



Venu - gīta

The Song of Kṛṣṇa's Flute

Śrīmad - Bhāgavatam

Tenth Canto – Chapter Twenty-one

*The gopīs sing the glories of
the sound of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute as
He enters the enchanting forest
of Vṛndāvana upon the arrival of autumn*

Śrī Śrīmad

Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

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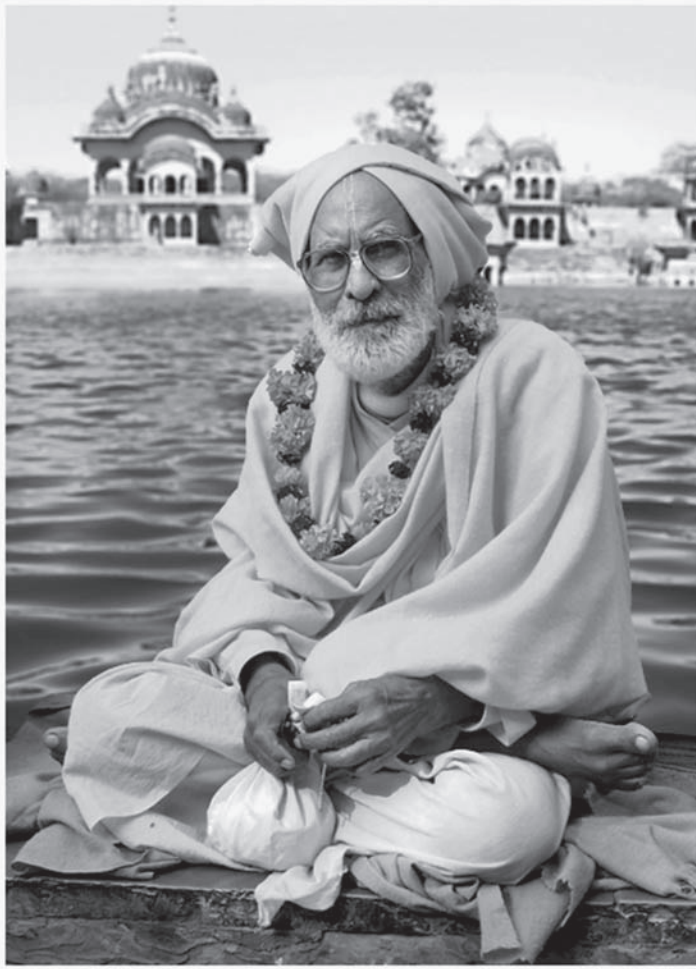
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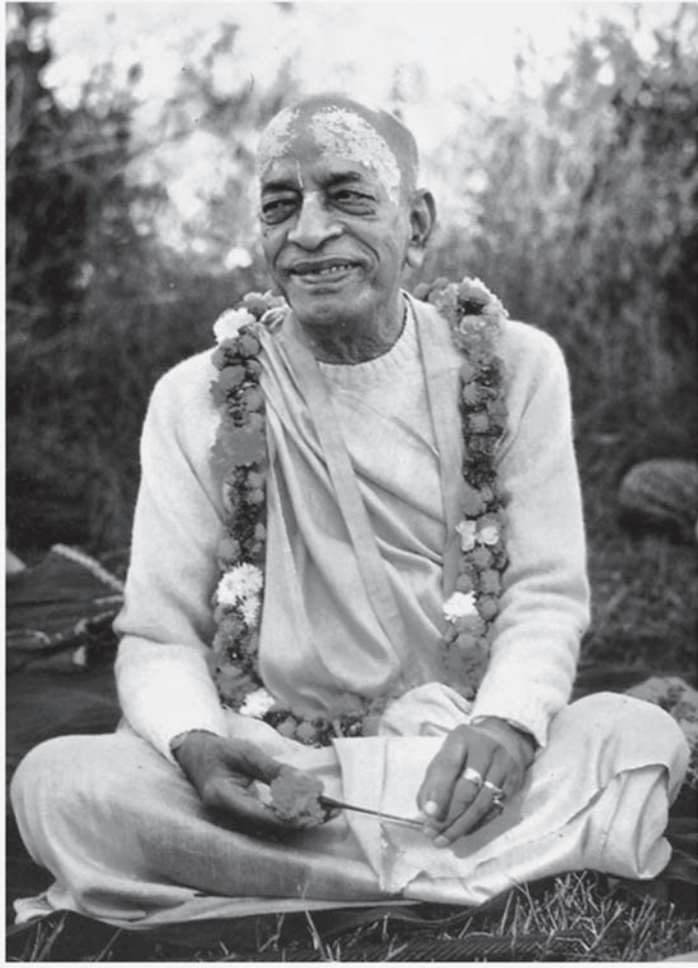
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Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

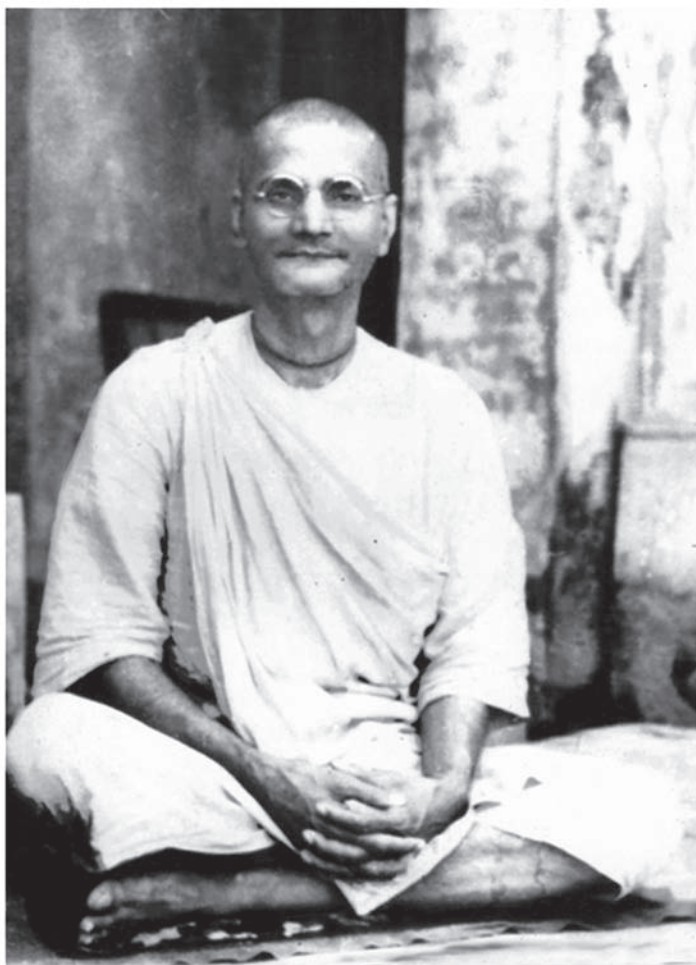


Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktivedānta Vāmaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja



Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja





Śrī Śrīmad
Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Preface



We feel extremely privileged to present a revised third edition of the *Veṅu-Gīta*, translated from the Hindi commentary written by our beloved Gurudeva *om viṣṇupāda paramahaṁsa parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja*. The first English edition, which appeared in 1995, was a compilation of the direct transcripts of a series of lectures that our exalted Gurudeva had spoken in English several years before. The Hindi rendition, inspired by the English version, is the result of his deeply studying the commentaries of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. He was so pleased with the Hindi rendition that he ordered it to be translated into English and published as soon as possible. The second English version, published in September, 1999, flowed much more smoothly than the original and convincingly captured the very charming sentiments stimulated in the hearts of the cowherd damsels of Vraja when they hear the sweetly alluring song of Śrī Śyāmasundara's flute. And now the third edition attempts to refine the language and open up the meanings of the many Sanskrit terms that define the *bhakti* experience.

This book is a beautiful and priceless gift from our venerable Gurudeva to the practicing devotee who is aspiring to do *rāgānuga-bhajana*, service in the mood of spontaneous love. Presenting many delightful descriptions of the moods of the *gopīs* who speak the *Veṅu-Gīta*, this sacred text effectively reveals the innocence in the hearts of the Vraja milkmaids, who know only their supernal sweetheart,

Brajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara. The vision of this innocence, purity and fervent devotion will surely have a powerful effect on the reader, increasing his faith and instilling in him the desire to seriously cultivate *bhakti* in the wake of Kṛṣṇa's beloveds.

The introduction is also significant with its presentation of many authentic proofs that establish the qualification to hear these confidential topics. The conclusion of all these references is that it is actually our duty to hear these discussions from bona fide Vaiṣṇavas in our disciplic line, even while we are still plagued with extraneous desires. Indeed, our *ācāryas* have informed us that hearing about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the beautiful damsels of Vraja is the apt medicine for healing the blemished heart.

This translation is the fruit of a large cooperative effort. All of us from Śrīla Gurudeva's flourishing garden who helped bring this book to press are grateful to have been engaged in this elevated and exhilarating service. Please excuse any mistake that may have slipped by us. We humbly pray at the lotus feet of our beloved and magnanimous Gurudeva, whom Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has sent to sprinkle the whole world with *sva-bhakti śriyam* (intimate service to Śrī Rādhā), that he will be pleased with this English presentation of his Hindi words. We entreat that very soon he will also fill our hearts, which are harder and drier than any piece of bamboo, with his same deep loving sentiments for the Divine Couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala.

Awaiting the mercy of *śrī guru-pāda-padma*,
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Introduction

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is a direct manifestation of the Supreme Lord. It is an ambrosial, overflowing ocean of supremely sweet nectarean love (*prema-rasa*) for the original Supreme Personality of Godhead (Svayaṁ Bhagavān), that is, Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the personification of divine mellows. *Rasika* and *bhāvuka* devotees¹ absorbed in tasting the beauty of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, always drown in this ocean. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the fully ripened, juicy fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literature that comprises the entirety of Indian thought. Within *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *goṣī-prema*, the love of the cowherd maidens of Vraja, has been ascertained to be the ultimate objective.

A few towering waves of *goṣī-prema* can be seen from the *Veṅu-gīta* portion of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Rasika* devotees, who are seasoned in experiencing divine loving sentiments, drown themselves in these waves and even lose all consciousness of their own bodies. Greed to be immersed in this ambrosial ocean sprouts also in the hearts of the faithful devotees who are situated on the shore of this ocean.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined form of *rasarāja* (the King of divine mellows) and *mahābhāva* (the Queen of divine love), resplendent with the sentiment and bodily complexion of Śrī Rādhā, relished the nectar of *Veṅu-gīta* with Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda in Śrī Gambhīra. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī collected a few drops of this nectar in their commentaries

¹ Devotees immersed in upper stages of *bhakti* and expert in tasting transcendental mellows.

on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, entitled *Bṛhad-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* and *Laghu-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* respectively. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, through his commentary named *Sārārtha-darśinī*, has distributed to the whole world that same nectar in the form of remnants of their *mahāprasāda*.

Some persons believe that unqualified *sādhakas* (spiritual practitioners) are ineligible to hear, chant or remember the topics of *Śrī Venu-gīta*, *Śrī Rāsa pañcādhyāyī*, *Yugala-gīta*, *Bhramara-gīta* and so on, as described in the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This consideration is fully legitimate. But according to their conception, only a *sādhaka* who has conquered the six urges (lust, anger, etc.), who is free from all *anarthas* (mean, selfish propensities) and fully purified of the heart disease of lust is eligible to hear such topics, while all others have no right. We will now examine this topic in greater detail.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, who established and fulfilled the inner heart's desire of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, composed *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* and other sacred texts. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī composed *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. While writing, they were deeply concerned that these confidential texts on *rasa* (transcendental loving exchanges) should not fall into the hands of unqualified persons. If this should occur, it could present a great disturbance to the world. A glimpse of this topic is found in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 4.231), as stated by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī:

*e saba siddhānta gūḍha – kahite nā yuyāya
nā kahile, keha ihāra anta nāhi pāya*

*ataeva kahi kichu kariñā nigūḍha
bujhibe rasika bhakta, nā bujhibe mūḍha*

*hṛdaye dharaye ye caitanya-nityānanda
e-saba siddhānte sei pāibe ānanda*

*e saba siddhānta haya āmrera pallava
bhakta-gaṇa-kokilera sarvadā vallabha*

*abhakta-uṣṭrera ithe nā haya praveśa
tabe citte haya mora ānanda-viśeṣa*

*ye lāgi kahite bhaya, se yadi nā jāne
ihā vai kibā sukha āche tribhuvane*

*ataeva bhakta-gaṇe kari nāmaskāra
niḥśaṅke kahiye, tāra hauk camatkāra*

“The esoteric and confidential conclusions regarding the amorous pastimes of *rasarāja Śrī Kṛṣṇa* with the *gopīs* (the cowherd maidens of *Vraja* who embody the highest sentiments of divine love) are not fit to be disclosed to the common ordinary man. But without revealing them, no one can enter into this topic. I shall, therefore, describe these topics in a concealed manner so that only *rasika* devotees will be able to understand, whereas ineligible fools will not.

“Anyone who has established *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu* and *Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu* in his heart will attain transcendental bliss by hearing all these conclusions. This entire doctrine is as sweet as newly grown mango sprouts, which can be relished only by devotees, who are likened to cuckoo birds. For the camel-like non-devotees, there is no possibility of admittance into these topics. Therefore, there is special jubilation in my heart. If those whom I fear are themselves unable to comprehend these topics, then what could be a greater source of happiness in all the three worlds? Therefore, after offering obeisances to the devotees, I am revealing this subject without any hesitation.”

By reading and hearing these topics, everyone can attain the highest benefit. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has clarified this topic by quoting the following verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.33.36):

*anugrahāya bhaktānām mānuṣaṁ deham āsthitaḥ
bhajate tādṛśiḥ kṛiḍā yāḥ śrutvā tat-para bhavet*

“In order to bestow mercy upon the devotees as well as the conditioned souls, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifests His human-like form and performs such extraordinary pastimes (*rāsa-līlā*) that anyone who hears them becomes exclusively devoted unto Him” (quoted in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 4.34).

Here Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja points out that the verb *bhavet* in this verse is in the imperative mood. This means it is compulsory for the Ito hear such pastimes, as explained in the following verse from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 4.35):

*‘bhavet’ kriyā vidhiliṅ, sei ihā kaya
kartavya avaśya ei, anyathā pratyavāya*

“In this verse *bhavet* is in the imperative mood. Therefore, this certainly must be done. To not do so would be a discrepancy.

For the information of the reader, I am referring here to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī’s *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* commentary on the above quoted *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse (10.33.36). The words *anugrahāya bhaktānām mānuṣaṁ deham āsthitaḥ* indicate that the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears in His original human-like form and performs various pastimes in order to bestow favor upon His devotees. Therefore, although Śrī Kṛṣṇa is satisfied in Himself (*āpta-kāma*), His display of

kindness toward the devotees is quite appropriate. This is the distinctive characteristic of *viśuddha-sattva* (pure spiritual goodness). The Lord is always prepared to reward the devotees with a result consistent with their performance of *bhajana* (worshipful service). The favor shown toward King Rahugaṇa by Śrī Jaḍa Bharata and the Lord's favor toward Śukadeva Gosvāmī illustrate this.

In the verse under discussion, it is said that the Lord manifests His form and pastimes in order to bestow favor upon His devotees. The word *bhakta* (devotee) used here refers to the *vraja-devīs* (the *gopīs*), the *Vrajavāsīs* (the residents of Vraja) and all other *Vaiṣṇavas* – past, present and future. In order to bestow favor upon the *vraja-devīs*, the Supreme Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa lovingly engages in such pastimes as *pūrva-rāga* (the loving attachment experienced in anticipation of meeting Kṛṣṇa). To bestow mercy upon all the residents of Vraja, He enacts His birth and other pastimes, and by all His activities He bestows favor upon past, present and future devotees through the medium of hearing narrations of His divine pastimes.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifests all these pastimes to benefit the devotees. By doing so, even ordinary persons (other than the devotees) who hear even the more common of the Lord's pastimes become fully intent on the Lord. Therefore, by hearing the supremely ambrosial *rāsa-līlā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's circle dance with millions of *gopīs*, such persons will certainly become exclusively devoted to the Lord – of this there can be no doubt. This fact will be elaborately discussed in subsequent verses, such as *vikrīḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.33.39).

The words *mānuṣaṁ deham āsthitaḥ* may also indicate that those *jīvas* who have attained the human form of life are able to hear all these pastimes, and thus they become exclusively

devoted to the Supreme Lord. This is so because the Lord incarnates exclusively on the earthly planets, and it is here only that worship of the Lord takes on its predominant form. Consequently, the human beings residing on the earthly planets may easily hear these narrations of the Lord's pastimes.

We find the word *bhaktānām* (for the devotees) in this verse, but in some other editions, the word *bhūtānām* (for all living entities) is found in its place. In the first case, the purport is that the Lord incarnates only for the sake of the devotees, who are thus the root cause of the Lord's appearance. But the Lord also appears in His original human-like form in order to bestow His favor upon the liberated souls, the aspirants for liberation, sense enjoyers, and all other living entities in accordance with their relationship with His devotees. The Lord's compassion is therefore said to be the cause of His appearance. Nevertheless, it must be understood that the Lord's favor toward other living entities is due only to their relationship with His devotees.

In his *Bhāgavatam* commentary known as *Bhāvārthadīpikā*, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī has written that, what to speak of the devotees, even materialistic persons are freed from their material absorption by hearing the Lord's pastimes, and thus they become exclusively fixed upon Him.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains this verse in his commentary known as *Sārārthadarśinī*: "The Lord performs varieties of pastimes to show favor to His devotees. Coming in the human form of life, living entities who hear these pastimes become exclusively devoted unto the Lord. In other words, they develop firm faith in hearing the narrations of the Lord's activities. What more shall I say about the importance of hearing about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes? And this *rāsa-līlā*, being fully imbued with *mādhurya-rasa* (the mellow of amorous love), is eminently distinguished even from the

Lord's other pastimes. Like a jewel, a *mantra* or a powerful medicine, this *rāsa-lilā* is endowed with such indisputable, astonishing potency that by hearing it, all persons in the human form become devoted to the Supreme Lord. Therefore, all varieties of devotees who hear the descriptions of these pastimes will become successful and obtain supreme pleasure. Can there be any doubt about this?"

Also, we may cite verse 10.33.30 from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*naitat samācarej jātu manasāpi hy anīśvaraḥ
vinaśyaty ācaran maudhyād yathārudro 'bdhijam viṣam*

“In other words, those who are not the Supreme Lord, who are powerless and subjected to *karma*, should never imitate the Lord's pastimes even within their minds. If anyone foolishly imitates Lord Śiva by drinking the poison generated from the ocean, he will certainly be destroyed.”

The gist of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentaries on this verse is that living entities who are subservient to the material body and who are *anīśvara* – bereft of the controlling potency of the Supreme Lord – should never behave in such a way as to imitate the Lord. What to speak of actually transgressing religious codes as the Lord seems to do in His pastimes, one should not entertain even the desire to do so.

The word *samācaraṇa* (behavior), when divided into its constituent parts (*samyak* and *ācaraṇa*), signifies complete behavior. Here it has been used to indicate total prohibition of such activity. Therefore, the purport is that such behavior should not be adopted even to the slightest extent. What to speak of performing such activities through speech or the senses, one should not even mentally conceive of such activities for oneself.

The word *hi* indicates that this certainly must *not* be done. If one were to behave in that way, he would be completely destroyed. The significance of the word *maudhyād* (stupidity) is that if anyone, being ignorant of the Lord's omnipotence and his own incompetence, foolishly adopts such behavior, he will be utterly ruined. Just as if anyone other than Lord Śiva were to foolishly consume deadly poison, instantaneously he would be killed. But Lord Śiva, in spite of drinking poison, is not destroyed; to the contrary, he attains even greater fame and splendor as Nīla-kaṇṭha, he whose throat turned blue from drinking poison.

Here in this verse, imitation of such behavior has been prohibited, yet in the verse already cited (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.33.36) – *yāḥ śrutvā tat-para bhavet* – it is evident that not only devotees but even others who faithfully hear these pastimes will become fully devoted to the Supreme Lord. This has been further explained in the following verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.33.39):

*vikrīḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ
śraddhānvito 'nuśṛṅṣyād atha varṇayed yaḥ
bhaktiṁ parāṁ bhagavati pratilabhya kāmam
hṛd-rogam āśv apahinoty acireṇa dhīraḥ*

“A sober person who in the beginning faithfully and continuously hears from his *guru* the narrations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's unprecedented *rāsa* dance with the young brides (*gopīs*) of Vraja, and later describes those pastimes, very soon attains *parā-bhakti*, or *prema-bhakti* (supreme loving devotion), for the Supreme Lord, and thus becomes competent to quickly dispel the heart disease of lust.”

Here, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments in *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī*: Having concluded the narration of the *rāsa-līlā*, Śukadeva

Gosvāmī became deeply immersed in spiritual ecstasy. In this verse, he describes the fruits of hearing and chanting the *rāsa-līlā* and thus benedicts all future listeners and reciters. Those who incessantly and faithfully hear Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa-līlā* with the young brides of Vraja, and later repeat those pastimes, quickly attain *parā-bhakti* toward Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and thus relinquish the heart disease of lust."

Śraddhānvita means to hear with firm faith. This word has been used to prevent the offense that results from mistrust or disregard of the statements of *śāstra* (authorized Vedic scriptures). Such negative temperament is in complete opposition to the principle of hearing with faith. It has also been used to promote constant hearing; by its use the importance of hearing has been pointed out. The words *atha varṇayed* indicate that after continuously hearing the *rāsa-līlā* along with other special pastimes, one will personally describe those pastimes. By indirect implication, it is further indicated that after hearing and reciting, one will also remember those pastimes and take great delight in them. In other words, hearing, chanting, remembering, experiencing delight and so on are all implied by the words *śraddhānvitaḥ anuśṛṇuyāt atha varṇayed* (to hear repeatedly with faith and then describe).

Parā-bhakti (supreme devotion) means *bhakti* which follows in the wake of the *gopīs* of Vraja. Therefore, the *bhakti* referred to here is *prema-bhakti* of the highest category. The word *pratilabhya* (obtained), together with the word *parā-bhakti* (possessing the distinctive characteristics of *prema*), indicates that first *parā-bhakti* is obtained within the heart, displaying all its unending varieties at every moment. Thereafter one quickly gives up the heart disease of lust.

The difference between *kāma* (material lust) as a disease of the heart and *kāma* (spiritual love) in relationship to the Supreme Lord is made clear. These two are quite distinct from

each other. The word *kāma* here indirectly implies that all diseases of the heart will quickly be dispelled by spiritual love.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.54), it is said: “One who is situated in the transcendental position beyond the contamination of the three modes of nature, who is fully satisfied in the self, who neither laments nor hankers for anything, and who looks impartially upon all living beings, attains *parā-bhakti* unto Me.”

In this verse from *Gītā*, it is said that one attains *parā-bhakti* only after the disappearance of the diseases of the heart; yet in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse quoted above, it is said that one attains *parā-bhakti* even before their departure. Consequently, it is understood that hearing and chanting of *rāsa-līlā* is one of the most powerful forms of spiritual practice.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura discusses the same verse (10.33.39) in his *Sārārtha-darśinī* commentary: The prefix *anu* (repeatedly or methodically) when applied to *śṛṇuyāt* (to hear) indicates constant hearing. By continuously hearing from the lips of the *śravaṇa-guru*² and Vaiṣṇavas, and thereafter reciting, narrating or describing those pastimes in poetry of one’s own composition, one attains *parā-bhakti* – that *bhakti* which is of the nature of *prema*. After hearing instructions from the *śravaṇa-guru*, the person from whom one hears about the fundamental truths of Bhagavān, a desire may arise to engage in *bhajana*.

The suffix *ktvā* has been used in the formation of the verb *pratilabhya* (obtained) in this way: *prati* + *labh* + *ktvā*. According to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, when the suffix *ktvā* is applied to a verbal root with a prefix, it is replaced by *yap*. Then the letter ‘p’ is dropped and thus the final form of the word *pratilabhya* is obtained. The suffix *ktvā* is applied to the first of two verbs performed by the same

² That *guru* from whom one hears the fundamental truths and confidential aspects of *bhakti*, and who instills the desire to enter *bhajana*. Often the same as the *bhajana-sikṣā-guru*.

agent to show successive action (i.e., having attained *prema*, he relinquishes all lusty desires of the heart). In this case, the first action is *pratilabhya*, the attainment of *prema*, and the second action is *apahinoti*, renunciation of the lusty desires of the heart.

Therefore, the suffix *ktvā* in the verb *pratilabhya* indicates that although lust and other evils still remain within the heart, *prema-bhakti* first enters the heart and by its extraordinary influence destroys all vices to the root. In other words, hearing and reciting *rāsa-līlā* possesses such astonishing power that the lust in the heart of the faithful *sādhaka* is destroyed, and he attains *prema*. Though these two take place simultaneously, the influence of *prema* manifests first and then, through its effect, all lusty desires of the heart are dissipated.

Thus, as a result of hearing and chanting the narrations of the Lord's pastimes, one first attains *prema* for the Lord's lotus feet and thereafter one's heart is liberated from lusty desires and all other contamination. Thus one becomes perfectly pure, because *prema* is not feeble like the processes of *jñāna* (the pursuit of knowledge which leads to impersonal liberation) and *yoga*. *Bhakti* is all-powerful and supremely independent.

The words *hṛd-roga-kāma* indicate the difference between lusty desires of the heart and the *kāma* in relationship to the Supreme Lord. *Kāma* which is in relationship to the Supreme Lord is of the very nature of the nectar of *prema*, whereas the lusty desires of the heart are exactly the opposite. Therefore, these two attitudes are distinct from each other. This is substantiated by use of the words *hṛd-roga-kāma*.

The word *dhīra* means *paṇḍita*, or one who is learned in the scriptures. One who refuses to accept the claim of this verse and thinks, "As long as the disease of lust remains

in the heart, *prema* cannot be obtained,” is said to possess an atheistic temperament. One who is free from such a foolish, nihilistic mentality is known as a *paṇḍita*, or sober person (*dhīra*). Consequently, only those who have firm faith in the *sāstra* are known as *dhīra*. Those who have no faith in the statements of the *sāstras* are atheists and offenders to the holy name. Such persons can never attain *prema*.

Consequently, in the hearts of the *sādhakas* who firmly believe in the statements of the *sāstra*, faith arises by hearing *rāsa-līlā* and other narrations. Only in the hearts of such faithful devotees does *prema* manifest its influence as a result of hearing narrations of Kṛṣṇa’s activities. Thereafter, lust and all evils present within the hearts of the devotees are destroyed to the root.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary on *Śrīmād-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.59) is also relevant to this discussion. There it is stated that *bhakti* is the only cause of superior qualities found in any individual. Austerities, learning, knowledge and so on are not the cause of superior qualities. Although *bhakti* is itself of the highest excellence, it does not appear only in the most exceptional individuals endowed with all good qualities. On the contrary, it may manifest or remain even in the most condemned and vile persons. Furthermore, it causes thoroughly wretched and fallen persons to attain all good qualities, to become worthy of the respect of all, and to attain the highest and most rare association.

For this reason, the opinion that Bhakti-devī enters the heart only after all base propensities and desires (*anarthas*), offenses, lust and other diseases of the heart have been eradicated is not appropriate. On the contrary, by the mercy of the Supreme Lord or the devotees, or by faithfully executing *sādhana* and *bhajana* (daily practices of worshiping and meditating on the Lord to achieve love of Kṛṣṇa), this rare *bhakti* enters the heart first, and then all unwanted

tendencies are automatically dissipated. This conclusion is thoroughly agreeable.

Therefore, faithful *sādhakas*, with firm belief in the statements of *śāstra*, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, are eligible to hear the narrations from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which are saturated with nectar. And those who believe that only *sādhakas* who are completely free from all *anarthas* are eligible to hear the above-mentioned pastimes will neither become free from *anarthas* nor obtain eligibility to hear – even after millions of births.

Another point to consider is that if this argument is accepted, then we *sādhakas* who are still affected by *anarthas*, although possessing faith, could never read or hear the sacred books of *rasika* Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* (leading spiritual preceptors) like Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. This means that we would be forever deprived of the extremely confidential and elevated truths of *bhakti* expressed by these *ācāryas*. There would be no possibility that the sprout of greed for *rāgānugā-bhakti* (spontaneous devotion) would ever be awakened in our hearts. We would be forever cheated of that which was not previously given, the *prema-rasa* of the most munificent Śrī Śacī-nandana, He who bestows *kṛṣṇa-prema*. What, then, would distinguish the Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who have taken shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu from Vaiṣṇavas of other disciplic lines (*sampradāyas*)?

A third point to consider is this. Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 8.70) quotes this verse from *Padyāvalī*:

*kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ
krīyatām yadi kuto'pi labhyate
tatra laulyam api mūlyam ekalaṁ
janma-koṭi-sukṛtair na labhyate*

Here, the words *lauilyam api mūlyam ekalam* (indeed the only price is greed) indicate that this supremely rare greed cannot be aroused even by pious activities accumulated over millions and millions of births. Then how can this greed be obtained? The words *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ* indicate one whose intelligence or perception has been awakened toward *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa*, nectar-filled loving service to Kṛṣṇa. Here, the implication is that by faithfully hearing the narrations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes saturated with *rasa* from the lips of *rasika* Vaiṣṇavas in whom *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa* has arisen, or by faithfully and attentively studying the literatures related to the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa composed by them, this greed may be obtained. Besides this, there is no other means.

Some maintain that at present no *sādhaka* exists who is completely free from *anarthas* and that therefore no one is eligible, nor in the future will anyone be eligible. This argument is completely illogical. Freedom from lust and all other *anarthas* in and of itself is not the qualification for entrance into *rāgānugā-bhakti*. On the contrary, greed awakened towards the Lord's *mādhurya* (sweetness) is the sole qualification for entrance into *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Nor is there any certainty that by routine observance of the limbs of *vaidhī-bhakti* (following rules and regulations) alone, greed toward *rāgānugā-bhakti* will automatically awaken. There is no evidence of this anywhere. Therefore, our highest obligation is to follow the purport of the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas* to the above-mentioned verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

It is by the inspiration of His Divine Grace *śrīla guru-pāda-padma nitya-lilā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇu-pāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja* and the repeated solicitation of many bumblebee-like devotees that I am presenting *Śrī Veṅṅ-gīta* to the readers, along with a

purport to the commentaries of Śrīla Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī named *Sārārtha-darśinī* and *Śrī Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* respectively. By reading this subject with full faith, the greed to enter into *rāgānugā-bhakti* will certainly sprout in the hearts of the faithful devotees. This itself is the very purpose of human life. Having expounded upon every point, I end the discussion here.

Praying for a drop of mercy from Śrī Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas,

Tridaṇḍi bhikṣu
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa

śrī śrī guru gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Maṅgalācaraṇa

*namaḥ om viṣṇupādāya gaura-preṣṭhāya bhūtale
śrī-śrīmad-bhakti-prajñāna-keśava iti nāmine
atimartya-caritrāya sva-śritānāñ ca pāline
jīva-duḥkhe sadārttāya śrī-nāma-prema-dāyine
gaurāśraya-vigrahāya kṛṣṇa-kāmaika-cāriṇe
rūpānuga-pravarāya vinodeti-svarūpiṇe*

I offer *praṇāmas* unto my most worshipable holy master *jagad-guru om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja*, who is very dear to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who nurtures with extreme divine affection as a parental guardian those who take shelter of him, whose heart is always melting with compassion to see the sufferings of the *jīvas* who are turned away from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is bestowing upon them the holy name along with *prema*, who is the manifestation of the receptacle of Mahāprabhu's *prema*, who is the topmost preacher of *prema-bhakti* in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, and whose name is Vinoda because he is very skillful in giving pleasure (*vinoda*) to Vinodinī Rādhikā and to Mahāprabhu.

*viśvasya nātha rūpo 'sau bhakti-vartma-pradarśanāt
bhakta-cakre varttitatvāt cakravartty ākhyaya bhavat*

Because he illuminates the path of *bhakti* for the whole world (just like Viśvanātha Mahādeva, Lord Śiva, the best of devotees), he is known as 'Viśvanātha'. Because he has attained the foremost position among the community of

devotees, he is known as ‘Cakravartī’. Therefore, he is worthy of being called Viśvanātha Cakravartī. (The word *cakra* means circle or wheel and *vartī* means to reside. Thus, *cakravartī* means one who resides in a circle or community. In this case the word *vartī* also conveys the sense of an axis or axle around which a wheel rotates. Thus, *cakravartī* is that person who is the axis around whom the Vaiṣṇava community revolves.)

*śrī caitanya mano’bhīṣṭam sthāpitam yena bhūtale
svayaṁ rūpaḥ kadā mahyaṁ dadāti sva-pādāntikam*

When will Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the dear associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, bestow upon me the shelter of his lotus feet? He has established *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of Kṛṣṇa, and the method for obtaining it in this world, thus fulfilling the inner heart’s desire of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

*vāñchā-kalpatarubyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca
patitānām pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

I bow down again and again unto the Vaiṣṇavas who are just like desire trees, who are an ocean of mercy, and who deliver the fallen, conditioned souls.

*veṇu-nāda-sudhā-vṛṣṭyā niṣkramayyokti mādhurīm
yāsām naḥ pāyayāmāsa kṛṣṇas tā eva no gatīḥ*

By the shower of nectar in the form of His flute song, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys dallying in Vraja, has caused His dear-most *vraja-gopīs* to release a flow of sweet words incited by their unrestrained *prema*. He has thus bestowed upon us the good fortune of drinking the statements of those cowherd maidens, who are our one and only shelter.

*namo mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

The supremely munificent Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is bestowing that precious gift of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, which is rare even for the demigods. He is Śrī Gopījana-vallabha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, the lover of the *gopīs*, now resplendent with a golden complexion, having assumed the sentiment and bodily effulgence of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. I reverently bow down before Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu.



Verse One

śrī-śuka uvāca
itthaṁ śarat-svaccha-jalaṁ
padmākara-sugandhinā
nyaviśat vāyunā vātaṁ
sa-go-gopālako 'cyutaḥ

śrī-śuka uvāca – Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī (or *śriya śuka*, the very dear parrot of Śrīmatī Rādhikā) said; *itthaṁ* – in this way; *śarat* – autumn season; *svaccha* – clear; *jalaṁ* – water; *padmākara* – lotus flowers are blossoming in the lakes, ponds and rivers such as the Yamunā, Kusuma Sarovara, Mānasī Gaṅgā, Govinda-kuṇḍa, etc.; *sugandhinā* – full of sweet fragrance; *nyaviśat* – He entered; *vāyunā* – by the cool and fragrant breeze; *vātaṁ* – carrying; *sa* – with; *go* – the cows; *gopālakaḥ* – and the cowherd boys; *acyutaḥ* – the infallible Nanda-nandana Śyāmasundara.

Translation

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī (Śrīmatī Rādhikā's very dear parrot) said, "O Mahārāja Parikṣit, Śrī Vṛndāvana, now exquisitely decorated by the autumn season, became even more splendid. The lakes, ponds and rivers were filled to capacity with clear, sweet water. Gently blowing, aromatic breezes carried the mild, sweet fragrance of blossoming lotus flowers from the lakes. In this pleasing atmosphere the

infallible Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa entered the immensely alluring Vṛndāvana forest, accompanied by His cows and the *gopas*, His cowherd friends.”

Ānanda-varddhinī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

In the previous chapter³ the crown jewel of swan-like devotees, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, gave an enchanting description of Vṛndāvana’s autumnal splendor. In the present chapter he describes Kṛṣṇa’s gallivanting in the forest in autumn. Ordinarily the six seasons – summer, rainy, autumn, winter, misty and spring – come and go one after another. In the summertime all the living beings are oppressed by the fierce rays of the sun, and the grass, trees and plants generally shrivel up. Ponds, lakes, pools and other reservoirs also begin to go dry, and the currents of the rivers dramatically slow down. With the advent of the rainy season all the lakes fill to the brim and start overflowing, and the flooding rivers acquire a fearsome aspect. Everywhere the water becomes muddy; the trees fill up with new green leaves; and the clouds float throughout the sky, sometimes sprinkling softly and sometimes raining in torrents.

As soon as autumn arrives, the ponds, lakes and rivers naturally become clear. All the flowers bloom due to the nectar-filled autumn moon-rays. The full moon, surrounded by countless stars, rises in the cloudless sky. And the heart overflows with waves of new, joyful feelings. This is why Kṛṣṇa danced in the *rāsa-maṇḍala* arena and enjoyed so many other activities with the *vraja-ramaṇīs*⁴ in Vṛndāvana during autumn.

³ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Chapter 20.

⁴ *Ramaṇīs* – shy young girls who are expert in the various skills for awakening sweet amorous emotions, the sight of whose faces gladdens the heart.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī also describes the beauty of Vṛndāvana in the winter and misty seasons in various other passages. And in the spring all the trees, plants, animals, birds and human beings are infused with new life, exhibiting fresh feelings of elation. The trees and plants sprout new leaves and shoots, and the people blissfully sing Holi and other songs. At this time it seems that the land of Vraja is decorated like a bride.

Vṛndāvana-dhāma is a most transcendental, miraculous and astonishing place where the unique splendor of spring, the charmingly sweet queen of all seasons, reigns perennially and where a velvety carpet of luxuriant green grass is always rolled out. The entire atmosphere is pervaded with both transcendental bliss and the intoxication of youth. These combine to create a kingdom of ever-increasing joy which casts a magical spell on the body and mind.

The auspicious arrival of autumn smashes the pride of the unyielding clouds of the rainy season. At that time the whole atmosphere swings with joy – a green luster is reflected everywhere, and new leaves and flowers appear on the trees, which are filled with sweetly chirping birds. The rivers, streams, ponds, reservoirs and waterfalls contain pure sweet water. Their waves seem to be playing with one another and running after each other as if desiring to be kissed. Many colored lotuses blossom in all the ponds and rivers, and the branches of the trees are also laden with fully bloomed and delightfully fragrant *campā*, *camelī*, *belī* and *jūhī* (frangipani and varieties of jasmine). Intoxicated bees relish the nectar of these flowers, and the ponds, rivers and hills of the forest resonate with their melodious humming. Carrying the weight of the sweetly intoxicating fragrance, the gentle breeze collides into the branches of the trees and loses its balance.

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī was filled with bliss as he described Śrī Kṛṣṇa's autumn dalliance and said: *ittham śarat-*

svaccha-jalaṁ padmākara-sugandhinā. “Mahārāja Parikṣit, I have described only a fraction of the unparalleled beauty of Vṛndāvana, which becomes especially splendid with the onset of autumn. On seeing the previously described loveliness of Vṛndāvana at this time, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the performer of unlimited pastimes, becomes very pleased. To stroll in the forest and see more of her beauty, He enters Vṛndāvana with His multitudes of cows and cowherd friends.”

With the advent of autumn the waters of Kusuma Sarovara, Pāvana Sarovara, Mānasa Gaṅgā, the Yamunā and the other forest lakes spontaneously become crystal clear. The current of the rivers slows down, their mood turns grave, and their waves also become subdued. The lakes and rivers are elaborately beautified with the blossoming of countless varieties of lotuses, lilies and other flowers. The gentle breeze blows with the wonderful fragrance of these flowers and permeates all of Vṛndāvana. The infallible Acyuta⁵ Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who never deviates from His nature, became filled with supreme bliss upon entering Vṛndāvana.

⁵ Acyuta – who never diverges from His constitutional qualities, especially His mercy, His beauty and His sweet pastimes; who never fails to keep His word and to please His devotees.



Verse Two

*kusumita-vanarāji-śuṣmi-bhṛṅga-
dvija-kula-ghuṣṭa-saraḥ-sarin-mahīdhram
madhu-patir avagāhya cārayan gāḥ
saha-paśu-pāla-balaś cukūja veṇum*

kusumita – completely filled with beautiful flowers; *vana-rāji* – amidst the rows of trees of the forest; *śuṣmi* – maddened; *bhṛṅga* – bees; *dvija* – of birds; *kula* – and flocks; *ghuṣṭa* – resounding; *saraḥ-sarin* – its lakes, ponds and rivers; *mahīdhram* – Govardhana, Nandīśvara and other hills; *madhu-pati* – *akhila-rasāmṛta-sindhu Śrī Kṛṣṇa* (here *madhu* means *rasa*; therefore *madhu-pati* refers to *rasika-śekhara Kṛṣṇa*, who is the ocean of nectar of all the *rasas*; *madhu* also means *vasanta*, who is enjoyed by Kṛṣṇa); *avagāhya* – entering; *cārayan* – grazing; *gāḥ* – the cows; *saha-paśu-pāla-balaḥ* – in the company of the cows, the cowherd boys and His elder brother Balarāma; *cukūja* – vibrated; *veṇum* – His flute.

Translation

Intoxicated bees were humming here and there amidst the rows of lush green trees filled with colorful, sweet-smelling flowers. All the lakes, rivers and hills of the forest resounded with the melodious singing of flocks of many kinds of birds as they flew from place to place. *Madhu-pati Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, accompanied by Baladeva and the cowherd boys,

entered Vṛndāvana and, while taking the cows for grazing, vibrated a mellow sweet tune upon His alluring flute.

Ānanda-varddhinī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

The natural beauty of the land of Vṛndāvana is beyond description. And it becomes even more exquisite and delightful upon the auspicious arrival of Vrajarāja-nandana with His cows and cowherd friends. *Kusumita-vanarāji* – the many different trees and creepers fill up with soft, newly blossomed leaves, flowers and fruits. And why should it be otherwise? Just as the bee is the only enjoyer of a flower's honey, *madhu-pati* Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the sole enjoyer and the supreme stock-keeper of the honey of all the *rasas*.

Vasanta, the spring season, is also *madhu* (honey) for her *pati* (beloved master) Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the recognized object of her service. Therefore, it is not strange that Vṛndāvana enhances her beauty in welcoming Him, her revered lord and master. As soon as Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa enters Vṛndāvana, the trees, creepers, animals and birds all blossom with delight. As one watches this scene unfold, it is very hard to discern whether the forest flourishes because of the blossoming flowers or whether the trees are in ecstasy because of the lushness of the forest. Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī quoted the *gopīs*: *jayati te 'dhikāṁ janmanā vrajaḥ śrayata indirā saśvad atra hi*. Before Kṛṣṇa's appearance in Vraja, the goddess of fortune Lakṣmī-devī personally came to Vṛndāvana and decorated her in various ways to facilitate Kṛṣṇa's playing there. It seems that the entire forest is beautifully embellished in every way, ready to welcome Him.

Describing the beauty of autumn in Vṛndāvana, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: *śuṣmi-bhṛṅga-dvija-kula-ghuṣṭa-saraḥ sarin-mahīdhram*. Different varieties of jasmine (*belī* and *jūhī*) and many other types of flowers are blossoming here, there and everywhere. Their fragrance reaches far and wide, inviting the bees to taste their honey. Swarms and swarms of humming bees are attracted to sit on the lovely flowers, and after drinking nectar they find other flowers to taste. In this way, drinking nectar full up to the neck, they become intoxicated and sing. It appears as if Vana-devī, the goddess of the forest, is welcoming the arrival of *madhu-pati* Śrī Kṛṣṇa with their humming. On hearing the bees, how can the parrots, the many kinds of cuckoos, and other birds remain quiet? They also join in with their chirping and drown in ecstasy. Absorbed in bliss, they fly hither and thither from one tree to another and from one branch to the next, causing the whole of Vṛndāvana to resonate with the sound of their singing. The combination of the humming of the bees and the singing of the birds creates an unparalleled, soft, sweet musical symphony which reverberates throughout all the ponds, lakes and hills of Vṛndāvana.

Kṛṣṇa, the son of the king of the cowherds, along with His friends and elder brother Dāujī, enters Vṛndāvana on the excuse of taking the cows for grazing, but actually He comes only to drink Vṛndāvana's enchanting beauty. Hearing the humming of the bees and the harmonious chirping of the parrots, cuckoos and other birds, Kṛṣṇa begins dancing with joy. In order to see the beauty of the various forests, He strolls from one to another, accompanied by His countless friends and cows. The innumerable flowers decorating the luxuriant forest grounds increase in number upon Kṛṣṇa's entrance, and their fragrance becomes even more attractive. Seeing the dancing of the maddened peacocks and hearing the singing

of the birds, Kṛṣṇa, in His charmingly crooked *tri-bhaṅga-lalita* (threefold bending) pose, leans against a branch of a delighted *kadamba* tree in the forest on the bank of the River Yamunā. He holds the flute to His soft lips, places His blue lotus-bud-like fingers on the holes of the flute and vibrates a mellow tune.

Saha-ṛaśu-ṛāla-balaś cukūja veṇum – Dāma, Śrīdāmā, Vasudāmā, Subala and the rest of His friends, along with Dāujī, also play their flutes, horns and other musical instruments in harmony with Kṛṣṇa's flute. The entire Vṛndāvana begins vibrating with musical sounds. All moving and non-moving beings become spellbound upon hearing this sweetly enchanting music. At that time an indescribable stream of bliss never before experienced flows through Vṛndāvana.



Verse Three

***tad vraja-striya āśrutya
veṇu-gītaṁ smarodayam
kāścit parokṣaṁ kṛṣṇasya
sva-sakhībhyo 'nvavarṇayan***

tad – that; *vraja-striyaḥ* – the young girls (*kiśorīs*) of Vraja; *āśrutya* – having heard; *veṇu-gītaṁ* – the song of the flute (*veṇu-nāda*); *smara-udayam* – *bhāva* of *kāma*, arousing an intense desire to meet with Kṛṣṇa; *kāścit* – one of them; *parokṣaṁ* – privately (Hundreds and thousands of *gopīs* gathered together in a secluded place with no one else present, not even Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs*' mothers-in-law or any other family members.); *kṛṣṇasya* – of Kṛṣṇa (His beloved *gopīs*); *sva-sakhībhyo* – to their intimate companions; *anu-avarṇayan* – continuously described (the *tad-ātmika gopīs* describing Śrī Kṛṣṇa as befits Him).

Translation

When the *vraja-kiśorīs*, the fresh young maidens of Vraja, heard that sound of Śrī Śyāmasundara's flute, feelings of love and an intense desire to meet with Him were aroused in their hearts. In a secluded place they described to their intimate companions Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beauty and qualities and the powerful influence of His flute.



Verse Four

*tad varṇayitum ārabdhāḥ
smarantyaḥ kṛṣṇa-ceṣṭitam
nāśakan smara-vegena
vikṣipta-manaso nṛpa*

tad – that (the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa’s flute); *varṇayitum* – to describe; *ārabdhāḥ* – beginning; *smarantyaḥ* – remembering (Śyāmasundara’s qualities churning within their minds); *kṛṣṇa-ceṣṭitam* – Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes (which attract the hearts of all); *na aśakan* – they were incapable; *smara-vegena* – by the force of *kāma* came the ardent desire to meet with Kṛṣṇa; *vikṣipta* – agitated; *manasaḥ* – whose minds; *nṛpa* – O King Parikṣit.

Translation

O King Parikṣit, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, the beautiful young damsels of Vraja, certainly wanted to discuss among themselves the sweetness of the sound of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s flute, but as soon as they remembered the *veṇu*, immediately the vision of their beloved’s charming pastimes, His compelling glance filled with love, His beckoning eyebrows, His sweet smiles and His other attractive features manifested in their hearts. Vrajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara, who charms even Cupid, churned their minds with His qualities, and their hearts were set aflutter with an intense desire to meet with Him. They completely lost control of their minds, which at

once went to join their beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How could the cowherd girls speak now? Thus they were unable to describe Him.

Ānanda-varḍdhiṁ Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

In Vṛndāvana, on the bank of the Yamunā embellished with delightful trees and creepers, Kṛṣṇa was standing in His graceful *tri-bhaṅga-lalita* pose. Leaning on one of the bent branches of a blossoming *kadamba* tree, He struck a lovely note on His flute. Immersed in supreme bliss, all the moving and non-moving beings became oblivious to their bodies and all bodily connections. The enchanting *veṇu-nāda*, the mellifluous melody of the flute⁶ was not able to confine its sweetness to its place in the forest, but came dancing out on the breeze, going from house to house in Vraja. It entered the ears of all the Vrajavāsīs, causing waves of emotions to surge up in their hearts.

Vṛndāvana is the natural fountainhead of all varieties of transcendental loving sentiments (*bhāvas*). From the men and women to the birds, animals and insects, and even the trees, creepers and unconscious entities such as the hills, lakes and rivers – all are filled with loving emotions. According to the level of their *bhāvas*, they taste the nectar of the unprecedented, condensed sweetness of Vrajendra-nandana Śyāmsundara, the son of the king of Vraja, who is the embodiment of supreme pleasure. Just as the thundering of clouds causes masses of water from the unlimited, unfathomable ocean to inundate the shores, in the same way

6 A sound so inconceivably and startlingly sweet that it sets the head spinning and changes the intrinsic nature of all beings, both living and nonliving.

the sweet *veṇu-nāda* of the cloud-like *nava-kiśora naṭavara* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the ever-youthful expert dancer, churns up the ocean of loving sentiments in the hearts of the Vrajavāsīs.

Vraja-bhūmi is full with four kinds of moods – *dāsyā* (servitorship), *sakhya* (friendship), *vātsalya* (parental affection) and *madhura* (amorous love) – with *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *madhura* predominating among the majority of its residents. Śrīdāmā, Subala and the other cowherd boys in *sakhya-bhāva* regard Kṛṣṇa as their friend, and by this *bhāva* taste His sweetness. Nanda Bābā and Yaśodā Mā lovingly look after Kṛṣṇa with *vātsalya-bhāva*, and in the same mood the other elder *gopas* and *gopīs* also think of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their own son. In this way they taste the charm of Kṛṣṇa's childhood. Śrī Rādhā, Candrāvalī and all the other young wives of the *gopas* think of Kṛṣṇa as the love of their life, and relish the beauty of the youthful *kiśora* Kṛṣṇa in *madhura-bhāva*. Whenever the people of Vraja come in contact with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in any way, either by seeing His beauty and pastimes, touching Him, hearing His sweet voice or listening to Him play on the flute, loving sentiments are stirred up in their hearts like waves in the sea. Both internally and externally they become emotionally flooded.

All the cows of Vraja have *vātsalya-bhāva*, motherly affection, for Kṛṣṇa. That is why touching Kṛṣṇa, seeing Him or hearing the *veṇu-nāda* causes their hearts, which are an ocean of *vātsalya-rasa*, to swell with many rising waves. Streams of milk flow from the cows' udders, flooding the forest lands. In addition, the trees, animals, rivers and hills, although they may not have a special relationship like *vātsalya* or *sakhya-bhāva*, also nurture deep feelings for Kṛṣṇa. On hearing His *veṇu-nāda* or by having even the slightest connection with Him in any way, they immediately become thrilled with joy and their hairs stand on end.

In autumn, Nanda-nandana (Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja), desiring to roam in the incomparably beautiful lush forest of Śrī Vṛndāvana, plays the flute so enchantingly that it makes the hearts of the Vrajavāsīs fill with a joy never experienced before. Surpassing even this, indescribable new waves of blissful emotions rise within the hearts of the *vraja-vadhūs*, the young brides of Vraja. At the time of the *veṇu-nāda*, new *bhāvas* are surely stimulated in Nanda-nandana's own heart as well, since He is naturally the superlative crown jewel of enjoyers of *rasa* (transcendental loving exchanges). This is true especially now, when Vṛndāvana is extremely picturesque in the radiantly beautiful autumn, with Kṛṣṇa manifesting the sweet juncture of two ages – *pauganḍa* (childhood) just giving way to *nava-kiśora* (early adolescence).

When He comes from His father's palace, Nanda Bhavan, to roam in the forest, the *vraja-vadhūs* peep from their windows and from behind the trees and creepers, their eyes thirsty for a glimpse of Kṛṣṇa. Who can claim that the convergence of all these elements and sweet memories does not arouse in the heart of Śrī Nanda-nandana an intense longing to meet with the young brides? When Kṛṣṇa starts playing the *veṇu*, everyone experiences supreme bliss in the heart, but in the *vraja-vadhūs* the *bhāva* ocean of their hearts leaps in a special way. They begin singing to each other, glorifying the sweetness of that *veṇu-nāda*. *Tad vraja-striyaḥ āśrutyā veṇu-gītāṃ smarodayam* – When the *vraja-kiśoris* hear the sound of Śrī Śyāmasundara's flute, feelings of love and an intense desire to meet with Him are aroused in their hearts.

Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Candrāvalī and the other *vraja-ramaṇīs* are the same age as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They have frolicked with Him throughout their tender years without any hesitation or discrimination. Therefore, a deep affection exists between them. Indeed, the *gopīs* cannot live without Kṛṣṇa. In their

childhood, they did not distinguish between male and female. But as they grew up, they developed shyness, self-restraint and other such qualities in their meetings with Him. Then they got married – they became the wives of other men and Kṛṣṇa became their paramour. Now in their youth, despite their intense love for each other, their meeting freely became rare. Despite being the wives of others, they were ever eager to meet with Kṛṣṇa and ready to abandon their family obligations, modesty and fears. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, surrounded by the cowherd boys, used to go with Dāu Bhaiyā to tend the cows, some *gopīs* would hide behind the trees and others would anxiously peep from their windows to get a glimpse of His sweet lotus face. Hearing the *veṇu-nāda* made them restless. Their desperation to meet with their beloved grew to such gigantic proportions that they finally threw off their self-control, shyness, family obligations, chastity, moral conduct and other forms of etiquette, to meet Him.

Gopīs with *mādhurya-bhāva* are of four types: *svapakṣa* – *gopīs* who take the side of Śrīmatī Rādhikā or are in Her group; *vipakṣa* – *gopīs* in the rival group of Candrāvalī; *taṭastha* – neutral *gopīs* like Bhadrā, who are inclined toward Candrāvalī; and *suhṛd* – those who favor Śrīmatī Rādhikā, like Śyāmalā. All kinds of *gopīs*, married and unmarried, are included in these groups, called *yūthas*, which are further subdivided many times. Every *yūtha* has a group-leader called a *yūtheśvarī*. Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the group-leader of *svapakṣa gopīs*, Candrāvalī of *vipakṣa*, Śyāmalā of *suhṛd*, and Bhadrā of *taṭastha*. *Sakhīs* like Lalitā and Viśākhā are also qualified to be group-leaders, having sufficient beauty, qualities and other attributes, but being completely charmed by the beauty, qualities and emotions of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, they never wish to be known as independent *yūtheśvarīs*.

The *yūthas* are subdivided into smaller groups called *gaṇas*, which are again further broken into smaller numbers called a

samāja. Ten to twelve affectionate *gopīs* with similar *bhāvas* comprise a *samāja*. They reveal their hearts to each other without reserve.

These *gopīs* are of three types: Śrīmatī Rādhikā's *kāya-vyūha*, the *nitya-siddha* and the *sādhana-siddha gopīs*. Those who directly appear from Śrīmatī Rādhikā are called *kāya-vyūha*. Śrīmatī Rādhikā expands Herself in many forms to enrich the flavors of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. *Nitya-siddha* (eternally perfect) *gopīs* are *jīva-tattva*, souls coming to Vraja directly from the marginal potency (*taṭastha*). They appear from Baladeva Prabhu⁷ and are never bound by *māyā*.

Sādhana-siddha gopīs are of two types: *yauthikī* and *ayauthikī*. Practicing devotees who are completely enchanted by the loving moods of the *gopīs* perform *sādhana-bhajana*⁸ following the path of spontaneous devotion (*rāgānugā*). Those who practice in groups and eventually take birth in Vraja, where they again come together, are called *yauthikī*, and those who take birth in Vraja, having practiced solitary *rāgānugā-bhajana* alone, or with one or two others, are called *ayauthikī*.

Yauthikī gopīs are also of two types: (1) *śruticarīs* (the personified Vedas) and (2) *municarīs* or *ṛṣicarīs* (the Daṇḍakāraṇya sages). Seeing the fortune of the *gopīs* performing *rāsa-līlā* and other pastimes with Kṛṣṇa, the *śruticarīs* were struck with wonder. By engaging in severe austerities with great faith, they achieved birth in the homes of *gopīs* in Vraja. Then, by the influence of the association of *nitya-siddha* and *kāya-vyūha gopīs*, they easily entered the *rasa* dance and other pastimes.

There is mention of *municarī/ṛṣicarī gopīs* in the *Bṛhad-vāmana Purāṇa*, wherein it is told that they hankered to meet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and were doing *bhajana* under the guidance of

7 Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu – a manifestation of Baladeva Prabhu.

8 *sādhana-bhajana* – prescribed spiritual discipline that leads to love of Kṛṣṇa.

the *gopīs*. Previous to this, in Tretā-yuga, when as sages⁹ they saw the supremely enchanting beauty of Śrī Rāmacandra in the Daṇḍakāraṇya forest, the desire in their hearts to join Kṛṣṇa became even stronger. Understanding their ardent desire, the most magnanimous Śrī Rāmacandra awarded them the boon of birth as cowherd girls in Vraja, which they obtained in the next Dvāpara-yuga. Some of them received the association of *nitya-siddha gopīs* and easily entered the *rāsa* dance. Those who did not get the association of *nitya-siddha gopīs* were stopped by their husbands in their homes by the power of Yogamāyā, the Lord's pastime potency who gives the purified living beings entrance into His *līlās*.

When Śrī Nanda-nandana was seven years old, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the other *vraja-gopīs* were six years old. Although by worldly standards they looked and acted like small children, the Supreme Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His eternal beloveds actually exhibited *kiśora*-like (young teenage) emotions even at that time, and were greatly eager to meet with each other. Despite being the Lord of the entire material cosmos, the all-pervading spirit, the omniscient supreme controller, and the reservoir of all potencies, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is controlled by the parental love of Yaśodā, Nanda and the other mature *gopas* and *gopīs*, as well as by *sakhya-prema*, the love of His friends, like Śrīdāmā and Subala. Under the influence of this *sakhya-prema*, Kṛṣṇa enjoys cow-herding, playing games, joking, dancing and other boyhood activities. In the same way, governed by the amorous love of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and other *vraja-gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa assumes His form as an attractive lover to taste the nectar of the *rāsa* dance and various other pastimes He performed as a youth. In this *madhura-rasa*, the Lord of lords, the supreme controller, Svayaṁ Bhagavān

9 The Daṇḍakāraṇya ṛṣīs, yearning for Kṛṣṇa as their beloved, were performing austerities in the forest, meditating on Him by the *gopāla-mantra*. While in exile Lord Rāma was staying nearby with Lakṣmāna and Sītā.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *nāyaka*, the hero; and His own internal energy, the *gopīs*, who are the embodiment of His *hlādinī* (pleasure) potency and who taste the highest expressions of love, are the *nāyikās*, or heroines.

Prior to meeting, the *nāyaka* and the *nāyikā* feel a deep attachment for each other and experience an overwhelming eagerness to meet. This condition is described in the scriptures as *pūrva-rāga*:

*ratir yā saṅgamāt pūrva-darśana-śravaṇādi-jā
taylor unmīlati-prājñaiḥ pūrva-rāgaḥ sa ucyate
Ujjvala-nīlamanī (śṛṅgāra-bheda-prakaraṇa 5)*

When every atom of their bodies is filled with loving emotions for each other, the *nāyaka* and *nāyikās* are overwhelmed by intense longing to meet. Even before meeting, on hearing glorification of each other's beauty, qualities and other attractive features, they experience different types of *bhāvas* welling up in their hearts. These *bhāvas* give rise to wonderfully indescribable feelings of desperation, called *pūrva-rāga* by sages well versed in the *rasa-śāstras* (scriptures describing the nectar of loving exchanges). In the state of *pūrva-rāga*, various types of *sañcārī-bhāvas* (exhibitions of transitory ecstasies) are generated, such as ardent desire (*lālasā*), anxiety (*udvega*) and sleeplessness (*jāgaraṇa*).

In this worldly realm, it is the *nāyaka* who first experiences the desire to meet. But in the case of the transcendental *nāyaka-nāyikās*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, it is the *gopīs* who experience these feelings first. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes Śrīmatī Rādhikā's and the other *gopīs*' feelings of *pūrva-rāga*. It is important to note here that the meeting of the *vraja-gopīs* with Gopinātha¹⁰ is not petty or degrading as in ordinary lusty affairs. Externally, the loving affairs in both realms

¹⁰ Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the *gopīs*; or Kṛṣṇa, who is controlled by the *gopīs*.

appear similar, but the love and the meetings of worldly *nāyaka-nāyikās* are ignoble, worthless and demeaning. The Vraja damsels' *pūrva-rāga* and their loving, playful activities, on the other hand, are transcendently pure and faultless, and they bestow affection for Kṛṣṇa. *Prema* for Him arises in the heart of that enthusiast who hears about them, and the fever of material lust vanishes.

Therefore, the crest jewel of swan-like devotees, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, first described how profound longing to meet with Kṛṣṇa appeared in the hearts of the *kṛṣṇānurāginī*¹¹ *vraja-vadhūs* on hearing the exquisite *venu-nāda*. Upon entering Vṛndāvana, *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti* (the embodiment of the full nectar of all *rasas*) Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa immediately transmitted through the flute His desire to meet with the *gopīs*. When the *gopīs* heard that sound in their own homes, they were rendered helpless. *Smara*, their love and desire for Kṛṣṇa, awakened in the sleeping chambers of their hearts. Many kinds of *vyabhicārī-bhāvas* (temporary symptoms of rapture) started arising in every part of their bodies, and they could not control their intense emotions. To pacify the turmoil in their hearts, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beloved *gopīs* met in a secluded place and discussed the powerful influence of His flute with their intimate *sakhīs* – *kāścit paroḥṣaṁ kṛṣṇasya sva-sakhībhy* 'nvavarṇayan.

The *vraja-gopīs* are extremely reserved and chaste, and their high level of self-control is also exemplary. They nurture deep attachment for their paramour, *para-puruṣa* Nanda-nandana (the divine Supreme Male), but they do not want to disclose this confidential matter to anyone under any circumstances. Their hearts start quivering even at the thought of this secret. But indifferent to everything else, *kṛṣṇānurāga* starts manifesting by its own vigorous power in their hearts more

11 Endowed with *ānurāga*, intense feelings of love which even though continually experienced remain increasingly ever fresh.

and more, day after day. Eventually the *vraja-ramaṇīs*' self-control, shyness, respect, fear, family obligations, chastity and other powerful restrictions begins to weaken.

Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda* is an eternal associate of *anurāga*, startlingly fresh and compelling feelings of love. The beautiful music of the *veṇu* enters the heart through the ears of anyone who has even a drop of affection for Kṛṣṇa. One's dormant, hidden *anurāga* then awakens and is revealed in the heart. That is why the *gopīs*, in the state of *pūrva-rāga*, become frantic upon hearing the enchantingly sweet song of the flute. The *vraja-ramaṇīs*' acute love for Kṛṣṇa, natural and ever perfect, is kept secretly tucked away in the temple of their hearts. As Kṛṣṇa's childhood playmates, their *anurāga* manifests only to a small degree; but when they enter the threshold of youth, marry, and go to the homes of their husbands, their *prema* is kept safely hidden in their hearts in such a way that no one will suspect it. It is impossible for others to detect even a slight scent of it. And what to speak of others, it is suspected that the *gopīs* themselves are unable to open the treasure chest of their hearts and see the symptoms of their *kṛṣṇānurāga* buried deep under the layers of their self-control, shyness, family duties and other barriers.

However, the very instant the sweet song of Kṛṣṇa's flute enters their ears, the symptoms of their love surface straight away – *smarodayam*. The *veṇu-nāda*'s peculiar nature is such that it immediately arouses one's *smara*, the amorous love for Kṛṣṇa hidden in one's heart. The *gopīs*' feelings are like a latent spark of fire within wood and other fuels. Igniting upon contact with the wind, that spark assumes the form of a fearsome conflagration which reduces the fuel to ashes and illuminates everything all around. In just the same way the *gopīs*' hide their *kṛṣṇānurāga* within, covered up by their self-control, shyness and other such restraints.

These obstacles are burned up with great force by the sweet *veṇu-nāda*, causing their deep attachment to Kṛṣṇa to blaze forth. Hence, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, overwhelmed with love, lose all sense of external consciousness the moment they hear the enchantingly sweet sound of the flute.

To get relief from the burning in their hearts, they are compelled to reveal some of their inner feelings to their intimate peers – *kāścit parokṣaṁ kṛṣṇasya sva-sakhībhyo 'nvavarṇayan*. The word *parokṣa* has a hidden purport. It means *avahitthā*, not revealing clearly but expressing one's feelings in a concealed manner, through hints and gestures. Because of the extraordinary power of the captivating sound of the flute, *kṛṣṇānurāga* manifests the *kṛṣṇa-prema* hidden in their hearts, but the young Vraja *gopīs*, whose self-restraint is like a deep, vast ocean, try to hide their love and thus express their feelings in such a way that even their closest friends will not get a glimpse of their hidden emotions. They praise the flute song with ambiguous words in order to conceal their *kṛṣṇa-prema* – *tad varṇayitum ārabdhāḥ smarantyaḥ kṛṣṇa-ceṣṭitam*.

Filled with profound love for Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* begin to describe the beauty of the *veṇu-nāda* to their *priya-narma sakhīs* (intimate girlfriends), but they express themselves with extreme caution so that not even a whiff of their *kṛṣṇānurāga* will blow in the direction of their friends. The *vraja-ramaṇīs'* endeavor to keep the moods in their hearts secret is itself a special flow of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. *Rasa-sāstra* calls this *avahitthā*.

There are thirty-three types of *sañcārī-bhāvas*, including *nirveda* (self-disparagement) and *viṣāda* (despondency), as well as *avahitthā* (concealment of one's emotions). Just as waves rise in the ocean and again merge in it, in the same way in the ocean-like hearts of the moonstruck damsels of Vraja, waves of *nirveda*, *viṣāda*, *dainya* (humility), *avahitthā* and so on rise and fall. The *sañcārī-bhāva* of

concealment arises due to deceit, shyness, fear and honor. Out of shyness, the *gopīs* express their concern that “our family elders and others should not come to know about our illicit love.” The endeavors of the *vraja-ramaṇīs* to try to keep their attachment to Kṛṣṇa a secret out of this fear are also extremely wonderful and delightful.

Every *gopī* is a boundless, unlimited store of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Just as Agastya Ṛṣi drank the entire vast ocean from his hallowed palms, in the same way the *vraja-ramaṇīs* have contained the entire, immeasurable ocean of *kṛṣṇa-prema* within their hearts. It is difficult to estimate when and which wave will arise next in the ocean of their love. Moment by moment, newer and newer waves that never come to rest, dance in the ocean of their *bhāvas*.

Concealing their feelings even from themselves, the *gopīs* describe the sweetness of the attractive *veṇu-nāda*, but due to the surge of their emotions, they are not able to hide their overwhelming attachment to Kṛṣṇa. Instead, on the screen of their hearts appears the enchanting love-filled form of Madana-mohana playing His flute. In the waves of their emotions, all their self-control, shyness, social pressures, honor, fears and other obstacles float away. *Nāśakan smara-vegena vikṣipta-manaso* – They become so helpless in love that their hidden *kṛṣṇa-prema* starts exposing itself by its own volition.



Verse Five

*barhāpīdam naṭa-vara-vapuḥ karṇayoḥ karṇikāraṁ
bibhrat vāsaḥ kanaka-kapiśaṁ vaijayantīm ca mālām
randhrān veṇor adhara-sudhayāpūrayan gopa-vṛndair
vṛndāraṇyaṁ sva-pada ramaṇaṁ prāviśat gīta-kīrtiḥ*

barha – a peacock feather; *āpīdam* – wearing a head decoration; *naṭa-vara* – skillful dancer (expert in loving affairs); *vapuḥ* – the transcendental body; *karṇayoḥ* – on the ears; *karṇikāraṁ* – yellow *kanera* flower; *bibhrat* – wearing; *vāsaḥ* – garments; *kanaka* – like gold; *kapiśaṁ* – yellowish; *vaijayantīm* – named *vaijayantī* (a garland strung with flowers of five different colors which hangs down to the knees); *ca* – and; *mālām* – the garland; *randhrān veṇoḥ* – the holes of the flute; *adhara* – of His lips; *sudhayā* – with the nectar; *āpūrayan* – filling up; *gopa-vṛndair* – with the cowherd boys; *vṛndā-āraṇyaṁ* – the forest presided over by Vṛndā-devī (Vṛndāvana); *sva-pada* – marked by the signs of His lotus feet, such as the conch shell and *cakra*; *ramaṇaṁ* – enchanting; *prāviśat* – He entered; *gīta* – singing; *kīrtiḥ* – His glories.

Translation

(The *gopīs* were seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa through their eyes tinged with loving emotions.)

Accompanied by His cowherd friends, Śyāmasundara entered the forest of Vṛndā-devī. His head was decorated

with a peacock feather. He wore yellow *karṇikāra* flowers over His ears, a dazzling golden yellow garment on His body, and a fragrant *vaijayantī* garland made of five kinds of flowers hung from His neck down to His knees. Splendidly attired as a beautiful *naṭavara*, a most expert dancer, He appeared just like a very fine actor on stage. He poured the nectar of His lips through the holes of His flute, and the cowherd boys followed behind Him, singing His glories. In this way, the land of Vṛndāvana was even more charming than *Vaikuṅṭha*,¹² due to being beautified by Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet marked with the conch, disk and other symbols.

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Filled with deep attachment for Kṛṣṇa, the beautiful Vraja maidens were carried away by the sweet song of His flute. The alluring *veṇu-nāda* astonishingly caused their hidden love for Him to start dancing in their hearts. They immediately began to describe to each other the marvelous sweetness of the *veṇu-nāda*. As soon as they began talking, a strange thing happened – the image of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His charming *tri-bhaṅga-lalita* pose, with His playful way of sauntering, His sidelong glances and His faint smile, established itself in their hearts, rendering the *gopīs* completely helpless in *prema*. Just as the sound of thunder causes the waves of the sea to start rising and inundating the shore, in the same way Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda* arouses a tidal wave in the ocean of the *gopīs' bhāva*, and also sweeps away their intimate friends who are sitting nearby. In this verse *barhāpīdam naṭa-vara-vapuḥ*, the crest jewel of perfected devotees, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī,

¹² That portion of the spiritual realm where the Supreme Lord in His unlimited four-armed Nārāyaṇa forms is worshiped with awe and majesty.

depicts an extraordinarily wonderful picture of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweet form which appears in the hearts of the *gopīs* when they hear the mellow sound of His flute.

Barhāṇḍīdam – While playing the flute Śrī Kṛṣṇa enters Vṛndāvana, ambling along in a winding gait and gesturing in such a way that defeats the art of dancing. Curly locks of black hair tied in a knot adorn the top of His head, making Him look very beautiful. The topknot, decorated all around with jewels and pearls, is crowned with peacock feathers arranged in a half-moon, giving the impression of a rainbow on a fresh cloud. The peacock feathers, having the same seven colors as a rainbow, look very enchanting, thereby increasing Kṛṣṇa's splendor. Sometimes a rainbow is seen opposite the sun while it is raining, and when the sky is filled with dark clouds, the rainbow looks particularly beautiful. Kṛṣṇa's complexion is like a fresh cloud, and the peacock feather half-moon decorating the topknot looks like a beautiful rainbow.

Naṭavara-vapuḥ – Kṛṣṇa appears like an expert dancer (*naṭavara*), moving gracefully as He enters the forest. On seeing His unparalleled, enchanting beauty with the eyes of *bhāva*, the impassioned *vraja-ramaṇīs* become immersed in a state of supreme bliss. They cannot determine at this point whether Kṛṣṇa's body is like a *naṭavara* or whether He actually is the embodiment of *naṭavara*. That person who is expert and unmatched in the art of dancing is called *naṭavara*. The *gopīs* ponder, "In all the three worlds is there any *naṭavara* so spectacular that he can be compared to Kṛṣṇa?" In other words, what can Kṛṣṇa be compared to? Comparisons such as 'a face like the moon' and 'deep like the ocean' are well known in this world. Here the ocean and the moon are the objects of comparison, and the face is the subject being compared.

Generally, it is seen that in a comparison the object is superior to the subject. However, nothing more splendid in the

three worlds than the perfect nature of Kṛṣṇa's unprecedented sweet, beautiful form can be imagined. This is why it is not correct to say that Kṛṣṇa's body is like a *naṭavara*. If someone wants to say that His body is like a beautiful *naṭavara*, then the generally prevailing statement that the object is superior to the subject will have to be changed. This is because here the subject (Kṛṣṇa's form) is superior to the object (*naṭavara*). Ordinarily the object is superior to the subject. But when Kṛṣṇa's superlative beauty, sweetness, dress, form, dancing, singing and expressions are the subject matters of comparison, the subject is billions of times superior to the object since He is billions of times greater than all others.

The god of the demigods, Mahādeva, is celebrated throughout the three worlds as *naṭarāja*, the king of dancers. But in the art of dancing, *naṭavara* Kṛṣṇa is the supremely worshipful *guru* of *naṭarāja* Śiva:

*gāḥ pālayan saha-balaḥ kvaṇayaṁś ca veṇuṁ
vikrīḍayāñcati giritra-ramārcitāṅghriḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.44.13)*

“While tending the cows in Vraja with His *goṣa* friends and elder brother Dāu Bhaiyā, Kṛṣṇa is absorbed in dancing and other pursuits as He roams through the forest. Though this very Kṛṣṇa is the supreme cause of all causes and the primeval Personality of Godhead worshiped by Śaṅkara (Śiva) and Ramā (Lakṣmī), He assumes the form of a young boy as He secretly enjoys His pastimes here.”

Therefore *naṭarāja* Śiva cannot be compared to *naṭavara* Kṛṣṇa, so in this case Śiva cannot be accepted as the object of comparison.

The *vraja-ramaṇīs* contemplate in their hearts, “Our dear *naṭavara* Śyāmasundara is the unparalleled, unique

personification of the highest sweetness. No one can be compared to Him. Especially when one looks at His entire miraculous form, it becomes evident that from head to toe every part of His body, His attire and His ornaments, are all *naṭavara*. That is why His body itself is *naṭavara* and is not comparable to any other dancer. When Kṛṣṇa enters Vṛndāvana, following behind the cows and accompanied by His cowherd friends, His lotus feet spontaneously prance in His own natural style that surpasses the art of dancing itself. At the same time His jeweled ankle-bells tinkle the sound *ruṅ-jhun*, *ruṅ-jhun*, and His *pītāmbara* (yellow cloth), shining more brightly than the luster of gold, gracefully flutters. His waist-bells dance with a sweet sound. On His chest the *vaijayantī mālā*, with its seven different kinds of flowers, rhythmically swings, and His ten fingers also dance in a unique manner on the holes of the flute.

“Kṛṣṇa’s two eyes, agilely darting with a great variety of expressions and gestures, defeat the prettiness of *khañjana* birds (wagtails) and baby deer. Beautiful dolphin-shaped earrings undulate on both His earlobes. Dark black curls fall on His forehead, bouncing as He moves, and even the peacock feather sitting on the top of His head starts to sway. Not only that, seeing that every part of His body is delightfully vibrating, the entire herd of cows, cowherd friends, creepers, branches of trees and even the Yamunā imitate His dancing. Dear *sakhī*, how much more can I tell you? The hearts of whoever beholds, hears about or remembers His nimble way of moving will also start dancing in the joyous ecstasy of love. That is why Kṛṣṇa is not like any other. He Himself is the matchless *naṭavara*, and every part of His body is *naṭavara*.”

Karṇayoḥ karṇikāraṁ – As He enters the forest, *naṭavara* Śyāmasundara is wearing a yellow *karṇikāra* flower on His ear (*karṇayoḥ*), thereby increasing the beauty of His peerless

fresh youth. *Karṇikāra* flowers are yellow in color and have a sweet, mild fragrance. As this flower blossoms, it faces the eastern rising sun. Slowly, as the sun moves from east to west, the face of the flower follows its path; and when the sun sets, the flower also closes. In this verse, *karṇayoḥ* is the plural form and *karṇikāra* is singular. There is a deep meaning here – *Rasika-śekhara Śrī Kṛṣṇa* wears only one flower, sometimes on His right ear and sometimes on His left. This demonstrates the youthful Kṛṣṇa's carefree disposition and, since He puts the flower on the ear that faces the same direction as the *gopīs*, it also shows His intense love for them. Just as the *karṇikāra* flower on Earth turns to the sun in the sky and thus demonstrates its friendly regard for the sun, in the same way Kṛṣṇa, while taking the cows out grazing, places the *karṇikāra* flower on that ear which faces the *gopīs*, thus indicating His heart's profound affection for them as they stand on their rooftops.

Bibhrad vāsaḥ kanaka-kapiśaṁ – Naṭavara Śyāmasundara, whose bodily complexion defeats the color of newly formed clouds, is gracefully adorned with a very beautiful *pītāmbara* which shines like molten gold against His bluish body. He wears cloth the same golden color as the *gopīs'* complexion, thus disclosing His inner loving feelings for them. On His broad chest the beautiful *vaijayantī* garland, made of five or seven kinds of flowers, is swinging gently and sweetly. Seeing all this, the *gopīs* experience ever new waves of emotions surging in their hearts.

Randhrān veṇor adhara-sudhayāpūrayan – Dressed in enchanting garments suitable for roaming in the forest, the topmost dancer Śyāmasundara enters Vṛndāvana in the autumn, playing the flute. His facial expressions at the time of the *veṇu-nāda* seem to indicate that He is trying to fill the holes of His flute with the nectar of His lips. As the flute is His eternal companion, it is only befitting that he should

be without any holes. If anyone, even after attaining Kṛṣṇa's association, still has some holes, or defects, it is a matter of great distress. But for this eternal associate of Kṛṣṇa, the *veṇu*, it is impossible to be without holes. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa Himself tries to fill up those holes with the nectar of His lips.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa rests His fingers on the holes of the flute, and puts him to His soft bud-like lips which outshine the beauty of a ripe crimson *bimba* fruit. Then, when He dispatches His breath through the flute, sweetly alluring sounds flow from the holes of the *veṇu*, attracting all moving and non-moving beings. But alas! Still the flute cannot be without holes. Actually, Kṛṣṇa's *adharāmṛta*, the nectar of His lips, comes out through the holes of the flute as *nādāmṛta*, the nectar of sweet sound. This exquisite music causes dry trees to become green and lush, flowers to bloom, and stones to melt. The *veṇu* himself, however, undergoes no change; his dryness never comes to an end. Although the music melts all other moving and non-moving beings, the *veṇu*'s hard, stiff body does not soften even slightly.

In this world there are many objects with numerous holes, but Kṛṣṇa does not try to fill their holes. It is impossible for all to receive Kṛṣṇa's association, but the *veṇu* has taken birth in a *sad-vamśa*, a virtuous dynasty (or alternatively meaning 'good bamboo'), so by nature he is simple (or straight, thus fit to be used for a flute). Because of this, he easily gets to be with Kṛṣṇa, who tries to fill his holes. But as the flute is devoid of inner essence, being heartless or hollow inside, he can never become 'holeless', despite having Kṛṣṇa's association and mercy. From this we learn that those who get good association due to their simple nature or birth in a high-class family, but who have no love and affection in their hearts, still remain deprived of all benefits of good fortune.

Vṛndāraṇyam̐ *sva-pada-ramaṇam̐* – “Dear friend, the land of Vraja is certainly the most blessed on this Earth, and within the land of Vraja, Vṛndāvana is even more auspicious. It is in her forests, on the pretext of grazing the cows, that Śrī Kṛṣṇa happily roams about with His friends while playing His flute. That is why the land of Vṛndāvana is very dear to Him.” Outwardly this land appears very rough with many small, pointed stones and various kinds of thorns. But despite this, it is very pleasing to Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. If this were not so, why would Śrī Kṛṣṇa have blessed Vṛndāvana as the place for His pastimes of superior sweetness, overriding Goloka, Vaikuṅṭha and all the other sacred abodes? In these other realms Bhagavān rides on the back of Garuḍa and other carriers or sits on a jeweled throne, and He always wears jewel-studded sandals. He never walks barefoot. But in this Vṛndāvana, on the excuse of cow-herding, He freely roams about with bare feet, thereby adorning the land with the impressions of His beautiful lotus feet, which are ornamented with the flag, thunderbolt, elephant goad, water pot and other symbols.

Gopa-vṛndair prāviśad gīta-kīrtiḥ – In this way Vrajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara entered the supremely attractive Vṛndāvana as He played the *veṇu*. At that time Kṛṣṇa was completely surrounded by a circle of all His cowherd friends. As they proceeded with Him, they loudly declared the glories of His swaggering gait which defeats the art of dancing, His expertise in playing the flute, His valor, His munificence and other admirable qualities, calling out, “*Sādhu, sādhu!* Excellent, excellent.”

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavācārya Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes a vivid description of the extraordinary impact of the sound of the flute in his drama, *Vidagdha Mādhava*:

ruddhann ambu-bhūtaś camat-kṛti-paraṁ
kurvan muhus tumburum
dhyānād antarayan sanandana-mukhān
vismāpayan vedhasam
utsukyāvalibhir baliṁ caṭulayan
bhogīndram āghūrṇayan
bhindann aṇḍa-kaṭāha-bhittam abhito
babhrama vaṁśī-dhvaniḥ

“When Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa strikes a note on His flute upon entering Vṛndāvana, all the clouds stop moving. Tumburu, the topmost master of the Gandharvas, is struck with wonder. Sanat, Sanandana and the other sons born from the mind of Brahmā break their deep meditation. Brahmā, the creator himself, becomes spellbound. Bali Mahārāja, residing in Sutala-loka, becomes agitated by the various types of desires sprouting in his heart. The head of Śeṣanāga¹³ which is holding the Earth, starts to spin. In this way the *veṇu-nāda* pervades all the three worlds, thereby creating an upheaval throughout the entire universe.”

Thus, Kṛṣṇa’s *veṇu-nāda* captures the minds of all living beings, stimulating in their hearts those emotions which are in accordance with their particular relationship with Him, and intensifying them to the utmost limit. Those people who have no relation with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in one of the three primary *rasas* (*sakhya*, *vātsalya* or *mādhurya*) in Vraja, only experience the sweetness of the *veṇu-nāda*. Becoming charmed and stunned, they sink in the ocean of His loveliness. But, as soon as the *veṇu-nāda* enters the ears of those who do have a relationship with Him in one of the primary *rasas* in Vraja, it causes waves of *bhāvas* to immediately start rising and

13 The snake incarnation, who bears all the universes on His hoods and who with His ten hundred faces describes non-stop the qualities of the Lord but never reaches the end of His glories.

falling in the ocean of their hearts. It is impossible to describe their extreme agitation.

A stream of the *veṇu*'s ambrosial nectar enters the ears and inundates the hearts of the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, who are fully intoxicated in the highest sentiments of love for Kṛṣṇa. At that time a strange condition arises in them: they become tormented by the strong desire to meet with Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, in order to contain the inner mood of their hearts, the *gopīs* take shelter of *avahitthā*, concealment of their emotions, and describe the *veṇu*'s sweetness to their intimate *sakhīs*. As soon as they begin to speak about the *veṇu-nāda*, however, a picture of the enchanting form of Kṛṣṇa playing the flute becomes imprinted in their hearts. They lose external consciousness and their throats choke up, leaving them speechless. Sinking and surfacing in the waves of their internal emotions, the *sakhīs* only look at each other without speaking.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* descriptions of the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's beauty are found in many places, and amongst them, three are acclaimed to be especially wonderful and heart-melting.

(1) by Brahmājī (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.14.1):

*naumīḍya te 'bhra-vapuṣe taḍid-ambarāya
guñjāvataṁsa-paripiccha-lasan-mukhāya
vanya-sraje kavala-vetra-viṣāṇa-veṇu-
lakṣma-śriye mṛdu-pade paśupāṅgajāya*

After the *brahma-mohana-līlā*, the pastime of the bewilderment of Brahmā, the most respected Brahmā said to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, "O Lord, You are the only person in the whole creation worthy of our prayers. O Vrajendra-nandana, You look like a new rain cloud, and adorned with a *pītambara* which sparkles and shimmers like lightning, You look very

elegant. With *guñjā* berry ornaments embellishing Your ears and a peacock feather on Your head, Your lotus face emits a brilliant luster. The garland of many colored forest flowers and leaves around Your neck, the cow-herding stick and forest bugle under Your arm, and Your *veṇu* tucked into Your cummerbund look splendid. In Your soft lotus hands are morsels of rice and yoghurt. Appearing in this sweet attire of a cowherd boy, You attract everyone. Your delicate lotus feet, softer than lotus flowers, are marked with auspicious symbols. To these lotus feet alone I am offering prostrated obeisances again and again.”

(2) by the *dvija-ṣatnīs*, the wives of the priests (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.23.22):

*śyāmaṁ hiraṇya-ṣaridhiṁ vanamālya-barha-
dhātu-ṣravāla-naṣa-veṣam anuvratāmse
vinyasta-hastam itareṇa dhūnānam abjaṁ
karṇoṣṭhalāka-kapola-mukhābja-hāsam*

The *dvija-ṣatnīs* were the wives of the Mathurā *brāhmaṇas*, the respected priests learned in Vedic rituals. Despite being forbidden by their husbands, these ladies still appeared on the border between Vṛndāvana and Mathurā to feed Kṛṣṇa personally, bringing various kinds of palatable dishes prepared by their own hands. There, instantly imbibing with their eyes the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa’s marvelous beauty, they said, “His complexion is blackish like a newly filled cloud, and His *pītāmbara*, which defeats the luster of gold, shimmers against His darkish body. His head is decorated with a peacock feather, and every part of His body is embellished with designs drawn with various colored minerals. Sprigs of new leaves adorn His body, and on His neck is an enchanting forest garland with flowers of five colors. Dressed in this way He appears as *nava-kīṣora naṣavara*, the eternally youthful, expert dancer.

One of His hands rests upon His friend's shoulder, and with the other He plays with a pastime lotus¹⁴. Earrings grace His ears, curly locks of hair bounce on His forehead, and His lotus face is made most delightful with His ever-so-slight smile.”

(3) In the verse at hand from the *Veṇu-gīta* Śukadeva Gosvāmī describes Kṛṣṇa's enchanting beauty, which comes as a vision in the hearts of the Vraja *gopīs*.

These are three extraordinary descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's form and beauty. If we compare them from a neutral point of view, it becomes evident that the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's beauty as manifested in the hearts of the *gopīs* is the topmost. Brahmā, the grandfather of the universe, is an empowered servant of Bhagavān. That is why majesty mixed with a touch of awe is seen in his prayers by use of the words *naumi* (obeisances) and *iḍya* (supremely worshipable person), indicating his *dāsyā-bhāva*. The *dvija-patnīs* are situated on a higher platform than Brahmājī. Although their mood is not characterized by opulence, a tinge of honor and respect is detected in their *mādhurya-bhāva*. As they are *brāhmaṇīs*, the wives of the priests, they are not entitled to enter into and relish Kṛṣṇa's sweet pastimes. Standing on the borderline between majesty (*aiśvarya*) and sweetness (*mādhurya*) at the meeting ground between Mathurā and Vṛndāvana in Bhatraul at Brahma Hrad (Lake), they behold Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweet beauty in accordance with their own mood. It is possible that in their next births¹⁵ they may perform *bhajana* in the moods of the *gopīs*. Then by the grace of Yogamāyā, they may take birth as milkmaids and by the influence of association with the *nitya-siddha gopīs*, they may attain the good fortune of serving Kṛṣṇa.

14 Twirling this lotus in His hand, Kṛṣṇa twists the hearts of all the Vrajavāsīs and especially causes the *gopīs'* hearts to dance.

15 Depending on their attachment to and relationship with Kṛṣṇa, some *dvija-patnīs* take their very next birth as *gopīs*.

Considering these points, it is clear that the vision of Kṛṣṇa's sweet beauty that manifests in the *vraja-devīs'* hearts upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda* is the topmost. It is only on the throne of the inner heart of the love-maddened *gopīs* that the ultimate limit of beauty of *nava-kīśora naṭavara Śrī Kṛṣṇa* – the ever youthful, superb dancer who is the endless ocean and the supreme enjoyer of ambrosial mellows (*akhila-rasāmṛta-sindhu rasika-śekhara*) – can be manifested.



Verse Six

*iti veṅṅu-ravam rājan
sarva-bhūta-manoharam
śrutvā vraja-striyah sarvā
varṇayantyo 'bhirebhire*

iti – thus; *veṅṅu-ravam* – the vibration of the flute; *rājan* – O King Parikṣit; *sarva-bhūta* – of all living beings; *manoharam* – stealing the minds; *śrutvā* – upon hearing; *vraja-striyah* – the cowherd ladies of Vraja; *sarvāḥ* – all of them; *varṇayantyaḥ* – becoming absorbed by describing; *abhirebhire* – by embracing Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they felt spiritual bliss.

Translation

O King Parikṣit, the sound of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute steals the minds of all living beings, both moving and non-moving. When the young *gopīs* of Vraja heard that sound, they began to express their feelings. By describing the *veṅṅu-nāda*, they entered a state of emotional turmoil due to their *smara*, or *prema*, and became completely absorbed in thoughts of their beloved. To alleviate the force of their love, within their hearts they began to embrace Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the ocean of ambrosial bliss and the topmost *rasika* enjoyer.

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The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

In their extreme emotional condition the *gopīs* were briefly at a loss for words. But after some time, when the force of their emotions calmed down a little, they somehow regained their composure and again began to describe the sweetness of the *veṇu-nāda*. Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's enchanting form manifested in their hearts, and they became helpless with *prema*. Being spellbound, the *gopīs* experienced infinite *bhāvas* converging within them, and each one tried to hide her overflowing emotions for her most beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This caused *prema-rasa* to flood their hearts even more, producing towering waves in which they themselves drowned.

Describing to their intimate companions the *bhāvas* which arose in their hearts due seeing Kṛṣṇa, some of them became so overwhelmed by their emotions that they embraced their friends. Thinking that their *sakhīs* were Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, some *gopīs* hugged each other and floated in the blissful ocean of meeting with Him. Some, hearing their own secrets coming from the mouths of other *sakhīs*, lost their composure out of joy and said, "Friend, you have expressed exactly what I was thinking in my heart. How could you know my inner secrets?" Driven by love, one *gopī* bound her friend in the net of her embrace.

On hearing the enchanting *veṇu-nāda*, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, filled with *anurāga*, were tossed by the waves of their many *bhāvas* which were continuously flowing one into the other. At this time their whole bodies exhibited symptoms of *aṣṭa-sāttvika*,¹⁶ *sañcārī* and other *bhāvas* to their ultimate limit – *varṇayantyo 'bhirebhire*.

16 Eight symptoms of ecstasy which arise when the heart is overwhelmed by emotions: *stambha*—becoming stunned; *sveda*—perspiration; *romañca*—standing of the hairs on end; *svara-bhaṅga*—faltering of the voice; *kampā*—trembling; *vaivarṇya*—paler or change of color; *āśru*—tears; *pralaya*—fainting or loss of consciousness.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's enchanting beauty and the sweetness of His *veṇu* steal the minds of all living beings. But the hidden purport here is that at the time of the *rāsa* dance, the sound of the flute captivated the beloved *gopīs* only, and no one else. When the *vraja-ramaṇīs* heard the sound of the *veṇu* in the very beginning of the *rāsa*, an intense desire to meet with Kṛṣṇa arose in their hearts only, and they offered in sacrifice all of their fear, regard for public opinion and social conventions, virtuous conduct and so on. They went to meet their dearly beloved in whatever condition they were at that time. Forgetting everything – service to their husbands, bathing, decorating themselves, cooking – they left to join Kṛṣṇa: *niśamya gītāṁ tad anaṅga-vardhanāṁ* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.29.4).

It becomes clear from this description that, upon hearing the *veṇu-gīta*, all the birds, animals, trees, plants, as well as all the *Vrajavāsīs*, young and old, become attracted to the *veṇu-nāda* and are filled with bliss according to the level of their individual *bhāvas*. However, only Kṛṣṇa's most beloved *vraja-ramaṇīs* sacrifice their fear, hesitancy, self-control, regard for public opinion and social conventions, virtuous conduct and other attachments, running to meet their lover in a disheveled condition.



Verse Seven

gōṇya ūcuḥ
akṣaṇvatām phalam idaṁ na paraṁ vidāmaḥ
sakhyāḥ paśūn anuviveśayator vayasyaiḥ
vaktraṁ vrajeśa-sutayor anuveṇu-juṣṭam
yair vā nipītam anurakta-kaṭākṣa-mokṣam

gōṇya ūcuḥ – the *gōṇīs* said; *akṣaṇvatām* – of those who have eyes; *phalam* – success; *idaṁ* – this (beautiful sight of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as He enters Vṛndāvana with the cows and cowherd boys); *na* – not; *paraṁ* – other (success of the eyes); *vidāmaḥ* – we know; *sakhyāḥ* – O friends; *paśūn* – the cows; *anuviveśayatoḥ* – entering one forest after another; *vayasyaiḥ* – with Their friends of the same age; *vaktraṁ* – the sweetness of Their faces; *vrajeśa* – of Nanda Mahārāja; *sutayoḥ* – of the two sons Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, or Kṛṣṇa, the son of King Nanda, and Rādhikā, the daughter of King Bṛṣabhānu (in other words, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa); *anu-veṇu-juṣṭam* – following behind and touching the flute to His lips; *yaiḥ* – by which; *vā* – and; *nipītam* – drinking (the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s sidelong glances); *anurakta* – filled with love; *kaṭākṣa* – sidelong glances; *mokṣam* – pouring on (smiles, laughter and sidelong glances).

Translation

The *gōṇīs* said to their most intimate friends, “O *sakhīs*! Just see! How can we find words to express the indescribable

fortune of one whose eyes behold the imperishable beauty of the two sons of Mahārāja Nanda, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, as They enter Vṛndāvana with the cowherd boys and cows? They hold Their flutes to Their lips and smile mildly while lovingly showering sidelong glances upon us. At that time we drink the sweetness of Their faces.”

Ānanda-varddhinī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

The *gopīs*, totally mad for Kṛṣṇa, are filled with the deepest sentiments of love. Without their grace it is impossible to understand the words they speak to express the feelings overflowing from their hearts. That is why Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and other commentators have prayed to the *gopīs* for their blessings. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has written in *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* (The Commentary that Satisfies the Vaiṣṇavas):

yāṣāṃ budhyate vāg-artho yāṣāṃ eva prasādataḥ
gopīḥ prapadye tā yābhiḥ sa gambhīrāśayo jitaḥ

“I take shelter at the lotus feet of the *gopīs*. By their mercy only can one understand the meaning of their words in the *Veṇu-gīta*. What more can I say about their glories? Even Svayaṃ Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, whose heart is extremely deep, is constantly conquered by their love.”

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has written in his commentary *Sārārtha-darśinī* (The Commentary that Reveals the Essential Meanings):

veṇu-nāda-sudhā-vṛṣṭyā niṣkramayyokti-mādhurīm
yāṣāṃ na pāyayām āsa kṛṣṇas tā eva no gatiḥ

“The shower of nectar in the form of Kṛṣṇa’s *veṇu-nāda* made the *gopīs* delirious, forcing them to come out of their houses to drink the sweetness of His song. Those *gopīs* are our only refuge.”

In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 4.95) the beautiful nature and form of the crown jewel of all *gopīs*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, has also been described:

*jagat-mohana kṛṣṇa tañhāra mohinī
ataeva samastera parā ṭhākurañī*

“That very Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who attracts the entire universe with His beauty, qualities, pastimes, nature, opulence, sweetness and other aspects, is Himself attracted and rendered helpless by the unparalleled and unsurpassed love of Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Śrīmatī Rādhikā. She is the most supremely accomplished of all in the art of love and affection, the embodiment of *mahābhāva*, and extremely dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, She is the Goddess of He who is the God of the entire creation. Therefore, She is the greatest of the great, surpassing all transcendental limits.”

Without Her causeless mercy, it is not possible to understand the depth of Her moods and words. For this reason the commentators have prayed to Her venerable lotus feet for Her causeless mercy.

Hearing Kṛṣṇa’s alluring *veṇu-nāda*, the *gopīs* became extremely restless in their desire to meet with Him. Sitting in seclusion in their homes, they were discussing the *veṇu-nāda* with their closest friends while looking with great thirst towards the path Kṛṣṇa took on His way to the forest. As soon as they started to talk about the lovely melody of the flute, they saw with their eyes of *bhāva* a vision of Kṛṣṇa’s enchanting form and were overwhelmed in love.

Their throats choked up, their hearts stopped beating, and they stood silent for some time. After their *bhāva* was pacified a bit, they patiently concealed their inner mood by indirectly hinting at Kṛṣṇa's sweetness. They spoke with each other: *akṣaṇvatām phalam idam na param vidāmaḥ*. "Dear *sakhīs*, you have chained yourselves in the net of household life and are wasting your eyes and other senses that the Creator has given you. You should try to escape from the prison of your houses as soon as possible. Come running with us to the Vṛndāvana forest and there make your eyes, other senses and your very lives successful by seeing something indescribable and extraordinarily amazing." With this intent the verse *akṣaṇvatām phalam idam* has been spoken.

The *kṛṣṇānurāginī vraja-ramaṇīs*, who know only Kṛṣṇa and who are themselves the essence of His life, were engaged in talking with their confidential friends about the enchantingly sweet sound of the flute. But then a vision of Kṛṣṇa's charming form came in their hearts, rendering them unable to reveal their innermost feelings. Even in front of their dearest *sakhīs*, who as their alter egos had the very same desires, they were hesitant to reveal their feelings of love for Kṛṣṇa and their anxiety to meet with Him. Therefore, in order to hide their *prema* for Him, they described not only Kṛṣṇa's beautiful form but Balarāma's beauty as well. By doing this their innermost feelings – their intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa and their eagerness to meet with Him – were not disclosed to others. But it was not possible to hide their deep affection for Kṛṣṇa from their similar-hearted *priya-narma sakhīs*. Being influenced by shyness, self-control and other such qualities which naturally accompany *prema*, they continued their attempt to hide the feelings in their hearts but were not successful.

The *vraja-ramaṇīs*, consumed with love for Kṛṣṇa, began telling their *sakhīs* in sweet gentle voices, "For one who has

eyes, this vision is the sole purpose and perfection of those eyes. Dear *sakhīs*, beyond this there is nothing.” Helplessly melting in *prema*, the *gopīs* forgot to tell for what purpose the eyes exist and were only able to say that *this* is the success of the eyes. They were incapable of mentioning the beauty, qualities and other special endearing aspects of the object that was making their eyes worthwhile. Being thoroughly astonished and wonder-struck, they were only able to hint, “This is it... There is nothing more.”

After regaining their composure, they continued: *paśūn anu-viveśayator vayasayaiḥ*. “*Sakhī!* Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva enter one forest after another, surrounded by Their innumerable cowherd friends of the same age, such as Śrīdāmā, Subala and Madhumaṅgala. They follow behind the cows, driving them towards Vṛndāvana while calling out sweet words containing many secret signals. Only those eyes are successful that have tasted the sweetness of the lotus faces of the sons of the king of Vraja, Vrajarāja-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. The eyes of those who have not received the fortune of tasting this nectar are useless. The Creator has made their eyes in vain.”

It is stated in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 2.29):

vaṁśī-gānāmṛta-dhāma, lāvaṇyāmṛta janma-sthāna
ye nā dekhe se cānda vadana
se nayane kiba kāja, paḍuka tāra muṅḍe bāja,
se nayana rahe ki kāraṇa

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, deeply absorbed in the loving moods of Śrī Rādhā, cried bitterly to Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda and Svarūpa Dāmodara, “The lotus face of our beloved Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa defeats the beauty of millions upon millions of moons. That face is the glowing reservoir of complete, nectarean loveliness and the abode of the ambrosial songs of His flute. The eyes of those who have not seen this

moon-like face are useless. Their heads should be struck with a thunderbolt. What is the necessity of such useless eyes?"

Various commentators have offered many different explanations of the phrase *vrajeśa-sutayoḥ*, and a few of their deliberations are given here. The *gopīs* are calling both Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva *vrajeśa-sutayoḥ*, the sons of the king of Vraja. Despite not being a son of Vrajarāja Nanda, Balarāmajī is also called *vrajeśa-suta* because, according to the *Hari-Vamśa Purāṇa*, His father Śrī Vasudeva was also the master of large herds of cows: *vasudeva iti khyāta goṣu tiṣṭhati bhūtale*. Therefore, he can also be called *vrajeśa*. Vasudeva was famous in Vraja-maṇḍala as such, and that is why it is not improper to call his son *vrajeśa-suta*. According to another explanation, Baladevajī was born in Nanda's Vraja, and from the time of His birth Nanda Mahārāja had brought Him up like his very own son. Because Nanda and Yaśodā affectionately raised Him, no one can deny that He is their son.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.5) describes that after Kṛṣṇa's birth Vrajarāja Nanda, the king of Vraja, went to Mathurā to pay taxes to Kāmsa. There he met the respected Vasudeva who said to him:

*bhrātar mama sutaḥ kaścīn mātrā saha bhavad vraje
tātaṁ bhavantam manvāno bhavadbhyām upalālitaḥ*

"Brother Nanda! It is a great joy to know that you have been blessed with a son in your advanced age [after age fifty]. My son, together with His mother, is also living in your home. You care for Him with much love and affection, and therefore He sees you as His father."

These words spoken by Vasudevajī further confirm Baladeva as *vrajeśa-suta*. When Balarāmajī came from Dvārakā to console the Vrajavāsīs, He offered *praṇāma* to

Nanda Mahārāja and Śrī Yaśodājī, addressing them as ‘mother and father.’ They both blessed Him and made Him sit on their laps like their own son – *rāmo ‘bhivādyā pitarāv āśīrbhir abhinanditaḥ*.

In this way we find various statements that prove that Balarāmājī is indeed also known in Vraja as Vrajeśa-nandana. That is why the love-maddened *gopīs*, in order to hide their undivided love for Kṛṣṇa, described Balarāmājī’s beauty and other qualities along with Kṛṣṇa’s. “*Sakhī!* Those eyes which have not drunk the beauty of Vrajarāja-nandana Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva are useless.” As soon as the cowherd girls began expressing the beauty of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and the way the *veṇu* touches Their lips, many kinds of moods flashed in their hearts.

Vaktraṁ vrajeśa-sutayor anuveṇu-juṣṭam – There is another deep meaning here. When the two sons of the king of Vraja, surrounded by all the cowherd boys of the same age, enter the forest for cow-grazing, one of them, holding a charming flute to His lips, follows some distance behind. The life and eyes of one who has drunk the sweetness of His lotus face are successful, and the eyes of one who has not tasted that sweetness have no purpose. This is the *gopīs*’ inner *bhāva*. Outwardly, however, they convey their feelings in such a way that anyone overhearing them will not understand their inner mood.

Their use of the descriptive phrase *veṇu-juṣṭam* (touching the flute to His lips) has intensified and filled the lovesick *gopīs*’ moods with so much *rasa* that it is impossible to grasp these *bhāvas* without their mercy. The *veṇu* repeatedly touches Vrajarāja-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lips when He plays on him. At that time Vrajendra-nandana sprinkles the *veṇu* with the nectar of His lips. He fills the flute with the breath of the indescribable love in His heart, expressed through enigmatic sounds such as *klim*.

Pointing at the *veṇu*'s unparalleled good luck, the *vraja-ramaṇīs* experienced a *bhāva* arising in their hearts never encountered before, along with an intense yearning to attain the flute's great fortune. The phrase *yairnipītam* expresses this *bhāva* – only the eyes of those who have beheld the beautiful lotus face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as He touches the flute to His lips are successful. If their purpose had been only to see Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* would have said *dṛṣtam* (to see) instead of *nipītam* (to drink). But with their hearts shackled by self-control, shyness, family obligations, honor and fear, it was impossible for them to taste Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweetness and to drink the nectar of His lips.

Therefore they said instead, "O *sakhī*! While playing the *veṇu*, Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa lovingly casts sidelong glances at those devotees to whom He is deeply attached." They explained that with His fully loving gaze Śrī Kṛṣṇa breaks the obstructions of shyness, duty, self-control and hesitancy. As soon as He arches His eyebrow in a coyly provocative way, all of these obstacles are banished forever. This is the deep purport of the word *mokṣa* in this verse. Not only does Śrī Kṛṣṇa look from the corners of His eyes at His dearest ones, but they also cannot refrain from looking at Him in the same way – *anurakta-kaṭākṣa-mokṣam*.

"Being shy, *sakhī*, you still hesitate to go near Vrajendra-nandana. But if you approach Him a little, the play of His eyebrows will break your regard for public opinion, self-control and all the rest, and drawing you closer to Him, He will force you to drink the nectar of His lips. At that time, drinking the honey of the lotus face of our *prāṇa-priyatama*, the love of our life, all of us will bring our lives, along with our eyes, to perfection."

All the *vraja-ramaṇīs* are immersed in *bhāva*, each and every one having her own particular, special mood. The heart cannot grasp all these individual *bhāvas*, but it is possible to

understand a few of them. Among all of the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Candrāvalī and the other principal *gopīs* are always the most eager to meet Śrī Kṛṣṇa and enjoy with Him. Śrī Rādhikā's maidservants, however, like Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, are not eager to meet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa themselves, but rather they only desire to arrange for Her to meet with Him. The pleasure Her followers taste is millions and millions of times greater than it would be if they were meeting personally with Kṛṣṇa. This particular kind of *gopī-bhāva*, called *ullāsa-rati*, is especially sweet and has been brilliantly analyzed in *Prīti-sandarbha* and in the commentaries on *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*:

*sañcārī syāt samonā vā kṛṣṇa-ratyāḥ suhṛd-ratiḥ
adhikā puṣyamāṇā ced bhāvollāsa itīryate*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (2.5.128)

Generally, devotees of the same mood, who are enriched with similar desires, naturally share *suhṛd-bhāva*, intimate friendship, with each other. That is why the love and affection (*prīti* and *rati*) that Lalitā and the other *sakhīs* have for Śrīmatī Rādhikā is called *suhṛd-rati*. When their *suhṛd-rati* increases from its normal condition to become the same as or just slightly less than their *kṛṣṇa-rati* (affection for Śrī Kṛṣṇa), it is called *sañcārī-bhāva*¹⁷. It is like a wave in their *kṛṣṇa-rati*, which is their permanent mood. In other words this *suhṛd-rati* becomes a *sañcārī-bhāva* when the *sakhīs'* affection for Śrīmatī Rādhikā rises up and becomes equal to the waves in the ocean of their prominent affection for Kṛṣṇa. But there are some *gopīs* whose tender affection (*sneha*) for Rādhājī is so prodigious that it vastly exceeds their *kṛṣṇa-rati* and continuously increases by the moment due to their full absorption in it. In this case

¹⁷ *sañcārī-bhāva* is a transitory emotion that heightens the *sthāyī-bhāva*, permanent emotion. These come in waves that arise from the nectarean ocean of *sthāyī-bhāva*, causing it to swirl and swell, before they return to their source.

suhṛd-rati, no longer a *sañcārī-bhāva*, is called *bhāva-ullāsa-rati*, a special feature of *madhura-rasa*. Of the five types of *sakhīs*, only the *nitya-sakhīs* and *prāṇa-sakhīs*, who are known as *mañjarīs*, have this *bhāva-ullāsa-rati*, and for them it is the permanent emotion (*sthāyī-rati*).

It is seen that creepers are always endeavoring to embrace trees, but the leaves, flowers and buds (*mañjarīs*) of the creepers do not even slightly try to embrace the trees directly. When a creeper embraces a tree, the joy of its flowers, leaves and *mañjarīs* automatically increases. In Śrī Vṛndāvana, Śrīmatī Rādhikā stands supreme among all *gopīs*. She is famous as the wish-fulfilling creeper of love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Some of Her *sakhīs* have the nature of leaves, some are like flowers and some like *mañjarīs*. That is why they are always eager for Śrīmatī Rādhikā to meet with Kṛṣṇa and are carried away by the bliss of Their union:

*sakhīra svabhāva eka akathya kathana
kṛṣṇa saha nija līlāya nāhi sakhīra mana*

*kṛṣṇa saha rādhikāra līlā ye karāya
nija sukha haite tāte koṭi sukha pāya*

*rādhāra svarūpa – kṛṣṇa prema-kalpa-latā
sakhī gaṇa haya tāra pallava-puṣpa-pātā*

*kṛṣṇa-līlāmṛta yadi latāke siñcaya
nija-sukha haite pallavādyera koṭi-sukha haya*

Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 8.207-210)

After hearing the mellifluous sound of the flute, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the other *vraja-ramaṇīs* are tormented by desire to meet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Attempting to assuage the burning in their hearts, they discuss the sweetness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name,

form, qualities, pastimes and *veṇu* only with the *sakhīs* within their own groups. Śrīmatī Rādhikā's *sakhī mañjarīs* also become restless upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, not out of desire to see Kṛṣṇa personally, but rather out of desire for Śrīmatī Rādhikā to meet with Him. They are always eager for the pleasure of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's sweet and loving meeting. In Her heart Śrīmatī Rādhikā is feeling that the triumph of the eyes lies only in relishing the beauty of that Kṛṣṇa who is playing the flute and arching His eyebrows. But the *sakhī mañjarīs* have a different understanding. The fruit for their eyes is to drink the combined beauty of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's sweet lotus faces.

Just as we can get a glimpse of the moods of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the other principal *gopīs* by deliberating on this verse *akṣaṇvatām phalam idam* and others from *Veṇu-gīta*, hints of the moods of the *sakhī mañjarīs* can also be found therein. Upon hearing Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda*, Rādhikā's *sakhī mañjarīs* also began uttering this verse to the other *vraja-ramaṇīs* of the same mood. The *sakhī mañjarīs* are eager to arrange the meetings of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and to taste the *rasa* of serving the Divine Couple. In order to relish the meaning of these verses in this mood, it is necessary to understand a general analysis of the word meanings as well as their special inner purports, which can be explained in this way:

“O *sakhī*, when *vrajeśa-suta* Śrī Kṛṣṇa and *vrajeśa-sutā* Śrīmatī Rādhikā meet together, They decorate and dress each other in a manner befitting Their youthful age. While the enchanting *veṇu* is kissing Kṛṣṇa's lips and Śrīmatī Rādhikā's face is being served by Her arched eyebrows, the Prince and Princess of Vraja look tenderly at Their very dearest ones. Only those eyes which have seen these sweet faces are victorious; the eyes of one who has not seen this have been utterly wasted.” Here *vrajeśa-sutayoḥ* has an inner meaning –

vrajeṣa-sutās ca and *vrajeṣa-sutaś ca* refer respectively to *vrajeṣa-sutā Śrīmatī Rādhikā*, the daughter of the king of Vraja (Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja), and *vrajeṣa-suta Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, the son of the king of Vraja (Nanda Mahārāja). Thus, both of Them are indicated.

The phrase *anuveṇu-juṣṭam* indicates that first the *veṇu* is kissed by Kṛṣṇa, and then by Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Descriptions of this are given in the Gosvāmīs' literatures. During the midday pastimes sometimes Śrīmatī Rādhikā takes the *veṇu* from Kṛṣṇa's hand, puts him on Her lips and plays him. At that time, Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa become absorbed in each other and cast charming, sidelong glances at Their dearest devoted *sakhīs*. Seeing this sweet picture of the Divine Couple, these *sakhīs* offer their everything to Them. Whoever beholds this sight has fulfilled the purpose of his eyes. This is the secret objective of the *sakhīs* in Śrī Rādhā's own party.

The *gopīs*, overflowing in *bhāva*, were only able to say, "This is success for one who has eyes." They were not able to say any more. The reason for this is that their throats immediately choked up upon remembering Kṛṣṇa's beautiful form, and they were not able to speak further. The supremely *rasika* Vraja maidens are extremely grave by nature, and their utterances of love are also equally profound. One or two words are enough to reveal their deep, mysterious moods. What is the need of correct grammar – subject, object, verb and adjectives – to properly express their *bhāvas*? This proves that the *gopīs* are supremely skillful and are the crown jewels amongst all *rasikas*, those experienced in tasting the nectar of loving exchanges.

Hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute song, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, whose feelings of love are always fresh and new, became as if deranged with the appearance of *aṣṭa-sāttvika* and many other kinds of *bhāvas*. This incited their eagerness to meet with Kṛṣṇa,

and by just a few words they revealed their hearts to those *gopīs* of the same mood. All the *vraja-gopīs* are Kṛṣṇa's life, and they are all deeply committed to giving Him pleasure, but their *bhāvas* are not the same. Consequently there are subtle differences in their eagerness to see Kṛṣṇa and their desire to meet with Him. It is impossible to describe and fully taste all of the individual moods of the multitudes of *gopīs*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam shows how to relish the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda* by following two different moods: those of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the supreme *gopī* who possesses *mahābhāva* to the highest degree and who is the crown jewel of Kṛṣṇa's beloved consorts; and those of Her devoted *sakhī mañjarīs*, who have taken shelter of Her lotus feet. The commentators as well have given particular importance to describing both these moods. Therefore, all of the verses of the *Veṇu-gīta* are to be relished in this way. Each and every one of Kṛṣṇa's beloved *vraja-ramaṇīs* is an unfathomable ocean of *mahābhāva*. No one can count how many towering waves of these moods toss about and swirl through their hearts. And, with whatever visions of Kṛṣṇa appear in the practicing devotee's heart by the *gopīs'* mercy, he is fully gratified.



Verse Eight

*cūta-pravāla-barha-stabakotpalābja-
mālānuṣṙkta-ṣaridhāna-vcitra-veṣau
madhye virejatur alam paṣu-pāla-goṣṙhyām
raṅge yathā naṭa-varau kva ca gāyamānau*

cūta – of a mango tree; *pravāla* – with soft new leaves; *barha* – peacock feathers; *stabaka* – bunches of flowers; *utpala-abja* – blue lotuses; *mālā* – with garlands; *anuṣṙkta* – being touched; *ṣaridhāna* – Their garments; *vcitra* – especially attractive; *veṣau* – being dressed; *madhye* – in the midst; *virejatuḥ* – both of Them very sweetly decorated; *alam* – extremely; *paṣu-pāla-goṣṙhyām* – within the gathering of cows and cowherd boys; *raṅge* – upon a stage; *yathā* – just as; *naṭa-varau* – two most excellent dancers; *kva ca* – sometimes; *gāyamānau* – singing.

Translation

One of the *sakhīs* said, “O *sakhī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, singing sweetly amidst the gathering of cows and cowherd boys, are looking absolutely gorgeous, like a pair of most expert dancers (*naṭavaras*). Kṛṣṇa, dressed in yellow garments, and Baladeva, wearing blue, decorate Themselves very charmingly with newly grown mango blossoms, peacock feathers, leaves, clusters of flowers and garlands of many colored lotuses. O dear *sakhī*! What can I say about the splendor of Their appearance? They look like two incomparably beautiful and skilled dancers performing on stage.”

Ānanda-varḍdhirī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

The hearts of the cowherd damsels, imbued with *mahābhāva*, are always deeply and fully immersed in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweet ocean of *rasa*. The *vraja-ramaṇīs* are constantly engrossed in remembering, thinking and conversing about Him. When they see Him and hear His *veṇu-nāda* as He comes and goes from cow-grazing, they are completely overcome by their intense emotions of love. Thrown into a helpless state due to their ardent desire to see Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they try to restrain the surge of these emotions in their hearts by revealing their feelings to their intimate *sakhīs*. Because of shyness and hesitancy, however, they cannot directly express their affection for Him.

That is why, although they want to describe the enchanting sweetness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's face when kissed by the *veṇu*, they instead describe the beauty of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma both, with the phrase *vrajeśa-sutayoḥ*, the two sons of the King of Vraja. But even by doing this, they cannot conceal the *bhāvas* hidden in their hearts. In an attempt to cover up their undivided love for Kṛṣṇa, they purposely talk about both Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva in this verse, describing Their exquisite beauty and other superlative qualities.

The *vraja-ramaṇīs* say, "Dear *sakhīs*, when the two brothers Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma enter Vṛndāvana to graze the cows in the company of Their cowherd friends, it is impossible to describe Their incomparable beauty."

One *gopī*, brimming over with emotions, says to another, "O *sakhī*! We can look at Kṛṣṇa from a distance, but how can we go near Him and drink the nectar of His lips? We will feel shy with the respected Balarāma there."

The second *sakhī* replies, "O foolish one, don't worry. Kṛṣṇa will look at us and His eyebrows will beg for our

love (*praṇaya*). At that time our regard for public opinion, self-control and all other restrictions will disappear. Come on, *sakhī*. Let us go see Him at once. Then we will just see what happens.”

The first *sakhī* exclaims, “Oh no, that is not possible. I can never go in front of Him when Dāujī is there. And not only that, *sakhī*, our husbands, fathers-in-law and other relatives will stop us, and the village elders will hurl sarcastic and caustic comments at us. I feel it is not proper for us to go.”

On hearing this, the second *sakhī* composes this verse in order to convince her friend to go with her.

*cūta-pravāla-barha-stabakotṭpalābja-
mālānuṣṭkta-ṭparidhāna-vicitra-veśau*

“O *sakhī*, They appear most astonishing, wearing crowns of soft, newly-grown mango leaves, peacock feathers and clusters of flowers on Their heads, blue lotuses on Their ears, garlands of night lotuses around Their necks, golden cloth (*pītāmbara*) on Kṛṣṇa’s dark body and blue cloth (*nīlāmbara*) on Baladeva’s fair-complexioned body, and twirling pastime lotuses with Their right hands. Playing sweet music, They dazzle brilliantly amidst the *sakhās* and cows. My dear *sakhī*, it appears as if two clever dramatists are dancing and acting on stage. How can I describe Their splendor?”

Sometimes, in the circle of the cowherd boys, the two brothers are immersed in Their own ecstatic mood and dance in such a way that the other boys call out, “*Sādhu, sādhu!* Excellent, excellent!” Here the word *gāyamānau* has a deep meaning. Seeing Their dancing and hearing Them sing in a full range of ascending and descending notes, jumping from one key to another, all the *sakhās* lavishly praise Them. Sometimes, feeling overjoyed in the *bhāva* of Their own

sweet singing and dancing, the two brothers haughtily ask Their friends, "Can any of you sing and dance like this? If so, then show Us."

In this way, the Vraja maidens, immersed in *bhāva*, keep their love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa hidden in their hearts by describing Baladeva's sweet beauty and other delightful qualities along with Kṛṣṇa's. Their internal sentiments, however, reveal themselves through every part of their bodies – their facial expressions, eyes, poses and language.

"O *sakhī*! The only lucky ones in Vraja are the cowherd boys. Whether at home or in the forest they are always with Kṛṣṇa, enjoying with Him in so many ways. They get to see Him all the time, dance and sing with Him, and always touch His beautiful body. But the Creator has given us birth as *gopīs*, thus depriving us of this privilege. On top of that, we are wives from respectable families, and thus we cannot see Him to our hearts' content. If we had been born as *gopas* instead of *gopīs*, we could be with Kṛṣṇa all the time and always see Him. In this way our lives would have been blessed."

The exalted position of the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, who are overflowing with *mahābhāva*, is evident here, although they consider themselves most pitiful and unfortunate. This is the natural characteristic of pure *prema*. The heart of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī also became overwhelmed with *gopī-bhāva* as he recounted these eternal pastimes. That is why, like the *gopīs*, he described the incredible good fortune of the cowherd boys with great exuberance.



Verse Nine

*gopyaḥ kim ācarad ayaṁ kuśalaṁ sma veṇur
dāmodarādhara-sudhām api gopikānām
bhunkte svayaṁ yad avaśiṣṭa-rasaṁ hradinyo
hṛṣyat-tvaco 'śru mumucus taravo yathāryāḥ*

gopyaḥ – O *gopīs* (one *gopī* addresses the others); *kim* – what; *ācarat* – performed; *ayaṁ* – this; *kuśalaṁ* – *sādhana* and *bhajana* performed in previous lives; *sma* – certainly; *veṇuḥ* – the flute; *dāmodara* – of Kṛṣṇa; *adhara-sudhām* – the nectar of the lips; *api* – even; *gopikānām* – which is the rightful property of the *gopīs* alone; *bhunkte* – drinks; *svayaṁ* – he himself; *yat* – from which (he is able to taste the nectar of Dāmodara’s lips as much as he desires); *avaśiṣṭa* – (not even a drop) remaining; *rasaṁ* – of that *rasa* (the nectar of Dāmodara’s lips); *hradinyāḥ* – the rivers; *hṛṣyat* – feeling jubilant (due to seeing the flute drinking the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s lips and thus manifesting ecstatic symptoms in the form of blossoming lotus flowers); *tvacaḥ* – on whose bodies; *aśru* – tears; *mumucuḥ* – overflowing; *taravaḥ* – of the trees; *yathā* – exactly like; *āryāḥ* – family elders.

Translation

“O dear *sakhī*,” one of the *gopīs* said to her friend, “this flute is merely a piece of dry wood. We cannot imagine what sort of pious activities he must have performed in

his previous births that in our very presence he is directly and fully tasting the nectar of Dāmodara's lips, which rightfully belongs to us alone. He is not sparing even one drop of that *rasa* for us. Seeing the good fortune of this *veṇu*, Mānasī Gaṅgā and the other ponds exhibit ecstatic symptoms – the blossoming lotuses are actually their hairs standing on end. Seeing themselves as the family elders of the flute, who is mad for Bhagavān, all the trees rejoice. Under the guise of pouring forth streams of honey, they are actually shedding tears of bliss from their eyes.”

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The *vraja-ramaṇīs*, already desperate to meet Kṛṣṇa, now become even more restless. In order to cover up their deep, undivided affection for their beloved, they describe to their closest friends the beauty and other sweet qualities of both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. However, they are not able to hide their real feelings for long. A vision of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful form appears in their hearts, and as soon as they see the *veṇu* on His lips, the *gopīs* start admiring the rare, good fortune of that flute. In great wonder they think, “Ah! There is no need to discuss the *sakhās'* fortune as they have taken birth in the cowherd community and have been playing with Kṛṣṇa since childhood. But what shall we say about the fortune of this *veṇu*?”

These thoughts stimulate the *gopīs'* natural *mahābhāva*, causing a divine madness (*unmāda*) to arise within their hearts. Thus they become jealous, imagining the *veṇu's* supposed good luck – *gopyaḥ kim ācarad ayaṁ kuśalaṁ*. This verse is explained thus: “O *sakhī!* This *veṇu!* What austerities has this dry stick of bamboo performed in his

previous life? What charity has he given, what auspicious deeds has he done, and in what holy places has he taken bath in order to always remain at Kṛṣṇa's lips?"

Another *sakhī* replies, "He has not performed any of these virtuous deeds. If he had, why would he have taken birth in a family of non-moving beings?" Yet another *sakhī* insists, "If what you say is indeed true, how is it that this *veṇu* is always tasting the *rasa* of Kṛṣṇa's lips? Just see how Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa loves him. Sometimes He holds him in His hands, sometimes He kisses him, sometimes He keeps him tucked under His arm, sometimes in the folds of His waistband, and sometimes He sprinkles him with the nectar of His lips.

"If anyone in this entire Vṛndāvana is fortunate, it is surely this *veṇu*. O *sakhī*, by giving us birth as *gopīs*, the Creator has deprived us of all blessings. Alas! Why couldn't we have taken birth as the *veṇu*? We cannot meet Kṛṣṇa openly like this flute nor serve Him to our hearts' content. Our birth as humans is simply useless. This *veṇu* certainly must have performed severe austerities or some pious activities in a previous birth, and if we only knew what they were, surely we would do the same so as to achieve such an uncommon fortune. Come on! Let us go to the respected Paurṇamāsī. She is a pure ascetic who knows past, present and future. We will ask her advice and follow her instructions. Then we also can attain this rare auspiciousness."

"O *sakhī*," another *gopī* interjects, "this *veṇu* is indeed thoroughly fortunate. There is no doubt about this because he is always relishing the nectar of being with Kṛṣṇa. For this reason, however, he has become so proud and arrogant that we cannot bear it. *Gopikānām dāmodarādhara-sudhām api* – The nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips is meant for our exclusive enjoyment but he thinks it is his property. Kṛṣṇa was born in

the *gopa* dynasty and so were we. From infancy we have shared deep love with each other. He is our treasured sweetheart, and therefore we alone have full rights to the nectar of His lips. But this crafty and shameless *veṇu* is depriving us of our natural birthright and brazenly drinking the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips just as he likes! Despite taking birth in the community of *gopas*, we are deprived of the nectar of Gopendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lips. But that *veṇu*, even though taking birth in the family of non-moving trees, is continuously drinking *adharāmṛta*.

“The day Yaśodā Maiyā bound Kṛṣṇa with a rope, He became famous as Dāmodara, and that very same day we initiated our loving relationship with Him. At that time no one in Vraja knew anything about the *veṇu*. His relationship with Kṛṣṇa began in earnest only after Kṛṣṇa began taking the cows out to graze. Although the *veṇu* had only a slight relationship with Him, he suddenly became the heir extraordinaire to the full rights of Kṛṣṇa's *adharāmṛta*. Thus he has deprived us *gopīkās* of this privilege even though we have loved Kṛṣṇa since infancy. Therefore, O *sakhīs*, I say that birth as a *veṇu* is higher and more blessed than birth as *gopīs*.”

Deliberating in this way on the *veṇu*'s great fortune and on their own bad luck, the *gopīs*, naturally characterized by *mahābhāva*, are consumed with divine animosity, jealousy and other *sañcārī-bhāvas*. Then they humbly say: *bhuñkte svayam yad avasiṣṭa-rasaṁ*. “O *sakhī*, when Kṛṣṇa puts the *veṇu* to His lips and plays him, His beautiful shining scarlet lips, which defeat even the lustrous color of a ripened *bimba* fruit, turn yellow, being drained of color. It seems that the *veṇu* is drinking the *adharāmṛta* so completely that he drains Śrī Kṛṣṇa's nectar-filled (*sarasa*) lips, making them juiceless and dry (*nirasa*). This *nirasa veṇu* is trying to make Kṛṣṇa's lips dry like himself. Kṛṣṇa's *adharāmṛta* is our exclusive property,

but this *veṇu* is drinking all the nectar and snatching our share as well! Of this there is no doubt.

“*Sakhī*, just see the evils perpetrated by this *veṇu*. Even after stealing someone else’s wealth, he is not even the least bit embarrassed or afraid. He is shamelessly tasting our wealth right before our very eyes, and with his deceptively sweet melody he even has the nerve to taunt us by announcing, ‘Just see, O *gopīs*, I have taken your wealth of Kṛṣṇa’s *adharāmṛta* and, unrestrained, I am drinking the full *rasa* right in front of you! And there is nothing you can do about it.’ That is why, *sakhīs*, it is not befitting for us to just sit here quietly. Let us teach that *veṇu* a lesson by forcibly kidnapping and hiding him in a remote place so that in the future he will never do this again.”

Here the phrase *avaśiṣṭa-rasaṁ* has a hidden purport. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has given several interpretations: *ava* means ‘empty’ and *śiṣṭa* means ‘remains,’ so *avaśiṣṭa* means that not even one drop remains. The *veṇu* has fully drunk all the *rasa*, without leaving even one drop. The meaning of the word *rasa* in *avaśiṣṭa-rasaṁ* is ‘affection.’ No matter how much one drinks, the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s lips never diminishes or goes dry. That is why the *veṇu* drinks it perpetually! No matter how much nectar he drinks, his thirst is never satiated, and that is why he drinks it continuously. There is another hidden meaning of *avaśiṣṭa-rasaṁ*: after abandoning all worldly tastes, the *gopīs* relish Kṛṣṇa’s *adharāmṛta*, and the *veṇu* incessantly drinks the *gopīs*’ remnants.

Hradinyo hṛṣyat-tvacaḥ – Drowning in a sea of *mahābhāva* upon hearing Kṛṣṇa’s *veṇu-nāda*, the *gopīs* are tossed about in the high-spirited waves of various *sañcārī-bhāvas*, sometimes experiencing humility (*dainya*), sometimes jealousy (*īrṣyā*), sometimes malice (*asūyā*) and so on. In that blissful condition the *gopīs* describe the good fortune of the *veṇu*:

“Despite being a male the *veṇu* is brazenly tasting *our* wealth, the *rasa* of Kṛṣṇa’s lips, and that, too, right in front of us! The trees cannot contain their joy. Seeing the incredible good fortune of the *veṇu*, they become ecstatically laden with fruits and flowers, and honey oozes out from them. It is as if their very own child has become fortunate, and with pride they cry tears of *prema*. And why not? The *veṇu* is, after all, made of bamboo, and bamboo is a member of the tree family. For that reason the family elders – mango, *kadamba*, *neem*, *aśoka* and others – think of the *veṇu* as their child. This makes them jubilant and, feeling thrilled, they shed tears of love.”

Hradinyo refers to the Yamunā, Mānasa Gaṅgā, Pāvana Sarovara, Māna Sarovara, Kusuma Sarovara and all the other rivers and lakes. “Bamboo takes birth in rivers and lakes and is nourished by their water. For the bamboo that water is not really water but is actually milk. Because he has grown up on the milk from these rivers and ponds, they consider themselves his mothers. On seeing the rare fortune of their son, these mothers sometimes laugh, as exhibited by their blossoming flowers. Sometimes in their elation they express their joy through high-spirited waves, and sometimes they shed tears of happiness. They reflect, ‘That supreme blessing, for which Brahmā, Śiva, Lakṣmī and others are always desperate but are unable to achieve, has been granted to our son. He is constantly tasting Kṛṣṇa’s *adharāmṛta*.’”

The *gopīs* display their jealousy, a characteristic of *mahābhāva*, towards their rival, the *veṇu*, because he is always drinking the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s lips (*adhara-sudhā*) to his full capacity, leaving not even a single drop for them.

Aśru mumucus taravo yathāryā – The *gopīs* continue, “It is seen in this world that if someone born in a particular family line achieves some rare high position, the elders of that line become extremely joyful. In their exhilaration,

they experience ecstatic eruptions of the skin, and tears of love fall from their eyes. In the same way, when the *veṇu* vibrates a sweet sound after drinking Kṛṣṇa's *adharāmṛta*, all the trees of the forest blossom with flowers as if their hairs are standing on end, and nectar flows from them as blissful tears. O *sakhī*, what more can I say! In Vṛndāvana this dry, hard wooden *veṇu* becomes entitled to the highest type of benediction. Only we *gopīs* are drowning in a sea of misfortune, and we don't foresee any chance of getting to be with Kṛṣṇa. If, by taking birth as any moving or non-moving being, we could have Kṛṣṇa's association, our lives would be successful."

*yāce'ham vaṁśa-dehaṁ na tu
kulaja-vadhū-dehamādye hi kṛṣṇas*

*tṛṣṇa-bhāvena sajjan bahu-rūci
viharan durlabhaḥ syāt paratra*

*vaṁśibhāve cid-aṁśa-prasamana-vaśatā
vismṛtātmā yadi syām*

*tena jñāyeya seyaṁ mama
viraha-dutādārutām āgateti*

Gopāla-campū (pūrva 27.103)

Śrī Rādhājī tells Her friend, "O *sakhī*, I pray to God for birth in a family of bamboo in order to become a *veṇu* and remain on Śrī Dāmodara's lips forever. I am not praying for the superior birth as a human female. Kṛṣṇa is always hungry to play the flute and revels with him with great delight. For the flute, made only of bamboo, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is easily available, while He is completely inaccessible to those who have taken high birth as women. Even if I am born as dead matter and, ignorant of my identity, I become a flute, the omniscient

Śrī Kṛṣṇa will know that ‘Rādhikā, being acutely afflicted by My separation, has come to Me as a bamboo flute.’ He will then place Me on His lips again and again.”

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in his *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*:

*mukunda-mahiṣī-vṛndair apy asāv atidurlabaḥ
braja-devy eka-saṁvedyo mahābhāvākhyayocyate
varāṁṛta-svarūpa-śrīḥ svam svarūpaṁ mano nayet
sa rūḍhaś cādhirūḍhaś cetyucyate dvi-vidho budhaiḥ*

“This *bhāva* of the *gopīs* is uncommon in every respect and can be experienced only by Śrī Rādhā and the other *vraja-devīs*. It is extremely rare even for Śrī Rukmiṇī and Mukunda’s other queens. This *mahābhāva* is the highest nectarean wealth, which attracts the heart and causes it to adopt its very own nature. Among the enjoyable objects of this material world, there is nothing sweeter than *āṁṛta*, or nectar. In the same way nothing is more tasteful than *mahābhāva*, that special esoteric form of divine *prema*. In this condition the hearts of the *gopīs* become one (*tādātma*) with *mahābhāva*. Indeed, it is the natural condition of the beautiful Vraja maiden’s hearts to embody this highest expression of *prema*.”

Scholars who are well versed in *rasa-tattva* have described two forms of this *bhāva*: *rūḍha* and *adhirūḍha*. On analyzing the words and realizations of the *gopīs* which have been spoken as the *Veṇu-gīta*, it becomes absolutely clear that the *gopīs’ prema* is of the highest standard, *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva*.



Verse Ten

***vṛndāvanam sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīrtim
yat devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi
govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyam
prekṣyādri-sanv-avaratānya-samasta-sattvam***

vṛndāvanam – Vṛndāvana; *sakhi* – O friend; *bhuvaḥ* – of the Earth; *vitanoti* – spreads (the glories of the Earth far exceeding even that of Vaikuṅṭha); *kīrtim* – the glories; *yat* – because; *devakī-suta* – of the son of Devakī (another name for Yaśodā); *pada-ambuja* – from the lotus feet; *labdha* – received; *lakṣmi* – the beautiful markings; *govinda-veṇum* – the flute of Govinda; *anu* – continuous; *matta* – maddened; *mayūra* – of the peacocks; *nṛtyam* – in which there is the dancing; *prekṣya* – seeing; *adri-sānu* – in the meadows of Govardhana; *avarata* – stunned; *anya* – other; *samasta* – all; *sattva* – -creatures.

Translation

“The fame of the Earth, O *sakhī*, is enhanced due to being splendidly decorated with the marks of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Yaśodā. Upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, the peacocks take it as the thunder of the clouds, and, becoming intoxicated, begin to dance. Also feeling pleasure, the other animals in the meadows of Govardhana become stunned. Because of this, the presence of Śrī Vṛndāvana makes the Earth planet even more glorious than Vaikuṅṭha.”

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The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

Describing the conversations of the *gopīs*, who are being thoroughly drenched in the shower of nectar coming from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus lips in the form of His ethereal flute song, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, "The intoxicated *gopīs* have been telling their friends, 'O *sakhī*, birth as a *veṇu* is so much better than that of a woman. If after death we can take birth as a *veṇu*, then we will be able to relish the joy of always being with Kṛṣṇa!'"

Now, in this verse the *gopīs* cease talking about the fortune of the flute in Kṛṣṇa's hand and instead speak about the favorable position of the Earth, which has been graced with the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. The natural action of *prema* is to make the heart restless. Intoxicated in the heights of love and anxious to embrace Kṛṣṇa, the sweet *gopīs* say, "Had we been given birth as this forest ground rather than as milkmaids, we would have received the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and considered our lives worthwhile."

We observed in the previous verse that the sight of any object of *Vṛndāvana* stimulates the *gopīs'* thoughts of Kṛṣṇa and kindles their love for Him. Having reached the peak of pure *prema*, the *gopīs* see themselves as very fallen and wretched. They regard Kṛṣṇa's flute, the flute's relatives (the ponds, rivers, trees and flowers), and even the deer and other animals to be the most fortunate beings. "All the residents of the forest," they ponder, "can see Kṛṣṇa and even touch Him without anyone interfering. Only we *gopīs* have to face all difficulties in approaching Him."

With eyes full of love, they look over the entire *Vraja-maṇḍala* and see that it is covered with the marks of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. When Kṛṣṇa plays in the forest and climbs the trees with His friends, automatically the trees receive the touch

of those very lotus feet, which are worshiped and prayed to even by Brahmā, Śiva, great sages and all other living beings. The *gopīs* are eager that Śrī Śyāmasundara's rarely attained lotus feet, which are the abode of Lakṣmī, should also adorn their breasts. For the forest of Vṛndā, however, these lotus feet are easily attainable as they climb the trees, perform pastimes in the secluded forest bowers (*kuñjas*) and enter the lakes. In this way the *gopīs* sing the glories of Vṛndāvana.

Vṛndāvanam bhuvo vitanoti kīrtim – The *gopīs* exclaim, “O *sakhī*, this land of Vṛndāvana is even more sanctified and glorious than Vaikuṅṭha.” In the word *vitanoti*, *vi* indicates Vṛndāvana's unique speciality (*vaiśiṣṭya*), meaning that Vṛndāvana's qualities are more special than Vaikuṅṭha's, and *tanoti* means ‘spreading.’ The land of Vṛndāvana spreads the fame and prestige (*kīrti*) of the Earth. Being the playground of Svayaṁ Bhagavān Vrajendra-nandana – who is all-powerful, the cause of all causes, and the endless ocean of ambrosial mellows – and having been touched by His lotus feet, Vṛndāvana is infinitely superior to Svarga (the heavenly realm) and Vaikuṅṭha.

Devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-lakṣmi – The glory of the land of Vṛndāvana is that it is always covered with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus footprints. Vṛndāvana's beauty is thus enhanced by the various symbols of His lotus feet (the flag, thunderbolt, elephant goad, etc.).

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda writes the meaning of the word *vṛndāvana*: “One who nourishes and protects everyone is called *vṛndāvana*.” Hiding the mood of opulence, Vṛndāvana maintains all by *prema* alone. Being controlled by this *prema*, the supreme power Svayaṁ Bhagavān Himself never leaves Vṛndāvana even for a moment. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī describes this in his *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* (*Antya-līlā* 1.67): *vṛndāvanam parityajya sa kvacin naiva gacchati*.

Śrī Vṛndāvana is the crown jewel of the Earth planet. Why do the *gopīs* say it is even higher than Svarga or Vaikuṅṭha? The answer to this question lies in understanding that in Svarga and other realms Bhagavān resides in His Viṣṇu expansions – as Upendra in Svarga and as Viṣṇu in Vaikuṅṭha. In this way the same Bhagavān Viṣṇu resides in different places in one form or another. Kṛṣṇa, the original Viṣṇu, has one form, but still He is present everywhere in unlimited expressions according to the particular pastimes. Among all of these forms, however, only Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original, complete manifestation, and all others are partial incarnations or portions.

This has been described in *Brahma-saṁhitā* (39):

*rāmādi-mūrtiṣu kalā-niyamena tiṣṭhan
nānāvatāram akarod bhuvaneṣu kintu
kṛṣṇaḥ svayaṁ samabhavat paramaḥ pumān yo
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

“I worship the original person Śrī Govinda, who continuously descends to different planets and who, according to His prescribed schedule, manifests His powers in many different forms, establishing Himself as Śrī Rāma and other incarnations (*avatāras*). However, at the end of the Dvāpara-yuga in the twenty-eighth millennium of the seventh Manu in each day of Brahmā, Svayaṁ Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, in His complete form, appears on this Earth with the full paraphernalia of His eternal Vraja-dhāma.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, the Supreme Spiritual Being and the Supreme Truth, establishes His bare lotus feet in the land of Vṛndāvana on the pretext of cow-herding. These lotus feet, decorated with the red *kuṅkuma*¹⁸ from the breasts of the

18 a reddish powder that married women apply to the part in their hair and in a dot on their foreheads just above the eyes.

vraja-devīs, touch the land of Vṛndāvana, thereby making her blessed. Offering prayers to the particles of dust of Vṛndāvana, the respected Uddhava says:

*āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syām
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhīnām
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.61)*

“It would be the greatest fortune for me to become a tree, creeper or medicinal herb in this Vṛndāvana-dhāma. Oh, if I become something like this, then I will always be able to serve the dust of the *gopīs*’ lotus feet. Bathing in this dust I will be blessed.”

In this tenth verse we should understand that Devakī-suta (the son of Devakī) is actually Yaśodā-suta (the son of Yaśodā), because another name for Yaśodā is Devakī. This is told in *Bṛhad-viṣṇu Purāṇa*:

*dve nāmnī nanda-bhāryāyā
yaśodā devakīti ca*

“The wife of Nanda had two names, Yaśodā and also Devakī.”

Govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyam – *Indra adhipati*, the original master of all the cows, is Govinda. The verbal root *vinda* means “to give pleasure, protection and nourishment.” Therefore, He who is responsible for the welfare, protection and ever-increasing pleasure of all the *gos* – *gopas*, *gopīs*, *gopa-bālakas* (cowherd boys), *govatsa* (cows and calves) and *go-bhūmi* (pasture grounds) – is called Govinda.

In this Vṛndāvana Yaśodā-nandana Kṛṣṇa is always roaming about barefoot, glancing over the intoxicated,

maddened peacocks, and from time to time vibrating mellow tunes on His dear flute. Catching sight of Śrī Govinda, who pours forth the core of His heart through the *veṇu*, the peacocks experience great pleasure and start dancing with joy. They think that Kṛṣṇa's golden *pītāmbara* against the effulgence of His bluish body looks like a lightning flash across a new water-filled blue cloud, and that the soft sound of the *veṇu* is like muted thunder. Intoxicated with love, they spread their tail feathers and dance with complete abandon. Seeing this, Kṛṣṇa plays an even more heart-rending melody on His flute. The peacocks then become even more spirited than before and, being so delighted with the sweet *veṇu-nāda*, surrender their feathers to Him.

Accepting those feathers with great love, Kṛṣṇa places them on His crown and says, "O peacocks, I will wear your gift of love on My head for the rest of My life." And because Kṛṣṇa sees the name of His most dearly beloved sweetheart on the feathers, the peacock's gift is especially precious. Kṛṣṇa affectionately accepts whatever a devotee offers with devotion. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.26) He Himself says:

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ*

"I accept with great affection whatever any devotee having immaculate *prema* lovingly offers Me, be it a leaf, a flower, fruits, water or anything else."

The peacocks become even more enlivened upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda* and seeing Kṛṣṇa's lotus face, His head decorated with their feathers. They drown in rapture, and dance to the sweet rhythm of the *veṇu* in a way that is very soothing and

enchanting to Kṛṣṇa's eyes. The peacocks and Kṛṣṇa exchange their *bhāvas*, thereby inspiring each other to greater ecstasy.

The *sakhīs* see this entire scene through the eyes of their loving emotions. As their hearts are being inundated with the *sañcārī-bhāvas* of *dainya* (humility) and *nirveda* (self-disparagement), one *gopī* declares, "O *sakhī*, such moods are exchanged between like-minded hearts. We have heard from Paurṇamāsī that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a young, life-long *brahmacārī* (celibate), and the peacocks are also *brahmacārīs*. That is why they exchange loving glances with each other. Capable people associate with others who are similarly qualified. But we are married women and therefore belong to someone else, so how is it possible for us to get together with Śyāmasundara?"

Kṛṣṇa often sits in Govardhana's valleys where everyone can get a clear, unobstructed view of Him. All the living entities in the valleys, except for the peacocks, stand or sit motionlessly, becoming detached from all material affairs. The specialty of the peacocks, which distinguishes them from the other birds and animals, is that they become uninhibitedly enraptured upon seeing their feathers on Kṛṣṇa's head and upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, which they take to be thunder. Instead of being stunned into complete immobility like the other creatures, the peacocks dance to the melody of the flute with full self-abandon. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's cloud-like beauty and the thunder-like sound coming from His *veṇu* make the peacocks' hearts leap. Their bodies in turn start to dance along with their hearts.

On the other hand, all the other living entities become totally motionless seeing Kṛṣṇa's *rūpa-mādhurī* (sweet beautiful form) and hearing His *veṇu-mādhurī* (sweet flute). In order to witness and taste the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's sweet flute playing and the peacocks' unprecedented, beautifully rhythmical movements, all the animals, birds, cowherd boys,

cows, calves, deer and does gather in Govardhana's valleys. Flocks of birds crowd the branches of the trees, while the cowherd boys, praising the flute-playing and the dancing, circle close around Kṛṣṇa and the peacocks. Here *adri*, mountain, refers to Girirāja Govardhana.

On seeing Kṛṣṇa's incomparable beauty and hearing the sound of the *veṇu*, which attracts the minds of everyone in the three worlds, all the birds and animals stop moving, becoming still as statues. The cowherd boys and others forget whatever they are doing and only look at Kṛṣṇa. Even the calves drinking milk leave their mothers and run towards Him, and the peacocks, having gone mad, start dancing with Him.

"Look, *sakhī*," one cowherd maiden says to another, "all kinds of animals and birds, upon hearing the vibration of the *veṇu*, become paralyzed in pleasure and lose external consciousness. Seeing Govinda and hearing His *venunāda*, even hard stones and rocks melt and become clearly imprinted with Śyāmasundara's most beautiful, tender footprints. But what more can I tell you, *sakhī*? Our hearts are so hard that, even after hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, nothing changes in them. Alas, fie on us. Our lives are cursed. What is the point of such a life?"

Avaratānya-samasta-sattvam – Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda has shed light on the meaning of this part of the verse. He says that *avarata* refers to the abolishing of the modes of passion and ignorance, meaning that only in the absence of passion and ignorance does *viśuddha-sattva*, pure spiritual goodness, illuminate the heart. The *gopīs* explain its symptoms elsewhere:

*vana-latās tarava ātmani viṣṇum
vyañjyatyā iva puṣpa-phalādhyāḥ
praṇata-bhāva-vitāpā madhu-dhārāḥ
prema-hṛṣṭa-tanavo vavṛṣuḥ sma*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.35.9)

“When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the master of inconceivable opulences, roams about Vṛndāvana playing His *venu*, He calls out the names of the cows grazing in the meadows at the foot of Girirāja Govardhana. At that time all the trees and creepers of the forest blossom with flowers and fruits. Their branches bend low with their weight, as if offering obeisances. These trees and creepers, filled to the brim with affection, thus express their love for Kṛṣṇa. Each and every pore of their bodies blossoms in delight, and their honey flows out as if they are shedding tears of joy.”

This shows that the natural characteristic of *bhakti* is to awaken humility and a serving mood in the heart. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.9.10) tells us that in Vaikuṅṭha, only *viśuddha-sattva* (unalloyed spiritual goodness) is manifest – there is no mixed goodness, no effect of the three modes, nor any passage of time:

*pravartate yatra rajasa tamasatayoḥ
sattvaṁ ca miśraṁ na ca kāla-vikramaḥ*

In this tenth verse the *gopīs* wonder, “O Creator! When will we have the same good fortune as Vṛndāvana, who always adorns her breast with Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet? Oh, we are bereft of all auspiciousness. The peacocks and peahens together dance with Kṛṣṇa. Why can’t we, along with our husbands, dance with Him upon hearing the sound of His flute? No, no, we are completely accursed as our husbands are vehemently opposed to this idea. The trees, creepers, deer and does – even all the birds and animals – can go close to Kṛṣṇa, but not even for an instant do we have the good fortune to be with Him and lovingly hold His lotus feet to our breasts. We are so powerless. Only when we die and take birth in another species in Vṛndāvana will we be able to get Kṛṣṇa’s association; only then will our lives take on some meaning.”



Verse Eleven

*dhanyāḥ sma mūḍha-gatayo 'pi hariṇya etā
yā nanda-nandanam upātta-vicitra-veśam
akarṇya veṇu-raṇitam saha-kṛṣṇa-sārāḥ
pūjām dadhur viracitām praṇayāvalokaiḥ*

dhanyāḥ – fortunate, blessed; *sma* – certainly; *mūḍha-gatayaḥ* – having taken birth in an ignorant animal species, thus being foolish; *api* – although; *hariṇya* – she-deer, or doe; *etāḥ* – these; *yā* – who; *nanda-nandanam* – the son of Nanda Mahārāja; *upātta-vicitra-veśam* – dressed in a most startlingly unique yet pleasantly captivating manner; *akarṇya* – hearing; *veṇu-raṇitam* – the sound of His flute; *saha-kṛṣṇa-sārāḥ* – accompanied by their husbands, the *kṛṣṇa-sāra* deer, the essence of whose hearts is Kṛṣṇa; *pūjām dadhuḥ* – they worship Kṛṣṇa (from a nearby place); *viracitām* – perform; *praṇaya-avalokaiḥ* – by their affectionate sidelong glances.

Translation

“O *sakhī*, when our beloved Nanda-nandana Śyāmasundara dresses Himself in a most startlingly unusual yet pleasantly captivating manner¹⁹ and vibrates sweet sounds on His flute, even the foolish deer, who have taken birth as most ignorant

¹⁹ Kṛṣṇa appears very carefree and debonair, gracefully charming and gay, in the unlimited varieties of His distinctive dress. Always freshly and inconceivably unique (*vicitra*), each new garment (*veśa*) is carefully calculated to steal the hearts of the Vrajavāsīs over and over again.

animals, upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, go running to Him along with their husbands (the *kṛṣṇa-sāra* deer) and gaze upon Him with their large, love-laden eyes. They are not just staring, *sakhī!* They are worshipping Him by the sidelong glances of their wide lotus eyes. Śrī Kṛṣṇa welcomes their worship by exchanging loving sidelong glances with them, and the does, in turn, accept His reciprocation. Truly, the lives of these deer are blessed. *Sakhī*, how ironic it is that, although we are *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana, we are not able to offer ourselves freely to Kṛṣṇa in the same way, because our family members harass us!”

Ānanda-varḍhini Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

Owing to their unquenchable thirst which is a natural symptom of their *prema*, the damsels of Vraja, blessed with *mahābhāva*, are always restless to meet with Kṛṣṇa and are unable to steady their minds in any way. Whenever they see anything which has even a hint of relationship with Kṛṣṇa, they think its position extremely fortunate. Due to their natural humility, they consider themselves greatly unfortunate. In Vṛndāvana Śrī Kṛṣṇa always walks barefoot, so Vṛndāvana always attains the good fortune of being touched by His lotus feet. The forest of Vṛndā continuously serves Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His dear ones in every way, especially since it is the land where He roams and performs amorous pastimes. The *vraja-ramaṇīs*, ever absorbed in their love for Kṛṣṇa, reflect on the glories of Śrī Vṛndāvana in this way.

“Oh, my goodness! *Sakhī*, how can I possibly describe the good fortune of Vṛndāvana? After all, it shelters Śrī Kṛṣṇa's near and dear ones, like the animals, birds, trees, creepers, cows, calves and beloved Vrajavāsīs. We can't even imagine

the good fortune of Vṛndāvana, what to speak of attaining it. Just see! Just see! These deer are so lucky; the good fortune that they enjoy is extremely rare for us. Being animals, they are naturally devoid of discernment, which is why they are not deprived of seeing Kṛṣṇa. We have taken birth as women and are endowed with human intelligence, but despite this, we are still not lucky enough to be able to meet with Him. This is the irony of our lives. An ignorant or undiscriminating person who has some relationship with Kṛṣṇa is thousands of times superior to an intelligent person who has no relationship with Him.”

When Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, beautifully decorated in extraordinarily unique attire suitable for roaming in the forest, enters Vṛndāvana in the autumn and sees her wonderfully splendid beauty, He starts playing the *veṇu*. At that time the does forget to graze and neglect everything, including looking after their young. They swiftly run to Kṛṣṇa and stand so close to Him that He can touch them with His hands.

“These does are so foolish,” the *gopīs* muse. “They do not realize that they are about to give up their lives to the hunter’s *veṇu*. They have not even the slightest idea from where the music is coming. They do not know that it could easily be a hunter who is alluring them with his music in order to kill them. They become mad and, pointing their cupped ears in that direction, foolishly start running toward the sound. On the other hand, the does’ foolishness is also a form of greatness, because they go very close to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, demonstrating their *praṇaya*²⁰ for Him. That is why they are vastly more blessed than us.”

20 That stage of *prema* when all manner of shyness and hesitation is completely removed. The *āśraya*, or reservoir, of *madhura-rati*, the *nāyikā* (heroine), perceives no distinction between her body, mind, intelligence, heart and life and those of her beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and visa-versa.

Sitting at home, the *gopīs* observe all this through eyes tinged by their loving emotions. They see the does worshipping Kṛṣṇa as if begging for *praṇaya* through their love-laden eyes and standing very close to Him. The milkmaids eulogize, “Oh, how very fortunate the deer are to come to Kṛṣṇa for *abhisāra*, a secret love meeting, and beg Him for deep love. We have taken birth as *gopīs* and are unable to give up our family obligations, our regard for public opinion, our self-control and other social concerns. We cannot meet Kṛṣṇa for *abhisāra*, let alone beg for His *praṇaya* the way the deer do.”

Nanda-nandanam upātta-vicitra-veśam – Kṛṣṇa is dressed in exquisite garments, and adorned with a crown made of newly sprouted, very tender red mango leaves, clusters of various kinds of flowers, and a peacock feather. His brilliant yellow *pitāmbara* shines like molten gold as it flutters in the wind. He wears a *karnīkāra* flower on one ear only, and His swinging garland made of various forest flowers reaches all the way down to His knees. Kṛṣṇa's attire is just suitable for His lovely and enchanting rising youth. Seeing Him dressed in His beautiful clothes, decorated with flower ornaments, and dancing, the deer are charmed by His appearance and watch Him with unblinking eyes as if they are great sages fixed in their meditation on the Absolute Truth (*brahma*).

Ākarnya veṇu-raṇitam – As soon as they hear Kṛṣṇa's flute, the does are immediately drawn towards Him. Their husbands are known as *kṛṣṇa-sāra*, which means that Kṛṣṇa alone is the essence of their lives. Without Kṛṣṇa they cannot stay alive; He is everything for them. The male deer follow behind their wives, considering their wives more surrendered to Kṛṣṇa by their bodies, minds and very lives than they are. Running straight to Him, the does do not even look back to see whether their husbands are following or not. On seeing the eagerness and intensity of their wives' love, the deer think, “Ah,

how much deep affection our wives have for Kṛṣṇa! They are much more fortunate than us.” Because of this deep affection, their hearts are one with Him. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura describes this in *Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta* (7.51-52):

*kṛṣṇa-sāra iti nāma sārthakaṁ
svaṁ dadhāvayamaho dayodadhiḥ
dveṣṭi no giridharānurāgiṇīḥ pratyutaiti
sukhaya nijāṅganāḥ*

*tās tu taṁ sakhi! vidhāya pṛṣṭhataḥ
kṛṣṇa-sañjigamiṣāti tṛṣṇayā
yāntya eva jaḍatām śitāḥ śrute
veṇu-nāda iha citritā babhuḥ*

“O *sakhī*, having been enchanted by the *veṇu-nāda*, the does leave their husbands behind, desiring to be with Kṛṣṇa. But despite this desire, their limbs refuse to move and they remain fixed like statues. The *kṛṣṇa-sāra* deer stay behind their wives and gaze upon Kṛṣṇa.” Thus it is proved that Kṛṣṇa is the *sāra*, the essence, of their lives.

Prāṇayāvalokaiḥ pūjām dadhau – The deep, inner meaning is that the does look at Kṛṣṇa lovingly with their beautiful wide eyes. Simply casting glances filled with *prāṇaya* is their complete worship, which automatically includes the offering of all types of articles. Moreover, in comparison to the formal worship (*arcana*) performed with all varieties of items, the *āratī* (adoration) offered with love-filled eyes is the most excellent form of worship, or ritual of love. Here *dadhau* (accepting) has a deep meaning: Kṛṣṇa especially accepts this worship. *Viracitām prāṇaya-avalokaiḥ* – gazing at Kṛṣṇa with *prāṇaya* is the best form of worship, or offering.

“If our most beloved Kṛṣṇa can accept the worship (*pūjā*) which the does offer Him through their love-filled eyes,

why will He not accept ours?" This is the hidden purport of the *gopīs'* words. *Dadhau* here has another deep meaning. By looking with love-filled eyes, the does have overpowered Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* consider these does extremely fortunate, because they lose all sense of their own bodies and give up regard for public opinion and even all concern for their husbands. They simply perform their worship of the wonderfully attired Nanda-nandana through their glances filled with a love that admits no sense of separateness from their adored object. Attracted by the *veṇu-nāda*, they gaze upon Kṛṣṇa with unbroken concentration, with eyes full of loving emotions, as if performing *ārati*; and the *gopīs* witness this loving form of worship.

The poet Kavi Karṇapūra quotes a *yūtheśvarī* disclosing to her companion her ardent desire to see Kṛṣṇa:

*kiṁ duścaram caritam āli! tapo mṛgībhiḥ
paśyānti yāḥ sa-muralī-kalam āsyam asya
akṣṇoḥ prakāma-kamanīya-guṇatvam āsām
mā sāmpratam bhavati samprati sampratīhi*

Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū (11.146)

“O *sakhī!* What severe austerities have these deer and does performed in order to achieve the result of seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus face embellished with the supremely sweet sound of His flute? The does' extremely attractive, large eyes are endowed with bountiful qualities; thus their inviting sidelong glances achieve their desired result.”

Another *yūtheśvarī* says to one *sakhī*:

*saubhāgya-bhāgiyam aho sakhi! kṛṣṇasārī
sārikaroti nayane saha-kṛṣṇasārā
varṁśī-nināda-makaranda-bharam dadhānam
kṛṣṇāsyā pañkajam aśaṅkitam āpibanti*

Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū (11.148)

“O *sakhī*, look at that deer named *kṛṣṇa-sāra*! His wife is so extremely fortunate. Along with her *kṛṣṇa-sāra* husband, she is unhesitatingly drinking the *rasa* of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus mouth, which carries the honeyed sound of the flute; thus she is making the best use of her two eyes. Kṛṣṇa is truly the *sāra*, the essence, of the life of this doe’s husband. But my husband’s nature is opposite to the deer’s. He is very wicked and doesn’t even let me get a glimpse of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

The word *aśankita* (fearlessly) here means, “I cannot fearlessly watch Kṛṣṇa when He returns home in the evening, because my cruel husband is always suspicious.” The *gopīs* say, “Our next birth should be as deer so that together with our husbands we can also worship Kṛṣṇa with love-filled eyes.”

In this verse the *gopīs* call the deer foolish. Actually, even if one who is ignorant associates with Kṛṣṇa, he is definitely intelligent, whereas one who is materially clever but does not take Kṛṣṇa’s association is actually a big fool. The *gopīs* continue, “We would gladly be foolish if it meant we would get an opportunity to serve and worship Kṛṣṇa.”

Yaśodā Maiyā, Nanda Bābā and the other cowherds also think the same as the *gopīs*. Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān Himself, but Yaśodā Maiyā and Nanda Bābā consider Kṛṣṇa only to be their son, not Svayaṁ Bhagavān. All those conversant with scriptural truths (*tattva-jnānīs*) pray for the dust of the lotus feet of Nanda Bābā, Yaśodā Maiyā and the other Vrajavāsīs. All the trees, creepers, plants, animals, birds, insects, *gopas* and *gopīs* in Vraja are beyond *māyā*, being eternally full of unlimited knowledge and unfathomed happiness (*sac-cid-ānanda*), and are absorbed in the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is not possible for there to be even a scent of ignorance in them. By the power of Yogamāyā they have forgotten all of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s majesty, His being Svayaṁ Bhagavān Himself.

Rather, as in ordinary worldly relationships, they see Him as their friend, son, lover, etc.

All these personalities have *rāgātmika-bhāva*, natural affection for Kṛṣṇa in their hearts. Persons who have greed for this service mood of the *rāgātmika* associates (the residents of Vraja) and who practice *bhajana* under the guidance of *śrī guru-vaiṣṇava* in this world are called *rāgānuga-sādhakas*. Following the *rāgātmika* associates, even those *rāgānuga* practitioners remain distant from *bhakti* for Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra that is filled with restrictions, reverence and majesty. Considering Śrī Śyāmasundara as their friend, son or lover, they practice *sādhana-bhajana* nonstop. Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared as Śrī Śacī-nandana Gaurasundara to taste the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the very embodiment of *mahābhāva*, and to initiate the path of spontaneous devotion, following in the wake of the residents of Vṛndāvana (*rāga-mārga*). These *bhāvas* have been described by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, who fulfilled Śrī Śacī-nandana Gaurasundara's inner heart's desire by his unprecedented, heart-touching explanations found in *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* and other writings. But those who are qualified for this are rare in this world.

Vaidhī-bhakti, which is full of rules and restrictions, can bring one up to the majestic service of Śrī Nārāyaṇa in Śrī Vaikuṅṭha. But *rāgānuga-bhakti* gives the love-filled service of Śrī Vrajendra-nandana in Vraja. And among *rāgānuga* devotees, only the *rūpānuga sādha*ka, having attained his perfected spiritual form in accordance with the mood and service of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, receives the eternal *sevā* (divine service) of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vraja – no one else. At that time, forgetting Svayaṁ Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa's godhood and majesty, he thinks of Śrīmatī Rādhājī as his own mistress (*svāmīnī*) and Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Śrī Kīśorī's (the Supreme Maiden's) dearly beloved, and is always absorbed in Their *sevā*. This is the speciality of the followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī.



Verse Twelve

*kṛṣṇaṁ nirīkṣya vanitotsava-rūpa-śīlaṁ
śrutvā ca tat-kvaṇita-veṇu-vivikta-gītaṁ
devyo vimāna-gatayaḥ smara-nunna-sārā
bhraśyat-prasūna-kabarā mumuhur vinīvyaḥ*

kṛṣṇaṁ – Śrī Kṛṣṇa (the attractor of the heart); *nirīkṣya* – observing; *vanitā* – for all young adolescent girls (*kiśorīs*); *utsava* – a festival; *rūpa* – whose beauty; *śīlaṁ* – and character; *śrutvā* – hearing; *ca* – and; *tat* – by Him; *kvaṇita* – vibrated; *veṇu* – of the flute; *vivikta* – clear; *gītaṁ* – song; *devyaḥ* – the wives of the demigods; *vimāna-gatayaḥ* – traveling in their airplanes; *smara* – by Cupid; *nunna* – agitated; *sārāḥ* – their patience; *bhraśyat* – slipping; *prasūna-kabarāḥ* – the flowers tied in their hair; *mumuhur* – they became bewildered; *vinīvyaḥ* – their drawstrings loosening.

Translation

“O *sakhī*, when the wives of the *devas* (demigods) see Śrī Kṛṣṇa and hear His enchanting *veṇu-nāda*, they become completely infatuated by the force of Cupid. After all, He attracts the hearts of all adolescent girls, being a treasury of all beauty for them, and bestows upon them supreme bliss with His sweet form, qualities and unique nature. The flowers binding the *devīs*’ braided hair fall out, their *sārīs* slip from their waists, and they fall unconscious into the laps of their husbands in their heavenly airplanes.”

Ānanda-varḍdhirī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

The *gopīs*, overwhelmed with intense love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, have now become extremely restless to meet with Him. They feel that their only goal in life is to serve Kṛṣṇa, and their only concern is how to achieve His *sevā*. In this condition, if they see anyone with even a faint sign of relationship with Kṛṣṇa, they think him to be extremely blessed. “O *sakhī*,” one *gopī* says, “how can I aptly describe the great fortune of the does who live in *Vṛndāvana*, the land where Kṛṣṇa roams about performing His pastimes? Every day, on the pretext of grazing the cows, Kṛṣṇa Himself goes walking in the forests where the does take up their residence simply in order that they may see Him. Ah, look! Do you see how lucky the demigoddesses (*devīs*) are, flying in their heavenly planes up in the sky? With unblinking eyes they are drinking the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s beauty to their hearts’ content. By hearing His *veṇu-nāda*, they make their lives and especially their eyes successful.

“But alas! Despite having taken birth in *Vraja* and spending all our childhood here, we can neither meet nor talk with *Vrajendra-nandana* freely. Although the deer have taken a lower birth in the animal kingdom, they live in *Vṛndāvana* and are thus able to see the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa’s beauty and hear the *veṇu-nāda* every day. And the celestial goddesses, who have taken a higher birth than us, are also not deprived of seeing Kṛṣṇa or hearing His *veṇu*, even though they live far away in *Svarga*, the heavenly planets.

“Despite having taken human birth in *Vraja* and residing here, we alone are deprived of seeing Kṛṣṇa. We are observing that both higher and lower life species are in the fortunate position of being able to see Him. Only we milkmaids are stuck in between and deprived of all auspiciousness, thus passing

our lives uselessly. If the Creator had given us birth in a lower species like the deer or a higher one like the *devīs*, then perhaps we could see Kṛṣṇa and our lives would be successful.”

In this way, while describing the great fortune of the deer and lamenting over their own ill fate, the *gopīs* see through the eyes of their emotions that even the wives of the *devas*, seated in their celestial airplanes in the sky, have become restless after beholding Kṛṣṇa’s unparalleled beauty and hearing the enchanting *veṇu-nāda*. Losing consciousness, the *devīs* fall into the laps of their husbands. On seeing their wonderful fortune, the *gopīs* also experience an intense longing to meet and embrace Kṛṣṇa. They become restless and bewildered as in intense desire to take birth in the society of *devīs* arises in their hearts.

Prema is of three types: 1) *manda*, weak, 2) *madhya*, intermediate, and 3) *prauḍha*, mature. *Prauḍha-prema* is that stage in which the *nāyaka* (hero) and *nāyikā* (heroine) cannot tolerate the intense pain of separation from each other. The *prema* in which separation is tolerated albeit with intense pain is called medial, or *madhya-prema*. And that *prema* in which anger and jealousy towards a rival cause one to forget about service to Kṛṣṇa is called *manda-prema*. The *prema* of the *gopīs* speaking here (*svapakṣa* to Sṛimātī Radhikā) is *prauḍha*, mature. They become completely restless to meet with Kṛṣṇa freely and to embrace Him.

Another speciality of *prauḍha-prema* is that such lovesick *gopīs* attribute their own *kṛṣṇānurāga* to all moving and non-moving beings, be they animals, birds, trees or creepers. They desire to take birth in any of these species so that they can meet with Kṛṣṇa without any obstacles. They also admire the fortune of the wives of the demigods and say, “*Sakhī*, when the *devīs* saw the unparalleled, magnetic beauty of Śyāmasundara, who is the love of our lives, and heard His

veṇu-nāda, the flowers in their braided hair automatically started falling out and their skirts came untied.”

This phenomenon is called *moṭṭāyita-bhāva*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda explains it in *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi (anubhāva-prakaraṇam 47)*:

*kānta-smaraṇa-vārtādau hṛdi tad-bhāva-bhāvataḥ
prākṛtyam abhilāśasya moṭṭāyitam udīryate*

“The mood rising in the *nāyikā* when she is either remembering or hearing about her lover, and the subsequent desire which arises from that mood, is called *moṭṭāyita-bhāva*.”

The *gopīs* attribute their own deep love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa to the *devīs*, and on seeing their good fortune to behold Kṛṣṇa without any obstacles, the *vraja-sundarīs* desire in their hearts to also take birth as heavenly goddesses.

Kṛṣṇam nirikṣya vanitotsava-rūpa-śīlam – The charming, sweet beauty of the eternally ever-fresh Śrī Kṛṣṇa is like a festival for the eyes of the young teenage *gopīs*. The great poet Kavi Karṇapūra writes in His *Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū* (11.149):

*dhanyā vimāna-vanitā janitānurāgād
rāgātta-gāḍha-ratibhiḥ patibhiḥ paritāḥ
līlā-kala-kvaṇita-veṇum avekṣya kṛṣṇam
dhairyād athāvaruruhur mumuhur muhuś ca*

Although the does are animals and therefore lack intelligence, and although they are with their husbands, is this reason enough that they cannot have *kṛṣṇānurāga*? No, it is not. Is it possible that someone can be the crown jewel of all clever persons but not have deep attachment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa?

In flowery language known as *alaṅkāra*, one *yūtheśvarī* relates to her *sakhī* her hidden admiration, “Dear friend, just see! The *devīs* flying in their airplanes are so fortunate, because they have developed *anurāga* for Śrī Kṛṣṇa and their husbands also have deep love for Him. Although sitting next to their spouses, the goddesses still lose their self-control on seeing Kṛṣṇa play the *veṇu* so sweetly, and their attraction for Him keeps rising up again and again.”

Vanitā janitā atyarthā anurāgāyām ca yoṣiti – According to this phrase, only those young women who nurture immense love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa can rightfully be called *vanitā* (a young maiden) – no one else. “These *devīs*, who display their love for Kṛṣṇa right in front of their husbands, are actually *vanitā*. But we are not like them – we cannot show our love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa in front of our husbands because we don’t have that same deep love that the *devīs* have. What else can I say?”

*visraṁsamāna-cikurāḥ ślatha-māna-nīvyo
devyo dhṛti-vyasanato nikhilā divīva
āripsyamānam amara-druma-puṣpa-varṣam
vismṛtya hanta vavṛṣur-nayanā ‘mbha eva*

Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū (11.150)

“Those demigoddesses became intoxicated on hearing the melody of the *veṇu*. The flowers in their hair started falling out, and the drawstrings of their skirts loosened. They had been showering flowers from desire trees upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but, becoming intoxicated with joy, they forgot that and instead showered tears of love.”

Vanitotsava-rūpa-śīlam – “Our Kṛṣṇa, who adorns His head with a peacock feather, bunches of various kinds of flowers and fresh mango leaves, who wears a *karnikāra* flower on His ear, and whose *pītāmbara* shines like gold, is the best of

dancers and the crest jewel of lovers. If any *vanitā* sees Him, she will surely become intoxicated and go completely mad. Not only that, *sakhī*, when dusky-complexioned Śrī Kṛṣṇa vibrates a note on the flute, the *devīs* start suffering from the urge of *kāma*.”

Śrutvā ca tat-kvaṇita-veṇu-vivikta-gītam – On hearing the attractive *veṇu-nāda*, the demigoddesses forget their chastity. Only for women smitten with *anurāga* are Śrī Kṛṣṇa's incomparable beauty and enchanting *veṇu-nāda* like a festival of joy. There is not even one single impassioned female in the entire world who will not get intoxicated upon tasting the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beauty or hearing His melodious musical notes. His smiles, laughter, speech, glance and mannerisms are completely irresistible to one and all. Whosoever comes in contact with Kṛṣṇa becomes His. On seeing the matchless beauty of *manmatha-manmatha* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Cupid of cupids, and hearing the music from His poisonous flute, the *devīs*, sitting in their heavenly airplanes, suffer from the great fever of *kāma*, lose their self-control, embrace their husbands and faint.

On seeing the condition of their wives, who are suffering from *kāma* due to *kṛṣṇa-prema*, the demigods, rather than feeling jealous, admire their wives' loving mood, just like the does' husbands. Not only do the demigods praise their wives' *kṛṣṇa-prema*, they actually encourage them.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes in his commentary: “The *gopīs* reflect, ‘We are *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa is a *gopa*. Even so, we don't have as much love for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the *devīs* have. They belong to the species of demigods. Although Kṛṣṇa is not a *deva* but a human, these *devīs* have such deep love for Him. Despite being goddesses, they have made their eyes successful. This is indeed very astonishing. Our eyes, bodies and intelligence are all completely wasted, because we don't get to

associate with Kṛṣṇa.” Suffering in separation and ardently yearning to meet with Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* are lamenting, speaking many different witty remarks (*ālāpa*) of this nature.

Bhraśyat-prasūna-kabarā mumuhur vinīvyah – The flowers woven in their hair fall out, the drawstrings of their skirts come loose, and they faint and fall into the laps of their husbands. Serving their wives, the *devas* say, “Ah! Devī, you are so blessed. We also love Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but the love within us does not overflow like yours.”

Situated in *mahābhāva*, the most mature stage of love, the *gopīs* pleasantly continue their love-crazed talks (*samlāpa*). Just as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu saw Caṭaka Parvata as Govardhana, the sea as the Yamunā and any forest as Vṛndāvana, each and every object stimulates *kṛṣṇa-prema* in the *gopīs*’ hearts. In reality, this dry stick of bamboo, the *veṇu*, who is drinking Kṛṣṇa’s *adharāmṛta*, is not actually a breathing, living person. The *gopīs*, however, possess extreme affection for *prema-devatā* Kṛṣṇa, their God of Love, and see that bamboo stick as their rival. In the same way, the *devas* and *devīs* sitting in their planes delight their eyes by beholding Kṛṣṇa, but in reality they can never taste the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s love the way the *gopīs* do. Even Lakṣmījī is not qualified to enter Vṛndāvana and taste the nectar of *prema* like the *gopīs*. And the *dvija-patnīs*, the wives of the Mathurā *brāhmaṇas*, who are more qualified than the demigoddesses, are also unable to enter Vṛndāvana and savor the sweet, enchanting beauty of *rasika-śekhara-naṭavara-nāgara* Śrī Kṛṣṇa (the topmost dancer and enjoyer of love).

The *gopīs* attribute their own *bhāvas* to anything and everything that is even remotely connected to Kṛṣṇa, and then admire its fortune. They desire to take birth as animals, birds and even creepers or trees to be able to meet Kṛṣṇa to their hearts’ content without any obstacles.

From early childhood the *vraja-ramaṇīs* had a natural affinity and love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, because they are all the direct expansions of His internal energy (*kāya-vyūha* of *svarūpa-śaktī*). The *gopīs* descended on this Earth along with Śrī Kṛṣṇa from Goloka Vṛndāvana. There the most brilliant, divine paramour love (*unnatojjvala parakīyā-bhāva*) between Śrī Nanda-nandana and the milkmaids of Vraja prevails eternally. In Goloka the *gopīs* do not have husbands in gross form; only the mood of having a husband is there. In order to enrich *parakīyā-bhāva*, Yogamāyā, giving physical form to the mood of there being husbands in Goloka, by the will of Bhagavān, had the cowherd boys marry the *gopīs* in Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes in this world. In reality, all the husbands and the weddings themselves were imaginary, just like a dream. Only to nourish their paramour love (*upapati-bhāva*) did Yogamāyā arrange these marriages.

This is *madhura-līlā*, Kṛṣṇa's sweet, human-like pastimes with the cowherd damsels. In it the mood of majesty (*aiśvarya-bhāva*) is completely covered, with the pastimes as ordinary humans being prominent. The *gopīs* see themselves as simple, helpless girls. Devoid of any mood of majesty, they are completely unaware of Kṛṣṇa being the Supreme Lord. They are not all-knowing like Paramātmā, the Supreme Soul and indwelling witness, but are innocent cowherd girls. Having very simple hearts, they cannot realize that Yogamāyā has staged such a drama that their marriage had taken place with Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself and not any other *gopa*. If the *gopīs* were to think that all this was by Yogamāyā's arrangement, the mood of majesty would come. They only consider that, although their marriages have taken place with the *gopas*, their life's beloved, Śrī Nanda-nandana, is everything to them, dearer to them than life itself. For Nanda-nandana they sacrifice regard for public opinion, virtuous conduct,

self-control and all other conventions. All their love-filled discussions are in this mood – this is *mādhurya-bhāva*.

Nārada Muni knows that all the *gopīs* are married to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, and not to the other *gopas*. Although this is the truth, what the *gopīs* believe is the complete truth. Nārada, Śukadeva, Uddhava and Vyāsa are all-knowing; they understand the real situation. But the *gopīs* have only one *bhāva*: “Kṛṣṇa is my cherished beloved.” They understand that Kṛṣṇa is the only one who has stolen their hearts, and nobody else knows it but them. Under the sway of their hesitancy and shyness, while sitting in their homes, completely absorbed in loving thoughts about their beloved, they try to hide their camphor-like *prema* within the jewel-box of their hearts. Knowing that camphor flies away with even the slightest breeze, they do their best to hide their precious *kṛṣṇa-prema* within, but they do not understand how to keep it concealed.

If the *gopīs* and Kṛṣṇa were to think that they were married to each other, this idea would hinder the sweet human-like pastimes of Vraja. If they were to see themselves as married, there would be no difference between them and the queens of Dvārakā. So we should understand that whatever is written in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is absolutely correct.

There is a deep secret behind the reason why Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, in his commentaries on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, has refuted the paramour love (*parakīyā-bhāva*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, and instead has tried to establish the idea that Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* are married (*svakīyā-bhāva*). Outwardly promoting *svakīyā-bhāva*, he has kept the *parakīyā-bhāva* intact and pure. Actually, it is not possible for a *rūpānuga* Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* like Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī to be a proponent of *svakīyā-bhāva*. Whatever description and commentaries he has given in favor of *svakīyā-bhāva* has been done to satisfy the desire of others, not his own.

In the conclusion of his commentaries, he has written: *likhitam kiñcid atra parecchayā*. The meaning is that, in order for unqualified persons with different interests to understand these impenetrable, inconceivable pastimes without finding fault with them, he has accepted *svakīyā* so that they can also constantly meditate on them with full faith. This explanation, however, is not agreeable at all to those internal devotees who have taken shelter of the lotus feet of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has clearly written in his commentary on Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamanī:

*svecchayā likhitam kiñcit kiñcid atra parecchayā
yat pūrvāpara-sambandham tat-pūrvam-aparam param*

“I have presented this view partly by my own desire and partly by the desire of others. The first and last part of the explanation, referring to *parakīyā*, has been written out of my wish, and whatever is not related to *parakīyā* has been written out of the desire of others. It should be understood in this way.”

The complete verse from Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamanī (1.2) is:

*laghuttvam atra yat proktaṁ tat tu prākṛta-nāyake
na kṛṣṇe rasa-niryāsa-svādārtham avatāriṇi*

“In regard to worldly lovers, the position of a paramour is considered degraded by those who understand *rasa*. But this does not apply to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the source of all incarnations, who establishes Himself as the transcendental paramour in order to taste the essence of *rasa*.”

All *rasas* emanate directly from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The different incarnations of Bhagavān descend to this world to maintain control over religion and irreligion. Although He personally

never does anything which breaks worldly rules of conduct, Svayaṁ Bhagavān Govinda is not tied by these conventions and restrictions. We should understand correctly that whatever Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His eternal associates like Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura have written about *svakīyā* and *parakīyā-bhāva* is according to the evidence of *vidhi-śāstra* and *rasa-śāstra*.²¹ Both of these commentators are *rūpānuga* Vaiṣṇavas, devotees in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura is a follower of the Gosvāmīs. Therefore, we should try to understand the writings of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī through the explanations of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes, “*Parakīyā-bhāva* is especially prominent in the goal and devotional practice (*sādhya* and *sādhana*) of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.” Before the advent of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, not a single Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* (authorized spiritual preceptor) gave clear instructions for worshiping Kṛṣṇa in relation to *parakīyā-bhāva*, although *parakīyā-bhāva* is mentioned in *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*, *Rāsa-pañcādhyāyī* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.29-33), *Muktāphala*, the writings and various collections of poems of Jayadeva Gosvāmī, Caṇḍīdāsa and Vidyāpati. But a clear explanation is found in the works of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s followers like Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara, Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda and Śrī Rūpa-Raghunātha. In these sacred texts and in other books of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, there is no mention of Kṛṣṇa’s marriage to the *gopīs*; nor is there mention of His sacred thread ceremony in Vraja, since that ceremony took place in Mathurā. According to Vedic culture, marriage does not take place before this ceremony.

²¹ *vidhi-śāstra* – the scriptures presenting rules for morality and propriety in human society; *rasa-śāstra* – those describing the nectar of loving exchanges with Kṛṣṇa in His pastimes.

Many people think that Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī supports *svakīyā-bhāva*, but this idea has no basis. Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Sanātana, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa, Śrī Kavi Karṇapūra, Śrī Kavirāja Gosvāmī and other primary *rasika ācāryas* have described Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes on the basis of *parakīyā-bhāva*. But since Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī thought it rare to find someone qualified to do *bhajana* in *parakīyā-bhāva*, he prescribed the system of *mantra-mayī upāsana* (meditation on a single pastime) in his *Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha* (paragraph 156). Śrī Rūpa, Raghunātha and other Gosvāmīs have described in their literatures *svārasikī upāsana* (meditation on chain of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes that flow one after the other) – this is the inner heart's desire of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

The detailed explanations of *svakīyā* and *parakīyā-bhāva* by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in their commentaries on *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* present proper philosophical conclusions according to their own perspectives. The only difference is in their angle of vision. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has taken the side of *svakīyā*, keeping in mind fundamental truths, while Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has supported *parakīyā-bhāva*, focusing on the pastimes.

The *gopīs* are expansions of Kṛṣṇa's own internal energy (His *svarūpa-śakti*) – that is why they may be considered His wives (*svakīyā*). Although it is not possible for them to be other men's wives, still in their pastimes in this world, they appear to be married to others. This is only an illusion of *Yogamāyā*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has given a deep understanding here, explaining that there is no difference between the manifested and unmanifested pastimes. The only difference is that one is in the spiritual world (*aprakāṣa*), and the other manifests in this material world (*prakāṣa*). In the *aprakāṣa* realm the observer and that which he observes are completely pure.

Only those people who have the great fortune of receiving Śrī Kṛṣṇa's unlimited mercy can fully abandon all material connections, enter the spiritual realm upon attaining their spiritual body (*vastu-siddhi*), and directly meet Kṛṣṇa there. These persons alone can see and taste the completely unblemished pastimes of Goloka, but such people are extremely rare. And there are those who, despite living in the material world, have achieved perfection in their *bhakti* and are experiencing spiritual *rasa* by Kṛṣṇa's mercy. They see the eternal pastimes of Goloka in the *prakāṣa-līlā* of Gokula on Earth in the material world. There is some difference between the two levels of qualification – *svarūpa-siddhi* (vision of one's spiritual form while still a *sādhaka* in this realm) and *vastu-siddhi*. Until one attains his spiritual body and enters *prakāṣa-līlā* (*vastu-siddhi*), there are some material hindrances in receiving the *darśana* of these Goloka pastimes. The vision of one's own constitutional form (*svarūpa*) and his vision of Goloka depends on and is proportionate to the level of self-realization one has attained.

Careful observation reveals that Goloka, in reality, is completely pure and absolutely free from *māyā*. In the same way the earthly Gokula, manifesting in the material world by the power of Yogamāyā, is also without any impurity. Whether the pastimes are *prakāṣa* or *aprakāṣa*, there is not even the slightest touch of material fault, degradation or incompleteness. Any apparent difference is due only to the viewpoint of the person and his own eligibility. Those in Goloka are completely pure. In the material world, however, devotees view the pastimes according to their qualification. Those whose eyes, intelligence and false egos are absorbed in matter will focus on faults, degradation, bodily identifications, impurity and ignorance. Such persons do not have faith in the fundamental truth. Those with less faults will experience a more pristine vision.

Parakīyā-rasa is the essence of all the *rasas*. To consider that it is missing in Goloka minimizes that realm. It is impossible that the highest *rasa* is not relished in the highest planet Goloka. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the source of all incarnations, tastes this *rasa* in one way in Goloka and in another way in Gokula. Although by illusory, material vision *parakīyā* appears to transgress *dharma*, in whatever form it takes, it is without a doubt the untainted truth in Goloka also.

Even if we practice spiritual disciplines continuously for a very long time, it is not possible to achieve perfection in this *rasa* without taking shelter of the *gopīs*. *Sādhana-bhakti* is of two types: *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*. The *prema* illuminated through *vaidhī*, practicing strict regulations, is full of awe and reverence. Possessing greed to serve Kṛṣṇa's associates in Vraja gives rise to *rāgānugā-bhakti* (spontaneous loving devotion), which is completely devoid of majesty and leads to the appearance of ecstatic *prema-bhakti*, pure unadulterated love for Kṛṣṇa. It is possible to enter into *madhura-bhāva* (the loving mood of the cowherd damsels of Vraja) based on pure *parakīyā* only by following *rāgānugā-bhakti* under the guidance of the *gopīs*.

Even great devotees like Uddhava could not achieve this highest *bhāva* of the *gopīs*. He was stunned upon seeing their extremely elevated, transcendental sentiments and prayed to take birth in Vraja as a creeper or bush in order to get the dust of the *gopīs*' lotus feet:

āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām aham syām
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauṣadhīnām
yā dustyajāṃ sva-janam ārya-ṣaṭhaṃ ca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-pada-vīm śrutibhir vimṛgyām

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.61)

“It will be the greatest stroke of fortune if I become a bush, creeper or herb in Vṛndāvana-dhāma. Then I will constantly be bathed in the transcendental dust of the *vraja-gopīs*’ lotus feet, and I will be blessed. Just look, the *gopīs* have completely left their close relatives and social and Vedic regulations, which are so hard to give up, and have reached Mukunda’s lotus feet, achieving His topmost *prema*. What to speak of others, even the *Śrutis* and *Upaniṣads*, who have been searching for Him up till now, have still not attained Him.”

*jñāne prayāsam udaṇḍasya namanta eva
jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadīyavārtām
sthāne sthitāḥ śrutigatām tanu-vāṅ-manobhī
ye prayaśo ‘jita jito apyasi tais tri-lokyām*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.3)

“Those who associate with love-filled devotees and hear Your pastimes from them with faith, absorbing body, mind and words, need not make any separate endeavor to acquire knowledge of the truth. My Lord, although You are invincible, they have conquered You and brought You completely under their control by their devotion!”

The phrase *jñāne prayāsam udaṇḍasya* has been explained by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in this way: What to speak of impersonal realization of the Lord (*nirviśeṣa-jñāna*, which is offensive to the lotus feet of Bhagavān), there is no need to make a separate effort to achieve knowledge of the position of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*bhagavat-tattva*), because Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān is full in six opulences. He is the controller of all controllers and the cause of all causes, but knowledge of this reality obstructs the natural *prema* of Vraja, which has not even a scent of reverence based on social conventions and restrictions.

Ajita Śrī Hari can never be conquered by anyone, but that same Hari is conquered by those who, rather than making an independent endeavor to achieve knowledge of the truth (*tattva-jñāna*), simply hear narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes from the mouths of *rasika*, *tattva-jñā* devotees (who are adept in tasting transcendental mellows and who know the fundamental truths). Such persons bind Him by the ropes of their love. If *rāgānuga-sādhakas* meditate on Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Paramātmā or Bhagavān, full in six opulences, they cannot enter the sweet pastimes of Vraja. The *vraja-gopīs* do not think of Kṛṣṇa as Paramātmā or Bhagavān with all opulences. They only know Him as their intimate friend and their beloved sweetheart, as in ordinary worldly relationships, and are always eager to serve Him. Vaiṣṇavas who follow Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī continuously cultivate these moods of the *gopīs*, who are immersed in the most sublime expressions of love.



Verse Thirteen

***gāvaś ca kṛṣṇa-mukha-nirgata-veṇu-gīta-
pīyūṣam uttabhita-karṇa-putaiḥ pibantyaḥ
śāvāḥ snuta-stana-payah kavalāḥ sma tasthur
govindam ātmani dṛśāśru-kalāḥ sprśantyaḥ***

gāvaś – the cows; *ca* – and; *kṛṣṇa-mukha* – from the mouth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *nirgata* – emitted; *veṇu* – of the flute; *gīta* – the song; *pīyūṣam* – the nectar; *uttabhita* – raised high; *karṇa* – with their ears; *putaiḥ* – which were like cups; *pibantyaḥ* – drinking; *śāvāḥ* – the calves; *snuta* – exuding; *stana* – from the udders; *payah* – the milk; *kavalāḥ* – whose mouthfuls; *sma* – really; *tasthur* – stood still (the *sāttvika-bhāva* of becoming stunned); *govindam* – Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *ātmani* – within their hearts; *dṛśā* – by their eyes; *āśru-kalāḥ* – their eyes full of tears; *sprśantyaḥ* – touching (embracing).

Translation

“O *sakhī*, enough talk about the *devīs*! Just take a look at the cows. When our beloved Śyāmasundara fills the flute with the sweet sound flowing from His mouth, and when the cows hear that mellifluous song, they cup their ears up high and drink the nectar of *rasa*. How can this happen, friend? Taking beloved Śyāmasundara onto the throne of their hearts through the doorway of their eyes, O *sakhī*, they seat Him there and embrace Him within their minds. O dear friend! Just

see how tears are flowing from their eyes! And their calves? As the calves drink from the cows' udders, they are unable to swallow and the milk gets stuck in their throats. Their ears perk up and drink the nectar of the *veṇu-gīta* flowing from Kṛṣṇa's mouth. With their eyes they welcome Kṛṣṇa in their hearts and embrace Him. Therefore, their eyes overflow with tears, they start trembling, and their hairs stand on end."

Ānanda-varddhinī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

Through the eyes of their loving emotions, the love-maddened *gopīs* watch their beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa taking the cows to graze from one forest to another along with the other cowherd boys. At the same time they clearly hear Kṛṣṇa's sweet *veṇu-nāda* through the ears of their *bhāva*. Every part of Kṛṣṇa's body, His way of walking, laughing, talking and gesturing are like a supreme celebration for the *gopīs'* eyes and ears. Upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, wildly in love with Kṛṣṇa, are compelled to sacrifice their lifetime's accumulation of self-control, chastity, gravity and so on. They do not wish to reveal their inner sentiments to their intimate *sakhīs*, but they have no ability to hide them.

Accepting Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their dear-most beloved, they have surrendered their bodies, minds and everything they possess at His lotus feet. Indeed, they cannot live without Him even for a minute. Internally, externally, behind, in front and through every pore of their bodies, they are unable to see anything but Kṛṣṇa. Still, they do not wish to express their feelings even to their closest *sakhīs*. In *rasa-śāstra* these divine moods are called *avahitthā*. At first the *gopīs* try to hide their feelings, but somehow or other,

their emotions rise to the surface. Then, being embarrassed, they again try to hide them. In the previous verse, however, while discussing the *devīs* flying in their spacecrafts, some degree of the *gopīs*' internal *bhāvas* escape. Therefore, to cover up their real mood, they immediately change the subject and speak about the *kṛṣṇānurāga* of the cows, who are full of motherly affection for Kṛṣṇa, and of their newly born two- to three-day-old calves.

The love-maddened *vraja-gopīs* observe, “Dear friends, just see the condition of the *devīs* flying in their heavenly planes! It seems that they belong to the class of shy young girls (*ramaṇīs*) who are expert in the various skills for awakening sweet emotions. That is why, on seeing *ramaṇī-mohana Śyāmasundara*, the enchanter of sweet chaste girls, and on hearing His *veṇu-nāda* which stimulates amorous love (*śṛṅgāra-rasa*), they become enchanted and are afflicted by *kāma* (pure-hearted desire for Kṛṣṇa). However, if one contemplates our dearest Vrajendra-nandana's bodily features, His unparalleled beauty, His alluring *veṇu-nāda*, His mannerisms, His supremely captivating power and other features, who will not lose all awareness of body and mind? Whosoever one might be – whether man or woman, human or demigod, animal or bird – one definitely becomes enchanted. Anyone who sees Kṛṣṇa just once is bound to surrender to Him forever. There is not the slightest doubt about this.

“Our beloved Kṛṣṇa enters the all-attractive Vṛndāvana to graze His cows. But why does He go out with the cows? *Sakhī!* This is just an excuse! Actually He goes in order to roam freely, to play various games and pranks with His cowherd boyfriends, and especially to meet secretly with His beloved *gopīs*. When Kṛṣṇa transmits the nectar of His lotus lips through the *veṇu-nāda*, no one is able to determine what kind of nectar it is. Animals, birds, men, women, trees,

creepers, ponds, rivers, mountains and all other moving and non-moving beings – no matter who they are – all drown in the ocean of supreme pleasure and lose consciousness on hearing the magnetic melody of the *veṇu*. Oh! Just see, just see the condition of these cows!”

*gāvaś ca kṛṣṇa-mukha-nirgata-veṇu-gīta-
pīyūṣam uttabhita-karṇa-ṭṭaiḥ pibantyaḥ*

When the cows hear the sweet *veṇu-nāda*, it seems that a powerful stream of nectar is rushing directly into their ears. They immediately stop grazing, raise their heads, turn their ears towards the sound, and silently stand still as if in a picture. Why do they raise their ears? So that not one drop of the nectar which has filled them will fall out. They are not actually ears but are in fact cups which they fill with the nectar of the *veṇu-nāda*, enabling them to greedily gulp it down with great gusto.

“Although cows may be unintelligent, foolish animals, and there is no chance that *śṛṅgāra-rasa* (amorous love) will be stimulated in their hearts as happens with the wives of the demigods, still they are certainly able to taste the sweetness of the *veṇu*. The melody of this flute is incapable of hiding its sweetness from the birds and animals also. O *sakhī*! When the stream of the liquid nectar of the *veṇu-nāda* emanating from Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s moon-like face enters the ears of the cows, being unintelligent animals, they are unable to understand this sound vibration. They think of it as merely some indescribable flow of sweetness. Just as one drinks ambrosia from a cup, the cows also fill their raised cup-like ears with the mellifluous flow of the *veṇu-nāda* and, tasting it with supreme pleasure, lose all consciousness of their bodies and minds.

“These cows are also very dear to Kṛṣṇa. In His childhood, when they were calves, He, along with His *sakhās*, used to take them out for grazing in the enchanting forests near Nanda-Vraja. He would personally bathe them with His lotus hands, fondle them and lovingly rub their backs and soft necks. Even when the calves grew up, they refused to go out to pasture with anyone else but Kṛṣṇa. Therefore He Himself had to take them. Even though are devoid of intelligence, these cows love Kṛṣṇa, and that is why they become immobile on hearing the *veṇu-nāda*. Because He was with the cows from their very childhood, He is extremely fond of them. Someone may point out that this is the reason the cows are so attached to Him. But this is not correct, *sakhī!* If you look one time at the calves who are merely two or three days old, who know only their mother’s breast and nothing else, you will see that they also fall unconscious upon hearing Kṛṣṇa’s enchanting *veṇu-nāda*.”

*harer vaktraṁ veṇu-dhvani-miṣatayā varṣati sudhām
pibatya etāṁ gavyā yad anu rasanā-karṇa-yugalam
āhāsīt prastabdhā nija-viṣayamanyā tu rasanā
kim etat kiṁ naitad bhavati kim ivaitat kim iti vā*

Gopāla-campū (pūrva 17.80)

“The lotus face of Śrī Hari is actually showering nectar under the ruse of the *veṇu-nāda*. The cows and calves turn their ears into tongues, which become completely stunned upon drinking that nectar. In this condition it is impossible to point out which is the tongue and which the ear.”

When the stream of the *veṇu*’s melodious nectar enters the ears of the cows, an indescribable feeling floods their hearts, melting them completely and causing a stream of milk to

flow with great force from their udders. Ordinarily a cow's milk begins to flow upon seeing her calf, but in the case of Kṛṣṇa's beloved cows that graze in Vṛndāvana, the milk does not come in this same way. Only when the cows see Kṛṣṇa, touch His body or hear His *veṇu-nāda*, unlimited milk flows from their udders, completely filling their calves' mouths. But upon hearing the pleasing melody of the *veṇu*, the calves lose consciousness and cannot even swallow the milk flowing from their mothers' breasts, although it is already in their mouths. The calves become absorbed in bliss and, rendered helpless, are unable to drink the continuous flow of milk that dribbles down their chins onto the ground.

In his *Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū* (11.151) *rasika* Vaiṣṇava Kavi Karṇapūra gives a very pleasing and heart-touching description of this:

*arddhāvalīḍhya vasāṅkura-śobhi-dantāḥ
sotkaṅṭham uniṣita-netram udīrṇa-karṇam
citrārpitā iva patantam ivāmr̥taugham
veṇu-dhvaniṁ śruti-ṭe gamayanti gāvaḥ*

“Feeling intense longing, the cows close their eyes, raise their ears and, standing completely still as if in a painting, drink the nectar of the *veṇu-nāda* through their ears. They forget to swallow the half-eaten green grass, which just remains in their mouths.”

In the next verse, he describes the calves:

*cūṣanti cūcukam aho na na samtyajanti
vatsā nayanti na payaḥ-kavalaṁ galā 'dhaḥ
vaṁśī-kalā-hṛta-hṛdāṁ sakhi! naucikīnām
sneha-snuta-stana-raso dharayaiva pītaḥ*

“O *sakhī*! Enough about the state of the cows. Just look at the condition of the calves! They were drinking milk from their mothers’ breasts when they heard the sound of the *veṇu*. Immediately they forgot to suck the milk, and could not even take their mouths away from their mothers’ breasts. What more can I say? They were also unable to swallow the milk that was already in their mouths. Today that nectarean milk, filled with the cows’ love, is being drunk by the Earth instead.”

In this way the cows and calves, due to excessive joy, forget themselves and get lost in gazing at the one who adorns His moon-like face with the *veṇu*. As soon as they see Vrajendra-nandana, His sweet and incomparably beautiful form manifests in their hearts, and their eyes fill with tears of joy. Thus they cannot even see Him although He is standing right in front of them. They can only hear and relish the *veṇu*’s wonderful, *rasa*-filled sound through their ears. They remain absolutely still, being intoxicated from tasting the nectar of their internal vision of that most attractive form. It seems that these cows, who are the embodiment of the nectar of *vātsalya-prema* (motherly love), make their lives successful by taking Vrajendra-nandana in the laps of their hearts, being unable to do so outwardly. As a result they drown in ecstatic bliss.

Due to the influence of their natural supreme love, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, overflowing with deep feelings of love, are always intensely eager to meet with Kṛṣṇa. In that state whosoever they see having any kind of relationship with Him, whether moving or non-moving, they immediately consider most fortunate. At the same time, under the influence of their humility, the cowherd maidens feel greatly afflicted and depressed, thinking themselves to be most unfortunate in every respect.

On seeing the cows becoming absorbed in their emotions after hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, the *gopīs* ponder deep in their

hearts, “Oh! In Vṛndāvana taking birth as a cow is so fruitful because these cows completely forget their bodies and all bodily connections upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*. They even forget their own beloved calves and their food as well. The tender green grass that they were eating remains untouched in their mouths. The milk flowing from their breasts into the mouths of their calves falls to the ground. The newborn calves also are completely unaware of their bodies and minds.

“But alas! We are cursed! When we hear the *veṇu-nāda*, we are unable to stop thinking about our bodies and our homes. It is indeed lamentable that we cannot escape from the shackles of home-life to go to Kṛṣṇa, being locked up in the chains of our self-control, regard for public opinion, obligation to family, chastity, honor, fear and other such impediments. We are unable to drown in the sea of sweetness created by the flute song, and instead always remain attached to our bodies and minds. We can only listen to the sound of the *veṇu* from afar. We don't get so lost in the mellifluous sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute that we forget our honor and self-control. Nor do we become intoxicated by it. That is why our lives have no value. These cows and calves are thousands of times better situated than us because, on hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, they forget everything, including their own bodies. Those who have only a slight relationship with Kṛṣṇa are really blessed and their lives are successful. Although we have taken birth in the community of cowherders, we are absorbed in our mortal selves, being under the grip of body and home; uselessly we carry the burden of our bodies.”

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says:

*yat-kiñcit tṛṇa-gulma-kikaṭa-mukhaṁ goṣṭhe samastaṁ hi tat
sarvānandamayāṁ mukunda-dayitaṁ līlānukūlaṁ param*

Vraja-vilāsa-stava (102)

“In Vraja the grass, bushes, creepers, insects, snakes, animals and birds are all dear to Kṛṣṇa and help to enrich His pastimes. They are all transcendental and increase His pleasure.” Why does a devotee develop the greed to become a tree in Vraja? Because he hopes that “Kṛṣṇa will sit on my lap, taste my fruits, dance and play hide and seek on my branches.”

To nourish such sweet pastimes, a practicing devotee may desire to become a snake or a tree. Why would someone want to be a snake? Because: “If I am a snake, then when Śrīmatī becomes angry with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and starts to leave Him, by seeing me She will become frightened and immediately fall into His arms!”

The significance of this thirteenth verse is that, according to the *gopīs*' love-filled vision, if anything, living or non-living, has any relationship with Kṛṣṇa, then that entity is extremely fortunate. *Rāgānuga-sādhakas*, practitioners following the path spontaneous devotion, should remember the chain of these *bhāvas* while doing their *bhajana*.



Verse Fourteen

*prāyo batāmba vihagā munayo vane 'smin
kṣṣṇekṣitam tad-uditam kala-veṇu-gītam
āruhya ye druma-bhujān rucira-pravālān
śṛṇvanti amīlita-dṛśo vigatānya-vācaḥ*

prāyaḥ – most of them; *bata* – certainly; *amba* – O my mother (O friend); *vihagāḥ* – the birds; *munayaḥ* – great sages; *vane* – in the forest; *asmin* – this; *kṣṣṇa-ikṣitam* – seeing Kṛṣṇa's beautiful moon-like face; *tad-uditam* – created by Him; *kala-veṇu-gītam* – sweet vibrations made by playing the flute; *āruhya* – rising; *ye* – who; *druma-bhujān* – to the branches of the trees (in the form of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*); *rucira-pravālān* – having enchanting creepers and flowers; *śṛṇvanti* – they hear; *amīlita-dṛśaḥ* – with wide-open, unblinking eyes; *vigatānya-vācaḥ* – stopping all other sounds (not related to Śrī Kṛṣṇa).

Translation

“O my mother! The cows and calves are our family members. But look at the birds of Vṛndāvana. To call them birds is certainly a mistake. Truly speaking, most of them are exalted self-satisfied sages and ascetics (*ātmārāma ṛṣis* and *munis*). They sit quietly in the beautiful green trees of Vṛndāvana, upon branches that are sprouting many charming, new blossoms. Gazing continuously with unblinking eyes

at the elegance of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful form, they take in His love-laden sidelong glances and become elated. Ignoring all other types of sounds, they listen to Kṛṣṇa's captivating voice and the music of His flute which enchants the three worlds. My dear *sakhī*, how blessed their lives are! Alas! How unfortunate we are. Our birth has become spoiled, our eyes useless. Where lies our fortune to behold the beautiful form of Kṛṣṇa and hear His sweet *veṇu-gīta*? Due to millions of obstacles, this seems completely impossible."

Ānanda-varḍdhirī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

Becoming overwhelmed with joy as a direct result of hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, the cows and new-born calves of Vṛndāvana forget their bodies and all bodily relations. Discussing the condition of the cows, the *vraja-ramanīs*, graced with deep attachment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, become immersed in *bhāva* and completely forget themselves, fully losing consciousness of their surroundings. After some time, when their emotional turmoil subsides a little, they heave a deep sigh and say, "O *sakhī*, how much more can I say about the fortune of the cows and calves! Nanda-nandana Himself takes care of them. He cleans their bodies with His very soft hands, feeds them tender green grass, puts His arms around their necks and gently fondles them. Who knows how much love and affection He showers upon them! Therefore it is, of course, natural that the cows will also love Him in return. But *maiya rī*, O mother! O my goodness! One cannot help but be amazed on seeing the activities and behavior of the birds of Vṛndāvana."

Prāyo batāmba vihaḡā munayaḡ – When the *goṇīs* are fully immersed in this highly charged, emotional discussion

about the sweetly magnetic and strange effect of the *veṅu-nāda*, they are completely unaware of their bodies and homes. At that time there is not a single *goṣṭhī* present who is old enough to be called mother. Only young *goṣṭhīs* of the same loving sentiments and group are there.

When women talk among themselves and all of a sudden any fearsome, amazing or surprising subject comes up in their conversation, they exclaim, *mai yā ri* or *ha amba*, ‘O mother’, even though no older woman is present. When absorbed in *bhāva*, ladies demonstrate this long-standing nature. They do not address each other as mother unnecessarily. Only for a prolonged occasion of extreme joy or amazement does this sweet form of exclamation, ‘mother’, naturally flow from their mouths. There are many places in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* where there are accounts of women conversing with each other, but such a form of salutation is rarely found anywhere. *Prāyo batāmba vihaḡā munayaḡ* – this extraordinary, loving form of greeting is found only in this verse in the *Veṅu-gīta*.

One *vraja-ramaṇī*, aroused by extreme feelings of love (*mahābhāva*), exclaims to another, “O mother! What more can I say about the birds of Vṛndāvana? By observing their behavior, it seems that most of them are self-realized sages who are always contemplating Kṛṣṇa. On catching sight of Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa when He enters Vṛndāvana, all the peacocks and peahens flock around Him while singing out, ‘*ke! kā! ke! kā!*’ They spread their colorful tail feathers and with great love start dancing. All varieties of parrots (*śuka-sārī*), *pika-pāpīhā* and other types of birds, overcome by the emotions resulting from seeing Kṛṣṇa, become immersed in supreme pleasure and start to sing and dance.

“It seems that these birds are not ordinary *munis* but rather the crown jewels of devotees because, except for devotees, all perfected *ṛṣīs* (sages), *yogīs*, *sannyāsīs* (renunciates), *tapasvīs*

(those performing austerities), *dhyānīs* (meditators), *munis* (ascetics) and other *siddha sādhakas* (perfected practitioners) are opposed to singing and dancing. Being devoid of natural spontaneous affection (*rāga*), they always remain in a place far distant from singing, dancing and playing music. Only *bhāvuka* and *rasika-bhaktas*²² by seeing Kṛṣṇa and remembering Him, become intoxicated by drinking the pleasure of *rasa*, and naturally sing and dance. Therefore, seeing the peacocks, cuckoos, parrots and other birds who are singing and dancing, one can understand that they are surely the crown jewels of devotees. Except for them, all the other birds, having adopted the course followed by *munis*, behave like *munis*. On hearing Kṛṣṇa's sweet *veṇu-nāda*, they do not sing nor do they dance like the parrots and peacocks, who have the mood of devotees. Like *munis*, they simply adopt silence and with closed eyes sit quietly without moving, as if in *samādhi*.

When those birds who follow the discipline of *munis* hear Kṛṣṇa's sweetly enchanting *veṇu-nāda* from afar, they quickly leave their nests to come very close to Him. They go and sit on the branches of the trees nearest to Him, which are decorated with newly sprouted, soft green leaves and buds that have been bathed in the nectar of the *veṇu*'s musical notes. They sit there in such a way that they are not obstructed from seeing Kṛṣṇa, and that Kṛṣṇa can also cast His glance on them. They consider it more advantageous to sit on branches filled with leaves and flowers. They could have chosen bare branches so that they could more easily see Kṛṣṇa without obstruction as they listen to the *veṇu-nāda*, but, being *munis*, they find the more secluded leaf and flower-filled branches more favorable. Another reason is that, on tasting the nectar of the flute song, there is the possibility of inanimate objects coming to life and living beings losing their consciousness.

²² Devotees immersed in upper stages of *bhakti* and expert in tasting transcendental mellows.

When these helpless birds forget their bodies and minds upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, there is a chance that they could fall from bare branches. Therefore they deliberately sit on leafy, flower-filled ones to prevent their falling when they enter a state of ecstasy and lose consciousness.

Ordinarily *munis* live in complete seclusion in huts made of straw and grass. The birds also sit quietly in a solitary place on the front branches of trees that are fully covered with tender new leaves and flowers, and become overwhelmed with delight on drinking through the holes of their ears the melodious waves of nectar from the flute. In an ecstatic emotional condition they hear the sweet sounds with half-closed eyes, forgetting their bodies and bodily relations. Indeed, they do not know anything else in the world besides the *veṇu-nāda*.

In *Śrī Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū* (11.154) Śrīla Kavi Karṇapūra has explained this subject in a way that pleases the mind and deeply touches the heart:

*na spandate sakhi na rauti na viṅṣyate 'nyan
nānyac chṛṇoti na jighatsati pakṣi-saṅghaḥ
romāñcavān iva mudā garutaṁ dhunāno
vaṁśī-kalā-vadanam eva paraṁ karoti*

One *gopī* says to her companion, “O *sakhī*! On hearing the extremely attractive *veṇu-nāda*, the entire bird population of *Vṛndāvana* becomes motionless. They neither chirp, sing, see nor eat anything. The birds feel thrilled at every moment on hearing the sound of the *veṇu*, and with feathers aflutter, they silently relish its nectar with full concentration.”

Seeing this unique and attractive scene, another *sakhī* expresses her amazement to her dear friend, “Look, look!

O mother, it is so amazing that even these birds, who by nature are very restless and independent, have also taken to meditation. Living in the forest, keeping their eyes half-closed, sitting quietly with fixed concentration, and observing silence – this is all reminiscent of the *munis*. But to my understanding it is not right to say that they seem like *munis*. The entire bird population of Vṛndāvana is actually comprised of *munis*.”

There are three types of *munis*: those who meditate on *brahma-tattva* (the impersonal truth), on *paramātma-tattva* (the Supersoul in the heart) and on *bhagavat-tattva* (the personal form of the Lord). *Munis* contemplating *bhagavat-tattva* are of two types: *bhagavad-aiśvarya* – those who reflect on the name, qualities, beauty and other majestic aspects of Nārāyaṇa; and *bhagavan-mādhurya* – those who meditate on Bhagavān's sweet pastimes. In the beginning Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanat Kumāra and Śukadeva Gosvāmī were all *brahmavādīs* who had realized the impersonal truth, but by the mercy of four-headed Brahmā, Sanat Kumāra and the others became celebrated for meditating on the personal form of the Lord in a mood of awe and reverence. By the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī also became famous as a *muni* meditating on Bhagavān in the mood of sweetness. There is a world of difference between *brahmavādī munis* and modern-day impersonalists (*kevala-ādvaitavādīs* or *māyāvādīs*). *Brahmavādī munis* do not deny the personal form of Bhagavān as do the *nirviśeṣa kevala-ādvaitavādīs*. By the association of advanced devotees *brahmavādīs* can be converted into personalists.²³

Paramātma-munis meditate on the Supersoul, the indwelling witness in the heart. Saubhari Muni belongs to

23 *Brahmavādīs* worship the all-pervasive *brahman* effulgence of Bhagavān. At the same time they accept Kṛṣṇa's personal form but see it as an inferior form of worship. *Kevala-ādvaitavādīs*, on the other hand, who also worship the impersonal *brahma*, do not accept the existence of Kṛṣṇa's personal form and therefore are offenders. Thus, they can never be converted into personalists.

this category. The goal of both types of *munis* is liberation. With the association of pure devotees, however, *munis* free from offenses give up their desire for liberation and also become devotees of Kṛṣṇa:

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām
Bhagavad-gītā (18.54)*

“A person who realizes the impersonal *brahma* becomes fully joyful. He never laments or desires anything. Being equally disposed to all beings, he attains devotion to Me which is blessed with the symptoms of *prema*.”

These people take the shelter of such branches of the Vedas wherein *brahma-tattva* or *paramātma-tattva* is mentioned and wherein the fruit of liberation can be tasted. The desire tree of the Vedas has unlimited branches. It is evident from the activities of the *bhagavat-tattva munis* that they have taken shelter of one special branch from which they receive unobstructed vision of the fully transcendental Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, who is filled with spiritual flavors. They eagerly cling to this branch, practicing the limbs of *bhakti* and adopting as the essence of their lives the diverse moods of *mādhurya-rasa*, the sweet moods of Vraja. This mood is represented by the various newly-sprouted, tender smooth leaves and buds specific to this particular branch. They are not interested in any other subject concerning the body, bodily relations or anything mundane. Rather, they are always absorbed in the practices of *bhakti* that are favorable for their spiritual nature. Avoiding all other topics, they do not want to hear or speak anything other than the names of Bhagavān and spiritual truths. They spend all their time in hearing, chanting and remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s sweet

name, beauty, qualities and pastimes. Like the *bhagavat-tattva munis*, the birds of Vṛndāvana also take shelter of the branch which allows them a view of Kṛṣṇa. They give up everything else, remaining perpetually absorbed in hearing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's melodious *veṇu-nāda*.

In Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 24) Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the savior of the fallen souls in Kali-yuga, has explained the *ātmārāmaś ca munayaḥ* verse in sixty-one different ways to His dear associate Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī. In this context He has given the definition of a *muni*. One of the many meanings is 'bird.' To foster this definition, He has cited this verse, *prāyo batāmba vihaḡā munayaḥ*, as proof:

*muni-śabde pakṣi bhṛṅga, nirgrantha – mūrkhā jana
kṛṣṇa kṛpāya sādhu kṛpāya dohār bhajana*

“By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's devotees, even birds are able to worship and meditate on Kṛṣṇa by following *muni-dharma* free from desire.”

This passage from Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and the *prāyo batāmba vihaḡā* verse from Śrīmad-Bhāḡavatam are the evidence for this.

If Śrī Kṛṣṇa or His devotees give their grace, it is not impossible for even unintelligent beings like birds to follow *muni-dharma* and do *bhajana* of Kṛṣṇa. In the same way, it is not impossible for the *munis* to take the form of birds and sit with half-closed eyes on the branches of the trees of Vṛndāvana to taste with greed the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's incomparable, enthralling beauty and flute. Thus, it is difficult to decide whether the birds of Vṛndāvana are following *muni-dharma* and tasting the loveliness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda*, or whether the *munis* themselves assume the form of the birds, taking the shelter of branches of trees to taste the honey of the

sweet flute song. Deep study of *prāyo batāmba vihagā munayaḥ* and other verses indicates how the birds follow *muni-dharma*. In the same way it can also be pointed out that the *munis*, having taken the form of birds, are listening to the *veṇu-nāda*.

The *vraja-gopīs*, intoxicated with the highest sentiments of selfless love, say, “O *sakhī!* On seeing the transcendental behavior of the birds of *Vṛndāvana*, we cannot think that they are ordinary birds of the forest. It appears that self-satisfied sages, like Sanaka and Sanandana, have entered *Vṛndāvana* in the form of birds to taste the nectarean sweetness of the flute and beauty of *vṛndāvana-vihārī Kṛṣṇa*, who enjoys roaming about the forests. Living on *Brahma-loka* these sages were relishing the songs of the *Vedas* from *Brahmā* and the lovely singing of *Hāhā*, *Hūhū* and other *Gandharvas*. But then they heard the *veṇu-nāda* evincing startlingly novel melodies, rhythms, cadences of ascending and descending notes and other musical innovations, all combined with ever-increasingly higher and newer aspects of *mādhurya-rasa*. Just by hearing that *veṇu-gīta*, which allures the whole universe, they became overwhelmed with joy and lost consciousness.”

This clearly shows that *Kṛṣṇa's veṇu-nāda* has some special qualities and some incomparable nectar which is found neither in the singing of the *Vedas* nor in *brahma-samādhi* on *Brahma-loka*. Therefore residents of that planet, like the *munis* Sanaka and Sanandana, who enter *brahma-samādhi* upon hearing the songs of the *Vedas*, leave their residence in *Brahma-loka* in order to be birds in *Vṛndāvana* and taste the nectar of *Kṛṣṇa's veṇu-nāda*. In this way they understand that their lives are fully successful. They renounce the desire tree of the *Vedas* and take shelter on the branches of the trees of *Vṛndāvana*. With half-closed eyes and fixed minds, they listen to the *veṇu-nāda* with full absorption, renouncing everything except for *Kṛṣṇa's*

name, form, qualities and pastimes. By fixing their minds exclusively on Kṛṣṇa, their lives become meaningful.

Witnessing the astonishing absorption of Vṛndāvana's birds upon seeing Kṛṣṇa's beauty and hearing His *veṇu-nāda*, the *gopīs* drown in the heights of *prema* and praise the birds' great fortune over and over again:

*asmin vane tu vihagā munyaḥ pradīṣṭāḥ
kṛṣṇas tu tad-gurur iti pratataṁ pratīmaḥ
naivānyathā tad amunā kimapi pragītaṁ
mauna-vratena śṛṇuyuh parito niviṣṭāḥ*

Gopāla-campū (pūrva 17.89)

“All the birds of Vṛndāvana are *munis*, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is their *guru*. This we know very well – there is not the slightest doubt about it. The *veṇu-nāda* performs such magic that all the birds have taken a vow of silence, and with fixed minds are listening to the lovely song of the flute.”

The *gopīs*, thinking themselves most unlucky and the birds greatly blessed, say, “Here Kṛṣṇa is also a *muni*, and on all sides He is surrounded by *munis* in *samādhi*. How then will it be possible for our desires to be fulfilled? It is true that Śrī Śukadeva, Śrī Nārada and Śrī Vyāsa are the prominent *munis* who must have performed such austerities that Yogamāyā became pleased and bestowed her mercy on them, granting them birth as birds in Vraja. That is why they are drinking the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's sweet beauty and enchanting *veṇu-nāda* to their hearts' content.”

Śṛṇvanti mīlita-dṛśo vīgatānya-vācaḥ – Through the eyes of ecstatic emotions, the *gopīs* observe that the birds are not singing but are unnaturally quiet, their external senses having slackened. “These birds,” they deliberate, “have become aloof from the realm of external sense perception. Similarly,

if our hearts would be overwhelmed by such all-consuming love, then we would also be blessed.” Feeling distressed, they pray within their hearts, “O Creator! Will we ever receive such good fortune to become birds in our next birth? Then without any hindrances we will be free to fly to Kṛṣṇa to drink the nectar of His sweet form, sweet flute and other special qualities. If we become parrots, we will be extremely dear to Kṛṣṇa and will have the fortune to sit on His soft lotus hands. Then, receiving their joyful touch, we will be blessed. Or, if we become peacocks, we will get the good chance to dance to the lovely tunes of the *veṇu-nāda* and be able to entertain Kṛṣṇa.”



Verse Fifteen

***nadyas tadā tad upadhārya mukunda-gītam
āvarta-lakṣita-manobhava-bhagna-vegāḥ
āliṅgana-sthagītam ūrmi-bhujair murārer
grhṇanti pāda-yugalaṁ kāmaloṣpahārāḥ***

nadyaḥ – the rivers (Śrī Kālindī, Mānasī Gaṅgā and others); *tadā* – then; *tad* – that; *upadhārya* – attentively hearing the song of the flute; *mukunda* – Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who awards liberation from all distress by giving His association; *gītam* – the song of Mukunda’s flute, which gives rise to supreme spiritual bliss; *āvarta* – by their whirlpools (awakening of their desire to meet with Kṛṣṇa); *lakṣita* – manifest; *manaḥ-bhava* – by their conjugal desire; *bhagna* – broken; *vegāḥ* – their current; *āliṅgana* – by their embrace; *sthaḡitam* – motionless; *ūrmi-bhujaiḥ* – by the arms of their waves; *murāreḥ* – of Lord Murāri, the killer of the Mura demon; *grhṇanti* – they carry; *pāda-yugalaṁ* – the two lotus feet; *kāmala-upahārāḥ* – offering of lotus flowers as a gift.

Translation

“The Yamunā, Mānasī Gaṅgā and other rivers become enchanted with amorous desires upon hearing Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *veṅu-gīta*. The innumerable whirlpools they are exhibiting express their intense feelings of love. They stop flowing and with their waves as arms, they offer lotus flowers. They embrace Madana Mohana, and hold His lotus feet to their breasts.”

Ānanda-varḍdhirī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

Hearing the sweet *veṇu-nāda*, the *vraja-devīs*, saturated with passion for Kṛṣṇa, are overpowered by *prema*. They begin talking about the various effects of the *veṇu-nāda* with the *sakhīs* of their own group. In this context they describe the loving moods of the animals, birds and other living beings of Vṛndāvana who become stunned motionless upon hearing the pleasing sound of the flute. The *gopīs* are so grave and self-controlled, however, that even after a lengthy discussion about the effect of the *veṇu-nāda* on the animals and birds, they still have not expressed their own internal feelings. As they are all restless in *pūrva-rāga*, anxiously waiting to meet with Kṛṣṇa, in separation from Him the blinking of an eye seems to pass like many eons.

Trying to hide the true emotional state of their hearts by means of *avahitthā* (concealment), the *gopīs* talk only about the various aspects of the *veṇu-nāda*'s alluring influence. Its enchanting power greatly increases their restlessness, causing them to experience such acute longing and anxiousness to meet with Kṛṣṇa that they consider even one blink of an eye to be like the passing of millions of eons full of suffering. Still, they do not express their internal *bhāvas* even slightly. Among the many topics they discuss, they speak about the Yamunā, Mānasī Gaṅgā and other rivers that flow through Vraja-maṇḍala. Through metaphors, they describe how the lifeless rivers exhibit symptoms of love, being affected by the melodious *veṇu-nāda*. The waters of the rivers are lifeless; actually, it is not possible for them to experience any transformation upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*. But the *vraja-ramaṇīs* do not differentiate between the living and non-living, their natures being controlled by their

mahābhāva. Reflecting their own mood onto all, they see all beings, whether living or non-living, to be as enchanted and agitated by the *veṇu-nāda* as they are.

In the Eleventh Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.45) the nature of devotees of superior rank is described in this way:

*sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ paśyed bhagavad-bhāvam ātmanaḥ
bhūtāni bhagavatya ātmany eṣa bhāgavatottamaḥ*

“Whatever mood and relationship a high-class *uttama-adhikārī* devotee has with his revered Lord, he sees the rest of the world also having this same mood and relationship.”

Kali-yuga *pāvanāvātārī*, the savior of the most fallen, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, said to His dear associate Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda:

*mahā-bhāgavata dekhe, sthāvara-jaṅgama
tāhāñ tāhāñ haya tāñra śrī-kṛṣṇa sphuraṇa
sthāvara jaṅgama dekhe, nā dekhe tāra mūrti
sarvatra haya tāñra iṣṭadeva-sphūrti*

Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 8.273-4)

“Wherever highly elevated *mahā-bhāgavata* devotees look, they see Kṛṣṇa manifested in everyone and everything. Although they are seeing both moving and non-moving beings, they do not look at their outer forms but perceive only their own worshipable Lord in them.”

For example, a *mahā-bhāgavata* named Mukunda fainted out of love, and fell from a balcony upon seeing a peacock feather, which had stimulated a vision of the sweetly smiling Śrī Kṛṣṇa absorbed in playing the flute. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja as being in this same category.

Those *bhāva-sādhakas* who have progressed step by step through *niṣṭhā* (steady practice) and *ruci* (taste) to the

highest level of *uttama-adhikāra*, see Bhāgavan manifested everywhere and see their own ecstasies reflected in everyone's hearts. The *vraja-ramaṇīs*, who are steeped in *mahābhāva*, are *kāya-vyūha* (bodily expansions) of *svarūpa-śakti* Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Some of the *gopīs* are *nitya-siddhas*, and along with them are also some *sādhana-siddhas*, who have reached perfection by following the moods of the *nitya-siddhas*. If such *kāmātmikā gopīs*, filled with divine amorous desires for Kṛṣṇa, see the Yamunā, Mānasī Gaṅgā and other rivers being restless with love and anxious to meet with Kṛṣṇa upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, what is surprising about this?

While roaming in the forest of Vṛndāvana, Śrī Nandanānanda Kṛṣṇa arrives at the banks of the Yamunā or Mānasī Gaṅgā. He hears the pleasant sound of flowing water, sees the lovely soft lotus flowers floating on the waves, hears the sounds of the cuckoo birds on the banks, and is touched by the gentle, fragrant breeze blowing over the rivers. He is feeling so much pleasure by this that He begins to play a sweet melody on the *veṇu* to reflect His happiness. On hearing the melodious sound of the flute, the rivers, which are ordinarily flowing, stop moving. Unlimited numbers of whirlpools appear in their hearts; their water swells up and gradually makes its way to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's chest. Due to the repeated striking of Yamunā's waves, the lotus flowers break off from their stems and present themselves at Kṛṣṇa's beautiful feet.

Upadhārya mukunda-gītam āvarta-lakṣita manobhava-bhagna-vegāḥ – Having seen all this through the eyes of their own devotional moods, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, spurred on by their *mahābhāva*, reflect within their hearts that the rivers like Śrī Yamunā and Mānasa Gaṅgā have much more love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa than they have. The rivers lose their senses upon hearing the sweet *veṇu-nāda* and, displaying various signs of *kāma* (amorous desire) in their hearts, they reveal their desperate restlessness to meet with Kṛṣṇa.

The *gopīs* express their *bhāvas* to their intimate companions, “O *sakhī*, who knows what type of wonderful, intoxicating power lies in the sound-waves of our beloved Mukunda’s flute! Look, look! See how the Yamunā, Mānasa Gaṅgā and other rivers become agitated and restless on hearing Kṛṣṇa’s *veṇu-nāda*. Many kinds of moods churn their hearts, causing thousands of whirlpools to arise from their breasts. Actually they are not whirlpools, but rather are emotions overflowing from their hearts. They gaze upon Mukunda’s enchanting beauty and hear the waves of the flute’s full range of ascending and descending melodies, both of which attract the three worlds. This has filled their hearts with so much *kāma* that they are unable to contain their emotions any longer. Therefore, instead of flowing with great force towards their husband, the ocean, they flow towards Kṛṣṇa. Not only that, with their waves in the form of hands, they gradually reach Kṛṣṇa and offer their lotus flowers at His feet. Those same arm-like waves rise up higher and embrace Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s chest.

“It is the inherent characteristic and natural action of rivers to flow towards the sea. Because all rivers are the wives of the ocean, they always diligently rush ahead to meet their husband. But the rivers that flow in Vraja-maṇḍala, like the Yamunā and Mānasa Gaṅgā, have another nature altogether. On seeing Kṛṣṇa’s enthralling beauty and hearing the enchanting waves of the *veṇu-nāda*, they no longer pay heed to the laws of society or even to the duties of a chaste wife, as they are always restless to meet with Him. By touching Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet and embracing His chest, they fulfill all their heart-felt desires and thus their lives are crowned with success.”

The word ‘Mukunda,’ as spoken in this verse by the *mahābhāvavatī gopīs*, has a deep meaning. “O *sakhī*! On hearing Mukunda’s *veṇu-gīta*,” the *gopīs* say, “the rivers become stunned and are unable to hide the feelings of *kāma*

rising in their hearts.” Śrīla Cakravartī Ṭhākura and other commentators have described ‘Mukunda’ in three ways:

1) *Muktim dadāti iti mukundaḥ*: one who bestows complete liberation from material afflictions is Mukunda.

2) ‘Mu’ – *mukti-sukham*, ‘ku’ – *kutsitam kṛtvā*, ‘da’ – *premanānandam dadāti iti mukunda*: Mukunda is He who inspires distaste for *mukti* (liberation) and bestows the pleasure of *prema* upon His devotees.

3) ‘Mu’ – *mukham* means face, ‘ku’ – *kunda-puṣpavat* means like a *kunda* flower – *kunda-puṣpavat yasya mukham saḥ mukundaḥ*: one whose face is joyful, fragrant, sweet, soft and attractive to the heart like a *kunda* flower is Mukunda.

The first meaning is meant for reward-seeking workers who are burning in the afflictions of the material world, and the second one is for *ātmārāma brahmavādīs* like Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Sanaka-Sanandana and for *nirguṇa-brahmavādīs*. The *vraja-gopīs* have no connection with these two categories. They are always intensely eager to see the delightful, gentle smile of amorous desire on Kṛṣṇa’s beautiful, love-stimulating lotus face, which causes their *prema* to increase at all times in ever new forms:

*jayati jana-nivāso devakī-janma-vādo
yadu-vara-paraṣat svair dorbhir asyann adharmam
sthira-cara-vṛjina-ghnaḥ su-smita-śrī-mukhena
vraja-pura-vanitānām vardhayan kāma-devam²⁴*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.90.48)

24 “All glories to the victorious Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is known as *jana-nivāsa*, the ultimate resort of all living entities, and who is also known as Devakī-nandana, meaning Yaśodā-nandana. (It is *vāda*, only theory, that He is the son of Devakī of Mathurā.) He is the guide of the Yadu dynasty, and with His devotees, who are just like His own mighty arms, He kills everything unfavorable, as well as all impious persons. By His presence He destroys all inauspiciousness for the living entities, moving and inert. His blissful smiling face always increases the amorous desires of the Vraja maidens.”

The *gopīs* are always unable to hide the symptoms of love in their hearts. Even though they try, they fail.

Another *sakhī* says, “These rivers are more fortunate than us. Being controlled by *kāma*, they can satisfy Kṛṣṇa’s senses; but we, because of our chastity, shyness and ill luck, are unable to do so. They keep Kṛṣṇa’s feet on their soft lotus-like breasts and caress them with their soft lotus-like hands, thus making their lives successful.

“Although they meet with Kṛṣṇa as their paramour, which is improper for a chaste woman, their loving behavior with Him is always spotless and pure. This is because our Kṛṣṇa is Murāri, He who killed the demon called Mura. Everyone in Vraja knows that when Gargācārya was conducting Kṛṣṇa’s name-giving ceremony, he had said, ‘*Nārāyaṇa-sama-gunaiḥ*. This boy will have all the same qualities as Śrī Nārāyaṇa and will attract everyone.’ Just as touching the feet of Śrī Nārāyaṇa and serving Him does not violate the vow of a chaste wife, in the same way there is no harm in serving and touching the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose qualities are the same as Śrī Nārāyaṇa’s.”

In *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has described the word *murāri* in this fifteenth verse based on Śrī *Vāmana Purāṇa*’s account of a demon called Mura. He was the son of Kaśyapa Ṛṣi and his wife Danu. Mura saw that his brother and many other valiant demons were killed in the battle between the demigods and the demons. Being afraid, he ran away from the battleground and in a dense forest began to perform severe austerity to propitiate Brahmā, the universal grandsire.

Brahmā was pleased seeing Mura’s intense austerities and appeared before him to ask what blessing he wanted. Mura immediately requested, “If you are happy with me, then give me the blessing that whosoever I touch with my palm will immediately die, even if he is immortal.” Brahmājī replied,

"*Tathāstu*. So be it." After giving him this boon, he returned to Brahma-loka. Mura then went to Mount Sumeru, where he challenged the demigods, Yakṣas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and others to fight. Everyone, however, was afraid to take up his challenge, because they knew about the boon granted him by Brahmā and feared being destroyed.

Proud of his power, Mura traversed the three worlds looking for someone with whom to fight. But there was not one brave hero prepared to oblige him. He finally reached Yama-loka and challenged Yamarāja, the god of death, who politely replied, "You are very powerful; before you I am insignificant. If you really want to fight, then go and battle with Viṣṇu. He will certainly smash your pride. Except for Him I don't see any warrior of your caliber in the entire three worlds."

On hearing this Mura became happy and asked Yamarāja, "Where does this Viṣṇu live? Where can I find Him?" Smiling, Yamarāja replied, "It is very difficult to locate Him. Although He is certainly omnipresent, still you should go to Viṣṇu-loka. There He can easily meet with you." Mura followed the route indicated by Yamarāja and arrived on Viṣṇu-loka. There he met Bhagavān Viṣṇu, who asked, "Why have you come here?" Mura replied, "I have come to engage in battle with You." The Lord retorted, "Mura! You have come here to fight, but your heart is trembling like that of a frightened old man. I do not fight with cowards." Mura laughed very loudly when he heard Śrī Nārāyaṇa's words and, proudly moving his hands towards his heart, said, "How is my heart trembling?"

As soon as his hands touched his chest, he fell down on the ground like a mangled tree and, wailing loudly, he died. Śrī Nārāyaṇa then used His *cakra* (disc) to cut the demon's heart into pieces. Seeing this, the demigods boarded their celestial airplanes and, cheering His victory in chorus, showered flowers on Bhagavān Śrī Nārāyaṇa. Now free

from anxiety, they again became absorbed in activities for the welfare of the world. From that day on, Bhagavān Śrī Nārāyaṇa became famous as Murāri.

The *goṇīs* had once heard this tale from the respected Paurṇamāsī. One of them now said, “*Sakhī!* Our Kṛṣṇa is brave like Śrī Nārāyaṇa, who killed the Mura demon, and He has all the same qualities. That is why Mānasī Gaṅgā, Yamunā and other rivers neglect their husband, the ocean, and instead flow towards Kṛṣṇa and embrace Him. But even then their vow of chastity is not violated.” There is a hidden intention in the *goṇīs*’ words: “Kṛṣṇa is brave like Nārāyaṇa and has the Lord’s other qualities as well. If we give up our regard for public opinion, self-control and duties, and neglect our husbands to meet and embrace Kṛṣṇa, then for us also there will be no possibility of deviating from our religious duties.”

There is another profound reason the *goṇīs* call Kṛṣṇa ‘Murāri.’ By his cruel activities Mura always persecuted the demigods, who lived in constant fear of his atrocities. Killing that demon, Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa made the demigods feel secure and confident again. The cowherd maidens think, “We have taken shelter of Śrī Nanda-nandana, who has all the qualities of Nārāyaṇa, the destroyer of the Mura demon. From our childhood in Vraja, we were raised with Him, so it is a very sad state of affairs that we are now always being harassed by *kāma* (Cupid). Despite being aware of this, this killer of Mura does not punish the demon of our *māra* (*kāma*). Śrī Nārāyaṇa became famous as Murāri by killing the demon Mura and making the demigods fearless. In a similar way, if Kṛṣṇa kills our *māra*, He will be famous as *Mārāri*. Then everyone will recognize that He has the same qualities as Śrī Nārāyaṇa, otherwise not. And with the destruction of our *māra*, we *vraja-ramaṇīs* will also heave a sigh of relief.”

In the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, four meanings of the word *mura* are given:

*muraḥ kleśe ca santāpe kāmabhoge ca karmaṇām
daitya-bhede hāris teṣāṁ murāris tena kīrtyate*

They are: *kleśa* (suffering), *santāpa* (agony), *kāmabhoga* (indulgence in lust) and the demon, *Mura*. Bhagavān destroys these four types of demons – *kleśa*, *santāpa*, *kāma-tāpa* (the burning fire of lust) and the demon called *Mura* – and is therefore known as *Murāri*. Just as Śrī Nārāyaṇa is the enemy of the *Mura* demon, in the same way Kṛṣṇa is the enemy of mundane *kāma*, or lust. If someone is consumed by lust and prays to Kṛṣṇa to attain sense gratification or even for relief from the torment of his lust, then Kṛṣṇa takes away all these degraded and insignificant material desires and transforms them into spiritual *kāma*:

*kāma lāgi kṛṣṇa bhaje pāye kṛṣṇa-rase
kāma chāḍi dāsa haite haya abhilāṣe
Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.41)*

“If any person worships Śrī Kṛṣṇa to fulfill his material desires, Kṛṣṇa either fulfills all his desires or destroys them, and then gives him pure *prema*. As a result that person becomes absorbed in serving Kṛṣṇa with great love.”

The *vraja-ramaṇīs* say, “O *sakhī*, look! By observing their flow and movements, we can clearly understand that the *Yamunā* and *Mānasī Gaṅgā* are possessed by *kāma*. Coming close to Kṛṣṇa, their *kāma* changes into *prema*. Seeing the whirlpools which have arisen as a result of hearing Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda*, we can clearly understand that the rivers' hearts are agitated by *kāma*. So, leaving their husband,

the sea, they come to Kṛṣṇa and embrace Him with their arm-like waves.”

A lusty person, upon obtaining what he desires, becomes immediately involved in enjoyment. But the behavior of pure *premī* devotees is always opposite. In spotless *viśuddha-prema*, when a lover meets his beloved, he immediately tries to please her with various kinds of services. Ordinary *kāma* means enjoyment, but *prema* means serving the inner heart's desire of one's beloved. Material lust seems pleasurable but ultimately results in pain and sadness. *Prema* seems painful but culminates in sublime pleasure. *Kāma* is compared to rusted iron, while *prema* is pure like unalloyed gold, so there is a world of difference between them.

Āliṅgana-sthagītam ūrmi-bhujair murārer gṛhṇanti pādā-yugalaṁ kamalopahārāḥ – “The *prema* of the Yamunā and Mānāsī Gaṅgā is immaculate and pure. Out of affection for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, these waters sometimes assume *dākṣiṇya-bhāva*, a submissive, rightist mood, and embrace Him. On seeing their *dākṣiṇya-bhāva*, however, Kṛṣṇa takes up a contrary, leftist mood, *vāmya-bhāva*, in order to taste some special kind of *rasa*, and does not respond to their embrace. When the rivers note Kṛṣṇa's neglectful mood, they become embarrassed. They withdraw their embrace and, with their waves as arms, quickly offer a lotus flower at His lotus feet. After washing Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet with their cool water, they offer Him the lotus. O *sakhī*! It is clear from the behavior of the Yamunā and the other rivers that they have left their audacious behavior and, feeling ashamed, are repeatedly bathing Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.”

According to literatures like *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and other *rasa-śāstras* (scriptures describing the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's loving exchanges with His devotees), it is seen that the *nāyikās'* prominent *bhāva* is leftist, or contrary. This expression of love is called *kandarpa-sambandhinī uttamā rati*,

sublime love controlled by Cupid. It has three main characteristics: the ladylove (the *nāyikā*) conceals her *kāma*, she repeatedly rejects the proposals of the *nāyaka* (the lover), and they rarely get to meet.

*bahu vāryate khalu yatra pracchanna-kāmuktvañ ca
yā ca mitho durlabhatā sā manmathasya paramā-rati
Ujjvala-nīlamanī (nāyaka-bheda prakaraṇam 20)*

Sometimes, however, in special situations like separation, the *nāyikā* exhibits *dākṣiṇya-bhāva*, a submissive mood. For example, Kṛṣṇa disappeared during the *rāsa* dance, and in the *gopīs'* suffering due to separation from Him, they left their normal behavior and expressed their *dākṣiṇya-bhāva*:

*praṇata-kāma-dam padmajārcitaṁ
dharaṇi-maṇḍanam dhyeyam-āpadi
caraṇa-pankajaṁ śantamañ ca te
ramaṇa naḥ staneṣv arpayādhi-han
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.31.13)*

“O dear-most beloved, only You can remove our sorrow. Your lotus feet, which fulfill all the desires of Your surrendered devotees, are worshiped by the lotus-born Brahmā. Your lotus feet are the very ornament embellishing the Earth. Just by meditating on Your lotus feet, all difficulties are destroyed, and by serving Them one receives unparalleled happiness. Kindly place those lotus feet on our breasts and in this way pacify our agitated hearts.”

This *dākṣiṇya-bhāva* is not favored much by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the charming lover who is the entire, everlasting ocean of the nectar of *rasa* (*akhila-rasāmṛta-sindhu dhira-lalita nāyaka*). That is why, on seeing the *gopīs'* right-wing, submissive mood, He sometimes does not express much interest.

Here, through analogy the *gopīs* attribute their own deep, inner moods to the rivers.

On hearing Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda*, the Yamunā and the other rivers exhibit abnormal behavior: they start flowing in the opposite direction, whirlpools arise, being stunned they stop flowing, and then their waters swell. Seeing all these changes, the *gopīs*, drowning in *mahābhāva*, believe that the rivers also nurture deep passionate feelings for Kṛṣṇa, and by analogy discuss (*ālāpa-pralāpa*)²⁵ with each other the many manifestations of the rivers' moods. When the *gopīs'* emotions subside, as a natural characteristic of their *prema*, they consider themselves unfortunate. Heaving a long sigh, they say, "O *sakhī!* We are most afflicted. Our lives and youth have been wasted. We have never once seen Kṛṣṇa to our full satisfaction. Even after hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, because we are not able to give up our shyness, chastity, self-control, social obligations and household duties, we cannot present ourselves in front of Kṛṣṇa. We are unable to embrace Him and freely offer gifts of flowers at His lotus feet as the rivers do. Alas, alas! If we *gopa-ramaṇīs* were rivers like Yamunā or Mānasī Gaṅgā, then we also would sacrifice our everything on hearing Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda*, and would come to Him unrestrained. Then we would be able to embrace Him and touch His lotus feet.

"By taking birth as cowherd girls we have been deprived in every respect. Now we fully understand that birth as a river is billions of times better than as a *gopī*. A river can easily associate with Kṛṣṇa freely and attain so much of His rare, invaluable service. It is not possible to have all this as a *gopī*. O *sakhī!* We do not know what severe austerities and worship they have performed to take birth in Vraja-maṇḍala as rivers. If we knew, then we also would leave everything and follow in their footsteps. Vidhata, O Creator! We don't know how

26 Many varieties of pleasing, witty, flattering remarks and jesting nonsense.

many offenses we have committed at your feet that you have deprived us of meeting Kṛṣṇa and have put so many obstacles in our way, binding us in the prison of household life. Alas! Will we ever in any way be successful in having a relationship with Kṛṣṇa?"

Observing the moods and behavior of the rivers, the Vraja damsels, immersed in *mahābhāva*, express their various moods with unlimited waves of emotions tossing in the boundless ocean of their hearts. The oneness of the moods of the *gopīs* with those of Śrī Yamunā and Mānasī Gaṅgā is a rare and unique vision. Blessed are these *vraja-ramaṇīs*, in whom *mahābhāva* resides, blessed is their sweetheart Kṛṣṇa, and blessed is this Vraja-bhūmi.



Verse Sixteen

*dṛṣṭvātape vraja-paśūn saha rāma-gopaiḥ
sañcārayantam anu veṇum udīrayantam
prema-pravṛddha uditaḥ kusumāvalībhiḥ
sakhyur vyadhāt sva-vapūṣāmbuda ātapatram*

dṛṣṭvā – seeing; *ātape* – in the full heat of the sun; *vraja-paśūn* – the domestic animals of Vraja (the cows); *saha* – together with; *rāma-gopaiḥ* – Śrī Baladeva and the cowherd boys; *sañcārayantam* – herding together; *anu* – repeatedly; *veṇum* – His flute; *udīrayantam* – loudly playing; *prema* – out of love; *pravṛddha* – expanded; *uditaḥ* – high note; *kusuma-āvalībhiḥ* – with particles of water vapor, which are like clusters of flowers; *sakhyuḥ* – for his friend (who is the same color – *śyāma*); *vyadhāt* – he made; *sva-vapūṣā* – out of his own body; *ambuda* – the clouds; *ātapatram* – an umbrella (composed of clouds).

Translation

“Dear friend, these rivers are indeed the wealth of our Vṛndāvana, but please consider the clouds for a moment. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Baladeva Prabhu take the cows out to graze in the heat of the sun with all the cowherd boys, Śrī Kṛṣṇa plays loudly and sweetly on His flute again and again, and the clouds begin to hover above Them. The clouds become completely saturated with affection for Kṛṣṇa and cover the whole sky with their bodies, forming an umbrella

to protect Him. When the clouds begin to sprinkle fine rain upon Them, it seems that they are showering Them with lovely white flowers. What can I say? These clouds are offering Him their very lives because they have so much love for their intimate friend, Ghanaśyāma²⁶.”

Ānanda-varddhinī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

Upon hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, the *vraja-devīs*, always lost in their all-consuming attachment for Kṛṣṇa, are rendered helpless by their love and become extremely restless. They talk to each other about the *veṇu-nāda*, but they do not even know what they are saying. Through *avahittā* they try to hide the profound feelings of their hearts within by speaking with extreme caution, but sometimes, being overwhelmed by their *prema*, they are not able to conceal the deep secret of their overwhelming affection for Kṛṣṇa. The word *gopī* originates from *gūpta*, meaning to keep hidden. One who can keep her affection for Kṛṣṇa concealed in her heart is a *gopī*.²⁷ But love for Kṛṣṇa is such a self-effulgent, other-worldly and transcendental flavor that, even after thousands of attempts to conceal it, it spills out in some form or other.

In the previous verse, while describing the Vraja rivers' *bhāvas*, which resulted from hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, the *gopīs* unwittingly end up openly revealing their hearts' secret love for Kṛṣṇa. But when their emotions subside a little,

²⁶ Ghanaśyāma – a name of Kṛṣṇa, meaning “dark like a rain cloud.”

²⁷ The *gopīs* have so much love for Kṛṣṇa but they will never openly admit this. Rather, they will say the exact opposite and even criticize and admonish Him. When the *gopīs* go to meet Him, they keep what they are doing a secret. They never tell their husbands or families where they are going. They will say they are going to worship the Sun-god or to fetch water. Anything kept secret becomes more flavorful.

they look at each other shyly and wonder, “Oh no! What have we done?” They bite their tongues and, in order to hide the *bhāvas* previously expressed, say, “O *sakhī!* From His very infancy, Kṛṣṇa has been bathing, playing games in the water and enjoying rowing boats in the Yamunā, Mānasa Gaṅgā and the other rivers. That’s why it is natural for the rivers to have fond feelings for Him. So it is no wonder that the mood in the rivers’ hearts is transformed upon hearing Mukunda’s flute song.

“But just see these clouds who are floating in the sky. One cannot help but be amazed to see their love for Kṛṣṇa! Clouds are not always present in the sky, but as soon as they see Kṛṣṇa, they become so filled with such an inexpressible love that they immediately come into sight. We have lived in Vraja from infancy, and we see Kṛṣṇa from time to time, but for us to exhibit the friendly behavior (*sakhya-bhāva*) of the clouds towards Kṛṣṇa is impossible. Do you know why? I feel that the color of Kṛṣṇa’s body resembles the blackish hue of the clouds, His bright yellow cloth is like lightning, and His *veṇu-nāda* is akin to thunder. That is why the clouds love Nanda-nandana like a friend, and by their exchange of love with Him, they make their lives successful. Such loving behavior is most praiseworthy.

“When Śrī Kṛṣṇa goes for cow-grazing with Baladeva, Śrīdāmā, Subala and the other *sakhās* and they arrive in Govardhana’s meadows or at the banks of the Yamunā at midday, the heat of the sun is so intense that all the *gopas* and cows feel quite tired. At that time, to collect the cows who are roaming about in the pastures, Kṛṣṇa puts the flute to His lips and calls them as He stands in His charmingly crooked *tri-bhaṅga-lalita* posture. The cows all become spellbound and gather before Him, some standing on the burning rocks and others on the scorching hot sand.

With unblinking eyes they drink in Kṛṣṇa's extremely beautiful and sweet appearance (*rūpa-mādhurī*) which charms the whole world. While gazing at Him they become so absorbed in pleasure that the burning rocks and sand actually feel cool to them." Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described this symptom of *rāga* as that state of *prema* in which even extreme suffering is experienced as happiness:

*duḥkham apy adhikaṁ citte sukhatvenaiva rajyate
yatas tu praṇayotkarṣāt sa rāga iti kīrtyate
Ujjvala-nilāmaṇi (sthāyī-bhāva prakaraṇa 126)*

At that time, not seeing any other means for giving the cows relief from the heat, Kṛṣṇa plays the *malhāra rāga*. Upon hearing the ascending and descending scales of this heart-rending *rāga*, the clouds immediately gather together in the sky and begin sprinkling soothing drops of water. The burning rocks and stones immediately cool down with the refreshing shade of the clouds and their gentle shower. The cowherd boys and cows also get relief. It seems that the clouds, by their movements in the sky and their cooling shower inspired by Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda*, have made their bodies into a huge umbrella. Out of their love for Him, they offer raindrops, the essence of their life, to relieve Him from the heat.

"So listen, *sakhī*, these clouds are millions of times more fortunate than us. We are so unlucky that we cannot offer our bodies or wealth in any kind of service to Kṛṣṇa. But these clouds completely surrender their bodies to form an umbrella to protect Him from the scorching rays of the sun. With their raindrops they also cool down the hot rocks and stones and make the sand pleasantly refreshing so that He will not feel any discomfort. Seeing Kṛṣṇa, these friends of His slowly emit their rumbling sounds of thunder as if blowing the conch

shell to welcome Him. Oh! If the Creator had made us clouds instead of *gopīs*, then we also could surrender our bodies, minds, wealth and our everything for Kṛṣṇa's service, just as these clouds have done. Alas! In this birth as *gopīs* we have been completely deprived of service to Kṛṣṇa. *Sakhī*, see how much *anurāga* these clouds have for Him."

One *sakhī* holds the hand of another, both of them drowning in their feelings of love, and says, "Look, *sakhī*! The clouds have caught sight of their beloved friend Śyāmsundara, and their hearts have melted. These are not drops of rain coming down but cool tears that fall due to the rising of their *sāttvika-bhāva*, which is stimulated by seeing their bosom friend. When a great personality arrives, his dear ones worship him by bathing his feet with cool scented water, offering sandalwood paste, flowers and other items, and welcoming him by playing musical instruments. In the same way these cloud banks, on catching sight of their friend Kṛṣṇa, who is millions of times more dear to them than their own lives, shower soft snow-like drops of water as if bathing and offering flowers to His lotus feet. They sound their deep rumbling thunder as if blowing a conch shell in welcome."

In this way, out of humility resulting from their natural love for Kṛṣṇa, the *vraja-devīs*, possessed of *ānurāga* for Kṛṣṇa, call themselves unfortunate and the clouds supremely fortunate. By talking about the *sakhya-bhāva* of the clouds, they try to hide their very sweet and deep attachment for Kṛṣṇa. The meaning behind the *gopīs*' discussion is, "We are young ladies, *ramaṇīs*. For this reason we thought that we were the only ones who love Śyāmsundara, but now we see that this is not the fact. Whosoever sees Kṛṣṇa's beautiful form or listens to His flute song becomes totally absorbed in *bhāva*. Thus enchanted, he fully offers himself at His lotus feet.

“*Sakhī*, we are tied by the ropes of self-control, shyness, family obligations, chastity, respect, fear and other such restrictions, and are therefore unable to render any type of service to Kṛṣṇa. Not only that, just to get the chance to see Him is quite difficult for us. And even if we are able to catch sight of Him or hear His *veṇu-nāda*, then immediately our hearts become so bewildered that we can neither fix our gaze upon Him nor do any kind of service. In Vraja the animals, birds and even the clouds floating in the sky are much more fortunate than us, because they are never stricken by such bewilderment that hinders them from seeing Kṛṣṇa or doing something for His pleasure. We do not have even a tinge of *prema*. That is why, in spite of hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, we still remain engaged in useless household activities. Alas, alas! In all respects we are such unfortunate girls.”



Verse Seventeen

*pūrṇāḥ pulindya urugāya-padābja-rāga-
śrī-kuṅkumena dayitā-stana-maṇḍitena
tat-darśana-smara-rujaḥ tṛṇa-rūṣitena
limpantya ānana-kuceṣu jahus tadādhim*

pūrṇāḥ – fully satisfied; *pulindya* – the young girls of the lower-caste Śabara tribe; *urugāya* – of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who loudly sings a very sweet song by mouth or flute; *pada-abja* – from the lotus feet; *rāga* – the reddish color of affection; *śrī-kuṅkumena* – through the beautiful *kuṅkuma* powder or paste; *dayitā* – of His beloved (Śrī Rādhā); *stana* – the breasts; *maṇḍitena* – which had adorned; *tat* – of that; *darśana* – by the sight; *smara* – by the force of *kāma* (amorous desire); *rujaḥ* – the burning torment of desire; *tṛṇa* – upon the blades of grass; *rūṣitena* – touching; *limpantya* – smearing; *ānana* – upon their faces; *kuceṣu* – and breasts; *jahuḥ* – they gave up; *tat* – that; *adhim* – the disease of the heart or the anguish caused by *kāma*.

Translation

“O *sakhī*! These Pulindīs, the young maidens who live in the forest, are fully satisfied because they possess *anurāga*, extraordinary attachment, for Śrī Śyāmasundara within their hearts. When they see Him, the pain of divine lust arises within them and their hearts are struck with the disease of love. And when they see the grass covered with

kuṅkuma, these forest maidens are immediately overwhelmed by the burning torment of *smara*. This reddish *kuṅkuma*, coming from Śyāmasundara's lotus feet when He roams about Vṛndāvana, adorned the breast of one of His beloveds. The supremely fortunate Pulindī girls take this *kuṅkuma* and smear it on their faces and breasts, and in this way alleviate the anguish of their desire."

Ānanda-varddhinī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

The *vraja-ramaṇīs*, madly in love with Kṛṣṇa, are describing to their *sakhīs* the many different aspects of the sweetness of the *veṇu-nāda* and its wonderful effects on all those who hear it. Overpowered by their emotions, the *gopīs* do not realize what they are saying. As they are describing the loving moods of the Yamunā, Mānaśi Gaṅgā and other rivers, the external symptoms of their deep passion for Kṛṣṇa automatically appear as a result of seeing Him. Having expressed their feelings openly, they become embarrassed and again try to hide them. Covering their *madhura-bhāva* with *sakhya-bhāva*, they begin describing the clouds that have gathered in the sky due to the *veṇu-nāda*.

Because of the powerful effect of the *gopīs'mahābhāva*, however, this attempt to hide their feelings does not last long. By remembering the Pulinda girls of the forest, the *gopīs* again become completely absorbed in their own *bhāva*, saying, "Sakhī, the luster of Śyāma's complexion is somewhat similar to the color of the clouds floating in the sky, His bright yellow cloth resembles their lightning, and His *veṇu-nāda* sounds like their thunder. Because of these similarities, the clouds and Kṛṣṇa are friends. It is natural that the clouds have affection

for Him. For us to describe their relationship is not strange or unnatural. But when we see the fortune of the Pulinda *kanyās* (fresh, young maidens) who move through the forest, it seems that they also are so much more fortunate than us.”

Living in the forest land of Vṛndāvana are many types of men and women from various tribal castes like Pulinda, Śābara and Bhīla. Some of the men from these tribes work as palanquin carriers in the towns and villages of Vraja. Others work for the higher castes – tilling the fields, digging and doing other types of menial labor for their living. Their wives, daughters and other tribeswomen go from forest to forest in their spare time to collect dry wood, cow dung, varieties of edible green leaves, fruits, roots and other things.

The *ramaṇīs* of the Pulinda, Śābara and other low-caste tribes never come near Kṛṣṇa, nor does He maintain any relationship with them. Even so, how can they be bereft of hearing Kṛṣṇa’s supremely enchanting *veṇu-nāda*? In other words, how can they remain untouched by Kṛṣṇa’s love? Sometimes, hearing the *veṇu-nāda* from afar, they tell many stories about Kṛṣṇa to each other while, unbeknownst to them, *kṛṣṇa-prema* sprouts in their hearts.

In his *Vraja-vilāsa-stava* Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has described that all the grasses, shrubs, trees, snakes, animals, birds, worms and insects of Vraja are completely filled with bliss, and help to enrich Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. In the Vedic scriptures there is much evidence that, on seeing their serving mood, even great perfected sages and *bhakti-yogīs* like Brahmā and Śiva aspire to take birth in these species. So why would young girls like the Pulindīs be deprived of nourishing Kṛṣṇa’s *līlās*? It is simply not possible. In some way or other, they also help enrich His pastimes.

These Pulinda *kanyās* live either in the forest or near the hilly region of Vraja. On the pretext of performing *sūrya-pūjā*,

worship of the Sungod, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, yearning to meet Kṛṣṇa, go to Kusuma Sarovara to pick flowers, or sometimes they go to meet Him at Sūrya-kuṇḍa, Bhāṇḍiravan and other wonderful places. These simple-natured Pulinda girls collect many varieties of beautiful fragrant flowers and offer them to the *vraja-devīs*, who use them to fashion exquisite garlands, necklaces, armlets and other types of floral ornaments for presenting to Kṛṣṇa. The *vraja-ramaṇīs*, being pleased with the Pulinda maidens' carefree and simple behavior, sometimes talk with them lovingly about Kṛṣṇa's enchanting beauty and qualities. By the association of the extraordinarily influential *vraja-ramaṇīs*, the tribal girls' hearts are infused with *prema*.

In *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* (2.7.14) Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī describes the glory of such saintly association in a very heart-touching way:

*mahat-saṅgam mähātmyam evaitat paramādbhutam
kṛtārtho yena viprāsau sadyo 'bhūt tat-svarūpavat*

“The glory of *mahat-saṅga*, the association of great personalities, is extremely wonderful. By the effect of such affiliation, the *brāhmaṇa* Jana Śarmā immediately became perfect like his *gurudeva*, Śrī Svarūpa.”

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī further clarifies this verse in his commentary: “You may say that one can get the love-laden service of Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa by performing various types of severe practices, and even then it is only after a long time that one receives the special mercy of Bhagavān. Considering this, how could this *brāhmaṇa* have obtained such a rare treasure without any endeavor?” To dispel this doubt the *mahat-saṅgam* verse has been written. In fact, the effect of affiliation with a greatly exalted personality, a *mahāt-puruṣa*, is so glorious that, without doing any *sādhana*,

the *brāhmaṇa* became perfect like Śrī Svarūpa. One may ask how this impossible phenomenon could happen. The answer is that such a doubt is not proper, because the influence of a *mahat-puruṣa*'s association is extremely miraculous and beyond logic, and therefore it can make anything happen.”

In his *Govinda-līlāmṛta* (10th *sarga*), Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has mentioned the Pulinda girls in the chapter describing *vaṁśī-corī-līlā*, the pastime of stealing the flute. One day, seeing the audacity of the flute, the *goṇīs* stole him. When Kṛṣṇa realized that His flute was missing, He became very anxious. Seeing His distress, Lalitā and the other *sakhīs* smiled and started making fun of Him. Śrī Lalitājī said, “O crown jewel of debauchees! Why are you so concerned about a dry piece of bamboo? At Govardhana there are two Pulinda girls named Mallī and Bhṛṅgī, who are our *sakhīs*. They are expert in the art of woodcarving. If you just give me the word, I will get you ten or twenty pieces of bamboo with so many holes.”

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has also described the Pulinda *kanyās* in the story of the dice game in his *San̄kalpa-kalpadruma*. In this *līlā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa was defeated, and the *goṇīs* clapped with satisfaction.

Kṛṣṇa became slightly embarrassed and cautiously said, “Lalitā! This time I am putting up My flute as a wager. Tell me what your *sakhī* is going to stake in exchange.”

Lalitājī immediately replied, “Just tell us what you want Her to wager.”

Kṛṣṇa answered, “The embrace of your beloved *sakhī*.”

Lalitājī agreed, “*Evam astu*. So be it.”

The dice game began again, and this time Śrīmatījī was defeated. But She, having cleverly signaled Bhṛṅgī to come and sit next to Her, said to Kṛṣṇa, “This girl Bhṛṅgī is my representative, so think of her as Me and embrace her.”

Bhṛṅgī was completely embarrassed, and the *sakhīs* smiled sweetly. How fortunate these Pulinda girls are! In this way they are also helpful in fostering Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

When these Pulinda girls are wandering about collecting dry cow dung in the forests, they see the *kuṅkuma* from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet spread all over the grass and are overwhelmed with the anguish of lust. They wipe off some *kuṅkuma* from the grass and hold it to their nostrils to smell it, thereby becoming attracted to its enchanting fragrance which ignites their *kāma*. Drowning in *bhāva*, they smear it all over their faces, but even then the intense heat of the *kāma* in their hearts is not relieved. Finally, they rub off the rest of the *kuṅkuma* from the grass and adorn their breasts with it. This makes them feel like they are meeting with Kṛṣṇa, or are actually touching His body. Thus their burning *kāma* is pacified.

And why wouldn't that happen? The fragrance of Śrī Rādhā's body along with the fragrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and the fragrance of the *kuṅkuma* itself combine as the Triveṇī,²⁸ producing such an extraordinarily powerful scent that, upon entering the Pulindīs' hearts, the unbearable heat of their *kāma* is instantly cured.

The *vraja-ramaṇīs*, desperately in love with Kṛṣṇa, do not actually go to the forest and directly witness what is happening to the Pulinda *kanyās*. Rather, while they are sitting in their homes they hear the *veṇu-nāda*; a storm of feelings arises and immediately a vision of all these events flashes clearly in their hearts. With deeply felt words they relate this to the beloved *sakhīs* in their own group, who cherish the very same *bhāvas*.

Is it possible that, while sitting far away in their houses, they can describe what is happening in the hills and forests? Yes, it is possible. The effect of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* is so wonderful that it endows miraculous powers like omniscience upon those

28 Confluence of the Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī Rivers in Prayāg.

who are blessed with it. The glory of Bhakti Mahādevī (the personification of *bhakti*) is presented in *Nārada-pāñcarātra*:

*hari-bhakti-mahādevyāḥ sarvā muktādisiddhayaḥ
bhuktyaś cādbhutās tasyāś ceṭikāvad anuvratāḥ*

“*Sālokya* (living on the same planet as Kṛṣṇa) and the other four types of *mukti* (liberation), the eight *siddhis* (mystic perfections) including *aṇimā* (becoming smaller than the smallest) and *laghimā* (becoming lighter than the lightest), omniscience, the post of Indra and the post of Brahmā are all maidservants of Hari-bhakti Mahādevī. So wherever Mahādevī Hari-bhakti is present, her maidservants – the *bhuktis* (heavenly enjoyments), *siddhis* and *muktis* – automatically appear there with folded hands, always waiting for orders.”

The *vraja-ramaṇīs* are situated on the highest level of *bhakti*. No, no – they are the direct embodiment of *bhakti*. There is no doubt that all the *muktis*, *siddhis* and others wait for the *gopīs*' order. What to speak of the *gopīs*, even the great personality Sañjaya, by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa, received divine vision (*divya-dṛṣṭi*). Sitting so far away in the royal palace of Hastināpura, he could see the distant battle at Kurukṣetra and described the whole battle scene to Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra. If he could do this, why would this not be possible for the *mahābhāvavatī gopīs*? When they are absorbed in deep loving moods and are discussing Kṛṣṇa's enchanting beauty, His astonishing *veṇu-nāda* and the effect of both on the animals and birds, then all kinds of unknown happenings in line with their moods shine brilliantly in their eyes of *bhāva*. In this way the *vraja-ramaṇīs* who are sitting in their homes can see the condition of the Pulinda *kanyās*, and share their feelings with their closest *sakhīs*:

*tad-darśana-smara-rujas tṛṇa-rūṣitena
līmpantya ānana-kuceṣu jahus tad-ādhim*

Lost in their *mahābhāva* the *vraja-ramaṇīs* say, “O *sakhī!* Just see how these Pulinda *kanyās*, taking the *kuṅkuma* from the grass to rub on their faces, breasts and other parts of their bodies, are sinking in the ocean of bliss! This pleasure blossoms in every hair on their bodies. It seems that this is not ordinary *kuṅkuma*. Certainly this *kuṅkuma*, which looks very beautiful on the green grass mixed with drops of morning dew, is from the lotus feet of our sweetheart Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is impossible for such *bhāva* to arise at the sight of ordinary *kuṅkuma*, or to experience supreme pleasure by smearing it on oneself. This is why I say that these particles of *kuṅkuma* surely come from Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet and have somehow been pressed onto the grass. See how these Pulindī girls have become intoxicated with its sweet scent! Sitting nearby, they first sniff it and immediately experience indescribable feelings of joy. The torment of divine lust arises in their hearts, and they smear the *kuṅkuma* on their faces. Then, when the heat of their *kāma* does not subside, they rub it on their breasts.

“Someone may say that this is not *kuṅkuma* but *mahāvara*, the red dye, from Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet which is on the grass, since no one puts *kuṅkuma* on his feet. However, such thinking is not logical. Its supernatural aroma is shouting out and declaring it to be *kuṅkuma*. But where did it come from?” Then the *vraja-ramaṇīs* stop speaking for awhile.

Śrī-kuṅkumena *dayitā-stana-maṇḍitena* – “O *sakhī!* This must be the *kuṅkuma* from the breast of some beloved (*dayitā*). Somehow it got stuck to the soles of *urugāya* Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet and came off on the grass, either when He was returning home before dawn after meeting that beloved, or when He was going for cow-grazing after engaging in mid-day pastimes at Rādhā-kuṇḍa.”

The cowherd girls address Kṛṣṇa as *urugāya*. *Urugāya-padābja-rāga* has a deep, confidential meaning. He who defeats the most sweet-sounding cuckoo bird with His varieties of pleasant, high-reaching melodies which flow rhythmically from His lotus mouth, and who emits through His *veṇu* such supremely enchanting, high-pitched tones that all the hamlets, villages, forestlands and other places of Vraja resonate the sound in ecstasy – this person is called *urugāya*. All the animals, birds and other living entities, and all the Vrajavāsīs become overjoyed in a state of supreme pleasure. Considering all this we cannot imagine the state of the *vraja-ramaṇīs* on hearing the electrifying sound of the *veṇu-nāda*, which attracts all moving and non-moving entities. Their condition can never be described.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.29.3) gives a heart-touching description of this: *jagau kalaṁ vāmadṛśāṁ manoharam*. “In the very beginning of the *rāsa-līlā*, Kṛṣṇa’s flute sings out *klīm*, a penetrating, all-attracting vibration which drives everyone mad.” The *gopa-ramaṇīs*, the lovers of the supernal Cowherd Boy, come under the control of love and instantly leave wherever they happen to be. Being pulled in the direction of the sound of the flute, they run to reach that heart-thief. Some *gopīs* are in the midst of serving their husbands, some are milking the cows. They lose control of their senses and, in whatever condition they are, start running. Those *gopīs* who are putting mascara on their eyes or decorating themselves leave everything half done. In this condition they offer in sacrifice their self-control, shyness, family obligations, chastity, honor and fear in order to quickly meet with their beloved. *Niśamya gītaṁ tad-anaṅga-varddhanam vraja-stryaḥ kṛṣṇagrṛhita-mānasāḥ*. “Kṛṣṇa attracts the *gopīs* with His sweet flute song” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.29.4).

Urugāya-padābja-rāga-śrī-kuṅkumena dayitā-stana-maṇḍitena – One of the *sakhīs* says, “O dear friend! Where did this *kuṅkuma*

on the grass come from? It smells very sweet and arouses *kāma*.” Another *sakhī* answers her: *urugāya-padābja-rāga dayitā-stana maṇḍitena śrī-kuṅkumena*. “This *kuṅkuma* came onto *urugāya* Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, having adorned the breast of His favorite beloved. Upon rubbing this *śrī-kuṅkuma*, which is the embodiment of affection (*rāga*), on their bodies, the Pulinda *kanyās* experience complete fulfillment of their desires, and their entire lives become successful.”

Here the word *dayitā* means the topmost beloved who has given her *da* – *deha* and *daihika* (body and mind) – to fully surrender Herself at the lotus feet of Her lover, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How powerful is this miraculous *kuṅkuma* which decorates the breast of that special *dayitā*! Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Vaiṣṇava-toṣanī* and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his *Sārārtha-darśinī* clearly explain that the phrase *śrī-kuṅkumena* refers to Śrīmatī Rādhikā as the most beloved *dayitā*; so here the accepted meaning of *śrī* is Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Thus, *dayitā* is understood to be that beloved who possesses the highest stage of *prema*, the special mood of *mādanākhya-bhāva*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself.

The lovesick *gopīs* become extremely restless describing both the *kuṅkuma* on Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, which has come from the breast of that *dayitā*, and the condition of the Pulinda *kanyās*. They say, “How is it that these Pulinda *kanyās*, who are simple forest dwellers, have such a high love for Kṛṣṇa? They have no direct contact with Him, but just by touching the *kuṅkuma* from His lotus feet (even though that *kuṅkuma* originally came from the *gopīs*' bodies, and besides that it is now on the grass far away from Kṛṣṇa), how they have become mad with *prema*! They pacify their burning hearts by massaging this *kuṅkuma* all over their faces and breasts. That is why their lives are successful.

“We are the only unfortunate ones in Vraja-maṇḍala. We cannot override our regard for public opinion, self-control and the rest like these Pulinda *kanyās*, nor do we go mad, adorning ourselves with the *kuṅkuma* or the dust from Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. We do not have so much *prema* for Kṛṣṇa like His *dayitā*, who sacrifices everything in every way to serve Him. Despite hearing the flute song, we still remain engrossed in our households. Alas! Woe is us! Devoid of *prema* our lives are useless. Such *vraja-ramaṇīs* as we, bereft of love, cannot even imagine the fortune of Kṛṣṇa’s beloveds.

“Leave all this talk. If we had taken birth as Pulinda *kanyās* rather than *vraja-ramaṇīs*, then we also would rub all over our bodies that *kuṅkuma* which has come onto the grass from Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. Then our lives would also be worthwhile.”

Another *sakhī* says, “What to speak of being Pulinda *kanyās*, even if we had taken birth as mere blades of grass in the forest, our lives would be successful by getting the touch of the *kuṅkuma* from the breasts of the *prema*-filled *vraja-gopīs*, which has fallen from Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. But alas! Our lives are so cursed. We have been deprived of any type of relationship with Kṛṣṇa.”

On contemplating the explanation in *Vaiṣṇava-toṣanī*, one can conclude that the *gopīs* are looking at the activities of the Pulindī girls directly through the eyes of their *bhāvas* and are admiring the good fortune of the forest girls. They have come to a sure conclusion about that especially fortunate young beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is impossible that *nāgara* Kṛṣṇa, the sweetheart who is *dhīra-lalita* (the youthful, rakish lover expert in cutting jokes) and *rasika-cūḍāmaṇi* (the crown jewel of enjoyers), is roaming about in the forest only to play His flute. He must be enjoying intimate pastimes with His topmost *nāgarī*, that ladylove who is endowed with

all superlative qualities. That is why somewhere in Vraja-
maṇḍala there must be a beloved from whose breast came the
kuṅkuma that has stuck to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet:

*tādṛśa-nāgarasya tādṛśīm vinā sthiter asambhavāt yā kācit
nigūḍha vidyate tasyāḥ stanābhyām maṇḍitam*

Who is the *mahābhāvatī vraja-ramaṇī* who possesses all
exemplary qualities and who is seated on the highest peak
of *prema*? It is told further on in *Rāsa-pañcādhyāyī*²⁹ that
Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the *rāsa-sthalī* (dancing arena) with
His own beloved. After this the *gopīs* came to the following
conclusion themselves:

*anayārādhito nūnam bhagavān harir īśvaraḥ
yan no vihāya govindaḥ pṛīto yām anayadrahaḥ*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.30.28)

“O *sakhīs*! Śrī Rādhikā is much more fortunate than
all of us! She has surely performed so much more worship
(*ārāadhanā*) of Bhagavān Śrī Hari than we have to have
received the name ‘Rādhikā.’ That is why, being very
much pleased with Her, Govinda has left us in the *rāsa-
sthalī* and gone off with Her to a solitary place.”

Almost all commentators of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* declare
that *anayārādhito* clearly refers to Śrīmatī Rādhikā as
Śrī Kṛṣṇa's dear-most sweetheart. Some distance away from
the *rāsa*, the *gopīs* saw Kṛṣṇa's beloved Rādhikā anxiously
tossing about in the pain of separation from Him. Śrīla Rūpa
Gosvāmī has commented on *mādana-bhāva*, the highest
state of *mahābhāva*, in *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi (sthāyī-bhāva-
prakaraṇam 219)*:

²⁶ Five chapters in the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describing
rāsa-līlā.

*sarva-bhāvodgamollāsī, mādano'yaṁ parātparaḥ
rājate hlādinī-sāro rādhāyām eva yaḥ sadā*

“The supreme state of exaltation in which all the various stages of *prema*, from *rati* (the eighth stage in the development of the creeper of *bhakti*) to *mahābhāva*, are manifest simultaneously in their most radiant form, is called *mādana* (*mādanākhyā*) *bhāva*.”

This *mādana-bhāva* is more exalted and delightful than *mahābhāva*, *rūḍha*, *adhirūḍha*, *modana*, *mohana* and all other loving sentiments. This glorious *bhāva* is always present in Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and in Her only; it is not found even in Her dear-most *priya-narma sahkīs* like Lalitā and Viśākhā. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s most favorite beloved of all, His life and soul, is Śrīmatī Rādhikā, from whose breast *śrī-kuṅkuma* has come onto His lotus feet.

The author of *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* also says, “Although all previously uttered expressions of the *gopīs*’ thoughts and feelings are the experiences of their own internal moods, still not one drop of these is imaginary. Because of the deep *kṛṣṇa-prema* which the Vraja beauties possess, they are able to see the invisible and that which is beyond their view as if directly in front of their eyes.” Reflecting on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam’s *yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā* (5.18.12) and other verses, one can come to understand that those who have *akiñcanā bhakti* for Bhagavān in their hearts – *bhakti* performed in a mood of seeing Kṛṣṇa as one’s only possession – are never ignorant of any subject, be it religion, science, the perceptible and the imperceptible. Consequently they have no doubt as to who is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s superlative *dayitā*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.86.42) presents a statement about Kṛṣṇa by the Dvārakā queens, which confirms this *siddhānta*:

*kāmayām aha etasya śrīmatpāda-rajah śriyaḥ
kuca-kuṅkuma-gandhādhyam mūrdhnā voḍhum gadābhṛtaḥ*

“We are always praying to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that we may wear on our heads the dust from His lotus feet, which are always fragrant with the aroma of *kuṅkuma* from Śrīmatī Rādhikā's breast.”

The same prayers are uttered by the *gopīs*, the Pulinda *kanyās* and all others in Vraja down to even the grass, bushes and creepers.

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī has written about this verse in the *Bṛhat-krama-sandarbha* commentary: *dayiteti vaktrīnām rādhā-sakhitvam spaṣṭam eva*. The meaning is that the *kuṅkuma* which had adorned the breasts of one special *dayitā* has rubbed off on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's feet. It is very evident that these words were spoken by the *sakhīs* of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

The *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* and *Krama-sandarbha* commentaries make it clear that Kṛṣṇa engages continuously in pastimes with His eternal beloved Śrī Rādhikā. Therefore, there is not a speck of doubt that this *kuṅkuma* on Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet has come from Śrīmatī Rādhikā's breast. Even while still a small child, Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifested Himself as a fresh youth (*kīṣora*) to perform various types of loving pastimes with His treasured sweetheart, Śrī Rādhikā. This is confirmed in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*:

*bālye'pi bhagavān kṛṣṇaḥ kaiṣoraṁ rūpam āśritah
reme vihārair vividhaiḥ priyayā saha rādhayā*

This *siddhānta* is also seen in the *Kṛṣṇa-yāmala-tantra*:

*ekena vapuṣā goṣa-prema-baddho rasāmbudhiḥ
anyena vapuṣā vṛndāvane krīḍati saha rādhayā*

“In Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana Śrī Kṛṣṇa in one form affectionately grazes the cows and performs pastimes with His *sakhās*, and in another form engages in various pastimes with Śrīmatī Rādhikā.”

Quoting from various verses like these, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī proves that only with Śrīmatī Rādhikā does Kṛṣṇa perform the topmost pleasurable pastimes. It is, indeed, the *kuṅkuma* of Her breast, coming from Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s feet onto the grass, which the Pulinda girls smear all over their bodies. Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s *sakhīs* and the other *vraja-ramaṇīs* are admiring the good fortune of the Pulinda girls.

In *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* in the chapter on *sthāyī-bhāva* (221), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes the external symptom (*anubhāva*) of *mādana-mahābhāva*:

*atrreṣyāyā ayogye’pi prabalerṣya-vidhāyitā
sadā bhoge’pi tad-gandha-mātrādhāras tavādayaḥ*

“In the highest state of *mahābhāva* called *mādana*, one always remains unsatisfied, thinking that Kṛṣṇa is not present with Her, even after enjoying with Him in different ways, dancing with Him and sitting on His lap.”

When Rādhā is in that condition, even an unqualified object that has the slightest scent of a relationship with Kṛṣṇa appears supremely fortunate to Her and immediately arouses feelings of jealousy. She experiences great separation in meeting and intense union in separation. Even after meeting Kṛṣṇa again and again, She forgets that She has ever met Him before. This is a wonderful and amazing characteristic of *mādana-bhāva*.

Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi quotes *pūrnāḥ pulindya* and other verses from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as proof of this. According to *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* the *pūrnāḥ pulindya* verse refers to Śrīmatī

Rādhikā because *mādana-bhāva*, which Śrīmatī Rādhikā is always experiencing, is superior even to the state of *divyonmāda* (divine madness at the time of separation) and *prema-vaicitya* (thinking one's lover is absent even while together). Even after meeting Kṛṣṇa She totally forgets that She has ever been with Him. She envies the fortune of the unqualified Pulinda *ramaṇīs*, who have barely any relationship with Kṛṣṇa at all, and at the same time She is praising them.

Who is speaking this verse? One may think that some differences in opinion exist between *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* and *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*. But Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī is one of the main *rūpānuga* Vaiṣṇavas, so it is not possible for him to have any view diverging from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Therefore, it is proper to accept the appropriate *siddhānta* only after reconciling both lines of thought. Some commentators hold the belief that Śrīmatī Rādhikā and all other *vraja-ramaṇīs* as well experience the highest expressions of love. Out of all of them Śrīmatī Rādhikā is pre-eminent, but at the same time the *prema* of other *vraja-ramaṇīs* is also not ordinary. Their expressions of love are most rare – even for the Dvārakā queens and Lakṣmī herself. Therefore, on hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, Śrī Rādhikā and the other *gopīs*, according to their moods, are thrown into an emotional turmoil, and speak incoherently about all the happenings going on around them. *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* describes the feelings of *mādanākhyā* (*mādana*) *bhāva* which arise in Śrī Rādhikā's heart upon seeing the good fortune of the Pulinda *kanyās*; and *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* describes the *bhāvas* of the other *gopīs*. We should have no doubt about this and should take it as our duty to relish the inner mood of these verses.



Verse Eighteen

*hantāyam adrir abalā hari-dāsa-varyo
yad rāma-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparśa-pramodaḥ
mānaṁ tanoti saha-go-gaṇayos tayor yat
pānīya-sūyavasa-kandara-kandamūlaiḥ*

hanta – oh (indicating distress); *ayam* – this (as if showing with the finger that Govardhana is just nearby); *adriḥ* – hill (Govardhana); *abalāḥ* – O friends (*sakhīs*, literally meaning those who have no power to serve Kṛṣṇa as Govardhana does); *hari-dāsa-varyaḥ* – the best among the servants of Hari (Hari – who steals away the mind, sinful activities and all distress); *yad rāma-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparśa* – because of the touch of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma (or because of the touch of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *ramaṇīs*); *pramodaḥ* – jubilation (giving rise to the eight *sāttvika-bhāvas*, such as hairs standing on end in the form of grass and tears in the form of cascading waterfalls on Girirāja Govardhana); *mānaṁ tanoti* – offers respect (by offering various services); *saha* – with; *go-gaṇayoḥ* – the cows, calves and cowherd boys; *tayoḥ* – to Them (to the two lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, or to the lotus feet of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala); *yat* – because; *pānīya* – with drinking water or with the fragrant cool water from Govardhana’s waterfalls; *sūyavasa* – very soft grass, food grains, flowers and fruits; *kandara* – *kuñja*-like caves; *kandamūlaiḥ* – edible roots.

Translation

“O *sakhīs*! This Girirāja Govardhana is the topmost servant of Śrī Hari. How fortunate he is indeed! Have you not seen how elated he is to obtain the touch of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is *prāṇa-vallabha*, dearer to us than life, and of Śrī Baladeva, who is *nayanābhirāma*, the source of delight for the eyes? Just see how graciously he receives Balarāma and all of Kṛṣṇa's cows and cowherd boys. He supplies cool clear water, soft green grass, wonderfully sculpted caves to rest in, and varieties of fruits and roots to eat. By offering all these opulences, Girirāja Govardhana, the king of mountains, serves and pays respect to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva Prabhu, who are surrounded by all the *gopas* and cows.”

Ānanda-oarddbhinī Vyākhyā The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

Steeped in the deepest sentiments of pure love, the *gopa-ramaṇīs*, the lovers of the supernal Cowherd Boy, are completely absorbed in describing the good fortune of the Pulindī girls living at Govardhana Hill. Automatically, the *bhāva* sheltering in their hearts shines forth. But as their emotions calm down a bit, they try to cover their internal feelings which have already spilled over, saying, “Our sweetheart Śyāmasundara roams in different picturesque areas of the supremely enchanting Vṛndāvana. In some places He becomes absorbed in herding the cows with the cowherd boys, elsewhere He is enraptured by performing many different kinds of amorous pastimes with His sweethearts in the caves and love bowers (*kuñjas*) of Govardhana, and elsewhere He enjoys playing in the water.

“Despite having eyes, however, we are so unlucky that we do not even get a chance to see Him. Despite having feet we cannot walk up to Him. Despite having arms we cannot embrace Him, because of our concern for public opinion, chastity, self-control, moral principles and other impediments. Even after hearing the *veṇu-nāda*, we still engage in our household work, thereby rendering all our senses useless. Our eyes, ears, hands and feet – all are worthless. In vain we are carrying the heavy load of our bodies. Oh! These low-caste Pulinda *kanyās*, who were previously looked down upon by all, are so incredibly blessed. Even though they have no direct contact with Kṛṣṇa, without hesitation they smear on their faces and breasts the *kuṅkuma* clinging to the grass, thereby cooling their burning hearts. In this way they make their lives successful. But we cannot even do that, despite being *goparamaṇīs*. Or if we had been born as blades of grass, our lives would be successful.”

In this way the goddesses of Vraja, the *vraja-devīs*, are desiring to be born as a blade of grass, a creeper, a tree or any other similar life form. As they are displaying all the symptoms of *mahābhava*, the great glories of Girirāja start to manifest in their hearts. Therefore they say: *hantāyam adrir abalā hari-dāsa-varyo sakhi ri!* “No desires can be fulfilled without taking shelter of great personalities and serving them. We have heard the glories of Govardhana Hill from the saintly Paurṇamāsījī. Come, let us take bath in Mānasī Gaṅgā and circumambulate Govardhana. Then we shall take *darśana* (audience) of his presiding deity, Śrī Hari-deva, worshiping and praying to Him. Our life-long desires, which are so difficult to achieve, will be fulfilled by doing this.”

This humility of the *gopīs* is natural and appropriate for their human-like pastimes (*nara-līlā*), but for *sādhakas* this subject has a special message. If someone wants to achieve the

anurāga-filled service of the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in transcendental Vṛndāvana, the only way is to take the association and shelter of the lotus feet of devotees who relish the sweetness of Vraja, the *rasika vraja-bhaktas*. That is why Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says:

*anārādhya rādhā-padāmbhoja-reṇum
anāśritya vṛndāṭavīm tat-padāṅkām
asambhāsyā tad-bhāva-gambhīra-cittān
kutaḥ śyāma-sindho rasasyāvagāhaḥ*

(Śrī Saṅkalpa-prakāśa)

“Without taking shelter of the dust of the lotus feet of *mahābhāva-svarūpa* Śrīmatī Rādhikā, whose very form is made of the highest sentiments of love, and of Vṛndāvana, which is adorned with the dust of Her lotus feet, and without hearing nectar-filled narrations from the mouths of *rasika* devotees of Vraja, it is not possible to dive into the boundless ocean of love for Śyāmasundara.”

*mahater kṛpā binā kona karme 'bhakti' naya
kṛṣṇa-bhakti dūr rahu, saṁsāra nahe kṣaya*

Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.51)

“Without the mercy of great devotees, there is no way to enter devotional service. One cannot achieve *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, or even be released from material existence.”

The moment the image of Govardhana's glory comes in their hearts, the Vraja *gopīs*, who are filled with boundless affection, immediately point their finger towards Girirāja, saying: *hantāyam adrir abalā hari-dāsa-varyaḥ*. The word *hanta* is used either in elation or amazement. After experiencing both of these emotions, the *vraja-devīs* use the word *hanta*. “By having Girirāja's *darśana* and worshiping him, our long-

awaited desires will be quickly fulfilled. We are deprived of joy, any kind of power or fortune, as well as the association, service and mercy of great personalities. That is why we are weak (*abalā*). Will there ever be a time when Girirāja will give us his mercy and we will have that great fortune? This would be amazing.” For these two reasons the word *hanta* is used here. The *gopīs* regretfully describe themselves as weak, by which they are trying to say, “We have no strength to abandon our social obligations and self-control. We are not able to break the chains of society and thus be freed to come before our beloved Śyāmasundara to surrender everything at His lotus feet.”

The *vraja-ramaṇīs*, overwhelmed in *prema*, tell about the glory of Girirāja, “O *sakhī*! Girirāja Govardhana is *hari-dāsa-varya*, the topmost servant of Hari (Kṛṣṇa). In the entire universe there are many kinds of *hari-dāsa*, but out of all of them Girirāja Govardhana is indeed the greatest.”

The *vraja-ramaṇīs* utter the phrase *hari-dāsa-varya*, whose many different meanings can be realized by repeatedly meditating on them. The name of the presiding deity of Govardhana is Hari-deva. The whole of Vraja worships Hari-deva, whose topmost servant is Govardhana Hill, so he is called *hari-dāsa-varya*. All the Vrajavāsīs serve Hari-deva. But Girirāja has surrendered his entire self – his body, mind, wealth and everything – at the lotus feet of Hari-deva and keeps Him over his heart. That is why Girirāja is the topmost of all His servitors. In this material world those who serve their wives, sons, daughters, family, wealth, bodies and minds are actually *māyā-dāsa*, servants of the illusory energy, whereas those who have no material attachment and have sacrificed everything for the service of Bhagavān are *hari-dāsa*. Dhruva, Prahlāda, Ambarīṣa, Nārada, Vyāsa and other such jewel-like devotees have given up everything to serve

the Lord, but none of them has turned his very body into a playground for Bhagavān's pastimes. Only Girirāja has done this; therefore he is the topmost *hari-dāsa*.

One who snatches away all sorrows and sufferings, and who captures everyone's heart through His name, beauty, qualities or sweet pastimes, is Hari – *manaḥ harati cittaṅ ca iti hariḥ*. His intimate devotees also possess these capacities – *kṛṣṇa-bhakte kṛṣṇer guṇa sakali sañcāre*. Because all of Hari-deva's qualities have been transmitted to Girirāja Govardhana, he is *mahat-puruṣa*, a great personality; and to take shelter of his lotus feet is one's only duty.

It is not an ordinary thing to be the servant of Hari. People who have little *sukṛti* (accumulated spiritual merits) are not admitted to Kṛṣṇa's service. First Kṛṣṇa removes all types of impurities in the heart and breaks all material ties. Only then does He give one the chance to serve Him. Service to Him is of two types: one is *sambhrama*, performed with reverence, and the other is *viśrambha*, intimate service, filled with a sense of *mamatā*, or possessiveness towards Him. This *viśrambha-sevā*, service performed in the mood of a bosom friend, is better than *sambhrama-sevā*, service mixed with awe and reverence. That is why Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has indicated *viśrambhena guru-sevā*, intimate service to *guru*, as one limb of *bhakti*. The highest expression of *viśrambha-sevā* is pre-eminent in the *mādhurya-bhāva* (mood of amorous love) exhibited by the *vraja-devīs*, and especially by Śrīmatī Rādhikā. One can observe some feelings of possessiveness also in *dāsyā*, *sakhyā* and *vātsalyā*; but the way the *vraja-devīs* serve with their whole bodies in *mādhurya-bhāva* is not found anywhere else. Only in *madhura-rasa* is service with *mamatā* intimately performed with great expertise and precision by the whole body. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī therefore prays exclusively for personal service to Śrīmatī Rādhikā (*rādhā-dāsyā*), saying:

*pādābjyos tava vinā vara-dāsyam eva
nānyat kadāpi samaye kila devi yāce
sakhyāya te mama namo'stu namo'stu nityam
dāsyāya te mama raso'stu raso'stu satyam*

“O Svāmīnījī, my divine mistress! You are *krīḍā-parāyaṇā*, the lovely abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s playful pastimes. I will never pray for any other *bhāva* than that of Your *dāsī* (maidservant), to perform that topmost service to Your lotus feet. I eternally bow my head and offer *praṇāma* again and again to the position of being Your friend, but I am telling You truly that I desire only to be Your maidservant.”

The *vraja-devīs*, attributing their own deep moods to Girirāja Govardhana, say, “Govardhana performs Śrī Hari-deva’s *viśrambha-sevā* with his entire body. Therefore, he is Hari’s greatest servant (*hari-dāsa-varya*), and, being merciful, he can bestow upon us his own mood.”

Previously it has been told that Śrī Hari-deva is Govardhana’s presiding deity. Circumambulating Girirāja Govardhana does not bestow the full fruit without visiting Śrī Hari-deva. This means that *prema-bhakti* depends upon mercy. There are two types of mercy: that of great devotees and that of Bhagavān. The mercy of Bhagavān, however, comes through the pure devotees. In other words, it can be said that the mercy of the devotees is always present, including and prevailing over the mercy of Bhagavān.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* three great personalities have been called *hari-dāsa*: Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, Śrī Uddhava and Śrī Girirāja Govardhana. The *gopīs*, however, after considering all possibilities, conclude that Girirāja Govardhana is Kṛṣṇa’s topmost beloved servant and thus call him *hari-dāsa-varya*.

In the *rājasūya-yajña*³⁰ conducted by Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, sages, saintly *brāhmaṇas*, many high-class Vaiṣṇavas and great personalities, including Grandsire Bhīṣma, Śrī Vedavyāsa and Śrī Nārada, gathered together. As Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was welcoming them, he said, “Ah! Today is such a fortunate day that simply by sitting at home, I am receiving the *darśana* of all these great souls.” Seeing the good fortune of the saintly King Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī joyfully exclaimed:

*hari-dāsasya rājarṣe rājasūya-mahodayam
naivātṛpyan praśamsantaḥ piban martyo 'mṛtaṃ yathā
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.75.27)*

“Parikṣit Mahārāja, all those sages never became fully satisfied in their praising the *rājasūya-yajña* of Śrī Hari's servant, the saintly King Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, just as a mortal person continues to drink nectar without ever becoming satiated.”

At that time Devarṣi Nārada said to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira:

*yūyam ṅṛloke bata bhūri-bhāgā
yeṣāṃ priyo'sau jagad-īsvareṣaḥ
devo gurur bandhuṣu mātuleyo
dūtaḥ suhṛt sārathir ukti-tantraḥ
Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta (1.5.7)*

“Mahārāja! In this world you are all indeed fortunate, because the supreme controller of all controllers, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the original cause of all causes, is your dear worshipful deity, *guru*, cousin, brother, messenger, friend, charioteer and servant who follows your every order. He who is the object

30 Elaborate sacrificial ceremony performed to establish an emperor's sovereignty over the whole world.

of love for all living entities is Himself bathing the feet of all the sages and saintly kings who have arrived for your *rājasūya-yajña*. That same Supreme Soul, whose audience is extremely rare, always resides incognito in your home. Truly, we have not come here to take Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *darśana*, but rather to witness the amazing way you Pāṇḍavas have won over the all-pervading and fully independent Supreme Power and Supreme Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. You have made Him your intimate family member. O Dharmarāja (Yudhiṣṭhira), eldest son of Pāṇḍu, how is it that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who lives in everyone's heart as the witness and supreme controller, always resides in your house and makes Himself quite at home with you? All these great personalities have come here just to see this."

This is why *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has conferred upon Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja the title of *hari-dāsa*, which completely befits him.

The second *hari-dāsa* is Śrī Uddhava. In this regard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.56) states:

*sarid-vana-giri-droṇīr vīkṣan kusumitān drumān
kṛṣṇaṁ saṁsmārayan reme hari-dāso vrajaukasām*

In order to console His parents as well as the *vraja-ramaṇīs* and the other *Vrajavāsīs*, Kṛṣṇa sent His dear servant Uddhava to live in Vraja for some time. "This *hari-dāsa* Uddhava wandered around Vraja with the *Vrajavāsīs*, sometimes going to the banks of the Yamunā, sometimes walking in the forests, sometimes roaming on Girirāja Govardhana, and sometimes meandering happily amongst the trees laden with colorful flowers. In each place He asked the *Vrajavāsīs* about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes that took place there, thus causing them to become overwhelmed by those pastimes." How dear this *hari-dāsa* Uddhava is to Kṛṣṇa!

*vṛṣṇinām pravaro mantrī kṛṣṇasya dayitaḥ sakhā
śiṣyo bṛhaspateḥ sākṣāt uddhavo buddhi-sattamaḥ*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.46.1)

“Parīkṣit! The highly intelligent and respected Uddhava was a prominent member of the Vṛṣṇi dynasty and the direct disciple of Bṛhaspati. He was Kṛṣṇa’s prime minister and dear bosom friend. What greater glories than these can be attributed to him!”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself said to Uddhava:

*na tathā me priyatama ātma yonir na saṅkaraḥ
na ca saṅkaraṣaṇo na śrīr naivātmā ca yathā bhavān*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.14.15)

“O Uddhava, you are My very closest friend. No one is as close to Me as you are, not even My own son Brahmā, Śaṅkara, My brother Balarāma, or the other half of My body, Lakṣmī. Not even My own soul is as close to Me as you are.”

This is why in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Uddhavajī has also been given the title *hari-dāsa*, which is entirely appropriate in every respect.

After some deliberation, however, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, overflowing with *mahābhāva*, come to realize that Girirāja Govardhana is the best of all the servants of Hari – that is why they call him *hari-dāsa-varya*. There must be some deep, secret reasons for this. By following the literatures of Śrīla Rūpa, Sanātana and the other Gosvāmīs, who have deep realization of the principles of transcendental mellows (*rasa-tattva*), some of these ultimate mysteries can be revealed. In *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī explains the gradations of all kinds of devotees: the *jñānī-bhakta*, *śuddha-*

bhakta, *premī-bhakta*, *premapara-bhakta* and *premātura-bhakta*.³¹ Although the Pāṇḍavas serve Kṛṣṇa with intimacy, treating Him as their family member, they still nourish a trace of reverence. According to Sanātana Gosvāmī, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja's feelings for Kṛṣṇa are predominantly *dāsyabhāva* mixed with *sakhya* and *vātsalya*; Arjuna's mood is predominantly *sakhya-bhāva* mixed with *dāsyā*; and the other Pāṇḍavas, as well as Kuntī, have a similar disposition. The Pāṇḍavas' *prema* is suppressed because of their reverential mood resulting from their knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's Godhood. This is why Uddhava, a *premātura-bhakta*, has higher love for Kṛṣṇa than the *premapara* Pāṇḍavas.

Both the Pāṇḍavas and Uddhava are Kṛṣṇa's associates in Dvārakā. Because Uddhava's love is higher, Kṛṣṇa sent him to the school of the lovelorn *gopīs* to receive training in higher levels of *prema*. Uddhava went to Vraja, where he was wonderstruck to observe the *gopīs'* unique high-class love. There he realized the glory of the rare dust of Vraja (touched by the *gopīs*) which is supremely worshipable for Brahmā, Śiva, Śukadeva and others. And beyond this, Uddhava expressed his deep longing to take birth as a blade of grass, bush, medicinal herb or any other such species in Vraja, so that he would always be fully bathing in the *gopīs'* foot-dust. He came to understand that he should take shelter of the most magnanimous Girirāja Govardhana to fulfill this desire. He chose to take birth as a blade of grass or some other plant at Girirāja Govardhana in Śyāma Kuṭī near Kusuma Sarovara.

Śrīla Rūpa, Raghunātha and other Gosvāmīs describe the very mysterious *kuñja-līlās* and other pastimes of

³¹ *jñānī bhakta* – devotee who knows the Lord's supreme position (Prahlaḍa); *suddha-bhakta* – devotee actuated by the pure devotional aptitude found in the Vraja pastimes (Ambariṣa); *premī-bhakta* – one imbued with full loving devotion (Hanumān); *premapara-bhakta* – devotee engrossed in pure *prema* (the Pāṇḍavas); and *premātura-bhakta* – the devotee impelled by overwhelming love (Uddhava).

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* in *Stavamālā*, *Stavāvalī* and other works: *pramada-madana-līlāḥ kandare kandare te, racayati nava-yūnor dvandvam asminn amandam* (the youthful lovers Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa perform newer and newer secret, amorous pastimes within your many caves); *rasa-nidhi-nava-yūnoḥ sākṣiṇīm dāna-keler* (O Govardhana, you facilitate and witness the *dāna-keli* pastime enacted by the youthful lovers Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, who Themselves are a treasure-house of nectar); *yatraiva kṛṣṇo vṛṣabhānu-putryā/dānaṁ gṛhītuṁ kalahaṁ vitene* (Demanding a road tax, Kṛṣṇa quarreled for several hours at Dān Ghāṭī with the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja). In these prayers Girirāja Govardhana is depicted as the witness of all the secret pastimes and the bestower of *vraja-prema*. The *Gosvāmīs* pray to Gīri Govardhana to give them shelter at his lotus feet.

According to the *Garga-saṁhitā* Girirājajī appeared from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's love-filled eyes. In the *Vraja* that is manifest in this world, *Yogamāyā Pūrṇimā-devi*'s heart appeared in the form of Girirāja as the son of *Droṇācala* [one of the *Himālayas*], and *Pulastya Ṛṣi* brought him to *Vraja-bhūmi*. According to the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, however, the topmost *rasika* Girirāja Govardhana manifested directly from the heart of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's internal potency (His *svarūpa-śakti*): *manasaḥ prakṛter jāto giri-govardhano mahān*.

The word *Govardhana* means *go*, *goṣa*, *gopīnām samvarddhayati* – he who increases the pleasure of *prema* for the cows, calves and all the residents of *Gokula*. Śrī Girirāja Govardhana has the fortune of doing many kinds of service, as well as witnessing and nourishing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa* dance and other confidential *līlās*. Śrī Girirāja has two identities: as a devotee (*bhakta-svarūpa*) and as Kṛṣṇa Himself (*bhagavat-svarūpa*). The *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas* see Girirāja as *bhakta-svarūpa*.

In this way the *vraja-devīs*, thoroughly steeped in their love for Kṛṣṇa, continue: *yad rāma-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparśa-pramodaḥ*. Upon receiving the touch of the beautiful lotus feet of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, Giri Govardhana gets carried away by *prema*, and the two brothers experience supreme pleasure walking upon him. Seeing this, the *gopīs* cannot help but call Girirāja *hari-dāsa-varya*. That *dāsa* who delights Śrī Hari with his service and in turn receives supreme joy from that service is topmost among the attendants of Śrī Hari. That *dāsa* who finds the service of Śrī Hari to be hard work or experiences some difficulty, whose service Bhagavān reluctantly accepts, cannot be called His topmost.

When Hari (Kṛṣṇa who steals the hearts of the residents of Vraja) comes to Govardhana with Balarāma and the cowherd boys on the excuse of cow-herding, Govardhana experiences supreme pleasure which causes tears, horripilation, trembling, perspiration and other *aṣṭa-sāttvika-bhāvas* (eight bodily symptoms of *prema*) to be easily seen on his body. The growing grass is his hair standing on end (*romāñca*), the fountains are his tears (*aśru*), and the dew is his perspiration (*sveda*). At that time the stones of Govardhana melt. For the comfort of the lotus feet of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, his stones become warm in winter and cool in the summer. Because he is manifesting symptoms of rapture, such as ecstatic eruptions of the skin, bristling hairs and perspiration, it is clearly understood that Govardhana receives maximum joy from doing service for Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa also receives great happiness in playing, having fun and roaming on Govardhana's body. There is not a drop of doubt that Girirāja Govardhana is the topmost of Śrī Hari's servants.

Ordinarily, on studying this part of the verse – *rāma-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparśa-pramodaḥ* – it seems that the *gopīs* are describing the rambling of both Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. However,

reflecting upon their staunch exclusive love for Kṛṣṇa, one can understand the deeper *bhāva* in the *gopīs*' hearts. Taking *rāma* to mean supremely captivating rather than Balarāma, they are actually saying *rāma-kṛṣṇa* to cover their deep *bhāvas*. Thus, this phrase means: "Being graced by the touch of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's most enchanting lotus feet, Śrī Govardhana rejoices in full delight, his hairs rising up and his body trembling." Two of the *gopīs*' *sañcārī-bhāvas* are indicated here: concealment of their emotions (*avahitthā*) and humility (*dainya*). Their hearts churning with loving sentiments, the *gopīs* describe the good fortune of Govardhana at receiving the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, and at the same time express their own humble position. "Alas! Alas! Even if we were only one of Govardhana's stones, we would also soften from the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. By Kṛṣṇa's *veṇu-nāda*, even the stones of Govardhana melt, but our hearts do not. The Creator has made us so unlucky and so bereft of love that neither are we ever able to receive the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, nor do our hearts melt."

The *gopīs*, emotionally surcharged, highly praise Girirāja Govardhana's absorption in *prema*, saying:

*mānaṁ tanoti saha-go-gaṇayos tayor yat
pānīya-sūyavasa-kandara-kanda-mūlaiḥ*

"O sakhī! Govardhana is not satisfied merely by being overwhelmed with bliss upon receiving the touch of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, experiencing hairs standing on end (*romāñcita*), ecstatic eruptions (*pulakita*) and becoming enraptured (*pramudita*). He also hospitably receives Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva, all Their cowherd friends and countless cows with various types of gifts as if welcoming a bosom friend. With his body, mind, wealth, life and everything, he performs

manobhīṣṭa-sevā – he fulfills the inner heart’s desire of Kṛṣṇa and His whole party. He offers gifts of cool and pure sweet water to quench their thirst, very sweet succulent fruits and roots for them to eat, different types of flowers, and red ochre³² for decorating. For resting and roaming he arranges seats and beds bedecked with jewels, effulgent gems for lamps and mirrors, and elaborately decorated caves and kuñjas. And for the cows he provides nutritious grass. Kṛṣṇa, His friends and the cows become extremely satisfied with all these gifts presented by Giri Govardhana.”

Mānasa Gaṅgā and the other rivers of Govardhana are continuously filled with utterly pure, sweet, cool water. The various types of trees and creepers are perpetually full of luscious, fragrant fruits and flowers, ready for using for Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s service. Sweet-smelling, tasty green grass is ever available for the cows, thereby increasing the flow of their milk. Within his countless caves Govardhana always keeps sitting and sleeping places ready for Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd friends. Being attracted by all these assets, Kṛṣṇa daily goes roaming on Govardhana to graze His cows and performs amazingly wonderful pastimes with His friends. Not only this, He enjoys deep, confidential *līlās* with His sweethearts in the decorated *kuñjas* and caves. That is why the *gopīs* themselves have awarded Girirāja Govardhana the title *hari-dāsa-varya*.

In regard to the phrase *hantāyam adrir abalāḥ*, there is some difference of opinion whether it has emanated from the lotus mouth of Śrīmatī Rādhikā or from the mouths of the other *gopīs*. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī says that it refers to the *gopīs*: “*Govardhano jayati saila-kulādhirājo yo gopikābhir uditō hari-dāsa-varyaḥ* – All glories to the king of all mountains, whom the *gopīs* have entitled *hari-dāsa-varya*.” Śrīla Raghunātha

32 A saffron-colored pigment extracted from Govardhana śilās.

dāsa Gosvāmī, on the other hand, has clearly stated in his Govardhana-vāsa-prārthana-daśakam:

*giri-nṛpa! hari-dāsa-śreṇī-varyeti-nāmā-
mṛtam idam uditam śrī-rādhikā-vaktra-candrāt*

“O Girirāja Mahārāja! The nectarean name *hari-dāsa-varya* has clearly issued forth from the moon-like face of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.”

There appears to be some difference of opinion between Śrīpad Sanātana Gosvāmī and his follower, Śrīpad Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, but actually this is not so, since Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself is a *gopī*. Both Rādhikā and the *gopīs* have called Girirāja *hari-dāsa-varya* upon seeing his extraordinary endeavor in service. Regarding this subject, Śrīpad Sanātana Gosvāmī states in *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* that Śrīmatī Rādhikā together with all the *gopīs* named Govardhana *hari-dāsa-varya*. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, on the other hand, claims that the glories and significance of Govardhana being called *hari-dāsa-varya* have issued from the mouth of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the topmost *gopī*. Śrīmatī Rādhikā and all the *gopīs*, as well as Śrīpad Sanātana Gosvāmī and all our subsequent *ācāryas*, have glorified Govardhana as the topmost servant of Śrī Hari. *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, explaining the method for worshiping Govardhana, also refers to him as *hari-dāsa-varya: śrī-kṛṣṇa-dāsa-varyo'yaṁ śrī-govardhana bhūdharam*.

In this way the *gopīs*, absorbed by their *kṛṣṇānurāga*, lavishly praise the many *prema*-filled services that Govardhana performs for Kṛṣṇa. By their facial expressions and gestures the cowherd maidens reveal their mood, “Despite taking birth in Vraja, we could not do any service for Kṛṣṇa. Our whole lives have simply gone in vain.”



Verse Nineteen

***gā gopakair anu-vanaṁ nayator udāra-
veṇu-svanaiḥ kala-padais tanu-bhr̥tsu sakhyaḥ
aspandanam̐ gati-matām̐ pulakas tarūṇām̐
niryoga-pāśa-kṛta-lakṣaṇayor vicitram***

gāh – the cows; *gopakaiḥ* – with the cowherd boys; *anu-vanaṁ* – to each forest; *nayatoḥ* – leading; *udāra* – very liberal (the sound of the flute is very liberal because it carries *kṛṣṇānurāga* to the *gopīs* wherever they may be); *veṇu-svanaiḥ* – by the vibrations of Śrī Śyāmasundara’s flute; *kala-padais* – having sweet tones; *tanu-bhr̥tsu* – among the living entities; *sakhyaḥ* – O friends; *aspandanam̐ gati-matām̐* – causing the moving and non-moving living entities to completely change their natures, i.e., the rivers’ permanent nature is to flow but now they stop flowing; *pulakas tarūṇām̐* – even among the non-moving trees, *pulaka* and other *sāttvika-bhāvas* are blooming; *niryoga-pāśa* – the ropes for binding the hind legs of the cows; *kṛta-lakṣaṇayoḥ* – of those two (Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma) who are characterized by; *vicitram* – extraordinary wonder.

Translation

“O *sakhīs!* The two brothers, our Śyāmasundara and Gaurasundara Balarāma, move in an especially graceful and unique manner. When Śyāmasundara, together with His cowherd friends, leads the cows from one forest to another, He wraps around His head a rope used for binding the legs of

the cows at the time of milking, and on His shoulders He hangs a noose for catching cows. What to speak of human beings, when even moving living entities such as animals and birds, as well as the non-living rivers, see that unparalleled sweet beauty and hear the melody of His flute, they become stunned, and the immobile trees shiver with ecstasy. What more can I tell you, *sakhī*, of the magical wonders of the flute?"

Ānanda-varddhinī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

While describing the good fortune of Girirāja Govardhana, the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, delirious in their elevated feelings of love, say, "O *sakhī*! Just see! It is not surprising that Girirāja is blessed by doing various types of service for Kṛṣṇa and by getting the touch of His soft, lotus feet. If we could also be *hari-dāsa-varya* like Govardhana, then we also would be favored by doing varieties of service, and our lives also would be fruitful. But we are forever locked in the prison of our homes, with our bodies and minds engaged in mundane affairs. Therefore it is impossible for us to get that good fortune. In Vṛndāvana all the living entities, whether moving or non-moving, are blessed. Their lives are successful because they are able to get the benefit of touching Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and establishing some kind of relationship with Him. We are the only unfortunate ones in the whole of Vraja."

As the *gopīs* speak, the image of Kṛṣṇa going to the forest to graze the cows while playing the enchanting *veṇu* manifests in their hearts. They become completely immersed in supreme bliss, as if they are directly seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. Now, becoming helpless in their *prema*, they say, "Just see, *sakhī*! With very sweet gestures Śyāmasundara, that supreme dancer, gracefully swaggers from one forest to another. All the

moving and non-moving entities become overwhelmed in the bliss of love upon hearing His sweet *veṇu-nāda*, and clearly exhibit *aṣṭa-sāttvika* bodily transformations.

“Our Śyāmasundara, along with His multitudes of cows, goes from one forest of Vraja-maṇḍala to another for cowherding. Because of their large numbers, the cows cannot graze in just one small forest. The cowherd boys do not leave their bosom friend Kṛṣṇa alone even for a moment. Keeping Him in the center, they constantly and diligently look out for His safety, always staying in groups to protect Him from the potential dangers of demons, monsters and snakes.

“Yaśodā Maiyā made them repeatedly take an oath, ordering them, ‘O my sons Subhadrā, Śrīdāmā, Sudāmā! This Kanhaiyā is very naughty! He does not want to stay in the house. Despite having hundreds of servants, He Himself wants to go herding the cows. What shall I do? In the forest there are deep rivers, snakes, prickly bushes, demons, fiends and other causes of fear. Promise me that you will never leave Him alone.’ This is the reason that there are unlimited numbers of cows in front of and behind Him. What a unique pose Kṛṣṇa assumes! Playing the *vaṁśī* while resting His arms on Dāū Bhaiyā’s shoulders, He moves along in the midst of the multitude of cowherd boys.” Here the word *gopakaiḥ* refers to the cowherd friends who offer Kṛṣṇa protection.

Niryoga-pāśa-kṛta-lakṣaṇayor vicitram – The *gopīs* continue, “Oh! The two brothers, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, look so beautiful walking in the forest with the *niryoga* and *pāśa* ropes adorning Their bodies.” During milking, the restless calves are tied with a rope to a post in the ground in order to keep their faces near their mothers. This rope is called *niryoga*, and the other rope, which is tied to the restless cows to keep them from kicking when being milked, is called *pāśa*. According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, all the cows in Vraja are well-behaved; therefore, it is not necessary for them to be

tied up during milking. But for those few restless cows a noose called *niryoga-pāśa* is used to tie their two hind legs together. The *niryoga-pāśa* used by Śrī Kṛṣṇa is made of extremely fine yellow-colored cloth fibers, and the ends of the rope are woven with hanging strands of pearls which softly tinkle as He moves along. Like the other *gopas* Kṛṣṇa ties the *niryoga* on His turban, and He lets the *pāśa* hang down onto His chest from His shoulders. His dress is so winsome that anyone who sees Him cannot help but be charmed.

The *gopa-ramaṇīs*, filled with *prema*, swoon upon seeing this alluring attire. Because of their love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they relish the sweetness of His body, but to hide that *prema* they describe the fascinating beauty of both Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. However, their internal *bhāva* is such that Rāma here does not refer to Balarāma, but rather to *ramaṇīya* Kṛṣṇa. In Sanskrit the word *ramaṇīya* means charming and lovely.

Nayator udāra-veṇu-svanaiḥ kala-padaiḥ tanu-bhṛtsu sakhyaiḥ aśpandanam gati-matām pulakas tarūṇām – The *gopīs* resume, “O *sakhī*! In the entire creation there is not a single living entity who will not be charmed upon seeing the sweet, alluring forms of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, which attract the three worlds. They enchant everyone. And the atmosphere created when Kṛṣṇa strikes a melodious note on His flute to gather up all the far-distant cows is most difficult to describe. Oh! Kṛṣṇa’s flute is naturally so generous that without discrimination his tunes enter the ears of all the living entities in Vraja and churn supreme bliss in the ocean of their hearts. The effect created by the soft melodious echo of the *veṇu* is such that, upon hearing it, everyone thinks that Kṛṣṇa is calling him only, and no one else. When Kṛṣṇa’s ankle-bells, tinkling *ruṇ-jhuṇ*, *ruṇ-jhuṇ*, join the *veṇu*, then the sweetness of the *veṇu* increases even more. Is there any person who will be able to maintain his calm upon hearing this?”

In *Utkalikā-vallariḥ* (27) Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī gives a nectar-filled description of the waves of the *veṇu-nāda* meeting with the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s ankle-bells. This vibration, mixed with the sweet tinkling of the ankle-bells of Kṛṣṇa’s beloved Śrīmatī Rādhikā, creates sound waves that stimulate Their amorous pastimes:

*dhasta brahma-marāla-kūjita bharair urjeśvari nūpura-
kvānair urjjita-vaibhavas tava vibho vaṁśī-prasūtaḥ kalaḥ
labdha-śasta-samasta-nāda-nagarī sāmṛājya lakṣmīm parām
ārādhyāḥ pramadāt kadā śravaṇayor dvandvena mandena me*

“Oh! Will I ever be able to hear the very attractive and amazing sound of Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s ankle-bells mixed with Your enchantingly melodious *veṇu-nāda*, which together defeat even the soft, sweet warbling of Brahmā’s swan-carrier?”

While conversing about Kṛṣṇa’s enchanting cowherd attire and the *veṇu-nāda*, the Vraja maidens, who are helpless with *prema*, say, “*Sakhī!* On seeing Kṛṣṇa’s *niryoga* and *pāśa*, it seems that they really are *niryoga-pāśa* – surely for all eternity they will never come untied.” The unwavering *samādhi-yoga* of *munis* is insignificant next to this everlasting, continuous union of *niryoga*. Kṛṣṇa’s *niryoga-pāśa* are actually ropes of *prema*. Binding up all the Vrajavāsīs and forest residents in His trap of love, Kṛṣṇa renders them helpless, and thus demonstrates the amazing and wonderful effect of these ties of *prema*.

Aspandanam gati-matām pulakas tarūṇām – The love-filled *gopīs* say, “When Kṛṣṇa, enchantingly dressed as a cowherd boy, takes the cows for grazing in Vṛndāvana and plays His *veṇu*, it is impossible to describe the extraordinary symptoms of *prema* which arise in the hearts of all the moving and non-moving living entities. By that flute song all the animals of the forest, like the deer and birds, become absorbed in *prema*

and are rendered immobile, looking like stone statues or colored drawings. The trees, creepers and other non-moving living entities give up their intrinsic nature and adopt the character of moving beings. They also burst out in jubilation, their hairs stand on end and their skin ripples in ecstasy due to the intense pleasure in their hearts. They are not the only ones affected by the *veṇu-nāda*. The Yamunā, Mānasī Gaṅgā and the other rivers stop flowing, and the stones of Giri Govardhana melt and flow like rivers.”

Rasika devotees say that the word ‘tying’ is not used in relation to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *niryoga* and *pāśa*, which He actually uses only for decoration. They are exclusively the ornaments of the native costume of the *vraja-gopas* and are found only in Kṛṣṇa’s human-like pastimes. There is no need to tie the cows and calves with a rope. These pastimes are performed for the pleasure of the devotees of *prakaṭa* Vraja-dhāma in this material world. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains this in *Śrī Vraja-riti-cintāmaṇi* (35):

*chatrādi-daṇḍe śubha-cāmarādi-daṇḍe ca
daṇḍaḥ śrutir asti yatra
nīvyādi-keśādika eva bandhaḥ
samādhi-yogādi-karādhi-śabdaḥ*

The word *daṇḍa*, meaning rod of chastisement, is used in Vraja only for the handles of umbrellas and *cāmaras*, yak-tail fans. The practice of punishing due to offenses and other transgressions with a rod, as is customary in a king’s royal court, does not exist in Vraja. The word *bandhan* (to bind) is used only for tying the *gopīs*’ hair and waist sashes. In Vraja there are no fetters or bonds used for punishment. The word *ādhi*, headache, is used in relation to ecstatic meditation in *samādhi-yoga*, since the special feature of Vraja is that no suffering or anguish is found there.



Verse Twenty

*evaṁ-vidhā bhagavato
yā vṛndāvana-cāriṇaḥ
varṇayantyo mitho gopyaḥ
krīdās tan-mayatām yayuḥ*

evaṁ-vidhāḥ – this type, such (such wonderful pastimes of Bhagavān which astonish the three worlds); *bhagavataḥ* – the Supreme Personality of Godhead (who manifests unparalleled and unsurpassed sweet beauty and sweet pastimes); *yāḥ* – which; *vṛndāvana-cāriṇaḥ* – who was wandering in the Vṛndāvana forest; *varṇayantyaḥ* – (the *gopīs* continuously) engaged in describing all these pastimes of the Lord (and thus attained *tadātmā* with those pastimes; in other words, they entered into those pastimes and experienced Kṛṣṇa’s association directly); *mithaḥ* – among one another; *gopyaḥ* – the *gopīs*; *krīdās tan-mayatām yayuḥ* – they attained complete identification with those pastimes; in other words, those pastimes manifested within their hearts.

Translation

“O Mahārāja Parīkṣit! These are not the only pastimes of Vrajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara, who roams in Vṛndāvana. He performs unlimited *līlās*. By continuously discussing those pastimes amongst themselves, the *gopīs* enter a state of ecstatic trance and meditate upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thus they

become one with Bhagavān's pastimes, which continuously manifest within their hearts."

Ānanda-varddhinī Vyākhyā
The Commentary that Increases Pleasure

In this way, the *gopīs*, drowning in their overwhelming love for Kṛṣṇa, discuss the change of nature in all the moving and non-moving residents of Vraja, who have been enchanted by Kṛṣṇa's sweet beauty and sweet flute song. While describing this, the *gopīs* are sometimes overpowered by feelings of humility and sometimes by jealousy. Thus, becoming restless, they say, "Sakhī! Just see the condition of all the moving and non-moving living entities after hearing the lovely flute melody of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is decorated with His *niryoga-pāśa*. It seems that He must be a magician expert in casting spells, as well as the crown jewel of clever cheaters. His friends also are not any less than this; as His accomplices they aid and abet Him in every way. Kṛṣṇa attracts one and all with the power of His beautiful form and sweet flute song, ties them up with the ropes of love, and loots them of everything they hold dear.

"We have had enough! Now, only from afar will we offer respects to the *veṇu-nāda*. We think it wise not to hear it at all. Otherwise, if we do hear the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, our hearts will be rendered helpless and we will be tied up by His *prema-pāśa* forever. Then our entire wealth – our self-control, shyness, family values and traditions – will be stolen! O *sakhī*, there is no need to hear the *veṇu-nāda* of that clever magician, the king of swindlers. Come, come! Let us go where the sweet song of His flute will not enter our ears."

The crown jewel of swan-like devotees, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, has described the transformations caused by *prema*

in the love-maddened *vraja-ramaṇīs*, and their keen eagerness to meet with Kṛṣṇa, resulting from their hearing the sweet *veṇu-nāda*. “Mahārāja Parikṣit! What more can I say about the waves of the many *bhāvas* in the *vraja-ramaṇīs*, who are absorbed in the highest expressions of love? I have given you only a brief view. Who knows how many countless waves of divine sentiments surge up in the turbulent ocean of their hearts! It is not easy to describe their condition. The *gopīs*, while walking, talking, waking and sleeping, are completely immersed in remembering Kṛṣṇa’s various pastimes. They are always eager to meet with Him, and in this way they somehow pass their lives.

“O King! Overflowing with amorous sentiments of the highest order, the *gopa-ramaṇīs*, the lovers of the supernal Cowherd Boy, are overwhelmed by intense eagerness in anticipation of meeting with Kṛṣṇa (*pūrva-rāga*). This arouses many kinds of supremely sweet, divine moods like *lālasā* (yearning), *udvega* (anxiety) and *jāgaraṇa* (sleeplessness). Even the Creator, Brahmā himself, is unable to describe these transcendental sentiments, of which I have given just a glimpse.”

Thus ends the Ānanda-varddhinī commentary, the blissful account of Veṇu-gīta as narrated in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.



Glosary/ Index

abhisāra – the journey to go for a rendezvous or tryst with *nāyaka* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the primary location for this being Sāṅketa where They meet at night ---p. 80

Acyuta – Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who never deviates from His nature or diverges from His constitutional qualities, especially His mercy, His beauty and His sweet pastimes; who never fails to keep His word and to please His devotees ---p. 4

adharāmṛta – the nectar or remnants of Kṛṣṇa's lips ---p. 29, 62, 91

adhara-sudhā – another term for *adharāmṛta*, the pure nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips [*sudhā* is the nectar of honey or flowers] ---p. 64

adhirūḍha-mahābhāva – the full-blown, highly developed *prema* found only in the *vraja-devīs*; symptomized by the appearance of all kinds of *sattvika-bhavas* and *vybhicari-bhavas* manifest to the utmost extent; all kinds of happiness in this world up to Brahma-loka combined will not compare to even a drop of this high level of *prema*. This *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva* has two forms: *modana* and *mādana*. In some states of separation *modana* becomes *mohana*, when all the *sāttvika-bhāvas* manifest in the blazing (*sūddipta*) condition ---p. 66

aiśvarya-bhāva – worship of Kṛṣṇa in the mood of awe and reverence; seeing Kṛṣṇa as Bhagavān, who has no birth, no death and no intimate pastimes with His associates ---p. 92

akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti – the embodiment of the full nectar of all twelve *rasas* ---p. 18

akhila-rasāmṛta-sindhu – the endless ocean of ambrosial *rasa* ---p. 5, 35,134

ālāpa – most pleasing, flattering, witty remarks; one of the twelve *vācika anubhāvas* (a verbal manifestation of the heart’s emotion) ---p. 91,135

amśas – partial incarnations or portions (*avatāra*) ---p. 65

anartha – unwanted tendencies of the heart; base, selfish propensities

anubhāvas – actions which reveal the emotions in the heart. They are thirteen in number: dancing, rolling on the ground, singing, loud crying, writhing of the body, roaring, yawning, breathing heavily, giving up concern for public image, salivating, loud laughter, staggering about and hiccuping

anurāga – an intensified stage of *prema* [see *viśuddha-prema*]; as defined in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* (14.146): “Although one regularly meets and is well-acquainted with the beloved, the ever-fresh sentiment of intense attachment causes the beloved to be newly experienced at every moment, as if one has never before had any experience of such a person. The attachment which inspires such a feeling is known as *anurāga*.” It is accompanied by various *anubhāvas*. ---p. 19, 38, 89, 141, 162

anurāgavatī – endowed with or absorbed in the mood of *anurāga*

aprakāṣa – the unmanifested, eternal spiritual world ---p. 96

ārādhana – worship of one’s revered deity by *mantra* ---p. 154

asūyā – the *sañcārī bhāva* of malice ---p. 63

ātmārāma – one who is self-satisfied, always absorbed in meditating on the self ---p. 111, 118, 128

avahitthā – the *sañcārī bhāva* of hiding one’s emotions; not revealing clearly but expressing one’s feelings in a concealed manner, through hints and gestures ---p. 20, 32, 102, 124, 172

avatāra – a fully or partially empowered incarnation of Śrī Bhagavān ---p. 70

avatārī – the original, complete form of Bhagavān; the source of all incarnations

ayauthikī – those who have taken birth in Vraja after having performed solitary *rāgānugā sādhana-bhajana* alone or with one or two other persons ---p. 15

Bhagavān – the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is full with six opulences: full strength, full fame, wealth, knowledge, beauty and renunciation

bhāva – 1) loving emotions; a particular mood of love in which the devotee serves Kṛṣṇa. 2) an intensified stage of *prema* which *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* has equated with *mahā-bhāva*, which occurs when *anurāga* attains a certain stage of exhilaration and relish. This can be experienced and relished only by *anurāga* itself and by no other *bhāva*. When *anurāga* is adorned with the inflamed and exciting *sāttvika* passions shining like molten gold and reaches its climax in Śrīmatī Rādhikā, becoming identical with Her very temperament and dispositions, it is called *bhāva*. ---p. 11, 24, 34, 43

bhāva-ullāsa-rati – affection for Rādhā that is characterized by an exceptionally great joy. It is the *sthāyī-rati*, permanent emotion, of the *nitya-sakhīs* and *prāṇa-sakhīs*, who are known as *mañjarīs*. Their *suhṛd-rati* for Śrī Rādhā and everything connected with Her vastly exceeds their *kṛṣṇa-rati* and keeps on increasing by the moment due to their full absorption in it. This is a special feature of *madhura-rasa* ---p. 50

bhāvavatī – filled with ecstatic amorous love

brahmavādī munis – sages who worship the impersonal *brahma*, the effulgence of Kṛṣṇa's body. They accept the personal feature of Bhagavān but think it inferior to *brahma* ---p. 116

dainya – the *sañcārī bhāva* of humility ---p. 20, 63, 73, 172

dākṣiṇya-bhāva – the submissive, rightist mood found especially in Candrāvalī and her *vipakṣa gopīs*; sometimes exhibited by Śrīmatī Rādhikā also, to some small degree---p. 133

dayitā – the topmost beloved who has given her ‘*da*’ – *deha* and *daihika* (body and mind) – to fully surrender Herself at the lotus feet of the love of Her life, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ---p. 133, 150

dhīra-lalita – a youthful, rakish lover expert in cutting jokes ---p. 153

dīna-hīna – fallen and wretched

divyonmāda – the ecstasy of bewilderment experienced in separation; a wonderful state of divine madness that resembles delusion ---p. 158

gaṇa – a smaller group of *gopīs* within a larger group, called a *yūtha*---p. 14

Ghanaśyāma – Kṛṣṇa, who is the color of a dark rain cloud ---p. 138

goṣa – cowherd boy

hlādinī-sakti – Kṛṣṇa’s internal pleasure-giving potency, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī

irṣyā – the *sañcārī-bhāva* of jealousy

jāgarāṇa – the *sañcārī-bhāva* of sleeplessness ---p. 17, 183

kāma – 1) the divine, amorous love, or *prema*, of the *gopīs*; 2) material lust ---p. 90, 103, 126, 131, 148

kandarpa-sambandhinī uttamā rati – the *rati* in which the *nāyikās*, concealing their amorous desires, again and again reject the requests of the *nāyaka* and rarely meet with their lover ---p. 133

kānta – male beloved ---p. 88

kanyā – a chaste unmarried girl who loves only Kṛṣṇa ---p. 145

kāya-vyūha – direct bodily expansion ---p. 15, 126

kevala-ādvaitavādī – one who denies the personal form of Bhagavān and exclusively meditates on impersonal *brahma*. Such a person is an offender ---p. 116

kṛṣṇa-bhajana – internal worship of Kṛṣṇa

kṛṣṇa-milana – meeting with Kṛṣṇa; there are thirty-two types of *milana*, just as in *vipralambha*, or separation, there are thirty-two types

kṛṣṇa-rati – affection towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa ---p. 49

kṛṣṇānurāginī – a female filled with deep loving attachment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, when even in separation the most beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa is constantly present before the eyes ---p. 18, 44

kun̄kuma – a reddish powder that married women apply to the part in their hair and the dot on their foreheads just above the eyes ---p. 70, 144

lālasā – the *sañcārī-bhāva* of ardent desire ---p. 17, 183

līlā-kamala – a pastimes lotus which Kṛṣṇa twirls in His hand like a toy, thereby twisting the hearts of all the Vrajavāsīs and especially causing the *gopīs*' hearts to dance

mādana – the highest expression of *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva*, present only in Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself. It is described in *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* (14.219): “That aspect of *prema* which is the condensed essence of the *hlādinī* potency and in which all the other stages of *prema* from *sneha* up to *modana* meet together and enjoy supreme exultation is known as *mādana*. This is the very pinnacle of *prema*, beyond which there is nothing superior. This type of *prema* is eternally present in Śrīmatī Rādhikā and no one else. Sometimes She exhibits this *prema* externally and sometimes She conceals it within Her heart.”

In this stage, one always remains unsatisfied, thinking that Kṛṣṇa is not present with Her, even after enjoying with Him in different ways, dancing with Him and sitting on His lap. When Rādhā is in this condition, even an unqualified object that has the slightest scent of a relationship with Kṛṣṇa appears supremely fortunate to Her and immediately arouses feelings of jealousy. She feels great separation in meeting and intense union in separation. At that time, even after meeting Kṛṣṇa again and again, She forgets that She has ever met Him before. This is a wonderful and amazing characteristic of *mādana-bhāva* ---p. 154

Madana Mohana – that form of Kṛṣṇa who, like Cupid, attracts and bewilders every living being ---p. 123

mādanākhyā – another name for *mādana adhirūḍha-mahābhāva* ---p. 155

madhu-pati – Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is *akhila-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, the ocean of nectar of all the *rasas*, and who is also *rasika-śekhara*, the topmost enjoyer of loving mellows. *Madhu* also refers to the spring season (*vasanta*) that is enjoyed by Kṛṣṇa ---p. 5

madhura-bhāva – seeing Kṛṣṇa as an ordinary family member, dear friend or lover, never considering Him to be Bhagavān Himself. In His human-like pastimes He takes birth from the womb of Yaśodā Maiyā – He’s quite ignorant, He cannot turn over without the help of His mother; He’s always hungry; sometimes He becomes angry, steals and tells lies. According to Śrī Kavi Karṇapūra: “That which colors or pleases the heart and makes it melt is called *mādhurya*.” ---p. 12, 98, 144

mādhurya-rasa – the mellow of amorous love.

madhya-prema – medial love; the *prema* in which separation is tolerated albeit with intense pain ---p.87

mahābhāva – the most mature stage of *prema* ---p. 43, 53

mahābhāva-svarūpā – the embodiment of *mahābhāva*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā

mahābhāvavatī – a damsel consumed with the highest loving sentiments ---p. 123, 149, 154

mamatā – feelings of deep intimacy with and possessiveness for Kṛṣṇa, “Kṛṣṇa is mine.” ---p. 164

māna – that stage of *prema* “when *sneha* reaches exultation, thus causing one to experience the sweetness of the beloved in ever new varieties, yet externally takes on a crooked feature.” (*Ujjvala-nīlamanī* 14.96), and when the *nāyikā* assumes an outward demeanor of pique which turns into a sulky mood and indignation arising out of jealous love

manda-prema – weak love; that *prema* in which anger and jealousy towards a rival causes one to forget about service to Kṛṣṇa ---p. 87

manmatha-manmatha – Kṛṣṇa, the Cupid of cupids ---p. 90
manobhīṣṭa-sevā – fulfilling the inner heart's desire of one's worshipable lord ---p. 173

mantra-mayī – the vision of a single pastime or verse at a time appearing in one's *bhajana* ---p. 96

modana – that *adhirūḍha-mahābhāva* in which all the *sāttvika-bhāvas* are aroused to a much greater extent than in a brightly burning (*uddīpta*) condition. In some special conditions of separation *modana* becomes *mohana*, and as an effect of this helpless condition of separation, all the *sāttvika-bhāvas* manifest in the blazing (*sūddīpta*) condition. It is found only in Śrīmatī Rādhikā's party ---p. 155

moṅṅāyita-bhāva – the *bhāva* rising in the *nāyikā* when she is either remembering or hearing about her lover, and the subsequent desire which arises from that *bhāva* ---p. 88

Mukunda – Kṛṣṇa, who bestows complete liberation from material afflictions; who inspires distaste for *mukti* and bestows the pleasure of *prema* upon His devotees; whose face is like a *kunda* flower – joyful, fragrant, sweet, soft and attractive to the heart ---p. 66, 99, 125, 139

mura – suffering, the burning of distress, indulgence in lust, and the name of a demon ---p. 129

nāgara – male lover, Kṛṣṇa ---p. 153

nāgarī – female beloved, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *gopīs* ---p. 153

nara-līlā – Kṛṣṇa's human-like pastimes in which all Vrajavāsīs consider Him as a friend, family member or beloved, as in ordinary worldly relationships ---p. 161

naṭarāja – the king of dancers, Lord Śiva ---p. 26

naṭavara – one who is expert and unmatched in the art of dancing ---p. 12, 24

nava-kiśora – that ever-fresh youth who is from ten to fourteen years old ---p. 13, 35

nāyaka – hero, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ---p. 17, 87, 134

nāyikā – heroine, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the other *gopīs* ---p. 17, 87, 134

nija-priyatamā – one's own dearly beloved

nilāmbara – the blue cloth that Baladeva Prabhu wears; Śrīmatī Rādhikā also wears blue cloth ---p. 57

nirasa – dry, devoid of juice or mellows ---p. 62

nirveda – the *sañcārī-bhāva* of self-disparagement ---p. 20, 73

para-brahma – the supreme power, Bhagavān

paramahansa – exalted, swan-like personality

parakīyā-bhāva – divine paramour love ---p. 92

paramahaṁsa-śiromaṇi – the crown jewel of swan-like devotees

para-puruṣa – the divine, supreme male: Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself ---p. 18

para-tattva – the Supreme Truth

paugaṇḍa – childhood, from five to ten years old ---p. 13

pitāmbara – the brilliant golden yellow cloth that Śrī Kṛṣṇa wears, that looks like a flash of lightning against His dark complexion ---p. 27, 57, 72, 80, 89

prakāṣa – the spiritual realm which manifests in this world ---p. 96, 180

pralāpa – incoherent or delirious speech; one of the twelve *vācika* (verbal) *anubhāvas* [see above] ---p. 135

prāṇa-priyatama – the dearest beloved who is one's very life air ---p. 48

prāṇa-bandhu – bosom friend

prāṇa-vallabha – the beloved of one's life ---p. 160

praṇaya – that intensified stage of *prema* that occurs when *māna* assumes a feature of unrestrained intimacy known as *viśrambha*, or confidence devoid of any restraint or formality. This confidence causes one to consider one's life, mind, intelligence, body and possessions to be one in all respects with the life, mind, intelligence and body of the beloved ---p. 57, 79

prauḍha-prema – the mature love of the *gopīs*; that stage in which the *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* cannot tolerate the intense pain

of separation from each other. This is found in those *gopīs* who are *svapakṣa* to Śrīmatī Radhikā ---p. 87

prema-vaicitya – the condition when, even in the beloved’s presence, the lover, under the sway of intense emotions, is aggrieved with fears of future separation, or thinks she is separated from him ---p. 158

priya narma sakhīs – most intimate girlfriends

pulaka – ecstatic eruptions of the skin occurring with *romāñca*, hairs standing on end

pūrva-rāga – the mood of overwhelming eagerness experienced in anticipation of meeting, when the *nāyaka* and the *nāyikā* already feel a deep attachment for each other; upon meeting the lovers think they have never met before; various types of *sañcārī-bhāvas* are generated in this condition ---p. 17, 124, 183

rāga – 1) an intensified stage of *prema* that occurs when an unquenchable loving thirst (*prema-mayī tṛṣṇā*) for the object of one’s affection (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) gives rise to spontaneous and intense absorption in one’s beloved, so much so that in the absence of the opportunity to please the beloved, one is on the verge of giving up his life; 2) when *praṇaya* attains its highest level, and when even extreme misery is experienced in the heart as immense pleasure. If by accepting some misery there is a chance to meet with Kṛṣṇa, then that misery becomes a source of great happiness. And where happiness affords one no opportunity to meet with Kṛṣṇa, that happiness becomes the source of great distress ---p. 140

rāga-mārga – the path of *bhajana* which follows in the mood of the *Vrajavāsīs*, who have spontaneous loving devotion for Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprābhū came to give this type of *prema* to the world ---p. 84

rāgānuga-sādhakas – those who practice *bhajana* following the mood of the *Vrajavāsīs* under the guidance of *śrī-guru-vaiṣṇava* in this world ---p. 84, 100, 109

rāgātmikā – the Vrajavāsīs, who have *rāga* in their *ātmā*, that is, natural affection for Kṛṣṇa in their hearts

rājasūya-yajña - Elaborate sacrificial ceremony performed to establish an emperor's sovereignty over the whole world. The emperor, in Vedic times, upon his ascendance to the throne, would send a challenge horse all over the world to declare his supremacy, and any ruling prince or king was at liberty to take the challenge and express his willingness either to accept or reject the supremacy of the particular emperor. One who accepted the challenge had to fight with the emperor and establish his own supremacy by victory. The defeated challenger would have to sacrifice his life, making a place for another king or ruler. Such performances required hundreds of millions of dollars, thus it was out of the question for a petty king ---p. 166

ramaṇīs – shy young girls who are expert in the various skills for awakening sweet emotions; the very sight of whose faces gladdens the heart ---p. 141

rasa-śāstras – scriptures describing the nectar of transcendental loving exchanges ---p. 17, 133

rasarāja/mahābhāva – Kṛṣṇa, the king of mellows, combined with Rādhārāṇī, the queen of divine love, came as the Golden Avatāra, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

rasika-bhakta – a devotee seasoned in experiencing divine loving sentiments; one who enjoys the *rasa* of *madhura-bhāva*, which is full of the sweetness of the human-like pastimes, as opposed to a *jñānī-bhakta* who worships Kṛṣṇa with *aiśvarya-bhāva*, steeped in His majesty ---p. 114

rasika-śekhara – the supreme enjoyer of *rasa*, Kṛṣṇa ---p. 28, 35, 91

rati – the seventh level in the development of the creeper of *bhakti*; the initial stage of perfection in devotion (*bhāva-bhakti*). The stage of *bhakti* in which *śuddha-sattva*,

the essence of the Lord's internal potency consisting of spiritual knowledge and bliss, is transmitted into the heart of the practicing devotee from the heart of the Lord's eternal associates and softens the heart by different kinds of taste. It is the first sprout of *prema*.

romāñca – the *sāttvika-bhāva* of the hairs standing on end --p. 171

Rūḍha and adhirūḍha mahābhāva – That mahābhāva in which all sāttvika-bhāvas are blazingly manifest (*uddīpta*) and which cannot be concealed by any means is called rūḍha-bhāva. These are its symptoms: the briefest moment of separation is unbearable; one thinks that everyone and everything around feels the same great agitation of heart; one kalpa seems like one moment, and one instant seems like an eternity; even when Kṛṣṇa is happy, the gopīs are always troubled that He may be distressed; being transcendental, the gopīs are never in illusion, but they also forget everything, even their own identities. When all the symptoms (*anubhāvas**) of rūḍha-mahābhāva arise simultaneously, this condition becomes even more astonishing and special – and this is *adhirūḍha mahābhāva*. There are two types of *adhirūḍha mahābhāva* – *modana* and *mādana*. *Modana*, which in some states of separation becomes *mohana*, when all the sāttvika-bhāvas manifest in the blazing (*sūddīpta*) condition, is found exclusively in Śrīmatī Rādhikā's party, and *mādana*, the highest expression of *prema*, is present only in Śrīmatī Rādhikā Herself. Only this *mādana mahābhāva* bestows *hlādinī śakti's* highest and most sublime pastimes (*suvilāsa*). All the bhāvas included from the initial stage of *prema* up to *mādanākhyā-bhāva* are termed *viśuddha-prema*.

* *anubhāvas* – Actions which display or reveal the emotions in the heart. They are thirteen in number: dancing, rolling on the ground, singing, crying loudly, writhing of the body, roaring,

yawning, breathing heavily, giving up concern for public image, salivating, laughing loudly, staggering about and hiccupping.

rūpa-mādhurī – the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's form ---p. 73, 140

rūpānuga-sādhakas – those who follow the mood and service of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī in order to receive the eternal *sevā* of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala in Goloka Vraja

sakhī mañjarīs – Śrīmatī Rādhikā's intimate maidservants, who have taken complete shelter of Her lotus feet. They are fully absorbed in increasing the pleasure of their *svāmīnī* and have no thought of meeting with Kṛṣṇa themselves ---p. 51

samāja – a group of ten to twelve affectionate *gopīs* with similar *bhāvas* ---p. 15

sambhrama-sevā – service in the mood of *aīśvarya*, performed with reverence ---p. 164

samlāpa – affectionate chit-chat; one of the twelve *vacika* (verbal) *anubhāvas* ---p. 91

sañcārī-bhāvas – also known as *vyabhicārī*; thirty-three internal emotions which emerge from the nectarean ocean of *sthāyībhāva*, cause it to swell, and then merge back into that ocean. These include emotions such as despondency, jubilation, fear, anxiety and concealment of emotions ---p. 17, 62, 73, 172

sa-rasa – filled with nectar, juicy.

sarva-śaktimān – all-powerful; the possessor of all energies (*śaktis*), Kṛṣṇa

sāttvika-bhāvas – that which causes perturbation to be aroused within the heart. They are of eight kinds: *stambha*, becoming stunned; *sveda*, perspiration; *romāñca*, standing of the hairs on end; *svara-bhaṅga*, faltering of the voice; *kampa*, trembling; *vaivarṇa*, pallor or change of color; *aśru*, tears; *pralaya*, fainting or loss of consciousness ---p. 159, 175

Śeṣanāga – The snake incarnation, who bears all the universes on His hoods and who with His ten hundred faces

describes non-stop the glories of the Lord but never reaches their end. Śeṣa-nāga becomes the gigantic lotus-like white bedstead on which the Personality of Godhead lies in the Garbhodaka Ocean at the time of the universal dissolution.

smara – love (*prema*) and desire for Kṛṣṇa (*kāma*) hidden in the heart which arises after *anurāga*, stimulated by seeing Kṛṣṇa or anything connected to Him. Each *gopī* tries to hide her feelings from the others. It is found only in the *kāmānugā* or *kāmātmikā gopīs* ---p. 18, 37, 144

sneha – the stage when *prema*, attaining a state of excellence, intensifies one's perception of the object of love, and melts the heart. When *sneha* is enkindled in the heart, there is no quenching of the ever-new thirst for seeing the beloved ---p. 49

śrī-niketana – the abode of Lakṣmī; the abode of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the original Lakṣmī; the abode of the beauty of *vraja-rasa*; the dwelling place of all kinds of beauty and softness.

suhṛd-bhāva – intimate friendship of *sakhīs* with Rādhā ---p. 49

suhṛd-pakṣa – those *gopīs* who favor Śrīmatī Rādhikā, like Śyāmalā

svakīyā – wedded love in *madhura-rasa*, as found in the queens of Dvārakā ---p. 93

sva-pakṣa – those *gopīs* who take the side of Śrīmatī Rādhikā or are within Her own group

svārasikī upāsanā – when a continuous stream of *līlās* appears spontaneously in the heart of the *sādhaka* during *bhajana*. It is a garland of pastimes, with millions of flowers in it ---p. 96

svarūpa-śaktī – Kṛṣṇa's internal potency, Śrīmatī Rādhikā ---p. 92

svarūpa-siddhi – vision of one's eternal spiritual body while still in this material world; it is attained at the stage of *rati*, or *bhāva*, when *viśuddha-sattva* descends into the heart ---p. 97

Svayaṁ Bhagavān – the original Supreme Personality of Godhead, Brajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara.

tādātma – to become one with, as iron in fire becomes red hot like fire, and finally acts like fire ---p. 66

taṣastha-pakṣa – the party of *gopīs* neutral to Rādhā, like Bhadrā.

tattva – established truths presented in the authorized scriptures.

Tretā-yuga – the second millennium in the cycle of four ages (Satya, Tretā, Dvārpara and Kali). Tretā is the silver age: people lived for 10,000 years and performed great sacrifices to achieve self-realization. It lasts 1,296,000 years, and it witnesses the introduction of vice ---p. 16

tri-bhaṅga-lalita – Kṛṣṇa's charming posture curving in three places – at the neck, waist and knee s---p. 8,24, 139

unmāda – the maddened frenzy of *prema* ---p. 60

unnatojjvala-rasam – the brilliantly shining *mādhurya-rasa*, specifically the moods of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her *kāya-vyūha* associates, especially the moods of *rūḍha*, *adhirūḍha*, *modana* and *mādana*. These are not found in Satyabhāmā and Rukmiṇī.

udvega – the *sañcārī-bhāva* of anxiety ---p. 17, 183

upamāna – the object of a comparison

upameya – the subject of a comparison

upanayana – sacred thread ceremony

upapati-bhāva – the love of a paramour; the feeling of having a paramour ---p. 92

vaidhī-bhakti – *bhakti* which is full of scriptural rules and restrictions, prompted by a sense of duty and fear of sinful reaction. It elevates one to the majestic service of Śrī Nārāyaṇa in Śrī Vaikuṅṭha. When following *rāga-mārga*, one will practice *vaidhī-bhakti* until one is inspired by intense longing for spontaneous service; then *vaidhī* transforms into

rāgānugā, but still one will continue to follow accepted rules and regulations ---p. 94

Vaikuṅṭha – the transcendental realm beneath Goloka Vraja; the spiritual abodes where the Lord dwells in His four-armed Nārāyaṇa forms, and where He is served in a mood of awe and majesty ---p. 30, 67

vāmya-bhāva – the contrary, leftist mood found in Rādhikā's *svapakṣa gopīs*, especially in Śrīmatī Rādhikā ---p. 133

vanitā – a young woman who nurtures excessive love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa ---p. 89

vastu-siddhi – the spiritual body one receives upon attaining *prema* and taking birth in Vraja ---p. 97

veṇu-mādhurī – the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa's flute ---p. 73

veṇu-nāda – the mellifluous song of Kṛṣṇa's flute, which is so inconceivably sweet that it sets the head spinning ---p. 11

vicitra-veśa – Nanda-nandana Śyāmasundara's most startlingly unusual yet pleasantly captivating manner of dressing. The unlimited varieties of His attire, always freshly and inconceivably unique, make Him appear very carefree and debonair, gaily and gracefully charming. Each distinctive new outfit is carefully calculated to steal the hearts of the Vrajavāsīs every time they see Him ---p. 80

vipakṣa – the *gopīs* in the rival group of Candrāvalī ---p. 14

viśrambha-sevā – service filled with intimacy, performed in the mood of *mamatā*, identifying the recipient of service as one's own, like a bosom friend. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has indicated *viśrambhena guru-sevā* as one limb of *bhakti* ---p. 164

viśuddha-sattva – pure spiritual goodness; the combined *hlādinī* and *samvit-śaktis*, the transcendental potency of devotion which is in the hearts of Kṛṣṇa's associates of the spiritual world and which descends through the disciplic succession (*paramaparā*) into the heart of the practicing *sādhaka* in the stage of *bhāva*, or *rati* ---p. 74

viśuddha-prema – this includes all the *bhāvas* from the initial stage of *prema* up to *mādanākhyā*: *prema*, *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga*, *bhāva*, *mahābhāva*, *rūḍha*, *adhirūḍha*, *modana*, *mohana* and *mādana* (*mādanākhyā*) ---p. 133

vraja-ramaṇīs – the shy young girls of Vraja, the very sight of whose faces gladdens the heart

vraja-sundarīs – the beautiful milkmaids of Vraja ---p. 88

vraja-vadhūs – the wives of the *vraja-gopas* (the cowherd boys) ---p. 13, 18

vyabhicārī-bhāvas – see *sañcārī-bhāvas* ---p. 18

yauthikī – those who perform their *sādhana* in a group and eventually take birth in Vraja where they again come together. Examples are the *śruticarī* and *municarī/ṛṣicarī gopīs* ---p. 15

Yogamāyā – Kṛṣṇa's pastime potency, who arranges all the pastimes in Vraja ---p. 16, 34, 83, 92, 120, 170

yugala – the divine loving couple ---p. 159

yūtheśvarī – leader of a major group of *gopīs* ---p. 14, 82

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