.

After they chanted mantras to protect the child, mother Yasoda gave the child the nipple of her breast to suck and then got him to lie down on his bed. Prabhupada writes:

When a baby drinks milk from the breast of his mother, this is a good sign of health. So the elderly *gopīs* were not satisfied with chanting mantras to give protection to Krishna; they also tested whether their child's health was in order. When the child sucked the breast, this confirmed that he was healthy, and when the *gopīs* were fully satisfied, they had the child lie down on his bed.

One may ask why Krishna didn't manifest a huge form the size of Putana's to fight with her? In his purport to *Bhāgavatam* 2.7.27, Srila Prabhupada explains:

Lord Krishna did not need to expand himself to the length of the she-demon Putana, although he was quite competent to extend himself more than six miles long. In his Vaman incarnation he posed himself as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa*, but when he took possession of his land, promised by Bali Maharaja he expanded his footstep to the top of the universe, extending over thousands and millions of miles. So it was not very difficult for Krishna to perform a miracle by extending his bodily feature, but he had no desire to do it because of his deep filial love for his mother, Yasoda. If Yasoda had seen Krishna in her lap extending six miles to cope with the she-demon Putana, then the natural parental love of Yasoda would have been hurt, because in that way Yasoda would have come to know that her so-called son, Krishna, was God himself. And with the knowledge of the Godhood of Krishna, Yasodamayi would have lost the temper of her love for Krishna as a natural mother.

In the meantime, all of the cowherd men headed by Nanda Maharaja, who had gone to Mathura to pay tax, returned home and were struck with wonder at seeing the gigantic six-mile-long dead body of Putana. Nanda Maharaja recalled the prophecy of Vasudev and considered him a great sage and mystic yogi — otherwise how could he have foretold an incident that happened during his absence from Vrindavan? When they heard the whole story of how Putana had come and then been killed by Krishna, they were astonished, and they offered their blessings to the child for his wonderful deed. Nanda Maharaja was very liberal and simple. He immediately took his son Krishna on his lap as if Krishna had returned from death, and by formally smelling his son's head, Nanda Maharaja enjoyed transcendental bliss. Srila Prabhupada comments:

Nanda Maharaja could not understand how the inhabitants of his house had allowed Putana to enter the house, nor could he imagine the gravity of the situation. He did not understand that Krishna had wanted to kill Putana and that his pastimes were performed by *yoga-māyā*. Nanda Maharaja simply thought that someone had entered his house and created havoc. This was Nanda Maharaja's simplicity.

The inhabitants of Vraja cut the gigantic body of Putana into pieces with the help of axes. Then they threw the pieces far away, covered them with wood and burned them to ashes. Srila Viswanath Chakravarti offers the following words:

On the order of Upananda and others, the lower class men of Vraja (*vrajaukasa*) completely burned Putana's body out of fear that it would come to life again. The influence of poisonous creatures is extinguished when their bodies are burned up.



Temple at Gokul in the early 1800s

Because of Krishna's having sucked the breast of the *rākṣasī* Putana, when she was killed she was immediately freed of all material contamination. Her sinful reactions automatically vanished, and therefore when her gigantic body was being burnt, the smoke emanating from her body was fragrant like *aguru* incense. Upon smelling the fragrance of the smoke emanating from Putana's burning body, many inhabitants of Vrajabhumi were astonished. They asked, "Where is this fragrance coming from?"
Sri Jiva Goswami Prabhupada comments:

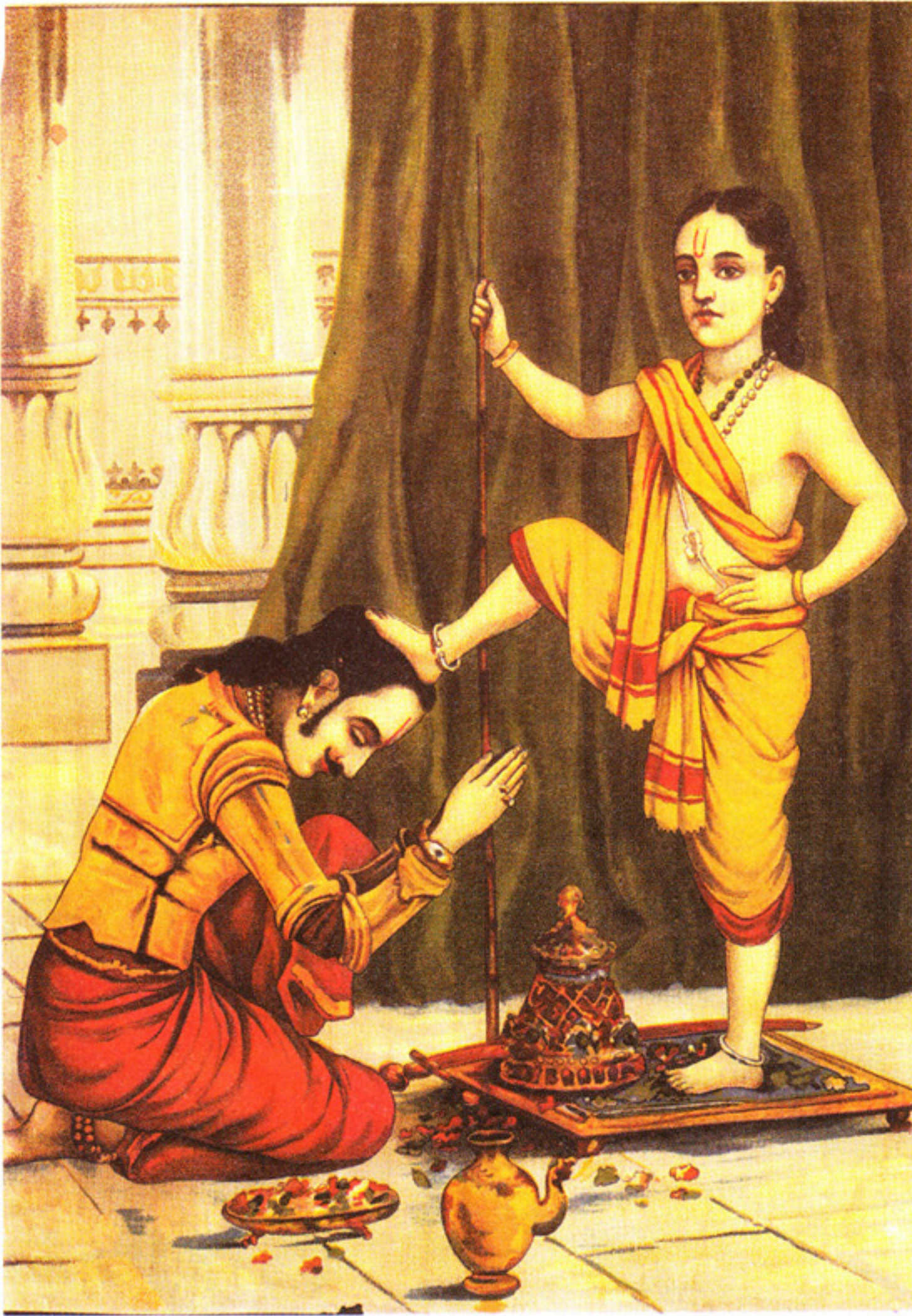
The smoke was more fragrant than *aguru*. The reason for this is that Putana's body was completely enjoyed by Lord Krishna, who in turn manifested his own unlimited supreme fragrance and beauty in her body. Because Krishna sucked out her milk along with her life breath, therefore at the time of smelling the smoke of her burning body, that smoke destroyed all the sin and wickedness of those who smelt it. Thus the glory of the Lord's remnants is demonstrated. What to speak of when something pure is offered with devotion.

Putana in the Spiritual World

Putana was always hankering for the blood of human children, and with that desire she came to kill Krishna. But because she offered her breast to the Lord she attained the greatest achievement. What then is to be said of those who had natural devotion and affection for Krishna as mothers and who offered him their breasts to suck or offered something very dear, as a mother offers something to a child? Viswanath Chakravarti comments:

If a person offers service with an attempt to kill the Lord and attains the goal of life, how much more will a person attain who offers with a neutral attitude? How much more will a person attain who offers with faith? How much more will a person attain who offers with pure *bhakti*? If a person worships an *avatāra* of the Lord, he will attain the supreme destination. But how much more will a person attain who worships Sri Krishna, the source of all *avatāras*?

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, is always situated within the core of the heart of



Lord Vamanadev puts his foot on the head of Bali Maharaja

the pure devotee, and he is always offered prayers by such worshipable personalities as Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva. Because Krishna embraced Putana's body with great pleasure and sucked her breast, although she was a great witch she attained the position of a mother in the transcendental world and thus achieved the highest perfection. What then is to be said of the cows whose nipples Krishna sucked with great pleasure and who offered their milk very jubilantly with affection, exactly like that of a mother? The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, is the bestower of many benedictions, including liberation [*kaivalya*], or oneness with the Brahman effulgence. For that Personality of Godhead, the *gopīs* always felt maternal love, and Krishna sucked their breasts with full satisfaction. Therefore, although the *gopīs* were engaged in various family activities, one should never think that they returned to this material world after leaving their bodies.

Viswanath further comments on Putana's salvation:

Which Vaikuntha planet did Putana attain? The verse explains that Putana attained the same planet as Mother Yasoda, *jananī gatim*. Therefore, Putana attained Goloka, but her position was predominated by happiness and reverence. She did not attain the place predominated by service in *prema*. One cannot say that she attained the status of a mother. Verse 10.6.36 says, that place is reserved for those who have pure loving attachment for Krishna. Here verse thirty-eight says that the cows and motherly *gopīs* who fed milk to Krishna during the *vimohana-līlā* attained a higher destination than Putana.

How could Putana, whose enmity was equal to Kamsa's, attain the same status as Yasoda, even though she imitated the dress and emotion of a *gopī*? Therefore Uddhava says (in *Bhāg.* 3.2.23): *lebhe gatim dhātry-ucitām* — Putana attained a status like a nurse." Thus in the present verse, some interpret the word *jananī* (mother) to be *dhātrī* (nurse). But even then one should not say that Putana was a direct nurse of Krishna. Rather, she attained a form like a nurse in a Goloka filled with *sukhaśvarya*, reverential happiness.

Astonishing Mercy

In *Bhāgavatam* 3.2.23, Uddhava has described the astonishing mercy bestowed upon Putana by Krishna:

*aho bakī yaṁ stana-kāla-kūṭaṁ
jighāṁsayāpāyayad apy asādhvī
lebhe gatim dhātry-ucitām tato 'nyam
kaṁ vā dayāluṁ śaraṇam vrajema*

Alas, how shall I take shelter of one more merciful than he who granted the position of mother to a she-demon [Putana] although she was deceitful and she prepared deadly poison to be sucked from her breast?

Our *ācāryas* have raised several interesting points in their commentaries on this verse. Viswanath:

Putana achieved a position in Goloka just befitting Ambika and Kilimba, the two nurses of Krishna who offer him their breast milk. Merely by dressing as a devotee she attained the affection (*rati*) befitting a devotee. Putana is therefore given as an example to show the special quality of Krishna that even those who are inimical attain both liberation and devotional service.

Srila Prabhupada:

Lord Krishna accepted the motherhood of Putana because she pretended to be an affectionate mother, allowing Krishna to suck her breast. The Lord accepts the least qualification of the living entity and awards him the highest reward. That is the standard of his character. Therefore, who but the Lord can be the ultimate shelter?



The cowherd men burn Putana under the direction of Nanda Maharaja

Putana's Previous Birth

One may ask, "How is it possible for such a terribly sinful living entity as Putana to get such mercy from the Lord? Surely there must be some reason behind it." The *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* 4.10.40-43 addresses this point and narrates a little known description of Putana's previous birth.¹⁰ Therein, Narada Muni asks the sage Narayan Rishi, "Who was that woman in the form of a demoness? She must have been a great devotee. What pious deeds did she perform that was she able to see Krishna and then go to his transcendental abode?"

Sri Narayan Rishi replied, "When Bali Maharaja's daughter Ratnamala saw Lord Vaman's handsome form in the *yajña* arena, she at once felt for him the love a mother feels for her son. She thought, 'If I had a son like him, I would cradle him to my chest and give him my breast milk.' Understanding her mind, in another birth Krishna drank from her breast. An ocean of mercy that fulfills all desires, Krishna made her like his mother.

Some persons say that when Ratnamala first saw Lord Vamanadev she became attracted to him and nourished the desire in her heart to have him as a son and offer her breast to him. Then when Ratnamala saw Vamanadev take away everything from her father Bali, she became angry, and thought to herself, "If I offered my breast to him I would smear it with poison to kill him." Krishna, they say, kindly gave Ratnamala in her next life the opportunity to fulfill both of her desires.

• • •

The sixth chapter of *Sātvata-tantra* describes the thousand names of Krishna. Text 123 mentions four names of Krishna in connection with Putana.

pīta-pūtanikā-stanyaḥ pūtanā-prāṇa-śoṣaṇaḥ
pūtanoraḥ-sthala-sthāyī pūtanā-mokṣa-dāyakaḥ

Krishna is famous as: *pīta-pūtanikā-stanya* — "he who drank the milk of Putana's breast." He is known as *pūtanā-prāṇa-śoṣaṇaḥ* — "he who dried up Putana's life." He is *pūtanoraḥ-sthala-sthāyī* — "he who stayed on Putana's chest"; and he is *pūtanā-mokṣa-dāyakaḥ* — "he who gave liberation to Putana." ❧

All Glories to the Killer of Putana

Srila Sanatan Goswami's
Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava texts 69-74

*vasudevoditopāta-śaṅkā nanda-śubhāśrita
vraja-mohana-sad-veṣa-viṣa-stana-bakīkṣita*

O Lord Krishna! Nanda Maharaja became frightened by Vasudev's description of impending calamity and he took shelter of the all-auspicious Supreme Personality of Godhead. The sister of Bakasura, Putana, smeared poison upon her breasts and assumed the form of a beautiful woman, enchanting and bewildering the residents of Vrajabhumi. O Lord, this demoness had the opportunity to see you.

*lajjā-mīlita-netrābja pūtanāṅkādhiropita
bakī-prāṇa-payah-pāyin pūtanā-stana-pīdana*

O Lord Krishna! Embarrassed, you closed your lotus-eyes and Putana placed you upon her lap. You caused her great pain by drinking out her life-breath as you drank her milk.

*pūtanā-kroṣa-janaka pūtanā-prāṇa-śoṣaṇa
ṣaṭ-krośi-vyāpi-bhī-dāyi-pūtanā-deha-pātana*

O Lord Krishna! Drying up Putana's life, you caused her to cry out. Her body fell and became a very frightening twelve-mile long corpse.

*nānā-rakṣā-vidhāna-jña-gopa-strī-kṛta-rakṣaṇa
vinyasta-rakṣā-go-dhūle go-mūtra-śakṛd-āpluta*

O Lord Krishna! The *gopīs*, expert at performing various protective measures, sprinkled you with dust upraised by the cows, covered you with cow dung, and bathed you with cow urine to protect you.

*gopikā-vihitājādi-bīja-nyāsābhimantrita
dahyamāna-bakī-deha-saurabhya-vyāpita-kṣite*

O Lord Krishna! The *gopīs* protected you by chanting *bīja* and *nyāsa* mantras beginning with the word "aja". When the body of Putana was burned, it spread a sweet fragrance everywhere.

*pūtanā-mocana dveṣṭr-rākṣasī-sad-gati-prada
nandāghrāta-śiro-madhya jaya vismāpita-vraja*

O Lord Krishna! You thus liberated the demoness Putana, who hated you, and permitted her to return to the spiritual world. Seeing all these pastimes, the residents of Vrajabhumi became amazed, and Nanda Maharaja smelled your head with paternal affection. O Lord! All glories unto you!

Endnotes

¹ While here it is described that Putana was the nurse of Kamsa, *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (4.10.8) says that she was Kamsa's sister.

² While explaining the meaning of Krishna's name Adhoksaja, Srila Jiva Goswami cites these verses in his *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha, annucheda* 57.

³ Krishna performs these same pastimes again and again, both in the spiritual world as well as here on this planet, but they differ in detail.

⁴ In *Lalita-mādhava* 1.17-18, Rupa Goswami says that Kamsa gave this order because he had heard from the goddess Mahamaya that Krishna had already appeared in this world along with his eight *śaktis* and the two sisters Radharani and Chandravali.

⁵ In *Lalita-mādhava* 1.1.36, Rupa Goswami says that Maharaja Bhishmaka found the child floating in the river and took her to his city of Kundina. From there he says that Jambavan, who was living in the caves of Govardhan, kidnapped the five-year-old Chandravali and took her away from Kundina. After that, Rupa doesn't give any further details. While discussing these topics, Rupa says: "What can be understood of these confidential matters?" (*Lalita-mādhava* 1.1.41).

⁶ These girls were Radha's friend Lalita, Chandravali's friend Padma, and the *gopīs* Bhadra, Saibya, and Shyama.

⁷ Bg. 4.8

⁸ Other descriptions of the form Putana took when she died don't seem to match this understanding.

⁹ *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.8

¹⁰ Nearly the exact same description of Putana's previous birth is described in *Garga-saṁhitā* 1.13.29-33

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PUTANA

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
Thakur Prabhupada

an article published in
The Harmonist
issue of January 1932



King Kamsa is the typical aggressive empiricist, ever on the lookout for the appearance of the truth in order to suppress him before he has time to develop. This is not an exaggeration of the essence of the empiricist's position. The materialist has a natural repugnance for the transcendental. He is disposed to think that faith in the incomprehensible is the parent of the dogmatism and hypocrisy that flourish in the guise of religion. He is also equally under the delusion that there is no dividing line between the material and the spiritual. He is strengthened in his delusion by the scriptural interpretations of like-minded persons. This includes all the lexicographic interpreters. ["Lexicographic" means "strict dictionary meaning".]

The lexicographical interpretation is upheld by Kamsa as the real scientific explanation of the scriptures, and is perfectly in keeping with his dread of and aversion for the transcendental. These lexicographical interpreters are employed by Kamsa in putting down the first suspected appearance of any genuine faith in the transcendental. King Kamsa knows very well that if faith in the transcendental is once allowed to grow it is sure to upset all his empiric prospects.

There is historical ground for his concerns. Accordingly, if the empiric domination is to be preserved intact it would be necessary not to lose a moment to put down the transcendental heresy the instant it threatens to make its appearance in earnest. King Kamsa, acting on this traditional fear, is never slow to take the scientific precaution of deputing empiric teachers of the scriptures, backed by the resources of dictionary and grammar and all empiric subtleties, to put down, by presenting specious arguments based on

hypothetical principles, the true interpretation of the eternal religion revealed by the scriptures.

Kamsa is convinced that faith in the transcendental can be effectively rooted out by empiricism if prompt and decisive measures are adopted at the very outset. He attributes the failure of atheism in the past to the neglect of the adoption of such measures before the theistic fallacy has had time to spread among the fanatical masses.

Sri Krishna manifests his eternal birth in the pure consciousness of the serving soul who is located above all mundane limitations. When Krishna is born, he is able to upset all sinister designs against those who are apprised by himself of his advent. The apparently causeless faith displayed by persons irrespective of age, sex, and condition may confound all rabid empiricists who are on principle averse to the absolute truth, whose appearance is utterly incompatible with the domination of empiricism.

But no adverse efforts of the empiricists, whose rule seems till then to be perfectly well-established over the minds of the deluded souls of this world, can dissuade any person from exclusively following the truth when he actually manifests his birth in the pure consciousness of the soul.

Putana is the slayer of all infants. The baby, when he or she comes out of the mother's womb, falls at once into the hands of the pseudo-teachers of religion. These teachers are successful in forestalling the attempts of the good preceptor, whose help is never sought by the atheists of this world at the baptisms of their babies. This is ensured by the arrangements of all established churches of the world. They have been

successful only in supplying watchful Putanas for effecting the spiritual destruction of persons from the moment of their birth with the cooperation of their worldly parents. No human contrivance can prevent these Putanas from obtaining possession of the pulpits. This is due to the general prevalence of atheistic disposition in the people of this world.

The church that has the best chance of survival in this damned world is that of atheism under the convenient guise of theism. The churches have always proved to be the staunchest upholders of the grossest form of worldliness from which even the worst of non-ecclesiastical criminals are found to recoil.

It is not from any deliberate opposition to the ordained clergy that these observations are made. The original purpose of the established churches of the world may not always be objectionable. But no stable religious arrangement for instructing the masses has yet been successful. The Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in pursuance of the teachings of the scriptures, mandates all absence of conventionalism for the teachers of the eternal religion. It does not follow from this, however, that the mechanical adoption of the unconventional life by any person will make him

a fit teacher of religion. Regulation is necessary for controlling the inherent worldliness of conditioned souls.

But no mechanical regulation has any value, even for such a purpose. The bona-fide teacher of religion is neither any product of nor the favorer of any mechanical system. In his hands, no system has likewise the chance of degenerating into a lifeless arrangement. The mere pursuit of fixed doctrines and fixed liturgies cannot hold a person to the true spirit of doctrine or liturgy.

The idea of an organized church in an intelligible form, indeed, marks the close of the living spiritual movement. The great ecclesiastical establishments are the dikes and the dams to retain the current that cannot be held by any such contrivances. They, indeed, indicate a desire on the part of the masses to exploit a spiritual movement for their own purpose. They also unmistakably indicate the end of

the absolute and unconventional guidance of the bona fide spiritual teacher. The people of this world understand preventive systems; they have no idea at all of the unprevented positive eternal life. Neither can there be any earthly contrivance for the permanent preservation of the life eternal on this mundane plane on the popular scale.

They are, therefore, greatly mistaken who are disposed to look forward to the amelioration of the worldly state in any worldly sense due to the worldly success of any truly spiritual movement. It is such worldly expectants [“Expectants” means “persons who are expectant or hopeful”.] who become the patrons of

the mischievous race of the pseudo-teachers of religion, the Putanas, whose congenial function is to stifle the theistic disposition at the very moment of its suspected appearance. But the theistic disposition can never be stifled by the efforts of those Putanas. The Putanas have power only over the atheists. They perform a thankless but salutary task for the benefit of their unwilling victims.

But as soon as theistic disposition proper makes its appearance in the pure consciousness of the awakened soul,

the Putanas are decisively silenced at the very earliest stage of their encounter with new-born

Krishna. The would-be slayer is herself slain. This is the reward of the negative services that the Putanas unwittingly render to the cause of theism by strangling all hypocritical demonstrations against their own hypocrisy.

But Putana does not at all like to receive her reward in the only form that involves the total destruction of her wrong personality. King Kamsa also does not like to lose the services of the most trusted of his agents. The effective silencing of the whole race of pseudo-teachers of religion is the first clear indication of the appearance of the absolute on the mundane plane. The bona-fide teacher of the absolute heralds the advent of Krishna by his uncompromising campaign against the pseudo-teachers of religion. 🙏



The Putanas have power only over the atheists. They perform a thankless but salutary task for the benefit of their unwilling victims.

But as soon as theistic disposition proper makes its appearance in the pure consciousness of the awakened soul, the Putanas are decisively silenced at the very earliest stage of their encounter with new-born Krishna.



FALSE GURUS, INSTITUTIONS, AND THE HOLY NAME

Reflections on Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's "Putana" (see page 43)



Kamsa and his minions (Putana is on the top row, second from the left.)

A robe of seeming truth and trust
Hid crafty Observation;
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,
The dirk of Defamation:

A mask that like the gorget show'd,
Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
He wrapt him in Religion.

HYPOCRISY A-LA-MODE

— From "The Holy Fair" by Robert Burns (1759–1796).

Putana is the first demon killed by baby Krishna. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur describes that she represents the first obstacle encountered by a spiritual aspirant — acceptance of a false guru. Anyone who wants to achieve genuine love of Krishna must give up false teachers, whether they be mundane religionists, priests, secular teachers, materialistic counselors, friends, or family members.

False Gurus

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur describes that there are two types of false guru — internal and external. The external false guru is the pretentious hypocrite who

presents himself as guru even though he is not qualified. The internal false guru is the mind of the living entity, which takes shelter of material logic and reason to understand the absolute truth. The Thakur writes in *Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā* (8.14):

Those who are on the path of attachment, *rāga-marga*, should avoid the first obstacle, accepting a bogus guru, by discussing Putana's arrival in Vraja in the guise of a nurse.

... One who accepts reason and argument as his guru and who learns the process of worship from such a guru is said to have accepted the shelter of a bogus guru. When reason and argument pose as nourishment for the living entities' constitutional duties, this may be compared with Putana's falsely posing as a nurse.

... One who knows the proper path of attachment and who instructs his disciples according to their qualification is a *sad-guru*, eternal guru. Those who do not know the path of attachment yet instruct others in this path, or those who know the path and instruct their disciples without considering their qualification, are bogus gurus and must be given up.

Quoting *Viṣṇu-smṛiti*, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (1.45-146) also describes:



The Birth of Evil

*paricaryā-yāśo-lābha-lipsuḥ śiṣyād gurur na hi
kṛpā-sindhuh su-sampūrṇaḥ sarva-sattvopakāraḥ
nisprhaḥ sarvataḥ siddhaḥ sarva-vidyā-viśāradaḥ
sarva-saṁśaya-saṅcchettānalaso gurur āhṛtaḥ*

One who is greedy to get worship, praise, and money from his disciples is a bogus guru. A true spiritual master is an ocean of mercy, perfect, a person who does good to everyone, free from all material desires, fully knowledgeable, able to cut apart all doubts, and not lazy.

Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes:

There are many pseudo-worshippers that become religionists only for the sake of name and fame. Such pseudo-religionists do not wish to get out of this universe and reach the spiritual sky. They only want to maintain the status quo in the material world under the garb of worshiping the Lord.

... The pseudo-religionists have neither knowledge nor detachment from material affairs, for most of them want to live in the golden shackles of material bondage under the shadow of philanthropic activities disguised as religious principles. By a false display of religious sentiments, they present a show of devotional service while indulging in all sorts of immoral activities. In this way they pass as spiritual masters and devotees of God.

... pseudo-religionists are heading toward the most obnoxious place in the universe after the completion of their

spiritual master business, which they conduct simply for sense gratification.¹

Qualification of Guru

Kamsa, as described by Srila Saraswati Thakur, is representative of the materialistic leaders of religious institutions. In order to suppress genuine spiritual life, Kamsa advocates a superficial simulation of religion. His instrument in accomplishing this purpose is his lackey in the form of Putana, who represents the false guru. Kamsa's standard of qualification for a guru is mere membership in his church or sect. In his "Putana" article, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta dismisses this attitude:

The Supreme Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, in pursuance of the teachings of the scriptures, mandates all absence of conventionalism for the teachers of the eternal religion. It does not follow from this, however, that the mechanical adoption of the unconventional life by any person will make him a fit teacher of religion. Regulation is necessary for controlling the inherent worldliness of conditioned souls. But no mechanical regulation has any value, even for such a purpose. The bona-fide teacher of religion is neither any product of nor the favorer of any mechanical system.

Source of the False Guru

In several places, Thakur Bhaktivinode writes about *dharmadvajīs*, cheating religionists — literally, “those who wave the flag of *dharma*”. He says that there are two types of *dharmadvajīs* — the false leaders and their foolish followers. He describes them as “the hypocrites and the fools or the cheaters and the cheated”. The existence of the hypocritical leaders is dependent upon the followers. If there were no foolish followers, how could there be false gurus?

In *Bhaktyāloka*, a series of articles he wrote commenting on the second and third verses of *Upadeśāmṛta*, Bhaktivinode says:

With special care, one should give up the association of the *dharmadvajīs*, the hypocritically devout. Those who accept the external signs of *dharma* but do not actually follow *dharma* are called *dharmadvajīs*. There are two types of *dharmadvajīs* — the hypocrites and the fools, or the cheaters and the cheated. When such hypocrisy is found in those following *jñāna-kaṇḍa*, the path of knowledge, and *karma-kaṇḍa*, the path of fruitive activities, it is also condemned, but in devotional service hypocrisy ruins everything. It is better to associate with sense enjoyers, for in this whole world there is no worse association than the *dharmadvajī*. The deceitful *dharmadvajīs* accept the signs of *dharma* with a desire to cheat the world, and to fulfill their crooked desires they cheat the foolish by helping them in their rascaldom. Some of them become gurus and others become disciples, and by trickery they accumulate wealth, women, false prestige, and material assets. If one gives up the association of crooked hypocrites then he can honestly engage in devotional service. Honest worship is the only way to attain Krishna’s mercy.

While cheating gurus are all too common, it is very rare to find a bona fide guru. As described in the *Purāṇas*:

guravo bahavaḥ santi śiṣya-vittāpahārakāḥ
durlabhaḥ sad-gurur devi śiṣya-santāpa-hāraḥ

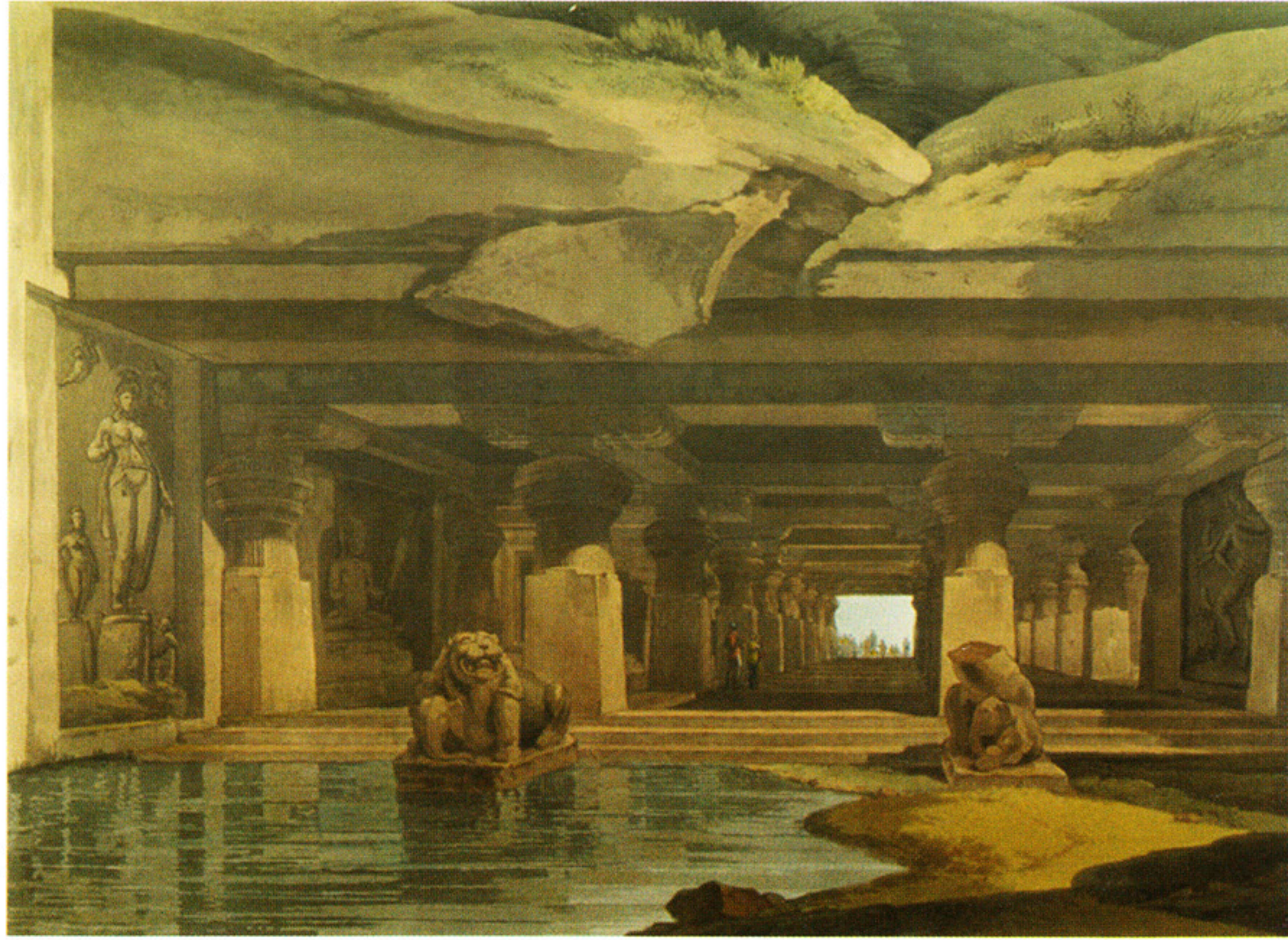
O Devi, there are many gurus who are expert in plundering the wealth of their disciples, but a bona fide guru who can remove the miseries of his disciple is very difficult to find.

Knowing everyone’s inner thoughts and desires, Krishna sends an appropriate guru. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.3) states:

nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām

The Supreme Lord is not obtained by expert explanations, by vast intelligence, or even by much hearing. He is obtained only by one whom he himself chooses. To such a person, he manifests his own form.

Krishna says in the *Gītā* (4.11):



6th Century Shiva Temple in a cave at Ellora, near Aurangabad, Maharashtra

ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ

As all surrender unto me, I reciprocate with them accordingly. Everyone follows my path in all respects, O son of Pritha.

For those who are genuine in their desire to advance, Krishna sends bona fide gurus. And for those who are



Festival scene at a Shiva temple in Murshidabad, West Bengal

not genuinely sincere about advancing in spiritual life — who only want to make a show of religion — or who depend on their own empiric senses to find a spiritual master, Krishna sends false gurus. This is the root cause of Putana's appearance. One should therefore pray feelingly for Krishna to send and reveal who is really guru. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur has written:

At the dawn of our spiritual life we sincerely and with complete submission and self-surrender pray to God for receiving the protection of Sri Guru. The Supreme Lord, perceiving our earnestness and devotion with a view to guide us on the true path, will send a real guru to us. Otherwise it is impossible for us to find Sri Guru by our own fallible energy. If we guide ourselves by our own energy we shall come across the pseudo-gurus, and being caught hold of by them by their temporary pleasing manners, run down to hell.³

Sri Krishna himself helps us in finding the really good preceptor in two ways. In the first place he instructs us as

regards the character and functions of a great preceptor through the revealed *śāstras*. In the second place he himself sends to us the good preceptor at the right moment when we are at all likely to benefit by his instructions.⁴

The Degeneration of Religion

The *Bhāgavatam* (6.3.19) states, *dharmaṁ tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam* — real religion is brought to this world only by the Lord or his intimate devotee. Throughout history, Krishna, his expansions, and his empowered devotees in the form of various *ācāryas*, prophets, and teachers, have come to establish spirit in this world of matter. Srila Saraswati Thakur writes:

Out of pity for the apostate *jīvas*, God sends his own messenger into this world in every age for establishing the pure (*śudha*) and eternal (*sanātana*) religion in the form of constant service of Krishna. Either Krishna or Krishna's own messenger establishes the true and eternal religion in this world. This task is beyond the capacity

of those who are not helped by the grace of God himself.⁵

But after the disappearance of the founder, care of the church falls into the hands of senior followers, who by default become the high priests, abbots, rabbis, imams, popes, pastors and gurus. Although these new leaders may be following the rituals, ceremonies, and practices given by their preceptor-founder, if they have not come to the platform of spiritual realization and still possess material desires then their vision of the transcendental religion given by their preceptor-founder will be mundane.⁶ Not being on the realized platform, they will be unable to give the same transcendental necessities that the founder was distributing. Srila Saraswati Thakur explains:

The most merciful Lord condescends at times to depute his servants, the dwellers of that blessed region, to the benighted inhabitants of this ungodly world. And sometimes out of his great mercy the Supreme Lord himself comes down into our midst. The Lord himself and his obedient servants alone know the real nature of the transcendental world. Those souls that are engrossed in matter are ignorant of the true nature of the spiritual region. This happens to be so because the fallen souls, being altogether averse to Krishna from time immemorial by reason of the vast variety of the material bodies which they were successively endowed by physical nature as the result of their ungodly activities, have remained without sight of Krishna for an incalculably long period. How then can we expect them to remember and tell us the tidings of the transcendental world? Can a person who has never been to England give us true information regarding that country? The analogy of this mundane world does not, of course, apply fully to the case of the supermundane. In this world, for instance, one who has never been to England may, by learning the account of that country from others who have visited it, be able to understand and also to convey to others information thus obtained. This is feasible because Bengal and England happen to be countries that are both situated within the limits of this physical universe and materially one country resembles the other. Therefore, it is possible for a person who is acquainted with the conditions of one country to understand the description of the other from the pen or lips of a person who happens to be like himself a denizen of their common universe. But the spiritual world is quite unlike this physical world. The two

Ink wash on paper by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm, c. 1770. The British Library, London.



Church in Nottinghamshire

are in fact centered on opposite poles. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that, engrossed as we are in the experience of this world, we fail to understand the real meaning of such accounts of the spiritual world as have been written or declared for our benefit by those who have had the privilege of possessing the true knowledge of that transcendental region. It is all the more so because the instruments with whose help we fallen souls have to study those accounts are themselves the cross threads in the texture that binds us to this world. Those who consider that by means of this material mind, intelligence and perverted ego it is possible to undertake the investigation of the spiritual kingdom and to enlighten other people regarding the same, and that it is possible with the help of such a mind to understand the nature of the spiritual world by studying the work of seers and explaining the same to others, are called psilanthropists [someone who views spiritual substance in a mundane way or with mundane vision] in the sense in which that term has been used by the devotees of God. ... Psilanthropism has assumed a great variety of forms and is grouped into numerous sects that are scattered over the world.⁷

After the disappearance of the religion's founder-prophet, if the new heirs to the priesthood harbor material desires for prestige and position, they tend to take advantage of the situation and accept the roles of religious leaders, even though they are not truly qualified. They are unquestionably accepted and supported by materialistic laity, who want a cheap imitation of religion and are thereby happy with the mechanical external presentation of the new priests. Thereby, such followers get the opportunity to be respected as pious people and feel good about themselves without going through the

trouble of genuine surrender. In this way, by the symbiotic relationship of false teachers and materialistic followers, the transcendental and unconventional religion given by the prophet is degraded into pedantry: an arbitrary adherence to rules and forms, a mere mechanical system of fixed doctrines and dogma. Srila Saraswati Thakur writes:

Putana is the slayer of all infants. The baby, when he or she comes out of the mother's womb, falls at once into the hands of the pseudo-teachers of religion. These teachers are successful in forestalling the attempts of the good preceptor, whose help is never sought by the atheists of this world at the baptisms of their babies. This is ensured by the arrangements of all established churches of the world. They have been successful only in supplying watchful Putanas for effecting the spiritual destruction of persons from the moment of their birth with the cooperation of their worldly parents.

... The bona-fide teacher of religion is neither any product of nor the favorer of any mechanical system. In his hands, no system has likewise the chance of degenerating into a lifeless arrangement. The mere pursuit of fixed doctrines and fixed liturgies cannot hold a person to the true spirit of doctrine or liturgy.⁸

Preaching and Practice

In an article entitled *Lip and Life*,⁹ Saraswati Thakur describes the qualities required for a true preacher of religion:

Mere profession of devotion to God with the lip without practicing the same in one's life is not the function of the preacher of God's word. Employing the lip in discoursing religion is only then lifted to the sphere of the service of God when such discourse proceeds from the heart that has been purified by devotion to the transcendental reality. This makes all the difference between the mercenary preacher and the true pastor.

... No one can be a teacher of religion who does not act in accordance with the principles that he teaches. ... In fact, preaching is only possible after practice has been perfected.

... Preaching of the word of God is the function of the *ācārya* who practices what he preaches. It is only when the conscious service of the Lord has been fully attained that one is fit to be styled as an *ācārya*. One who is himself fully established in the state of grace can alone lend a helping hand in lifting his brethren who happen to be in the fallen condition. One who is fit to instruct others regarding the nature of Godhead must himself belong to the transcendental plane.

On the transcendental plane there can be nothing that is worldly. The person who moves on the spiritual plane is absolutely free from all mundane affinities.

... In fact, the word of God and ordinary words are in every way different from one another. This difference cannot be really grasped by those who are in the sinful state. But the difference is nonetheless real, and it is owing to this radical difference between the two that it is never possible for a person in the sinful state to be a preacher of the word of God. The word of God is identical with God himself and manifests itself of its own accord on the tongue of one who is absolutely free from sin and who submits himself entirely at the holy feet of the Supreme Lord.

Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada stated similarly in the following conversation:

Devotee: What if a disciple goes to preach, but he's not preaching in the same spirit as his spiritual master?

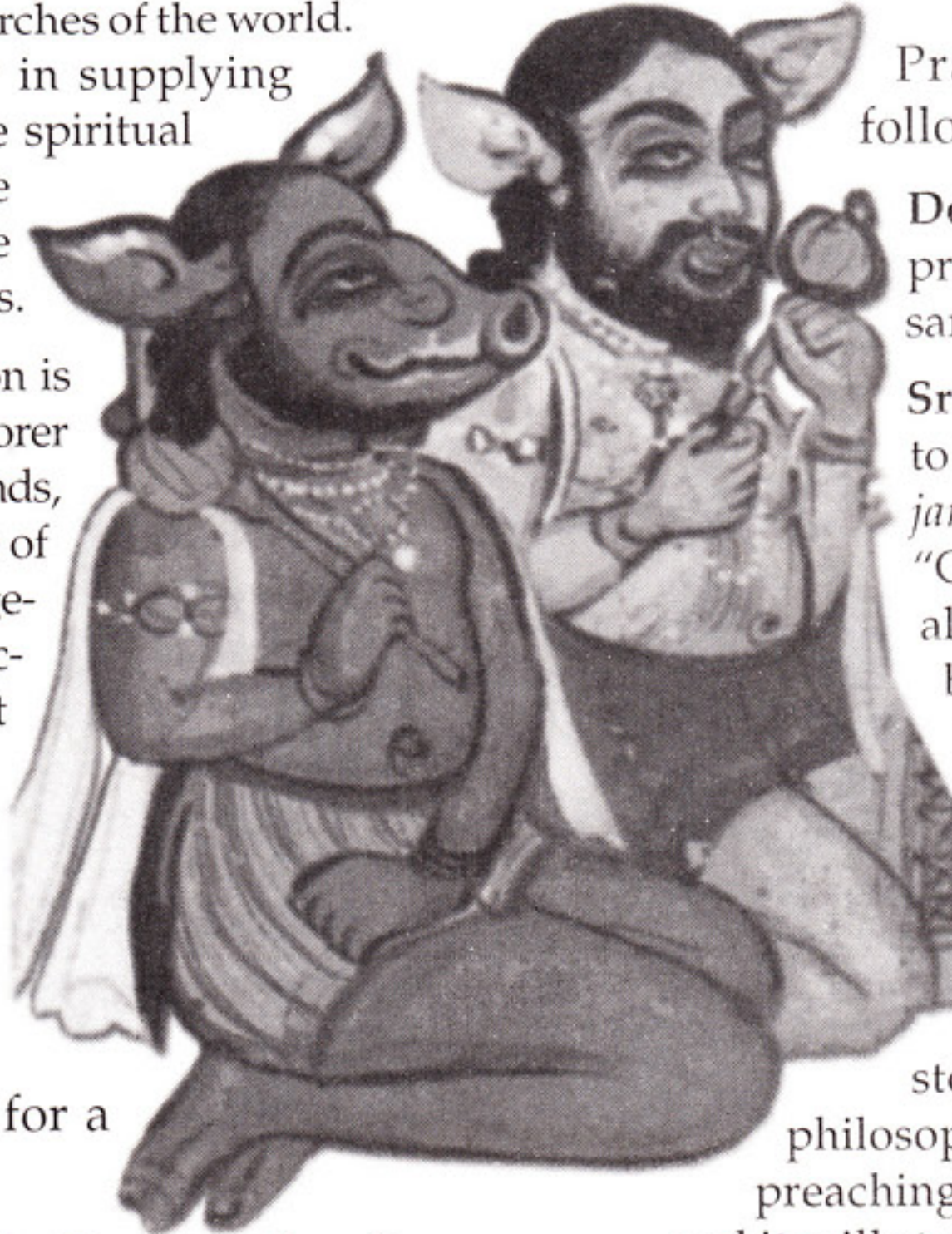
Srila Prabhupada: Therefore he is not to preach. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says, *janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra*: "Go and do good to others. But first of all do good to yourself".¹⁰ First of all you become a real preacher. Then go to preach. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu never sent neophytes to preach. For neophytes, preaching is not their business. Neophytes should stick to the worship of the deity in the temple. And those who have understood the philosophy and applied the philosophy in their life, they should go for preaching. Otherwise one will preach wrongly

... and it will stop. ... Mahaprabhu does not say that, "You remain a rascal and go to preach." No. *janma sārthaka kari* — "Your first business is that you make your life perfect. Then go to preach. Perfect means you learn how to obey my orders, *āmāra ājñāya*." That is perfection.

If you are actually, perfectly carrying out the orders of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, then you are preaching. Otherwise you will do wrongly and mislead. Don't do that! *andhā yathāndhair upanīyamānāḥ* — If you remain blind, don't try to lead other blind men.¹¹ That is misleading. First of all, open your eyes. Everything is there. Nobody should do anything whimsically. If you do whimsically, concoctedly, it will be a failure. It will not be effective.¹²

Fledgling Putanas

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta describes how the duplicitous desire to become guru arises in the heart of the conditioned soul:





Indra Sabha, looking outward. Part of a 6th century Hindu cave temple complex in the mountain of Ellora.

If I do not remember the lotus feet of Sri Guru at the beginning of every new year, every new month, every new day, and every new moment, then I am sure to fall into far greater inconveniences. If I do not remember his lotus feet, then the desire will come to dress myself in the garb of guru. I will become liable to the bad desire of seeking to be worshiped by other people as guru. It is this which constitutes addiction to things other than the truth.¹³

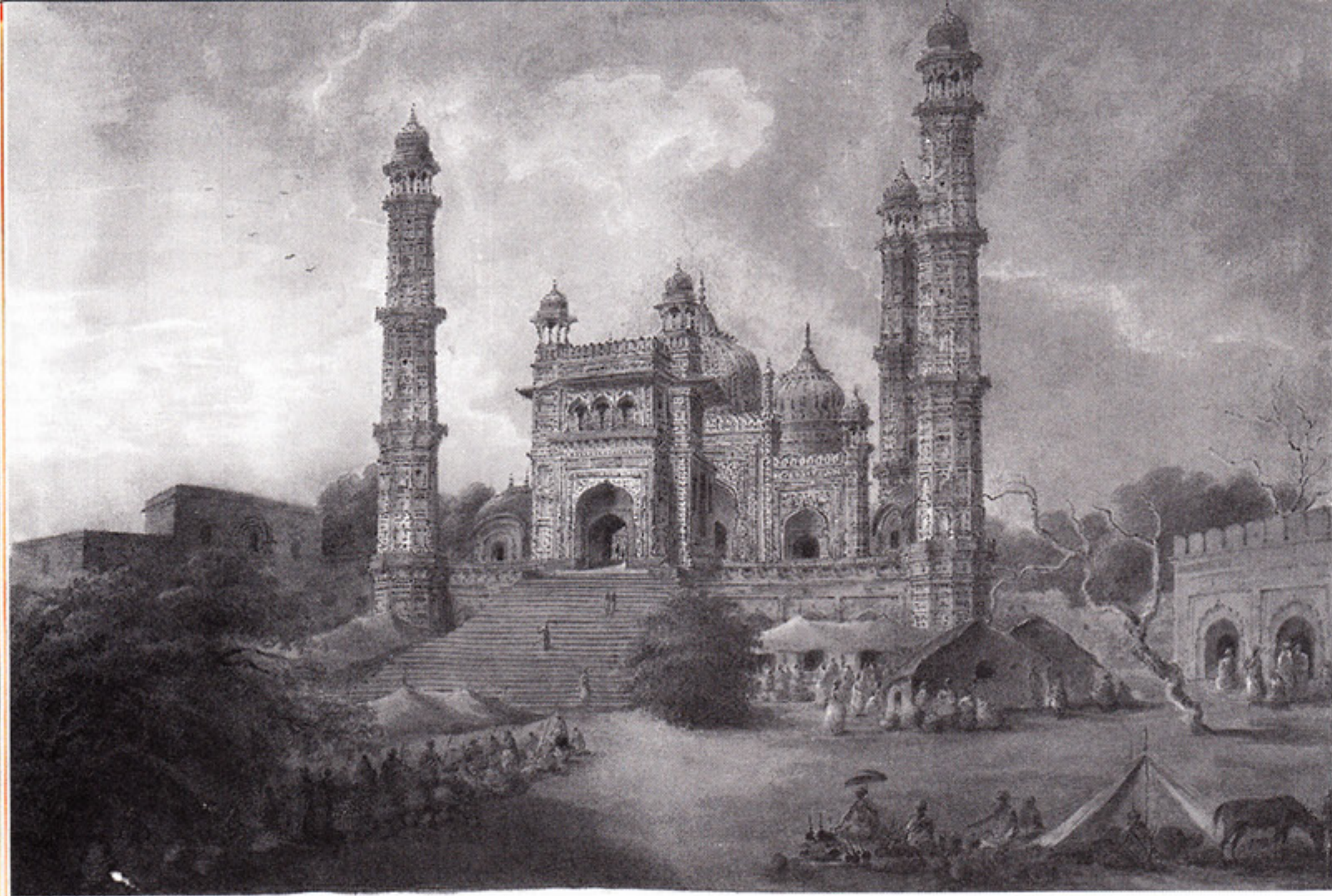
One who does not constantly remember and take shelter of one's transcendental teacher is unable to appreciate how that teacher is still present even after his physical departure. The history of the world's religions has shown that such materialistic followers commonly start to think, "My mentor is no longer present. How will his mission go on? I may not be qualified, but someone has to be the guru and priest. I don't see anyone else who can do it, so I will have to myself." Srila Saraswati Thakur says that in this way the "bad desire" to falsely dress as guru arises in the heart of the follower. Putana thus takes birth.

Deified

Historically, there has been a tendency amongst such disciples to place more emphasis on the founder-prophet of their religion than on the orders of that saint to glorify the Lord. The prophet, saint, founder was someone they were able to relate to with their senses, while the Lord remains always beyond the range of mundane sense perception. Such budding Putanas commonly exploit whatever association they had with that founding prophet, and instead of developing the qualities taught by the saint, seek prestige and respect based on whatever bodily contact they had with him.

Attached to their reputation and external ritualism, Kamsa and his minions such as Putana do not appreciate the appearance of bona fide transcendentalists, for realized spirituality is a threat to Kamsa's mechanical brand of churchism. Srila Saraswati Thakur writes:

Putana does not at all like to receive her reward in the only form that involves the total destruction of her



Watercolor by Seeta Ram c. 1814-15. The British Library, London.

The Jama Masjid in Mathura

Universal Problem

Putana's presence is not limited to Vraja or to any one institution or religion. False gurus and hypocrisy are inherent problems that plague all religious organizations and indeed all groups in the material world — from the Boy Scouts, to public libraries, businesses, political groups, and even senior citizen shuffleboard clubs.

Dr. Sadhu Singh Dhama in *The Sikhs and Their Religion*¹⁷ writes:

The followers of established religions soon degenerate into the smugness of self-seeking comfort and ease out of which their masters once shook them with their in-

spiring message. The hard road of truth and self-sacrifice is abandoned for the byways of personal gain and egotism. The religious idealism is lost in a barrage of high-sounding words and eloquent phrases. They worship the form instead of the spirit, the symbol instead of the essence, and hinder their development by narrow creed and stultifying dogma. Their leaders cease to live their religion; they begin to use it as a means to earn a comfortable living. The established religious hierarchy uses all the tricks of power politics to keep itself in the saddle.

Hypocrisy in religion is condemned in all of the world's sacred literatures:

Christianity:

And Jesus said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'" (Mark 7:6-7)

[When Jesus discovered that materialistic persons had taken over the temple and were using it as a place to sell things to maintain themselves] he went into the temple and began to cast out them that sold therein and them that bought, saying unto them, "It is written that my house is the house of prayer. But ye have made it a den of thieves." (Luke 19:46-47)

Judaism:

King Alexander Jannaeus said to his wife, "Fear not the [true] Pharisees nor the non-Pharisees, but those hypocrites who ape the Pharisees." (Talmud, Sota 22b)

Buddhism:

What is the use of your matted hair, O witless man? What is the use of your antelope skin garment? Within you are full of passions; without you embellish yourself [with the paraphernalia of an ascetic]. (Dhammapada 394)

wrong personality. King Kamsa also does not like to lose the services of the most trusted of his agents. The effective silencing of the whole race of pseudo-teachers of religion is the first clear indication of the appearance of the absolute on the mundane plane. The bona fide teacher of the absolute heralds the advent of Krishna by his uncompromising campaign against the pseudo-teachers of religion.¹⁴

Krishna, as well as his empowered devotees, who are non-different from him, come to this world to reform the religion, originally pure, that has been hijacked by Kamsa and his unctuous band of hypocrites.

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmanānir sṛjāmy aham*

Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion — at that time I descend myself.¹⁵

Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes:

Whenever an *ācārya* comes, following the superior orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or his representative, he establishes the principles of religion as enunciated in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Religion means abiding by the orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Religious principles begin from the time one surrenders to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the *ācārya's* duty to spread a bona fide religious system and induce everyone to bow down before the Supreme Lord. One executes the religious principles by rendering devotional service, specifically the nine items like hearing, chanting and remembering. Unfortunately, when the *ācārya* disappears, rogues and non-devotees take advantage and immediately begin to introduce unauthorized principles in the name of so-called swamis, yogis, philanthropists, welfare workers and so on.¹⁶

Confucianism:

Tzu-kung asked about the true gentleman. The master said, "He does not preach what he practices until he has practiced what he preaches." (*Analects* 2.13)

The master said, "A gentleman is ashamed to let his words outrun his deeds." (*Analects* 14.29)

Why Did they Do it?

At this point a question arises: Why did Srila Bhaktisiddhanta do it? As author of the article "Putana", and as a scholarly *vaiṣṇava* aware of the pervasiveness of hypocrisy in organized religion, why did he start a formal religious organization? And similar questions can be asked about his disciples such as Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who after Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, created institutions such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Knowing that Putana would inevitably rear her ugly head, why did they instigate formal institutions and encourage everyone to join and cooperatively follow the authorities therein? Did they want to offer the members of their societies as sacrificial goats on Putana's bloodstained altar? What was their purpose?

In "Putana", Srila Bhaktisiddhanta writes, "Regulation is necessary for controlling the inherent worldliness of conditioned souls." Srila Saraswati Thakur saw that the vast majority of persons in this degraded age of sense gratification need some form and regulation to help them be steady in their devotional practices. It is said that man is a social animal. Srila Saraswati Thakur saw that the natural tendency to want to identify oneself with a group could be dovetailed in a Krishna conscious institution where membership entailed following a strict schedule of devotional activities, thus helping the followers to become fixed in their *bhajan*.

Two Weapons

By analyzing the work of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, it is seen that they employed two secret weapons in the foundation of their institutions. They knew that as long as these two elements were present, in spite of Putana's inevitable arrival, their sincere followers would be safe. Those secret weapons were *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and Sri Krishna's holy names.

Every *vastu*, object, whether spiritual or material, has a particular *dharma*, intrinsic nature. The *dharma* of water is to be wet; the *dharma* of fire is to be hot, etc. These objects cannot be separated from their essential qualities. One of

the essential and inseparable qualities of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is that it always creates a revolution. Text 1.5.11 says: *tad-vāg-visargo janatāgha-viplavo* — "This transcendental literature will bring about a revolution in the sinful lives of the world's misdirected civilization." If one sincerely reads *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, then the Putanas and Kamsas who inevitably arise within all religious institutions will be exposed. The second verse of the *Bhāgavatam* therefore describes, *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo* — "This *Bhāgavata Purāna* completely rejects all cheating religious activities which are materially motivated and propounds the highest truth." Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur and his followers such as Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada mandated for their institutions that there must be daily hearing and reciting of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Knowing that *kṛṣṇa-tulya bhāgavata* — the *Bhāgavatam* is non-different from Krishna¹⁸ — they were, no doubt, confident that child Krishna in the form of the *Bhāgavatam* would safeguard sincere spiritual aspirants from Putana.

No Faults

The second secret weapon they employed was the chanting of Krishna's names. Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami was fond of referring to his society as the "Hare Krishna movement". Both he and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta knew that as long as the chanting of *kṛṣṇa-nāma* was present, sincere practitioners would be sheltered and purified. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 8.23.16 says:

*mantratas tantrataś chidraṁ deśa-kālārha-vastutaḥ
sarvaṁ karoti niśchidraṁ anusaṅkīrtanaṁ tava*

There may be discrepancies in pronouncing the mantras and observing the regulative principles, and, moreover, there may be discrepancies in regard to time, place, person, and paraphernalia. But when your Lordship's holy name is chanted, everything becomes faultless.

Therefore Srila Prabhupada instructed the managers of his ISKCON society:

This chanting should go on. Instead of meetings, resolutions, dissolutions, revolutions, and no solutions, there should be chanting.¹⁹

Faults are always present in religious institutions, especially in this age of Kali. However, the Gaudiya Vaishnava devotees have strong faith in *nāma*; they are *nāma-āśrayi*, those who take shelter of the holy name. They understand that any faults one may perceive in persons chanting the holy name are only temporary and apparent. Such *sāragrahi-vaiṣṇavas*, devotees following

the essence, do not criticize members of other *sampradāyas*, camps, and institutions who are sincerely chanting the holy name. Rather, they feel transcendental ecstasy seeing the spreading of Mahaprabhu's mission. They have strong faith in the holy name as the quintessential panacea for all faults and troubles. Being non-different from his holy name, Krishna inspires and protects the devotee who sincerely calls upon him with love.

*teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te*

To those who are constantly devoted to serving me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to me.²⁰

Per this promise, Krishna gives intelligence to the sincere devotee who is doing *nāma-bhajan*. Part of that intelligence is to reveal who is a *sādhu* and who is a cheater, just as baby Krishna exposed the true form of Putana to the inhabitants of Vrindavan.

Even after the disappearance of Sri Guru, if the disciple follows the instructions of his spiritual master and continues to chant the holy name, he can continue to associate with his divine master. In *Vāmana-kalpa* (quoted in *Bhakti-sandarbha* 237.8) Lord Brahma says:

*yo mantrah sa guruḥ sāḥśād yo guruḥ sa hariḥ svayam
gurur yasya bhavet tuṣṭas tasya tuṣṭo hariḥ svayam*

One's mantra is identical with his guru. One's guru is identical with Lord Hari. When the guru is pleased, Lord Hari is also pleased.

Secret?

How it is that chanting *hare kṛṣṇa* and reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* are "secret" weapons in societies that advocate mass distribution of the holy name, and where all the members daily chant and read the *Bhāgavatam* as well as distribute it profusely to others? They are secret in the sense that the *bahir-mukha janas*, those external persons who are unwittingly Putana's great supporters, don't take them seriously. Lacking faith in these activities, such false pretenders only make a show of chanting and reading the *Bhāgavatam*. If they do not chant the required number of rounds and attend (or give) lectures on *Bhāgavatam* then they will not be allowed to remain in the society and thus they will lose the source of their income, prestige and position. Such persons think that they are cheating others, but actually Krishna is cheating them. Putana thought that by killing the children in Vraja she was promoting her own cause, but in fact Krishna tricked her and she only killed the children of Kamsa's followers.²¹ She thought that she was fooling Krishna, but ultimately she was fooled and used by Krishna for his own purposes. In the same way, Sriman Mahaprabhu uses the little Putanas, the

pretender devotees, to help push on his movement. Moreover, just as Putana was ultimately purified and delivered by Krishna, similarly, the little Putanas of today who have infiltrated the temples, institutions, and *saṅgas* in Mahaprabhu's society are also ultimately purified and delivered, provided they maintain their contact with the holy name. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur was aware of the presence of such duplicity in his institution, but as the following story illustrates, he understood that in the end such persons would become benefited:

Once, Sisir Kumar Ghosh, the editor of Ananda Bazaar Patrika, a daily newspaper of Calcutta, said to Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, "I see there are many hypocrites in your mission; people who are not very sincere. What they say and what they do are not the same. Why do you not put them out? Let them go home and get married or something like that. Why keep them in your *maṭha*?" Simha-guru Srila Saraswati Thakur replied, "Oh editor! What is a better place for them than this *maṭha*? Is there any better place to save them? Here they may be good or bad, but if their fortune will allow, they will become good. If not, what can I do? Is there any better place? No, there isn't."²²

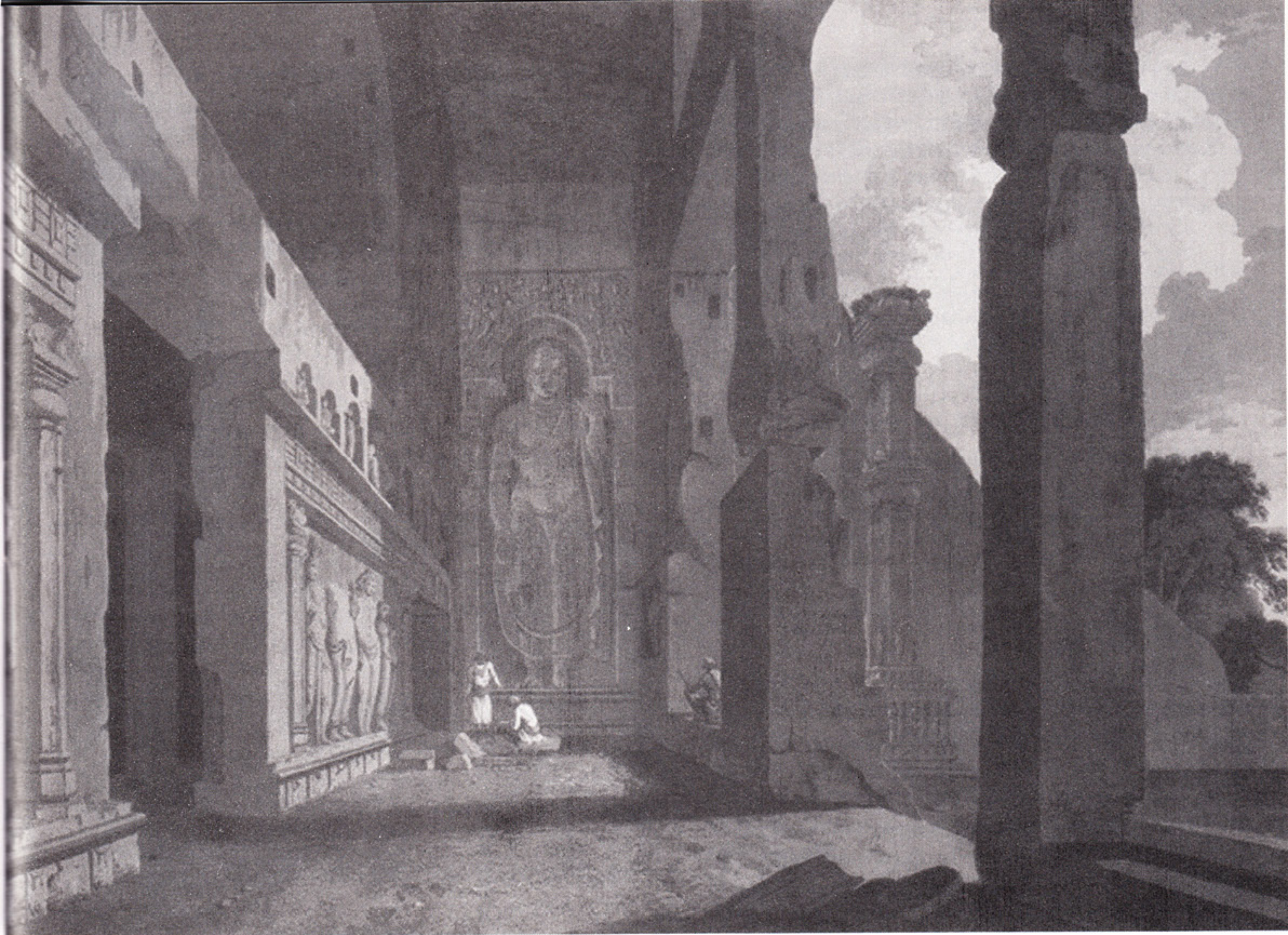
Similarly, from many statements and historical episodes it is clear that Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada was also aware that hypocrisy and various other improprieties were going on in his society. But, like Srila Saraswati Thakur, he had faith that by following the process of Krishna consciousness such persons would ultimately be purified.

The Enemy is Us

One may ask, "How is it possible for demoniac and deceitful persons posing as sincere spiritual aspirants to enter into a genuine spiritual movement?" To properly answer this question, we should consider the much more perplexing question of how it was possible for the terrible demoness Putana to enter Vraja, deceive Krishna's eternal associates such as Yasoda and Rohini, and thus gain entrance into the bedroom where baby Krishna was resting? If even Yasoda and Rohini could be tricked into thinking that the false guru Putana was a genuine devotee, then what hope is there for the insignificant living entities in this material world to recognize her? Therefore, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta says that only Krishna can recognize and stop the false guru Putanas:

No human contrivance can prevent these Putanas from obtaining possession of the pulpits. This is due to the general prevalence of atheistic disposition in the people of this world.

... as soon as theistic disposition proper makes its appearance in the pure consciousness of the awakened soul, the Putanas are decisively silenced at the very earliest stage of their encounter with new-born Krishna.²³



5th century Mahayana Buddhist temple on the island of Salsette, India

Saraswati Thakur says it is a mistake to think that conditioned souls who perceive the world through the same dull material senses that bind them to it can have any success in driving out the Putanas from the world's religious institutions. Rather, he says that those who strive with material means to expose and drive out Putana become her unwitting supporters:

They are, therefore, greatly mistaken who are disposed to look forward to the amelioration of the worldly state in any worldly sense due to the worldly success of any truly spiritual movement. It is such worldly expectants [i.e., persons who are hopeful or expectant] who become the patrons of the mischievous race of the pseudo-teachers of religion, the Putanas, whose congenial function is to stifle the theistic disposition at the very moment of its suspected appearance.²⁴

They become Putana's supporters because in trying to drive Putana out they take shelter of the very process that she advocates — empiricism. Krishna is the only person who can expose and drive out Putana, the first

anartha in spiritual life. But rather than taking shelter of Krishna, these inadvertent supporters of this demoness take shelter of their self-conceived strengths in the form of imagined intelligence, scriptural knowledge, and superficial religious practices. However, none of these — not even apparent spirituality, is sufficient to recognize or defeat Putana. Rather, they only support her cause as the false guru by distracting people from taking one-pointed shelter of Krishna. The real enemy of spiritual life is not an external force. The enemy is one's tendency to take shelter elsewhere than Krishna, to try to defeat Putana on one's own, separate from Krishna. As it is said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

The Corruption of Reform

The injurious consequences of the conditioned soul's endeavor to expose and police evil are understood in Vedic as well as secular circles. The British philosopher and author Aldous Huxley wrote:²⁵

The effects that follow the constant and intense concentration upon evil are always disastrous. Those who crusade not for God in themselves but against the demons in others never succeed in making the world better, but leave it either as it was, or sometimes even perceptibly worse than it was before the crusade began. By thinking primarily of evil we tend, however excellent our intentions, to create occasions for evil to manifest itself. (p. 192)

No man can concentrate his attention upon evil, or even the idea of evil, and remain unaffected. To be more against the demon than for godliness is exceedingly dangerous. Every crusader is apt to go mad. He is haunted by the wickedness that he attributes to his enemies; it becomes sort of a part of him. (p. 260)

Krishna similarly tells Uddhava:²⁶

*para-svabhāva-karmāṇi yaḥ praśamsati nindati
sa āśu bhraśyate svārthād asaty abhiniveśataḥ*

Whoever indulges in praising or criticizing the qualities and behavior of others will quickly become deviated from his own best interest by his entanglement in illusory dualities.

Narottam Das Thakur therefore says that pure *bhajan* means not concerning oneself with the non-devotees and false pretenders:²⁷

*karmī jñānī michā-bhakta nā habe tāya anurakta
śuddha-bhajanete kara mana*

Don't be attached to the fruitive worker, the philosopher, and the hypocritical devotee, but fix your mind in pure *bhajan*.

Protected

Ultimately, the false guru is oneself, for in spiritual life no one else can cheat us. If one is sincere, then Krishna will manifest in the form of good intelligence and provide protection from the false gurus of this world. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati writes in "Putana":

Sri Krishna manifests his eternal birth in the pure consciousness of the serving soul who is located above all mundane limitations.


... as soon as theistic disposition proper makes its appearance in the pure consciousness of the awakened soul, the Putanas are decisively silenced at the very earliest stage of their encounter with new-born Krishna.

But no adverse efforts of the empiricists, whose rule seems till then to be perfectly well-established over the minds of the deluded souls of this world, can dissuade any person from exclusively following the truth when he [Krishna] actually manifests his birth in the pure consciousness of the soul.

The theistic disposition can never be stifled by the efforts of those Putanas. The Putanas have power only over the atheists. They perform a thankless but salutary task for the benefit of their unwilling victims.

As Krishna says in the *Gītā* (6.40):

*pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśas tasya vidyate
na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścid durgatiṁ tāta gacchati*

O Arjuna, a transcendentalist engaged in auspicious activities does not meet with destruction either in this world or in the spiritual world; one who does good, my friend, is never overcome by evil. 

Endnotes

¹ *Īśopaniṣad* mantra 12, purport.

² Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada often quoted this verse. It is included in *Gauḍīya Kanṭahāra*, a compilation of verses often cited by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati. The only reference given therein is *purāṇa-vākya*, "a statement of the *Purāṇas*".

³ *Sajjana-Toshani*. Oct. 1929, vol. XXVII, no. 5.

⁴ From article entitled, *Initiation into Spiritual Life*. *Sajjana-Toshani* Dec. 1928, vol. XXVI, no. 1.

⁵ From the article "Thakur Bhaktivinode" published in *Sajjana-Toshani* magazine. September 1927, volume XXV, no. 4.

⁶ One may question why the founder would accept them as principal followers? If he was such a teacher, why couldn't he pick out and only accept qualified persons as his authorized followers? For more on this topic, please see "Mercy and Cheating" in *Sri Krishna Kathamrita* #7.

⁷ Excerpted from "Psilanthropism", *Sajjana-Toshani* magazine, January 1928, volume XXV, no. 7.

⁸ "Putana" article.

⁹ *Sajjana-Toshani*. December 1927, volume XXV, no. 8.

¹⁰ *Cc. ādi* 9.41.

¹¹ *Bhāg.* 7.5.31.

¹² Room Conversation in Fiji. 2 May 1976.

¹³ *Sri Chaitanya's Teachings* page 262-263.

¹⁴ "Putana" article.

¹⁵ *Bg.* 4.7.

¹⁶ Purport to *Bhāg.* 4.28.48.

¹⁷ Page 12.

¹⁸ *Cc. madhya* 24.318.

¹⁹ Statement to the GBC. *Prabhupāda Lilāmṛta* volume 6.

²⁰ *Bg.* 10.10.

²¹ As described on pages 35-36 of this issue in the article, "Krishna's Pastime of Killing Putana."

²² Remembrances of Sripad Jatishekhar Das, disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, from an upcoming biography of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta by Srimad Bhaktivikas Swami.

²³ "Putana" article

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *The Devils of Loudon*. Page 260.

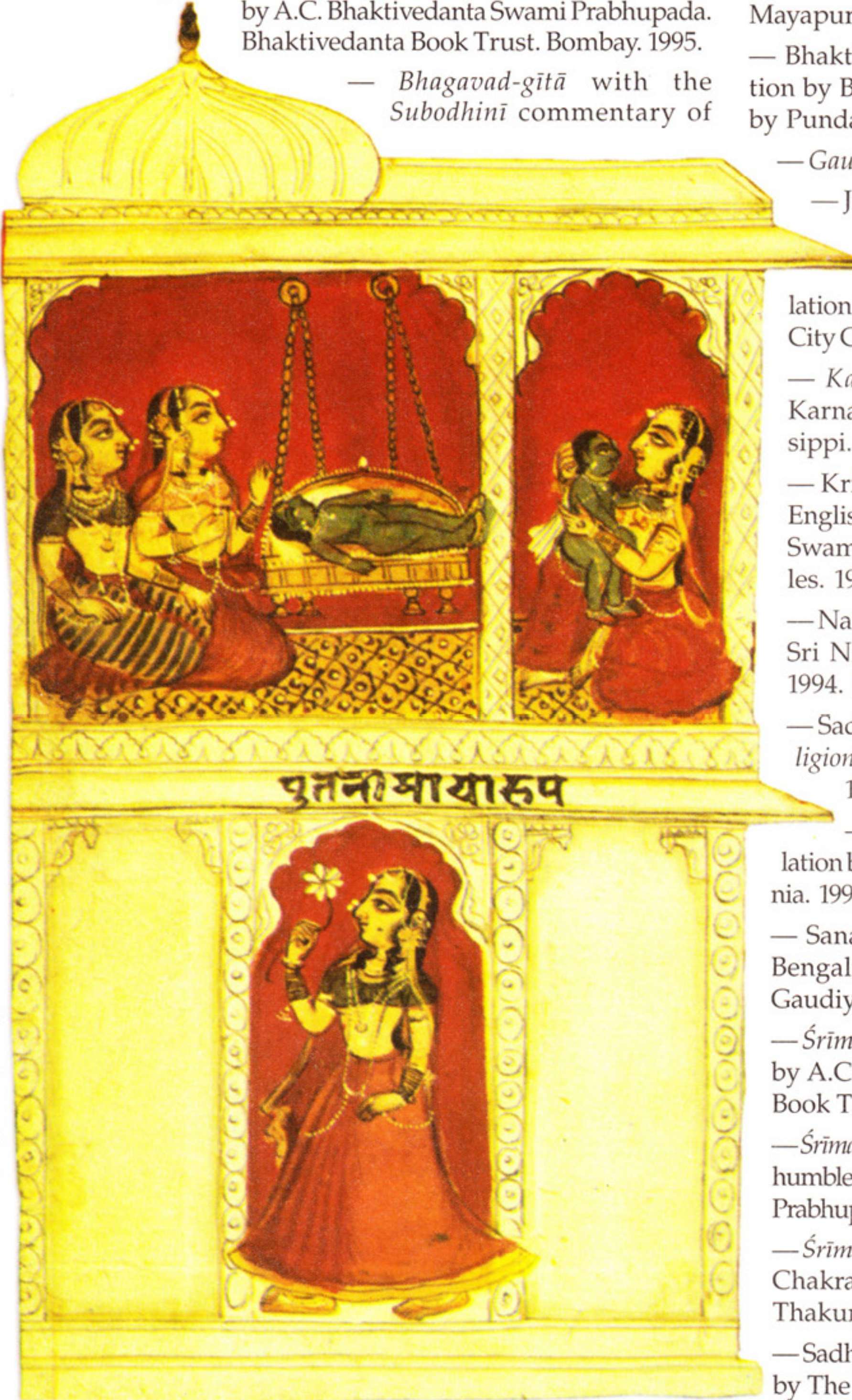
²⁶ *Bhāg.* 11.28.2.

²⁷ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā* 6.18.

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18th Century Rajasthani painting. Artist unknown.

Putana entering Nanda Maharaja's home in the form of a beautiful young woman. Only Krishna was able to recognize Putana for what she was.

THE WONDER OF GAURA'S KIRTANA

Srila Narahari Chakravarti Thakur

(Ghaṅṭāraṇa-rāga)

নাচত গৌর নিখিল নট-পণ্ডিত
নিরুপম ভঙ্গী মদন-মদ হরঈ
প্রচুর চণ্ডকর-দরপরিভঞ্জন
অঙ্গ-কিরণে দিগবিদিগ উজরঈ

*nācata gaura nikhila naṭa-panḍita
nirupama bhaṅgī madana-mada harāi
pracura caṇḍakara-darapari-bhañjana,
aṅga-kiraṇe diga-bidiga ujarāi*

Lord Gaura, the most learned pandit of dancing, gracefully dances with peerless movements that defeat Cupid. The effulgence of Lord Gaura's limbs breaks the sun's pride into pieces and fills all the directions with light. (1)

উনমত অতুল সিংহ জিনি গরজন,
শুনই বলী কলিবারণ ডরঈ
ঘন ঘন লম্ফ ললিত গতি চঞ্চল,
চরণাঘাতে ক্ষিতি টলমল করঈ

*unamata atula siṅha jini garajana,
śuna-i balī kali-bāraṇa ḍarāi
ghana ghana lampha lalita gati cañcala,
caraṇāghāte kṣiti ṭalamala karāi*

His roar defeats that of wildly angry lions. Hearing that roar, powerful Kali-yuga is stunned with fear. In his restless dancing, he leaps again and again. The weight of his steps makes the earth tremble. (2)



কিন্নর-গরব খরব করু পরিকর,
গায় উলসে অমিয় রব বরই
বায়ত বহুবিধ খোল খমক ধুনি,
পরশত গগন কৌন ধৃতি ধরই

*kinnara garaba kharaba karu parikara,
gāya ulase amiya raba bharāi
bāyata bahu-vidha khola khamaka dhuni,
paraśata gagana kauna dhṛti dharāi*

His companions joyfully sing songs that are like nectar — songs that shrink the pride of the Kinnaras'. The various sweet sounds of the *khola* and *khamaka* drums touch the sky. Who can stay peaceful and unmoved? (3)

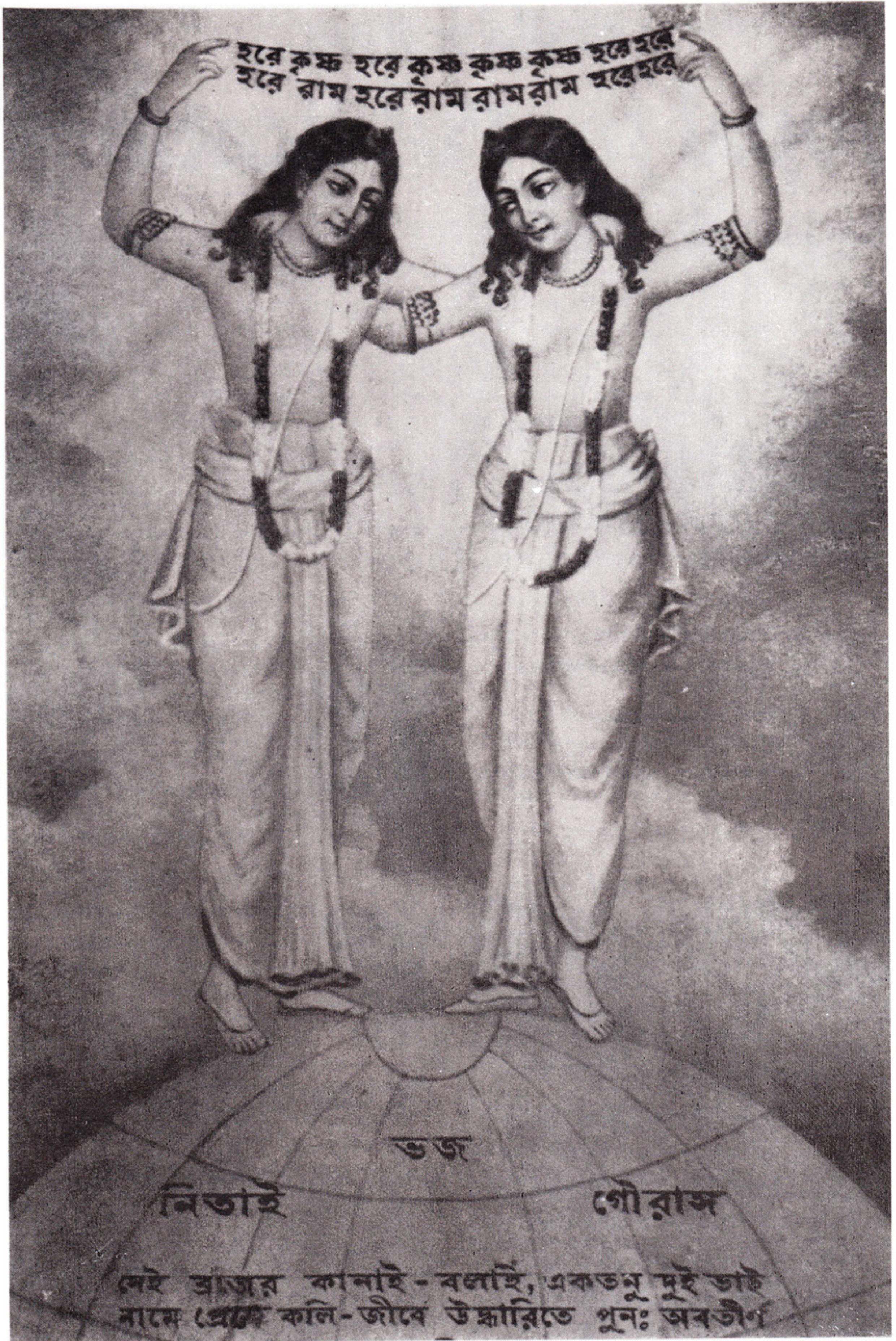
অতুল প্রতাপ কাঁপি দুরজনগণ,
লেয়ই শরণ চরণতলে পডই
নরহরি পঙ্ক কীরিতি রহু জগভর,
পরম দুলহ ধন নিয়ত বিতরই

*atula pratāpa kāñpi durajana-gaṇa,
leya-i śaraṇa caraṇa-tale paḍai
narahari paṅka kīriti rahuṅ jaga-bhara,
parama dulaha dhana niyata bitarāi*

Trembling in fear, the powerful demons take shelter of Lord Gaura's feet. Narahari's master fills the worlds with the sound of *kīrtana*. He freely gives the rarest treasure to this world. (4)

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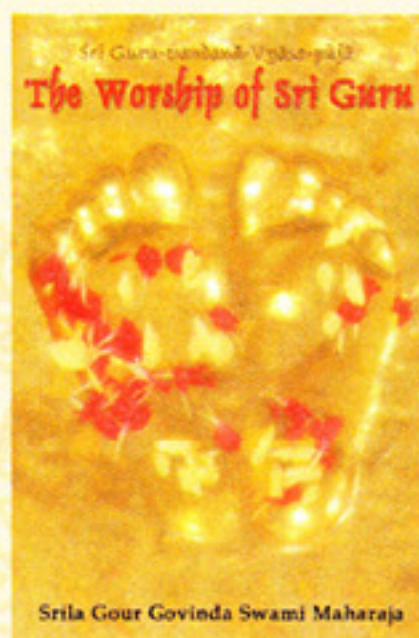
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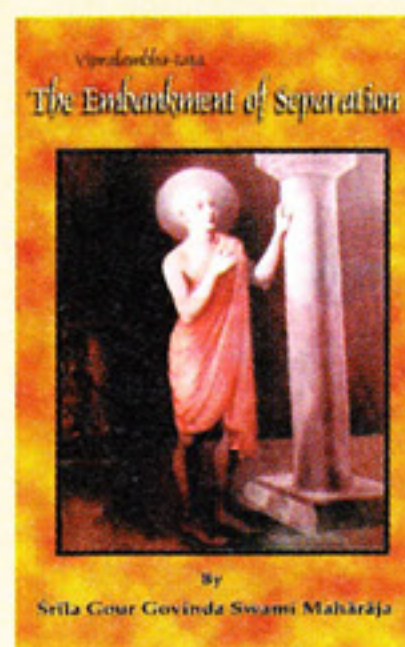


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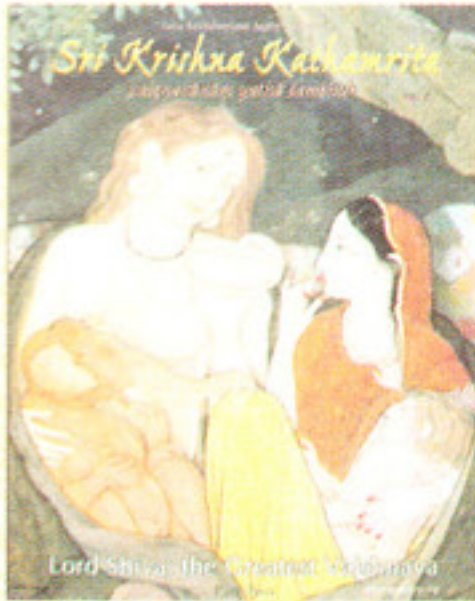


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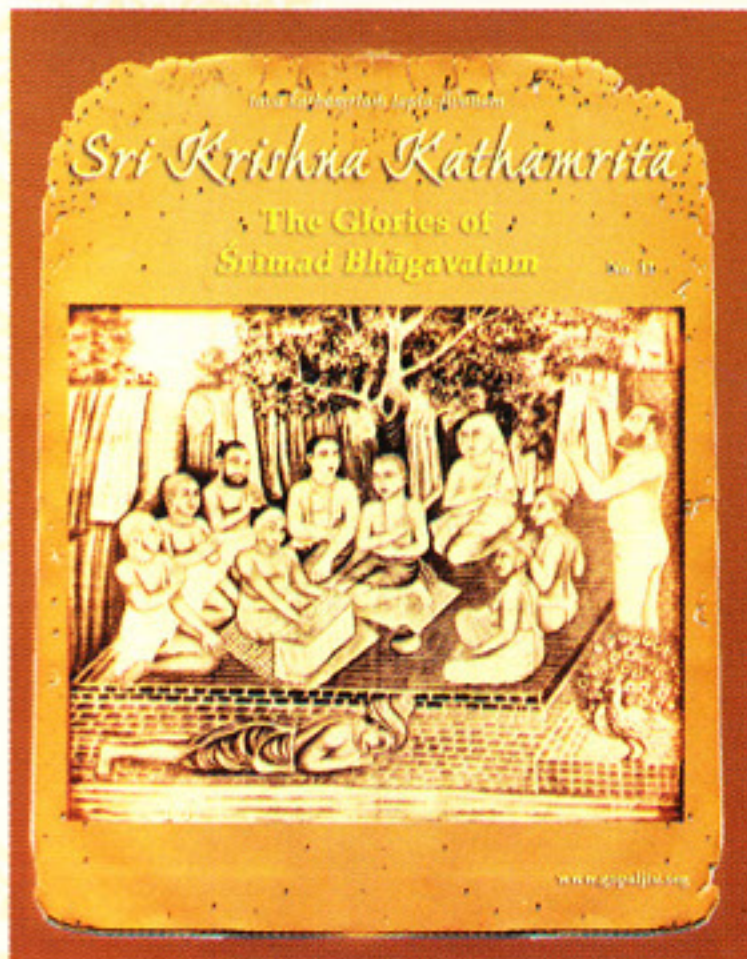
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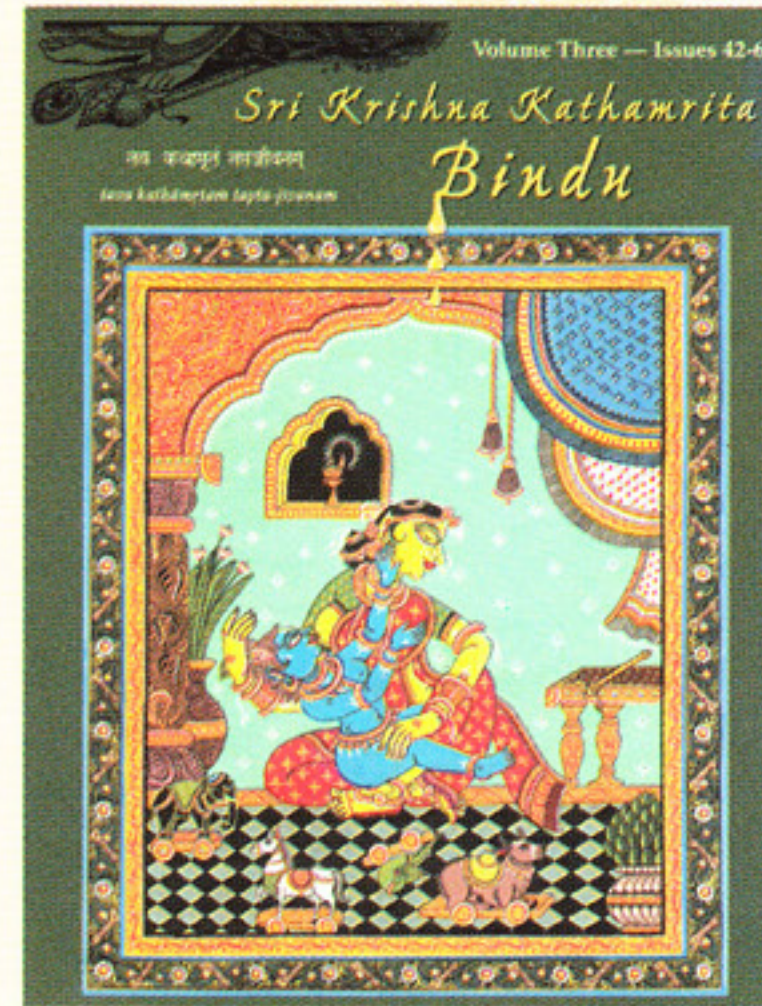
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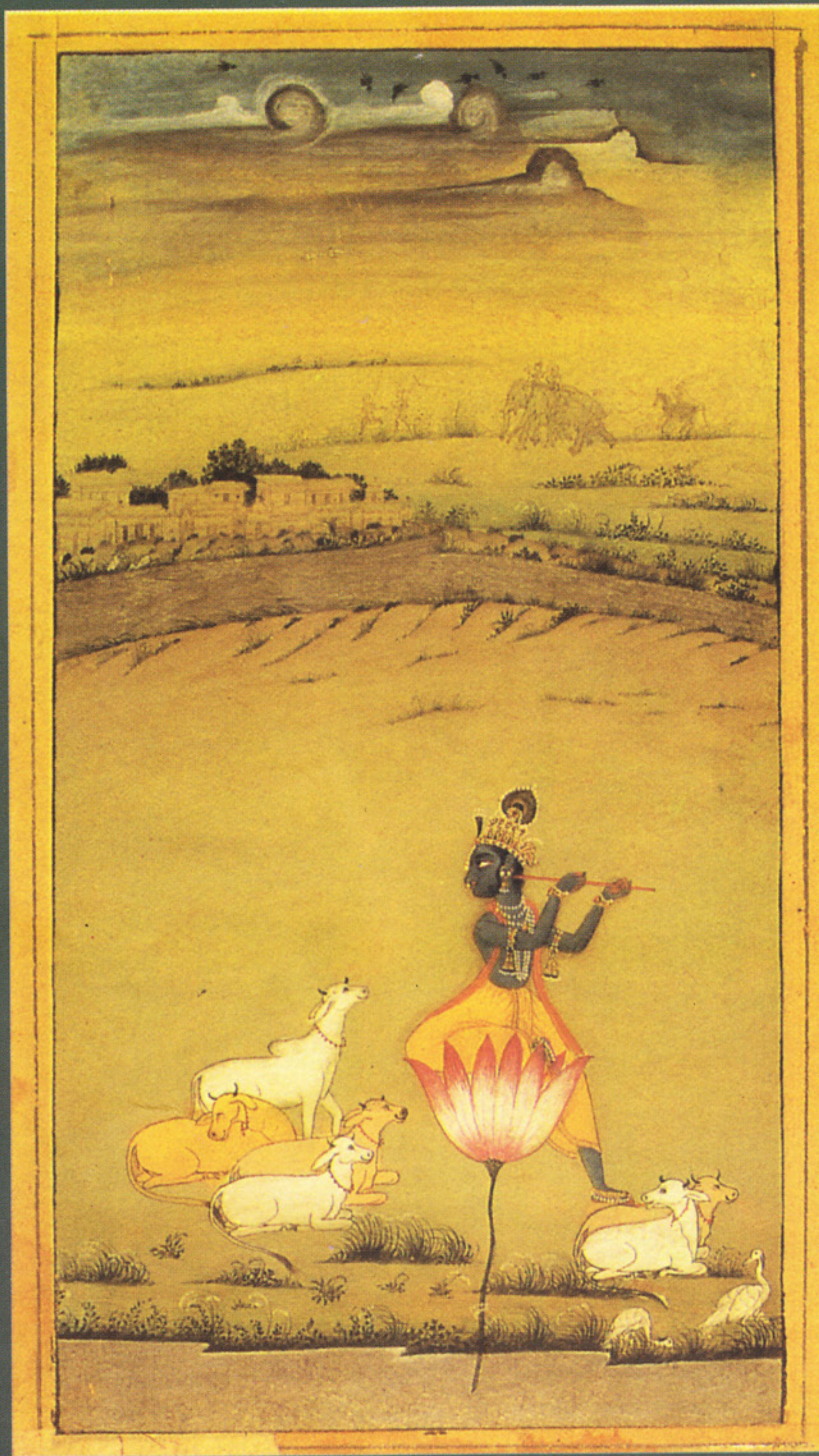
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*nāmāni praṇayena te sukṛtinām tanvanti tuṅḍotsavam
 dhāmāni prathayanti hanta jalada-śyāmāni netrāñjanam
 sāmāni śruti-śaṣkulīm muralikā-jātāny alaṅkurvate
 kāmānirvṛta-cetasām iha vibho nāsāpi naḥ śobhate*

Now that we have become your devotees, your holy names have affectionately created a jubilant festival in our mouths, your bodily splendor, which is like a dark raincloud, has become the black ointment of our eyes, and the music of your flute has become the ornament of our ears. O Almighty Lord, we no longer find happiness in so-called pleasurable objects, and material desires have lost their attractiveness. — Srila Rupa Goswami's *Padyāvalī*, text 59