

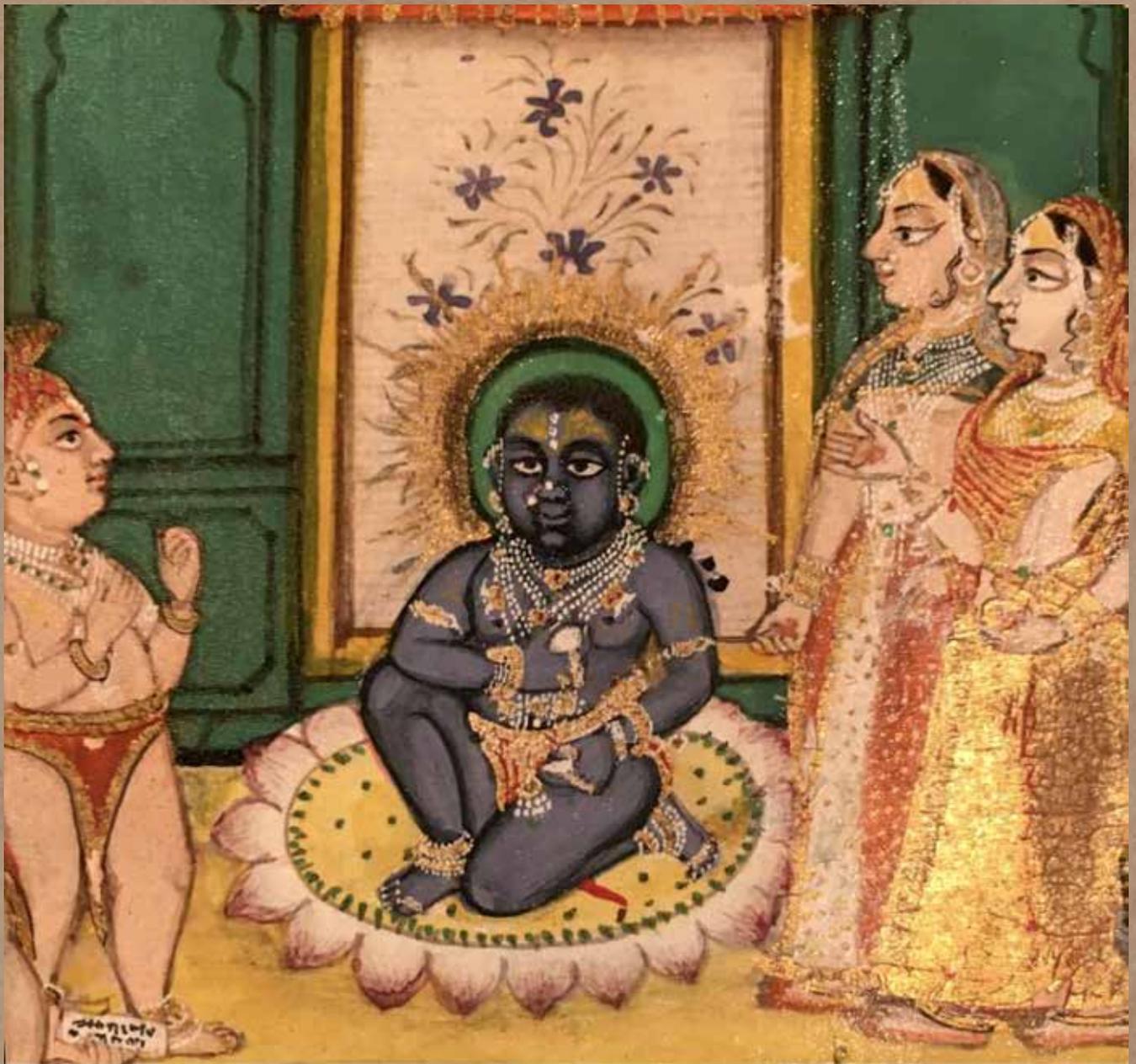
Sri Krishna Kathamrita



Bindu

Issue 534

Karttika Meditations





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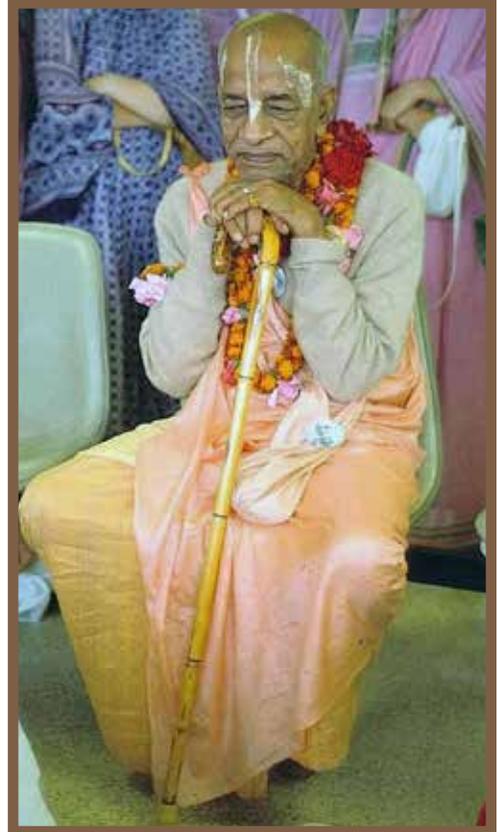
KRISHNA-KATHA IS ESSENTIAL



His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

The descriptions of the pastimes of Lord Krishna are so attractive that they are relishable for all classes of men. ... Whether one is liberated, or is trying to be liberated, or is even grossly materialistic, the pastimes of Lord Krishna are worth studying.

... 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 as *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* then their path of liberation becomes very clear. *Bhagavad-gītā* is the preliminary study of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. By studying the *Gītā*, one becomes fully conscious of the position of Lord Krishna; and when he is situated at the lotus feet of Krishna, he understands the narrations of Krishna as described in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Lord Chaitanya has therefore advised his followers that their business is to propagate *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.



Cover: "Bala Krishna with elderly gopis". Unknown artist.



Unknown artist

Beautiful Krishna Gopal

... It is the order of Lord Chaitanya that *kṛṣṇa-kathā* should be spread all over the world, because if the conditioned souls suffering under the pangs of material existence take to *kṛṣṇa-kathā* then their path of liberation will be open and clear.

... Krishna will be appealing to the liberated souls and to persons who are trying to be liberated, as well as to the gross, conditioned materialists. According to the statement of Maharaja Parikshit, who heard about Krishna from Sukadev Goswami, *kṛṣṇa-kathā* is equally applicable to every human being, in whatever condition of life he is in. Everyone will appreciate it to the highest magnitude. But Maharaja Parikshit also warned that persons who are simply engaged in killing animals and in killing themselves may not be very much attracted to *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. In other words, ordinary persons who are following the regulative moral principles of scriptures, no matter in what condition they are found, will certainly be attracted, but not persons who are killing themselves. The exact word used in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is *paśughna*, which means killing animals or killing oneself. Persons who are not self-realized and who are not interested in spiritual realization are killing themselves; they are committing suicide. Because this human form of life is especially meant for self-realization, by neglecting this important part of his activities, one simply wastes his time like the animals. So he is *paśughna*. 🍌

— From the introduction to *Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. Bombay. 1996.

ALWAYS DISCUSS TOPICS OF THE LORD



Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

There is always discussion of *hari-kathā* in our *maṭha*, and the residents there are also engaged in Lord Hari's service. It is our duty to associate in all respects with devotees for whom the Lord's service is their life and soul. That place where there is no *kṛṣṇa-kathā* is extremely unfavorable for *bhakti*, even if it is filled with relatives and items for comfortable living. I simply think of Mahaprabhu's mercy when I see the devotees in the *maṭha* continually discussing *hari-kathā* and always being eager to serve the Lord.

Pious persons who desire their own good should visit the *maṭha* from time to time and hear *kṛṣṇa-kathā* from the spiritual master and the *vaiṣṇavas*. If we have a taste for *kṛṣṇa-kathā* and a propensity to serve Krishna, then that taste will keep us aloof from bad association. By always reading spiritual magazines and studying the literature written by the *mahājanas* while constantly begging for Sri Guru-Gauranga's mercy, we can attain the result of hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā* from the mouths of the devotees. Although in this material world we cannot always meet with devotees from the spiritual world, the pastimes and conversations of the devotees who were contemporaries of Mahaprabhu have been permanently recorded in books. Therefore, there is no need for disappointment. If we live somewhere and discuss *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, we will certainly attain auspiciousness, and nothing can harm us.

If we simply engage in discussing topics of the Lord while living anywhere, by the Lord's mercy we can realize the glories of devotional service, the Lord's mercy, and come to remember the Lord in our day-to-day life. A devotee should live wherever the Lord is pleased to keep him and should forget his own material miseries. When the propensity to serve the Lord is awakened in the heart while discussing *hari-kathā* in the association of devotees, then we will automatically remember Hari under all circumstances. To test us, the Supreme Lord is always present behind what we can see. If we see the Lord's mercy behind every incident, we will no longer feel distress. The material world, material existence, is the

place where we are tested. If we wish to pass the test, we must hear *kṛṣṇa-kathā* from the pure devotees. Even though at present we may not always have the opportunity to hear *hari-kathā* in the association of devotees, if we continuously hear it in the form of discussing *vaiṣṇava* literature we will not feel the absence of *vaiṣṇava* association. 🍌

— Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. *Amṛta Vani*. Pp. 153-154. A collection of statements from Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. Originally compiled in Bengali by Sri Bhakti Bhagavat Mayukha Maharaja. Translated into English by Bhumiapati Das. Touchstone Media. Mumbai. 2004.

FEEDING THE MONKEYS



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

This is a conversation between Yashoda and Krishna which took place after Yashoda caught her son stealing butter and feeding it to the monkeys.

Mother Yashoda said to Gopal, “Your intelligence, your play, your activities, are like that of the monkeys.

श्रीकृष्णकथामृत बिन्दु

And you are with so many monkeys. Gopal, are you not afraid, surrounded by so many monkeys?”

Gopal said, “Mother, these monkeys helped Lord Rama! Rama was going to conquer Lanka and kill Ravan. The monkeys underwent severe tribulations, suffering, suffering, suffering. Lord Rama was wandering in the forest. He had no good food to give them. He had nothing. Sometimes they couldn’t get anything at all to eat. Sometimes they were jumping from one branch to another to get some fruit, and some days they might not have gotten anything, so they had to fast. Now see, mother, how they are stretching out their hands, begging for *mākhan*, ‘Give us, give us, give us *mākhan*!’ They are eating with so much delight.”

This is such a wonderful sweet *līlā*! The Supreme Lord makes His devotees drown in the ocean of happiness, joyfulness, and pleasure.



Photo by Divyadesam.com

The original mortar where Krishna was tied in Gokul



Painting by Annapurna Dasi

Krishna fed butter to the monkeys while keeping a watchful eye out for his mother

Yashoda-mata, due to her *vātsalya-rasa*, parental love, forgot that Krishna is Bhagavan. She was only thinking how to make everything auspicious for her son, how to make her son happy. By the activity of *yoga-māyā*, she was only thinking, “My son, my son!” She was thinking only these kinds of thoughts. The *Bhāgavatam* (10.8.45) describes:

*trayyā copaniṣadbhiś ca sāṅkhya-yogaiś ca sātvataiḥ
upagīyamāna mātmyam harim sāmānyatātmajam*

The glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are

studied throughout the three Vedas, the Upanishads, the literature of *sāṅkhya-yoga*, and other *vaiṣṇava* literature. Yet mother Yashoda considered that Supreme Person her ordinary child.

Those who are *sāṅkhya-yogīs* engage in analytical discussion on him. Those who are devotees offer prayers to the Supreme Lord Krishna. But mother Yashoda said, “He is my son, he is my son!” — *sāmānyatātmajam*. This is pure *vātsalya-rasa*. 🌸

— From a lecture in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, 21 May 1994. Chapter four of *Mathura Meets Vrindavan*. Gopal Jiu Publications. Bhubaneswar. 2003.

The Mouse, the Lamp and the Queen



A Puranic History

Srila Jiva Goswami writes in Bhakti-sandarbha, anuccheda 153:

astu tāvat śuddha-bhakti-ābhāsasya vārtā, aparādhātvena
dṛśyamāno 'py asau mahā-prabhāvo dṛśyate.

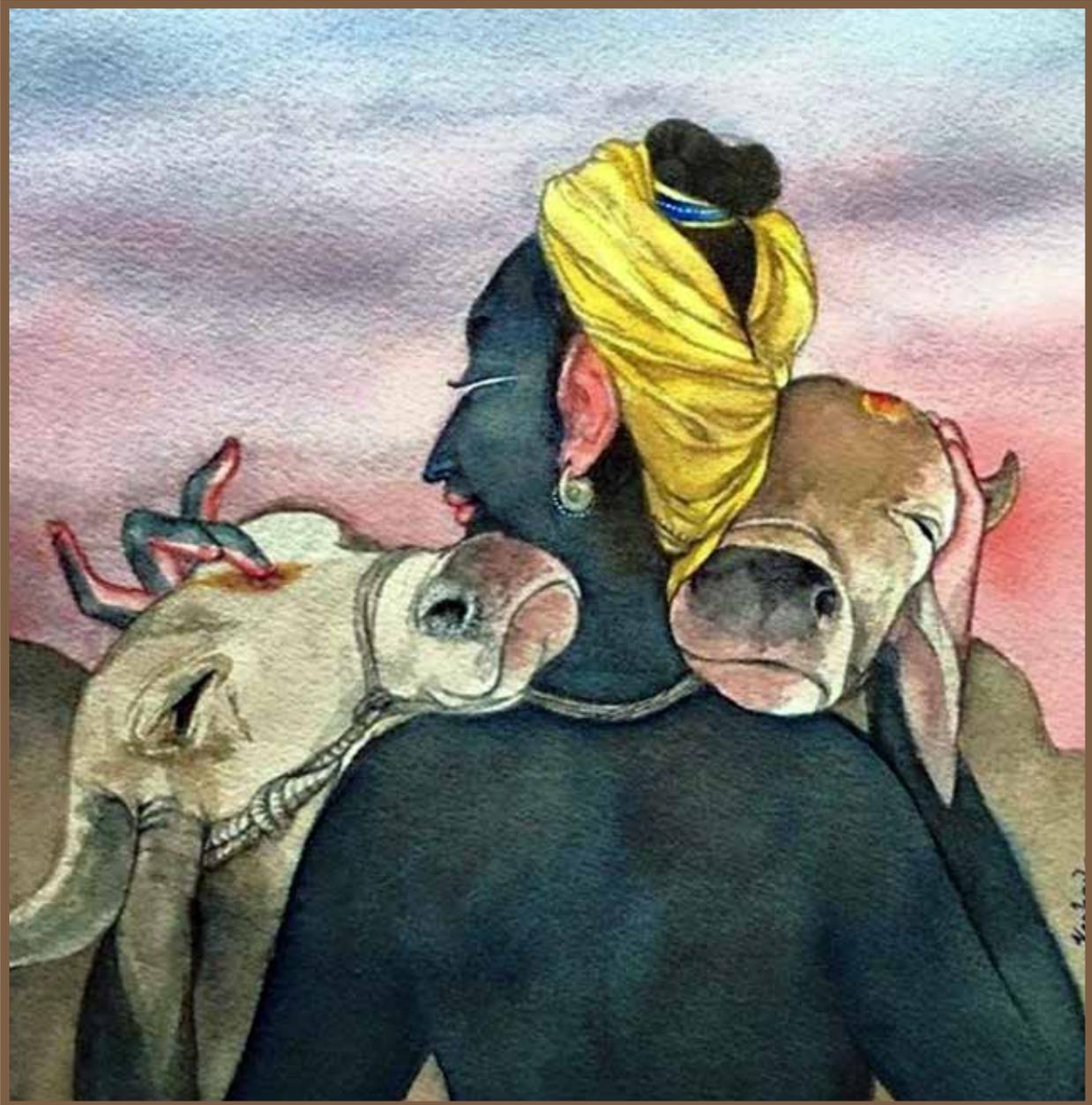
It is seen that the activities of pure bhakti when performed even without a devotional attitude are still very powerful.

श्रीकृष्णकथामृत बिन्दु

Srila Jiva Goswami then cites an example from the Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa of an ordinary mouse who became a devotee and a queen due to some superficial contact with the Lord. A similar story is also found the Padma Purāṇa.

In the Viṣṇudharmottara (1.167), Markandeya Rishi relates the following to King Vajra.

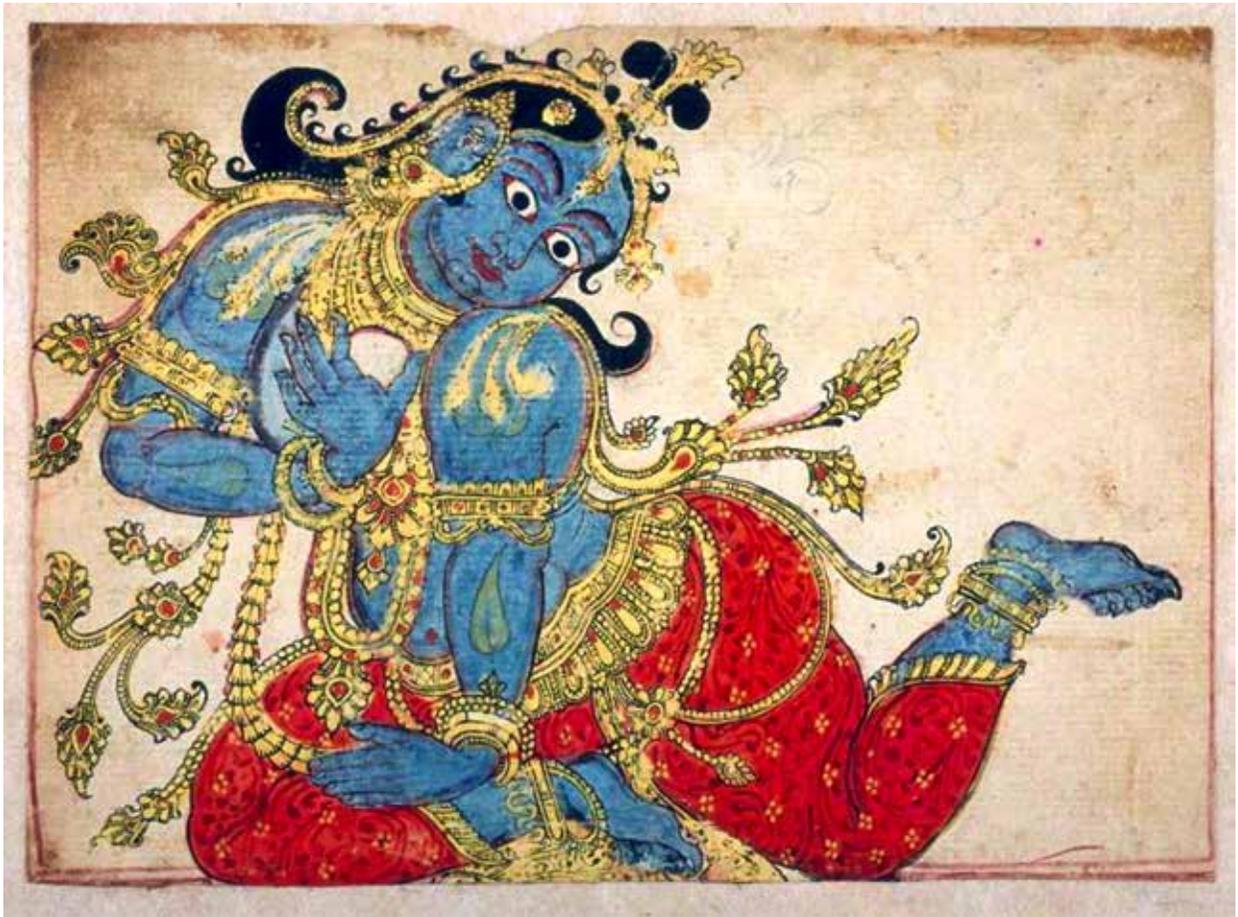
In the country of Vidarbha there lived a king named Chitraratha. He had one hundred and fifteen sons, but only one daughter, whose name was Lalitika. She was endowed with all good qualities and possessed matchless beauty. Her father gave her in marriage to the righteous king of Kashi. That



Painting by Keshav

Krishna, the lover of the cows

Unknown artist. South India. Late 18th century



The butter thief

law-abiding king of Kashi had three hundred wives, but Lalitika became his principal queen. Beginning from the dark half of the month of Āśvina (September-October), till the bright half of the month of Kārttika (October-November), it was Lalitika's daily practice to light thousands of lamps, both day and night, in the temple of Vishnu. She also sent lamps to the houses of Brahmins, to crossroads of the streets, to various temples, at the bottom of holy trees, on the tops of mountains, on the sandy banks of rivers, and on the surface of wells. Seeing her thus absorbed, her co-wives gathered together and asked her, "O fair eyed Lalitika! Neglecting all other rituals, you always seem keen on lighting lamps in the temples of Vishnu. We are very curious to know why you do this. Please explain to us why you have so much faith in this activity?"

Lalitika replied, "O auspicious ladies! Listen carefully to my words, and I will tell you why it is that I have faith in the fruit of giving lamps. That worthy daughter of the lord of mountains, who is the beloved wife of Shiva, is famous in the country of Madra in her form

of the divine river named Umadevi. For blessing the masses of people, she was called by the Brahmins to descend to the earth. On her banks there is a sacred place measuring eight miles in circumference. The water in that holy place is considered to contain waters from all the places of pilgrimage. Whoever dies there obtains an auspicious result. That goddess destroys sins whenever she is heard, wished for, or seen. Her holy place, named "Narasimha", destroys all sins. In the past, the Lord who has a combined form of a man and a lion had taken a bath there. In ancient times, the king of Sauvira constructed a temple of Lord Vishnu at that place. The priest there daily worshiped the Lord with flowers, fragrant scents, and the offering of lamps. One evening during the month of Kārttika, the lamp that had been offered to the Lord was almost extinguished. I was then living in that temple in the body of a female mouse. Thinking to eat the ghee-soaked wick, I seized it, but suddenly a cat came. I fled away out of fear with the wick in my mouth. My running made the flame of the lamp burn brightly as before. I then met with death and was later reborn as a daughter of the king of Vidarbha."



Painting and photo collage by Akash Kumar. Zacttic Artz.

Krishna and one of the bulls of Vraja

In the Padma Purāṇa story (uttara-khanda, chapter 30), Lord Shiva relates the following to Narada Muni.

On the charming bank of the Saraswati River there was a hermitage known as Siddhashram. Formerly a Brahmin named Kapila lived there. He was poor but learned in the Vedas, and maintained his family by begging. He worshiped Lord Vishnu by performing various vows and fasts. As part of his worship of the Lord, with great devotion he always lit lamps in his house for the pleasure of Vishnu.

A cat with sharp teeth was also living in the house. Day and night, the cat was searching for mice, and ate many in the house of the Brahmin Kapila. One *Ekādaśī* day, that pure Brahmin and his wife fasted and worshiped Vishnu.

Singing and praying to the Lord and dancing in front of his deity, Kapila stayed awake. When it was midnight, the Brahmin was finally overcome with sleep. Seeing that Kapila had fallen into a slumber, the cat quickly came there. He saw a small female mouse that had come to eat the wick and drink the oil in the lamp. He jumped and attacked, and the mouse ran away. While running away, the mouse bumped the lamp with its foot. Due to that contact, the lamp suddenly became bright. With the suddenly increased light of the lamp, the Brahmin woke up and continued his all-night vigil. The cat also stayed awake throughout that night. When the sun rose, the Brahmin performed his daily duties and then broke the fast along with his relatives.



Unknown artist. Mural from the Guruvayur temple in Kerala.

Krishna and his friends stealing butter

The magnanimous Brahmin Kapila obtained many sons and grandsons, as well as grains, excellent health, and abundant riches. Finally, at the end of his life, Kapila was liberated from this material world due to his practice of offering lamps to the Lord.

In course of time, the female mouse also died and a wonderful divine airplane came and took her to the world of Vishnu. The cat also eventually met with death, and, ascending an excellent airplane surrounded by celestial nymphs, accompanied by hosts of Vidyadharas, and being praised with auspicious cries of victory, he also went to the world of Vishnu. After enjoying many pleasures there for hundreds of millions of years, that former cat took birth on the earth as a king named Sudharman. [In this connection, see “Prapanchika Vaikuntha”, in the box below.]

Maharaja Sudharman was religious-minded. He regularly worshiped the Lord and the Brahmins, and he was handsome, brave, and very strong. His dear wife was endowed with all auspicious marks, devoted to her husband, and was of good character. Her name was Rupasundari, and she was the most beautiful among all ladies. Many sons and daughters were born to them. While the couple was thus enjoying each other’s company,

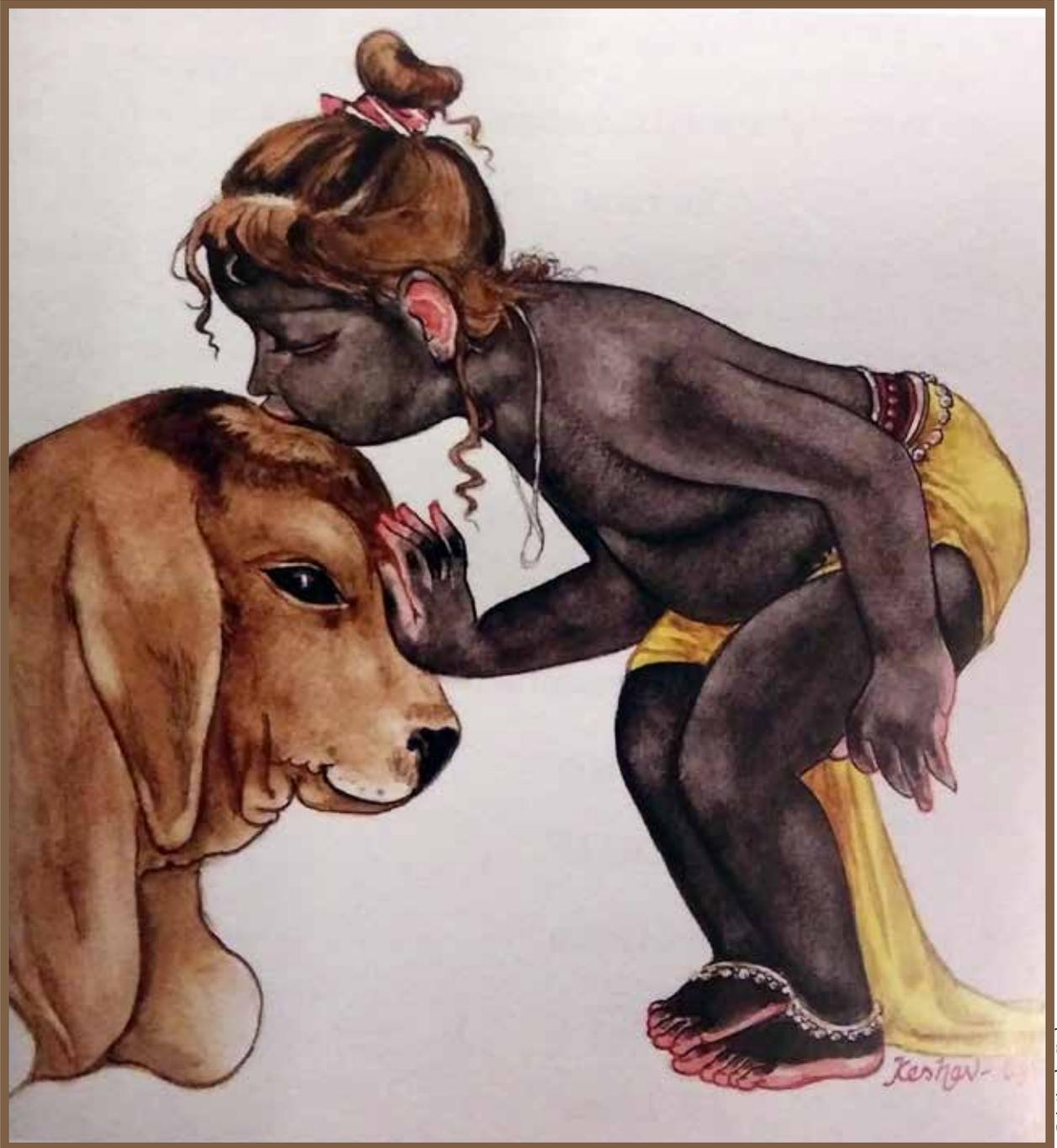
the month of *Kārttika* arrived. During that month, lamps are lit by those who are devoted to Vishnu.

One day, the king said to the queen, “Today is the auspicious *Prabodhini Ekādaśī* [also known as *Haribodhini* or *Utthānā Ekādaśī*, it is the last *Ekādaśī* of the Vaishnava month of *Kārttika* and marks the end of Lord Vishnu’s four-month slumber known as *cātur-māsya*]. With my senses controlled by fasting, today I will bathe in the holy place Pushkar and worship the imperishable lotus-eyed Lord of gods along with his consort Lakshmi.”

Hearing these pleasing words, Rupasundari, who was always engaged in the well-being of her husband, replied, “O king, I desire to go with you to the sacred place Pushkara.”

Then the king and queen, accompanied by groups of elephants, horses, chariots, and the family-priests, came to Pushkar. The king took bath and worshiped the Supreme Lord Vishnu. Standing in a charming temple that was full of rows of lights everywhere, the king suddenly saw a drawing of a cat. Upon seeing that picture, the king remembered his former existence, looked at the lotus-like face of his beloved, and smiled.

Rupasundari said, “O lord, why did you smile after looking at me?”



Painting by Keshav

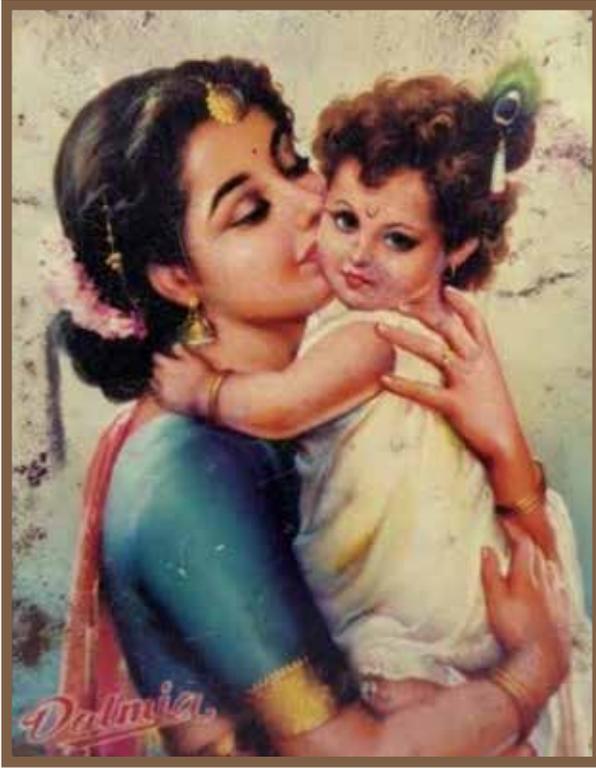
From his youth, Krishna took care of the calves and cows

The king replied, “In a previous birth I was a cat in the house of a Brahmin. There I ate hundreds of mice. Even though my intention was to catch mice to eat, since the result was that I guarded the lamp in front of Vishnu, I got, O Queen, the fruit of that deed. I first attained the world of Vishnu and now have obtained a kingdom here on earth.

Rupasundari said, “I, too, have gained recollection of my former existence. I was a small female mouse in the house of the Brahmin. Once, on the *Prabodhini Ekādaśī* in *Kārttika*, when the lamp had become dim,

I came out of my hole to snatch the wick so I could eat it. Emerging from the hole, I saw the deity of Vishnu decorated with flowers and the Brahmin overcome with sleep. You, in the body of a cat, jumped up to attack me. I saw you and ran back into the hole. In doing this, my foot struck the lamp and it made the wick suddenly burn bright. O lord of great kings, since I brightened the lamp in that way, I have now secured excellent beauty, obtained you as my husband, and also gained a kingdom, sons, and great happiness. Due to my inadvertent brightening of the lamp, I secured

Unknown artist



Yashoda loves her darling boy

knowledge that is extremely difficult to obtain. By the fruit of even unconsciously assisting offering a lamp to Vishnu, we have been blessed to remember our former existences and all our sins have perished.”

After this discussion, the king and queen, with great faith, properly performed the rituals of offering a lamp to Vishnu at the holy place of Pushkar. As a result, the two of them obtained salvation, which is difficult for even the demigods to attain.

Thus, *bhakti* is so powerful that even the slightest touch of it possesses great power. As Krishna says in *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.40:

*nehābhikrama-nāśo 'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate
sv-āpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*
“In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.” 🍌

— MD.

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PRAPANCHIKA VAIKUNTHA

One question arises here: How can someone attain the Lord's abode and then return to the material world? After all, Krishna says in the *Gītā* (15.6), *yad gatvā na nivartante* — “Once attaining my abode, one never returns to this material world.” The permanent nature of residence in the spiritual world is also described by Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in a number of places in his writings. Some examples:

From Vedic scriptures it is understood that sometimes even Brahma and Indra fall down, but a devotee in the transcendental abode of the Lord never falls. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 3.15.48)

The conclusion is that no one falls from the spiritual world, or Vaikuntha planet, for it is the eternal abode. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 3.16.26)

However, the *Bhāgavatam* (8.5.5) and other *Purāṇas* describe an abode of Lord Vishnu within the material universe. That planet is sometimes referred to as Prapanchika Vaikuntha [*prapañcika*” means “consisting of the five material elements”]. There are many descriptions of persons attaining that place and then returning to this material world.

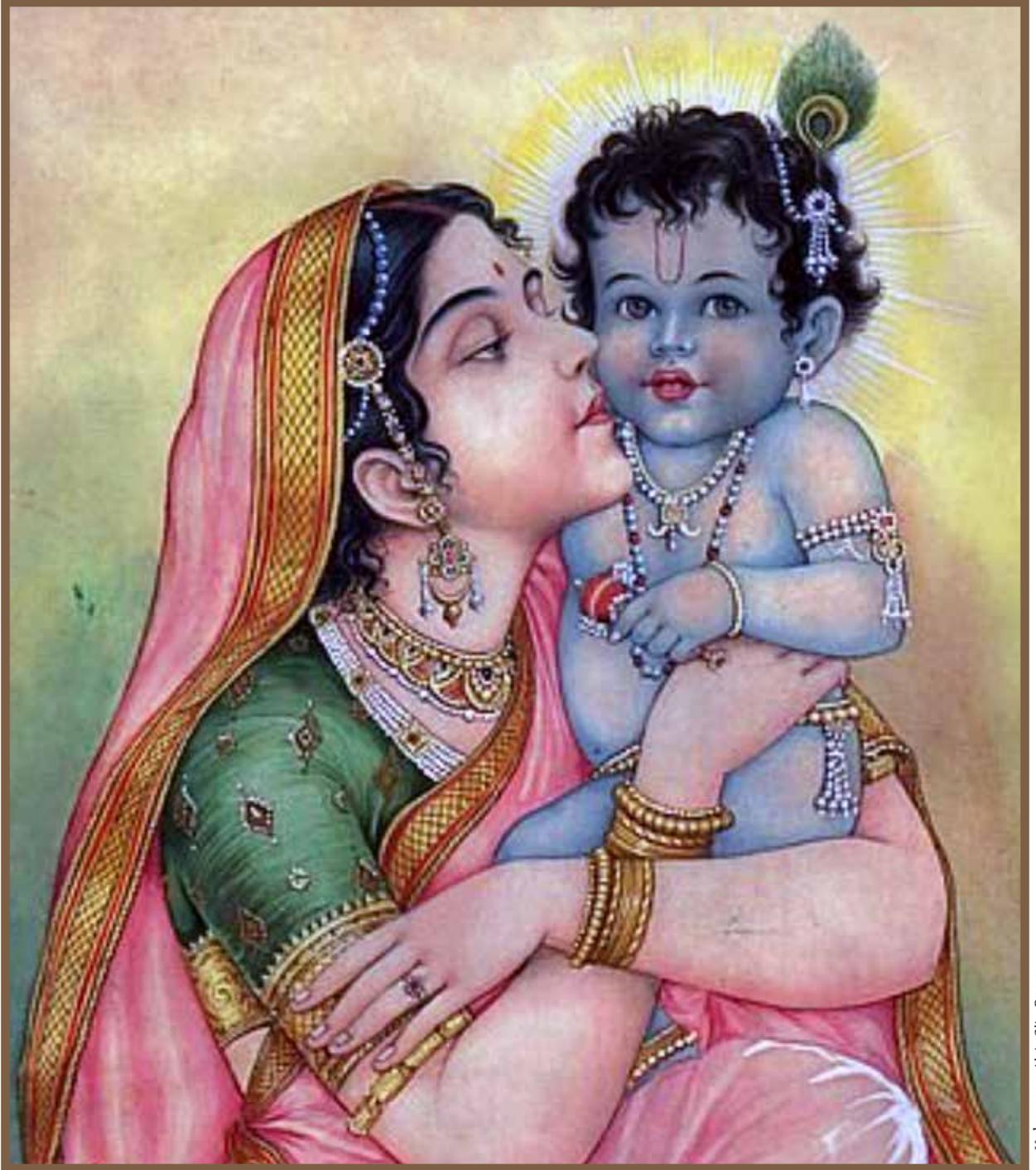
MOTHER, GIVE ME BUTTER!



The medieval Gaudiya poet Raya Sekhar

The scholar Sukumar Sen in his iconic book, *A History of Brajabuli Literature*, writes: “Raya Sekhar, or Kavi-sekhar as he very often styled himself, was the greatest poet of Brajabuli and Bengali lyric literature among the successors of Govindadas Kaviraj. Raya Sekhar seems to have been a younger contemporary of Govindadas, as he apparently imitated the latter in some of his poems. Raya Sekhar was a disciple of Raghunandan Goswami of Srikhand. His native place was the village of Paranagram in the district of Burdwan.”

*ādha ādha bālaka sata bola bolata
janani vadana tahi cāi
mākhana kṣīra svāra udara pūrī deha
navanita khāi tathāi*



Unknown artist. Gita Press.

Mother Yashoda considered that supreme person her ordinary child

The mother said, “O small child! Tell me truly what you want. The child replied, “Give me as much *mākhana* (butter that has been stored for a few days), *kṣīra* (kheer), and *svara* (a special milk preparation) till my stomach is full. Then I will eat *navanīta* (freshly churned butter).”

[**Translator’s Note:** Yashoda knows that Krishna is more interested in the *navanīta*, freshly churned butter, but she wants her son to finish all the existing

milk products before eating what has been freshly made. So Krishna vaguely promises that he will eat the *navanīta* only after finishing the existing food.

In Bengali, the word *svara* refers to a sound or noise, however, this poem is written in Brajboli. “*Svara*” here seems to refer to the top layer of fat on boiled cow’s milk.]

*e kṣīra mākhana svara dila nandarāni
kibā se bhojana kare golokera mani*



Unknown artist

Yashoda churns butter for Krishna

Thus, Nandarani Yashoda gave him *kṣīra*, *mākhana* and *svara* to eat. Just see how the crest-jewel of Golok is eating all of it!

*bhojana kariyā puna udare dhari kara
kemana mākhana dilā māgo nā pūre udara*

Quickly finishing everything that was given to him, he puts his hand on his stomach and says, “Māgo (Mother)! What *mākhana* have you given me? My stomach is not at all filled.”

[**Translator’s Note:** Krishna’s intention all along has been to eat *navanīta*. Therefore, he has finished everything in great haste, pretending that it was not enough to fill his stomach.]

*mā bola bala e tomāya e michā vacana
navani bhojana tomāra nija pṛya jana*

Mother Yashoda strictly says, “Your words are false. Your actual intention was to eat *navanīta*.”

[**Translator’s Note:** From these words, Krishna now knows that he has entered a danger zone where he may be subject to punishment.]

*mā bola bali bali tuli bāhu phirata
bhāve bhara gada bhebe dhanda
rāya sekhare bhane jānala taichane
jasamati tavahi ānanda*

As Mother Yashoda was speaking these strict words, Krishna raised his hands and started walking here and there, saying “Ma! Ma!” and making a false show that he has eaten too much and is now experiencing indigestion. Raya Shekhar says, “At that moment, O Yasoda, I knew the joy that you had experienced!”

[**Translator’s Note:** In order to escape punishment, Krishna pretended to have stomachache. No loving mother will chastise a child who’s having a stomach issue. There is immense joy of *vātsalya-rasa* to be experienced by a devotee who directly sees in their heart this pastime of a strict Yashoda and pretentious Krishna.] 🍌

— Translated by Hari Parshad Das from song 2 of the *Śrī Kṛṣṇera Bālyalīlā* section of *Rāyāśekhara Padāvalī*. No publisher information.

KRISHNA'S ANGER AT YASHODA



The medieval Gaudiya poet Balaram Das

Balaram Das is considered by scholars and Vaishnavas to be one of the greatest poets in the Gaudiya Vaishnava literature of Bengal. Unfortunately, however, his identity is unclear. Sukumar Sen in his book, *A History of Brajabuli Literature* (p 75) suggests that he was likely a disciple of Nityananda Prabhu, who was present at the famous festivals in Katwa and Kheturi (around 1582-1583) and who is mentioned in Cc. ādi 11.34. Mr. Sen further opines that it was probably this Balaram Das who is mentioned by Devakinandan Das in his famous *Vaiṣṇava-vandanā*, as a disciple of Nityananda and a writer of songs.

dāṅḍā-iyā nandera āge gopāla kānde anurāge
buk bāhiyā paḍe dhārā
nā thākiba tomāra ghare apayaśa deha more
mā ha-iyā bale nanīcorā

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Standing in front of Nanda, Gopal was weeping.
 Tears of mock anger were wetting his breast.
 “I shall not stay in your house anymore.
 What can be more insulting than this?
 A mother calling her son a thief!

dhariyā yugala kare bāṅdhiyā chāndana-ḍore
bāṅdhe rāṇī navanī lāgiyā
āhīrī ramanī hāse dāṅḍāiyā cāri pāśe
haya naya dekha sudhāiyā

“For a cup of cream the queen tied me by the hands.
 All the milk maids stood around and laughed.
 You can ask others if you disbelieve me!

anyera chāoyāla yata tārā nanī khāya kata
mā ha-iyā kebā bāṅdhe kare
ye bala se bala more nā thākibā tora ghare
e nā duḥkha sahite nā pāre

“All the other boys have their fill of cream.
 Which other mother tied her son?
 Whatever you say, I will not stay here.
 I cannot bear the sorrow and injustice.

balāi khāyyāche nanī michā cora bale rāṇī
bhāla manda nā kari vicāra
parera chāorāla pāiyā mārena āsiyā dhāiyā
śīśu bali dayā nāhi tāra

“It was Balai (Balaram), after all, who had that cream!
 The queen punished me, without any proof.
 Only because I am not her own son
 She has no pity even at my tender age!

aṅgada-balaya-tāḍa āra yata alānkāra
āra maṇi-mukutāra hāra
sakala khasāyyā laha āmāre vidāya deha
e duḥkhe yamunā haba pāra

“Take away my armlets and all the other jewels.
 And yes, take this necklace away.
 Take everything off me and bid me farewell.
 I shall cross the Yamuna with pain in my heart.”

balarāma dāse kaya ei karma bhāla naya
dhāiyā gopāla kara koḍe
yaśodā āsiyā kāche gopālera mukha mucche
aparādha kṣamā kara more

Balaram Das says “This does not bode well.
 Come quickly and take Gopal on your lap.”
 Yashoda comes quickly and wipes Gopal’s eyes.
 “Forgive me, my child, for what I have done.” 🍌

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