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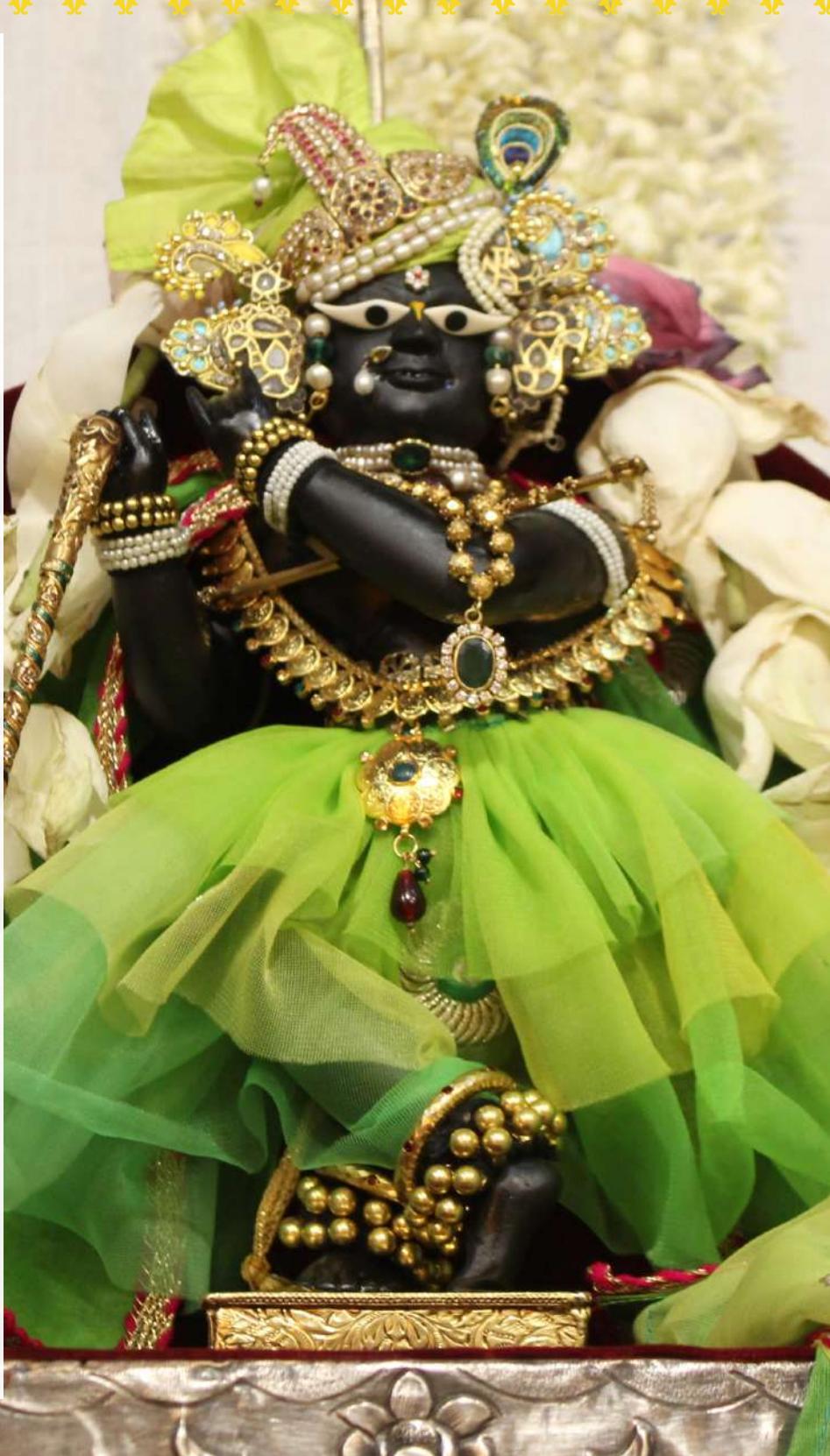
Monthly Newsletter
June 2018
Issue No. 6

The Crow and the Swans

The scriptures tell the story of a crow and some swans. The crow was famous for being one of the fastest birds of all. He was very proud of himself, and felt that no one could defeat him. But one day a group of swans visited the area. Some other birds told the crow, "These swans can fly long distances, and they are even faster than you!" The crow's ego was hurt. He would do anything to defeat those swans, he thought. So he went to them and said, "I challenge you to a race. Choose the best flier amongst you and I will defeat him."

The swans were not at all interested in what the crow was saying, but the crow was very stubborn. Finally, one of the swans replied, "Alright. We are going to cross the ocean soon, so let that be the race. Starting from here, we will cross the sea, and whoever finishes first wins." The crow happily agreed.

All kinds of birds gathered to watch the competition. When the race began, the swan started flying steadily. But the crow flew faster and faster, performing difficult stunts along the way.



The crowd cheered, and the crow loved the attention.

After just a few miles of flying, the crow started getting really tired, but there was nowhere he could stop to rest. The ocean below was very deep; if he fell in, he would die. He understood his mistake when he looked at the swans, who were still flying smoothly at an even pace. Soon the crow's tiredness overcame him. As he started to sink down in the air, one of the swans took him on his back and saved him, bringing him back to the starting point. Then the crow realised that he was not the best flier in the forest.

Some devotees are like the crow. They start their practice trying to be a serious *sadhak* and fight against Maya; but instead, they end up enjoying their own accomplishments. Such a devotee feels happy when he completes a certain number of rounds of *jap*. He feels good when he controls his senses, or resists his physical urges. And he feels satisfied whenever he spends quality time doing some spiritual practices. He feels a sense of pride within, a sense of fulfillment. And sometimes people also praise him, which pleases his ego. Like the crow, this devotee's only goal becomes how to win the race against Maya by performing intense and difficult practices, while impressing other devotees in the process.

The other type of devotee is like a swan. His goal is higher than just controlling his senses; he is greedy to cross over the entire ocean and reach Eternal Vrindavan. And to make the long journey, he just starts to fly. He does not care if he is getting praised by anyone, or if he is being criticised. A person who has a debt of one million rupees only thinks, from morning to night, of how to pay back that debt. He works very hard, and he does not care how difficult it gets, because his only goal is to get rid of that debt.

In the very same way, the devotee's goal is to attain Eternal Vrindavan. He is not satisfied with the small stunts of the crow, or the small perfections he may gain on the way. With a one-pointed heart, he just flies to Eternal Vrindavan.

कृष्णभक्तिरसभाविता मतिः
क्रीयतां यदि कुतोऽपि लभ्यते
तत्र लौल्यमपि मूल्यमेकलं
जन्मकोटि-सुकृतैर्न लभ्यते

*kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matih
krīyatāṁ yadi kuto 'pi labhyate
tatra laulyam api mūlyam ekalam
janma-koti-sukṛtair na labhyate*

"A heart absorbed in Krishn's love is so rare; if you ever get the chance, buy one right away! The only price to make your heart like that is greed." (Padyavali 14)

If we feel satisfied by completing a certain number of rounds, or by doing a specific act of worship, or if we enjoy it when people praise the way we dress our deities, then like the crow we have lost the real idea of the journey. In the end, we are just performing *bhakti* stunts to please ourselves and the crowd. And one day, all this showing off will exhaust us, and we will drown in the material ocean. The only thing that can make us cross this ocean of Maya is greed for Eternal Vrindavan; and when that greed is the focal point of your spiritual life, then you will keep on moving until you reach your destination.

Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami

Haridev: The Darling of Govardhan



करोद्धतनगेन्द्राय गोपानां रक्षकायते
सप्ताब्दरूपिणे तुभ्यं हरिदेवाय ते नमः

*karoddhṛta-nagendrāya gopānāṁ rakṣakāyate
saptābdarūpiṇe tubhyam̄ haridevāya te namah*

"O Haridev, I bow to you! - the protector of the cowherds, the seven-year-old Child Krishn lifting Govardhan Hill." (From *Skand Puran*, quoted in *Braj Bhakti Vilas*)

The deity of Haridev in Govardhan is very ancient. He was first worshipped by Shri Krishn's grandson's Vajranabh about 5,000 years ago. When Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to Braj, he took *darshan* of Haridev too.

प्रेमे मत्त चलि आइला गोवर्धन ग्राम
हरिदेव देखि ताहां हइला प्रणाम
हरिदेव आगे नाचे प्रेमे मत्त हंया
सब लोक देखिते आइला आश्र्वय शुनिया

*preme matta cali āilā govardhana-grām
harideva dekhi tāhān hailā praṇām
harideva āge nāce preme matta hañā
saba loka dekhite āila āścarya śuniyā*

"Drunk with sacred love, Mahaprabhu came to Govardhan village. There he had darshan of Haridev, bowed to him, and danced blissfully in front of him. The word spread, and many people came to see Mahaprabhu there." (Chaitanya Charitamrit, Madhya 18.17 and 19)

The Brajwasis were charmed and

overwhelmed by Mahaprabhu's love, and the temple Goswamis took wonderful care of him. That night, Mahaprabhu stayed at Haridev temple (*Chaitanya Charitamrit, Madhya 18.20 and 22*).

Later, Haridev was placed in a sacred lake called Bilchu Kund, probably to protect him from attacks by the Mughals. Later he was found by a Vaishnav saint named Keshavacharya. Keshavacharya worshipped Haridev for many years and his descendants continue to serve the deity today.

Some say that the warrior-sadhu Himmat Giri Bahadur took Haridev to a village near Kanpur in the mid-1700s, to protect him from invaders. Indeed, there is a beautiful deity of Haridev in Budhauli village near Kanpur. However, many say the original deity is in Govardhan, and still others believe his location is unknown. Whatever the case may be, Haridev's sweetness can be experienced in both forms - in Govardhan and Budhauli.



The lotus face of Haridev in Budhauli (left) and Govardhan (right).

How Haridev Came to Keshavacharya

One night, as the saint Keshavacharya lay sleeping, Haridev appeared to him in a dream and said:

"I am stuck at the bottom of Bilchu Kund! Please come and take me home."

"Are you alone?" asked Keshavacharya.

"Yes, I am alone," replied Haridev sadly.

"Then my answer is no," said Keshavacharya.

Haridev was shocked by Keshavacharya's response. "But I'm Krishn!" he said. "How can you say no? You've worshipped me for so long! Now at last I want to come to you, and you just reject me?!"

Keshavacharya replied, "Lala, you are very *chanchal* (restless). You come and go as you please. But you never leave Radharani. I don't want you without her!"

"Actually, I am Radha and Krishn in one!" said Haridev.

"I see! That's very convenient!" said Keshavacharya, raising an eyebrow.

"No, it's really true!" said Haridev. "When I was holding Govardhan Hill, the Brajwasis had Radharani sit in front of me. She is my strength, my *shakti*. As I drank in her beauty, she entered into every pore of my being, and gave me the power to lift Govardhan. That's why the Brajwasis say:

कछु माखन ते बल बद्ध्यो, कछु गोपन करि सहाय
श्री राधे की कृपा सु, गोवर्धन लियो उठाय

*kachu makhan te bal badhyo, kachu
gopan kari sahay,
shri radhe ki kripa su, govardhan liyo uthay*

"Some of his strength came from eating butter, and the cowherd men helped a little too. But it is really by Radharani's *kripa* that Krishn lifted Govardhan."

Keshavacharya's heart melted after hearing this, and he rushed to Bilchu Kund at once and brought Haridev home.



Bilchu Kund



Keshavacharya and the Mercy of Harinaam



Once a group of *sadhus* were passing by Keshavacharya's home. They were very hungry, so Keshavacharya invited them to take *prasad*. He cooked a delicious meal and offered it to Haridev. But just as he was about to begin serving the *prasad*, one of the *sadhus* said:

"I just noticed that you do not have *tapt-mudra*! Haven't you taken initiation (*diksha*)?"

"I am initiated, but I do not have *tapt-mudra*," said Keshavacharya.

According to the scriptures, *tapt-mudra* is one of the five rituals of Vaishnav initiation, along with receiving a new name, *tilak*, instructions for worship and - most important - the *mantra* from an unbroken lineage of Gurus. In the *tapt-mudra* ritual, *shankh* and *chakra* are branded on the devotee's shoulders with a hot iron.

The spiritual schools of Vrindavan do not use *tapt-mudra* because the *shankh* and *chakra* are symbols of Narayan. Wearing these signs makes you a servant of Narayan in Vaikunth, and we only want Radha and Krishn in Vrindavan. But the *sadhus* who were visiting Keshavacharya did not understand this.

"If you don't have *tapt-mudra*, then you are not really initiated," said one *sadhu*.

"And we cannot eat food cooked by an uninitiated man. We will go somewhere else to take *prasad*."

The *sadhus* stood up and began to leave, but Keshavacharya stopped them. With tears in his eyes, he humbly begged them to stay and eat.

"I may not have *tapt-mudra*," said Keshavacharya, "But I am marked with the *kripa* of Harinaam."

"Prove it," demanded the *sadhu*.

Keshavacharya took off his shawl. The *sadhus* were amazed to see that his whole body was covered with the Holy Name.

वृषभानु सुता श्रीनन्दसुवन
वृषभानु सुता श्रीनन्दसुवन
वृषभानु सुता श्रीनन्दसुवन

Vrishabhanu Suta-Shri Nand Suvan

Vrishabhanu Suta-Shri Nand Suvan

Vrishabhanu Suta-Shri Nand Suvan

It was not a tattoo, nor a *tapt-mudra*. The Holy Name had manifested by itself on every inch of his body. The *sadhus* offered *pranam* to Keshavacharya, and felt blessed to receive *prasad* from such a great saint.

The Month of Jyeshth



Due to the intense heat in the month of Jyeshth, Radharamanji (Shriji) needs to be kept cool and comfortable. His *bhog* is made using ingredients that cool the body such as cucumber, fresh fruits and different kinds of cool drinks. Shriji's drinking water is kept in a cooling clay pot rather than the usual silver one, and the pot is changed twice a day. And in the afternoon, all the *shaligram shilas* are placed in cool water to rest (*jal shyan*).

A new *kunj* (*phool bangla*) is made every afternoon, using strings of fragrant flowers, like jasmine and roses that are artistically woven over a wooden framework. In the evening, Shriji comes out into his *jagmohan* (outer altar) to sit in this beautiful *kunj*. Wearing the bare minimum, a *taniya* (a fine loin cloth), he blesses the devotees with close *sandarshan* of his most divine form. For this reason, Shriji's devotees love the summer months in Vrindavan.

New Publication: Shri Krishn Kautukam

We are pleased to announce the release of our new publication, *Shri Krishn Kautukam*. This rare book about Shri Radha-Krishn's *lilas* was written by a *mahatma* named Shri Paramanand. There are 12 well-known saints named Paramanand in Gaudiya Vaishnav history. However, considering the time period of this work and other factors, it was probably written by Shri Paramanand Sen, who is better known as Kavi Karnapur.

The book was first published by Shri Krishndas Babaji of Kusum Sarovar, based on a 460-year-old handwritten manuscript. But unfortunately, the book has remained out of print and unavailable for decades. When Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami came across the book, he realised its importance and wished to make it available for everyone. Unfortunately the language of Shri Krishndas Babaji's translation was dated, and difficult for the average person to understand. And so Maharaj began re-writing the text in simple, modern Hindi.

Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami's translation of *Shri Krishn Kautukam* is now available to purchase online at www.shriradharaman.com. It is our hope that we can continue to serve the Gaudiya Vaishnav scriptures in this way for many years.

