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Sanatan Goswami: The Journey from Ramkeli to Vrindavan



Sanatan Goswami was the eldest of the Six Goswamis, who lived about 500 years ago. He is an incarnation of Radharani's maid servant, Lavang Manjari.

He and his younger brother Roop Goswami were from a family of South Indian Brahmins, but they were born and brought up in Bengal. As young men, they worked for the Muslim government of the time, under the ruler Hussain Shah. Thus they were forced to wear Islamic dress and long beards. Sanatan Goswami's birth name was Amar Dev, but he became known by the Muslim name of Sakar Mallik.

Sanatan Goswami was a genius, and he knew many languages including Sanskrit, Farsi and Arabic.

Even though he worked for the Muslims, he was completely devoted to Radha and Krishn. He used to read scriptures, meditate and chant *Harinaam* secretly. During the day he worked in Hussain Shah's court, but at night he went home to his village, named Ramkeli. He used to meditate that Ramkeli was Vrindavan, and lose himself in that mood, with tears of love rolling down his cheeks.

Then one day, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to Ramkeli. The brothers met him, and that meeting changed their lives. Mahaprabhu gave them new names, and they became known as Sanatan Goswami and Roop Goswami.

The brothers decided to leave their jobs and run away to Vrindavan. But Sanatan Goswami, being the elder brother, asked Roop Goswami to go first. Sanatan Goswami eventually stopped attending work too, and was thrown in jail because of it. But he was able to get free by bribing the guard.

Sanatan Goswami soon received Mahaprabhu's full mercy. Mahaprabhu gave him the seva of finding the lost holy places of Krishn Lila, and writing books to help others follow the path Mahaprabhu had shown him. Sanatan lived in Vrindavan and dedicated his whole life to this seva.

Sanatan Goswami and Madanmohan

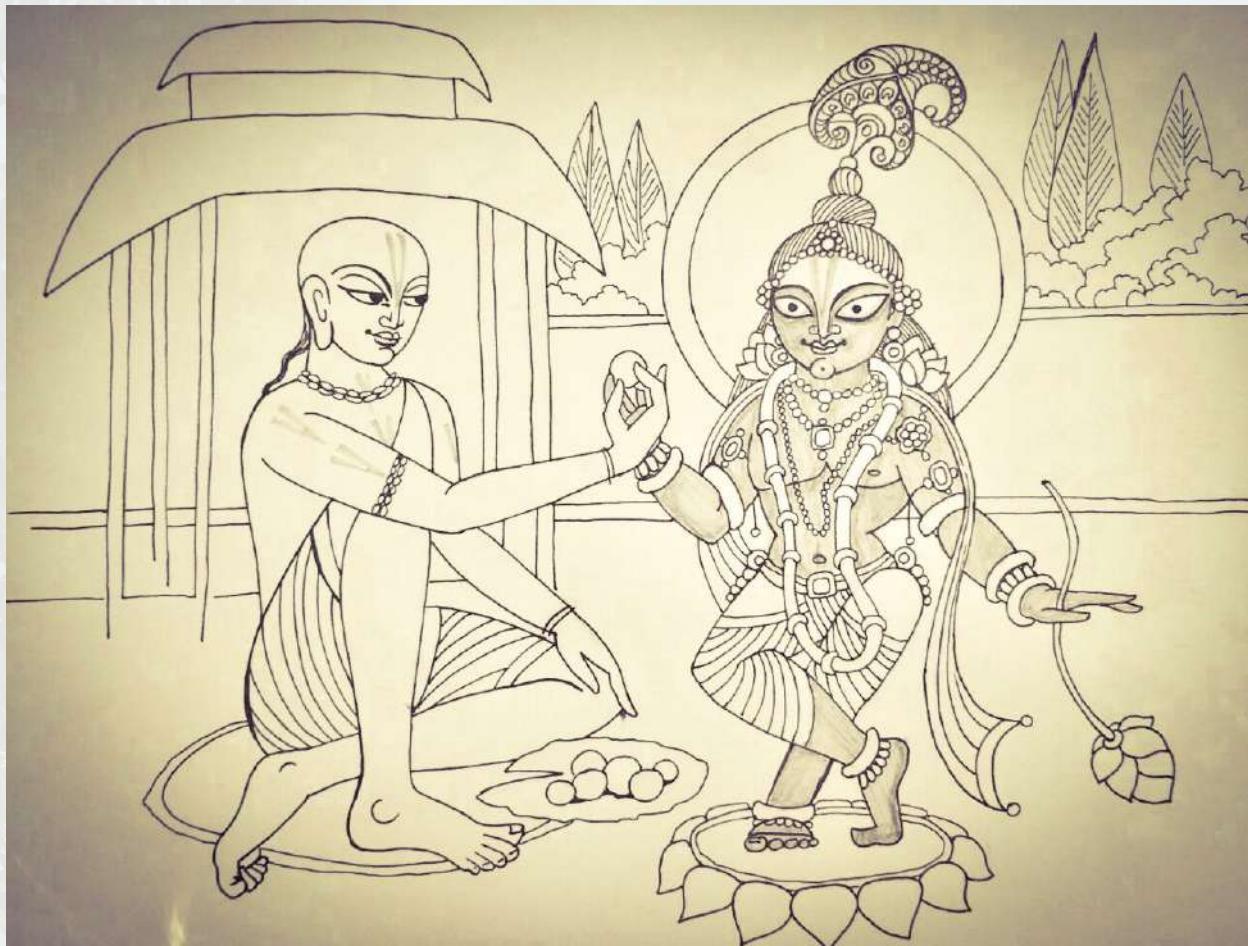
In Vrindavan, Sanatan Goswami lived at Dwadash Aditya Tila, the place where Radha and Krishn first met (see Sandarshan Issue 5). There he lived in a simple hut, and for food he used to perform *madhukari* (collecting food from Brajwasis). In those days, Vrindavan was full of trees, but not many people; he had to go to Mathura to find food.

One day while performing *madhukari*, Sanatan Goswami came to the house of a Chaube (a Chaturvedi Brahmin). The Chaube had a very beautiful deity of Shri Krishn, but Sanatan Goswami was shocked by how he treated him. The children were playing with the deity, and

their mother was cooking while brushing her teeth with a *neem* twig.

Sanatan Goswami was very upset. He said to the Chaube, "You should worship Krishn according to the rules, not like this!" The Chaube was very embarrassed. From then on, the Chaube and his family tried to worship the deity strictly. The deity's name was Madanmohan.

That night, Madanmohan came in Sanatan Goswami's dream and said, "Why did you ruin my life? The Chaube is not an ordinary person. He has real love for me. He only knows me as his son.



"And yes, mother was brushing her teeth while cooking for me, but it's not because she doesn't know it's wrong. She was doing that because she knows I am very hungry in the morning, and she was getting late. She wanted to make sure I got my food as quickly as possible. And the children are my friends! We used to really play together, but you couldn't see it. You thought they were treating me like a doll."

Sanatan Goswami felt awful. "Please forgive me! Do you want me to have a talk with the Chaube?" he asked.

"No," said Madanmohan with a smile. "Come take me away from here. Now I want to enjoy your love, just like I enjoy theirs."

So the next day, Sanatan Goswami went back to the Chaube's house. The

Chaube had also had the same dream, and Madanmohan came to live with Sanatan Goswami.

Before taking Madanmohan with him, Sanatan Goswami said to Madanmohan, "Are you sure you want to come with me? I'm a renounced man, and I live under a tree. I can't give you a fancy temple to live in. The only temple I have is my hut made of mud and sticks. And all I can feed you is some dry bread and leaves from the forest.

Madanmohan said, "For me, your hut will be the greatest temple, and your simple food will be the greatest feast!"

Sanatan Goswami said, "if you are sure, then I would love to bring you home." Thus Madanmohan came to live with Sanatan Goswami at Dwadash Aditya Tila.

Everything was wonderful for a while. Sanatan Goswami would collect wheat flour from the Brajwasis, and from the flour he made *bati*: very simple *bati* without any salt or ghee. Sometimes he also plucked weeds from the forest and boiled them. And that was all they had to eat.

Madanmohan ate Sanatan Goswami's offerings happily . . . for a few days. Then Madanmohan said to Sanatan Goswami:

"I'm finding it hard to choke down your dry balls of dough. Can I please have some salt?"

Sanatan Goswami said, "That's not possible."

Madanmohan was shocked. "What do you mean it's not possible?" he said.

"I am a renounced man," replied Sanatan Goswami. "I live this way because this lifestyle supports my seva for Mahaprabhu. If I give you salt, you will ask for ghee. If I give you ghee, you will ask for sugar. If I give you sugar, you will ask for *rabri*. And if I give you *rabri*, you will ask for *chhappan bhog*! If you want salt, you're going to have to get it yourself!"

Later that day, a merchant named Ramdas Kapoor was travelling down the Yamuna river on a boat. When the boat reached Dwadash Aditya Tila, it got stuck on the Yamuna shore. Ramdas Kapoor tried and tried, but he couldn't get the boat unstuck. He asked some local

Brajwasis for help, but they were not able to move the boat.

One Brajwasi said, "On top of that hill is a great saint named Sanatan Goswami. Go and take his blessings. I'm sure he can help you."

Ramdas Kapoor went up the hill to Sanatan Goswami's hut. Bowing at his lotus feet, he said "Please, Maharaj, you have to help me. My boat is stuck, and it's full of goods. If I can't free my boat, I'm going to lose a lot of money!"

Sanatan Goswami remained silent for a moment. He did not want to get involved in any material problems. But then a thought crossed his mind. He asked:

"What's in your boat?"

"It's full of salt!" said Ramdas Kapoor.

Sanatan Goswami smiled. "I think I know how to free your boat," he said.

Sanatan Goswami had Ramdas Kapoor bring a small amount of the salt, which was then offered to Madanmohan with his midday meal. And as soon as the *bhog* was offered, the boat was freed from the shore.

Ramdas Kapoor was so shocked and impressed by Sanatan Goswami that he paid for a temple to be built for Madanmohan. That temple is the oldest temple in Vrindavan.

Sanatan Goswami and Mudiya Puno

Sanatan Goswami entered Nitya Lila on Guru Purnima, the sacred day for worshipping the spiritual master, and from then on this day was called Mudiya Puno in Braj.

Puno means the full moon (*purnima*), and Mudiya comes from the word *mundan*, which means shaving ones head.

It is called this because the Brajwasis loved Sanatan Goswami so much, that when he left this world, it was like their own father had died. They shaved their heads and performed Govardhan *parikrama* together in his memory.

Mudiya Puno is Braj's largest festival. In 2017, about 6.5 million devotees visited Braj to celebrate by performing Govardhan Parikrama and visiting Sanatan Goswami's *samadhi* in Vrindavan.



The Only Jewel of my Life

Sanatan Goswami wrote several important books in his lifetime, and the most famous one is *Brihad Bhagwatmritam*. There is a beautiful verse in the beginning of this text, which reveals the glory of the Holy Name:

जयति जयति नामानन्दरूपं मुरारे
विरमितनिजधर्मध्यानपूजादियत्नम्
कथमपि सकृदात्तं मुक्तिदमप्राणिनां यत्
परमममृतमएकं जीवनं भूषणं मे

*jayati jayati nāmānanda-rūpam murārer
viramita-nija-dharma-dhyāna-pūjādi-
yatnam
katham api sakrd āttam mukti-dam
prāṇinām yat
paramam amṛtam ekam jīvanam
bhūṣanam me*

Glory to Shri Krishn in the form of his Holy Name! Those who take its shelter above other practices like meditation, deity worship and varnashram dharm are blessed. It easily grants liberation to those who speak it even once. This Holy Name is the greatest source of eternal bliss and the only jewel of my life. (1.9)

In his commentary on this verse, Sanatan Goswami explains that *Harinaam* (the Holy Name) is anand-roop or bliss incarnate, and whoever chants it also becomes filled with bliss. He says everyone should take shelter of

Harinaam, because chanting is the simplest practice, which takes you to the highest goal.

Some people perform *varnashram dharm*, but this is a difficult path. Others practice *yog*, but on that path you have to control your mind and senses.

Even with *bhakti* practices there can be trouble. For example, deity worship (*archana*) can be hard to do in a perfect way, because we have to be very pure in body and mind. And even hearing Hari Katha can be difficult sometimes, if we can't find the right speaker to hear from. So Sanatan Goswami says, we should not worry about being perfect in all these *bhakti* practices. Just offer yourself to the Name, and the Name will give you everything.

Harinaam, he says, is not only for chanting, but it can be served by all the senses. With our minds we can meditate on *Harinaam*; we can touch *Harinaam* by writing it on our bodies with sacred clay; we can worship *Harinaam* with our eyes by taking its *darshan*, and so forth.

Sanatan Goswami says, "This Holy Name is the only jewel of my life." *Harinaam* is the supreme *amrit*, far greater than *mukti*, and greater than the joy of Vaikunth. It is more beautiful than anything in this Universe, because it is Shri Krishn himself.

Jal Yatra



In Summer, Vrindavan is very hot, so devotees find ways to make Radha and Krishn as comfortable as possible. The festivals of this season focus on keeping them cool, and one such festival is Jal Yatra.

On the evening of Jyeshtha Purnima, a special fountain is installed on Radharamanji's altar, sprinkling him and his Beloved with cooling drops of Yamuna water. Greenery adorns the altar in the form of a *kalpavriksh* bearing many kinds of fruit.

Shriji wears a new white *dhoti* on this day, which becomes almost transparent in the water. This makes for a most captivating *sandarshan*!

Jal Yatra

by Gunmanjari Das Goswami

लखत श्री राधारमण फुहारे ।
कबहूँ हजारा कबहूँ इकधारा कबहूँ कुंज अकारे ॥
बैठि लता सुन्दर सीतल जलकण अंगन धारे ।
नृत्य करत फल निरखें पहिरें पट भूषण सुकुमारे ॥
सुन्दर फल पावत मिश्री को पनोपिये दोऊ प्यारे ।
गुणमंजरी गुलाब नीर को छोड़त हैं पिचकारे ॥

*lakhat śrī rādhāraman̄ phuhāre
kabahū hajārā kabahū ikdhārā kabahū kuñj akārē
baiṭhi latā sundar sītal jal-kaṇ aṅgan dhārē
nṛtya karat phal nirakhē paharē paṭ bhūṣhaṇ sukumāre
sundar phal pāvat miśhrī ko panōpiyē doū pyāre
guṇmañjarī gulāb nīr ko ḡodat haī pičhkāre*

Just see how Shri Radharamanji is enjoying the sprinkling shower of water, sitting in this *kunj* in Shri Vrindavan Dham! Sometimes thousands of streams pour upon him and sometimes just one. Shriji wears silk clothes and beautiful ornaments, and as he dances, he looks up at the different kinds of fruit hanging from the *kunj*. His beloved Priyaju sits at his side, drenched in a mist of cool droplets. The *sakhis* have made delicious *panna* from ripe fruits selected by Shriji, juiced and sweetened with *mishri*. As the Divine Couple drink it together, Gunmanjari lovingly sprinkles them with rosewater from a *pichkari*.

