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Cleaning Our Mental Hard Drive

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When I was a child, I used to play video games on my computer, and at the time, hard disks didn't have a lot of memory. After finishing a game, I always wanted to keep it and try to install a new game as well. But this used to slow my computer down; so, I used to erase the old game instead. Letting go of that old game allowed me to load the new game without any hassle. And thereafter, I could happily play the new game on my computer.

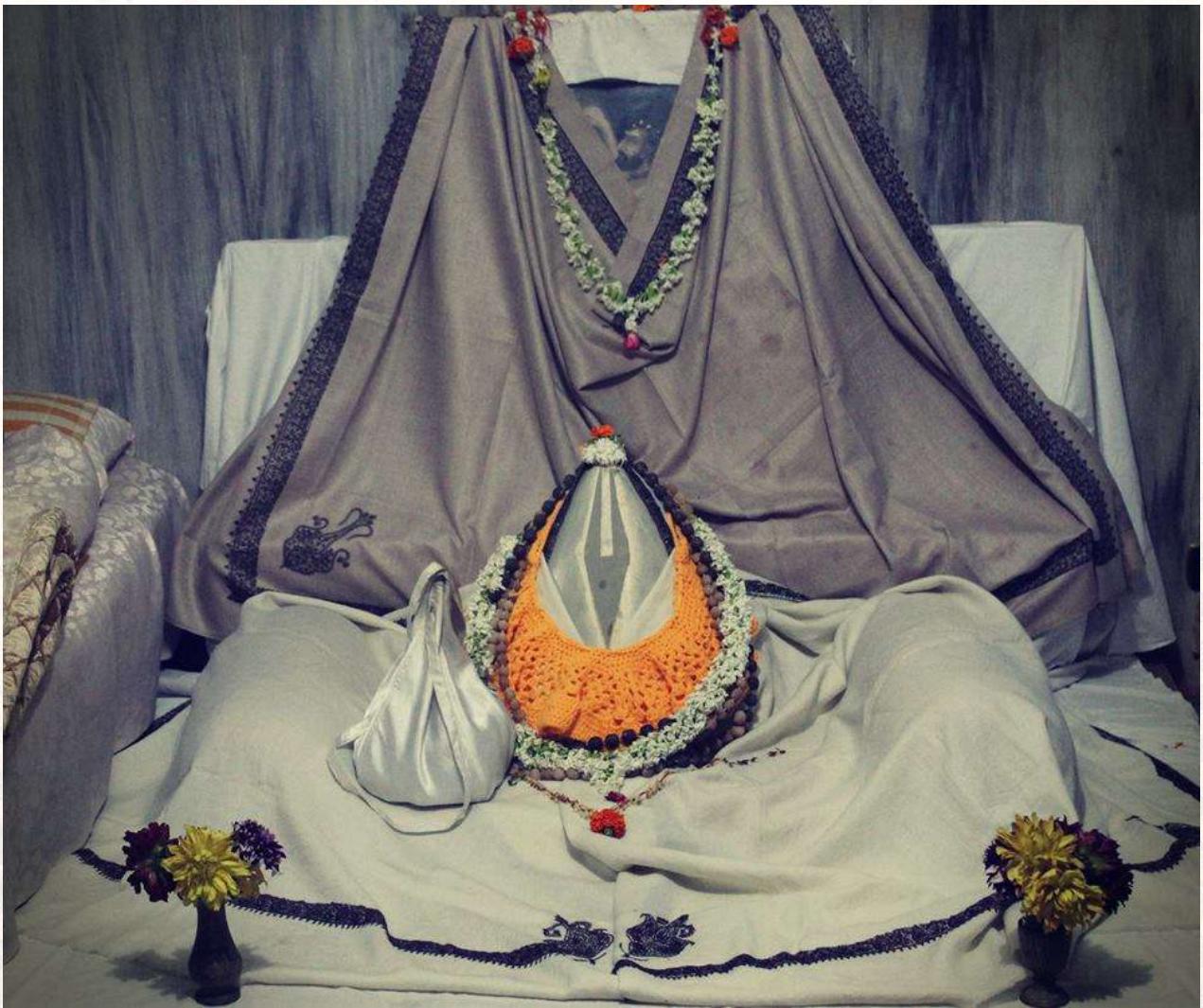
Similarly, in this life, every person collects memories, and we are a bundle of them. Our body has a hard drive in the form of our mind, which stores our memories from the past. Now, when we attempt to live in the present moment and enjoy life on a daily basis, our old memories take up too much space and slow us down. They prevent us from capturing new memories too. What we think today shapes our future, so we must make sure to clean our mental hard drive regularly and without fail. And the easiest, most effective way to do this is to immerse ourselves in chanting the Holy Name (Harinaam), which has the power to erase all the negativity from our life and replace it with the supreme joy of Shri Radha-Krishn and their *lila*.

Haridas Thakur: Humility and Harinaam

Haridas Thakur is an eternal servant of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and an incarnation of the god Brahma. Though he was raised by a Muslim family, he was naturally attracted to the path of devotion from a young age, and eventually, he took initiation from Mahaprabhu's dear companion, Adwait Acharya.

Haridasji was very humble and always absorbed in *bhajan*. He used to chant three *lakh* of Harinaam daily on his *jap mala*, and the rest of the day, he continued chanting in his mind. At the young age of eighteen, Haridasji left home and began to live in a hut, deep in the forest. Because of his deep faith and practice, the inhabitants of a nearby village developed so much respect and adoration for him, that soon, Haridasji became known as a great saint. Haridasji, however, had no desire for fame, for he knew it could lead to his downfall on the path of devotion.

Filled with jealousy, a local *zamindar* (landlord) named Ramchandra Khan tried to tempt Haridasji so that he would fall from his ideals. Khan instructed a prostitute named Hira to seduce him and so, late at night, she went to him.



Haridas Thakur's Samadhi

After offering her obeisance to Haridasji's *tulsi* plant, Hira entered the hut. There, she saw Haridasji sitting on his *asan*, absorbed in *jap*. Showing off her body to him, she said, "O worshipful *sadhu*! You are so young and gorgeous. What woman could possibly control herself after seeing you? I want you . . . and if I cannot have you, then I will surely die."

Haridasji replied, "My dear, I will surely accept you as my own, but only after I finish my rounds.

Please have a seat and listen. When I have finished chanting, I shall give you whatever you desire."

Haridasji chanted all night, while Hira watched him. However, when Haridasji had not finished chanting by sunrise, Hira got up and left.

Haridasji had promised to fulfil Hira's desire, thus she came back that evening. Again, she sat down before Haridasji, trying to get his attention.

Haridasji said to Hira, "Last night I disappointed you, so please forgive my *aparadha*. Just know that I will certainly accept you once my chanting is done. Please sit and listen." Hira bowed to *tulsi* and Haridasji, then sat down in the doorway of his hut. And so, for a second night, Hira sat in Haridasji's presence as he chanted.

As dawn came, Haridasji said, "Listen. I have vowed to chant a crore (ten million) Holy Names this month. That is why I have not finished my rounds yet; but tomorrow, I will surely complete them. Then you and I will become one."

Thus, for a third night, Hira watched and listened to Haridasji's chanting. This time she also chanted.

As the sun rose, tears began to roll down Hira's cheeks. Haridasji had promised to fulfil her desire, but now the only desire that remained in her was to drown in the Holy Name the way Haridasji did. She bowed at Haridasji's feet and begged for his forgiveness.

"I am a great sinner," said Hira, "Please save me."

Haridasji replied, "I would have left the day you came here, but I stayed just to save you."

Taking shelter of Haridasji and accepting him as her guru, Hira asked what she should do from now on. Haridasji told her to give away all her wealth to Brahmins and come and live in the hut, while he himself would make arrangements to live elsewhere.

He also gave the following teaching:

निरन्तर नाम लओ करो तुलसी सेवन
अचिरात पाबे तबे कृष्णर चरण

*nirantara nām lao karo tulsi sevan
acirāt pābe tabe krṣṇer caraṇ*

"Chant the Holy Name without stopping and serve *tulsi*. Thus, you will attain Krishn's lotus feet very quickly." (*Chaitanya Charitamrit, Antya 3.137*)

Hira did as Haridasji said. Living in the hut as a renounced woman, she chanted three *lakh* of Harinaam every day and sustained herself by collecting *madhukari* (alms).

She became so spiritually advanced that even great saints would come to have her *darshan*.

Everyone was astounded by Hira's transformation, and thus Haridasji became even more well known.

Persecution by Muslims

The Muslim government at the time was intimidated by Haridasji. Not only had he had left Islam, which they felt was a sin, but he was also attracting other Muslims to the path of devotion. They could not tolerate this.

Their ruler, Husain Shah, called Haridasji to court. He told Haridasji to give up Harinaam or he would be executed. Haridasji knew the Shah's threat was real, but he responded, "I will never give up Harinaam, even if you cut my body into pieces."

The Shah sent him to jail. However, Haridasji's spiritual power attracted even the prisoners to the path of devotion. Angered, the Shah ordered his men to drag Haridasji through twenty-two marketplaces and beat him constantly until he died. They began to carry out his order.

Although the men beat him brutally, Haridasji did not fight back. He did not speak a word, nor did he cry or show any sign of pain. He only chanted Harinaam. The more they beat him, the stronger his chanting became.

What's more, not a single mark appeared on his body.

Eventually, the men who were beating Haridasji started getting tired.

It seemed that no matter what happened, he would not die, and they started thinking that perhaps Haridasji was indeed a saint. Afraid and remorseful, they begged for his forgiveness.

They said to Haridasji, "We have tried so hard to kill you, but no matter what we do, you continue to live! Now the Shah will surely kill us for not fulfilling his orders. Please help us!"



Haridas Thakur in Puri

Haridasji closed his eyes and went into a trance. Thinking he was dead, the men threw him into the Ganga river where her divine currents brought him back to the shore some distance away. As soon as his trance broke, Haridasji got up and began chanting Harinaam once more.

Thereafter, even the Shah himself apologised to Haridasji. But Haridasji had already forgiven him. Even whilst being beaten, he only prayed to Krishn to forgive those who hurt him.

Haridas Thakur continued to live a most blessed life filled with Harinaam, and

eventually, he went to Puri where Mahaprabhu granted him his most precious blessings.

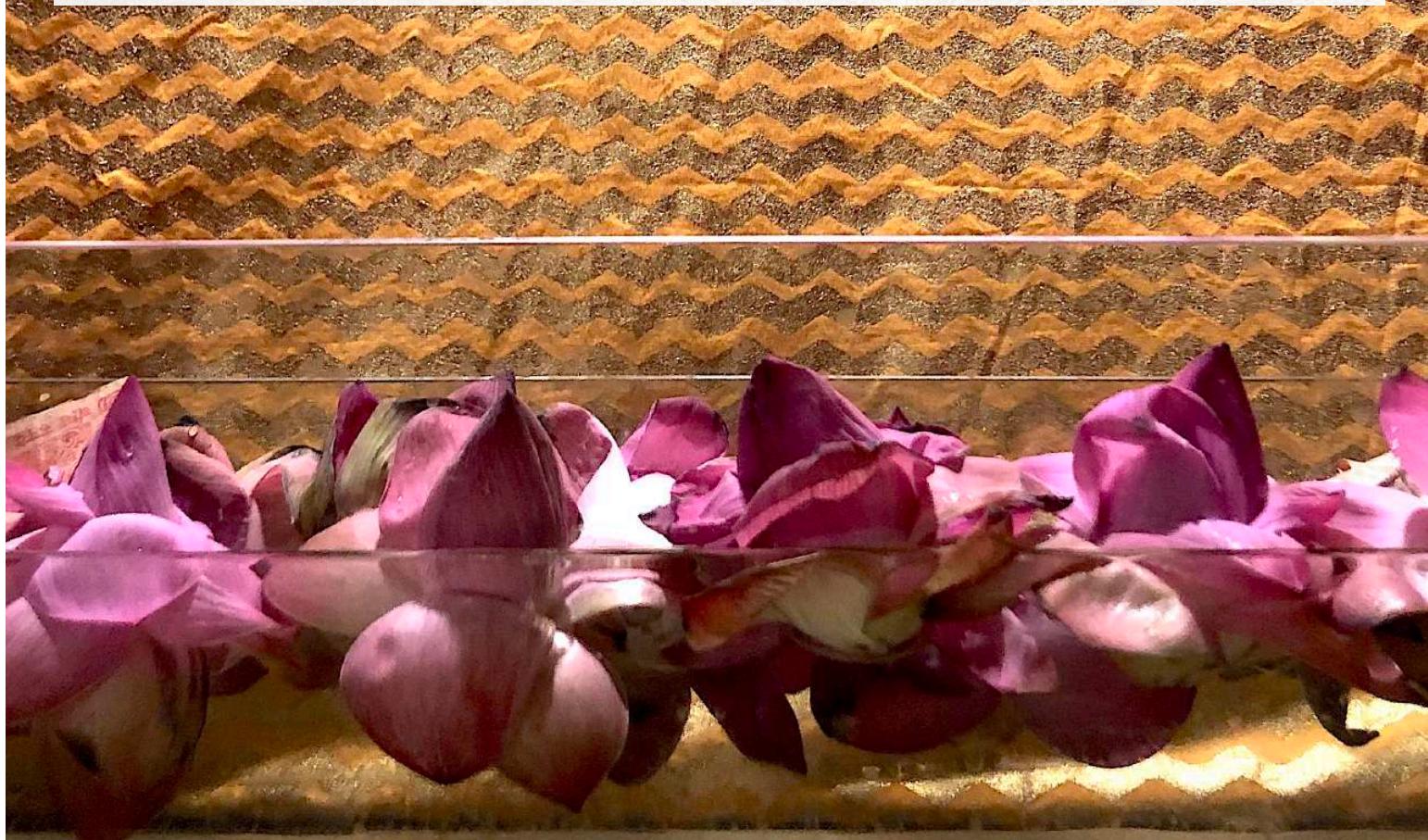
To be continued...

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Jal Yatra: The Water Festival



Jalyatra

by Gunmanjari Das Goswami

जलयात्रा

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

lakhat śrī rādhāraman̄ phuhārē
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 cheiden haī pičhkāre

Just see how Rādhāraman̄ is sitting in this *kuñj* in Vṛndāvan Dhām, and how he enjoys the sprinkling shower of water! Sometimes thousands of streams pour upon him and sometimes just one. Śrījī wears silk clothes and beautiful ornaments, and as he dances, he looks up at the different kinds of fruit hanging from the *kuñj*. His beloved Priyājū sits at his side, drenched in a mist of cool droplets. Guṇmañjarī stands nearby, sprinkling the divine couple with rosewater from a *pičhkāri*. The *sakhīs* have made delicious *pannā* from ripe fruits selected by Śrījī, juiced and mixed with *miśhrī*, and the Divine Couple drink it together as they enjoy the festival of Jal Yātrā. (English translation from *Shri Radharaman Gita* by Vaisnavacharya Chandan Goswami)

In the heat of the Vrindavan summer, the Brajwasis are only concerned about keeping Shri Radha and Krishn cool so that they may continue to enjoy their divine, love-filled pastimes. Their play, combined with the devotees' efforts to protect them from the heat, form a series of joyous festivals that are celebrated throughout Braj. For the devotees of Shri Radharaman, the *sandarshan* of their Beloved on the evening of Jyeshtha Purnima is an intensely captivating one.

On this occasion, known as Jal Yatra, Shriji enjoys the sprinkling of cool droplets of Yamuna water on his enchantingly dark form through a special fountain that his dear Goswamis place on his altar. Adorned in beautiful ornaments, our Shriji becomes drenched not only in water, but also in the love of those who serve him. In the spirit of the season, Shriji's altar is decorated with a *kalpavriksh* (a wish-fulfilling tree) to provide him with cooling greenery and an abundance of fruit. With Shri Priyaju by his side, Shriji is left soaked through, stealing the hearts of his devotees, as his white *dhoti* turns increasingly transparent.



Yamuna Maharani



Snan Yatra



Jagannath, Baldev and Subhadra on the Snan Mandap

In Jagannath Puri, this festival is known as Snan Yatra, where Jagannath Dev is brought out of the temple to a special platform, and a grand *abhishek* is offered. After the ceremony is complete, Jagannath "falls ill", presumably having caught a chill during the bath. However, according to the Gaudiya Vaishnav mood, Jagannath's illness is just an excuse for him to spend time with goddess Lakshmi, making her calm and contented so that he can more easily leave her for the period of the Rath Yatra, to reunite with Radharani in Vrindavan.

Jai Jai Radharaman Lal
Jai Jai Jai Shri Bhatt Gopal

