

Sri Krishna Kathamrita



Bindu

Issue 555

Daujī, the Older Brother





Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

Fortnightly email mini-magazine from Gopal Jiu Publications

Issue No. 555

Śrī Pavitrāropiṇī Ekādaśī

27 August 2023

Highlights

• [PASTIMES OF BALARAM](#)

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• [THE DEMONS KILLED BY BALARAM](#)

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

• [BALARAM'S PLOW AND KRISHNA'S FLUTE](#)

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

• [JIVA GOSWAMI'S WORSHIP OF KRISHNA BALARAM](#)

Srila Narahari Chakravarti Thakur

• [BALARAM TATTVA](#)

Srila Rupa Goswami Prabhupada

• [BALARAM PLAYS BALL](#)

Nandakishore Goswami

• [PRAYERS TO BALARAM](#)

• [BALARAM AND DURYODHAN](#)

• [DANCE MORE! DANCE MORE!](#)

Vaishnava Das



PASTIMES OF BALARAM

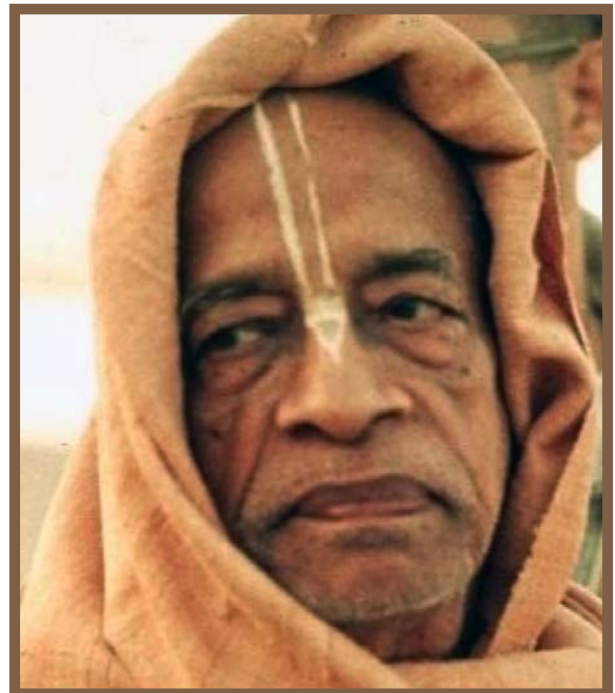


His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

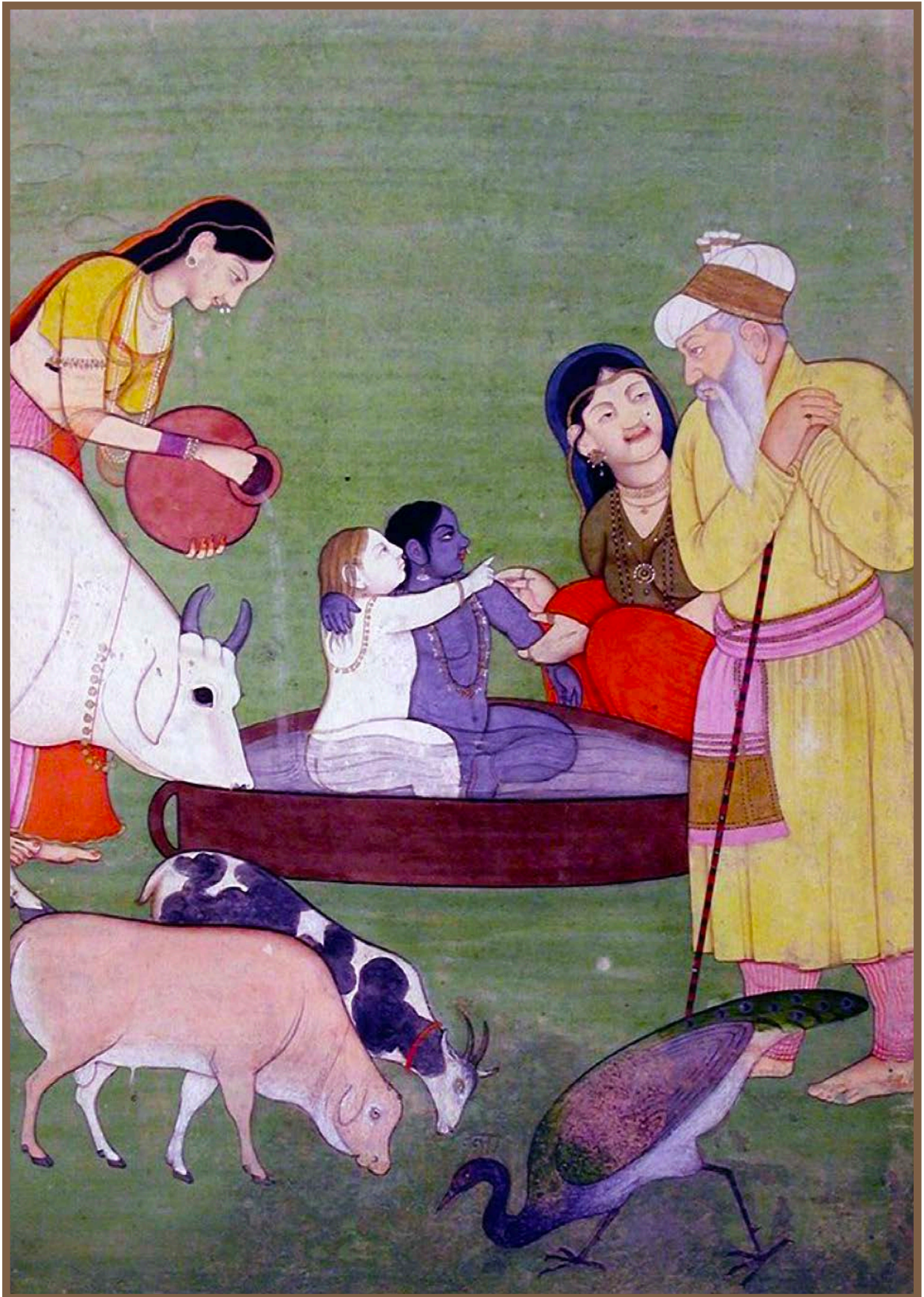
Upon hearing the chanting of Krishna's name, Lord Balaram saw that his dress had become white, although he was generally accustomed to a bluish dress. And the cowherd girls saw all the water of the Yamuna River turn into milk, so they began to churn it into butter. In other words, by the spreading of Krishna consciousness, or the glories of Krishna, everything became white and pure. (*Nectar of Devotion* chapter 22)

Lord Baladev, intoxicated from drinking excessive quantities of honey, once began to address the ants, "O you kings of the ants! Why are you hiding yourselves in these holes?" At the same time, he also addressed the king of heaven, "O King Indra! You plaything of Sachi! Why are you laughing? I am now prepared to



Unknown photographer

Cover: Krishna and Balaram. Unknown artist.



Unknown artist

Nanda and Yashoda give Krishna and Balaram a bath

40



శ్రీకృష్ణుని ముందు పంక్షణం చేయలంతుడు అల్లికం బ్రష్టుడు మున్నటికి నీ బ్రష్టులు నం
 కదలికృష్ణుని ముందు పంక్షణం చేయలంతుడు అల్లికం బ్రష్టులు మున్నటికి నీ బ్రష్టులు నం
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Unknown artist, South Indian, from the British Museum

Yashoda chastises Krishna and Balaram

smash the whole universe, and I know that Krishna will not be angry with me.” Then he addressed Krishna, “My dear Krishna, tell me immediately why the whole world is trembling and why the moon has become elongated! And you members of the Yadu dynasty! Why are you laughing at me? Please give me back my liquors made of honey from the *kadamba* flower!” Srila Rupa Goswami prays that Lord Balaram will be

pleased with all of us while he is thus talking just like an intoxicated person. (*Nectar of Devotion* chapter 29)
 Sometimes when the cowherd boys used to play in the forests of Vrindavan, Krishna would play on one side and Balaram would play on the other. There would be competition and mock fighting between the two parties, and when Krishna’s party was defeated by Balaram’s, the boys would say, “If Balaram’s party



Unknown artist. Lithograph, c. 1890. Chore Bagan Art Studio. Calcutta

Goṣṭha-līlā, Krishna and Balaram's pastimes with the cowherd boys and calves

remains victorious, then who in the world can be weaker than ourselves?" This is another instance of envy in ecstatic love. (*Nectar of Devotion* chapter 30)

Even Balaram, the elder brother of Krishna, sometimes unknowingly offered respect to him. Once when Krishna came before Lord Balaram, Krishna was anxious to offer his respects to his elder brother, but at that time Balaram's club was lowered down upon Krishna's lotus feet. In other words, the club in Balaram's hand offered its own respects to Krishna. (*Nectar of Devotion* chapter 40)

One devotee described the personal beauty of Baladev as follows "Let me take shelter of the lotus feet of Balaram, whose beauty is enhanced by the earrings touching his cheeks. His face is decorated with *tilaka* made from *kastūrī* (musk), and his broad chest is decorated with a garland of *guñjā* (small conchshells). His complexion is as white as an autumn cloud, he wears garments of blue color, and his voice is very grave. His arms are very long, touching his thighs, and he has shown his great strength by killing the Pralamba demon. Let me take shelter of this chivalrous Balaram." (*Nectar of Devotion* chapter 41)

Baladev's affection for Krishna is illustrated in this statement to Subal: "My dear friend, please inform Krishna not to go to Kaliya's lake today. Today is his birthday, and so I wish to go along with Mother Yashoda to bathe him. Tell him he should not leave the house today." This shows how Balaram, Krishna's elder brother, took care of Krishna with parental love, within the scope of fraternal affection. (*Nectar of Devotion* chapter 41) 🍌

THE DEMONS KILLED BY BALARAM



From Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode's
Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta, Chapter 7

A secret of *vraja-bhajan* is that all the obstacles represented by the demons that Balaram killed can be removed by the efforts of the devotee himself. Dhenukasura represents the bad mentality that carries heavy loads. Pralamba represents lust for women, greed, and desire for worship and position. The devotee must remove these obstacles by his own efforts with the mercy

Unknown artist



Balaram kills the demon Pralamba

Unknown photographer



Above and right: Balaram going to his chariot at the Rathayātrā festival in Jagannath Puri

of Krishna. Dhenukasura represents ignorance of one's own spiritual identity (*svarūpa*), the identity of the holy name, and the identity of Krishna. With great endeavor the devotee himself removes these obstacles. Pralamba represents lust for man or woman, greed for material objects, endeavor for material enjoyment, pride, and desire for worship and position. Understanding these to be very detrimental to progress, the devotee should make great effort to remove them. If his humility is true, Krishna will certainly be merciful. Then Baladev will make his appearance and all the obstacles will be destroyed in a second. Then, step by step, progress in cultivation of bhakti will take place. As this process is by nature very esoteric, the devotee, being spotless in character, should learn it from a qualified guru. 🍌

— Adapted from the English translation by Bhanu Swami. Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education.



Photo by Bhakta Charles

Left to Right: Varuni, Balaram and Revati at the Tota Gopinath Temple in Jagannath Puri

BALARAM'S PLOW AND KRISHNA'S FLUTE



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Gour Govinda Swami: Rules and regulations are needed at the beginning. That's *sādhana-bhakti*. Therefore, we have two paths: *sādhana-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Therefore, Balaram's plow and Krishna's flute. Balaram has a plow in his hands and Krishna has a flute in his hands. Why? Balaram will cultivate. *Sādhana-bhakti* is cultivation. The cultivated field is the heart. After being properly cultivated by *sādhana-bhakti*, then comes *karṣaṇa*, you'll come to *rāga-bhakti*. Then Krishna's flute will attract you, *ākarṣaṇa*. *Karṣaṇa* and *ākarṣaṇa* are the activities of Krishna-Balaram.

Devotee 1: Doesn't *sādhana-bhakti* mean that very little love is there?

Gour Govinda Swami: Love will generate! Love will be produced if properly cultivated. If guru sows the seed of the *bhakti* creeper but your land is barren, then it will never sprout. Gopinath Acharya said to his brother-in-law Sarvabhauma, *ūṣara-bhūmite yena bijera ropāṇa* — "I am just sowing seed in a barren land. How it will sprout, germinate?" *tānra kṛpā yabe habe* — If Mahaprabhu showers mercy, then it will happen. (Cc. *madhya* 6.105-106]

After the field of the heart has been cultivated and all *anarthas* are gone, then you'll be attracted to Krishna. Then you will hear Krishna's flute and be attracted. Then you'll run in the dead of night like the *gopīs*. Bilvamangala was so mad that he was running to the prostitute Chintamani in the dead of night, in spite of torrential rain and all the land being inundated. Then Chintamani gave him a great blow, saying, "What is this? Why are you so attracted to my body? All nasty things are inside this body —urine, stool, blood, bile,



Drawing by Anuradha Dasi, Poland

Balaram with his plow and Krishna with his flute: Deities in Bhubaneswar ISKCON



Painting by Radhe Gendron

Krishna, Balaram, and their friends in Vrjra

mucus, hair, bones, and marrow — all nasty things. Is there anything nice in my body? Why are you not attracted to the all-beautiful Krishna? Why are you are not running to him instead are running to me?” Then Bilvamangal turned his face towards Krishna. The plow had gone very deep and rooted out the weeds. That is the action of Balaram’s plow. That is the slap of guru. *Guru karna-dhāra* — guru catches your ear and slaps you, “Hey, rascal! What are you doing?” Guru gives you a kick to help you understand. With one kick, everything will be finished. One kick is enough.

My Guru Maharaja used to say that the blacksmith has a big hammer. With one stroke of that hammer, everything is finished. Nityananda’s kick is Balaram’s plow. It goes to the deepest regions of the heart. That kicking is his mercy.

Devotee 1: Should we pray for that kicking?

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes! Pray for that kicking from Nityananda Ram, Balaram! You should beg for his mercy, welcome it! Don’t be afraid of it! 🍌

— From a lecture in Bhubaneswar, 1 March 1992.

JIVA GOSWAMI'S WORSHIP OF KRISHNA BALARAM



*Adapted from Srila Narahari Chakravarti Thakur’s
Śrī Bhakti-ratnākara 1.719-738*

When Sri Jiva was only a boy, he avoided playing with friends or doing any other activities that had no connection with Krishna. He would make deities of Krishna and Balaram, worship them with flowers and sandal paste, and dress them with fine clothes and ornaments. When he would bow on the ground before them, he would weep. He offered them various kinds of sweets and then enjoyed eating the *prasādam* of the deities with his friends. He loved the deities of Krishna and Balaram so much that even when he was alone he would play with them. At bedtime he would clasp the deities tightly to his chest and sleep. Although they thought he was only playing, his parents were unable to separate

Unknown artist



Yashoda and Balaram caress baby Krishna

their son from his deities. Everyone was happy to see Jiva's love for Krishna and Balaram.

Chaitanya and Nitai were so bound by his love for them that they appeared to him in a dream. First, Krishna and Balaram appeared in a dream, and Sri Jiva was enchanted to see Krishna in dark blue color and Balaram in white color. They looked like cupids and enchanted the universe with their beautiful forms. Suddenly, Krishna and Balaram were replaced by Gaura and Nitai and the universe was perfumed by the scent of their bodies. Overjoyed with this vision, Sri Jiva wept and fell at the feet of his two masters. Gaura-Nityananda Ray, the twin oceans of mercy, put their feet on the head of Sri Jiva and embraced him affectionately. Whatever they spoke fell like nectar on the ears of Sri Jiva. In ecstatic love, Sri Gaurasundara offered Jiva to the gracious feet of Sri Nityananda. But Nityananda repeatedly instructed Sri Jiva, "Let my Gaura Prabhu be your life and soul." When he again bowed down to the feet of Gaura Nitai, they suddenly disappeared, and Sri Jiva fell into an abyss of disappointment. 🍌

— Adapted from an English translation by Kusakratha Das. The Krishna Institute. Culver City, California.

BALARAM TATVA



*Srila Rupa Goswami Prabhupada's
Śrī Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.3.85-88*

Krishna and Balaram are described in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3.23:

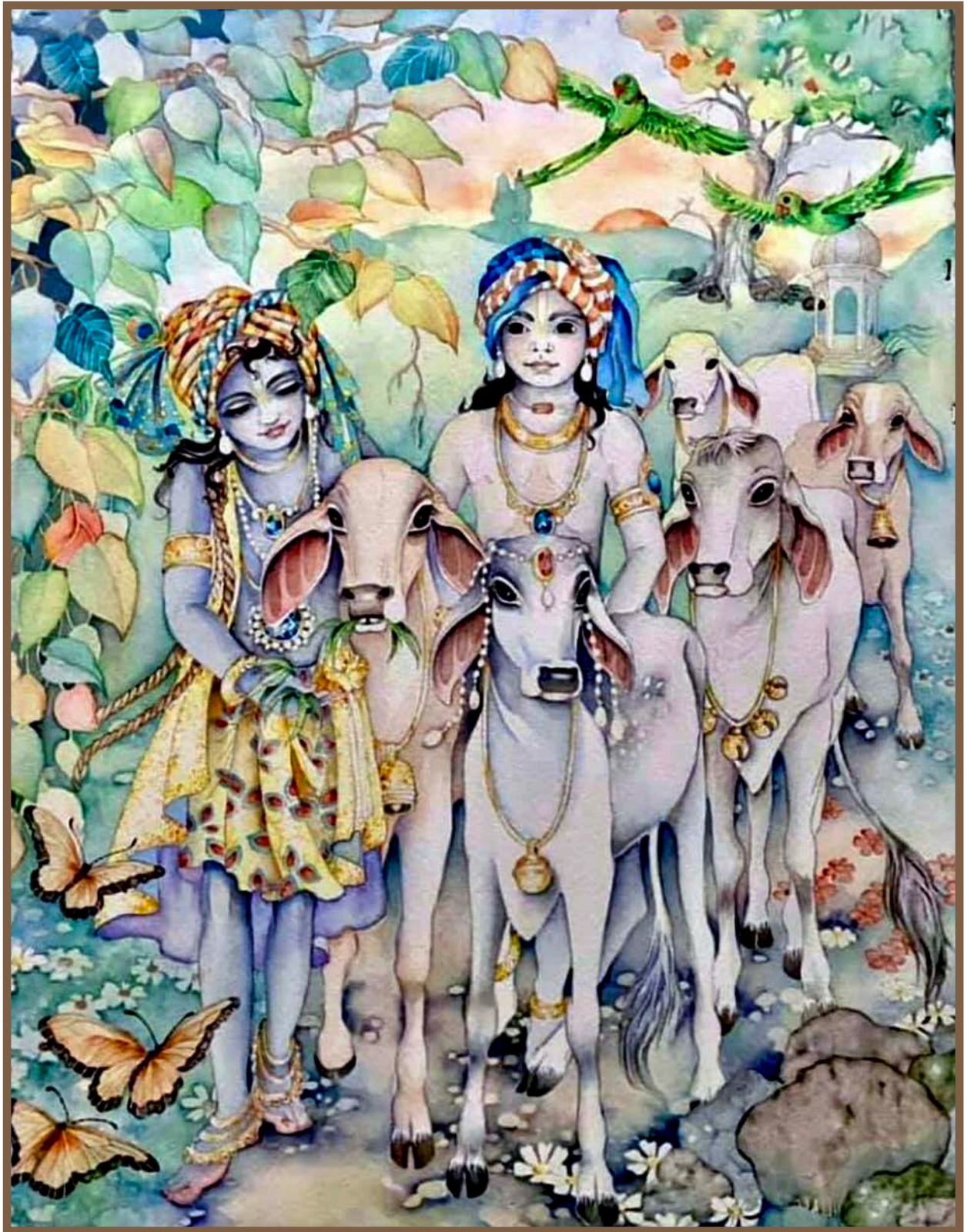
*ekonaviṁśe viṁśatime vṛṣṇiṣu prāpya janmanī
rāma-kṛṣṇāv iti bhuvo bhagavān aharad bharam*

In the nineteenth and twentieth incarnations, the Lord advented as Balaram and Krishna in the Yadu dynasty, and by so doing removed the burden of the world. (85)

*eśa matṛ-dvaye vyakto janakād vāsudevataḥ
yo navya-ghana-sārābho ghana-śyāmāmbaraḥ sadā*

Begotten by his father Vasudeva, Lord Balaram appeared in the wombs of two mothers. His complexion was white as camphor. He always dressed in garments dark as a raincloud. (86)

*saṅkarśaṇo dvitīyo yo vyūho rāmaḥ sa eva hi
pṛthvī-dhāreṇa śeṣeṇa sambhūya vyaktim īyivān*



Painting by Annapurna Dasi

Krishna and Balaram enter the forest with the calves



The ancient vijaya-vigraha deities of Sri Sri Krishna and Balaram at the Jagannath temple in Puri

Combining with Lord Sesha, who holds the earth, Lord Balaram, whose second expansion is Lord Sankarshan, appeared. (87)

*śeṣo dvidhā mahī-dhārī śayya-rūpas ca śārṅgīnaḥ
tatra saṅkarśaṇāveśād bhū-bhṛt saṅkarśaṇo mataḥ
śayya-rūpas tathā tasya sakhya-dāsyābhimānavān*

Sesha appears in two features, as the maintainer of the universe and as the couch of Lord Vishnu. As the maintainer of the universe he is an *āveśa-avatāra* of Lord Sankarshan, and as Lord Vishnu's couch he thinks himself the Lord's servant and friend. (88) 🍌

— Adapted from the English translation by Kusakratha Das. The Kṛṣṇa Library. Los Angeles. 1990.

BALARAM PLAYS BALL



*Adapted from chapter 18 of
Nandakishore Goswami's
Śrī Vṛndāvana-līlāmṛta*

O. B. L. Kapoor, a disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, dedicates the first chapter of his book, Saints of Vraja, to the life of Nandakishore Goswami. He writes that Nandakishore was born in the seminal line of Nityananda Prabhu as the son of Rasikananda Das in the district Bakura, West Bengal. He was later the mahant at Nityananda Vat



Unknown artist

Balaram pulls the Yamuna

in Vrindavan, where, in 1872, he installed the deities of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai. He wrote two famous books, Śrī Vṛndāvana-līlāmṛta and Śrī Rasakalikā. O.B.L. Kapoor says that according to the local history at Nityananda Vat, Krishna and Balaram directly ordered Nandakishore to write Vṛndāvana-līlāmṛta.

In the Vayu corner of Nandiswara there is a place called Gendukhora where Krishna and Balaram played ball. One day, at that place, Krishna and Balaram were taking care of the cows in the forest when they met Sridam and Vasudam, who were also herding cows there. Seeing that the place was full of fresh grass, they released the cows to let them eat. Then the boys began to play with a bat and ball.

Although all of them were enthusiastic in their play, no one was able to defeat the others. Krishna made a powerful hit on the ball, for which Balaram jumped high and caught. Seeing this, Krishnachandra and his friends ran, with Balaram pursuing them.

ḍāka diyā kṛṣṇa-yūtha kahe balarāme
mosabāra prati krodha chāḍaha āpane

At that time, Krishna's group of boys called out to Balaram, "Kindly give up your anger at us."

pūrṇarūpe madhupāna karāva tomāre
sthira haiyā raha āra nā dhāo satvare

"We will let you drink honey to your full satisfaction. Kindly control yourself. Do not come after us."

śuni balarāmacandra hāsīte lāgila
gaṇa saha sthira hañā dāṇḍāñā rahila

Hearing this, Balaram Chandra began to laugh, while he stood still with his group.

ḍāka diyā kahe rāma kṛṣṇa-saṅgi-gaṇe
cintā nāhi madhu āni karāha bhakṣaṇe

Balaram loudly called out to Krishna's friends, "Don't be afraid! Bring some honey for me."

tāhā śuni kṛṣṇa saha saba sakhāgaṇe
madhū āni rāma āge karilā gamane

Hearing that, Krishna and his friends brought honey and offered it to Balaram.

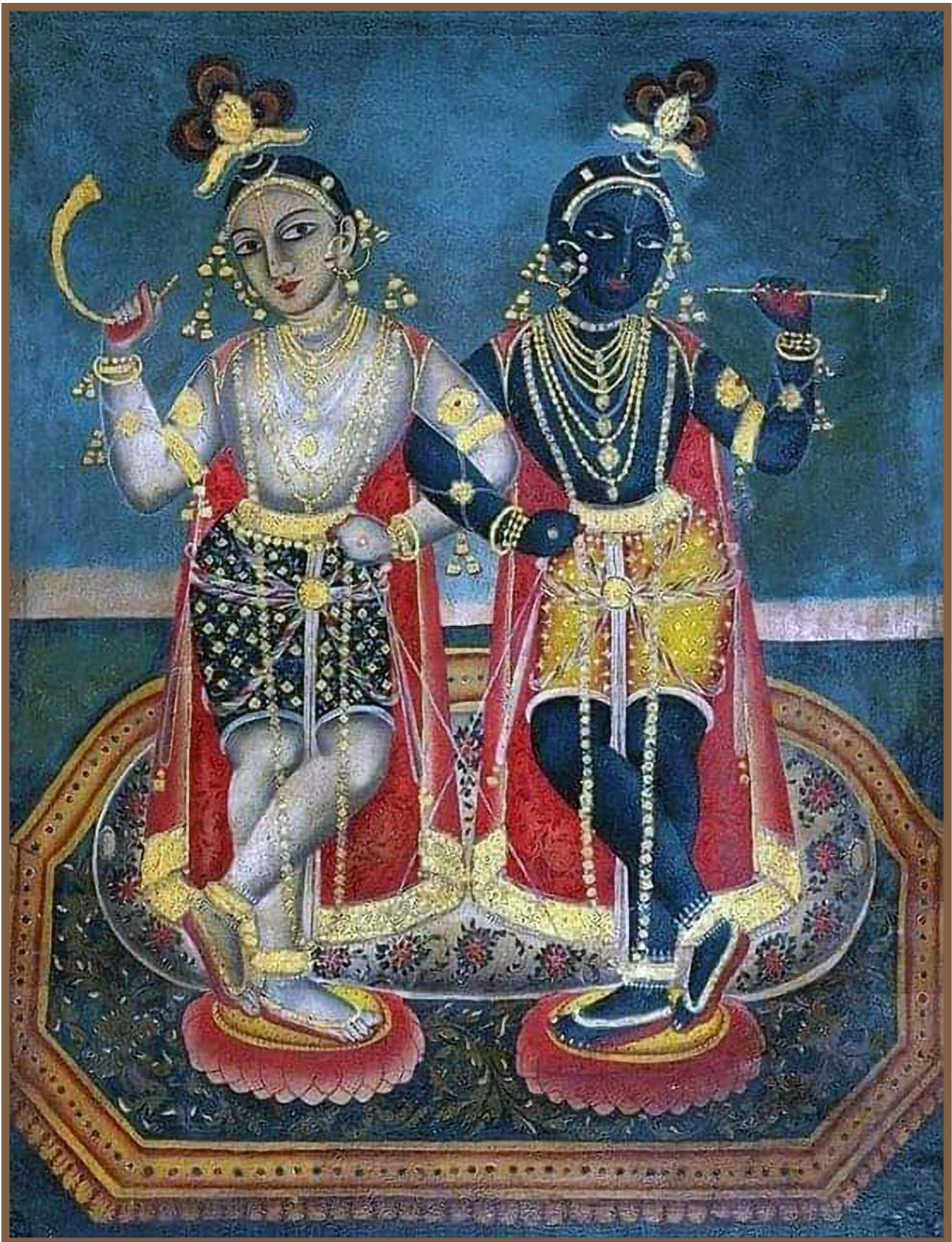
madhughāṭa dekhi sukhe rohiṇinandana
turite āsiyā kṛṣṇa kaila āliṅgana

Seeing the pots of honey, the son of Rohini was happy and came running to embrace Krishna.

svacchanda-hṛdaye madhu kariyā bhakṣaṇa
punaḥ punaḥ ghaṭa prati kare nirikṣaṇa

With an uninhibited heart he drank the honey and again and again looked at the pots.

āpanāra chāyā madhucāṭe nirakhiyā
kahite lāgila rāma ati matta haiyā



unknown artist

The two brothers



Photo by Indradyumna Swami

The deities of Sri Sri Krishna Balaram worshipped in Jagannath Puri by Mahaprabhu's associate Chota Haridas

Seeing his own reflection in the pot, Balaram said, "Who is drinking the honey from my pot?"

*kere mora ghaṭa madhye kare madhupāna
emata sāhasī kevē haya balavān*

"Who is that powerful and daring person to drink honey from my pot?"

*āmāre nā jāna āmi rohiṇinandana
muṭakira ghāte tomāra la-iba jīvana*

"Don't they know that I am the son of Rohini? I will hit you with the pot and kill you!"

*eta kahi matta haiyā madhu-ghatopare
māriḷa muṭaki rāma sakrodha antare*

Being drunk and speaking like this, Balaram, in anger, hit the pot.

*ghaṭa bhāṅgi madhu saba paḍila bhūmite
chāyā nā dekhiyā punaḥ lāgila hāsīte*

The pot was broken, and honey fell on the ground. Not seeing his reflection any more, he began to laugh.

*se kautuka dekhi kṛṣṇa saṅge sakhagaṇa
manda manda hāsī kahe madhura vacana*

Seeing that humorous scene, the friends began to laugh. Then with a smile, Krishna spoke sweetly.

*kāhāra yogyatā tuyā madhu pāna kare
hena ke baliṣṭha āche ei vrajapure*

"Who is such a hero to drink your honey? Who in Vraja is such a powerful man?"

*āisaha sakale khelā kari kutūhale
eta kahi sabe gela yamunāra kūle*

"Come on! Let us play again." Saying so, they all went to the bank of the Yamuna. 🍊

— Translated by Mani Gopal Das from Śrī Vṛndāvana-līlāmṛta. Published by Bishwambhar Laha. Kolkata. 1857. Bengali.

PRAYERS TO BALARAM



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Mahārāja would sometimes recite the following prayers from the Skanda Purāṇa:

Baladeva Praṇāma

*namas te tu hala-grāma namas te muṣalāyudha
namas te revatī-kānta namas te bhakta-vatsala*

Obeisances to you, O holder of the plow! Obeisances to you, O wielder of the mace! Obeisances to you, O beloved of Revatī! Obeisances to you, who are very kind to your devotees!

*namas te balinām śreṣṭha namas te dharaṇī-dhara
pralambāre namas te tu trāhi mām kṛṣṇa-pūrvaja*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Balaram, the best of the strong and the support of the earth. Obeisances unto you, O enemy of Pralamba! Please deliver me, O elder brother of Krishna!

BALARAM AND DURYODHAN



Why did Balaram give so much favor to the demoniac Duryodhan?

Duryodhan was not a devotee of Krishna. From his childhood he hated Krishna's pure devotees the Pandavas and tried in various ways to kill them. When Yudhisthir asked Krishna to go to Hastinapur to deliver a peace message on behalf of the Pandavas, Duryodhan grossly disrespected Krishna, and even tried to capture him.

In spite of all these offenses to both Krishna and his pure devotees, Duryodhan is famous as a great disciple of Balaram. Consider:

* Balaram stayed for several years in Mithila just to give association to Duryodhan and train him in the art of fighting with a club. (Bhāg. 10.57.26)

* Balaram wanted to give his sister Subhadra in marriage to Duryodhan. (Bhāg. 10.86.2-3)



Unknown artist. From a mural in South India

Lord Balaram with his plow

* Duryodhan addressed Balaram as Bhagavan, the Supreme Lord. (*Garga Saṁhitā* 8.9.1; 8.10.1)

* It was Duryodhan who asked the sage Pradvipak Muni to inform him about Balaram's *rāsa* dance in Vraja, as well as various prayers and procedures for worshiping Baladev, and Balaram's 1,000 names. (*Garga-saṁhitā* canto 8 chapters 9-13)

* One of Balaram's names is "Duryodhana-guru", the guru of Duryodhan. (*Garga-saṁhitā* 1.10.42)

* Balaram went to Kuruksetra to stop the fighting between Bhimasena and Duryodhan. When he saw that it was Krishna's will that they fight, he left as he had so much affection for both Bhima and Duryodhan that it was too painful for him to see them fight. (*Bhāg.* 10.79.23-30)

How do we reconcile the fact that Duryodhan was very dear to Balaram?

There may be many answers to this question, but we can conclude that although Duryodhan looked like he was very close, ultimately his attitude was not pleasing to Balaram.

There are many lessons that we can



Bhima and Duryodhan fight as Balaram and Krishna watch from the back

learn from this: First, it's not always easy to see who is really close to the guru. By *aparā-vicāra*, apparent consideration, it appeared that both Banasura and Ravan pleased Mahadeva Shiva and got his mercy. But our *ācāryas* have described that they only got *sakapaṭa kṛpā*, mercy with cheating. They got some wealth, fame, and position. But they didn't get the *niṣkapāṭa kṛpā*, mercy without cheating, *kṛṣṇa-prema*. In the same way, although it apparently looked like Duryodhan was close to Lord Balaram, internally he was far away from the Lord.

Secondly, although Duryodhan had some faith in Balaram, he didn't have faith in Krishna or the Pandavas. In the same way, sometimes a disciple may be full of enthusiasm for his or her guru, but may neglect or offend other *vaiṣṇavas*. Or, like Duryodhan, some disciples may express devotion for their guru, but they may not be interested in worshiping Krishna or chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Although it may appear that such devotees are very close to their guru, and they may even get some big position, they do not get the same quality of mercy that a surrendered disciple receives.

BALARAM'S JOY

Srila Jiva Goswami's

Gopāla-campūḥ, pūrva-campūḥ 3.89

*yataḥ sa tu janmata evānuja-janma yāvat
jaḍa evādrśyata. tatra pratikāraś caika evāsīt
yathāntardhṛta-nijāvarajaṃ vrajeśvary-aṅkam
eva kevalaṃ valamānaḥ samullasitaval lakṣyate.*

After the birth of Balaram up until the birth of his younger brother, there was dullness. There was one remedy, however. When Balaram sat on Yashoda's lap while she was holding Krishna to her heart, they saw that Balaram became very happy.

— *Śrī Gopāla-campūḥ*. English translation by Bhanu Swami. Sri Vaikunta Enterprises. Chennai. 2009.

— *Śrī Gopāla-campūḥ*. English transliteration from <https://grantha.jiva.org/>



To explore a third lesson from the relationship between Balaram and Duryodhan, we must understand Duryodhan's identity. The *Garga-saṁhitā* (1.5.30) describes him as an *aṁśa*, a partial expansion, of Kali — *duryodhanah kaler aṁśo*. Although externally he looked like a big follower of his guru, Duryodhan was a servant and follower of Kali, not his guru Lord Balaram. He had his own agenda separate from the Lord, an agenda that ultimately caused pain and death for millions of persons.

Regarding such duplicity, Thakur Bhaktivinoda describes in his *Bāul Saṅgīta* (song 6):

*eo to' eka kalir celā
māthā neḍā kapni parā, tilak nāke, galāy mālā*

Here is a disciple of Kali-yuga — he has a shaved head, wears *kaupins*, marks his forehead with *tilak*, and keeps *tulasī* beads around his neck.

Gour Govinda Maharaja warned that to really have the association of guru one must give up ulterior motives and false displays of devotion, and must genuinely surrender:

We are only pretending that we have done *ātma-nivedana*, that we have surrendered. But we have not really surrendered. We have only been pretending, pretending, pretending for so many years. And as long as we continue to act artificially we cannot approach guru, *sādhu* or *vaiṣṇava*. We cannot get their mercy at all, and therefore we cannot see their real form. We will be cheated. We will get all external things. — MD 🍊

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DANCE MORE! DANCE MORE!



By Vaishnava Das

This song was well liked by Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami, who would sing it every year on the occasion of Lord Balaram's appearance. A recording of Maharaja singing this song can be downloaded from: <http://www.harekrishna.asn.au/music.htm>

Paṭhamañjarī rāga

*nācare nācare mora rāma dāmodara
yata nāca tata diba kṣīra nanī sara*

Mother Yasoda tells Krishna and Balaram: “My dear Rama and Damodar, dance more, dance more! I'll give you condensed milk, butter, and cream!

*āmi nāhi dekhi bāchā nāca āra bāra
galāya gāṅthiyā diba manimaya hāra*

“Oh, I didn't see you. Dance again! Then I will give you a garland of jewels.”

*tā tā (tā tā) thaiyā thaiyā bale nandarānī
kare tāli diyā nāce rāma yadumani*

The queen of Maharaj Nanda gives the beat and directs their dance — *tā tā thaiyā thaiyā*. Rama and Krishna, the jewels of the Yadu dynasty, clap their hands and dance in time.

*rāma kānu ore mora ore rāma kānu
manimaya jhuri mājhe jhalamala tanu*

Yasodamayi sings, “O my dear Rama and Kanu (Krishna)! O dear Rama and Kanu! You look so beautiful with Your effulgent bodies and jeweled crowns on Your heads.” 🍊

— By Vaishnava Das. Published in Gokulananda Sen's *Pada-kalpa-taru, prathama khaṇḍha*, page 963. Syamacharan Library, Calcutta. 438 Gaurabda (1924). Bengali.



Painting by Radhe Gendron