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True Renunciation by Chandan Goswami

In the *Bhagwad Gita* (18.11), Krishn states, "Anyone whose soul is in a body cannot stop acting completely. But he who renounces the attachment to the results of his actions is truly renounced." It is impossible for anyone to completely stop acting, and the end of action alone is not renunciation. Actual renunciation takes place when the ego and desires for reward are given up.

This means to give up acting with selfish motivations. It does not mean we should become lazy or stop thinking. When we perform any task and expect something in return, this is attachment to the fruit of action. If we get the reward we desire, we become happy; but if we do not get what we want, we feel miserable.



If we act in this way, with attachment to results, our minds will be disturbed, and we will not be able to concentrate on the Lord. Krishn says in the *Bhagwad Gita*, "It is your job to perform action, but the results are not in your control. Do not see yourself as the cause of those results, but do not be attached to inaction either." (*Bhagwad Gita*, 2.47)

Desire is nothing but the anticipation of a reward. When we walk this path sincerely, we must stop seeking such incentives. Actions motivated by a desire for a reward brings reactions, and this is what binds us to the material world. By making an honest effort to

give up the desire for results, and by offering everything we do for Krishn's pleasure alone, we can overcome these yearnings. Krishn himself says: "Everything you do, do it as an offering to me: including the food you eat, the offerings you make in the sacred fire, everything you give away in charity and every vow you observe. By doing so, you will become free from the good and bad results of your actions and you will attain me." (*Bhagwad Gita*, 9.27-28)

(From *Way to Love: A Commentary on the Narad Bhakti Sutra* by Shri Chandan Goswami)



Shri Yogmaya Ma



Shri Yogmaya Ma was born to Muktakesi Devi in a small village of West Bengal in the year 1852 C.E. Her family was poor and when she was still very young, her father, Ramachandra Bhaduri, died, leaving her mother alone with two small daughters. Fortunately, the young widow and children were given shelter by a respected family of Goswamis from the lineage of Adwait Acharya, who was a close associate of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

At the young age of six, Yogmaya was married to the family's 18-year-old son, Vijaykrishn Goswami. Due to the extremely conservative nature of society at the time, this was done to ensure that Yogmaya would always have a male guardian. Fortunately, Vijaykrishn had a

good heart, and he made sure that Yogmaya experienced as normal a childhood as possible. He also arranged for her education. The two only began living as husband and wife after Yogmaya came of age. With guidance from Vijaykrishn Goswami and the devotional practices from her past lives (*samskaars*), she blossomed into a Vaishnavi. She was never fazed by wealth or the lack of it, by happiness or suffering. She remained unaffected and completely devoted herself to her husband and Shri Radha-Krishn. But, Yogmaya was about to be put to the test.

In following with his family tradition, Vijaykrishn Goswami became an initiating guru of the Gaudiya Sampradaya and made

many disciples. However, he began to doubt whether he was worthy of the great responsibility of looking after the spiritual lives of others and delivering them from the bondage of material life when he felt that he himself was bound. He considered himself undeserving of their unwavering faith in him as a guru. He was also very disheartened by the practices of the Hindu society at the time. People were misusing the privileges attached to their caste and falling from their ideals.

For a time, Vijaykrishn Goswami left the Vaishnav path to join the Brahmo Samaj, which promoted social reforms, shunned the idea of caste, and disregarded the personal form of God in favour of the impersonal Absolute. In an act of protest, he also removed his sacred thread (*janehu*). As a result, his family and community rejected him. Only Yogmaya and her mother remained by his side.

This was a very difficult time for Vijaykrishn and Yogmaya as they no longer received any donations from his disciples. Vijaykrishn had been attending medical school, but was now unable to complete his degree. Although he began to work a little in the medical field, the bulk of his time was dedicated to preaching for the Brahmo Samaj. With very little income, the couple's life became extremely austere and they often had to go without food. Yogmaya would fast, but no one could tell from her content demeanour, and this continued for a long time.

Over the next several years, Yogmaya gave

birth to five children, and due to her husband's travels as a preacher, which would take him away for an entire year at times, she had to shoulder the responsibility of caring for the rest of her family alone. This was one of the biggest ordeals of her life, yet steadily, with faith in the Lord, she persevered.

Even though Vijaykrishn Goswami neglected the personal form of God during this period of his life, this mood did not come naturally to Yogmaya. Once Vijaykrishn asked Yogmaya, "Do you understand what the formless Absolute is?" Yogmaya replied, "Yes, the word formless means God is round like a *shaligram shila*!" Her response did not please him.

But eventually, the effect of Vijaykrishn's devotional practices, passed on to him through his lineage, made him remove himself from the Brahmo Samaj. Finally, after searching for a *siddh* guru, he took shelter of Swami Brahmanand Paramhans of Maansarovar. Swami Brahmanand was a vessel of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's grace, and Vijaykrishn's *sadhna* blossomed under his guidance. He also took *sanyas* from Swami Hariharanand of Benares, but Swami Brahmanand advised him not to renounce the world and to return to his family. Although he now began to live with Yogmaya again, their physical relationship no longer existed.

Yogmaya was filled with joy when her husband returned, though she had never once succumbed to the hardship of what she had to endure by herself. She was firmly rooted in her faith in Krishn, who in return,

makes arrangements for those who have surrendered themselves unto his lotus feet: "I personally take care of my devotees who constantly think about me and nothing else. I conserve what they have and I carry to them what they do not have." (*Bhagwad Gita*, 9.22)



Vijaykrishn Goswami and Yogmaya Ma

With Vijaykrishn's renewed faith in Bhakti, he soon became known as a Vaishnav saint and he now wholeheartedly took on the responsibility of being a guru. Thousands attained shelter at his lotus feet, and Yogmaya also received initiation from him.

During her initiation, the eight signs of ecstasy (*sattvik bhavs*) appeared on Yogmaya's body, and she had *darshan* of a spiritual being that she had once seen in her childhood. After describing that divine vision to Vijaykrishn, he revealed that she had seen none other than

his ancestor, Shri Adwait Acharya himself. Thereafter, she began her spiritual practice under her husband's guidance, but her main *sadhna* was always *seva*.

One day, Vijaykrishn and Yogmaya went to Dakshineswar for *darshan* of the well-known saint, Ramkrishn Paramhans. Regarding Yogmaya's spiritual journey, Ramkrishn asked Vijaykrishn, "How long has it been since she was initiated? I can already sense great power emanating from her. Being in her presence gives me the same feeling as being in the presence of the Divine Mother." He then called her "Ma" and offered obeisances to her.

With the help of his disciples, Vijaykrishn went on to establish an ashram near Dhaka but the foremost assistant was Yogmaya. Every day, she would enter a room with her husband and serve him with all her heart. She would worship him daily with flowers and sandalwood paste as tears flowed from her eyes. He then used the *prasadi* items to worship her in return. Those who secretly witnessed this mood of devotion described it as a vision of purity and felt they represented the ideal relationship between a husband and wife. Yogmaya was a devoted Guru Ma, and treated the disciples with the same love and care as she did for her own children. Vijaykrishn Goswami used to say, "Whatever I have earned through rigorous meditation and penance, Yogmaya has achieved simply by serving me every day with total dedication."

Although Swami Brahmanand had instructed Vijaykrishn to live with his family, once during

a period of intense *sadhna* in Vrindavan, he needed to spend some time in seclusion. Yogmaya's feelings of separation from her guru made her weep and fast constantly, until her body was reduced to skin and bones.

One day during this period, she was standing in the presence of one of Vijaykrishn's foremost disciples, Kuladanand Brahmachari. Kuladanand looked away from his Guru Ma for just a moment, and when he looked back towards her, she was gone. It was as though she had simply disappeared.

All the disciples panicked and asked Vijaykrishn where their Guru Ma had gone. Vijaykrishn replied, "Gurudev [Swami Brahmanand Paramhans] mercifully took her away to the divine realm of Maansarovar near Mount Kailash. She may or may not come back." Those who doubted his words felt that perhaps she had drowned herself in the Shri Yamuna River. But after some days, Yogmaya reappeared just as mysteriously as she had gone. Upon her return, she no longer showed any sign of worldly attachment. She always remained blissful – for now, she was taking part in the eternal pastimes of Radha and Krishn.

One day as Yogmaya and her companions were on the way to have *darshan* of Govind Devji, one companion suddenly had *darshan* of Yogmaya as a young *gopi* wearing a red dress and fully adorned with the most beautiful jewellery. A divine fragrance was radiating from her and the sound from her jewellery brought her surroundings to life. It

was as though she was running towards the eternal *nikunj* of Shri Radha and Krishn. Experiencing this phenomenon, the companion fell unconscious.

Once during Vasant Utsav, the Kumbh Mela was being held in Vrindavan. Vijaykrishn had been staying in Vrindavan for a year, but now he decided to go to Haridwaar for the main Kumbh Mela *snaan*. Yogmaya declined to follow him, saying, "I only want to stay in Vrindavan."

"How can I let you stay here alone?" asked Vijaykrishn.

"This problem of guardianship only exists because I have a body," replied Yogmaya. "So I shall leave my body behind and stay in Vrindavan forever." Yogmaya asked for the *panjika* (Vaishnav calendar), and after consulting it, she informed everyone that she would leave her body on Nityanand Trayodashi.

On the morning of Nityanand Trayodashi, Yogmaya Ma began to show symptoms of cholera, and by the end of the day, she had succumbed to the virus. Vijaykrishn was attending a *satsang* elsewhere when Yogmaya left her body. After leaving her body, she went to her husband and asked for his blessings before entering *nitya lila*. Her body was decorated with *gulaal*, *kumkum*, flowers and sandalwood paste before it was burned at the Yamuna *ghat*. Nityanand Prabhu appeared to Vijaykrishn and instructed him to entomb a portion of her ashes at his ashram. He also

instructed him to install the following words from the *Brihannaradiya Puran* in her tomb as a deity and worship them. This worship continues to this day.

हरेर्नाम हरेर्नाम हरेर्नामैव केवलम् ।
कलौ नास्त्येव नास्त्येव नास्त्येव गतिरन्यथा ॥

*harernāma harernāma harernāmaiva kevalam ।
kalau nāstyeva nāstyeva nāstyeva gatiranyathā ॥*

"In Kaliyug, the only shelter is Harinaam and none other."

References:

Disciples of Shri Shri Bijoykrishna translated by Debkumar Bhattacharya
The Saints of Bengal by Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor

Teachings of Yogmaya Ma

Several of Yogmaya Ma's teachings have been preserved, including the following:

- Live fearlessly in this *samsaar* while chanting his Name.
- One cannot be happy in *samsaar* by any means, so focus on God and give your life to him if you want to have peace.
- Be careful never to let anyone take you away from God.
- God's love never changes in any condition. You can only be happy forever if you get him.
- If you want to progress and become rich in the world of *dharma*, then you have to become a miser. Never talk about your visions or experiences.
- Guru's grace is upon everyone all the time. We suffer at times because of lack of faith alone. Peace of mind can be attained if we surrender our heart and soul at the feet of the one who is our eternal support.
- No one is completely without faults, so we should learn to forgive everyone.
- Make humility and patience your companions.



Shri Yogmaya Ma



Braj Animal Care



A team member with some of our puppy patients

Winter is puppy season in Vrindavan. We are happy to report that we were able to facilitate several adoptions. Unfortunately, many homeless pups are killed or maimed by negligent drivers, or overcome by horrible diseases.

We recently got a call about a puppy whose lower jaw bone was snapped in the centre and completely detached from its hinge on one

side. He was unable to even close his mouth, let alone eat or drink. We learned that not just one, but two motorcycles had run over him within the same week.

We tried contacting a veterinary surgeon in Mathura to see if he could help. He said it was possible, but he wouldn't be available for a few days. In the meantime, an unknown person picked up the puppy and took it home, thinking she would be able to take care of him. However, she left him back on the street a few days later. By the time we found the puppy again, he was far too weak for surgery and passed away shortly thereafter. We hope one day we will have the facilities to offer animals like him the immediate shelter they so desperately require.

On February 16th, Vasant Panchami, we hosted the Braj Animal Care online Spring Festival to raise awareness and support for our medical program. The event featured a short film by Siddhant Shekhar and musical offerings by Dhruv Sharma and Ganesh Sharma. You can watch the event [here](#).

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Maharajji's Latest Updates

Last year, Shri Chandan Goswami Maharaj started writing material for his new book, which is now in the final editing stages and is on course to be published very soon. He has also been meeting devotees in Vrindavan.

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

March 9th, 2021: Ekadashi (online)

March 25th, 2021: Ekadashi (online)

We invite you to follow Maharajji on social media for more updates:

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Vaishnav Calendar

For upcoming festivals and Ekadashi dates, please click [here](#) to view our Vaishnav calendar.

ODev Logo Redesigned

Regular readers of *Sandarshan* will have noticed that we have been using a different logo since the end of last year. Here is the spiritual significance behind the new ODev logo, which is based on two *makars*: "I offer my respects to the devotees who are like *makars*, kings among fishes, frolicking in the sweet ocean of Bhakti Ras, who disregard the insignificant rivers like liberation, and who are not afraid by the net of time." (*Bhakti Rasamrit Sindhu*)

