

Founder Acharaya His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Thakura

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In this Iron Age (*kali-yuga*), the congregational chanting of the Hare Krishna Mahamantra is the only and the ultimate spiritual practice for the conditioned souls. Supreme Lord Krishna descended from His eternal abode, as Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in *kali-yuga*, by His grace and causeless mercy, to distribute the divine Hare Krishna Mahamantra, that one must chant to attain the ultimate goals of life—the lotus feet of the Divine Couple Sri Sri Radha Krishna.

In the Service of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's Mission,

His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Goswami Maharaja
President, Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math



THE DEVOTEE'S PRAYER (TO SRI GURU)

Sri Guru's mercy is everything—*guru-krpā hi kevalam*. Therefore, a disciple should pray as follows:

"I am most fallen and useless, O Lord. May my spiritual master be pleased with me. May he give me the spiritual strength, to follow his directions. May all the obstacles in my worship of the Lord be removed, so that at the end of my sojourn in this world, I may sit alone, far from the hustle and bustle of the material world, and with a steady mind, chant the Holy Names, with intense feeling. May the Lord be merciful, and allow me to give up my last breath in this way. Knowingly or unknowingly, I have committed so many offenses to His lotus feet, and even now I continue to commit such offenses. O Lord, please forgive all such offenses and give me a place at Your lotus feet. Make my life complete, by allowing me to associate with those who are dear to You.



"For so long, I have simply made a pretense of being initiated. In fact, I have not done that, which a surrendered soul should do; I have not strictly followed my spiritual master's instructions. Thus, I have not made even a little advancement in spiritual life. All the contaminations in my heart, prior to initiation are still there today, so how is there

any hope of my attaining the divine realization, which is said to be the real sign of initiation? Like a lump of iron, my heart is devoid of feelings. Even though I chant the Holy Names, it does not melt. Thus, I am thinking,

aparādha phale mama citta bhela vajra-sama tuwa nāme na labhe vikara

"Due to offenses, my heart has become as hard as a thunderbolt. Therefore, no ecstatic transformations take place, when I chant Your name." (Bhaktivinoda Thakura)

tabe jani tahe aparādha achaye pracura krsna-nāma bīja tahe na haya ankura

"Thus, I know I have committed so many offenses to the Holy Name, for though I have planted the seed of the Name, no creeper of love has sprouted." (*Chaitanya Charitamṛta* 1.8.29)

"O Gurudeva! Now in the dusk of my life, I have become so forlorn and hopeless. O Lord! O You, who see no fault in anyone! Be generous to me and give me your mercy. Help me to be free of all offenses, so I develop a taste for the Holy Names, which you have instructed me to chant. Allow me to earn the right to be called a genuine servant of your servants. With your divine vision, you see me perfectly, externally and internally. You know everything I do. Therefore, I pray, that everything I do, my behavior, and my devotional service, may be a source of pleasure to you.

"O Lord! Forgive all my offenses, whether I have committed them willingly or unwillingly. Forever give me a place among all your servants, at your lotus feet, where there is no more lamentation, no more fear, no more death. Your feet are the only shelter for one like me, who has found no refuge anywhere in this world. Your feet are the source of ultimate good for one like me, who has found no value anywhere in this world."



*bhumau skhalita-padanam bhimir
evavalambanam tvayi jataparadhanam
tvam eva śaranam prabho*

“Those who trip and fall, have only the ground as an aid to again rise up. O Lord! Those who commit offenses to you, have no one but you as a recourse.”

So, my dear devotees, tread carefully the path of devotion. Always pray for the mercy of Krishna, the Guru, and the Vaishnavas. Remember, that progress in devotion, depends on progress in humility—that is the Art of Sādhana.

*From The Art of Sadhana by Srila Bhakti Promode
Puri Goswami Thakura*

CHATURMASYA VRATA

Chaturmasya (*caturmāsya*) is a Sanskrit word which means ‘four months’. During these four months, devotees observe austerities while remembering Lord Krishna in the mood of separation. The four months fall between the day of *śayan ekādaśī* in the month of *Āṣāḍha*, and continue until the *utthana ekādaśī* in the month of *Kārtik*, during the sun’s move to the southern hemisphere (*dakṣiṇāyana*). The word *śayan* in Sanskrit means ‘to sleep’. On *śayan ekādaśī*, the Supreme Lord goes to take rest. This rest continues for four months. After the first two months, on the day of *pārśva ekādaśī* (also known as *Vāmana ekādaśī*), the Lord turns to His other side; the Sanskrit word *pārśva* means ‘side’. The four months of rest comes to an end on the day of *utthana ekādaśī* (also known as *Haribodhinī ekādaśī* and *prabodhinī ekādaśī*), the word *utthana* in Sanskrit means ‘to awake’.

Throughout the resting period, however, the Lord can manifest pastimes. He would still accept services from His devotees, and manifest many pastimes just as when He is awake, despite being apparently asleep.

During these four months, devotees do not consume green squash (lauki), beans, tomato, eggplant, pointed gourd (patol), urad dal or biuli dal, no western vegetables or foods, etc. As a general rule, we do not consume foods which are difficult to digest (*tamo guna*) and we avoid foods which create the arising of the mood of passion (*rajo guna*) in our consciousness. During the full four months, kalmi shaak is also prohibited because the Lord is said to be sleeping on a bed of that type shaak (a type of leafy green); He is also sleeping on a pillow of pointed gourd which is why it is avoided during the four months. During the first month of chaturmasya, devotees do not consume any types of spinach. In the second month, devotees do not consume yogurt. During the third month, devotees do not consume milk. During the fourth month, devotees follow an austere diet, focusing all of their energy on searching for Krishna under the guidance of Srimati Radharani and Her sakhis.

Kārtik month is the last month of Chaturmasya. It is a very special month while the Lord manifests numerous sweet pastimes in Vrindavan. On *Kārtik pūrṇima*, He suddenly disappeared from the Rasa Mandala with Radharani. However, Krishna later also leaves Radharani alone. All Her sakhis meet with Radharani and during the whole month, and they search for Krishna in the mood of separation. Therefore, during *Kārtik* month, we conduct *parikrama* in Vrindavan Dham, implying that we are searching for Krishna under the guidance of Radha and Her sakhis.

His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur used to austere observe this Chaturmasya vrata by eating only once a day, two and a half handfuls of *prasāda* off the floor. He would chant three lakhs (300,000) of Holy Names daily. He would also sleep on the floor and would not shave his head or beard. All of this was done in a mood of intense separation from the Supreme Lord.



In order to follow his footsteps, we also try our best to observe the Chaturmasya vrata. The main purpose of our observing the Chaturmasya vrata is to establish the feeling of separation from the Lord in our hearts, and remember the Lord in every step of our lives. We want to stay close to the Lord by attentively chanting the Hare Krishna Mahamantra. The main goal of our spiritual practice should be to fix our mind and consciousness on the Lord. The Chaturmasya vrata is very effective for accomplishing this while tasting the *vipralambha rasa* – union in separation.

Note: This year (2020), the Chaturmasya vrata started on 1 July and ends on 26 November; the four months/period as the following:

- ❖ first period —1 July to 30 July
- ❖ second period — 31 July to 29 August
- ❖ third period —30 August to 27 October
- ❖ fourth period —28 October to 26 November.

The extra month is due to the presence of *adhik-māsa* or Purushottama month in the Vedic calendar this year.

- ❖ Purushottama month—18 September to 17 October

Written by Srila Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Goswami Maharaja, July 2020

PURUSHOTTAMA MONTH VRATA

Krishna Purushottama Masa: The Extra Month

We call Purushottama month the '*adhik-māsa*' (extra month). It is also called, '*mala-māsa*', which means dirty or useless month. In India, the *sādhus* (holy persons), *sādhakas* (spiritual practitioners) and pious people of all *sampradāyas* (lineages)

observe this month with due care. All are observing and engaging in austerities according to their capacity. We should try to observe the following practices for the whole month.

At least three times (morning, noon and evening) each day we should chant Kaundinya Muni's mantra, which is found in the Hari-Bhakti Vilas:

*goverdhana-dharam vande gopālam
goparupīnam
gokulotsavam ishānam govindam
gopikāpriyam*

Meaning: *Goverdhana-dharam vande:* I worship the lifter of Govardhana hill; *gopālam goparupīnam:* who has the beautiful form of a cowherd boy, and who continually plays with the gopas; *gokulotsavam-ishānam:* He is the Lord of Gokula wherein every day is a festival; *govindam gopikāpriyam:* He is the giver of pleasure to the cows and spiritual senses and the beloved of the gopi damsels of Vraja.

We should also:

- ❖ Try to maintain celibacy this month.
- ❖ Instead of sleeping on a comfortable bed, sleep on the floor (use a thin mat or blanket if necessary).
- ❖ Take bath daily before sunrise.
- ❖ Wake up 1 hour and 36 minutes before sunrise (during the brahma-muhurta) or as early as possible and chant 'Pancha-tattva' and 'Mahamantra' at least 12 times.
- ❖ Each day chant a fixed number of rounds. You can increase rounds this month according to your ability. For example, if you usually chant 16 rounds daily then in this Purushottama month try to chant at least 24, 32, or 64 rounds according to your convenience.
- ❖ If your schedule allows then perform *pūja* daily by yourself. At least offer a



ghee lamp to Radha-Krishna Deities or Sri Jagannath Deities or Their Picture. If possible, offer this twice in a day (morning and evening) while chanting the Sri Jagannatha-ashtakam or any song about Sri Sri Radha-Krishna's glories.

- ❖ Daily do parakrama of Tulasi Devi, in the morning and evening.
- ❖ Take a vow to remain peaceful, and become 100% truthful throughout the month, just as a devotee should be throughout their entire life.
- ❖ Please be careful not to blaspheme anyone, especially the Vaishnavas and brahmanas.
- ❖ Try your best to please Sri Radha and Sri Krishna by performing spiritual practices according to your capacities.
- ❖ No cutting of hair or nails (optional).
- ❖ No cooking in mustard or sesame oil or rubbing these oils on your body. It is best to cook with ghee, and eat boiled Hobisanna (a type of rice mixed with Dal and vegetables, but no eggplant or tomato, without salt if possible).

This month is also called *mala-māsa* because all ritual forms of *karma-kānda* (reward seeking), *pūjas* and *yajnas* (fire sacrifices) don't give any results this month. Our Gaudiya Vaishnavas, however, disagree, saying it is called Mala-Masa because all days, weeks and months are created by the Supreme Lord for observing devotion. Therefore, we Gaudiya Vaishnavas try our best to follow devotional rituals as our previous teachers have established for the month.

Our previous teachers instructed us that in this month we have to observe devotional activities in a special manner. Then quickly and easily we can destroy the dirt and contamination caused by our sins, ignorance and *aparādhas*.

Firstly, the Puranas say that the Supreme personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna's

favorite month is Purushottama month. Sri Krishna has not only personally created this month, but He also named it after Himself. Remember, Sri Krishna alone is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Purushottama. As *swayam-bhagavān*, Sri Krishna is the most magnanimous, top-most origin of all the *avatāras* and incarnations. And so Purushottama month is the top-most, super best, most powerful spiritual reward giving month among all the twelve months.

Purushottama month is the holiest month, far superior to the pious Vedic months of *Vaisākha* (April-May), *Kārtika* (October-November) and *Māgha* (January-February), which the Vedas praise as the three best reward-giving months of all the 12 months of the year. Not only on the earth planet, but all over the universe Purushottama Month is honored and worshiped by all devotees, sages, gods and goddesses, and even Sri Lakshmi Devi Herself.

If one sincerely worships Radha and Krishna in Purushottama month, he/she will attain everything he/she wants. One who observes Purushottamavrata will burn up the reactions of all his previous bad karma and attain the direct service of Radha and Krishna. Purushottama month is the best month for all spiritual advancement because Krishna overlooks all the *aparādhas* this month. Residence in the holy dhams during Purushottam month yields 1,000 times the benefit.

Additional Observances for Purushottama Month

During the holy month of Purushottama, certain spiritual practices are observed by devotees, such as, recitation of Sri Radha-kripa-kataksha, Sri Krishna-kripa-kataksha and Sri Jagannathashtakam in the mornings, Chauraganya Purusashtakam in the afternoons, performance of japa or chanting as instructed by Kaundinya Muni, Deep-dana or ghee-lamp offerings in the evenings for Vishnu, Krishna or Ram, and last but not



the least, reading the *Brahmastava*, 40 *slokas* in Sanskrit, from the *Bhāgavatam*, Chapter 14, Canto 10. This spiritual technique, when performed with devotion in Purushottama, can bestow manifold results on the *sādhaka*. Observance of Purushottama vrata brings eternal joy to the soul.

Puranic Evidence on the Glories of Purushottam Month

Listed below are some *śāstric* quotations are from Padma and Skanda Purana:

1. Lord Sri Krishna: “Purushottama month has all the power I have, to bless its observer. One who follows Purushottama vrata will destroy all his past sinful reactions. Without performing Purushottama vrata, one cannot perform pure devotional service. The value of Purushottama month is far more valuable than all other types of austerities and religious activities mentioned in the Vedas. Anyone who observes Purushottama vrata will return to My abode, Goloka, at the end of his life.”

2. Durvasa Muni: “Just by bathing in a holy river during Purushottama month, one becomes sinless. The glory of all other months is not equal to one-sixteenth of the glory of the Purushottama Month. By bathing in a holy place, giving charity and chanting the Holy Name of Krishna during Purushottama month, all miseries are destroyed, one attains all kinds of perfection and fulfills all his desires.”

3. Valmiki Muni: “By observing Purushottama vrata, one attains more benefit than performing one hundred horse sacrifices. All holy places live within the body of a Purushottama month vrati (an observer of this penance). Anyone who faithfully performs Purushottama vrata will go to Goloka Vrndavana.”

4. Narada Muni: “Purushottama month is the best of all months, vratas and austerities. Just

by faithfully hearing the glories of Purushottama month, one attains Krishna-bhakti and immediately nullifies his sinful reactions. One who performs Purushottama vrata properly will attain unlimited piety and spiritual merit (*sukrti*) and go to the spiritual world.”

5. Sages of Naimisaranya: “Merciful Purushottama month acts like a desire tree to fulfill a devotee’s desire.”

6. Hari-bhakti-vilasa (Vol 4, Vs 437): “During Purushottama month, one should remember Lord Krishna, and then donate thirty-three milk cakes cooked in ghee to grhastha Vaishnava *brahmanas*, who are well versed in *śāstras*. Failing to do so, one loses all the piety he accumulated in the previous year.” Comment: Vrndavana Vaishnavas usually observe this by donating two kilos of good quality milk cake from a sweet shop to a few Vaishnava pandas or *pūjaris* or good temple devotees.

Compiled from various sources and edited by Srila Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Goswami Maharaja, August 2020

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura on Purushottama Month Vrata

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur used to perform the *nirapekṣa* vrata (neutral vow), which is 30 days of concentrated, one pointed worship and service to Radha-Govinda’s conjugal form by hearing, chanting, remembering Their divine names, forms, qualities, pastimes. All day and night, hear about Bhagavan Sri Sri Radha-Krishna’s glories, chant the Hare Krishna Mahamantra, and take *mahā-prasādam* only.

“O living entity! Why are you lazy in performing haribhajana in the month of Purushottama? This month, made by the Lord of Goloka, Himself, is the pinnacle of all months. It is even better than the greatly pious *Kārtika*, *Māgha* and *Vaisākha* months. With special bhajana, worship Sri Sri



Radha Krishna. You will gain everything.”

There are normally 12 months in one year. In line with varna and asrama, various pious activities to be performed have been described for the 12 months. When the 13th month is joined with the 12 months, it comes to be known as the *adhik-māsa* or *karmahina* month in which no karmic activities concerning piety can produce results. This month appears every three years.

The Brhannaradiya Purana describes the Purushottama month. *adhik-māsa*, the chief of all months, feeling sad due to the humiliatory ideas associated with itself, approaches Narayana in Vaikuntha and explains the situation. Narayana subsequently takes *adhik-māsa* along with Him to Lord Krishna in Goloka. Krishna, hearing malamasas's sadness, overcome with compassion, speaks as follows. “O Lord of Ramaa Devi, in the same way in which I am known in the world as Purushottama, this *adhik-māsa* will also be famously known in the world as Purushottama. All of my qualities are offered to this month. Just like me, this month will be the chief of all months. This month is worshippable and worthy of being praised with prayers. All other months are sakama, filled with material desires. This month is *niṣkāma*, without material desires. Whether one is *akāma*, without any material desires, or is *sakāma*, with material desires, if he worships this month, then all of his fruitive reactions get destroyed and he attains Me. My devotees sometimes get involved in offenses, but in this month, there will be no offenses. In this month, all those people who are most foolish and do not perform chanting and charity etc., those who do not perform activities for eternal benefit and who do not take baths etc., and those who are inimical towards the devas, holy places and brahmanas, all of these evil, nefarious, unfortunate people, living off of the wealth of others, will not even attain happiness in their dreams. In this Purushottama month, those who worship Me with bhakti, love and

devotion, attain wealth, sons etc., enjoying happiness and at the end become residents of Goloka.

Serve Lord Purushottama with utmost care. This service to Purushottama is the greatest *sādhana* and the greatest provider of results. Recite mantras such as the Govardhanadharam mantra with bhakti and you will attain Purushottamadeva. Meditate on Radha along with Krishna who is the color of a fresh raincloud having two hands holding a Murali flute, dressed in yellow garments. One should follow the vrata in the way in which Damodara vrata is followed, offering lamps for the pleasure of Purushottama, either with ghee or if that cannot be afforded, then with sesame oil. Vratīs shall take a bath before *brāhmamuhurta* - if possible, then perform acamana and apply tilaka, sankha and cakra with gopicandana. Performing *pūja* of Radha Krishna must be done in this month. Purushottama Sri Krishna is the main lord of this month. There are additional services that can be done such as offering 16 articles of worship to Sri Krishna, bathing early, listen to Srimad Bhagavatam with bhakti, worship the salagrama sila, etc. In he who follows this vrata, all the holy places and *devatās* reside. Service to Vaishnavas is of great importance during this month.

Those normally engaged 100 percent of the time in *bhāgavata dharma* should, in Purushottama month, one-pointedly engage in devotion taking sri *bhagavat-prasāda* according to the rules, and, according to one's goal, engage in *hari-śravana-kīrtana*.

There are other processes and rules of following the vrata for those not involved 100 percent in devotional service. Some people take *havisyānna* during this month. Suta Goswami says to avoid misfortune, follow this vrata.

Adapted from an article by Om Visnupada Bhaktivinoda Thakura from the Gaudiya Magazine, published on 14 July 1928



PRAYER PETALS

Srila Gurudev Ji Maharaj! Most humble obeisance at Your Divine Lotus Feet! We are fallen souls suffering in this dark ocean of ignorance and searching for light that is the Ultimate Truth. You are the Supreme knower of transcendental knowledge and capable of leading us to that Ultimate Truth. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet; kindly give us “Krishna Vigyan”- the Supreme Spiritual knowledge.

Your heart is filled with compassion for all living and non-living beings who are at different stages of consciousness. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet, kindly shower mercy on us, awaken our consciousness that is in a state of slumber, by always keeping under Your shelter.



You are always holding a ‘Japa Mala’ in Your Right Hand and relishing the nectar of vishuddh Sri Harinam. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet, kindly give us strength so that we can also chant Sri Harinam without committing offences and without having any material desire.

You are holding the most pious and most auspicious ‘Sannyas Danda’ which signifies Your Supreme Services offered through mind, body and words that are dedicated to Supreme Lord Sri Sri Radha Krishna.

We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet; kindly give us realization that irrespective of the ashram (be it is brahmacharya, grihastha

or vanaprastha) in which we are, we may be able to serve Supreme Lord Sri Sri Radha Krishna for their pleasure according to Your instructions and guidance.

You are representative of Srimati Radharani, thus full of divine glow and effulgence. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet; kindly give us purity in vision so that we can have a glimpse of our Guruvarga and their eternal pastimes. May Your Divine effulgence and aura remove all obstacles from our path of bhajan!

You are always smiling and we have never seen You perturbed by material problems. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet, kindly give us dispassion that will free us from the bondage of material problems caused by ‘tritapa- adhi-bhautik, adhi-daivik and adyatmik.’

When we are offering ‘Sri Guru Aarotriko’ we see Your Divine Grace praying to all Guruvarga humbly to shower Mercy on all of us. We are offering ‘ghrita deep’-ghee lamp at Your Divine Lotus Feet and praying, kindly enable us to surrender fully to all Guruvarga and Sri Guru Parampara. May the path shown by Srila Rupa Goswamidpad become our heart’s treasure!

Whenever and wherever we remember You sincerely, deep within our hearts, we feel Your presence. Therefore, Your Divine Grace is omnipresent. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet that may we never forget Your Lotus Feet and in this way we will remain always connected to Supreme Lord.

Your endless divine powers are not restricted to Your physical form alone. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet that may Your saguna sthiti, divine form and qualities that are visible to us and nirguna sthiti, presence in invisible state beyond three attributes of maya i.e., sattva, rajas, and tamas, always protect us.



You are the Supreme Rescuer of all living beings. In this world filled with miseries all the living beings- jivas are crying for help; they are finding Your Lotus Feet as the last resort. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet that may the supreme mercy of Srimati Radharani flow through You and may we all bound in togetherness of congregational chanting taste the ultimate bliss of Sri Hare Krishna Mahamantra in Your Divine association.

You are not affected by external factors and conditions. You are situated above the worldly dilemmas of happiness and sadness, pleasure and pain, etc. Beyond all confusions and dualities you are supremely situated and thus from such high pedestal you always beacon us to awake and arise and march to reach back to Godhead. We are praying at Your Divine Lotus Feet that may we not get confused by these temporary situations and sincerely search for ultimate bliss.

Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came in this Iron Age to distribute His all-encompassing compassion to all living entities. While continuing the same Mission You are uplifting all fallen souls irrespective of caste, creed, religion and gender. We are expressing our deepest gratitude to You for being supreme kind to all.

Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu brought the most powerful flow of Sri Harinam sankirtan to the earth so that all non-living and living beings can relish divine bliss. We are expressing our deepest gratitude to You for mercifully bestowing upon us Sri Hare Krishna Mahamantra. Many fallen souls whose life was about to sink like a rudder less ship in the middle of stormy sea could reach ashore for your timely guidance. Kindly accept our gratitude Shri Gaurudev Ji Maharaj for being our Supreme Captain and Supreme Path Finder.

In this world full of vices we see you as embodiment of all virtues. We express our

deepest gratitude from the deepest nook of our hearts for being our Supreme Benefactor and for being our Supreme Ideal. Your Divine Footprints shall remain ever embossed on the sands of time and we servants with Your mercy will try to follow those Footprints in this life and life after life, till we are back to Godhead.

While singing paeans of Your Divine Glories we are always falling short of words. Kindly accept all the prayers that we utter in words, that we fail to utter and just babble due to choked emotions and that we communicate in absolute silence. Kindly forgive all our mistakes and accept our humble “Prayer Petals”-Floral Offerings.

Sri Vyas Puja offering, 2nd August 2020, written on Sri Pavitropanna Ekadashi by Subhashree Devi Dasi

KRISHNA-BANDHAN

Raksha-bandhan is a festival that signifies the strength and love between siblings. This festival is observed on the full moon day (*pūrṇima*) of Shravana month; which generally falls in August. In this festival, typically the sister ties a thread (*rākhi*) on her brother’s wrist as a gesture for his long, healthy and prosperous life. In return, the brother promises to protect his sister from all the material dangers and ensures her well-being.

This festival has been celebrated in India for countless years. If we take a look at some religious scriptures, we can see several pairs of inspirational siblings from it. Draupadi-Krishna, Subhadra-Krishna, Subhadra-Balarama, etc. They continue to spread their glorious light in our lives even after so many years of their appearance on this material planet. They have set examples of not only how ideal siblings should become but also how one should lead their lives in order to serve and enlighten the lives of people around them.

The bond between Draupadi and Krishna was very special and admired forever by



almost everyone. They were not blood-bound siblings, yet their love and respect for each other was like one. Once, Lord Krishna got a snick on his finger by wielding the mighty Sudarshan chakra. Everyone around him started to search for a piece of cloth to tie it around his finger to stop the bleeding. Draupadi, who was also present on the site, quickly tore off a piece of cloth from her saree and bandaged it around Lord Krishna's finger. The divine lord was impressed by her pure devotion, love, and sincerity towards Him and committed to protecting her throughout her life. Later down the years, when Draupadi was humiliated in Hastinapur's court by Duryodhana and Dushasana in an attempt to disrobe her, she remembered her sakha (friend) and brother Krishna, "O Govinda, O Keshava, O Beloved Lord, save me!", she called. Krishna being the ultimate controller and her beloved brother, kept His promise and helped Draupadi by extending her saree cloth by immeasurable yards. She was thus saved from humiliation by the Supreme Lord Himself.

The above incident occurred in the *dvāpara-yuga* – a time when people could still believe in the virtue of others. Today, we live in *kali-yuga*: the age of Kali. Here, the people we put forth our faith in, are usually the most unfaithful ones. In this material world, nothing is constant. Happiness, sadness, gain, loss, health, despair, love, hate, friends, and enemies—everything is temporary and worldly. Once we leave this material body, all of the above will be left here; even the brother we tie our rakhi to. The only thing that will be permanent is Krishna. Sri Krishna is the ultimate controller, the supreme Lord of this universe and beyond. All of us suffer from some sort of void in our lives. So, if we submit everything in the lotus feet of the Lord Sri Krishna, we will find content, even in the voids of our lives. Everything will continue to happen as it is, people and things will come and go, but if we offer our complete submission to Krishna and make a

relationship with him, our life and soul will become meaningful.

I would like to encourage you all to make a connection that will last you for the complete eternity, and not just this lifetime. Connect the void of your life with Krishna and he will lead you to contentment which is none other than the shelter of the Lord himself. The only way to do so and to leave this *dukhālayam* (the place of miseries or this world) is chanting the Hare Krishna Mahamantra. It is said that we are the product of the five people we spend most of our time with, so we should expend our time in the worship of Krishna and his pure devotees. This will make our bond with Krishna closer with time.



For example, Draupadi made Krishna her 'sakha' and 'brother', and her obstacles were overcome by the aid of Krishna. Likewise, we should first make a bond with Krishna, serve Him, communicate with Him, worship Him, and celebrate Krishna-bandhan throughout our life. Each and every day, we should care for Him, adorn Him with beautiful flowers and clothes, feed Him like our own, present Him with our faults, and then most importantly feed our soul by chanting, "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare". So, on this raksha-bandhan, tie a rakhi not only to your brother but to Krishna as well and celebrate



it your whole life. Mark it as a thread to signify your ultimate submission to him, and lead a Krishna-conscious life. O friends, let's celebrate this raksha-bandhan as Krishna-bandhan!

Written by Raseshwari Devi Dasi, August 2020

WAYS OF LOVE IN VRAJA

Sri Radha said, “If you wish to know about love, then please listen. A person may be a great scholar, learned in Vedas, yet do not know what is true love and what it is not.

O My friend, to an eager student, someone may give an abstract explanation of true love, but true love is understood only by direct experience. True love disappears when one tries to analyze it, and it disappears again when one tries not to analyze it.

When the heart is free of these two, then pure love gloriously sits on the throne of one's character. Then one acts to please the beloved, and the beloved's pleasure shows the character of pure love.

As a lion is nourished by defeating many elephants, powerful love is nourished by defeating many troubles—troubles like crossing mount Sumeru, troubles that come from the two worlds, from one's kinsmen, from outsiders, from oneself, and even from the beloved who is dearer than one's own life.

True love is like a proud, fearless, self-assured, glistening-limb lion, that even while he sleeps, with a singular roar defeats dogs. True love is like a lamp gloriously shining in the darkness.

Because it is very intense, true love brings great pleasure and wild passion. It makes the beloved new and delightful at every moment. As the nectar moon delights the three worlds, a sun that makes the three worlds bright, it lights the lover. It shines like

the sun at the time of cosmic devastation, a sun that makes the three worlds burst into flames.”

O My friend, does anyone in the three worlds, above or below, bear this kind of love for any beloved other than Krishna? Only the doe-eyed girls of Vraja love—some more and some less, in this way.

When that pure love sometimes pretends to be lust, the beloved Krishna finds limitless pleasure in it. But when lust sometimes pretends to be love, intelligent Krishna knows it right away.

‘O My friend, please take me to Krishna at once. I am burning with ardent desire.’ Even if she speaks these words, a gopi desires in her heart nothing but to please Krishna. Her intent is never to please herself.”

Krishna is an ocean of love. He is a jewel-mine of various qualities. His cheating, deceptions, and crookedness are all delightful for the gopis. Pretending it is lust, He uses these to show His love for, and to attract the gopis.

Who are the hundreds and thousands of passionate girls that together have the power to satisfy the desires of Krishna? Krishna loves the beautiful gopis with no motive for His own pleasure. He loves them because He is conquered by their love for Him. I have personally witnessed this.



The people think that Krishna loves me more. That is not a lie. He thinks My love is like mount Sumeru and the love of other gopis is like three or four mustard seeds.

As the gopis love Him, so He loves them. He plays with them in ways appropriate to their passionate love for Him. He never offends them. If by destiny sometimes He offends them, He is not happy for it. His unhappiness then makes me burn with pain.

Sometimes He arranges a lovers' meeting with Me, and never shows up. Enchanted by some other gopi, He relishes with her. Then He passes the night tormented by a forest fire of worry, agonizing how I must be feeling.

Because of that, a great fire burned in My heart too. Saying, 'What is the use of my exquisite garments, ornaments, and possessions? Meant to enchant Him, they are now useless', I wept. You must have seen all these.

In the morning, He comes to pacify me, and I rebuke Him saying, 'Go to her! Enjoy with her!' For Him, My anger is the greatest pleasure. Please know that these are the ways of love in Vraja."

Adapted from Prema Samputa (texts 51-55), by Srila Visvanath Chakravathy Thakur



VAISHNAVA FESTIVALS: AUGUST 2020

Date	Festival
2 August	Appearance day of Srila Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Goswami Maharaja
3 August	Sri Balaram Purnima; End of jhulan-yatra of Sri Sri Radha Govinda; Raksha-bandhan
12 August	Sri Krishna Janmashtami
13 August	Sri Nandotsav
4 August	Annada Ekadashi
23 August	Appearance Day of Sri Sita Devi, the consort of Sri Advaita Prabhu
25 August	Lalita Saptami (Appearance Day of Sakhi Lalita Devi)
26 August	Sri Radhashtami (Appearance Day of Srimati Radhrani)
29 August	Parshva Ekadashi
30 August	Appearance Day of Lord Vamanadev; Appearance Day of Srila Jiva Goswami
31 August	Appearance Day of Srila Sachchidananda Bhakti Vinode Thakur

Bhagavata Dharma

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Dedicated to:

His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Pramode Puri Goswami Thakur, Founder Acharya of Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math, and
His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanata Saraswati Goswami Thakur PRABHUPADA.

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