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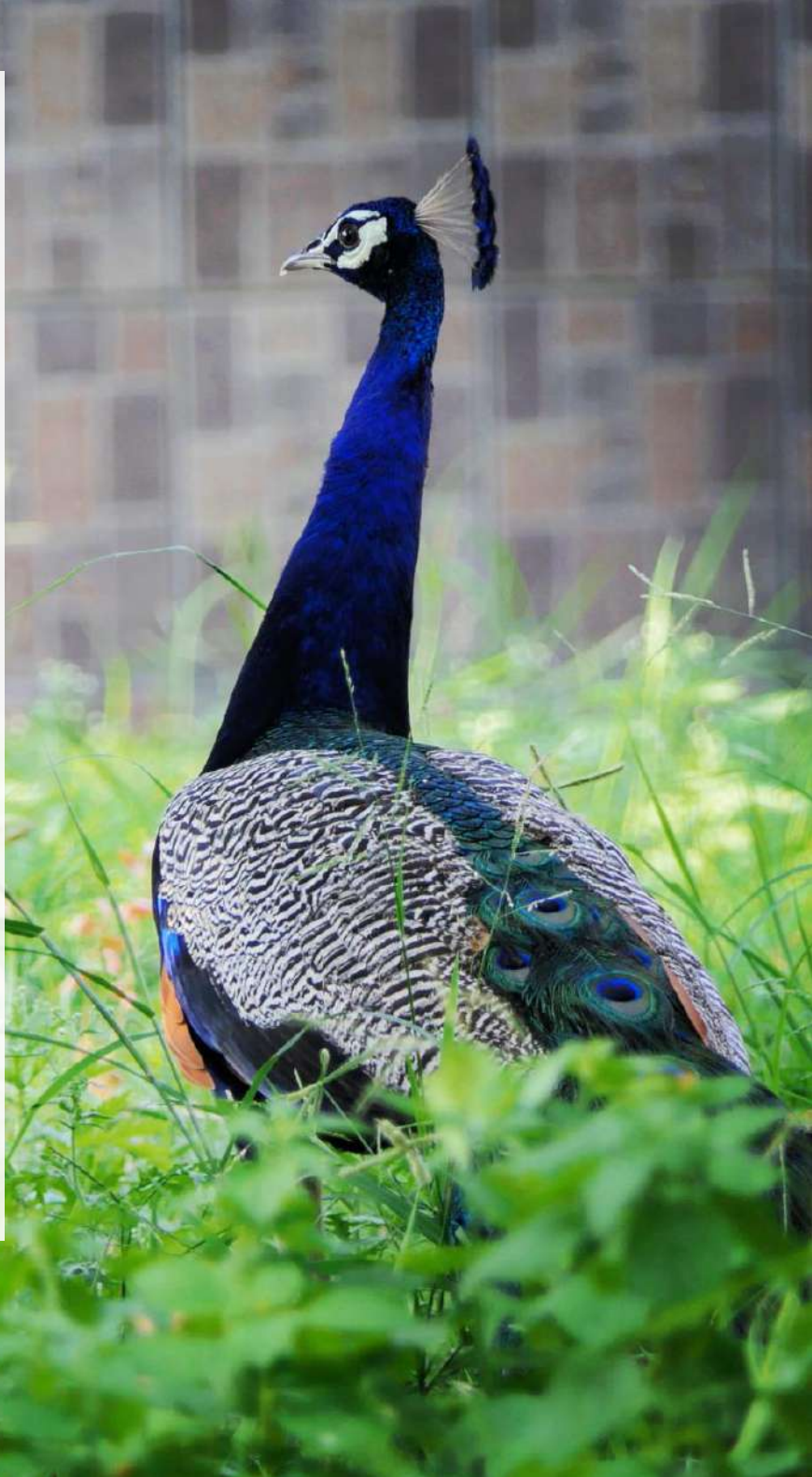
Monthly Newsletter
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Nourishing the Soul

by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami

Searching for happiness in this world is like trying to find water in the desert. Krishn has created this world and called it *dukhalayam*, meaning the place of sorrow. So if the creator has given it this name, why are we trying to find happiness here?

Yes, Krishn is the creator, controller and destroyer, but he never says that he is our personal manager. All other creatures in this world are surviving within their means, without asking him for anything more, so why do we, as humans, approach Krishn with a long list of wants just to help us survive in this *maya*?





Humans have been given a unique gift - the gift of intelligence. But we are wasting our intelligence by using it to ask for things for our survival, when we are capable of taking care of such responsibilities by ourselves.

We should not expect other people to fulfil our desires either, because this will lead to more unhappiness when those expectations either aren't satisfied according to our standards, or aren't satisfied at all.

Fulfilling our material desires gives only temporary nourishment to the body, and its cravings are never satisfied. On the other hand, fulfilment of our spiritual desires truly nourishes us because it nourishes what is eternal – the soul. If we approach Krishn with the intention of forming a relationship with him and making him happy, we will receive all the happiness we need.



Kalidasji and the Leftovers of Vaishnavs' Meals



The *Chaitanya Charitamrit* (*Antya Lila*, Chapter 16) tells of a man named Kalidas who lived in Bengal. He was a great soul, with a humble and friendly nature and at every moment, he would chant Harinaam, even in ordinary social situations. He often played board games with friends, and he would even chant Harinaam out loud whilst rolling the dice.

Kalidasji used to eat the leftovers of Vaishnavs' meals and it didn't matter if the person was older or younger than him, or to which caste that person belonged; he always tried to get part of their leftover *prasad*. This practice continued even when Kalidasji became elderly.

In order to get the remnants of Vaishnavs' meals, Kalidasji would go to visit them, bringing gifts of delicious food. If the Vaishnav was a Brahmin (a higher caste than Kalidasji), he would ask for permission before taking their leftovers, and sometimes they would give him a little bit out of mercy.

In all other circumstances, after giving the gift of food, Kalidasji would quietly leave and hide outside. Then, after everyone finished eating, he would secretly lift their used leaf plates from the garbage heap and lick them, thus savouring the nectar of their *prasad*.

In this way, over time, Kalidasji was able to eat the leftover food of every single Vaishnav in Bengal. He was even able to obtain the leftovers of Jharu Thakur, a very humble saint who was born in the caste of sweepers, by bringing him a gift of mangoes and hiding to take his *prasad*.

Mahaprabhu's Special Mercy

After Chaitanya Mahaprabhu moved to Puri, Kalidasji came to visit him there. Mahaprabhu would take *darshan* of Jagannath Dev in his temple each day. Govind, Mahaprabhu's personal servant, would go with him, carrying his water pot.

Before entering the temple premises, Mahaprabhu would wash his feet in a designated area near the gate. Out of great humility, Mahaprabhu instructed Govind to make sure nobody ever drank the water with which he had washed his feet (*charanamrit*). Though his very close devotees sometimes found ways to get it secretly, neither a bird, nor an insect, nor any living creature was allowed to drink Mahaprabhu's *charanamrit*. This is because when Krishna came to earth as Mahaprabhu, he took the form of a devotee and therefore followed all the practises and etiquettes of a Vaishnav.

One day, whilst Mahaprabhu was washing his feet, Kalidasji simply went up to Mahaprabhu and placed his cupped hand under his lotus foot. Mahaprabhu kept silent as Kalidasji drank a palmful of his *charanamrit* once . . . twice . . . then three times. Only then did Mahaprabhu stop him by saying, "Please do not continue. I have already made your wish come true."

One may ask, why did Kalidasji receive this special grace? The *Chaitanya Charitamrit* says:

सर्वज्ञ शिरोमणि चैतन्य ईश्वर
वैष्णवे तांहार विश्वास जानेन अन्तर
सेइ गुण लडा प्रभु तांरे तुष्ट हइला
अन्येर दुर्लभ प्रसाद तांहारे करिला

*sarvagya shiromani chaitanya ishwar
vaishnave taahaar vishwaas jaanen antar
shei gun loiyaa prabhu taare tusht hoiyaa
anyer durlabh prasaad taahaar korilaa*

"Mahaprabhu is the all-knowing Lord, and thus he knew of the great faith in Vaishnavs which Kalidasji had in his heart. It was because of this quality that Mahaprabhu became pleased with him, and gave him something that was almost impossible for anyone else to receive." (*Chaitanya Charitamrit, Antya, 16.48-49*)

After taking *darshan* of Jagannath Dev, Mahaprabhu returned home to Gambhira and took *prasad*. Kalidasji followed him and stood

quietly outside Mahaprabhu's door. Sensing that Kalidasji was there, Mahaprabhu silently hinted to Govind, who was a sincere servant and he understood all the subtle cues of his master. Thus, Govind quickly took some of the leftovers from Mahaprabhu's meal and gave them to Kalidasji.

Krishndas Kaviraj says:

"The instance of Kalidasji receiving Mahaprabhu's *charanamrit* is an example of the supreme mercy that is received upon eating the remnants of Vaishnav's meals. So please eat the leftover food of Vaishnavs, giving up any sense of shyness or aversion. By doing this, all your spiritual desires will come true."

"The leftovers of Shri Krishn are known as *maha-prasad* and the leftovers of Vaishnavs are known as *maha-maha prasad*." (*Chaitanya Charitamrit, Antya, 16.57-59*)

भक्त पद धूली आर भक्त पद जल
भक्त भुक्त अवशेष तीन महाबल

*bhakt pad dhuli aar bhakt pad jal
bhakt bhukt avashesh, tin mahaa-bal*

"The dust from the devotees' lotus feet, the water that has washed their lotus feet, and the leftovers of their meals; these three things are supremely powerful." (*Chaitanya Charitamrit, Antya, 16.60*)

ऐइ तीन सेवा हइते कृष्ण प्रेम हय
पुनः पुनः सर्व शास्त्रे फुकारिया कय

*ei tin sevaa hoite krishn prem hoy
punah punah sarva shaastre phukaariya koy*

"By serving (receiving) these three things, you will get Krishn prem. All the scriptures declare this fact again and again." (Chaitanya Charitamrit, Antya, 16.61)

Krishndas Kaviraj concludes by saying: "Through these three things, the supreme bliss of the Holy Name and prem is achieved; and Kalidasji is proof of this." (Chaitanya Charitamrit, Antya, 16.63)



Kalidasji hides in order to eat the leftover food of Vaishnavs



In Search of Vrindavan by an Anonymous Lali



Living oceans away from Vrindavan, in a place that is so different from the land where all functions revolve around serving the Divine Couple, I have found that the mind often attempts to take itself back to Braj, pulling the heart with it whether it wants to go or not.

On one particular occasion, I was sitting in the car with Maharajji (Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami) ready to drive him to where he was staying and, failing to place my attention on his *seva*, I let my thoughts explore the fact that great souls like him have transformed their hearts into Vrindavan, and so by being in his presence, I was in fact receiving the *darshan* of Shri Vrindavan Dham. Suddenly, I was awestruck. What a blessing to receive in this seemingly mundane environment!

Overwhelmed with emotion, I started off along a narrow, uneven road which was full of potholes and broken concrete. My small car shook and swayed as it struggled down the

street. In an instant, my face broke into the biggest grin. Experiencing the bumpy ride took me back to the *galis* of Vrindavan where I sat in the back of a rickshaw, temple bells ringing in the background, trying to make it in time for *darshan*. What bliss! My senses remained in Radharaman Ghera until I was brought back by the sound of Maharajji's voice. "Chal, Lali," he said, as we sat stationary at a traffic light that had already turned green.

For those of us who live so far away from Braj, what choice have we but to be transported to Radharamanji's temple every time we see a black-and-white tiled floor, to Govardhan's *parikrama marg* every time we walk along a woodland path, or to the steps of Radha Kund every time we hear the splashing of water? What choice have we but to allow our minds to wander in these directions so that internally, at least, we may remain in the land that is covered in the tears of love that fall from the eyes of Shriji's dear ones.





Upcoming Events: November 2019



Gopashtami (Kartik Shukla Ashtami)

Monday, November 4th

Gopashtami is the day when, as a child, Krishna was allowed to herd full-grown cows for the first time. In the Radharaman Temple, Shriji is dressed in *natvar shringaar*, which includes a bugle (*shringi*), cow-herding stick (*lakut*), flute (*murali*) and a special crown called *jura*, similar to the one he wears on Ekadashi. After Shringaar Aarti, *puja* is offered similar to that which is done on Govardhan Puja. The Goswamis ceremoniously apply *tilak* on Shriji's brow and offer gold coins to him.

Akshay Navmi and Yugal Parikrama (Kartik Shukla Navmi)

Tuesday, November 5th

On this day, many devotees perform a large *parikrama* through both Mathura and Vrindavan.

Devotthan Ekadashi (Kartik Shukla Ekadashi)

Friday, November 8th

On this day, Shriji wears a special crown. In the evening, a *kunj* is created with sugarcane, under

which an offering of raw fruits and vegetables is made to Vishnu and the gods. Without any bells or gongs, soft prayers are recited to awaken them from their four-month sleep of *chaturmasya*. After awakening them, *abhishek* is offered to *shaligram shila* with the sound of bells and gongs, and his full *puja* is performed. Then Shaligram Dev is placed on a small chariot and taken on a parade (*vijay yatra*) around the outer altar. Thereafter, ghee lamps are offered to Shriji and from this day till the end of winter, Shriji uses a blanket at night. This is the last day of Niyam Seva (for details, see Sandarshan issue 22), and one should end their *vrat* the following morning. From this day and continuing for five days Tulsi-Damodar *pujan* is held before Mangla Darshan. The Bhishma Panchakam *vrat* also begins today and ends on Kartik Purnima (for details, see *Hari Bhakti Vilas*).

Maha Raas Purnima (Kartik Purnima)

Tuesday, November 12th

This is the last day of Kartik month. On this night, Shri Radha-Krishn and the *gopis* enjoy Raas Lila under the full moon. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to Vrindavan on this day, and in honour of his coming, a great procession is held in the streets of Vrindavan, starting around 4pm at the Amiya Nimai Mahaprabhu Mandir in Gopinath Bazar, and lasting until after midnight.

Shri Gunmanjari Das Goswami's Mahotsav

Wednesday, 13th November

To learn more about Shri Gunmanjari Das Goswami, please refer to Sandarshan issue 14.

