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The Importance of Worship by Chandan Goswami

As a young boy in Vrindavan, I used to play cricket, a sport that has a huge fan base, which is comparable to followers of popular faiths in India. In my neighbourhood, I was known for consistently hitting long shots (similar to home-runs in baseball) and when my friends praised me, it made me feel like I was a good cricketer. I was competitive during matches but in contrast, my role model in the sport,

Rahul David, was calm and mellow. He was known as "The Wall", the one who was unshakable and a master in his strokes. I really wanted to be like him and someday become a professional. In fact, I had made myself out to be a great cricketer in my head, so the dream of actually becoming one seemed like a real possibility to me. I decided to go to New Delhi, to a coaching school run by a famous cricketer.

During trials, I was asked by the coach to bat. I played some nice shots and a few trainee boys cheered for me. This made me feel like I was different and good.

After the trial, my coach came and sat next to me. He tapped me on my shoulder and said, "You played well. Where did you learn to hit like that?"

"I am self-taught, Sir," I replied.

"That's what I thought," the coach said as he looked at me with concern. "See, there is an issue with the way you are holding your bat. Your posture isn't great. The position of your head, the way you were looking at the ball and your way of picking balls to hit is poor, and there is a problem with the way you are hitting the ball."

My impression of how "good" I thought I was at cricket was shattered. My coach could read the disappointment on my face. In a gentle manner, he said to me, "Don't feel discouraged. I am here to teach you everything. But we should start our journey of learning cricket under a good coach from the very beginning."

Similarly, most of us are self-taught worshippers of our deities at home. We put our hearts into worshipping, and perhaps this is the reason other devotees praise us. But to be a really good devotee, we need guidance, just like I needed a coach to become a better cricketer. The *Brahma Yamal*, (1.2.202) states:

श्रुति-स्मृति-पुराणादि-पञ्चरात्र-विधिं विना ।
ऐकान्तिकी हरेर् भक्तिर् उत्पातायैव कल्पते ॥

*śruti-smṛiti-purāṇādi-pañcarātra-
vidhiṁ vinā ।
aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva
kalpate ॥*

This verse highlights the result of self-taught worship. It may appear that the devotee is steady in his practice, but if he lacks faith in the words of God in the form of the Veds, Smritis, Purans and Pancharatras, and thus rejects them, his efforts will only create disturbance in his spiritual life.

When our gurus try to teach us, we may feel discouraged, or sometimes we feel comfortable with what we already know and we don't want to learn more. Or we may be happy to be recognised as the best in our community and thus we don't care enough to change. In all honesty, being the best at cricket was just a personal passion or goal, so the stakes are nothing compared to that of worship. Worshipping Radha-Krishn, Sita-Ram or any other god and goddess is not a game, because every act of carelessness on our part affects our Beloveds, just as every act of carelessness affects the close relationships in our lives. Therefore, we need a guru who can teach us how to perfect our worship in a way that pleases our deities.



Shrinivas Acharya, Part 11 of 12: Shrinivas and the Nose Ring



In the previous issue, Shrinivas hosted the Kheturi festival, and Mahaprabhu himself came to dance in the kirtan. In this issue, Shrinivas suffers from a mysterious problem.

The following story is told by Yadunandan in the third chapter of his book, *Karnanand*. Yadunandan was a disciple of Shrinivas's daughter, Hemlata Thakurani, who told him this story herself.

Once, Shrinivas and his wives, Ishwari and Shrimati, were staying in King Birhambir's town of Vishnupur. In the morning, Shrinivas told his wives stories about Shri Krishn's *lilas*, before bathing and performing his *puja*. Still sitting on his *asan*, he closed his eyes and began to meditate on Radha and Krishn.

Shrinivas's wives became very anxious when about nine hours passed, but he was still in his trance. They chanted the Holy Name loudly in his ears, but there was no reaction. They then sent for King Birhambir, and the three checked Shrinivas's vital signs. They were stunned! Shrinivas was not breathing at all, yet he still remained in a seated position.

As word spread of Shrinivas's condition, many of his disciples came to the house, but nobody could revive him. Three days passed and there was no change – Shrinivas remained suspended in breathless meditation. The disciples stayed at Shrinivas's house as they tried to think of ways to help.

On the third day, Shrimati said, "Last night, I had a dream that Ramchandra was coming. Our husband always used to praise him and once even said 'Ramchandra truly knows my heart'. I believe that he can help." Her words filled the devotees with hope. They were about to send for Ramchandra when Ramchandra himself walked in the door.

After hearing the whole story, Ramchandra draped a cloth in front of Shrinivas like a curtain. He asked everyone not to worry, and told them he would bring Shrinivas back in under an hour. But in case it took longer than that, he told them they must chant Harinaam loudly. Then, sitting beside Shrinivas, Ramchandra joined him for meditation.

A Divine Journey

Meditating upon eternal Vrindavan, Ramchandra saw the Yamuna River, and a beautiful girl on its banks. The girl was Shrinivas as a *manjari*.¹ In this form, Shrinivas is known as Mani Manjari. Ramchandra was also in his *manjari* form as Karuna Manjari. These are their eternal identities in Vrindavan *lila*.

Mani Manjari said, "I am so happy to see you! Shri Priyaju (Radha) lost her nose ring while playing in the Yamuna with her Beloved. Gunmanjari has instructed me to search, but I cannot find it. Please help me!"

Karuna Manjari joined Mani Manjari in the quest for the missing nose ring. It was really difficult, because there were many lotus plants with big blossoming flowers and wide leaves covering the surface of the water. And the sparkly sand below was full of deep prints from Radha and Krishn's lotus feet, any of which could be hiding the missing jewellery!

But by working together, the two found it and joyfully went to the *nikunj* where Radha and Krishn were taking rest. Roop Manjari, Gunmanjari and all the other *manjaris* were sitting just outside the *nikunj*, eagerly watching the path. When they saw Mani Manjari and Karuna Manjari's smiles, they immediately knew that the nose ring had been found!

Gunmanjari took the nose ring from Mani Manjari and happily told her, "You have found Shri Priyaju's lost jewellery so many times before. I had full confidence that you could solve this problem too!" Gunmanjari gave the nose ring to Roop Manjari, who quietly crept into the *nikunj* and expertly placed it back in Shri Priyaju's nose without disturbing her sleep.

Then Roop Manjari untied a knot in the corner of her *aanchal* and took out the Divine Couple's *prasadi beeda*.² Placing it in Gunmanjari's lotus hand, she said with a smile, "I relished this so much that I made sure to save some for my *priya sakhi*."

Back in Vishnupur, about an hour had passed since Ramchandra went behind the veil. Shrimati went inside to see what was happening, and saw both her husband and Ramchandra meditating together. She then asked all the devotees to sing Harinaam loudly, just as Ramchandra had requested, while she herself chanted Harinaam directly in her husband's ear.

Finally, Shrinivas opened his eyes. The curtain was opened, and the devotees took *darshan* of their guru. He was glowing with a special divine radiance, and just by seeing him, the devotees were lost in the ocean of love.

Taking Shrinivas and Ramchandra aside, Ishwari and Shrimati asked what had

1. A *gopi* maidservant of Shri Radha

2. *Paan*



Mani Manjari and Karuna Manjari find the lost nose ring

happened. Ramchandra shared the whole story with them. Overwhelmed with emotion, Ishwari and Shrimati prayed for Shrinivas and Ramchandra's blessings, and asked how they too could enter Radha and Krishn's eternal Vrindavan *lila*.

Then Shrinivas untied the corner of his shawl. Inside was the same *prasadi beeda* from the *lila*, which Roop Manjari had given to Gunmanjari, and which Gunmanjari had given to him. Shrinivas revealed the origin of the divine *prasad* and said, "I saved this for Ramchandra because of his precious service.

But now by his mercy, I am sharing it with you too."

Shrinivas divided the *beeda* in three equal parts, and gave one part each to Ramchandra, Ishwari and Shrimati. All three of them ate, and at that moment, Ishwari and Shrimati reached the same level of spiritual attainment as Ramchandra.

To be continued . . .

References

Karnanand by Yadunandan



Shrinivas distributes the *prasadi beeda*



Braj Animal Care



We recently got a call from Mathura about a bull calf who was run over by a tractor. One leg was ripped open to the bone, while another leg was missing half a hoof. He was also bleeding from the mouth and face.

He needed sixteen stitches in his leg, and several different medicines. By nighttime, he was still not able to eat or drink due to his mouth injury; but with daily follow ups, his condition quickly improved. Now he can walk, eat and drink just as before!



Just after the accident



Later that day

We are so happy to be able to help animals like this bull calf. About six months ago, we could only serve about ten cases a month, whereas now we serve hundreds a month. Our Braj Animal Care van, which was very generously donated to us, is also helping us reach cases in far away areas that would not normally have access to veterinary care at all. Similarly, our feeding program is really taking off, with about 15,000 animal meals served every month!



Recovering nicely in Vrindavan

If you feel inspired to join the movement, why not become BAC's monthly patron? We are looking for people to sponsor one day's feeding each month on a recurring basis. This helps us put more one-off donations towards expanding our services, hiring more staff and helping more animals.

For just \$25/£20/₹1800 per month, you can sponsor a daily feeding permanently. To contribute, please go to www.brajanimalcare.com/contribute or message us for more options.

Twenty-four days have already been sponsored, so we only need six people to help us cover the whole month!

From September 19th through 21st, Braj Animal Care held an online festival of music and dance. Many talented people offered their art. We wish to offer our heartfelt thanks to Janaki Mehta, Siddhant Shekhar, Lalit Dixit, Mohan Shyam Dixit, Madan Gopal Sharma, Natwar Sharma, Anup Patel, Avijit Kundu, Radhika Manchanda, Gouranga Das, Rita Purkayastha and Samrat Bannerjee (Shyamsundar Anuragi) for offering their talents. The festival videos, including a brand new mini-documentary about Braj Animal Care, can still be viewed on our Facebook page [here](#).

To support our programs, please visit [our website](#) or message us on [WhatsApp](#). For daily updates, please click to follow us on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#), or join our [WhatsApp Group](#).



Maharajji's Latest Updates



Shri Chandan Goswami Maharaj

Discourse on Shri Guru Ashtakam

As part of the auspicious month of Purshottam, Maharajji will be giving a series of lectures, live on Facebook, on the Shri Guru Ashtakam. He will impart the deep wisdom that lies in each of the nine *shloks*, written by Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur. The lectures can be viewed on [Facebook Page](#).

Our usual *sankirtans* have been temporarily postponed due to social distancing measures implemented in response to COVID-19, however regular virtual *sankirtans* are being held. We welcome you to join our online *sankirtan* programs on the following dates:

October 1st, 2020: Purushottami Purnima
October 13th, 2020: Purushottami Ekadashi
October 22nd, 2020: Durga Puja Shashti
October 30th, 2020: Sharad Purnima

To receive the meeting links, and for updates on further programs, please join our

WhatsApp group [Chandan Goswami Uvacha](#). You can also receive Maharajji's association through his recorded *kathas* on YouTube at [ChandanjiOfficial](#) and [ODevOfficial](#). For more information about Shri Radharaman Lal and Maharajji, please contact us at odev108@gmail.com or WhatsApp us on [+91 83687 83201](tel:+918368783201).

Vaishnav Calendar

Kartik Niyam Seva begins on October 27, 2020. To learn more about Kartik and its practices, please read our special edition of Sandarshan [here](#). For more upcoming festivals and Ekadashi dates, please click [here](#) to view our Vaishnav calendar.

