



PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE

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Gopal Lifts a Mountain

Today the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) received from India a beautiful painting of Sri Krishna lifting Govardhan Hill. Rasaraja das Prabhu and Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja. PhD, (Sripad Puri Maharaja) joyfully hung it up on the wall for all to worship and adore.



Gopal Krishna lifting Govardhan Hill

“Oh wow, such a beautiful painting of Sri Sri Radha Krishna,” BVI’s friend, Dorothy said in amazement when she saw it on the wall. While trying to explain the story behind the painting, guest, Ved ji said, “‘Go’ means cow and ‘vardhan’ means nourisher. Devotees are saying to Krishna ‘I want to be near you’ but Krishna says ‘you are under Me (Sri Govardhan), so you are safe’ but people don’t have that much faith so they put up their own sticks to hold up Govardhan,” Ved ji continued. “No, no they want to help Krishna. They think Krishna is such a little boy, how He can hold up Govardhan alone,” Sripad Puri Maharaja interjected. “I feel that way. I feel the people don’t have full confidence,” Ved ji reiterated.

Looking at the painting, Dorothy asked who brought it to the office. Sripad Puri Maharaja simply said, “by the prayers of the devotees and the grace of Sri Guru Giri Govardhan it arrived from India this morning.”

“Do you know the story of Govardhan?” Sripad Puri Maharaja asked Vedji. “Partially, I know what happened. People were going to various

demigods but He (Krishna) doesn’t care about that, so Krishna tells everyone not to worship the demigods. Just do your duty. Indra (King of Heaven and god of weather) got angry and started pouring down rain, lightning and thunder for seven days without stopping,” Ved ji explained.

“As just a little boy, Krishna saw his father (Nanda Maharaja) and the other residents of Vrindavan making elaborate preparations for the worship of King Indra because He provides them rain for their fields and crops. There were all kinds of food offerings being cooked with all types of grains, milk products, fruits and vegetables. Krishna already knew everything but still He asked Nanda Maharaja ‘what are all the decorations and bhog preparations for?’ Nanda Maharaja explained that ‘This is an annual tradition that is made in honor of Lord Indra, the king of heaven, for many generations.’ After his explanation, Krishna told the Vrajavasis (residents of Vrindavan), ‘You don’t have to worship Indra. Sri Govardhan Hill is more important than Indra. The Hill is providing all the food and water you need for your cows and nourishment,’ Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “On getting this news, Indra became very angry and ordered the rain and thunder to punish the Vrajavasis so that no one would make such an offense again. Lord Indra could not believe that Krishna, who He considered to be a mere mortal child, could dare to oppose His worship and instead choose to worship a pile of rocks such as Sri Govardhan. He felt the Vrajavasis had rejected all the demigods over whom he was king.”

“Indra is the lord of the weather. He carries the thunderbolt (*Vajra*), so when he gets angry at anyone, he throws his thunderbolt at them. So with severe rain and lightning the people of Vrindavan were getting frightened. They all loved Krishna so much but they were afraid of

Indra. Frightened, the *gopis* and *gopas* said ‘What are we going to do?’ So Krishna said, ‘Let’s go to Govardhan. He will protect us.’



L-R: Vedji, Dorothy, Rasaraja Prabhu with Sripad Puri Maharaja

Krishna went over to Govardhan hill and picked it up like a big umbrella and held it with His left pinky finger. He asked the Vrajavasis to take shelter of the mountain assuring everyone that Giriraj (Krishna - Lord as Govardhan Hill) will give them protection from Lord Indra’s wrath. The Vrajavasis were amazed and said, ‘Krishna, how can you lift that mountain? You are just an ordinary boy.’ He called out to them ‘Come under and you will be protected from the rain.’ They all came under the mountain- umbrella with Krishna. Some of the cowherd boys were afraid how Krishna, being such a young child can hold this gigantic hill up alone so they put their sticks up to help,” Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. “Of course Krishna is the Supreme Godhead, He didn’t need any help but the cowherd boys were so affectionate to Krishna they could only think of Him as their little friend, ‘We can help you’ and they all used their cow prods to help Krishna hold up the mountain. In the meantime Indra was pouring more and more rain while Krishna and His friends were all happily protected under the shelter of Sri Giri Govardhan. Even the cows came and all remained there happily situated. Indra became angrier throwing more thunderbolts and rain. Finally he realized ‘I can’t defeat Krishna. He is more powerful than me. He can do anything. This Krishna is not an ordinary boy. He is the Supreme Lord.’ Immediately he understood his mistake and thought, ‘I am such an arrogant fool. I am trying to punish Vrajavasis for not worshipping me but we should all be serving Krishna. You have all taught me a good lesson.’”



Sripad Puri Maharaja with Rasaraja Prabhu (left), Dorothy and Ved Ji

Humbly appearing before Krishna with folded hands, Indra appeased Krishna by reciting the *Indra Krutha Krishna stotram*^[1] (*Aksharam param brahma jothi roopam sanathanam*). Pointing to the new painting, Sripad Puri Maharaja continued, “You see Indra kneeling down and bowing his head to Krishna. Indra said to Krishna, “I am so sorry. I did not realize that you are the Supreme Lord. Please forgive me.’ Thus realizing his sincere repentance Krishna forgave Indra.”

“What caught my attention the last time I was here is that there are many common things between the Hindu religion and the Christian religion like this one. The Bible also has 40 days of torrential rain because God got angry due to the behavior of the people. This is not the first time I find so many similarities,” Dorothy said. “I am now going to begin collecting all these similar stories.”

“Everyone was asking me, ‘Why don’t we have Radha and Krishna here,’ so now we have the Divine couple in this painting,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said. “Yes, I was one of them,” Dorothy said happily.



Rasaraja das Prabhu demonstrating how Sri Krishna lifted Sri Govardhan Hill

“The pastime depicted in this painting brings out a very import point about false ego. In the mundane plane everyone is engaged in exploitation, making sacrifices to enjoy the fruits of their labor (*bhoktaram yajna tapasyam*) . They want to become the lord of all they survey (*sarva loka mahesvaram*). And they all want to be honored and loved by everyone (*suridam sarva butanam*). The result is that they end up fighting one another and creating misery because they are each separately seeking to serve their own selfish ends. But Krishna gives the proper formula for peace n the *Bhagavad-gita* 5.29

*bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ,
sarva-loka-maheśvaram
suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ,
jñātvā māṁ śāntim ṛchchhati*

I am the enjoyer and objective of the sacrifices performed by persons of action, and of the austerities performed by persons of knowledge. I am Nārāyaṇa, the indwelling monitor of all planes of life, the worshippable Supreme Personality who awards liberation. I am Kṛṣṇa, the well-wisher of all and the dear friend of the devotees. One who knows Me thus, attains the bliss of knowing his own original divine identity.

“In other words, the problem is that everyone is trying to take Krishna’s position for themselves and thus end up fighting one another for the supreme position. Rather all should be taking a humble position of serving Krishna as the Supreme Enjoyer, Lord and Friend. This is the most important thing,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said.

“At our main Math in Sri Dham Nabadwip in India, Srila Sridhar Maharaja^[2] told us that Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur called Koladwip Gupta Govardhan (the hidden Govardhan) and that same lila of Krishna lifting Govardhan Hill is right there on a relief sculpture on the center of the Mandir (temple) to remind us of the Lord’s protection of His devotees and the importance of forgoing the arrogance of Indra and surrendering to the Lord. However powerful one may be makes no difference to the Supreme Person. No one is superior to Krishna and thus humble surrender to Him is the most important quality of a vaisnava (worshipper of Lord Vishnu). A devotee is always very humble, tolerant, and respectful.” This is confirmed by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu^[2] in His Sri *Shikshashtaka* (3):

*trinad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniyah sada harihi*

One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.

“Mahaprabhu says we must be humbler than a blade of grass. Grass can be stepped on but it doesn’t protest. *Taror* means the tree. You must be more tolerant than the tree. Don’t expect people to respect you (*manina*) but still give respect to others (*manadena*),” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “Jesus was handled in a very rude way. He was beaten, people were spitting on him and throwing stones at him. Whatever disrespect they gave him, he did not become angry. He silently bore all of that. They wanted to kill him, and he humbly accepted that also. When he was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed ‘Lord if you like, please take this cup from my lips. I don’t like to drink from this bitter cup of my fate. I don’t want it but if it is Your will, I accept.’ He knew what was coming but still he just bowed his head. ‘If it is Your will, Thy will be done.’ In this way, don’t expect respect from others but rather give respect to others. One who is a devotee sees everyone as a servant of Krishna. All are serving the Lord in some way so accordingly we must give proper respect to them - not only Krishna but everyone because everyone is a servant of Krishna.”

“What is on the top of the mountain (Govardhan)?” Dorothy asked. “That’s a small temple for Gopal Krishna that was built there,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

After a brief pause, “I was always wondering why you didn’t have an image of Krishna and Radha.” Dorothy said. “We consider the Divine couple to embody the highest conception of Love. Our position is that we need mercy. We are looking for mercy so we worship Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu Who are giving mercy very freely to everyone without discrimination. This painting is not only showing Radha and Krishna but it is also teaching us how to approach Krishna with a humble attitude for those who are proud, and a simple loving mood of service for those who are surrendered,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

“Govardhan is considered one of the most sacred places in India for the devotees of Krishna (Vaisnavas) because Radha and Krishna performed Their intimate pastimes there. It was in the grottos of the mountain and the nearby Radha kund that they playfully engaged in their various loving pastimes,” Sripad Puri Maharaja explained.

“Another similarity in religions I see when looking at the painting is the cow. In the Christian religion, when Baby Jesus was born, there were the donkey, the cow, the sheep. All the animals were there honoring the sacred place where Baby Jesus was born,” Dorothy said. “Yes, the animals are around Jesus because all life and nature are part of His divinity. He was in a manger (*manga* means eat) where the cows eat, because they did not have a crib in which He could sleep, ” Sripad Puri Maharaja said. “Krishna is like that. He doesn’t come like a king, He appeared as a very humble cow herder, even though He is the Supreme Lord. He enjoys the more intimate relations and thus He takes a humble position alongside His devotees as their most lovable friend, child or lover.”

“The cows are also very important because of the milk. All over the world people can not live without the cow’s milk. Cows are pure vegetarian - they do not even take any insects as their food. The cows eat only grass and leaves, so their milk has a purity to it,” Ved ji said. “Some vegetarian people don’t drink milk,” Dorothy said. “You don’t have to kill the cow to take the milk. Cows are giving their milk abundantly and always have extra milk to give when she has a calf. If you don’t take the milk from them, they will be unhappy, so it’s important to milk the cow. It helps the cow. So to be vegetarian, it is not necessary to avoid milk because it is coming from mother cow,” Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. According to the Vedic culture, cows are considered as one of the seven mothers. In the purport of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.12.8, Srila Prabhupada^[3] explained “There are seven kinds of mothers.”^[4]

ātma-mātā guroḥ patnī
brāhmaṇī rāja-patnikā

*dhenur dhātrī tathā pṛthvī
saptaitā mātarāḥ smṛtāḥ*

These mothers are the original mother, the wife of the teacher or spiritual master, the wife of a brāhmaṇa, the king's wife, the cow, the nurse and the earth.

“Some people say that the Indian culture gives all this credit to the bull,” Dorothy said. “The bull is like the father who works for the family and brings them food, so the bull is used to plow the field for the crops that feed the cows and calves. In this way the bull is like the father and the cow is like the mother,” Rasaraja das Prabhu said. “The bull also helps to seed Mother Earth. When the bull plows the field, the farmer puts the seed there, so the bull is also gives the seed to the cow and earth and that is why he is called the father. The bull is the father, giving the seed, and the cow is the mother, giving the milk, so both are honored,” Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. “Krishna gives protection to the cows and the bulls also. One of His names is Govinda, protector of the cows,” Rasaraja das Prabhu added.



Rasaraja das Prabhu with Sripad Puri Maharaja during kirtan

With this our wonderful *sadhu sangā* came to an end after we chanted an inspiring bhajan to Sri Govardhan composed by Srila Raghunath das Goswami. In conclusion *prasadam* was served and honored by all.

All Glories to Sri Guru and Sri Sri Gauranga
Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Maharaja ki jai
Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj ki jai

Your humble servant,
Kushum Devi Dasi
(New York)



Please send donations
via Pay Pal
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seva@bviscs.org

[1] Indra Krutha Krishna stotram -
http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Indra_Krutha_Krishna_stotram

[2] Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj - Founder-President-Acharyya: Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math

[3] His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada) is the founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

[4] The Seven Mothers -
<https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/690509bgcol/>

