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IPBYS Prison Program
Newsletter and Vaiṣṇava Calendar – October 2015

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa – Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma – Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Newsletter Contents:

Letter from the Editors

The Fruit-seller

Mother Yaśodā Binding Lord Kṛṣṇa

Vaiṣṇava Songs: Śrī Damodarāṣṭakam

A Few Words on Damodarāṣṭakam

Vaiṣṇava Calendar



IPBYS

INTERNATIONAL PURE BHAKTI
YOGA SOCIETY

·PRISON SEVA·

Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

At the end of last month, a few members of our team and a few of the *kirtan*iyas (performers of *kirtan*) in our community drove from LA up to Snake River Correctional Facility in Oregon to engage in *kirtan* with around 35 enthusiastic members and newcomers. We were wonderfully welcomed and assisted by the facility's Chaplain Persinger, and we were even blessed with the opportunity to end the afternoon in a group photo, which we hope to share with you when it becomes available in a few months time. It was an incredible experience for all of us and it affected us deeply, each in very personal ways. We want to thank all those who attended – it really was something special and we all hope we have the opportunity to do *kirtan* together again one day. We also hope that the future brings more opportunities for events such as these, all over the country if possible, so please do share your interest with us and let us know if you'd be interested in us visiting your facility next summer.

This year, from the 27th October until the 25th November we have the opportunity to celebrate the holy lunar month of Kārtika. Last year we featured a few *lilas* (pastimes) of Kṛṣṇa and the *Vrajavāsīs* (residents of Vraja, which is the wider area of Vṛndāvana) during the month of Kārtika. Some of these pastimes include the binding of Dāmodara (baby Kṛṣṇa) by mother Yaśodā, revealing the power of pure devotion for God, and the *rāsa* dance, in which Kṛṣṇa danced with all of the *gopīs* (cowherd girls of Vraja) until Śrīmatī Rādhika left the dance, and when Kṛṣṇa in turn left them, they all sang *Gopī-Gītā*, the stunning, magnificent and deeply poetic song, calling Kṛṣṇa back to them. It was also during the month of Kārtika that Kṛṣṇa lifted the mountain of Śrī Giriraja Govardhana as a small child, holding the mountain on the tip of His left little finger for seven days and seven nights in order to protect the *Vrajavāsīs* from the wrathful storms of the insulted Indradeva.

All of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, which are endlessly sweet, are not mere stories; not only do they enlighten us to the nature, qualities and activities of God and His friends and family, but they also contain lessons for our own lives in this material world. Although we may have heard them before, it is in our interests to read, hear and share them again and again, with the prayer that their deeper and deeper meanings might be revealed to us in our sincerity. Just as everything in Kṛṣṇa's abode is every fresh and ever new, so we have the opportunity to be continuously refreshed and experience newer and more beautiful connections to Kṛṣṇa when we absorb ourselves in the remembrance of His pastimes.

For your pleasure and in honour of this holy month, we're featuring two of Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes in this month's newsletter. The first is the story of the fruit seller, as told by our Śrīla Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja during his lectures Kārtika lectures. Kārtika is also referred to as the month of Dāmodara, which is the name Kṛṣṇa was given when Mother Yaśodā bound him. As such, we're also featuring this pastime, as told by Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda in his *Kṛṣṇa Book*. Śrīla Gurudeva elaborated beautifully on the deeper meanings of this pastime, in reference to Śrī Satyavrata Muni's prayers to Dāmodara, in his book *Śrī Damodarāṣṭakam*. In mercifully revealing the depth of this pastime, Śrīla Gurudeva explains its symbolism and messages for our own spiritual journey. If this is something you would like to delve into, please feel free to request a copy of Śrīla Gurudeva's *Śrī Damodarāṣṭakam* as we would be more than happy to share with you what Śrīla Gurudeva shared with us.

Another more hidden understanding of the month of Kārtika is that it is also called the month of Dāmodari, who is none other than Śrīmatī Rādhika. Many of our ācāryas have spoken on this matter, on the various meanings to the month of Kārtika and our purpose in following a certain *vrata* (vow)

during this time. It has been told that the spiritual activities we perform during this month will receive a thousand times the reward, so usually, when the month of Kārtika begins, Gauḍīya Vāsianavas make a month-long vow. This can be anything from chanting an increased or fixed number of rounds, performing *parikramā* (pilgrimage) of the pastimes places of Kṛṣṇa, fasting from a certain food, or even vows such as not lying, no criticizing or anything else that will aid one in focusing their mind and heart on Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Gurudeva emphasised that we choose a vow (or several vows) that we felt were achievable, but that we also made an extra conscious effort in our spiritual practice during this month. On this topic, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja said:

“So this is a special month in which we shall try our best to cultivate all our feelings and regulate them for the attainment of our intimate connection with Kṛṣṇa. By investing our energy even in a small way during this Kārtika *mahinā*, we can get more result. Just as perhaps in time of war, capitalists may find opportunity of earning more profit. In a small time they can earn more, [likewise] that sort of arrangement is everywhere. So here also there are particular points of time where using our energy in a scanty way we can earn more. Such is the time, this Kārtika *mahinā*, and the purity of purpose is almost guaranteed here because the object is to satisfy Rādhārāṇī, the divine potency. *Jaya Rādhe. Jaya Rādhe. Jaya Rādhe. Jaya Rādhe.*”

So we invite you all to take this opportunity to delve deep into your hearts, to call out for the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhika, and to focus as much of one’s energy as possible into pleasing Her.

In service,

IPBYS Prison Program

The Fruit-seller

As told by Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

“*Itidr̥k sva-lilabhih* – His uncommon childhood pastimes, like this *damodara-līla*, are supremely charming.” One day, a fruit-seller from Mathura came to Vraja to sell her fruit. She had heard of the pre-eminent sweetness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Gokula and had become exceedingly eager to see Him directly. Although she came to Vraja often, whenever she came she could not see Kṛṣṇa. Either He was asleep or in the lap of His mother, or He was surrounded by His friends or busy playing inside His home. She tried again and again, but she was always unable to see Him.

Direct vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is easily available to the residents of Vraja, but it is quite rare for the people of Mathura. Still, the fruit-seller became so anxious at heart that she resolved, “If I do not see Kṛṣṇa today, I will not return to Mathura.”

The *sādhaka*’s (practicing devotee’s) resolve

should be exactly the same. He should think, “Day and night I will execute the limbs of devotion as instructed by Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. With love, I will chant a fixed number of Sri Hari’s names and serve Sri Guru and the Vaisnavas. Every day I will study Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and other devotional literatures. Every day I will recite *Goṇī-gītā*, *Venu-gītā*, *Bhramara-gītā* and *Yugala-gītā*. If I come across a *rasika* (high class) Vaiṣṇava I will give my life to serving him. I will visit the places where Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa performed Their confidential pastimes, in the groves and forests of Vraja. There, I will pray very piteously and recite hymns and prayers that are full of longing. Then, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will surely give me His *darśana* (vision); He is not far away.”

Having made her vow, the fruit-seller came to Nanda Maharaja’s cowherd settlement and wandered about near his house. She began

crying out, “Come, take fruits! Take fruits! Come! Take mangoes, bananas, and guavas!” But within moments, she became so absorbed in thinking about Kṛṣṇa that instead of calling the names of the fruits she cried out, “Come, take Gopāla! Govinda lo! Mādhava lo! Dāmodara lo! [all names for Kṛṣṇa]” At first she had been balancing the basket of fruit on her head with one hand, but eventually she forgot to hold the basket altogether. It only kept from falling due to her natural expertise. Finally, she sat down before the doorstep of Nanda’s house.

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa heard the cries of the fruit-seller, He could not remain sitting quietly on His mother’s lap; so He climbed down and went to a nearby mound of grain. After taking as much grain as He could hold in His joined palms He started toward the fruit-seller, but His hands were so tiny that all the grain fell from them as He walked. When He reached the fruit-seller, all He had left were a few grains that were wedged between His palms and fingers. He poured His grains into her basket and demanded, “Oh! Give Me some fruit!” The fruit-seller became completely enchanted by the beautiful form of little Kṛṣṇa and just sat there looking at Him for

some time.

The import of this pastime is that unless someone is intensely eager to see Śrī Kṛṣṇa and is absorbed in remembering Him, just like the fruit-seller was, He does not give them His *darśana*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa only gives His *darśana* to those *sādhakas* who desire nothing but to see Him and serve Him. In other words, He only gives *darśana* to those who have become completely free from *anarthas* (unwanted qualities in the heart).

When the fruit-seller returned to external consciousness, she said, “Lala, my darling baby boy, I’ll only give You fruit if You sit on my lap just once, and call me Mother.”

Baby Kṛṣṇa carefully looked in all directions to make sure no one was watching. When He was sure no one could see, He jumped on to her lap. “Mother.” And then quickly jumped off again. “Give Me fruit!”

All of the deepest desires within the heart of the fruit-seller had now been fulfilled. She wanted to give Kṛṣṇa all of her fruit, but she could only



give Him as much as He could hold in His tiny arms and hands. When Kanhaiya [a name for Baby Kṛṣṇa] returned to where Mother Yaśodā was sitting in the courtyard, He placed the fruit in her veil.

“Lala, where did You get these fruits from?” she asked.

Kṛṣṇa simply pointed toward the door. Mother Yaśodā became delighted to see such succulent and tasty fruits. While she began to distribute it to all the *gopīs* present, amazingly, even though there were only a few pieces of fruit, the quantity did not diminish.

When Kṛṣṇa had left the fruit-seller near the doorstep of His house, she completely lost external awareness. Śrī Kṛṣṇa had stolen her heart and she simply sat in the very same spot until a *gopi* passing by shook her and brought her

back to external consciousness. She slowly picked up her basket of fruit, placed it upon her head, and then set off for Mathura.

As the fruit-seller walked along the bank of the Yamuna river, she realized her basket was much heavier than it had been before. When she set it down and looked inside she was struck with wonder. Her basket was filled with a variety of valuable jewels. She picked up the basket, threw it into the Yamuna, and burst into tears.

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa has cheated me!” she cried. “I have been completely deprived of His real mercy.

Overwhelmed by love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, she lamented bitterly and never returned to her home. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa steals anyone’s heart, invariably, this becomes their condition.

The End

Mother Yaśodā Binding Lord Kṛṣṇa

By Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda in The Kṛṣṇa Book

Once upon a time, seeing that her maidservant was engaged in different household duties, mother Yaśodā personally took charge of churning butter. And while she churned butter, she sang the childhood pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and enjoyed thinking of her son.

The end of her sari was tightly wrapped while she churned, and on account of her intense love for her son, milk automatically dripped from her breasts which moved as she labored very hard, churning with two hands. The bangles and bracelets on her hands tinkled as they touched each other, and her earrings and breasts shook. There were drops of perspiration on her face, and the flower garland which was on her head scattered here and there. Before this picturesque sight, Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared as a child. He felt hungry, and out of love for His mother, He wanted her to stop churning. He indicated that her first business was to let Him suck her breast and then churn butter later.

Mother Yaśodā took her son on her lap and pushed the nipples of her breasts into His mouth. And while Kṛṣṇa was sucking the milk, she was

smiling, enjoying the beauty of her child's face. Suddenly, the milk which was on the oven began to boil over. Just to stop the milk from spilling, mother Yaśodā at once put Kṛṣṇa aside and went to the oven. Left in that state by His mother, Kṛṣṇa became very angry, and His lips and eyes became red in rage. He pressed His teeth and lips, and taking up a piece of stone, He immediately broke the butter pot. He took butter out of it, and with false tears in His eyes, He began to eat the butter in a secluded place.

In the meantime, mother Yaśodā returned to the churning place after setting the overflowing milk pan in order. She saw the broken pot in which the churning yogurt was kept. Since she could not find her boy, she concluded that the broken pot was His work. She began to smile as she thought, "The child is very clever. After breaking the pot He has left this place, fearing punishment." After she sought all over, she found a big wooden grinding mortar, which was kept upside down, and she found her son sitting on it. He was taking butter, which was hanging from the ceiling on a swing, and He was feeding it to the monkeys. She saw Kṛṣṇa looking this

way and that way in fear of her because He was conscious of His naughty behavior. After seeing her son so engaged, she very silently approached Him from behind. Kṛṣṇa, however, quickly saw her coming at Him with a stick in her hand, and immediately He got down from the grinding mortar and began to flee in fear.

Mother Yaśodā chased Him to all corners, trying to capture the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is never approached even by the meditations of great *yogīs*. In other words, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, who is never caught by the *yogīs* and speculators, was playing just like a little child for a great devotee like mother Yaśodā. Mother Yaśodā, however, could not easily catch the fast-running child because of her thin waist and heavy body. Still she tried to follow Him as fast as possible. Her hair loosened, and the flower in her hair fell to the ground. Although she was tired, she somehow reached her naughty child and captured Him. When He was caught, Kṛṣṇa was almost on the point of crying. He smeared His hands over His eyes, which were anointed with black eye cosmetics. The child saw His mother's face while she stood over Him, and His eyes became restless from fear. Mother Yaśodā could understand that Kṛṣṇa was unnecessarily afraid, and for His benefit she wanted to allay His fears.

Being the topmost well-wisher of her child, mother Yaśodā began to think, "If the child is too fearful of me, I don't know what will happen to Him." Mother Yaśodā then threw away her stick. In order to punish Him, she thought to



Mother Yaśodā chasing Kṛṣṇa

In order to punish Him, she thought to bind His hands with some ropes. She did not know it, but it was actually impossible for her to bind the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Mother Yaśodā was thinking that Kṛṣṇa was her tiny child; she did not know that the child had no limitation. There is no inside or outside of Him, nor beginning or end. He is unlimited and all-pervading. Indeed, He is Himself the whole cosmic manifestation. Still, mother Yaśodā was thinking of Kṛṣṇa as her child. Although He is beyond the reach of all senses, she endeavored to bind Him up to a wooden grinding mortar. But when she tried to bind Him, she found that the rope she was using was too short--by two inches. She gathered more ropes from the house and added to it, but at the end she found the same shortage. In this way, she connected all the ropes available at home, but when the final knot was added, she saw that it was still two inches too short. Mother Yaśodā was smiling, but she was astonished. How was it happening?

In attempting to bind her son, she became tired. She was perspiring, and the garland on her head fell down. Then Lord Kṛṣṇa appreciated the hard labor of His mother, and being compassionate upon her, He agreed to be bound up by the ropes. Kṛṣṇa, playing as a human child in the house of mother Yaśodā, was performing His own selected pastimes. Of course, no one can control the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The pure devotee surrenders himself unto the lotus feet of the Lord, who may either protect or vanquish the devotee. But for his part, the devotee never forgets his own position of surrender. Similarly, the Lord also feels transcendental pleasure by submitting Himself to the protection of the devotee. This was exemplified by Kṛṣṇa's surrender unto His mother, Yaśodā.

Kṛṣṇa is the supreme bestower of all kinds of liberation to His devotees, but the benediction which was bestowed upon mother Yaśodā was never experienced even by Lord Brahmā or Lord Śiva or the goddess of fortune.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known as the son of Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja, is never so completely known to the *yogīs* and speculators. But He is easily available to His devotees. Nor is He appreciated as the

supreme reservoir of all pleasure by the *yogis* and speculators.

After binding her son, mother Yaśodā engaged herself in household affairs. At that time, bound up to the wooden mortar, Kṛṣṇa could see a pair of trees before Him which were known as *arjuna* trees. The great reservoir of pleasure, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, thus thought to Himself, "Mother Yaśodā first of all left without feeding Me sufficient milk, and therefore I broke the pot of yogurt and distributed the stock butter in charity to the monkeys. Now she has bound Me up to a wooden mortar. So I shall do something more mischievous than before." And thus He thought of pulling down the two very tall *arjuna* trees.

There is a history behind the pair of *arjuna* trees. In their previous lives, the trees were born as the human sons of Kuvera, and their names were Nalakūvara and Maṇigrīva. Fortunately, they came within the vision of the Lord. In their previous lives they were cursed by the great sage Nārada in order to receive the highest benediction of seeing Lord Kṛṣṇa. This benediction-curse was bestowed upon them because of their forgetfulness due to intoxication.

The End



Mother Yaśodā binding Lord Kṛṣṇa

Vaiṣṇava Song: Śrī Damodarāṣṭakam

This *aṣṭakam* (eight-versed prayer) was originally sung by Satyavrata Muni and ultimately recorded in the *Padma Purāṇa*. It depicts the binding of Lord Kṛṣṇa by Mother Yaśodā and while it begins with a vision of Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Controller, it ends with a revelation of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and praise to the rope that bound this small boy's belly. In this way Satyavrata Muni reveals the sweetness in the mood of the Vrajavāsīs, which is ultimately the very rope that binds Kṛṣṇa – not the opulence of worshiping Him as a Lord, but dear and topmost love and affection of seeing Him as one's friend, child or lover. During Kārtika this *aṣṭakam* is often sung or recited every morning and every evening for the whole month. Śrīla Gurudeva said that by doing this we will most certainly achieve success.

**namāmīśvaraṁ sac-cid-ānanda-rūpaṁ
lasat-kuṇḍalaṁ gokule bhrājamānam
yaśodā-bhiyolūkhalād dhāvamānam
parām ṛṣṭam atyantato drutya gopyā (1)**

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

rudantaṁ muhur netra-yugmaṁ mṛjantaṁ
 karāmbhoja-yugmena sātaṅka-netram
 muhuḥ śvāsa-kampa-tri-rekhāṅka-kaṅṭha-
 sthita-graiva-dāmodaraṁ bhakti-baddham (2)

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 *pranāma* (obeisance) unto] that Dāmodara, who is bound by His mother's *vatsalya-bhakti* (bhakti in the mood of parental affection).

itīdṛk sva-līlābhir ānanda-kuṇḍe
 sva-ghoṣaṁ nimajjantam ākhyāpayantam
 tadyeśīta-jñeṣu bhaktair jitatvaṁ
 punaḥ prematas taṁ śatāvṛtti vande (3)

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! mokṣaṁ na mokṣāvadhiṁ vā
 na cānyaṁ vṛṇe 'haṁ varesād apīha
 idaṁ te vapur nātha! gopāla-bālaṁ
 sadā me manasy āvirāstāṁ kim anyaiḥ (4)

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

idaṁ te mukhāmbhojam avyakta-nīlair
 vṛtaṁ kuntalaiḥ snigdha-raktaiś ca gopyā
 muhuś cumbitaṁ bimba-raktādharāṁ me
 manasy āvirāstāṁ alaṁ lakṣa-lābhaiḥ (5)

Your lotus-like face, encircled by soft, blackish-blue curly locks of hair that have a reddish glow, is repeatedly kissed by the *gopī* Śrī Yaśodā. 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! dāmodarānanta viṣṇo!
 prasīda prabho! duḥkha-jālābdhi-magnam
 kṛpā-dṛṣṭi-vṛṣṭyāti-dīnaṁ batānu
 gṛhāṇeśa! mām ajñam edhy akṣi-dṛśyaḥ (6)

O Deva! O Dāmodara! O Ananta! O Viṣṇu ! 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 Īśa, shower me with Your merciful glance and kindly uplift me by becoming directly visible to my eyes.

kuverātmajau baddha-mūrtyaiva yadvat
 tvayā mocitau bhakti-bhājau kṛtau ca
 tathā prema-bhaktiṁ svakām me prayaccha
 na mokṣe graho me 'sti dāmodareha (7)

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 Dāmodara! I long for this alone; I do not want any other kind of liberation.

namas te 'stu dāmne sphurad dīpti-dhāmne
tvadīyodarāyātha viśvasya dhāmne
namo rādhikāyai tvadīya priyāyai
namo 'nanta-līlāya devāya tubhyam (8)

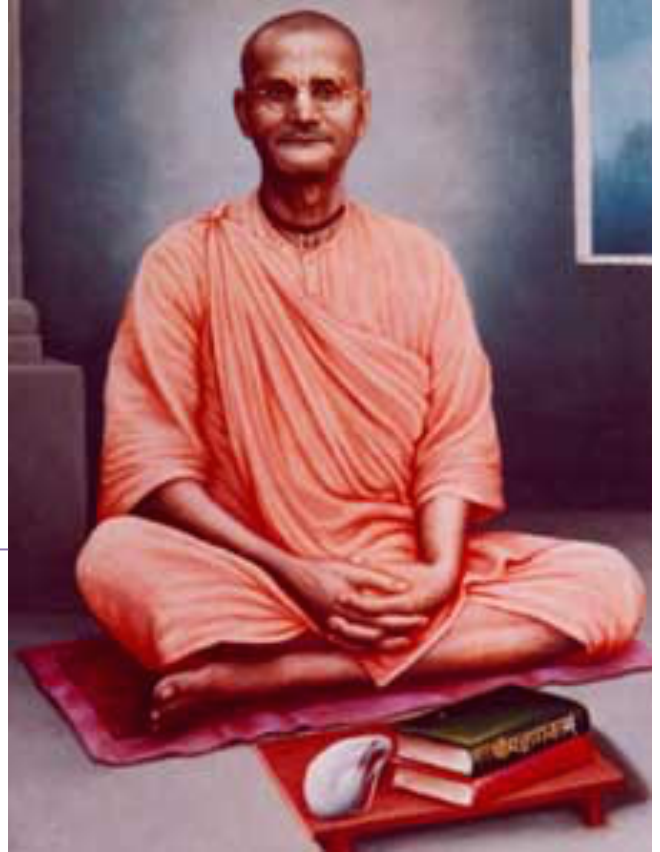
O Dāmodara, I offer *pranāma* to the rope binding Your belly, for it is an abode of brilliant effulgence. I offer *pranāma* to Your belly, which is the mainstay of the entire universe. I offer *pranāma* again and again to Śrīmatī Rādhika, Your most beloved. And I offer *pranāma* to You, my Divine Lord,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

A Few Words on Damodarāṣṭakam

Abridged extract from the Introduction to Śrī Damodarāṣṭakam by Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja on First Day of Kārtika, 1958

The first day of Kārtika each year sees the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja, who is Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Maharaja's beloved gurudeva, (therefore our param-gurudeva, grandfather guru) and the sannyaśa guru of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda. An astounding scholar, preacher and dear disciple to his own gurudeva, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja wrote many excellent books explicating true Vaiṣṇava philosophy and mood, and the following is an abridged extract from his introduction to Śrī Damodarāṣṭakam.

Acintyānanta-śaktimān bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, that is, the inconceivable and omnipotent Personality of Godhead, consented with Mother Yaśodā to bind Him with ropes to a wooden grinding mortar, and by this pastime fully tasted the essence of her *viśuddha-vātsalya-prema-rāsa*, the pure divine mellows of her parental love. Thus He also revealed to the world the highest characteristics of His quality of *bhaktādhīnatā*, the willingness to subject Himself to the dominance of the devotee. This supremely attractive *śrī dāmabandhana-līlā* was manifested on the day of the *kārtika-śukla-pratipada*, the day following the dark moon day in the month of Kārtika. This is also the primary reason for the perfectly glorious month of Kārtika becoming famous by the name of Dāmodara. Ācāryapāda Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, the author of



Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja

Vaiṣṇava *smṛti-śāstra* named *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, has outlined the devotional activities to be carried out during the month of Kārtika. He indicates that the rule to be followed everyday is the worship of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara and the recitation of the *stotra* named *Śrī Damodarāṣṭakam*, Eight Prayers Glorifying Lord Dāmodara, thus:

“Oh learned brāhmaṇas! One who worships Śrī Rādhika in the month of Kārtika for the sole purpose of pleasing Her, equally pleases Śrī Hari. One who also worships Śrī Dāmodara by daily recital of the *stotra* known as Śrī *Damodarāṣṭakam* that was spoken by Satyavrata Mūni, attracts Śrī Dāmodara Himself.”

Śrī Damodarastaka *stotra* is found in the *Padma Purāṇa*, having been spoken by Śrī Satyavrata Mūni during a conversation with Śrī Narada, Śaunaka and other sages. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda has stated in his *ṭikā* or commentary that this *stotra* is *nitya-siddha*, an eternally perfected prayer, that it has become manifest through Śrī Satyavrata Mūni, and that it is able to attract Śrī Dāmodara-Kṛṣṇa. He has fully elucidated and elaborated on this *stotra*'s ability to attract Lord Dāmodara in extensive purports, which abound with his own personal insights.

This *aṣṭakam*, which was written down by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, is an ideal specimen amongst the educated world due to its philosophical analysis, its expert composition, and its wonderful excellence in revealing the essence of the Lord's *līlās*. By composing his *ṭikā* of *Dig-Darśinī* with clear elaboration, *jagad-guru* Śrīla Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda has fully clarified and distinguished comparative differences of various mellows within the kingdom of *sādhana*. By that he has proven in all respects the superiority of the *vātsalya* [parental affection] and *madhura-rāsa* [the mood of sweetness]:

Finally, at the conclusion of this supreme *stuti* or prayer, the author desires to describe the supremely super-excellent pastimes of the *rāsa-*

līlā [Kṛṣṇa's dance with the gopīs] and other transcendental pastimes that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Performed with Śrī Rādhika, but these are the epitome of confidential topics, therefore they are not mentioned directly. The logic of *madhureṇa samāpayet-diti*, that is, 'all undertakings should be completed sweetly' applies here. Therefore such confidential pastimes are referred to in the words *namo 'nanta-līlāya*, "I offer obeisances unto Your unlimited *līlās*."

The principal purpose of observing this *urjja-vrata* [the vow made during Kārtika] is to please Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is called Urjješvarī, queen of the *urjja-vrata*. Only for this reason, in order to establish the pleasure of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara, Satyavrata Mūni uttered *namo rādhikāyai tvadīya priyāyai*, "I offer my obeisances unto Your most beloved, Śrī Rādhika." By this statement he has indicated that the sole activity to be done during the *Dāmodara-vrata* [the month of Kārtika] is the worship of Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara.

The End



Vaiṣṇava Calendar

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition celebrates many festival days throughout the year, following the Vedic lunar calendar, and as such the dates on which the festivals fall differ each year. Listed below are the dates on which we fast (*Ekādaśī* 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 appearance days (birthdays) and disappearance days (when a saint leaves their body) of prominent pure Vaiṣṇava saints, as well as the birthdays of Kṛṣṇa's incarnations (also known as appearance days).

The Vedas describe several reasons for fasting on *Ekādaśī* (the 11th day after the full or new moon).

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's song, *Śuddha-Bhakata*, describes the day of *Ekādaśī* as “mother of devotion”, because *Ekādaśī* is Kṛṣṇa's merciful manifestation as a day. By fasting from grains and beans and certain other foodstuffs, consuming only what we need for our sustenance and making the focus of the day our devotional practice, we are directly serving Kṛṣṇa. By offering all of our actions to Kṛṣṇa and honouring the spiritual practices of the day we will come to know Him. As such we also fast in the style of *Ekādaśī* on His appearance days.

Restricted and Permitted Foods on Ekādaśī

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

Restricted foods on *Ekādaśī*:

- ~ 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 *Ekādaśī*: black pepper, fresh ginger, pure salt and fresh turmeric, all taken from a new and clean package

Spices not used on *Ekādaśī*: hing (asafoetida), sesame seeds, cumin, fenugreek, mustard, tamarind, fennel, cardamom and nutmeg

Foods that can be taken all days of the year, including *Ekādaśī*:

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

Festival Days, Fasting Dates and Break Fast Times

(Daylight-savings time not considered)

October 2015

Wednesday 7 *Ekādaśī* - [HST] only!

Thursday 8th *Ekādaśī*

Break fast soon after 10:22 [HST] only!

Friday 9th Break fast 06:17-09:48 [EST], 05:58-09:54 [CST], 06:52-09:11 [MST], 06:19-08:11 [PST], 07:20-08:11 [Alaska]

Friday 16th Appearance day of Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Gosvāmī Maharāja – a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

Thursday 22nd Appearance day of Śrī Madhavācārya

Friday 23rd *Ekādaśī*

Saturday 24th Break fast 06:24-09:52 [EST], 06:08-09:48 [CST], 07:10-10:21 [MST], 06:41-09:41 [PST], 07:55-11:06 [Alaska], 06:31-10:09 [HST]

Disappearance of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī – an associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and one

of the six Gosvāmīs

Disappearance of Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī – an associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and one of the six Gosvāmīs

Disappearance of Kṛṣṇadasa Kaviraja Gosvāmī – an associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and author of Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta

Tuesday 27th The holy month of *Kārtika* and the fourth month of *Cāturmāsya* begins – fast for one month from sesame seeds & oil and mustard seeds & oil for *one month* and continue fast from eggplants, tomatoes (if possible) and honey for one more month.

Disappearance day of param-gurudeva Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja – our Gurudeva Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's guru

Disappearance day of Śrī Murari Gupta – An associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

November 2015

Monday 2nd Appearance day of Rādhā-kuṇḍa – Śrīmatī Rādhikā's sacred pond

Wednesday 4th Appearance day of Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣak Śrīdhar Gosvāmī Maharāja – Śrīla Swāmī Prabhupāda's dear god-brother

Friday 6th Ekādaśī [EST, CST, MST, PST and Alaska only]

Saturday 7th Ekādaśī [Hawaii only]

Break fast soon after 10:00 [EST], 09:00-09:53 [CST], 08:00-10:25 [MST], 07:02-09:45 [PST], 08:30-11:18 [Alaska]

Sunday 8th Break fast 06:39-10:11 [HST]

Wednesday 11th Diwali – festival of lights

Thursday 12th Govardhana-puja – Worship of Govardhana Hill

Sunday 15th Disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda

Thursday 19th Disappearance of Śrī Srinivasa Ācārya – Associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

Saturday 21st Ekādaśī [Alaska & HST only]

Sunday 22nd Ekādaśī [EST, CST, MST and PST only]

Break fast 09:03 -11:30 [Alaska], 06:47-10:15 [HST]

Disappearance day of Śrīla Gaura-kiśora dās Bābājī Maharāja - Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura

Appearance day of Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja – disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura

Monday 23rd Break fast 06:51-10:05 [EST], 06:50-10:01 [CST], 07:07- 10:32 [MST], 08:01-09:52 [PST],

Tuesday 24th Disappearance day of Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja – disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura

Wednesday 25th Śrī Kṛṣṇa Rāsa-yātrā

End of the month of Kārtika

End of Cāturmāsya

December 2015

Sunday 6th Ekādaśī

Monday 7th Break fast 07:38-10:26 [EST], 07:05-10:10 [CST], 08:04-10:39 [MST], 07:53-09:59 [PST], 09:31-11:43 [Alaska], 06:57-10:22 [HST]

Sunday 13th Disappearance of Śrīla Bhakti Jīvana Janārdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja – a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura

Monday 21st Ekādaśī

Advent of Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā – when Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Gītā* to Arjuna

Tuesday 22nd Break fast 07:49-10:34 [EST], 07:16-10:17 [CST], 08:15-10:22 [MST], 08:05-09:22 [PST], 09:47-11:53 [Alaska], 07:06-07-22 [HST]

Monday 28th Disappearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura Prabhupāda – Śrīla Swāmī Prabhupāda's guru