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IPBYS Prison Program
Newsletter and Vaishnava Calendar – October 2014

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna – Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama – Rama Rama Hare Hare

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IPBYS

INTERNATIONAL PURE BHAKTI
YOGA SOCIETY

·PRISON SEVA·

“We need never become hopeless!”
– Shрила Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja

Letter from the Editors – The Month of Kartik

Dear Readers,

As we write this, Gaudiya Vaishnavas all over the world are preparing to celebrate the most auspicious month in the Vedic calendar, the lunar month of *Kartika*, which this year takes place from Monday 6th October to Thursday 6th November.

Many devotees become pilgrims during this time, making their way to Vrindavana in India for a month long pilgrimage called *Shri Braja-mandala parikrama*. *Braja-mandala* refers to the area of *Braja* (sometimes pronounced *Vraja*, which encompasses Vrindavana, Govardhan, Varshana and the surrounding areas of Krishna's childhood pastimes) and *parikrama* means pilgrimage or circumambulation. The devotees often stay in temples and follow an intensive daily program that begins at 4am with *managal-arati* (morning prayers), followed by *bhajans* (songs), *harikatha* (class on spiritual topics) and then a day of walking, visiting various holy sites where Krishna (or His associates') pastimes took place. At each holy place we receive the opportunity to hear the pastimes that occurred there, with further *bhajans*, *kirtans* and *harikatha* taking place though out the day.

As so many of Krishna's pastimes occurred during this month, such as the lifting of Govardhan Hill, and many of our *acharyas* (spiritual leaders) have entered or left this world during this month, there are several festivals that take place during this pilgrimage, which adds to the excitement of it all. For example, the first day of Kartika is also the disappearance day of Shрила Gurudeva's guru, Shрила Bhakti Prajnana Keshava Goswami Maharaja (also a godbrother of Shрила Swami Prabhupada). During such a day we offer our prayers to that great personality and hear glorifications of his devotion and service to Shri Krishna and his own Gurudeva. Halfway through the month we have the opportunity to celebrate *Govardhan Puja*, also known as *Annakut Mohotsava*, in which hundreds of different food preparations made to be offered to Giriraja Govardhan, a tradition that Krishna began 5000 years ago. Devotees then carry plates and clay pots of food on their head toward Govardhan Hill on a procession through the town while singing kirtan, where we then offer the food and bathe Giriraja Govardhan in milk (an offering that is called *abhishek*).

The predominating deity of the month is Shrimati Radhika and due to her mercy, all auspicious actions we perform during Kartik receive a great deal more of the rewards than during any other month. Often devotees make a personal vow for their *bhakti* on the first day of the month, such as to chant a fixed amount of rounds. Shрила Gurudeva explained that our all of our efforts in this month should be in the mood of pleasing Shrimati Radhika. Because this month is a month of pilgrimage, there are also vast opportunities to glorify the holy land of Braja, all of the *Braja-basis* (sometimes pronounced *Vrajavasis* – residents of Braja and Krishna's associates) and of course, there is endless glorification for Krishna himself and especially for His beloved and the queen of Braja, Srimati Radhika.

There is simply too much to be said about the wonderful month of Kartik and all the topics concerning it to ever do it justice in this newsletter, but we hope that the following articles, which will focus on just a couple of the important pilgrimage sites in Braja, will inspire a desire in your heart to contemplate the pastimes of Shri Krishna and to one day eternally reside in Goloka Vrindavana (Krishna's abode in the spiritual world).

In service,

IPBYS Prison Program

The Glories of Giriraja Govardhana

Excerpt from a lecture spoken by Shrila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja in Badger California on 7th May 2001.

The follow extract begins to tell the glories of Giriraja Govardhana (also known as Govardhan Hill), who is the mountain manifestation of both Shri Krishna and his topmost servant. Countless meetings between Radha, Krishna and gopis took place on Govardhana and today, though Govardhana appears to us as a hill, His glories are as just as spectacular. The story below tells of the very first Annakut Mohostava festival (or Govardhana-puja, meaning worship of Govardhana), which Krishna began when he was only a small boy.



A pilgrim on the parikrama (pilgrimage) path at Govardhana

Govardhana is serving fully. In what way is He serving? He knows all the desires of Krishna and He understands how to fulfill His desires.

Govardhana knows that the cows are very dear to Krishna. Krishna Himself, without shoes or an umbrella, without any protection, follows the cows and gives them water. He never uses a stick to beat the cows; His stick is for demons, not for cows and calves. He will never beat them. Krishna personally pours water on their lotus feet and washes them. Govardhana knows all these facts, and therefore his lake known as Kusuma Sarovara supplies very sweet water for the cows.

Green grasses are everywhere on Govardhana. The grasses are not only green, but very tasteful, sweet, and soft. Krishna goes searching for these grasses near Govardhana, near Manasi Ganga, and on the top of Govardhana.

What does Govardhana provide for Krishna's companions, the cowherd boys? He provides fruits everywhere: mangos, jackfruits, oranges, grapes, and so many other varieties. To decorate their bodies, Govardhana supplies an abundance of colors in the form of minerals. If you go to Govardhana near Dan Ghati and do abhisekha, you can see this. There are some hidden Govardhana shilas (deities in the form of stones) there, and if you simply rub them with your hand, some color may come on your hand. These colors are used for decorating Krishna, His

cowherd boys, the cows, and also for the gopis. For the gopis there are also so many groves, so many kunjias, so many caves, and so many kinds of juices to drink. There are deer with their very fragrant kasturi, musk, and all the Govardhana silas have this fragrance naturally. If you go to Giriraja Govardhana, you will see that His fragrance is just like that of kasturi from a deer.

In this way, Giriraja serves all the friends, all the cows, and all the Vrajavasis. He provides them fruits and vegetables, fragrance, and colors for decorating themselves.

The word Govardhana means that by Govardhana's service to the cows, they are increasing in number. The cows do not only give forty litres of milk. They give unlimited milk and they can fulfill all your wishes. They all do more than any kama denu, wish-fulfilling cow. In this way, Govardhana serves everyone, from top to bottom.

In Vraja, everyone was worshiping Indra. One day, Yasodamaiya was very busy cooking many preparations and, in each and every gopi's house, all were also busy. Krsna went to His mother and said, "Mother, I am very hungry. Perhaps you are preparing all these things for Me?" Mother Yasoda became annoyed and chastised Him, "Oh, go away from here. Go to your father! Don't stay here, naughty boy."

Krishna became upset and, like a sad boy, He went to the lap of His father. Weeping He said, "Father, what is mother doing? She is not in a good mood." Nanda Baba told Him, "Everyone is preparing to worship Indra [king of the demi-gods]."

As though not knowing anything, Krishna innocently asked, "Baba, who is Indra and why do we worship him? We should worship someone who can give us many things. So why are we worshipping him?"

Nanda Baba answered, "Indra can give rain, and by rain all kinds of grains are produced. Grasses and sweet water also come, and without this we cannot maintain our lives. It is for this reason that each year we worship Indra on this day. Tomorrow we will all go with many preparations, on lakhs and lakhs of bullock carts, to the middle of Giriraja Govardhana to worship Indra."

Krishna said, "Baba, I think that even in that place where there is no Indra puja, whether there is rain or no rain, still everyone is maintaining their lives. Is that not true?" Nanda Baba replied, "I don't know. Why do You want to know all these things?" Krishna replied, "I think that it will be better to worship Giriraja Govardhana. We maintain our lives by his mercy. Our lives depend on these cows, and Govardhana gives so much good, soft grass, very pure water, and everything else needed to support us. So why should we not try to do puja to Giriraja Govardhana?"

Nanda Baba did not have any logical answer, and by logic Krishna convinced him and he



An auspicious blue cow on Govardhana Hill



A Govardhan shila (deity) being worshipped today

agreed, "Oh, tomorrow we will all worship Giriraja Govardhana."

The next day thousands and thousands of carts were brought and loaded with all the preparations collected from all the 84 krosas of Vraja. Everyone came and assembled at Giriraja Govardhana, in the middle of where the present-day Govardhana town is located, and they were worshipping Giriraja Govardhana as we do today. What we are doing is a very, very, very mini-worship of Giriraja Govardhana, but still it is exactly like what the Vrajavasis did. All the thousands and millions of cows of the whole of Govardhana were there, and they were worshiped by everyone.

After that the Vrajavasis performed full worship of guru, Vaisnavas, and the brahmanas, and then they offered all the preparations. Krishna exclaimed, "O Baba, O Vrajavasis! My friends! O, look at that! Giriraja Govardhana has assumed a huge shape, and with so many long, long arms, He is eating everything from here, from there, from very far away, from everywhere, and still He is not satisfied." His belly was so big, and He was telling them, "Bring more! Bring more! Anore! Anore! Bring more, more, more, more! I want more!"

All the Vrajavasis became puzzled and said, "Oh, what shall we do?" Krishna folded His two hands and prayed to His four-handed form as Govardhana, "O Prabhu, Your belly is so big. We cannot offer anything more. What we have got may fill only one pore of Your body. How can we satisfy You? We cannot satisfy You."



Govardhana (who is Krishna Himself) eating the Braja-basis's offerings as they do parikrama

If you want a house with many storeys, even 130 or 160 storeys, you should pile up some bricks and stones that you find there, one on top of another. However high you make it, Giriraja Govardhana will easily give this to you. However, devotees do not ask for anything and only perform kirtana, singing, "Govardhana jaya Giridhari, Giridhari jaya Govardhana, Giridhari jaya Govardhana" and "Radhe jaya jaya Madhava dayite", Govardhana will be very happy.

- Thus ends this excerpt of The Glories of Giriraja Govardhana -

Govardhana then took the water from Manasi Ganga, from Kusuma Sarovara, Govinda Kunda, and all the water entered His mouth. Krishna asked him, "We have brought you prasadam, but you have taken everything. So what should we do?" At once they saw that all the preparations were returned to their places, and Krishna told the Vrajavasis, "We have worshiped Indra, but we have not seen him, nor have we seen how He is accepting our offerings, how He is satisfied, and how is giving any boon. On the other hand, we are seeing that Giriraja Govardhana himself is here, and we see that He is now satisfied. He is telling us that He is prepared to give us whatever boon we want."

If anyone is going to Giriraja Govardhana and doing parikrama, Govardhana will give him anything he wants. He can fulfill all desires. Those who have worldly desires bind the branch of a tree with some cloth and pray, "I want to marry a very beautiful girl," or, "I want a very handsome husband." Govardhana will quickly answer this prayer.



Pilgrims carrying colourful offerings on their heads to Giriraja Govardhan on Annakut Mohotsava



Krishna lifting Govardhana Hill on his left little finger

Although this particular lecture ends there, the story does not.

Indra became so angered to discover that this boy Krishna, whom he did not realise was God, had prevented his worship, that he reigned the worst storm he could muster upon the land of Vraja. To protect the Braja-basis and all the cows from the lighting and hail, Krishna lifted Govardhana Hill and held it above the head of all the Vrajavasis on his little finger for seven days and nights. It was only after this that Indra realised Krishna was God and descended from the heavens to beg his forgiveness. The residents of Vraja, however, due to the veils of Yogamaya, did not realise that Krishna was God and continued to believe him to be their most special boy.

This story can be read in further detail in Shrila Swami Prabhupada's Kṛṣṇa Book, which you can order from us.

Shri Radha Kunda and Shri Shyama Kunda

Excerpt from Shrila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja's book Sri Braja Mandala Parikrama

Below is a description of Shri Radha Kunda and Shri Shyama Kunda and of their appearance pastime. Of all the holy places in the world, Shri Radha Kunda is considered to be the holiest.

Shri Radha-kunda lies in a village named Arita Gaon, about three miles northeast of Govardhana and fourteen miles from Mathura and Vrindavana. Aristasura was a servant of Kamsa who assumed the form of a bull and attacked Krishna with the aim of killing Him. However, Krishna killed him instead at this place.

At Shri Radha-kunda, Shri Radha-Krishna Yugala (the Divine Couple) perform Their midday pastime (*madhyahnik lila-vilasa*). Here They perform a variety of amorous pastimes freely and without any obstruction. This is not possible anywhere else. Therefore, Radha-kunda is considered to be the topmost place of *bhajana* (performance of spiritual practices), superior even to Nandagaon, Barsana, Vrindavana and Govardhana.

Shri Krishna killed Aristasura during the day. That same night, He met with His beloved Shri Radhika and the other *sakhis* (female friends) here. Shri Krishna was very eager to embrace Shrimati Radhika, but as soon as He reached out towards Her, She stepped back. Jokingly, She said, "Today, You have killed a bull, which belongs to the cow family. You have therefore committed the sin of killing a cow. Please don't touch My pure body."

Krishna smilingly answered, "Priyatame! It was a demon that I killed, who had deceitfully assumed the form of a bull; so how can sin even touch Me?"

Shrimatiji (Radharani) insisted, "Whatever he was, he had assumed the form of a bull when You killed him. Hence, the sin of killing a cow has definitely touched You." The *sakhis* supported Her statements.

Shri Krishna asked how He could atone for this



Shri Radha Kunda

sin. Smiling, Shrimatiji answered, "The only atonement is to take bath in all the *tirthas* (holy places) of the entire Earth planet." Hearing this, Shri Krishna created an extensive *kunda* (lake) simply by striking His heel on the ground. He then summoned all the *tirthas* of the entire planet to it. Uncountable *tirthas* immediately came before Krishna in their personified forms. Krishna asked them to enter the *kunda* in the form of water. In a moment, the *kunda* filled with pure, sacred water. Shri Krishna took bath in that *kunda* and again tried to touch Shrimatiji. But Shrimati Radhika now wanted to manifest a *kunda* full of water that was larger and more exquisite than Krishna's, in response to Her Priyatama's bragging. She and Her *sakhis* therefore stubbornly dug out a very attractive *kunda* nearby with their bracelets. However, not so much as a drop of water appeared in it. Krishna joked that they could take water from His *kunda*, but Shrimatiji along with Her innumerable *sakhis* prepared themselves to bring water from Manasi Ganga in clay pots. Shri Krishna signalled to the *tirthas* that they should



Shрила Gurudeva offering some flowers to one of Braja's many kundas (lakes)

insist that Shrimatiji and Her *sakhis* fill up their kunda by taking water from His *kunda*. The *tirthas* personified pleased Srimati Radhika by offering Her and the *sakhis* many prayers. Shrimati Radhika then gave them permission to enter Her *kunda*. Immediately, the current of water that had flowed into Krishna Kunda (commonly known as Shyama Kunda) also filled Radha-kunda. With great pleasure, Sri Krishna bathed and performed water sports (*jal-vihara*) with Shrimati Radhika and the *sakhis* in this dear *kunda*.

These two *kundas* (lakes) manifested at midnight on *Krishnastami* (the eighth day of the dark moon) in the month of Kartika. Hundreds and thousands of people therefore bathe here at midnight on this day known as *Bahulastami*.

Shri Giriraja Govardhana stretches out from north to south and has the shape of a peacock. His tail in the south is called Puchari, and his two eyes on his face in the north are called Sri Radha-kunda and Sri Syama Kunda.

To the south of Shri Kunda are jewelled swings hanging from the branches of champaka trees. Swings inlaid with precious stones hang from the branches of kadamba trees to the east. To the west, swings made of jewels hang from the branches of mango trees, and to the north jewelled swings hang from the branches of bakula trees. Rasika Shri Krsna plays on these swings with Shrimati Radhika and the other *sakhis*.

Surrounding both Radha-kunda and Shyama-kunda are kalpataru trees of mango, jackfruit, kadamba, bakula and so forth, which are laden with an abundance of flowers and fruits. The bases of these trees are held by platforms of various precious stones. All seasons are eternally serving Sri Yugala (the Divine Couple) under the guidance of the spring season. Vrinda-devi makes all the arrangements in a variety of ways for the *seva* (service) of the Divine Couple. The cuckoos coo and the peacocks dance and make the sweet ke-ka sound. Blue and red lotuses and various kinds of ketaki flowers frolic on the waves of the Shri kundas while intoxicated, buzzing bees hover above. Royal swans, chakravakas and cranes play in the water with their consorts, making sweet sounds. Different kinds of birds recite love poetry on the branches of the trees, thus giving pleasure to Sri Radha-Krsna Yugala. Deer and does roam about in the attractive *kunjas* (forest groves) nearby. Except for Srimati Radhika's most intimate girlfriends, no one can enter this forest.

More of these pastimes can be found in the book Sri Braja Mandala Parikrama, which can be ordered from us.



An old photo of Shri Radha Kunda

Vaishnava Song: Shri Damodarashtakam

One *vrata* (vow) Shrila Gurudeva always desired that we follow is the singing of the Shri Damodarashtakam prayers twice daily during the month of Kartika, usually once in the morning and once in the evening, but there is no limit to the amount of times one can sing, read or meditate on them. This ancient *bhajan* tells the story of the time that Damodara (Shri Krishna) was chased by his mother for being naughty and then bound to a mortar with a rope as a punishment. Shrila Gurudeva explained that as Krishna is the Supreme Controller and all powerful, ordinarily he cannot be bound, but Mother Yasoda, who has no conception of Krishna as God, but is filled with *vatsalya-prema* (parental transcendental love) for Him was able to bind Him completely out of her love. Mother Yasoda, the *gopis* and especially Shrimati Radhika show us how Krishna can only be bound by the pure love of his devotees. This pastime occurred during the month of Kartik, which is why this month is also called the month of Damodara.

*namamishvaram sach-chid-ananda-rupam
lasat-kundalam gokule bhrajamanam
yashoda-bhiyolukhalad dhavamanam
paramrishtam atyantato drutya gopya*

I worship the Supreme Controller, whose form is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. Upon His cheeks, *makara*-shaped earrings are swinging, and He shines most brilliantly in Gokula. Running away from the grinding mortar in great fear of Mother Yashoda He was ultimately caught from behind.

*rudantam muhur netra-yugam mrijantam
karambhoja-yugmena satanka-netram
muhuh shvasa-kampa-tri-rekhanka-kantha
sthita-graiva-damodaram bhakti-baddham*

Weeping incessantly, He rubs His eyes with His two lotus hands. His eyes are filled with fear. He takes heavy breaths again and again that cause the pearls and other ornaments around His neck, which is marked by three gracefully curving lines, to tremble. [I offer *pranama* unto] that Damodara, who is bound by His mother's *vatsalya-bhakti*.

*itidrik sva-lilabhir ananda-kunde
sva-ghosham nimajjantam akhyapayantam
tadiyeshita-jneshu bhaktair jitavam
punah prematas tam shatavriddhi vande*

Through pastimes such as these, He drowns the residents of Gokula in pools of bliss, thereby informing people who are aware of His Godhood that He can only be conquered by His devotees. Hundreds of times, I again offer loving obeisances to Him.

*varam deva! moksham na mokshavadhim va
na chanyam vrine 'ham varehad apiha
idam te vapur natha! gopala-balam
sada me manasy avirastam kim anyaih*



O Deva, I do not ask for liberation [from this world], nor the highest liberation [of residence in Vaikuntha]. Nor do I seek any other benediction from You, the supreme benefactor. O Natha! May this form of Yours as Bala-gopala (a little cowherd boy) in Vrindavana forever remain visible in my heart. What is the use of any other benediction?

*idam te mukahambhojam avyakta-nilair
vritam kuntalaih snigdha-raktaish cha gopya
muhush chumbitam bimba-raktadharam me
manasy avirastam alam laksha-labhaih*

Your lotus-like face, encircled by soft, blackish-blue curly locks of hair that have a reddish glow, is repeatedly kissed by the *gopi* Shri Yashoda. May Your lotus face, with lips like red *bimba*-fruit, always remain manifest in my heart. I do not care about millions of other attainments.

*namo deva! damodarananta vishno
prasida prabho! duh ka-jalabdhi-magna
kripa-drishti-vrishtyati-dinam batanu
grihanesha! mam ajnam edhy akshi-drshyah*

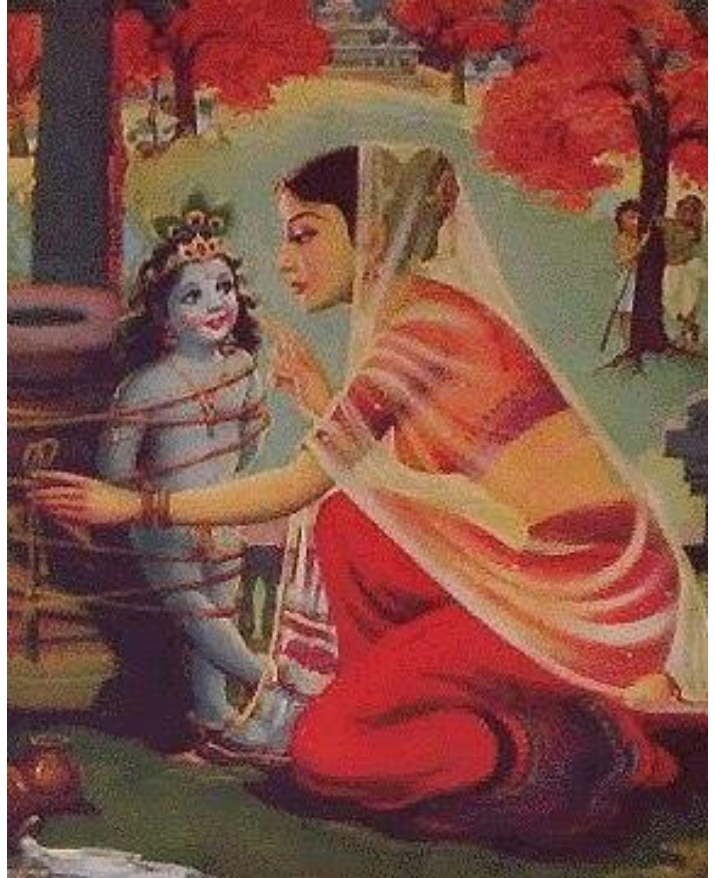
O Deva! O Damodara! O Ananta! O Vishnu! Obeisances unto You! O Prabhu, be pleased with me. I am drowning in an ocean of miseries. Alas, I am most afflicted and do not know what to do. O Isha, shower me with Your merciful glance and kindly uplift me by becoming directly visible to my eyes.

*kuveratmajau baddha-murtyaiva yadvat
tvaya mocitau bhakti-bhajau kritau cha
tatha prema-bhaktim svakam me prayaccha
na mokse graho me 'sti damodarera*

Just as You freed the two sons of Kuvera, even while bound around the belly, and made them recipients of devotion, similarly, please bestow upon me profuse *prema-bhakti* to You [in Your form as a little cowherd boy]. O Damodara! I long for this alone; I do not want any other kind of liberation.

*namas te 'stu damne sphuras-dipti-dhamne
tvadiyodarayatha vishvasya dhamne
namo radhikayai tvadiya priyaai
namo'nanta-lilaya devaya tubhyam*

O Damodara, I offer *pranama* to the rope binding Your belly, for it is an abode of brilliant effulgence. I offer *pranama* to Your belly, which is the mainstay of the entire universe. I offer *pranama* again and again to Shrimati Radhika, Your most beloved. And I offer *pranama* to You, my Divine Lord, who perform unlimited transcendental pastimes.



Mother Yashoda binding baby Krishna to the mortar

Vaishnava Calendar

The Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition celebrates many festival days throughout the year, following the Vedic lunar calendar, and as such the dates on which the festivals fall will differ each year. Listed below are the dates on which we fast (*Ekadasi* and others, indicated in italics) and the break fast times spanning three months for five US time-zones (EST, CST, MST, PST, HST). Also included are several other significant festival dates, including the birthdays and disappearance days (when a saint leaves their body) of prominent saints, and the birthdays of Kṛṣṇa's incarnations (also known as appearance days).

The Vedas describe several reasons for fasting on *Ekadasi* (the 11th day after the full or new moon). Shrila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's song, *Shuddha-Bhakata*, describes the day of *Ekadasi* as "mother of devotion". By fasting from grains and beans, consuming only what we need for our sustenance and making the focus of the day our devotional practice, we are directly serving Krishna. By offering all of our actions to Kṛṣṇa and honouring the rituals of the day we will come to know Him. As such we also fast in the style of *Ekadasi* on His appearance days.

Rules of Following Ekadasi

The essence is to eat simply, once or twice, so that one can spend as much time as possible hearing, chanting and remembering Shri Shri Radha-Krishna. Never eat meat, fish, eggs, onions, garlic, carrots, red lentils, green flat lentils, mushrooms or products thereof.

Restricted foods on Ekadasi:

- ~ Tomatoes, eggplants, cauliflower, broccoli, bell peppers, beets, bitter melon, ladies' fingers and banana flowers
- ~ Peas, chickpeas and all types of beans, including products made from beans (e.g., papadams, tofu, tempeh)
- ~ All leafy vegetables (e.g., spinach, salads, cabbages) and leafy herbs like parsley, coriander leaves, celery and curry leaves
- ~ Grains (e.g., millet, barley, farina, pasta, rice, corn) and all types of flour made from grains and beans (e.g., rice flour, chickpea flour, urad dahl flour)
- ~ Starches from corn or grains, and products made from or mixed with these starches like baking soda, baking powder, certain soft drinks with corn syrup, custard, certain yogurts and puddings, certain varieties of cream and cottage cheese, certain sweets and candies, and tapioca balls
- ~ Oils made from grains (e.g., corn oil, mustard oil, sesame oil) and products fried in these oils (e.g., fried nuts, potato chips and other fried snack foods)
- ~ Honey, and sweets made with starches

Spices used on Ekadasi: black pepper, fresh ginger, pure salt and fresh turmeric, all taken from a new and clean package

Spices not used on Ekadasi: hing (asofetida), sesame seeds, cumin, fenugreek, mustard, tamarind, fennel, cardamom and nutmeg

Foods that can be taken all days of the year, including Ekadasi

- ~ All fruits (fresh and dried), all nuts and all oils made from nuts
- ~ Potatoes, pumpkin, cucumber, radish, squash, lemon, avocado, olives, coconut, buckwheat, all sugar
- ~ All pure milk products

Festival Days, Fasting Dates and Break Fast Times (Daylight-savings time not considered)

October 2014

Saturday 4th Ekadasi

Sunday 5th break fast 06:15-09:48 [EST], 06:17-09:43 [CST], 06:05-09:34 [MST], 06:14-09:39 [PST], 06:24-09:30 [HST]

Disappearance days of Shrila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Shrila Radhuanatha Bhatta Gosvami and Shrila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami (all associates of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu)

Monday 6th Holy month of Kartika begins

Disappearance day of Shri Shrimad Bhakti Prajnana Keshava Gosvami Maharaja (Shrila Narayana Maharaja's guru)

Fasting for final month of Chaturmasya begins – fast for one month from sesame seeds & oil, mustards seeds & oil, eggplants, tomatoes and honey

Wednesday 15th Appearance day (birthday) of Shri Radha-kunda (the holiest of lakes, in Govardhan, India)

Thursday 16th Disappearance day of Shri Shrimad Bhakti Raksaka Shridhar Maharaja (god-brother of Swami Prabhupada)

Sunday 19th Ekadasi

Monday 20th break fast 06:22-09:51 [EST], 06:26-09:47 [CST], 06:17-09:56 [MST], 06:35-09:41 [PST], 06:30-07:54 [HST]

Thursday 23rd Dipa-dana (also known as Diwali) – festival of lights

Friday 24th Govardhana-puja, Go-puja and Go-krida (or Annakut)(workship of Govardhan Hill, and worship and decorating of cows)

Sunday 26th Disappearance days of Shri Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja and Shri Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Trivikrama Gosvami Maharaja (both god-brothers of Srila Narayana Maharaja)

November 2014

Sunday 2nd Ekadasi

Disappearance day of Shrila Gaura Kishor Das Babaji Maharaj (Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur's Guru)

Monday 3rd break fast 07:13-09:55 [EST], 06:36-09:52 [CST], 06:32-10:00 [MST], 06:56-09:54 [PST], 06:36-10:10 [HST]

Wednesday 5th Disappearance Day of Shrila Bhakti Pramode Puri Gosvami Maharaja (Disciple of Shrila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur)

Thursday 6th End of the month of Kartika and of Chaturmasya fasting

Monday 17th Ekadasi [CST], [MST], [PST] and [HST] only

Tuesday 18th Ekadasi [EST only] break fast soon after 11:41 [CST], soon after 10:41 [MST] 09:41-09:49 [PST], 07:41-10:14 [HST]

Wednesday 19th break fast 06:47-07:39 [EST only]

December 2014

Tuesday 2nd Ekadasi

Advent of Shrimad Bhagavad-gita – Shri Krishna spoke the Gita to Arjuna

Wednesday 3rd break fast 07:02-09:40 [EST], 07:01-08:40 [CST], 07:05-07:40 [MST], 06:55-10:20 [HST]

Wednesday 10th Disappearance day of Shri Shrimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada

Monday 15th Disappearance day of Shri Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja (also known as Shrila Gurudeva)

Appearance day (birthday) of Shri Shrimad Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja (Shrila Gurudeva's god-brother)

Wednesday 17th *Ekadasi*

Thursday 18th break fast 07:23-10:20 [EST], 07:11-10:16 [CST], 07:17-10:24 [MST], 07:51-10:20 [PST], 07:04-10:27 [HST]

Wednesday 24th Disappearance day of Shrila Jiva Gosvami

Wednesday 31st *Ekadasi*

The Gopis and the Cows

Excerpt from Shrila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja's lecture originally titled 'Pastimes in the Month of Kartika', given on 28th October 2002

It was during this month, while feeling separation from Krishna, that the *gopis* lamented, "We are not fortunate like the deer in this forest. People say they are foolish, but they are not so. We are foolish, because we don't know how to love Krishna like these deer. When *prema* is very high, it breaks all boundaries. These deer, although by nature very shy, have broken all boundaries by their intense love for Krishna. They gave up their shyness, they approached Him, and they are exchanging their hearts feelings with Him through their loving glances. We cannot do this, and therefore we are unfortunate. We will be lucky if we can die and take birth as deer in our next life. In that way we can see Krishna and approach Him when He is cow-grazing."

In this month the *gopis* remembered that when Krishna plays on His flute in the forest, the cows become stunned. With eyes of transcendental emotions the *gopis* see both Krishna and the cows, and further lament in their mood of separation. They see that although it is the nature of animals to spend their time in eating, when Krishna plays His flute these cows forget to eat and instead pick up their ears to hear. Humans have very small ears, but cows have large ears, like cups. Through the cups of their ears these cows drink the nectar of Krishna's flute playing, and when they taste it they forget everything else. They have grass in their mouths, but they forget to chew. Even the calves, who were drinking the milk from the udders of their mothers, are like this. The milk is coming into their mouths, but they have forgotten to swallow. They simply stand with tears gliding down from their eyes, and they embrace Krishna in the core of their hearts.

The love of the cows is not as high as that of the

the *gopis*, but due to the nature of their own *prema*, the *gopis* think the cows are greater. Those who are maha-bhagavatas, and what to say of maha-maha-bhagavatas like the *gopis*, see their own love and their own mood in all others. Yet they think, "I am unfortunate; I have no love."

Shri Narada Rsi received the benediction from Krishna that those who will hear His sweet *lila-katha* (descriptions of His pastimes) in the places of His pastimes, especially during this Kartika month, will surely attain *krishna-prema* (ecstatic transcendental love for Krishna) very soon. We should therefore have confidence; we need never become hopeless.

- The End -

Dear Vaishnava!

Got Questions??

We'll be starting a new column next month called 'Dear Vaishnava' where we hope to be able to answer and share some of your great questions. Write to us!

Want a Penpal??

If you're looking for someone to write to about Krishna, bhakti or anything else, let us know and we'll connect you to a devotee. Please tell us your release date and how we can be of service upon your release.

Write to us at:

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13400 NW 140th St. Apartment #1502
Alachua, FL, 32615