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Śrī Mukta Carita

The Story of the Pearls

Namah Sri Sri GandharvvaGiridharabhyam

He Who is more attractive than tens of millions of Cupids,
Whose bodily lustre resembles that of a blue lotus in full bloom
and Whose pastimes have completely enchanted the world
of animate and inanimate beings,
to He Who is the son of the Chief of the cowherds (Gopendra Nandan),
to Sri Govinda I offer my respectful salutations.

I adore the Divine Couple Sri Sri RadhaMadhab,
Who have become immersed in an ocean of playful pastimes
through the buying and selling of pearls,
each of Them mutually desirous of victory,
in the matter of disputatious wrangling over the said merchandise.

I take shelter of the Full Moon, Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu,
Who has risen in the sky of Sri Sacimata's womb,
with the intention of bestowing the nectar of His own pure devotion
upon the citizens of the world.

Aho! By the most celebrated mercy of he
from whom I have attained the hope of some service
to the best of all names within the orb of this earth,
Sri HariNam Mahamantra;
to Sri SaciNandan Mahaprabhu,
to Swarup, Rupa, & Sanatan
and to the extensive dominions of Mathurapuri,
with all of its pasturing grounds and residences;
to Sri RadhaKunda;
to the chief of all mountains, Sri Govardhana;
and to the lotus feet of Sri RadhaMadhava,
to Sri Gurudeva I bow my head again and again.

For the purpose of increasing the rapturous delight of those divine persons, the celebrated devotees of the Lord, who are conversant with the science of the mellows of devotion, I will now churn the ocean known as Sri Brindaban, that the waves of nectar produced therefrom, namely the wonderful character and qualities of Sri Hari, may expand, thus causing the devotees to drown therein.

Sri Satyabhama Debi, after hearing briefly that Sri Krsna had created in Brindaban, a creeper which produced pearls, submissively inquired from Him, expressing her desire to hear in full about this wonderful event, "Nath! (My Lord!) The pearls set in my bracelets were produced originally as the fruits of a creeper?! What sanctified country is it that produces such fascinating creepers?"

Satyabhama's question awoke within the mind of Sri Krsna remembrance of that wonderful pastime, which in turn caused Him to feel very afflicted in His heart. Externally however He smiled as He began His reply, "Priye! (Dearest one!) The time has long passed since pearls were produced from creepers. At present all pearls come from oysters."

Satyabhama listened carefully to this reply which only increased her intense eagerness to hear more, thus she requested Him again and again to narrate more about these wonderful events.

Krsna replied, "In Gokul, one day during the month of Kartik, the Dipamalika festival was going on at Sri Gobardhan. [During this celebration, rows and rows of little lamps, appearing like garlands of twinkling stars, are placed all around.] At that time the residents of Gokul were carefully preparing all kinds of decorations and ornaments which were just suitable for celebrating that festival and making it a grand success. The cowherd men had adorned themselves with various ornaments and were especially engaged in decorating the cows, buffaloes and other animals. The cowherd women and girls were all decorating their houses with the appropriate articles and cleaning various ornaments, preparing them to decorate their own delicate bodies. Amongst them, the daughter of Brishabhanu, Sri Radhika, was seated within a courtyard constructed from Madhabi creepers, on the banks of the lake known as Malya-Haron (lit.-stolen garlands), where in the company of her sakhis she was preparing to make various ornaments from a collection of most exquisite pearls.

Coming to know of these events from the tidings of a young parrot who is very aptly named, Vicakkan (lit.- clever, experienced), I immediately proceeded to that place in eager curiosity. Upon my arrival, I submitted with great solicitude, before Radha and Her friends, my petition for a collection of pearls with which I might decorate the receptacles of my fondest love, my two cows celebrated with the names, Hungsi and Harini.

Hearing my request, the girls barely glanced at me, and that with seeming indifference, from the corners of their lovely eyes, half-open and partially concealed by the ends of their saris, yet still exceeding the beauty of a blue lotus, and possessed of a humour or wisdom which can only be compared with the

nectar of flowers. Maintaining their silence they continued to expand the beauty of those necklaces that they were constructing with great skill and expertise, while at the same time discreetly exhibiting priceless diamonds and other gems on the ground stained red with lac dye, as though they were trying to decide which jewel to add next, but factually only that I might appreciate their fabulous collection.

At this point I laughed and addressed them once again, "He Sakhigon! Because you have all recently attained the priceless touchstone of adolescent beauty, is this pride of yours, which is now so magnified that it resembles a very tall mountain, somehow blocking your ears? Please heed for a moment the matter which I am presenting before you, and which is amiable to you all."

This time my words caused ripples of laughter to spread amongst them as they each glanced at one another. Finally the intrepid and impertinent Lalita accosted Me with angry words, coming from one as though offended, but which nevertheless emanated from her smiling face, "Ohe Nagar! (Oh our Great Gallant!) These extremely costly pearls which are fit to be worn by the king's queens are now deemed as being just suitable for your cows and she buffaloes!? Oh really! I know! Why shouldn't we just give you all the pearls so that you can decorate Your cows?!"

After hearing these deceitful and hypocritical words of Lalita I became absorbed in their playful, joyful mood and continued to address them with pleasant words, "Oh you who are yourselves all very attractive ornaments! [Priyabhusanagon!- This contains a double meaning: It can also mean, "You to whom ornaments (alone) are precious."] You don't have to give me all of the pearls, but at least you should give me some of them, which factually are just perfect for decorating the four horns of these two most favourite cows of mine."

Then Lalita, after patiently hearing my words, took the pearls of all the sakhis and while showing them to me with a big smile on her face, moved them around and around saying, "He Krsna! (Alas!) What shall I do!? There is not even one pearl here fit for your cows."

I replied, "Ayi Lalite! Oh most clever one! Just forget it! Henceforward you will never be able to call Me a miser."

After reproaching them in this and various other ways I immediately came to My mother and told her, "Janani (Mother)! Please give me some pearls. I want to plant them in the field."

I requested her again and again in this way, and finally, after listening to my eager requests, Mother laughed loudly and replied, "Batsa! (My darling!) Pearls will never sprout if you plant them."

I said, "Janani! You must give me some pearls. Within three days they will definitely sprout. This you will be able to see with your own eyes."

Seeing my intense eagerness, Mother couldn't refuse me, and so gave me a collection of many of her pearls. Binding these in a cloth I immediately proceeded to the banks of the Jamuna (in Gokul), just near Jolharon Ghat (lit.- where water is collected, or a collection of water), where I now began to prepare the soil in three separate plots. While I was busily engaged in seeding my freshly prepared beds with pearls, some gopis happened to pass that way and made their presence known by their loud laughter. This I nevertheless managed to completely ignore.

Having sown all of those pearls in the ground I covered them over with fresh earth and then constructed a very dense and strong fence around the field with thorn bushes.

Hereafter, I devised a plan whereby the gopis would be induced to come to me to beg for pearls. I sent some of my friends to them to request some milk for the purpose of watering my pearl plants. Of course, they only laughed very loudly as they replied, "Our milk is not suitable for such a noble purpose. Rather, you should use the milk of those cows for whom you are going to such great lengths to procure a quantity of pearls. Even if you do get pearls in this way, we will never come to crave those fruits from you." {Though they spoke in this way, still they were all now fully aware of what I was doing.}

Accepting their advice, we then proceeded to water those plants with abundant milk from our own house, on a daily basis, all so that they might see that we were doing so.

On the fourth day all of those pearls began to sprout. Seeing this I was extremely delighted and ran to tell Mother. Catching hold of her sari I brought her there and showed her the new sprouts. She was quite surprised and simply exclaimed, "What is this?!" Considering the whole matter within her mind, she returned to Braja, full of suspicion.

However, when the gopis received this news, they simply laughed among themselves, saying that, "Ferocious creepers of envy were sprouting." [i.e. sticker bushes]

Almost at once those pearl creepers took on an appearance similar to that of hemp plants. Seeing that they were growing very quickly and spreading out quite luxuriantly, I made them to take shelter of the Kadamba trees nearby that they might climb up on them.

In the space of only a few days, a heavenly scent which drove the bees mad began to emanate from the flowers that had now bloomed, thus pervading the whole of Gokul with their fragrant perfume and bestowing upon the gopis an inexpressible joy. All of those pearl fruits assumed such an uncommon beauty, more so in fact than the eight kinds of original pearls from which they derived their existence. [Pearls come from oysters, conch shells, wild boars' heads, elephants' heads, king cobras' heads, bamboo stems, clouds and fish heads.] Seeing that all of these creepers had produced pearls, the Brajbasis were amazed; specifically, the gopis

were especially dumbfounded with astonishment. They now came every day to see these wonderful plants, allured there by their own covetousness.

They then began to consult amongst one another, "He sakhigon! It is now a well known fact amongst us that Krsna will never give us any of his pearls, because previously when he requested from us both pearls and milk, we refused to comply. Therefore why should he now give us his pearl fruits. But what does it matter? It's not that we didn't witness the procedure for growing pearls. In fact we have seen exactly how it is done. Therefore, giving up our lack of courage, why shouldn't we begin a pearl field which is at least twice the size of Krsna's?"

Hearing this, the supremely intelligent Lalita addressed the sakhis, "My dear friends, who are now overwhelmed by insanity! These sorts of miraculous activities, such as picking up Sri Gobardhan, and producing pearls from the earth, marvellous deeds which are difficult even for demigods to perform, are nevertheless accomplished without effort by Krsna. No doubt he has received from some great sage, special mantras and medicines which have enabled him to execute these wonderful activities. This has already been ascertained by the residents of Braj (Brajbasigon). Otherwise how is it possible that this cowherd boy Krsna, born from the lotus pond of the womb of the wife of Brajraj Nanda, exactly resembling in fact a soft and delicate blue lotus, and acquainted only in the ways and means of the cowherds, could perform such uncommon activities as though he had a natural ability for doing so? Even though you are aware of all these things, still you are desirous of persuading yourselves to undertake this work, though none of you possess any such mantras or magic potions. This resolution of yours will in the end most certainly amount to nothing more than the cause of your falling into the ocean of embarrassment and ridicule. This also you must certainly be aware of."

Now Tungavidya spoke up, "We can also receive a mantra possessing esoteric powers, from Nandimukhi, the most accomplished disciple at the lotus feet of Sri Bhagavati Purnamasi. So why shouldn't we enthusiastically persevere in this matter?"

Deciding that Tungavidya's was the best counsel, they all approached Nandimukhi and humbly submitted their intentions.

After hearing all about the aforementioned topics, Nandimukhi exclaimed to herself, "Aye! Just to make the vision of our two eyes successful, this opportunity, eternally desired by us, namely the wonder of sportive play in the matter of trade and commerce, has appeared before us like the seed of a desire tree. Today great fortune is certainly soon to follow. Hence, I will now introduce such convincing and excellent arguments to these gopis, the crown jewels amongst clever girls, that this desire tree quickly sprouts and bears fruit."

After deliberating about the matter in this way, Nandimukhi addressed those gopis with a cheerful mind, "He sakhigon! You should know it to be the truth that these pearls have been produced from the earth, not by the power of any mantras

uttered by Mukunda."

The sakhis replied, "He Nandimukhi! The only source of the origin of pearls is oysters. How is it possible that without oysters, pearls can be begotten by the earth?"

Nandimukhi replied, "Sakhigon! Please don't think that anything is impossible as regards this matter, because it is all due to the natural influence of this soil. The transcendental earth of these forest lands of Braja has produced many variegated types of jewels. All this has been taught to me by Sri Bhagavati Paurnameasi herself, on many different occasions. Not only that, but I also have genuine experience of it myself. In Brindaban, golden trees have grown and are growing, visible before our eyes, with new twigs made of coral, fresh green emerald leaves, buds of diamonds and pearls, and fruits made of rubies. Therefore if pearls are planted in these fields of Brajbhumi and are seen to produce creepers which bear pearl fruits, then what is so strange or wonderful about that?!

Therefore you should also similarly engage in the cultivation of pearls, but carefully water your plants with fresh, fragrant butter. In this way you will get fruits which are superior, even to those of Sri KrsnaCandra."

In this way, these gopi maidens of Braj drank the sweetness of Nandimukhi's words. With happy hearts and great praise, they completely believed everything she said. After they had all embraced her, they returned, each to their respective homes.

Arriving there, they set about their work with a spirit of great audacity. As a challenge for gaining victory over me, they paid their servants twice or thrice the normal salary [paid in the form of milk], to go out and prepare the fields for their newly discovered agricultural enterprise. Pearls that were piled up in wicker baskets waiting to be strung and those that had already been strung into necklaces were all brought for this purpose, setting only a few of the very best ones aside. They even removed all of the pearls from the ornaments which were at present decorating their graceful bodies. These were, each and every one of them, now planted within the ground and carefully watered every day, morning, noon and evening with milk, butter and the most fragrant ghee.

Thereafter, when Candrabali and all the other gopis of Braja heard that Radha and her friends had taken up the cultivation of pearls, they also, being moved by intense jealousy and a covetous nature, prepared fields more extensive than any of those prepared so far, and planted each and every pearl which could be found in their houses and on their bodies, without setting even one aside for any other purpose.

Within a few days, when they saw that little plants had begun to sprout in their fields, [not realising them at first to be sticker bushes], they became very proud and began to ridicule my friends, taunting them in various ways.

One day, the cowherd men, seeing that there were very few milk products at the dinner table, became suspicious. Then they noticed that their homes were devoid of their store of pearls. In a very angry mood they inquired after an explanation for this.

When they had heard the mysterious reason behind it all, the elderly ladies of the house addressed them, "He Ayusman gopagon!(Oh ye long-lived cowherd men!) This is nothing to chastise anyone about. True, these girls have been watering their pearl fields with an abundant supply of milk and ghee, but very soon they will get a great profit in return. We have seen that Sri Krsna's fields have already begun to produce pearls which are rarely obtained even by great kings and queens."

One day, Visakha debi, after carefully observing the plants that were sprouting in her own field, secretly whispered into the ears of some of her sakhi friends, "He sakhigon! The young plants in our fields do not appear the same as the ones that I have seen in Krsna's pearl fields. I don't know what will be the outcome of all of this. Now we have to make sure that Krsna's friends don't notice this. Therefore we should now adopt the pretense of constructing a very nice fence to protect our plants, but in reality, the purpose of this enclosure will be to prevent Krsna's friends from seeing inside."

It didn't take many more days however, before the plants in Radharani's and her friends' fields, as well as the ones in all of the other gopis' fields, clearly exhibited the symptoms of being thorny creepers. The news spread throughout the length and breadth of Gokul, that, "The gopis' fields have produced only sticker bushes!"

Coming to know of this myself, I sent some of my friends to the meeting place of the gopis (Gandharbagosthi), and through them conveyed my congratulations, by way of a few slightly sarcastic remarks, "I heard that your fields have produced many wonderful pearls by now, so, since I am the dearly beloved of all of you, I hope that you will send with my friends, as a presentation to me, the first pearls produced from your gardens."

To this they replied by saying, "If we would have engaged in agricultural activities, then even the pasturing grounds would have become completely saturated with pearls. What makes you think that others are prepared to give up their traditional duty of cow protection to adopt some lower profession, just because your friend (Krsna) has done so?"

Thereafter, I began to decorate all of my friends, the cows and calves, the she buffaloes who pull the carts, the sheep along with their lambs, the female goats and their kids, and the female monkeys who cavort all over Brindaban, with pearl garlands and ornaments.

Seeing this, the gopis now felt ashamed in the absence of their own ornaments. Fearful of a severe reprimand from the cowherd men, due to the fact that they were responsible for a great loss of wealth from their own homes, they now held counsel together, "In this situation, what should we do now?! He sakhigon! This

clever Nandimukhi, being partial to Krsna, has collaborated with him to unjustly deceive us."

All of them in a hot temper, they now arrived at Nandimukhi's, and after describing everything that had happened they rebuked her without cessation.

Nandimukhi replied, "He sakhigon! On the strength of whatever austerities I have performed I am prepared to declare under oath that I have not deceived you in any way! Rather, all of you have spoiled everything."

The gopis retaliated, "He Kapatini! (Oh fraudulent friend!) How is it that we have ruined everything?"

Nandimukhi replied, "Becoming overly haughty and pretentious, you made such a din and bustle, just like a big spinning-wheel (which makes a rat-a-tat-tat sound), that Krsna and his friends were directly aware of everything you were doing. They knew that you had planted all of your pearls in the fields, yet, on top of that, none of you left anyone to guard those fields."

The gopis all chimed in together, "So what!"

Nandimukhi fired back, "Oh you who are so conceited by your cleverness! I will explain to you exactly what happened! Listen carefully:

With the motive in mind of soundly defeating you, the spiritual master of all cunning knaves, your paramour, the great gallant, Sri Krsna, very expertly enticed someone with bowls and bowls of sweet rice, namely his greedy friend, the buffoon Madhumangal, to zealously uproot all of your pearl plants, which had just begun to sprout, and replace them with thorny creepers. The pearls thus obtained from your gardens, were then planted in his own fields. In this way, the entire multitude of pearl plants from all of the various gopis' gardens, were uprooted and either replanted or thrown into the deep waters of the Kalindi (Jamuna). I have come to know all of this, as the sure and doubtless truth."

The gopis now retorted, "Ayi Mahanandi! Oh you who are faultless in your only business of expanding the dramatic impact of our pastimes, by your own expertise in play-acting, introducing as you always do the element of crooked and double dealings. Oh you who are the fellow class-mate of Madhumangal, almost fit in fact to be his guru. Ayi! You who are a worthy partner of that deceitful dancer who is famous throughout Braja (i.e. Krsna). He tat priyatame nati. (The darling dancer of His troupe!) Oh you famous female ascetic of kali-yuga. Let it be. Let it be."

Many such arrows were fired as if from their arched eyebrows, but finally they subsided and the gopis returned home to consult further on the matter. From amongst them Sri Radha spoke up,

"He sakhigon! Perhaps it was Nandimukhi who beguiled us, or perhaps it was the crest jewel of the shrewdest of slick operators. We are at present sorely afflicted by

the misery of this moment, but what will we gain by all this commiseration and consultation. Right now our greatest distress is the persecution we face from our superiors. But if we can somehow or other show them those pearls, that were feared to be lost for good, then only will that fear be relaxed. Pearls are however especially rare here in Gokul, therefore the only matter at hand is to consider how we might obtain those pearls from Krsna once again, at whatever the price."

After some more deliberation it was decided that Candramukhi, who was very cunning by nature, should take a sufficient amount of gold and go to Krsna to bring back the pearls.

Candramukhi submitted, "I will not be able to go there alone, since we have just finished rebuking him with such harsh words. Kancanlata should come with me."

Thus it happened, with all of the gopis' approval, that Candramukhi and Kancanlata arrived at a garden house within the pearl fields, carrying with them an abundant quantity of gold.

They addressed the proprietor of that garden house, Subal, who was seated there next to me, "He Subal! We have heard from reliable sources that you are desirous of selling your new pearl crop. Therefore please accept all of this gold, which is of the purest quality, and give us in return its proper value by presenting us with a choice selection of your pearls."

To this I smilingly replied, "Ohe Sakhigon! With great submission, I humbly entreated you that you might give me a few pearls, but you wouldn't even give us one. Then I requested you for some milk to water our fields but that was also denied. Before we will sell you any pearls we will throw them all into the waters of the Kalindi. Even if you present us with everything in all of your houses, and the houses themselves, we will never give you even one pearl of inferior value."

Kancanlata spoke up, "If it were not for fear of their husbands and elders that the gopis have to live with every day now, would any girl have otherwise tolerated these ugly and mean words. Anyway, what to do? Many different jewels are available in Mathura but at present that is very far away. Therefore, He Subal! You please be the middle-man in this affair. We are prepared to pay even more than the going rate."

These were the words I was waiting to hear and so I smilingly replied, "Well, after all is said and done, I am of course very soft-hearted by nature, so I won't be able to remain as relentless as all of you are. If I don't let you have them then what shall I do with so many pearls? But who will determine the price? All of you?"

Candramukhi and Kancanlata replied, "Yes, this will be done by us."

So I told them, "Then we might hear a detailed account of that amount just now."

Candramukhi smiled and looked at Kancanlata, but Kancanlata shyly addressed

Subal, "He sakhe Subal! You should accept the responsibility of arbitrating in this affair, by making a judicious and sensible solution which will be the cause of your good name and reputation."

Subal told Me, "Bayasya! (Comrade! Buddy! Pal!) She'll just banter about with you, stating only a fraction of the real value. Why don't you simply say yourself, in clear terms, the price that you desire?"

I replied, "Sakhe Subal! I can very easily understand Candramukhi's intentions. Imagining Kancanlata to be a priceless object, she has been sent here by Radha, to be given to me. But these pearl fruits are worth much more than heaps and heaps of Kancan (lit.- gold). This fact is quite well known in the world, so how is it that this one Kancanlata is expected to be sufficient payment for this great collection of pearls? Now in this instance Candramukhi might say that the two fruits on her (Kancanlata's) chest are actually golden caskets containing many priceless touchstones. However, even if that be true, that would still not be a fair price because only one of my pearl fruits is worth hundreds of thousands of billions more than even the Kaustubha mani worn by the Lord of Vaikuntha around His neck."

Kancanlata's eyebrows now contracted into a very threatening scowl as she fixed her eyes on me while fuming in anger, "Aye! You dolt! Candramukhi! I told you then that I would not go near Krsna. Still, with great persistence you managed to bring me here anyway, simply to be harassed. You can bring the pearls! I'm leaving this place right now!"

Candramukhi: "Sakhi Kancanlate! You're perfectly right. But how will I fix the price by myself? How will I remain alone in this secluded place? If we decide in a group then they can simultaneously decide to accept or reject our offer. If you're going, then so am I!"

When I saw them about to leave I told Subal, "Sakhe Subal! Didn't I tell you that the price could never be fixed by them?"

Now Subal went near them and said, "Sakhi Candramukhi! I see that my friend is very eager in the matter of pricing these commodities. Therefore, if priyasakhi Radha, Lalita and the others come here themselves to represent the appropriate value, then I see no reason why they shouldn't be able to retrieve all of the pearl fruits that they long for. In this matter I will assist as a mediator."

After hearing his counsel, Candramukhi and Kancanlata returned to Sri Radha and the other gopis, and, while still boiling in anger, narrated before them the preceding incidents.

Radha, Lalita and the others arrived outside the pearl garden house while Candramukhi went to call Subal, "Our dear friend Subal! You are naturally very affectionate towards us! Therefore, in order that we can obtain these pearl fruits by submitting the proper value, you please now prescribe to us what that might be."

Subal came and informed me of all the recent news, and then, according to my instructions, brought Lalita and the other gopis before me.

At first Radha spoke up, "Subal! Didn't you even inform your bosom buddy, the personification of tyranny and oppression, that I have arrived here?!" So saying, She secretly entered into a Kadamba kunj near by and sat down to listen to the proceedings.

I then began to look amongst Lalita and the other gopis, but unable to find Radha I exclaimed, "Why am I not seeing Radha?!"

To this Tungavidya replied, "He Gokul Jubaraj! (Oh prince of Gokul!) The respectable lady, Jatila, has affectionately kept Radha at home today, for the purpose of executing some specific household duties."

Madhumangal now entered and intimated to me through signs and gestures, that, "Sri Radha is secretly staying somewhere here nearby."

Smiling slightly I asked Tungavidya, "Ayi Tungavidya! Is Radha no longer interested in obtaining those pearls?"

To this Tungavidya replied, "No it isn't that. Not at all. We have come to pay the price for her also."

So I told her, "Visakha is Radha and Radha is Visakha. Therefore Visakha can pay for her. This is what I am thinking. Anyway, I'm not terribly concerned about Radha at the present moment. All of my sakhas have firmly decided that those amongst you who do not personally come here will have to pay four times the price and will get ordinary pearls only."

Now I addressed my friend, "Sakhe Subal! Bring the casket full of pearls here and spread all of those fruits out on the ground. Collect all of the smallest ones, and, casting aside all miserliness, present them to Visakha for Radha. Then collect from her the fair price. If she is unable to pay that much hard currency, then take her, by hook or by crook, she who is non-different from Radha, to the jail (Madhabi kunj) next to the one where we keep those cowherd girls who are caught stealing flowers."

Madhumangal spoke up, "Dear Friend! In spite of restraint, these beautiful girls (par-rama: girls outside of one's family) are all practised in the science of escape."

I replied, "Bayasya! I am well aware of that, but there is nothing to worry about. Though touching or coming into contact with beautiful girls even in dreams, and having thus abandoned modesty, is, for persons like ourselves, completely unworthy, still-

'A wise man is prepared to do even something which could be blamable, yet he is

always careful to perform his duty.' or,

'In matters of law (byabahaar) and eating (ahaar), the injunction is that one should give up shyness.'

In light of these statements from the Sunghitas, I am prepared to stay up the whole night guarding her."

Subal laughed, "Sakhe Purusottam! For how many days will priyasakhi Visakha have to remain in this greatly apprehensive situation?"

I replied, "For as many days as that person on Whose account Visakha is being incarcerated, namely Radha, does not remit the total amount. Or, if She is feeling sorry for Visakha, She can come here Herself with a partial payment and take Visakha's place while Visakha goes to bring full payment."

Madhumangal: "Sakhe! The Empress of all of these gopis, namely Radha, is more expert than all of them at everything, especially in the matter of fleeing away. We have noticed this many times at the toll station where we collect customs duty in the form of milk and yoghurt. Not only that, but you are often seen to be quite sleepy due to fatigue after a hard day's work in the pastures."

At this remark I smiled and took him aside, "Sakhe! There is no point in your entertaining these fruitless anxieties. I won't feel sleepy with Her. If perchance I should, then I will appropriate the lotus stem of her left arm as my pillow, while placing my tender left hand, as pink as the eastern sky in the morning, upon the exquisite, yellow silk bed sheet, situated like the moon upon the delicate chest of that Radha, and thus pass the time discussing the price of pearls, so that in the happiness of those wakeful hours, the fourth yam (prahaar- 3 hours) of night can end on a favourable note. Otherwise, placing her within the dark, impervious jail cell of my chest, I will shackle her in very firmly with my two arms, like hardened emerald bolts, and thus very happily and without apprehension, drift off into the world of dreams."

When the gopis overheard me speaking to Madhumangal, their faces all lit up with sweet smiles. Now Radha lifted up her head from her hiding place and while looking at me, Visakha and the other sakhis, said, "He Candrabali-kelikuranga! (The Deer who plays with Candrabali)! Tistha! Tistha!" [lit.- Stop! i.e. Be quiet! Shut your mouth!]

To hear Her chastise me with her gentle voice caused my face also to brighten with a smile.

Visakha however looked at me askance while saying, "He Brajadhurta dhrista! (Oh You arrogant knave of Braja!) I think its time for you to go now. Go on!" So saying she entered amongst the other sakhis.

Now they turned to my friend, "He Subal! Forget this clown. If you are at all

desirous of selling some pearls then show us the merchandise and then after accepting proper payment, present us with the goods. Otherwise, we're going home. We can also arrange to have pearls brought from Mathura."

At this point Subal decided it was time to show them the pearls so he opened up the treasure chests, while saying to me, "Priya bayasya! These pearls are priceless. Even if they sell their whole herds of cows they still won't have enough to purchase even one pearl. Moreover, they know nothing other than you and your loving affection. Therefore, just forget their previous miserly behaviour. Knowing me to be your faithful friend, I can now distribute these pearls with your permission, so much cherished by all of them, for a nominal price or for free."

I replied, "Sakhe Subal! No, no, no. That we cannot do. Because we are now businessmen. Anyway, what can I do? I should also support what you say I suppose. So, this small price that I am asking, you please accept it from them and then you can give them the pearls. No, come to think of it, I have heard from others that you sometimes accept bribes and in this way manage to spoil so much of my profit from customs duties. I had better accept the payment myself."

Subal laughed, "Very well. But you should allow them to choose the pearls of their choice, and then after seeing the ones they have chosen, you can name your price."

I replied, "Fine. They can place the pearls of their choice before me and I will then tell them the price."

Subal: "Priya Bayasya! Whatever these gopis are humbly offering; if you kindly concede to accept that then let this be the arrangement."

I replied, "He Subal! Just tell me. What are they offering? If it is suitable then I will accept."

Subal said, "Their proposal is this:

'Since Madhupuri is quite far away, it will take us a couple of days to collect all the goods for payment. The problem is that our elders are continually expressing their distress at having lost all their pearl ornaments, and chastise us for this. Knowing you to be a very agreeable fellow, we have abandoned our shyness to come to this lonely place. Therefore, we request that you now present the pearls to us as a loan which we will repay, and let us go from here very quickly. We will repay the loan within one or two days according to whatever procedure is desired by you. If your friend doesn't believe us then you please vouch for us.'

"Knowing that you can place Your confidence in them as truthful persons, I recommend that you trust them. Go ahead and give them the pearls now, knowing that you will collect the goods, with interest, very soon. This will also greatly increase your affectionate bonds with them."

I laughed, "He Subal. You are extremely gullible. You know absolutely nothing

about their dealings. If these gopis, who are like female dancers in a drama of diplomacy, decide to play the game by absconding with the pearls, and then, without making any payment, take shelter within the walls of the great fort of their husbands, surrounded by the mountains of their elders, then what will you do?!"

Subal replied, "Sakhe! Don't say that. I'm certain they wouldn't do such a thing. Or even if they do, then I will go there, taking with me these beautiful forest peacocks and cuckoos, to tell their husbands that these gopis promised to pay for the pearls-'with the payment of the nectar of their lips and fond embraces.' I will frighten those gopas in this way so that the gopis' husbands and elders will send them to you immediately for making payment."

To this Madhumangal angrily replied, "Ore Subal! You are Subal (endowed with auspicious strength) in name only, and a male in name only. Indeed, this is not the first time that I have noticed your appearance to be just like that of the weaker sex. Anyway, it is just befitting your timid nature that you can think of nothing better to do than to blow some hot air at the guardians of the gopis. Better you should just sit down here while I dress myself for battle. After surrounding the cows and buffaloes, along with the gopis' husbands, I will bring them and confine them where they can be guarded, here within Nandiswarpur. Then the gopis will be forced to come themselves to liberate their husbands and cows, by bringing with them the proper payment."

These words of Madhumangal greatly pained me, and so I asked him, "Pransakha Madhumangal! What kind of counsel is this you are giving? Even though these Brijbasis may belong to the aboriginal classes of men known as Bhilla and Pulinda, they are still dearer to me than my dearest. Moreover they are our family relations and our brothers, non-different than my very self. Consequently, this advice of yours is most inappropriate. I am a little inclined to support Subal's statements except for the fact that initiating a system of exchange amongst one's dearest friends and relatives will make it very difficult to maintain our friendship and honesty. This is mentioned in the Smriti sastra:

'The practice of mutual giving and receiving of presents among friends should be curtailed. Though performed with love and affection it becomes the cause of the extinction of love itself and will gradually be followed by quarrel and dispute.'

Therefore, let the current price be paid and only then can the merchandise be carried away."

The gopis now flared up, making a show of their false anger. While looking at Subal addressed him thusly, "Ore! Kautilyaparadarsin Subal! (Oh most expert amongst double-dealing hypocrites!) You have brought us here only for the purpose that you can enjoy our vexation in being deceived and disappointed by all of you. Therefore, go ahead with your plan to build up your kingdom by doing business in pearls, but we are leaving!"

As they were preparing to go Subal approached them in a very amiable disposition and spoke very softly to Lalita, "Sakhi Lalite! This practice of giving extended credit and the taking on of debts [on your side] will prove in the long run to be nothing more than the cause of the loss of love between friends. Only due to fear of this our dear friend has concluded, that without ascertaining the proper price for the goods and the means of receiving that amount, he is unable to hand over the merchandise. I have now especially understood this point, so there is no recourse for you all but to turn around, and then, after first fixing the price, you can consider how the payment will be made."

Humbly submitting the facts of the matter to them in this way, Subal brought the gopis back. Bringing them before me he addressed me, "Bayasya! This time, without joking, please determine the proper price and inform us of that."

I replied, "Sakhe Subal! To whom should I quote the price first?"

Subal: "Since Lalita is the chief amongst them, please tell us what payment You will receive from her?"

With a playful smile on my lips I replied, "If the chief amongst this battalion, Sri Lalitajiu, is able, by exhibiting the prowess of the most vigorous amongst us, to even once pin me (the lion among men) down in a wrestling match, in hand-to-hand combat, then I will come before her as a woman. Appearing just like a submissive and dependent wife, I will sing the glories of her manliness and virility. I will in this way become her servant. This is the small payment I will receive from her."

Subal laughed as he replied, "He Gokul Bir! (Oh Champion of Gokul!) For the purpose of humbling the mountain of pride of Debraj Indra, who had become so puffed up by his accumulated opulence and power, you held up, here in Braja, on the tip of the little finger of your left lotus hand, which is as soft as the outer covering of a lotus seed, Gobardhan Giri, for a period of seven days and seven nights, as though he was no more than a bee perched there. Now how will Lalita, who is softer than the softest young girl, contest in battle such a wild and woolly (untamable) character as You?"

Madhumangal spoke up, "Subal! How is it you are so highly acclaiming His prowess of preadolescence (pauganda), when the Desire Tree of Kamdeb (namely Sri Krsna Himself) has, by being sprinkled with the nectar of fresh youth, now extended it's branches and creepers in all directions, far surpassing it's previous size and beauty?"

Subal replied, "And how have you come to know all this?"

Madhumangal: "Well, as Krsna previously gave much perturbation to His enemies, He has now also, without any difficulty whatsoever, cut away at the Kandarpa Parbat (hills of Kamdeb) with the weapons of His nails, though they be very difficult to approach and equally as incomprehensible. In this battle however, He

has known some fatigue."

Thereupon I laughed as I addressed Subal, "My friend Subal! You have spoken truthfully. Most of the time and in most cases I am as you have described me. But not in front of this girl Radha. Since from the very beginning, in the most forceful and intense manner, this Radha, Who is so strangely wonderful in all Her diverse ways, and so wise and intelligent, has on many occasions, simply with Her eyebrows which are like two fierce bows, completely stunned me. By Her menacing shouts I become easily paralyzed. Therefore how can She be described as a member of the weaker sex?"

Hearing my statement, Lalita smiled as she looked towards the other gopis. Though she felt great ecstasy she concealed it and spoke as if she was absolutely infuriated, "Aye Vidushak Subal! (You clown Subal!) It seems that you also have become devoted to the cause of, nay, gone completely over to the camp of the friend of Madhumangal, the Lord of hypocrisy, the greatest buffoon and cheat of Gokul [this could also be taken to indicate Candrabali], since we find that you have brought us before him only to cast us into the ocean of affliction and frustration, chaffing us as the butt of your jokes."

Using phrases such as this, Lalita cast her eyes on me in a very crooked fashion. As though rebuking me, she sarcastically repeated, "Come on you sweet little sakhis, you simple-hearted gopi girls!"

Having said her piece she was preparing to leave, along with all the other gopis, when who should arrive on the scene but the disciple of Bhagavati Purnamasi, Nandimukhi. Judging from the presence of everyone, that they were all about to leave, she addressed Lalita, "Sakhi Lalite! Simply due to a few jocular remarks from this sportive connoisseur of amusement, Sri Brajendranandan, how is it that you are now prepared to disregard your real purpose and leave this place? I beseech you, tarry with me for a few moments, for,-

'In the face of insult I keep my pique (resentment) behind me,

And for the purpose of realising my objectives I always remain alert,

No matter what anyone says or how much treachery and cunning they apply.'

In this way, by the principles of logic, we should guide our lives, tolerating any imposture due to excessive mockery and harassment. Maintaining patience and repose, one should always remain diligent regarding one's duties, that they may be carried through to fulfillment. It is my solemn oath to you, though you may find it hard to accept, that it is His very jest and raillery, acting as though a go-between (mediator), which will in the end bestow these pearls upon you all. Otherwise, if Sri Krsna, who is as you know very conceited and sensitive, at all recollects your parsimonious behaviour, then it will no longer be possible for Him to apply His humorous methods. Therefore, after hearing the asking price for all those present, you should adopt whatever behaviour is proper and civil, and in this way realise

your ends."

Having spoken thusly, Nandimukhi forcibly caught hold of Lalita and brought her, along with the other gopis, near the mountain of pearls. Then she addressed me as follows, "He Gokuljubaraj! Along with hundreds of her blessings, the worshipful Bhagavati sends you a message."

I replied, "Nandimukhi! I hope that the venerable Bhagavati Debi is keeping well. Please tell me her order, that I may felicitate my soul with the nectar of her good instructions."

Nandimukhi replied, "You are the Master of vast wealth, the Son of the Sovereign of Braja. All of these darling young girls here, beginning with Sri Radha, are the favourite objects of our affection, and they are also continuously devoted to You who are of long life. Therefore, kindly glance upon us by giving up this excessive persistence of Yours, and accept whatever they are capable of giving, a value within the realms of practicality. Then satisfy us by bestowing upon them these most cherished objects of theirs, the pearls. Accept such words of solace as these, spoken by Bhagavati. Give up your facetious moods, and after presenting these young girls with their pearls, send them on their way home. Demonstrate to the whole of Gokul that you are the most magnanimous bestower of happiness within its realms."

To this I admirably replied, "Nandimukhi! Previously, when we received Bhagavati's order, Subal accepted it as a bouquet of flowers. Placing it on our heads, we at that time discarded all ideas about exorbitant prices. Only in the case of Lalita, some nominal fee was ascertained in collaboration with her, but now if she says that she wants even that amount to be reduced, then she need only say so. I am prepared to give up that amount also."

Hearing my reply, Nandimukhi saw that all the sakhis were smiling, except for Lalita, whose lips were trembling and whose eyebrows were crooked up into quite a frown. Laughing quietly she addressed me, "Brajajubaraj! I have heard from them all about your nominal prices. But now it is time to leave all joking aside. After having determined the appropriate prices for everyone here, you can quote them before me now."

I replied, "Nandimukhi! After consulting with the oldest amongst these gopis, you can just tell me the price that you have agreed upon."

Nandimukhi: "The usual system is that the Master of the wealth should first fix the amount. Therefore, you tell us your asking price."

I replied, "Jyestha should first give up her false prestige, and, with passionate desire, rise up (dawn), as have Radha and Anuradha, like the Lord of the Night (the moon), in the pathway of the sky of my heart [upon my chest]. Then, along with them, or individually, she should very slowly and gently kiss the moon of my mouth with her lotus-soft lips. This is the only price I ask."

I then noticed, that amongst all those present within this forest bower, Radha, Visakha, Lalita and Jyestha, were knotting their eyebrows in terrible frowns expressing great anger. So I inquired, "Nandimukhi! Why are they getting so angry to hear these words of mine, which are so propitious as regards their own individual fulfillment?"

Nandimukhi replied, "He Sundor! (Oh most beautiful one!) Except for the Lord of the Night of Dark Gokul (Gokulshyam nishapati- the moon of Dark Gokul [Radha]), these other married, chaste girls, consider it to be the sign of great sin, simply to touch another man, what to speak of kissing the moon of his mouth. For this reason they are angry."

Having heard the narration of such pleasure pastimes as these, Satyabhama now addressed Krsna, "He Nath! When enumerating the gopis, who are like stars in the sky, the name of Lalita was left out, who is likewise Radha's own, and while under the influence of excessive mirth and mockery, the name of AnuRadha was used. It is perfectly reasonable that the witty Radha and Visakha felt enraged, when reflecting upon the mention of their own names. Yet why did Lalita become angry at hearing Your amusing words?"

Krsna replied, "Priye! Another name of Lalita is AnuRadha."

Satyabhama: "Jadabendra! (Oh Lord of the Jadas!) My mind has been abundantly satisfied by hearing the narration of these unprecedented pastimes, but not to the point of satiation. Please therefore, continue to describe to me these events in all their detail."

Krsna continued, "At this point, while gazing upon the moon-like face of Campaklata, I caused the pearls belonging to her to fall through my fingers as I said:

"Nandimukhi! I have suspected for a long time now, that this dear sakhi of yours, Campaklata, has attained supernatural powers from some spiritually adept sage."

Nandimukhi: "And how did you arrive at this conclusion?"

I replied, "Since we see that this Campak vine, amongst the other inanimate objects, though it is bent down by its brace of very large fruits, is still quite easily able to move about, hither and thither. Therefore, let this golden Campak garland grace my chest, which is like a beautiful black cloud, with its sweet fragrance. By my mystic powers, I will without delay, as per the order of this Campak garland, then adopt the heroic form of a fine garland of emeralds about her neck, and as well, the Mahendranil gem suspended between her two breasts."

Subal spoke up, "Priya sakhi! All of us have perceived the mystic powers of Campaklata, by virtue of her ability to move about as she does, and so forth. However, no one has at any time or place witnessed the powers of yours that you

speak of. On account of this, if you are powerless to immediately accomplish this difficult task that you have described, then we will be the laughing-stock of all those present. Therefore, I hope you can understand, after carefully considering the matter at hand, that it is incumbent upon you now to demonstrate your abilities."

To this I replied, "Subal! Though I demonstrate my mystic powers; still you cannot see! What can I do about that?!"

Nandimukhi addressed me, "Madhuranga! (Oh You of graceful limbs and delicious appearance!) Please tell us. We are exceedingly desirous to hear all about the wonderful accomplishments effected by Your supernatural powers; when, where and how You performed these miraculous achievements."

I replied, "During the occasion of a pilgrimage to Ambikabon, when my father was attacked by a large python, simply by the touch of my toe, that serpent was transformed into the king of the Vidyadhar race (of demigods), fully decorated with all ornaments. I held up like an umbrella, the chief of all mountains, Girindra Gobardhan, with only one hand and for a full week. When Subal and my other friends became bewitched by the poison of Kaliya, I brought them back to clear consciousness simply by my glance. On many occasions I transformed great forest fires into nectar and then very easily drank them up with one swallow. Is there anyone in Gokul who hasn't seen these and the many other manifestations of my mystic potency? Hence, what is the need for me to expand further upon these topics?"

Having heard these and other similar words of mine, the following words now emanated from the sweetly smiling face of Lalita, "Nandimukhi! This disagreeable lecher of yours has spoken truthfully, but those days have passed. All of these miraculous activities were performed due to the potency of celibacy (brahmacarja). Now-a-days however, as a result of continuously enjoying wanton pastimes with the wife of Gobardhan Malla, [Candrabali], servant of the malignant, malevolent, malicious, murderous and cruel Kangsa, along with her friends Padma, Saibya and others amongst the beautiful young girls of Braja, his brahmacarja has been vitiated and his mystic powers have all vanished."

To this I replied with a smile,

"doshmadhye ganna nahi hoy tejiyan | sarbabhug bahni hoy tahar praman ||

'High-spiritedness is not counted amongst faults. All-omnivorous fire is the proof of this.'

You are only able to speak as you have because you cannot understand the true meaning of this verse. Therefore, listen carefully as I explain it in detail-

'Fire does not lose any of its vigour by consuming whatever it may. On the contrary, its strength increases by doing so. Similarly, through the sweet

satisfaction of constantly enjoying conjugal mellows with beautiful young girls like you, my mystic potencies are kindled, constantly flourishing forth brighter and brighter."

Now Madhumangal spoke up, "Lalite! Our dear friend has spoken correctly. If His powers hadn't increased, then how was it possible that He planted pearls in the ground and got them to sprout? Not only that! They all grew luxuriously and produced such an abundance of blooming flowers and fruits."

Lalita laughed, "Venerable Madhumangal! Was this in fact due to the influence of your dear friend's supernatural potencies?"

Madhumangal: "If it was not due to the potency of his power, then whose was it?!"

Lalita: "It was the potency of the soil of Brindaban!"

Radha spoke softly to Herself, "Lalite! Say that it was due to the influence of association with young girls!"

Visakha spoke out, "Aye! This has all come about as the result of his association with young women!"

I replied, "Then how is it that your pearls turned into thorny bushes?"

Lalita: "Aye Catursiromani! (Oh most clever one, crest jewel amongst the most cunning!) Can pearls ever become hurtful (thorny)?"

I said, "Then why weren't pearls produced?"

Lalita: "On account of the defective condition of the soil, or some imperfection in the seeds."

Radha again, off to the side, "Lalite! Say that no pearls were produced because of the properties of the particular field!"

Then Visakha spoke out, expressing the desires of Radha.

Nandimukhi: "Lalite! I think Visakha has something here!"

Lalita: "How is that?"

Nandimukhi: "Since we see that the poisonous creeper, which is always and in all ways the emblem of total freedom, produces pearls on barren land; yet within these fields and meadows of Brindaban, saturated with juicy sweet dew, the heavenly creepers, illuminated by feelings of continuous rapturous delight, produced from hearts over-flowing with an abundance of prem, their very being permeated with the ambrosia of pure devotion, are reduced to cowering in fear of the wild animals who happen to wander into these lands. For this reason they

couldn't produce any pearls."

Lalita laughed, "Visakhe! You had already expressed to us that it was through his association with young women that he was successful in his garden pastimes. Please expand upon this for us."

Visakha: "Even a great yogi who has ascended the yoga ladder and is thus on the path of sense control, if he associates with those who are fallen, becomes himself likewise so and is thus degraded. What then can be said concerning the matter of his negligible spiritual perfections? Similarly, these pearls, through only even a moments association with those, who in body, mind and words, are thoroughly addicted to women, and of the darker sort, very witty and humorous, and often to be seen with a flute in their possession, [by such association, these pearls] have become pregnant within the womb of the earth, and their full implication within the snare of sungsar (family life) is realised by the sprouting up of so many of their offspring on the surface of the earth."

Thereupon I said, "Visakhe! Everything you have spoken is perfectly correct."

Subal: "Bayasya! How is that?"

I replied, "On account of the fact that the sages of Dandakaranya took up the observance of very severe penances and austerities after hearing from Narada Muni and the other saintly persons about my auspicious qualities, my beauty and wit, the personified forms of the professors of passionate pastimes. By reason of this they could then accept birth in the homes of the cowherd men of the forests of Gokul, as the wanton women of Braja (brajavilasini). Being decorated with an abundance of good qualities, beginning with wisdom and good humour, they are now residing on my chest like a beautiful necklace. There also are to be found these pearls, like so many other liberated souls amongst the best of the sages. Having been similarly attracted by my inconceivable qualities, they have now taken up their residence in the forests of Braja simply to increase my pleasure, multiplying themselves as a multitude of eternally perfected animate and inanimate creatures, bushes, creepers, birds and beasts, thus enjoying the highest happiness themselves."

Subal: "Bayasya! You are glorifying the sadhus."

Lalita smiled slightly, "If in fact you did possess any esoteric powers, then you could have produced pearls regardless of where they were planted or the differences in the soil? If you really have mystic potency, then how is it that you have set up this small business selling pearls, simply for the purpose of accumulating superfluous commodities?"

I responded, "Ayi! Murkhe Lalitike! (Lalita, you dolt!) Puffed up by the treasure of your youth, as all of you have given up your religious duties and are now wandering here and there, should I, the only son of the King of Braja, the crest jewel amongst the vaisyas, who is so devoted to his religious duties, also renounce

my duties like a wilful, wanton and spoiled child? In the scriptures the sages have prescribed the duties of the vaisyas to be agriculture, tending the cows, engaging in commerce and usury [another reading lists law as the third duty]. These four professions have been ascertained in relation to the vaisyas. Since we are vaisyas, these four occupations exist for us. By the practice of even one of these professions, all mystic powers increase. But by engaging in all four of them, my potencies have ascended beyond the perfectional limit."

Nandimukhi smiled, "He swadharna nistha Jubaraj! (Oh Prince who art devoted to thy duty!) Your three occupations, agriculture, cow protection and commerce are clearly understood by us. But I have never heard mention of this money lending business."

I replied, "Nandimukhi! We are now also undertaking this usury business. Haven't you understood this. At this most needed juncture in time, due to the present shortage of pearls, that is, their present unavailability, we are duty bound to take up this much desired business, with these young gopis, much perturbed by circumstances beyond their control, simply for the sake of arranging that these pearls might further flourish and prosper."

[There are some hidden meanings here: During the day the gopis are greatly afflicted by separation from Krsna. He is trying to make some provision that they can meet together, even when he is herding the cows and such, so that their agitation will be due to the experience of ecstatic symptoms of love, and not due to feelings of want.]

Visakha laughed, "He Subal! Those who are attached to certain actions, though they be blameworthy, will nevertheless praise those activities to the skies. Therefore I suppose it is not terribly surprising that your fine friend here describes his impious activities in such a splendid fashion."

Subal laughed, "Nandimukhi! It is not only in the matter of vast wealth that such great gains have been made. Others' possessions are also continuing to increase at every moment."

Nandimukhi: "Whose? Whose!"

Subal: "For instance, the attractive bodily characteristics of those in the fresh bloom of youth, whose every limb can conquer Cupid [or, the mind] tens of millions of times over; those whose roving eyes, especially very restless at the corners, far surpass the softest lotus flowers; and whose speech is like a shower of the sweetest nectar."

Madhumangal: "Subal! Have you forgotten the other things which have enjoyed similar prosperity?"

Subal: "Please remind me. To whom are you referring?"

Madhumangal: "Shark-shaped (Capricorn) earrings; jewelled anklets; jewelled armlets; rings, etc.; the beauty and pride of those who wear them and especially the playful pastimes of love dalliance itself."

Lalita: "Arja! [Arja- form of address to a respectable person] There is another thing which has also increased. Why are you concealing that?!"

Nandimukhi: "What is that?"

Lalita: "The tasting of the nectar from the lips of chaste young girls."

Srimati Radha laughed, "Lalite! Even Bapu should be able to understand something about this! [Bapu-(shman)- abdominous; Madhumangal is very fond of eating prasadam.] Who can enjoy a nice meal without this! [adhoramrit- nectar of the lips, is, in other terminology- saliva].

In those two arms that more than trample the pride of exquisite, perfectly shaped sapphire bolts; in that chest which totally destroys the vanity of an emerald door; in those two thighs that goad the pride of emerald banana trees; in that beautifully expanded face which is the support of the graceful beauty of a hundred, thousand billion full moons of the Sarad season, who remain embarrassed in the face of such exquisite sweetness; in those two feet, the softness of which causes all praise of succulent new leaves to fall to pieces; in all of those delicious bodily limbs, the construction of which bestows well-being and modesty to all symmetrical beauty, most pleasing to the eyes; and in that body which steals away the lustre of a new blue lotus flower, just ready to blossom, lending its radiance to sapphires; pervading all of these, its (adhoramrita's) dallying presence is a dazzling pastime. The ambrosial, soft, smiling speech of Visakha and yourself is its perfume, like a soft flower smeared with sandalwood paste." [The implied meaning here is that it is by drinking the nectar of the gopis lips that Krsna has acquired these super-excellent bodily features.]

Madhumangal: "Bayasya! Making You greedy for the delicious lips of young women who belong to others, these extremely shrewd gopis, after saying so many sweet things and enticing You with tall talks about the increasing prosperity of this and that, will simply, in the end, take all of these pearls and enter into some inaccessible place, some labyrinthine maze where You will never find them. Then, neither will they give You any more news about flourishing prosperity, nor the asking price for the merchandise. Having myself clearly perceived this, I have, as Your friend, spoken these words for Your benefit. Afterwards, you may do as You please."

Thereupon I had to bite my tongue, "Sakhe! All of these heavenly damsels are chaste and respectable girls. They are very upright and pure in their exchange of love. You have spoken thusly only because you are unaware of all of this. Therefore listen carefully as I explain everything to you:

Just the other evening, providing me with excessive delight by offering the nectar

of Her lips to me, Gandharva then came very near to me, and after very tastefully decorating Her breasts with lotus flower pollen that has received its colour from the best friend of the lotuses, the early morning rising sun, [another reading says: She decorated Her breasts with delicate ruby necklaces, the colour of the early morning rising sun], She then spread out her wares on my chest four times. And on the evening of the day before yesterday, Lalita received from me one lodestone, oozing forth with nectar, but only after some dispute did she finally pay me back at a profit of three times. Another time, around midnight, after drinking the sweet nectar of my lips with great fondness and persistence, Visakha entertained me till early morning, gratifying me to the utmost with the whole wealth of her entire being. I profited many times on that occasion. The others also, beginning with Campaklata, have on many occasions, after eagerly accepting from me their most desired objects, satisfied me immensely in return, some at double my expenditure, some at triple. Amongst all of them, only two gopis display some slightly contrary business dealings."

Nandimukhi: "Who are they?"

I replied, "One of them is Ranganballi. She once agreed to place the two round fruits of her bosom on my chest three times, but then after accepting my two mardan [subduing, strong, manly, male] fruits, she only offered her fruits to me once. The other two that she still owes me, after much delay and procrastination, have, to this day, yet to be paid. Then also, the constant companion of Ranganmala, Tulasi, told me that she would pay me double, but then after accepting a whole bunch of embraces from me, she only teases me, passing the time by saying, 'Now I'll give you. No! Not now, I'll give you then, when...'

However, the price that we had agreed upon has still not been paid."

Madhumangal said, "Ayi Ranganballi! Ayi Tulasi! Even though He couldn't obtain from you any of His own celestial commodities, still, due to His natural simplicity, even people of your manners remain dear to Him, though our dear friend is by nature a spoiled child and used to having His own way. [or, "Still, due to His natural simplicity, He does not speak ill even of people of duplicitous ways.] Are you so ungrateful that you do not even fear what the people in general, or at least what God will think of you, that you behave in such a deceitful and cunning fashion with those who are by nature very simple and sincere."

Lalita gave a lovely little laugh at hearing all of this, as she retorted, "He Arja Madhumangal! (Oh most venerable Madhumangal!) Is there anyone in this assembly who does not hold dearer than the most ambrosial nectar, the words just uttered by your friend? If it weren't for the fact that his speech smacks heavily of mystic perfection, then his every word, nay every syllable, could be understood to be nothing more than fictitious lies!" [There is a pun intended here; since another meaning of mystic perfection (siddhi): is bhang (a drink made from marijuana); thus, "He is intoxicated from drinking bhang and his words reflect this, thus we can understand that his every word, no, every syllable, is nothing more than lies!"]

All of the sakhis laughed uproariously as they each embraced Lalita while exclaiming, "Sadhu Sadhu! Lalite! (Bravo! Well done Lalite!) You summed that up pretty good!" Srimati Radhika also embraced Lalita within her mind.

Now Nandimukhi spoke up, "He Mohan! (Oh most charming one!) Whose word do you doubt?! This Ranganmalika is the most beloved of Lalita, and Tulasi is the disciple of Visakha. Therefore it is certain that Lalita and Visakha, after consoling and explaining various things to them, will bring them around to Your way of thinking. Then surely they will present You with the goods remaining in arrears so that the matter will be rectified and You will again treat them as you did before. If for some reason they remain adamant in the matter of presenting You with Your dues, then I'm sure that Lalita and Visakha, because they are so deeply affectionate to Ranganballi and Tulasi, will themselves present You with Your goods. Yet even if they also unexpectedly refuse to come through, they will never again be able to lodge complaints against You, no matter what You do. Otherwise, if You stand in front of the sister of Anangamanjari and begin to whistle very loudly, then they just might get frightened and anxious enough that they will immediately agree to give You whatever you want."

At this the gopis frowned and sent very crooked glances askance at both Nandimukhi and myself.

Now Tungavidya came forward slightly and smiling to herself, said, "Bho! Bho! (Hallo!) He sakhigon! I have a bit of juicy news for you all!"

Everyone replied, "Yes, what is that?!"

Tungavidya: "There is an acarja by the name Kantadarpa [the pride of a lover, or, Kandarpa darpa- the pride of Cupid]. Have you heard of him?!"

Lalita: "I have heard the name but I don't know much about him."

Tungavidya: "Shyamal Misra, the dear disciple of Kantadarpacarja, has written a commentary called Sandhi Catushtoy (Four Sandhis; sandhi- union), on the sutras (aphorisms) of his guru. Have you seen what is described in that commentary?"

Visakha: "Visnu! Visnu! What to speak of seeing this commentary, I have never even heard it!"

Lalita purposefully questioned her, "Tungavidye! Where did you become acquainted with this acarja?"

Tungavidya: "One evening I met here a very beautiful forest goddess (Padma-apsara) coming from Sakhisthali (Candrabali's kunj), who was looking for Shyamal Misra, that she might hear a reading of his commentary."

At this point I spoke up, "Tungavidye! How was that forest goddess of fortune able to come this far [out of the forest]?"

Tungavidya: "By the help of a great flood!"

Everyone laughed to hear this answer.

Lalita: "Then! Then?"

Tungavidya: "Along with Shyamal Misra, there is also the unrivalled [false] pandit of the king, who after first having quoted the precepts of the Narma Panjika (Amusement Almanac) and the KroyBikroy Panjika (Commerce Almanac), then produced the Alik Panjika (Imaginary Almanac, Almanac of Lies) and the AdanPradan Panjika (Exchange Almanac) as well. I'm sure you must have heard of these, though they may have been under different names."

Lalita: "Not only have I heard, but I have also had first-hand experience of the same."

Tungavidya: "Even more accurate and erudite, exhibiting the sharpest intellect and effrontery, are the commentaries begun at the same time [perhaps as a challenge] by his fellow class-mate, Kuhak (magic) Bhatta." (Master of Deception)

Campaklata: "Tungavidye! As you are well-versed in all the branches of knowledge, we are all intently desirous of learning from you the subject matter discussed in the definitive statements called Catushtoy, penned by these well-known authors of scripture."

Visakha: "The meaning of the two titles, acarja and Bhatta, is clearly understood, but we would appreciate it if you would elucidate the etymological derivation of Misra and Pandit."

Tungavidya laughed, "There are faults as well as attributes. Because there is mixing (misrito), the name is Misra. The word pronounces its own meaning."

Nandimukhi: "What are the faults and attributes?"

Tungavidya: "Any inclination towards improper judgement, of wisdom as opposed to ignorance, or, cleverness as opposed to stupidity, is a fault. An equal disposition, devoid of discrimination and averse to the judgement of good and bad, all due to an excessivity of simplicity (naivety), is an attribute."

Lalita laughed, "Consequently the degree (title) is quite appropriate." [One who is mixed up, or confused.]

Citra: "Now please elucidate the etymological derivation of Pandit."

Tungavidya: "The word panda indicates the intelligence to judge right from wrong. Therefore pandit, which is a compound of panda, designates the same. Yet, this pandit, endowed with such honourable sagaciousness, while considering the

maxim, 'Of the previous and latter precepts, the latter carries more weight,' becomes thus implicated in the intelligence to judge wrong. [The Sanskrit word here is sadasad vicar. Sadasad is a combination of sad and asad or, good and evil, right and wrong. When joined together, the entire word means discrimination between good and bad. But, after consideration of the maxim, "between former and latter precepts the latter is more important," then we are left with only asad vicar, or, bad judgement, wherein panda is clearly existing. Thus the pandit must necessarily become implicated in the same.]

Citra: "Sakhi Tungavidye! Now please elaborate on the imports of the composition Sandhi Catushtoy and its corollaries."

Tungavidya: "Since among us, Lalita is the most expert in expanding on these subjects, let her be so kind as to delineate these topics before us."

Lalita: "I have never even heard of these discourses. It is Tungavidya who is most familiar with these topics and therefore she is the most qualified to expound upon this subject before us."

Citra: "Tungavidye! We would be honoured if you would please explain to us this lore."

Thereupon, the favourite of Sri Radhika, Tungavidya, who was too shy to say anything herself, considered that this subject was best breached by another. So she smiled and signalled with her eyes to she who is the apple of Radha's eyes (the emblem of Radha's delight), who though only a tender-aged girl, is the master of the demigods of this earth, the sweetly smiling Tunganarma. Now Tunganarma stepped slightly forward, and while looking at my smiling face, addressed Citra, "Citre! We are not particularly adept in the inner meanings of these abstruse topics, but I was present when that Apsara came here on repeated occasions to very humbly yet eagerly narrate before Tungavidya and ourselves, the subject matter of the four commentaries which she had studied under that most propitious and appropriately named, the eminent Mr. Misra. That which she described before us, even with her body itself, I will now briefly reiterate before you. Please hear me:

First of all, she gave an account of the details concerning trysts and assignations; how one personally, or by his messenger, resolves quarrels and complaints; and the alliances and unions that take place between youthful couples.

Then come the four erotic sentiments: touching of the breasts, embracing, kissing and drinking the nectar of one's lips. Also the four amorous passions: bruising with the nails, binding the other person's arms and related sports, covering the cheeks with wanton kisses and biting with expertise.

Then she mentioned the arts of conducting pleasant, or amusing conversation. This involves some specific techniques applied for the purpose of defeating one's companion, by using prahelika. [Riddles with concealed meanings]."

Citra smiled, "Tunganarman! Having so expertly expounded on these unprecedented and previously unheard topics, please be kind enough to describe to us what is contained in the corollaries and commentaries."

Tunganarma: "Because it is the giver of so much ecstasy, the form of enjoyment known as anandakrit-sambhog, is called as such. Its corollaries are hissing sounds and amorous cries, closing of the eyes, and the appearance of Kalapapriya, the incarnation of Kantadarpacarja. This young prince of mystic potencies, the personification of Kalap-byakaron [a Sanskrit grammar], due to the deliciousness and mystery of the activities which caused his descent, only in an unapparent and unclear fashion, enters into very detailed discussions with the witty and intelligent sakhis, revealing his thoughts through disguised gestures and figurative, ambiguous and paradoxical puns. Only those who are themselves very discerning, astute and gentle, are deserving enough to fully perceive the inner meaning of these discussions."

Campaklata smiled, "Tungavidye! This Bhattapad has only two arms, and they are very delicate at that. How is it then, that he was able to write four commentaries at the same time?"

Tungavidya: "Mugdhe! (Oh enchanted one!) [This could also be translated as: Stupid!] This Bhattapad is such a master magician that he is able to manifest four arms also!"

Lalita: "Yes! Yes! On the occasion of the Spring Rasollas (the splendour of Ras) festival, near the Rasasthali (place of the Ras festival), within a kunj in the middle of the forest named Pravistak, with the intended purpose of plundering the precious jewel of beautiful women and deceiving any number of young girls (ballabi brinda), after first veiling his own sweetness and suavity of manners [which would give his identity away], he did indeed manifest four arms by the power of his enchantment."

Visakha: "Actually, all of these activities have expanded from the influence of his magic. While enjoying pleasant and amusing conversation in the assembly of the sakhis, he seeks, through the charms of his erudition, to overcome them, weaving an ever-increasing web of illusion around them with the help of so many prose and poetic devices. As of late, we have also seen, that as his magic continues to grow, his two feet do also. [The word for foot, or pad, also means employment; this is a pun which indicates that now he is also trying to expand his activities and influence through doing business.]

Sudebi: "Visakhe! How is it that we see in practically all of the four departments of knowledge discussed by this author of scripture, only one profession, through-in and throughout?"

Nandimukhi: "Sudebi! Didn't you hear the brief description that was given by Tunganarma?"

Sudebi: "At that time I was distracted with watching the priyasakhis from Jab (Jabat), and so I did not follow everything. Please be so kind as to explain it all to me again."

Nandimukhi: "Sudebi! Listen carefully! This one young bachelor, of the name Kuhak Bhatta, is, in actuality, all four of these persons. For the purpose of performing his variegated pleasure pastimes, he has, by the influence of his very developed powers of delusion, ascended to the rank of Kantadarpacarja, by manifesting one form, and has taken the title Shyamal Misra, by assuming another. Moreover, you should know that Alik-rajpandit (the visionary pandit) is not a distinct personality from Shyamal Misra. This young bachelor, Shyamalacarja, is always very religiously inclined. Therefore, in order to experience further exultation of his wanton dalliance, he has assumed this alias of Alik Rajpandit. Having done so, he now delights in his wayward pastimes as much as he pleases, bringing tumultuous ecstasy to his friends and himself, through a variety of amorous diversions."

Thereupon I had to say something, "Hung Ho! (Ho Hallo!) All of these graceful, lovely four armed forms, full of amorous gestures, have appeared due to the influence of my mystic perfections. Consequently, it is only by the power of the inferior magic of these stupid, hot-tempered, female magicians, that they are able to continue to spout out this nonsensical pack of lies."

They replied to my remark, "This siddhagoswami (perfected sense-controller) has effected his own imaginary mystic powers by his own influence and now compliments himself before us, after first having assessed his own glorious position with his own mouth."

Finding fervour and strength in numbers the sakhis all laughed in joyous delight.

I said to myself, "Bho! (O ho!) Isn't this astonishing? These talkative young girls (ballabi brinda) have very neatly and methodically summed me up as a specious fool." Due to my embarrassment I considered the matter carefully, and having come up with a plan, I signalled with my hands that I couldn't hear what they had said, as I smiled to them, "Ayi! [used in addressing a female] Lo! Oh you enchanting and wanton young girls, blinded by your newly found youth. If you are lacking in confidence relating to matters regarding my mystic perfection, then I will exhibit the same in front of all of you, by firstly manifesting my form as a necklace [or forest flower garland] around the neck of Campaklata."

Having spoken thusly I approached Campaklata, as Madhumangal called to me, "He Bayasya! You are a saintly sage! It is not at all proper for you to touch other women!"

Being thus dissuaded by these joking words from my friend, I said to him, "Sakhe! Close contact between two perfected persons is only for the purpose of attaining great ecstasy!"

Just as Debarshi Narada has said, 'paramanandalabhay swayuthyamevasamsraye'-

"The coming together of friends (those of the same feather, or group), is always a matter of great happiness. [Friends always like to meet together to take delight in each others' company.]"

Everyone laughed heartily to hear these words of mine, attaining at the same time various ecstatic symptoms in their bodies [beginning with trembling], due to excessive mirth. Campaklata however, became as though enveloped in a dark cloud of great fear. She immediately fled from the spot, taking shelter in the kunj where Srimati Radhika was present, practically merging into Her body while tightly hugging her from behind.

I let the pearls fall through my fingers as I spoke to Citra, "Ayi! Citre! Please come here to hear the price of these pearls. Your dearest friend (pranprestha sakhi) Radhika, has told me that you are very expert at dressing and decorating with various ornaments (Sringar), and that you have in a chest many wonderful ornaments for this purpose. Therefore you should tastefully decorate all of my limbs with these ornaments, in as many different ways as you can think of."

[The word Sringar means: erotic sentiment; amorous passion; love; coition; toilet; marking with vermilion and sandal paste; and red lead. Therefore, an implied meaning is, "Because I have heard that you are very expert at making love, and that your delicate form is possessed of such exquisite beauty, just suitable for accomplishing the same, you should now apply this expertise in decorating my body with such erotic passions."]

"I will in turn satisfy you, by decorating those two golden pots on your bosom with crescent moons [marks from my nails] and various scented, flowering creepers. I will in this way also bring the greatest delight to your dear friend (priyasakhi Radhika), to whom you will no doubt describe all of this in your tactful and artful ways."

Citra replied in a huff, completely filled with anger, "Ohe! You have become such a mischievous and grotesque wolf (in sheep's clothing), there being no end to your wrathful and wicked ways. Aye! Oh emperor of the city of the most cunning and knavish knights, famous in all the three worlds as the most arrogant amongst hundreds and thousands of billions of the greatest rogues and cheats that ever existed! Oh you who like to make the forest deer dance, as soon as the opportunity presents itself, in the form of a safe and secluded forest garden. [There are a few other possibilities in the translation of this line: First off, the context is that of a long string of epithets being used to address Krsna. Now here he is being called a nat; which means dancer, as well as lewd person. Depending on the juxtaposition of the words, he is either a dancer, the best dancer of the female relatives of the deer, (though this can also be taken in another way, equally laden with sarcasm), or a dancer to entertain the noblest female relatives of the deer, or one who makes them dance. The best dancer of the deer (kul-nut) is sarcastic, because, whereas

kul is a word denoting aristocracy, nat can carry the connotation of lewdness pertaining to philanderers.]

After you have satisfied them by painting your little pictures, and then sufficiently sung the praises of those gopis, very expert at Sringar sadhan and just suitable for your purposes, then you may hastily depart from here, O Swami!"

All of the gopis faces lit up with laughter to hear these words of Citra, as they applauded her enthusiastically.

Thereupon Nandimukhi spoke up, "He Gokul Mangal! Your moon-like face is the only medicine which enables the residents of Gokul to sustain their lives. Suddenly we find ourselves looking at You with sad and longing eyes, You who are the only source of our long lives, and a burning pain is welling up in our hearts, as though a malignant cancer has penetrated to our most vital part. Therefore You must certainly tell us, please, what is the cause of all of this. Then only can Bhagavati Purnamasi promptly remedy the situation, so that You, who are endowed with such beauty and fortune, will be pleased. Thus will my heart also be blessed."

Having heard this synopsis of the situation, I replied, like one whose mind is fully prostrated, "Nandimukhi! Please hear me. She Who possesses such fine intelligence, never before seen or heard of; Whose wit and humour are so fascinating that they completely captivate the mind; Who is the personified form, the first acarja of the Veda dealing with the whole diversity of mirthful sports (cutting jokes) [Whose study of the most incomprehensible facetiousness has placed her as the primal preceptor in this line]; the personified Form of the treasure chest of the rarest jewels in the shape of the most auspicious qualities; Whose sweetly scented speech, like condensed cream of the most fragrant ambrosia, is the life subsistence of Her attendants; Whose exceedingly good fortune is paid homage to by the most fortunate damsels of the heavenly regions, headed by Saci, the wife of Indra; the radiant loveliness of the tips of Whose nails is continually searched out by Indira (Laxmi) and the other fawn-eyed nymphs of fair complexion, as the emblem or source of all beauty; Whose lotus feet are worshipped by hundreds and thousands of Laxmis, the Goddesses of innumerable universes, who are themselves worshipped by all the demigods, men, Gandharvas, Vidyadharas and munis; Whose abhishek (coronary bath) is performed on a jewelled singhasan (lion throne) at Mahajogpith, within the forest of Brindaban, the expanse of which completely dwarfs the whole of all the Vaikuntha planets and the spiritual sky itself; the two syllables of whose name, Radha, produced from the churning of an ocean of nectar, are actually the condensed form of the cream of that ambrosia, which was produced in two pots, [the churning of the milk ocean produced only one pot of nectar], and it is the transformation of that ambrosia [in the form of the name Radha] which felicitates and gratifies the fourteen worlds.

[The word used here for gratifies, is sitkarita, which means literally: amorous cries.]

The feet of this most renowned Debi, continually perfumed with the sweetest fragrance, infinitely, boundlessly beautiful and incomparably soft, put to shame, by their dawn-like, pinkish colour, the combined elegance of the total aggregate of all red lotus flowers. The service of feet such as these is life itself. But this Radha is not openly and unhesitatingly calling to me, who am expert in all of these branches of service, to bestow upon me this service which I so much long for. Therefore, She doesn't love me. Having determined this, I shall now seek out the aptly named Tungavidya (Tunga- lofty, elevated; vidya- learning, education), who, I have heard from Bhagavati Paurnamasi, is the self-same form as Radha. I will request her to immediately initiate me as her disciple, that by this process I might achieve my most cherished object of desire. I will request her to initiate me with the mantra of Mahadebi (Radha). I take shelter of you, the matchless disciple of Bhagavati, that this endeavour may be successful."

[Again there is an implied meaning. The matchless disciple of Bhagavati can also mean: who is non-different than Bhagavati. Thus, by accepting initiation from Tungavidya, Krsna becomes non-different from her, and therefore eligible to receive Radharani's favour, or, in another sense, he then can become one with Radha, since Tungavidya is the self-same form as Radha. Things equal to the same thing become equal to each other: $A=B$, $B=C$ therefore $A=C$]

Nandimukhi laughed, "He Sulakkon! (Oh you who are endowed with auspicious bodily signs!) In that case, you have to do that which has been ascertained by those conversant with scripture, to be the first duty of an aspiring disciple. You must serve the guru."

I replied, "Very good. But it is also appropriate that the prospective guru and sisya first examine one another. [There seems to be no end to the play on words. The word for appropriate: sangata, also means: joined or united. Thus, "The guru and sisya should first test each other by uniting together."] Then, for three nights, in some secluded kunj, let Tungavidya attain her fame by showing her prowess in learning before me. This should be accomplished by coming before me, sometimes as a male, and sometimes as a female. Thereupon, I, having naturally become a great believer in her, will very reverently and with the utmost regard, decorate her feet with javak, (a red coloured substance), massage her hips [again a variety of equivocal meanings present themselves: the actual word used is Sronimarddan: Sroni- hip, loins, waist; marddan- rub, grind, thrash, press, squeeze], scratch the itch on her bosom, braid her hair [after having first, of course, undone it] and in this way worship her, rendering whatever other services she may desire, which may even make all the aforementioned services seem very negligible and paltry indeed. If I am able to do all of this, then she will no doubt be very satisfied with me and say, "You have given me the utmost pleasure by your willing, service attitude." Having said this and other similarly sweet things to me, she will then, feeling great delight within her mind, establish me on the dais which is within the kunj, and say, "He Bicakkon! (Oh wise and experienced one!) With your two hands, you should first smear these two golden, auspicious waterpots [mangal ghat- auspicious water pots used in ceremonial functions] on my chest, with musk and kunkum, and then garland them with necklaces and flower garlands." After

having established the two auspicious pots according to the proper formulas, by these instructions and various other mantras, she will then bless me with the mahaprasad from her bosom, by anointing my forehead and other limbs with kunkum tilok. Then with musk, she will write on my chest the syllables of the mantra of Mahadebi, mark my arms with the symbols of Her lotus feet and other auspicious impressions, and then after removing her own one-stringed necklace and placing it around my neck, she will perform anga-nyas on my two breasts, my two shoulders, my two arms and my mouth, with her lips. Thereafter, since I am completely ignorant of all the various parts of the agamas (esoteric scriptures), Tungavidya, who is an agamacarja, will bestow upon me these various ingredients at the proper time and place. After these indispensable antecedents have been completed, she will then continue the preparatory rituals by investing the sixteen syllable mantra with the self-born rishi, the gayatri metre, the presiding Deity Sri Gandharva and the Divine energy of the first mystic syllable with its dot, that the desired perfection may be obtained, namely, the generation of amorous union between the worshipful object and the worshipper."

[Here follows a meditation on the worshipful object]:

"Her very being overflowing with exultation,
by the banks of Her own kund, in a clearing within the kunj,
She is dancing in such an amusing fashion,
exhibiting such an abundance of gestures and postures,
just to bring delight to her sakhis, who are assembled there to watch Her."

"She is very fair and is wearing red-coloured garments.

Her face is lit up with a slight smile. Her eyes are extremely beautiful,
in fact She is the most exquisite and delectable feast for the eyes.

I take shelter of Sri Radhika, my worshipful Deity,

Who is the most cherished and most devoted worshipper of Shyama-Shyam.

Please cause me to meditate on my tutelary Deity in this way,

for a very long time, by kindly bestowing upon me,

who am kami [desirous or, lascivious],

the king of all mantras,

joined at the beginning and at the end with the Kambeej.

Make my life a success, by initiating me with this mantra.

Her body, the veritable form of Mahabhab,

conceived by the most resplendent cintamani gem,

and anointed with the love and intimate friendship of her sakhis,

shines with an inconceivable lustrous splendour.

She bathes in the morning in waves of the nectar of compassion,

at noon in a nectar shower of youthfulness

and in the evening in a flood of the nectar of charming loveliness.

The Goddess of Fortune, Laxmidevi,

languors in lassitude by the side of Her blazing effulgence.

Her graceful form is covered by the silken garment of shyness,

decorated with the kunkum of graceful beauty,

and dappled with the black musk of erotic sentiments for Shyam.

She puts on her natural ornaments, fashioned from the best nine jewels:

shivering, tears in the eyes, horripilation (standing up of the bodily hairs),

becoming stunned, perspiration, faltering of the voice, blushing, madness and inertness.

She is garlanded with flowers of wonderful qualities,

such as Her sweet-tongued speech.

Her garments are cleansed and purified with the camphor of Her sometimes sober

and sometimes restless moods,

brought about by ecstatic emotions.

Her imperceptible and incomprehensible man

(amour-propre; pique; feigned resentment out of love)

is restrained,

confined and concealed within the coils of Her hair.

Her brilliant tilok is the emblem of Her immense good fortune.

Hearing Krsna's name and qualities are the ornaments swinging in splendour and jubilation from Her ears.

The reddish colour of Her lips is produced from the tambul (pan)

of Her great attachment for Krsna.

The black ointment of Her eyes (kajjol),

is the crookedness of Her loving affairs (prem-kautilya).

Her body is perfumed by the camphor of Her sweet smile,

while hearing the joking words of the sakhis.

Within the inner apartments of Her bodily fragrance is a bed of pride.

Here She sometimes remains, as though unconscious,

while wearing the restless necklace of separation from Her lover,

beautified by a locket of humiliation.

Her breasts are concealed,

bound with a bodice of wounded vanity (sensitive love).

The sounds of Her vina,

Her fame and beauty,

dry up the faces and hearts of Her co-wives (competitors in love).

She has taken up the most amorous posture,

leaning with Her lotus hands on the shoulders of Her sakhi friend

(adolescence personified),

just before beginning to distribute the honey of Cupid's infatuation and intoxication,

which is itself the remembrance of the pleasure pastimes of ShyamaShyam.

Please bring this very sombre somebody,

who is bowing down before You with a straw in his teeth,

back to life,

by sprinkling him with the nectar of Your servitorship.

He Gandharvike!

A truly compassionate person will not reject even a rascal

if he is surrendered to them.

Hai! (Oh my!)

Therefore please, never abandon this person who is similarly surrendered to You.

That person, who recites this stab (hymn), of the name Premambhoj-maranda, produced of Her mercy, will surely attain service at Her lotus feet."

[This prayer was composed by Srila Raghunath das Goswami.]

"May this hymn also advise and counsel me."

Thereafter, with these words, "I have received that most cherished object of my desire (kam {beej mantra}) from my Sri Gurudeb," choked up in my throat and my body trembling, I will fall down at her lotus feet. Then she will most certainly pick me up and embrace me, herself thrilling with ecstasy, while she places the remnants of her chewed tambul prasad, saturated with the nectar of her lips, into my mouth. But if you say that I am a brahmacari and therefore it is not proper for me to take tambul, then you may give me the remnants of your own mukhabas, scented with camphor. [mukhabas; mukhsuddhi- like an after dinner mint; something to scent the mouth after having taken a meal.]

Thereafter, coming to the realisation that my life is now successful, I will present as dakkina (alms given to the guru after receiving initiation), these most cherished pearls, along with heaps and piles of many other varieties of pearl fruits. By accepting these she will demonstrate that her favour is upon me."

The gopis all giggled as they looked at Tungavidya. She was gushing as she tried to conceal her inner ecstasy by knitting her eyebrows into a great frown and giving me a side-long glance laced with her fury. She called out to Nandimukhi, "Ayi! Nandimukhi! You are a perfected renunciant, therefore you should initiate him according to this procedure. If the mantra is received from some perfected person who has developed their mystic powers, then the desired result (kam) will be

accomplished very quickly."

Saying this much, she was preparing to leave in a great huff to go home, when Visakha caught hold of her and brought her back. Visakha laughed as she spoke, "Nandimukhi! Actually it would be a contrary course to initiate this character. For this reason the acarja is angry with you."

Nandimukhi: "Ayi! You liar Visakha. How is it you are prepared to cast these false aspersions against the saintly Son of the King of Gokul, Sri Nanda, the best friend of the lotus of religion?"

Visakha: "I'm warning you! This is a big mistake."

Nandimukhi: "What's the problem?"

Visakha: "Left remnants." (Tasted items)

Nandimukhi: "Whose?"

Visakha: "The maidservant's."

Nandimukhi laughed, "And who might this maidservant be?"

Visakha: "There is one lady in the forest of Shyaora, who, by the power of illusion, has taken on the form of a gopika. She was seen going to the house of Candrabali, the wife of the servant of Kungsa, Gobardhan Malla. Indeed, the following conversation was overheard there:

"Ayi! Candrabali! You are the dear-most servant of the Goddess of the universe, Candika, and I am also one of the chief associates of Goddess Candi. Due to my overwhelming affection for you, I am desirous of making you one of my sakhis."

Candrabali replied, "That sounds reasonable," and, saying thus, she embraced that person whose friendship she had just accepted. That is the maidservant I am talking about!"

Nandimukhi: "But who is that person?!"

Visakha: "This extraordinary Goddess of Wealth is renowned far and wide. I'm sure you must know of her."

Nandimukhi: "What are her remnants that you spoke of?"

Visakha: "The supremely sanctified honey of her black lips, kept in a small oil bottle." [Another meaning of adhor is- inferior; in which case we get-

"The ultimate purifying nectar, situated in her small, black, inferior, oil lamp."

Radhika smiled to hear this and all of the gopis laughed when they saw Radha's smiling face.

Nandimukhi: "Ayi! Visakhe! Has anyone seen this?"

Visakha: "Of course! What do you think?"

Nandimukhi: "Who?"

Visakha: "The two gopis Malli and Bhringi, when they were sent by Priyasakhi Gandharva, to fetch some saffron cloth. Just the day before yesterday, they saw all of these sublimely purifying activities going on near Manas Ganga, on the bank of Ushor. Then, when they returned they discussed what they had seen with all the other gopis."

Nandimukhi became very thoughtful as she said, "He is the life of all Gokul. How can this fault of His be extirpated?"

Visakha replied, "By observing some rites of atonement."

Nandimukhi: "Then let Bhagavati determine the proper penance, so that Purusottam can be acquitted of His crimes. Then after some provision is made for His purification, you can initiate him."

Campaklata spoke up, "Mugdhe! The method of atoning for this sin has already been explained in the Ujjval Mani Sunghita. You must never have seen this book and only for this reason you brought up Bhagavati's name."

Nandimukhi: "So who here knows this Sunghita?"

Campaklata: "Only priyasakhi Gandharva."

Nandimukhi: "But she is not here amongst this assembly just now. Therefore how can this penance be performed without excessive delay?"

Visakha: "This Lalita is the second Gandharva, Her very self-same form. Having studied this Sunghita under Gandharva [Radha], along with all of it's related treatises, she is now quite proficient in this subject due to the fact that she continually reads it again and again. Therefore she can easily determine what is a proper settlement."

Nandimukhi sarcastically replied, "Sakhi Lalite! After carefully considering the matter, please be so kind as to instruct us in these affairs regarding atonement."

Lalita smiled, "Priyasakhi! If the guilty party comes himself into the midst of this assembly and notifies those of us present, giving a complete and straightforward account of his crimes, and if he feels repentant for what he has done, then that is itself atonement. In this way have the wise and learned authors of the Puranas

decreed:

'Whoever feels remorse for his crimes after having confessed them before a council, is fully pardoned. This is the encomium given by the munis in the dharma sastras.'

Hearing this, Nandimukhi looked at me with emphatic intention. I then came before Lalita, with Subal and Madhumangal, but as I expressed my desire to say something, ...

Visakha said, "He Birbor! (Oh best of heroes!) Lustful persons have neither shame nor antipathy (self-mortification). Because of this, your naturally libidinous nature, you have done whatever you have done. Yet now, after careful consideration, you should divulge everything here in front of Lalita."

This time I wasn't laughing, as I spoke like one, thoroughly regretful of his past misdeeds, "Lalite! Four days ago, when I was looking for some of my cows who had strayed away, I came to Gauritirtha, where I saw, coming out of my Gauri Mandir, one of the highly perfumed attendants of Gauridebi (Carcika- Durga). Suddenly, she came and struck me on my left breast and then, after taking me within the Madhabi grove, she forced the remnants of her chewed tambul between my trembling lips. What more she did I cannot say exactly, since I was in a state of shock, and now cannot remember everything very clearly.

Then again, just the day before yesterday, I came to the bowers (nikunja) by the side of Radha Kund, bringing with me a variety of flower garlands all strung with golden thread. While absorbed in thoughts of my sweetheart, Gandharva, I wandered into Mandar Uddan (Slow and Gentle Gardens) just by the side of Mala Haron Kund (Lake of Stolen Garlands), near the City of Hills. There, who should appear on the scene but that same carcika (highly perfumed one), who again forcefully kissed me on the cheeks and entrusted the nectar of her lips unto my mouth.

So that these two sinful and wicked activities might be annulled, please give your permission for me to drink the honey remnants of Her lotus mouth."

Madhumangal laughed, "Bayasya! This is indeed an excellent means of atonement. Especially since it contributes to the further increase and expansion of the sinful activity itself!"

I replied, "Murkha! (You fool!) Fie on you! (You can go to hell!) Don't you even know that the best medicine to counteract poison, is poison itself. For example:

'A boil burns with a pain produced of heat (fire), but it is again by fire that this pain is checked.' And also-

'Those who are intelligent know that the best remedy for a soft foot, pierced by a thorn, is to remove that thorn with another thorn.'

In pursuance of these proofs, the best means of righting the wrong of tasting someone's remnants, is to again taste someone else's remnants (ucchista bhojan)."

Madhumangal: "Since you are the only physician qualified to cure the disease of such sins as these, why then do you bother going after Lalita to seek her compliance?"

I replied, "Sakhe! Even though one may be extremely knowledgeable about a variety of subject matters, still, in matters pertaining to his own personal affairs he might have some uncertainty. Therefore, the medical treatment of a doctor is best effected by other doctors."

Lalita laughed, "He Deb! Alliance with a debi (demigoddess) is accomplished only by another deba (demigod) [like you]. We are only human beings. How will we even be able to perceive this debi?"

I replied, "Ayi! Lalite! Having accepted a human form, isn't she present somewhere very close by?"

At this their curiosity was greatly stimulated, yet they remained very apprehensive as they all began to whisper to each other, "Who is he talking about?"

Radha said to herself, "Does this crest jewel amongst the most cunning of all charlatans think that he'll really be able to get away with exhibiting his amusing activities in front of the eyes of all those assembled here?"

Visakha: "Deb! Please tell us. Where is this debi? Only if you tell us can we then, after properly praising Her by the recitation of various hymns and prayers, bring Her into the midst of this assembly, and then quickly see to the execution of your affairs (religious rites)."

I replied, "Visakhe! That debi is present within your assembly, resembling as she does a streak of lightning. Though you possess very beautiful eyes, like the expanded petals of a lotus, I think you must be blind."

Having heard these words of mine, filled with the deepest profundity and gravity, Lalita and the other sakhis were completely filled with apprehension. In other words, they were all thinking, "He is probably referring to me!"

While thus absorbed in the midst of various doubts and hesitations, all the while looking each other up and down, Visakha interjected, "He lampat! (You debauch!) Is that debi Campaklata?"

I replied, "Na. Na."

Visakha: "Then Jyestha?"

Me: "No, not Jyestha."

Subal spoke up, "Then it must be either Rangadebi or Sudebi."

Me: "Nope. Neither of them."

Visakha: "Then it must be the pardon officer herself, Lalita."

I replied, "Visakhe! It is not Lalita either."

Visakha: "Not this one. Not that one. Not so-and-so. Then what! Has she just vanished from here?"

I replied, "Dhurte! (You impostor!) You know who it is! Just think!"

Lalita said, "Hai, Hai! (Oh my!) Sakhi Visakhe! [You're simply helping this lecher by keeping us in this unnerved and distraught state. Hurry up and get it out of him!] Hurry up! This poor lecher can't wait much longer. Let him get his business over with."

Visakha acted like she was thinking for awhile, and then said, "Lalite! The person whom I am thinking of is neither a debi (demigoddess) nor a human being."

Nandimukhi: "Then who is there within this assembly who is neither a debi nor a human being?"

Visakha: "A fairy!"

Lalita: "Who is that?"

Visakha smiled, "That scurrilous Padma (in the company of the snake goddess Manasa) has been engaged in some very unpleasant acts."

Tungavidya: "Sakhi Visakhe! Why do you defile her by saying, 'That sankhini!' She is very devoted to Goddess Katyayini and has performed much service for her. By the mercy of Katyayini debi she has become non-different from the debi herself, though she remains concealed." [In addition to fairy, sankhini also means female ghost. Because Krsna has tasted the lips of Padma and Candrabali and they are here compared to female ghosts, or, sankhini, low class women, therefore he has to atone, and specifically his mouth needs to be purified.]

Hearing this Madhumangal and the others laughed. Then I said, "Visakhe! If, due to the excessive bashfulness of the party in question, you would like to appoint someone else, then in that case I can divulge another name."

Visakha: "Let's hear it!"

I said, "You are that carcika debi." (perfumed, anointed goddess).

Seeing that all the other gopis got quite a laugh out of this, Visakha's lips were trembling as she replied, "Aye! Cancal! (You're so fickle!) Bancak! (Cheat!) He gop nisthur! (Oh most cruel of all the cowherds!) Oh you who smeared turmeric all over the body of the wife of Gobardhan Malla, the servant of that demon Kungsa! When it comes to wisdom, you are just like a great mass of molasses! Because you are so devoid of finesse in the fine art of cleverness, and so greedy for [her] affection, you are reduced to wandering around in the groves of jujubes (berries), looking for someone to play with. Oh worthless husband of Padmasankhini (female ghost associate of the snake goddess Manasa). Oh best of the merchants, greatest of the cheaters who like to deal in goods captured with the five arrows of Cupid! Though you think you are so clever, you are totally lacking in the necessary skills required for one to perform in this arena. Go and perform your impertinent activities in the chipped rice and molasses market, within the forest of Sakhot (Shyaora)! Go on! Get out of here right now!"

Sri Radha, in Her soft and gentle voice, began to praise Visakha, "Priyasakhi! Visakhe! May you be victorious! You have given me the greatest satisfaction by expressing externally, exactly what I was thinking within my mind!"

Rangadebi said, "Sakhi Visakhe! Why are you getting so angry? Sakhi Lalite! While he was supposed to be confessing all of his crimes before us, full of shame and remorse, he took the forest of Sakhot to be a bower of Madhabi creepers; the dry, salty land on the banks of Manas Ganga to be the Manda Gardens, on the banks of Mala Haron Kund; and the tasted remnants of the ghostly associate of the snake goddess, to be the nectar of the lips of Visakha. This clever cheat, while saying one thing, actually implies a different, hidden meaning. In this way he has ascribed the different qualities of other objects to you. Therefore, it still remains for you to prescribe his proper atonement."

Lalita laughed, "He Arja Madhumangal! Sakhe Subal! Come here and hear what we have in store for your friend."

Citra: "Sakhi Lalite! If the offender has any property, then the rule is that his penance should be levied at an increase of four times. Also, for the sons of kings it should be six times. Remembering these injunctions from the Smriti sastras, you should arrange for his penance."

Lalita: "Mugdhe! The law is that for the sons of kings it should be double six times (or twelve times). This, I know, is sanctioned in the Sunghita. How did you come up with six times?"

Citra: "You are the one who is most proficient in this sastra. Whatever you have understood is certainly the truth. But there have been a number of incidences when this young prince has saved our lives, for instance: when he picked up Gobardhan hill, when he saved us from the forest fire, and when he thrashed Sankha Cura. In light of this, maybe we should not be so quick to count all of his faults. We could be a little lenient by settling up at six times."

Lalita: "Fine! This is the provision I am recommending in accordance with your request. First off, in the matter of delivering him from his sins, he will have to take some ritual baths. This should be performed in ManasGanga for three days. Then, to undo the evil influences upon his mouth, for twenty-one days he shall have to take a dose of the five kinds of nectar (pancamrit) from the lips of Malli and Bhringi. Later on we can arrange his acquittance at the rate of twelve times."

Madhumangal pretended to be very angry at this, "Lalitike! The King of Braja and the Son of his Queen are the veritable bridge of true religion. He is the medicine which sustains not only the life of myself and His other friends, but of all the residents of Gokul. Yet you have now undertaken to destroy His caste by making him taste the remnants of these cetika (servant) and pulinda (mleccha) girls. Therefore I can see no other recourse but to go and immediately inform His mother and father. By bringing them here I will deliver Him from this dangerous dilemma. This will also serve to further increase our friendship."

Saying thusly, he muttered to himself as he prepared to run off, but Subal caught hold of him and dissuaded him from going.

Lalita: "Anarja bato! (What a low-born plebeian you really are!) You are simply ignorant of the glories of these two sakhis, our priyasakhi Radha's minister of loving affairs and the one named Bhringi. Perhaps then, you should hear of their greatness from your Nandimukhi."

Nandimukhi: "Brother Madhumangal! There is a very beautiful mountain of the name, Gobardhan, where is to be found Radha Kund, very dear to Krsna. As Radhika is most dear to Sri Krsna, Her kund is similarly as dear to him. Far superior to Vaikuntha is Madhupuri (Mathura). In spite of that, Brindaban is even far more excellent as the scene of the Ras festival, a marketplace of ecstasy, the epitome of eternal enjoyment. There is situated the mountain, Gobardhan, whose existence is also fully dedicated to flooding the Lord of Gokul with oceans of the nectar of love. Radha Kund is situated there, by the slopes of Giri Gobardhan. Is there any conscientious soul, averse to worldly pursuits, who will not serve Radha Kund? In light of all this, plus the fact that the guru of Bhagavati, Sri Debarasi, along with many other great sages and eminent saints, has described the residents of the caves upon Sri Gobardhan, near the southern bank of Radha Kund, in very glorious and majestic terms; and as well, Sri Sukdeb himself has described the Puranas, Pulindyas, Urugayas, and so forth, as being exceptionally fortunate. Therefore, will not the supremely sanctified pancamrit, liquefied by the lips of these two daughters of the king of the Pulindyas, Malli and Bhringi, destroy the effects of sinful activities? I have more to say! Listen carefully-

Sometimes Visakha and her friends, though they are themselves pranayi-sakhis (loving friends, or lovers), behave towards the new, Youthful Couple of Braj just as if they were maidservants. Then sometimes, they feign shyness and thus obtain the highest ecstasy, by engaging Ranganmala and her friends in their most cherished services, that they might listen to the extremely funny conversations that take

place between these gentle and soft-spoken gopis, unaware of the intricacies of conjugal affairs."

Taking this opportunity, Sri Gandharva summoned Tulasi by a gesture of Her eyes, and then, with the little finger of her right hand, more beautiful than the sweetest scented Campak flower (which is of course more beautiful than beauty itself), she took some sindur (red lead, vermilion) from the part in her hair, and with this began to compose a letter, according to her own feelings, so that the letters of the words themselves became a herald of the scent and loveliness of a bunch of golden Ketaki flowers. This letter she placed in Tulasi's hand, to be delivered to Lalita and the others. Thereupon, Lalita, after touching the letter to her head, went off to read it in secret with the other sakhis. She smiled as she handed it to Nandimukhi.

Nandimukhi reacted as though it was a matter of great exultation, and smiled as she began to read the letter, after first holding it to her heart,-

"Blessings and prosperity on you all. Sri Nandimukhi, Sri Lalita, Sri Visakha and all of my pran prestha sakhis. After first embracing you and exchanging hundreds and thousands of millions of jokes, a certain lady has something to announce.

He who achieves the highest happiness while wandering around Gobardhan Hill with His cows and friends, such as Sridama, Subal, Bhadrasen and others, and Who is the dear-most son of the King of Braja, more beloved by him than his own life, hundreds and thousands and millions of times; and Who attains the topmost pleasure, playfully lying on the soft mattress, scented with various flowers, which is actually the motherly affection that the Queen of Brajaraj feels for her son; on the bed inlaid with a great variety of valuable jewels, which are really the manifestation of her life force, multiplied hundreds and thousands of millions of times; within the vast temple, constructed from hundreds and thousands of millions of golden bricks, which are, in reality, nothing more than her body itself- to the image of the little toe of His left foot, I offer arati, taking ten million (arbud) of my pran pararddha (life force multiplied hundreds and thousands of millions of times) and then again, taking that pran pararddha arbud [arbud- hundred million] and multiplying it again by hundreds more pararddhas (hundreds and thousands of millions) just to fuel the wick of the ghee lamp. My heart is melting like fresh butter to hear that One whose tender and delicate body is so attractive, as though fashioned from a bouquet of blue lotuses, perfumed with fresh musk, the lustre of which is like cream, and Who is dhir lalit (that hero, devoid of anxiety, very polite and meek and who is expert at singing and dancing), will have to engage in such severe penances.

Now if this lad of delicate limbs is agreeable, and is still in a penitent mood as regards his previously committed crimes, then the actual prescribed means of his deliverance is by tantra. Having forgotten this part of the Ujjval Sunghita, Lalita had made some separate arrangement for drinking pancamrit, only for the purification of his mouth. In any case, if He can now be made blameless through this system of tantra, by both purifying His mouth and destroying His various other sinful activities as well, then I will be beside myself with bliss. It would be

superfluous to say more.

Please convey my loving embrace upon Malli and Bhringi, who are as dear to me as my own life.

I would just like to emphasize one point in closing: This young prince is supremely pure, and at the same time, addicted to luxury. Therefore, with His lotus feet he should tread on a flowering creeper taken from an Ashok tree, and the nectar that exudes from those flowers should be used, in the measurement of twenty-four gandushas [one gandusha is approximately equivalent to the amount contained in the spoon of an acaman cup], to wash His face. Then pancamrit should be administered to His smiling and camphor scented lips, very gently and lovingly causing him to drink it. In this way, the sins of this tender young child can be very quickly driven away, effecting His great happiness at one and the same time."

Having heard these words, like nectar to my ears, my mind was transported to the very outer reaches of ecstasy, as I looked towards the kunj wherein Sri Radha was seated. Lalita laughed to see this as she said, "Even though it is true that the sinful reactions of a wicked man are destroyed by his repentance, there still remains something further to be said. Namely, 'If there remain any properties, then the penance should be multiplied four times.' Moreover, 'Especially for the sons of kings it should be twelve times.' Then, 'In the case of minor injunctions and specific ones, the specific injunction is always more important.'

According to this logical proof, the proper penance for him is calculated at two times six (or twelve) which I had again divided up into two separate penalties. Nevertheless, the order of one's elder (gurujon) is not to be questioned, even if it may be inconsistent. Thus, taking this order upon my head, I will cause his sins to be expiated by the process of tantra."

Then I said, "The learning of the sisya is superior to even that of the guru."

At this, Lalita made a face which perfectly revealed her thoughts, as she said, "Nandimukhi! He who has thoroughly satisfied the lotus eyes of the residents of Gokul with his liquid loveliness, who plays at the celebrated place known as Parasali, this foolish black deer; has abandoned this playful lovely doe (Goddess of Youth), the constant companion of paramarasatarangini rangini [She who spends Her time, playing in the waves of the topmost, divine mellows; or, the companion of the gopi named Rangavati, (Sri Radha)], to repeatedly run after that apparition [mirage / the word for mirage is: mrgatrsna- the thirst of a deer; very appropriate for this allegory], the resident of Sakhisthali and confidante of Saibya. This restless and senseless bumblebee, has forsaken the lovely jasmine flower, the friend of the Campak creeper (Campaklata), that has filled the four directions in and around the nikunj bhavan (bower residences) surrounding Radha Kund with the sweetest fragrance, to relentlessly and recklessly pursue the scentless kusmanda creeper that grows in one corner of the yard of Gobardhan Malla, by the side of it's friend the river (Padma), which flows in the dry, sandy and saline soil nearby.

[Kusmanda means pumpkin, as well as false conception]. Because of this, the ineptness and tactlessness of this dim-witted dolt, the constant companion of Brindabaneshwari, namely Her naturally pleasant and agreeable repose, has superficially been saddened and made gloomy, so that the sentiments of conjugal love are not being nourished. Therefore, this ignorant and inexperienced bumblebee needs to be enlightened about the foolishness of his ways, so that he deserts that pumpkin creeper, devoid of the scents of fine sentiments, and instead becomes the devoted follower of the Goddess of Brindaban. Then Her dear friend (priyasakhi), in the form of Her amorous pleasure, radiant with contentment, will undoubtedly fulfil His most cherished desires."

Having been made to drink such a variety of sweet and intoxicating beverages, all scented with the flavour of conjugal affairs, Satyabhama said, "Prananath! Though I am drowning in this ocean of nectar, I am not in the least bit feeling satiated!"

Krsna replied, "Priye! It is as if your question has caused the appearance of my dear friend, the King of the Season Springtime, who used to accompany me in my sublime pleasure pastimes within the forests of Gokul." Saying thusly, he heartily embraced Satyabhama.

Satyabhama joyfully replied, "Then! Then?!"

Krsna said, "Then Subal laughed as he spoke to me:

"Priyabayasya! Priyasakhi Indulekha, by various hints and gestures, sent me here to inform you that her life has been made explicitly uneasy by the constant ranting and raving of her husband Bhasshor. Therefore, I am requesting you to settle the price for her pearls, and then, after presenting them to her, send her swiftly home that she might properly perform her household duties."

I replied, "Sakhe Subal! You have spoken correctly. This Indurekha is so attached to me in loving affection, that even though she is very afraid of her husband, still, she is not able to give up my company. Therefore, please listen carefully to the following assessment of the price she must pay. The aptly named Indurekha (Impression of the Moon), unable to tolerate separation from me, should manifest two bodies. One of these can remain in the dark sky of my heart, being etched there with the sharpened nail of her finger. Then I, who am also incapable of enduring separation from her, will rise up, by the power of my mystic science, like two half-moons on the mountains of her chest. There she can keep me within the folds of her cloth, like a poor man keeps a valuable gem that he has found. Thus will she realise the topmost ecstasy, by occasionally stealing a glance at me, situated upon the hairs of her body, standing on end. Or, I could remain in the heart of Indulekha [who is without the sign of a deer], by remaining there as a lovely, dark deer."

[Since mriganka: (lit.- drawing of a deer) means- moon; then, mrgalancon: (lit.-

sign or emblem of a deer) must also bear some connotation to the moon. There is obviously a relationship between deer and the moon, but the exact nature of that relationship is unknown to the translator. Unless it is just that they look very nice together. Imagine a deer, in the dead still of night, looking up at an autumn moon.]

Her lips trembling, Indurekha shot me a very crooked and tortuous glance, the sight of which made Tungavidya laugh as she said to me, "He Nagor! (Oh great gallant!) This Rangadebi is also very appropriately named! Therefore, let us hear the evaluation of the price she is to pay."

I replied, "Sakhi Rangadebi! Previously, during our Ras dance, I was especially delighted while continuously absorbed in watching your dexterity in dancing. Now, within the lonely and secluded compound of this nikunja mandir (bower temple), I am eager to experience that dancing once again. Therefore, please come here and make those two golden waterpots on your bosom dance on my chest, in the ways that you are so adept, so that I, having been highly pleased by you, may reward you with the nectar of my lips, the most coveted treasure of all the gopis, and thus bestow upon you too, the highest happiness."

"Ore bhandasekhor! (Oh summit of buffoonery!) Get out of here! Get out of here!", she said as she looked askance at me. Then she ran and hid behind Visakha

Sudebi laughed, "He Rasik Sekhor! (Oh summit of wit and merrymaking! {Who are so adept at relishing rasas- mellows of ecstatic love}) It is clearly felt that Rangadebi will quickly achieve perfection by relishing this mahaprasadam, that which is eternally enjoyed, emancipated and worshipped by the gopis. Thus it is hoped that she will bestow perfection on all of us also."

Subal said, "Bayasya! See how Sudebi remains eyeing you, longing to know what price for these pearls you have ascertained for her!"

I replied, "Sakhe Subal! Since Sudebi is celebrated as being very skilful at throwing dice, we will play a game together, but in order to avoid any cheating or embezzlement, no one amongst you will be able to support either side. The two of us will play by the power of our intuitive intelligence. Now if I am soundly defeated by her, then she can press my chest very tightly with her left breast and drink twice from my lips, which are the whole of my wealth. Or, in the case that I am able to defeat her, then her right breast, very firm to the touch, will be squeezed by my right hand, as much as I like, and she will have to cause me to drink the nectar of her lips twice."

Thereupon, Sudebi knitted her eyebrows into a terrible frown as she looked at me and spoke to Visakha, her words dripping with malice, "Ayi Visakhe! Does he know nothing more than engaging in mercantile affairs and joking on and on forever? Previously this great trader got so much amusement out of the gold business and nowadays he has begun to do the same by speculating in commerce in pearls, all calculated to achieve a handsome profit. Therefore all of you should

set aside two pararddhas¹ of golden coins in the form of the five arrows² he is so much desirous of getting struck with. Let him have as much as he wants from this reserve and then collect all our pearls from him. Meanwhile, I'm going home."

As Ananga Manjari caught hold of her skirt to prevent her from going, Sudebi again turned towards me, accosting me with her anger as she challenged me, "Bho! Kelilampat! (You love-making libertine!) Ananga Manjari is expert at rolling the dice. Therefore, you should play dice with her, unless of course you're worried that she might crumble the mountain of your pride to pieces."

To these sweet words I replied, "Are you sure? This quiet, little Ananga Manjari!? A practised dice-thrower? The dear sister of She Who is the personified form of my Kaustubha necklace and the mark of Srivatsa on my chest (Srimati Radhika), is very affectionate to me. The bumblebee of my mind is similarly so delighted with the sweetness of this Ananga Manjari, that it hovers near her constantly. I am prepared to give her some of the roundest and heaviest pearls for free. For her I won't charge anything. Then I will take her to a solitary kunj, and, placing her gentle form upon a dais within that kunj, I will arrange all fifty of the syllables [to be used in the mantrams], which are the various limbs and parts of her body, beginning with her heart. [There is a word used here which creates a wealth of beautiful, poetic imagery, the whole of which is very difficult to express in an English sentence. Smarapanjaraksaran- Smara refers to Cupid, or in this case AnangaManjari, since Ananga is also another name of Cupid; panjar means ribs or cage, as well as aviary; and aksaran means syllable, as well as sky, or atmosphere. So He is not only arranging her hair and clothes, but also her heart which is fluttering like the wings of a bird, by saying so many sweet things to her, etc.] I will embrace her and then perform a complete anga-nyas (applying mantras to the various parts of the body through touch and sound) while reciting all of the appropriate mantras. Then I will bestow upon her a most perfected mantra. By reciting this mantra only once, she will be able to enjoy direct association with Cupid himself. After the conclusion of her dalliance with Cupid, she will naturally be so satisfied, so pleased, that she will humbly present the jewels of her wanton coquetry, the whole of her worldly possessions, to her mantraguru as dakkina. Thereupon, I will be so delighted with her that I will bestow my graciousness as hundreds and hundreds of benedictions upon her, by awarding her the title, BisomsorBilasacarja.³ Having received this degree, she will in turn worship me with two times more devotion than she did before."

Accepting these words of mine like a hymn of flowers, she decorated her ears with those flowers as she glanced at me very quickly, while making a hasty retreat behind Tulasi and Ranganmalika, her lips trembling all the time. The full-faced, fortunate gopis laughed with full-blown eyes, full with affection, to see her disappear behind the backs of her friends, while her elder sister, Sri Radha, watched with sympathetic and smiling eyes.

1 pararddha- hundred, thousand billion

2 five arrows / pancaban- fascination; excessive excitement; exploitation /

extortion; inflammation / heat /

affliction; and stupefaction

3 Bisomsor: lit.- deadly arrow; most nearly rendered as- The Most Extraordinary Acarja of Pleasure Pastimes

Satyabhama laughed, "Prananath! Then! Then?!"

Sri Krsna replied, "At that time Malli and Bhringi appeared with two letters and presented them before the assembly. With elated minds, they all gathered around Lalita to read them, as she handed one of the letters to Subal."

I said, "Lalite! Who wrote these letters?"

Lalita smiled, "The letters will say!"

Then Subal opened the letter and began to read in a quiet voice.

Nandimukhi: "Subal! We can't hear!"

Subal laughed, "Sakhe! Please hear this remarkable letter!"

I replied, "Go on! I'm on the edge of my seat!"

Subal: "Swastisamastamukhah! (Denoting benediction or prosperity)

Before the right honourable; worthy of comparison (in writing) to the best of the saintly persons; surrounded and served by a host of good qualities, our dearest friend, the highly magnanimous Subal-

Please know the following, by this letter, like a sweet cake served to you on a golden plate, come from the village called Jabat, and composed of syllables which are nothing less than the condensed form of the nectar of my love-

Though the lotus feet of your dear friend, and of the other residents of Braja Mandal as well, like your good self, are always graced with all auspiciousness, may this always continue to be so. There is one other matter which you should please be attentive to:

It is common knowledge that the exacting of revenue from one's dear friends is unbecoming, and so, though on many occasions we have had to part with considerable sums, we have up till now, remained silent. Now however, due to the squandering of all the pearls that we had planted, our elders are awfully upset and complain all the time. Only due to this fact, that we are unable to attain a moment's peace since the dreadful day of our big blunder, I have had to say something about this. Please don't count this as a fault against me.

In this village of ours, Brindaban, your dear friend (Pranbondhu Krsna) has taken up pearl farming nowadays, in the fields near the Jamuna, as His means of

livelihood. After you have all settled on an adequate amount, through written correspondence with Lalita, then I will expect prompt payment. Here of course I am referring to the taxes due to us for the use of our land. With this revenue we will then go to bring a sufficient quantity of pearls from Mathura. Having presented these to our elders, we will have thus crossed over this ocean of anguish.

Or, if you are unable to come up with the considerable amount required, since of course you understand that it takes very expensive land to produce valuable pearls, then in that case, five representative members should meet together, and, after settling the rate, a quantity of pearls equal to that amount should be made over to Lalita.

You are yourself recognised as the best amongst learned and experienced persons. Therefore what need is there for me to say anything further?

Sincerely yours,"

Completely transported into the realms of rapture at having heard these lucid remarks, I revealed my inner thoughts, "Ayi Malli! Ayi Bhringi! Your mistress is well I hope!?"

They replied, "Absorbed in meditation on the feet of Lord Master, she is quite content."

Then, glancing out of the corners of my eyes towards that kunj, I inquired, "Where is she just now?"

They replied, "In the village of the name Jabat."

I inquired further, "What is she doing just now?"

They replied, "She is sitting, watching the path, waiting for the arrival of Lalita and the other sakhis, while anxiously praying for the auspicious welfare of the kingdom of Brindaban."

I said, "Sakhe Subal! I suspect that our double-dealing friend here (Lalita) has signalled to someone to write this letter and then produced it as if it had come from Jabat."

Subal: "Na. Na. This is definitely Radha's handwriting."

Then I said, "Sakhe! Let me see the letter!"

Taking the letter from Subal I marvelled at it as I said to myself,

"Aha! These rows of words illuminate my eyes with a brilliance like a flood of

nectar. However, I will have to disguise the appearance of these ecstatic symptoms, such as the standing up of the hairs on my body, by attributing to them a cause other than the real one.

Thus I laughed as I said, "How astonishing! I can't believe it! These sly foxes have pulled this rabbit out of the hat like a flower from the sky, by unexpectedly raising a completely new issue."

Madhumangal spoke up, "Bayasya! This over-indulged and pampered Lalita, the personification of the most grotesque and shrewd trickery (kuti-nati), the first preceptor of all deceitful dancing girls who cavort around on the dramatic stage, and who is herself a first-class actress, is non-different from Radha. Thus, by her beguiling words she very easily subjugates Sri Radha, and having thus overpowered her, enacts her own will through the personality of Radha. Know this to be a desperate and futile attempt. I know also, that as long as one of your enemies remains, then for that long you should relinquish all your hopes for happiness. Remembering this and all other pertinent information, you should recommend to the well-wisher of our kingdom of Brindaban, that all of these charlatans be run out of Brindaban at once. Then only, in this kingdom freed from all thorns, will you be able to enjoy all of the sweet flowers and juicy fruits. Immersed in the happiness of that moment, I will myself become a dancer as I continue to live here free from any further affliction."

I said, "Lalite! How has our Brindaban become the kingdom of your sakhi?"

Lalita: "Bho! Paramkapatin! (Oh consummate fraud!) You were present at the coronation festival of Sri Radharani. Why are you trying to conceal this fact?!"

I replied, "What to speak of seeing such a festival I don't remember even having heard of it!"

Visakha: "Lalite! It's not his fault. Through the transgression of the codes of religion by hundreds and hundreds of the chaste young cowherd women, the darkness of ignorance has descended upon this place. By association with them his intelligence has also become covered, and through his association, his two friends appear to be losing their's also. Now the question is: How to resuscitate their consciousness?"

"This can best be accomplished by causing the nectar of the words spoken by Radharani to enter into the holes of their ears. This will bring about the appearance of Her mercy within their consciousness and in this way their memories will be revived."

Just then Brindadebi arrived. This brought unlimited joy to all the gopis as they embraced her along with Lalita, who said, "Brinde! You have come at a very good time. Please describe the great fun we had at the coronation festival of Sri Radharani."

Brindadebi very humbly replied, yet with great delight, "Sakhi Lalite! Actually I have come here just to drink the flower nectar description of that festival from your lotus mouth. Therefore, please distribute this nectar to us yourself."

Lalita cheerfully replied, "So be it. Everyone please listen very carefully-

During the reign of the King of Seasons (Springtime), at the time of Purnamasi tithi (full-moon) and during the Visakha nakshatra (constellation called Visakha), all of the rivers such as Kalindi and Manas Ganga, met together with the demigoddesses headed by Krsna's younger sister, Savitri, the resident of the Vindhya hills, having been ordered to do so by a voice from the sky, that of Hiranyagarbha (Lord Brahma), and another instruction received through their dreams from a resident of Brindaban, Lord Gopeshwar. Then all of them, together with Bhagavati Purnamasi, attracted various Kinnaris and Gandharvis there, by making a tumultuous uproar produced from various musical instruments like flutes, vinas, gongs, mridungas and other kinds of drums. While the Kinnaris and Gandharvis sang, the Apsaras and Vidyadharis began to dance, as Saci and the other heavenly nymphs let loose with triumphant outcries, accompanied by showers of flowers, like the parijata. The approach of Visakha and all the other saharis (confidantes) was proclaimed by the melodious songs that went before them, resounding in all directions, as they appeared on the scene exquisitely decorated with sweetly scented silken cloths fastened with multi-coloured cords, and carrying in their hands freshly ground sandalwood paste, mind-enchanting musk, delicious kunkum (saffron), sandalwood oil and a variety of heavenly scented flowers. The wives of the brahmanas uttered hundreds and hundreds of benedictions as the sakhis carried in 108 brilliantly decorated golden pots, filled with water scented with kunkum, aguru, karpur (camphor), candan (sandalwood), and various fragrant flowers. To these were then added various gems decorated with auspicious markings. As the Ratnabhishek began, all to the accompaniment of triumphant cries of joy, thousands of streams flowed from the lotus feet of priyasakhi Gandharva, who was seated on an altar encrusted with rubies, atop a brightly coloured dais."

Brindadebi joyfully inquired, "Then? Then?!"

Lalita replied, "Then I gently rubbed Her with a very fine, soft cloth to dry her body before, dressing her in a red skirt, with a dark blue veil (the colour of clouds) scented with Ketaki flowers. After comfortably seating Her on a small golden seat, I began to braid her luxurious hair, which defeats the beauty of peacock feathers, intertwining the braids with garlands of fresh flowers, pearls and jewels, finally fixing a colourful bouquet of flowers at the end of her braid. Meanwhile the other attendants (sakhis) present, each began to perform the respective service that they were particularly expert at, decorating Her transcendental body with various unguents, ornaments and garlands, whatever was suitable for the particular part or limb that they were diligently decorating..."

Suddenly, while in the middle of this sentence, Lalita became overwhelmed by the remembrance of her Priyasakhi, as the ecstatic symptoms of trembling,

horripilation and faltering of the voice transported her into a state of divine unconsciousness. Visakha then sat down behind her and filled her ears with the nectarean vibrations of "Radhe Krsna Radhe Krsna", thus arousing her from her faint. Lalita patiently remained silent for a few moments and then prepared to resume the narration.

In the meantime, when Sri Radha saw that Lalita had become unconsciousness, She exclaimed, "Oh light of my life, whose character shines like a burning ghee lamp, encircling and dissipating the darkness, Oh priyasakhi Lalite! Have you left this already unfortunate soul in a state of complete hopelessness? Ha Bhagavan! Ha Bhaktabatsal Bhaskordeb! (Oh Lord! Oh You Who are affectionate to Your devotees. Oh most merciful Sun God!) Please save us! Please protect us! Ha Gokul Sudhanidhe! (Oh Nectar Reservoir of Gokul)! Oh You Who have unconditionally resolved to protect the residents of Gokul, up to and including the Pulindas. Quickly therefore, bring the life back into this succulent young creeper by sprinkling her with the nectar touch of your hands, this girl named Lalita, who is the means of existence for people like me, whose hearts are like a cuckoo's. I will bear the expenses, whatever the cost! Better yet! As your remuneration, you can purchase this ascetic, Radhika, and make her your maidservant."

Lamenting in this way, with Her face streaming with tears, Radharani rushed forward to embrace Lalita, but before she could advance She was Herself embraced (and thus protected) by her companions in the form of the ecstatic symptoms headed by paralysis (stambha). In other words, She also fainted in a swoon of ecstatic love.

Seeing this, Ranganballi and Tulasi became frightened and ran to Radharani with their hearts pounding. Ranganballi put her left arm around Sri Radha's back, and then, with her right hand, began to gently rub Her body. Tulasi was crying profusely as she called out in a faltering voice, "Ha Nath! Raksha! Raksha!" (Oh Lord! Protect us! Save us!) She ran and brought some fresh new leaves from a Tamal tree, and after having fashioned a fan from them, began to fan Radharani very briskly. Then Sri Radha regained her consciousness and was delighted to see Lalita fit and well.

Meanwhile Lalita continued, "Yes. Then, all of those assembled there, decorated as they were with the ornaments of ecstatic symptoms, surged forth like a swell in the ocean of happiness, and, with Bhagavati Paurnameasi at their head, seated Sri Radha on a very ornate, jewelled throne. Then, after collecting tilok and musk from the chest of the dark-blue demigod (Shyamal debata) of the name Kam, the brother of Jogmaya, She was anointed with this tilok as the Queen of Brindaban, all to the accompaniment of the blowing of conchshells, ringing of bells and beating of gongs and drums."

Having heard this wonderful description of Sri Radha's coronation festival, a great din and bustle of laughter was produced amongst all those present. I was also so much taken up by the intense rapture of that moment, that a variety of ecstatic symptoms sprung up in my physical person, which I was able to constrain and

contain only by sheer effort.

I managed a slight smile as I said, "Lalite! How is it I never came to know about any of this? Anyway, simply by this have you all acquired the kingdom? Especially since you certainly must have assented that it would also be my kingdom, along with yours."

Nandimukhi: "How is that?"

I replied, "Since it was by my suggestion that Bhagavati Purnamasi crowned Radha as my queen, the Queen of the Inner Sanctum [Purandor] of Brindaban."

Visakha laughed, "He asangata bhashin! (Oh you of inconsistent speech!) The queen of Purandor¹ is a demigoddess, the wife of Indra, famous by the name of Saci, and she lives in heaven. However, my sakhi Radharani wanders upon this Earth as a human being, the wife of the fortunate Abhimanyu."

¹Here Purandor, which literally means: andor- the interior, or female quarters (harem), of a pur- city; has been taken as a name of Indra, {though it is also a name of Krsna}.

I said, "Oh most esteemed preceptor, crest jewel amongst the professors of the science of polemics! Visakhe! You are endowed with the most decrepit intelligence (You imbecile)! Though you have repeatedly studied the section of dialectics dealing with direct perception, have you forgotten it all?"

Visakha replied, "And just exactly what is it that I have forgotten?"

I said, "I will tell you. Just listen carefully-

If your priyasakhi Radha is not my mistress, then why did Bhagavati Purnamasi anoint Her with tilok and musk from my chest, during her coronation ceremony? Why did she place my necklace and my flower garland around Her neck?"

Lalita: "Bho shashashringa dhanurdhar!¹ (Oh wielder of the bow made from the horns of a hare!) He alik purandor! (Oh you false Indra!) She [Parbati debi-Jogmaya], whose lotus feet are adorned with the most excellent lines of auspiciousness; whose wealth of glories are sung by the Gandharvas and Vidyadharas; whose character is praised in hymns recited by Prajapati Brahma; the bestower of the fruits of manifold desires; the consort of the Lord of Nandi, Sri Mahadeb, the resident of Kailash and Vindhyaal; has a brother (Shyamal debata) named Kamakhya, whose mahaprasad (musk and flower garlands) was used by Purnamasi to anoint Radharani during Her coronation festival. I am not aware of your relationship with him?!"

Tungavidya: "Sakhi Lalite! This title, Alik Purandor, that you have used to address him, is so fitting since in fact he is nothing more than a false Indra!"

Visakha: "How is that?"

Tungavidya: "In the same way that a beggar brahmana who has some knowledge of music may accept a post as music teacher in a small village, simply to receive the twenty-five kauri (conchshell) salary, and, when falsely addressed by the simple village folk as, "He Deb! Oh He Maharaj!", he feels so delighted and cheerful; similarly, certain inebriated (intoxicated from taking bhang² and dissembling scholars (court jesters) of low character, simply greedy for the pay of one pol³ of fresh butter, respectfully refer to themselves with the title Brindaban Purandor, even a semblance of which remains far from the reality that they are nothing more than ambitious farmers, thus revealing their true identity as foolish idiots. Yet they remain so enthusiastic to establish themselves as the gods of celestial abodes."

Biting her bottom lip to hold back her laughter, Tungavidya now began to describe my abhishek (coronation ceremony), "Sakhigon! He is comfortably seated on a throne made from golden mud from the banks of Pabon

1Dhanurdhar also indicates a bold or clever person, and, shashashringa, the horns of a hare, is another way of denoting an impossibility or absurdity.

2marijuana

3four tolas

Sarobar, produced from the moss growing there. [There is a kind of gold called, Jambunad, produced from mud on the banks of the Jambu River, moistened by the flowing juice of that river, which when dried by the sun is transformed into gold. However, what transformation occurs with the mud on the banks of Pabon Sarobar is unknown. Still, this mud is being referred to here as gold, though in actuality it is probably nothing more than mud]. This throne is also encrusted with tasty pearl fruits and other jewels. He wears a crooked crown, roughly fashioned from flowers from the sky (akash kushum- day dreams), the scent of which has attracted a swarm of intoxicated yellow bumble-bees eager to collect some pollen, as they busily buzz about. Subal is happily holding an umbrella above his head. Aha! I can't even describe the elegance of that umbrella, made from the shells of tortoises, from which is falling a shower of the most fragrant nectar. [There is another kind of nectar(?) associated with tortoise shells, which anyone who has ever picked up a (live) tortoise will have experienced.] His two friends, Ujjwal and Catur, appear very delighted as they stand by his two sides, fanning him with camaras made from bunches of hair produced from the soft palms of the hands. [Since everyone knows that no hair grows in the palms of the hands, this might be the joke in itself; otherwise, another possibility is that the camaras were made from bunches of hair from the soft underside of an elephants trunk. This also presents a pretty funny picture of camaras with stubbly little hairs sticking out.] Some of the greatest and noblest saints, born from the wombs of the most celebrated, barren women, are performing his abhishek, anointing him as Chief Sovereign (Mahendra) of Brindaban, by bathing him in a shower of the delicious milk of Padmagandha and some of the other bulls. His hare-horn bow, that he holds in his left hand, shines

with a splendour like a gift from the mighty Kubera himself.

In this and so many other ways the Rajyabhishek was performed throughout the day. Thus his fame was proclaimed throughout the universe, carried by the tidal wave of his majesty. Though all of you are aware of this, it seems a great impropriety to me that none of you are falling at his feet while addressing him as Mahendra incarnate."

The fair-limbed gopis laughed with delight as they shyly glanced towards me from the corners of their eyes. Then they all smiled at one another as Citra said, "Bho! Why are you two (Visakha and Tungavidya) joking about him so? He really is the Lord of the Gods (Debendra) you know! There is no doubt about it."

Then Tungavidya said, "Citre! If that be true, that he is the Lord of the Gods (Debaraj), then why would he come here before all of us ordinary folk?"

Citra replied, "Though it is common knowledge that he gets enamoured by other women (por ramana rata), debi was so angered by this that she kicked him and rebuked him severely. Thus he left that heavenly home of his and came here to the forest. Accepting the dress of a cowherd boy he then began the performance of purash caran1. By this process (purash caran) he has attracted the favour of Brindabaneshwari and is now happily passing his time here. Therefore, instead of teasing him by making him an object of ridicule, we should affectionately welcome this guest who has come to our home."

lit.-repetition of the name of a Deity attended with burnt offerings.

The glowing faces of the graceful young gopis lit up with smiles as they listened to this explanation of Citra's.

Nandimukhi addressed her, "Sakhi Citre! He who eternally sports in the forest of Braj, namely the Son of the King of Braja, Brajendra Nandan, appears to be seriously contemplating the inner, hidden meaning of the words you have used to describe Him. Please therefore, after due consideration, bring delight to all of our hearts by explaining this secret before us."

Citra laughed but remained silent. When Sri Brindadebi saw that she appeared like a saint who has taken a vow of maunam (silence), Brinda blissfully began, "Nandimukhi! I have clearly understood the esoteric meaning of clever Citra's statements. Please listen carefully as I reveal this to you."

Nandimukhi: "Tell us how he has become the King of the Gods, Debendra."

Brindadebi replied, "Those who are very playful, who engage in a variety of captivating pleasure pastimes, are deba; or, those who are very effulgent, whose brilliant bodily lustre shines like the waves of a river of nectar on a moonlit night, can also be called as the Sovereign Chief of all the debas, Debendra Raja. His above mentioned qualities far outshine the other debas. This is the meaning of

Debendra."

Nandimukhi smiled, "Brinde! You have sufficiently explained the meaning of Debendra. Now tell us the meaning of par ramana rata."

Brinda replied, "Para means other, or opposing. It can also indicate paramotkrista ramani, a very eminent lady. That is, Sri Radha. And of course, rata means deep and fond attachment, so, par-ramani rata means, one who is passionately devoted to Sri Radha."

Campaklata laughed, "Brinde! Then who is that debi?"

Brindadebi replied, "Unless one is a god himself, he has no right to worship the gods. In accordance with this injunction, she who is very diligently engaged in the service of Candika debi, is also called debi, just to lend some auspiciousness to an otherwise inauspicious situation; like calling a blind child, Padmalocan. Otherwise, debi means the wife of a deba."

Nandimukhi inquired, "Who is that?"

Visakha: "Well, that's obvious. The person that fits this description; who has all of these qualities, is Candrabali."

Brindadebi smiled to hear this but then fell silent, as all the other bright-eyed gopis laughed together.

Nandimukhi: "Yes, the fact that she rebuked him by kicking him clearly indicates her lower propensities and shameless impudence. But what then is the meaning of, parama sukhada tan nija bhavanam?"

Brindadebi replied, "That place that is not very deep or dense, without flowers or the buzzing of bumble-bees, only (param- exclusively) affords unhappiness, uneasiness and the lack of contentment (asukhad); or, that place which ruins real happiness, the place which gives pain, our debi's residence, SakhiSthali. Quitting that place, he has come to this forest."

Nandimukhi: "How wonderful it is that you have so cleverly recognised the esoteric meaning of Citra's statements. Please therefore, divulge the hidden meanings of the other words which still remain incomprehensible to us."

Brindadebi replied, "The phrase beginning with navin gopatwa indicates someone who carries a flute, a buffalo horn, a cane, and a rope for tying cows; who is painted with red mineral dyes, decorated with new peacock feathers and necklaces made of gunja berries; an enchanting cowherd boy bedecked with forest flowers and leaves. Navin especially refers to his ever fresh, eternally youthful quality. Purash caran vidhan is understood in this way. Purah means, before. In other words, underneath the sweetly scented Bakul trees ornamented with a multitude of bumblebees. Caran means self-willed, wanton or noble; or, like the king of the

elephants, Gajendra, maddened by Cupid's shafts, who wanders about, engaged in a variety of pleasure pastimes. His precepts (vidhan) consist of such things as kissing the lotuses (kissing the lotus of his pastimes), biting the tender leaves of the Ashok creeper, playing with round pomegranate fruits, embracing golden jasmine creepers and causing others to drink the intoxicating honey of his camphor-sweet smile and the side-long glances from his lotus eyes. On this account, He forcibly attracts the playful coquette of this capital of Brindaban, who has come here to share some of her ecstatic feelings with the Mallika, Bakul, Campak, Madhabi and golden Jasmine flowers that grow here, collecting them that they may render service as various fragrant flower garlands. After making Her completely mad with excitement, He pulls Her to Himself.

The inner meaning of, sukhenā samoyan gamayan, or, happily passing the time, is as follows: sukhenā- the topmost ecstasy produced by tasting the most commendable and indescribably sweet mellows. This ecstasy has the ability to endow samoy, or time, that is, the time of soporific Spring, with the most unique and incomparably good fortune, as though the Goddess of Fortune herself was eternally present, by means of a mystical myriad of pleasure pastimes. Having attained Her association, He is incessantly and intently absorbed in inventing even more inexpressible and unspeakable ways to divert the attention of His Playmate, through the artistry of delicious, wanton dalliance."

My heart filled with joy, I addressed her, "Biswasghatini Brinde! (You traitress!) You are the keeper (mistress) of my gardens; these groves of Brindaban. Have you joined their side now?"

Madhumangal said, "Priya bayasya! This Brinda, just so that she can eat some rice with salt and buttermilk, has abandoned Your groves to become a servant in their homes. So what else would you expect her to say in these present circumstances?"

Brinda exclaimed, "Aye bhusurabhash! (You mere semblance of a brahmana!) Katubato! (You crude, rude and jealous jester!) Upon hearing these words, comparable to a fresh Spring shower, from your friend who is himself like a cloud, you have become quite a cheerful frog now haven't you? Your harsh croaking however, is simply a source of disturbance for us."

Malli and Bhringi said, "Debi Lalite! Have you forgotten about what our Swamini wrote in the second letter?"

Lalita: "What was that?"

Malli and Bhringi: "Whoever behaves in a contrary fashion, furnishing fallacious arguments, simply to instigate quarrel and hostility in the matter of settling a just and equitable price for the goods in question, should immediately be bound and sent to me. And so forth..."

Lalita said, "Yes! This Madhumangal is definitely antagonising the situation. After binding him tightly with some vines and creepers, take him, not to our soft-

hearted Priyasakhi however, but submit him instead to Jatila and Abhimanyu. There he can collect his dues in the form of a good, sound thrashing from the lion of Jabat, Abhimanyu."

Madhumangal timidly remarked, "Bayasya! I have some very important work waiting for me at home. I'll come back as soon as I'm finished."

I replied, "Dhik brahman! (Shame!) When you are with me why do you fear the tall talks of these weak, young girls?"

Madhumangal: "He Mahasur! (Oh great hero!) I have directly experienced Your great valour at the toll gate on the path around Gobardhan enough times. Even if You so conveniently have, I haven't forgotten that day the gopis bound me with their veils, by the order of Gandharva, for the purpose of realising the revenues on Brindaban, and carried me off right under Your nose as You looked on with your mouth hanging open. Fortunately, I somehow or other managed to save myself by my own brahminical prowess."

Saying this much, Madhumangal imitated someone in a panic of terror trying to flee away, as I caught hold of his hand to bring him back and said, "Lalite! Why should I pay revenues to such a soft, gentle-hearted young girl as that. Rather, I will collect my own dues by force if necessary."

When she heard this, Sri Radha glanced at me from the corner of Her eyes and laughed.

Nandimukhi said, "Citre! What is the meaning of what you said about batir atithi (our house guest)?"

Lalita offered, "Nandimukhi! When you already know, then why do you ask? He has only been here for about six or seven years since he left his own village in Mahaban, where he always used to stay."

Nandimukhi: "Why did he abandon the place of his birth?"

Radha answered under her breath, "Because there he was not free to do as he pleased. In such a big village as that, which is practically like a town, with many people always present, where is the opportunity to accomplish all the odd and unbecoming things that he is accustomed to, such as assassinating young girls, breaking milk pots and stealing butter? Since there he has little scope for committing these crimes, and thus perfecting his natural calling, he has come to this lonely and dense forest of Brindaban. Here, his intense eagerness for such activities as biting the lips and stealing the clothes of chaste young girls goes unchecked, and with it the good name of our respectable families."

Nandimukhi smiled as Lalita expressed (out loud) Sri Radha's observation for the benefit of all those present. Divulging her intentions, she remarked, "Yes Lalite! Yet he seems to have relinquished this profession as of late."

Radha again answered quietly, "That does seem to be the case at present. He has renounced his natural characteristics (swadharma), since his judgement was swayed by some averse conception, having been acquitted of his crimes of thieving and the like by the penances prescribed by Lalitacarja. Now, feeling very repentant, he has taken up the occupation of the gopis, namely agriculture, as his religious duty. He is producing quite a good harvest and giving that too, over to the gopis, after first accepting a share for himself. In this way he brings so much happiness to the gopis and himself as well, behaving just like a virtuous and pious gentleman."

This much Visakha similarly communicated to everyone, with her smiling face.

The lovely young gopis (Brajasundori gon) discovered a festival of laughing and merriment in these statements of Sri Radha, as I said to Subal with insincere malice, "Sakhe Subal! Have you seen how these cunning rascals, under the ruse of jesting mockery, have thoroughly undermined my authority here in this kingdom of Brindaban?"

Subal replied, "Not only have they dismissed your proprietary rights over Brindaban, but moreover, they have made you into a farmer!"

Brindadebi said, "Subal! You are very wise and an experienced scholar. You are also the favoured recipient of the affection of both Radha and Krsna. Therefore, why don't you confer with Nandimukhi and make some settlement here? Though Radha and Krsna are naturally very affectionate to each other, They have become engaged in this dispute over Brindaban. Why aren't you able to refute this incongruity of opinions regarding the proprietorship of this kingdom, by citing some logical references from the scriptures?"

To this, Lalita and myself responded by saying, Well done! Well done! Excellent proposal!"

Subal then addressed me, "Bayasya! First of all, let Lalita explain how the gopis attained exclusive mastery over the kingdom, and then you can present your viewpoint, regarding the same, outlining your respective position and what are your claims to the kingdom."

I replied, "Sakhe Subal! Overcome by illusion, I became an offender by cohabiting with all of the celestial nymphs here in Braja, but then, by my acts of atonement I again became purified. Please tell me how it is, that I am again supposed to bandy words about with these gopis?" [In other words, this could easily lead to getting involved with them, thus I may again become defiled.]

Brinda then said to me, "Mahasuddhal! (Oh most purified one!) {i.e. "Oh, aren't you the pure one!} Even though some of these gopis may have become defiled by the deadly arrows of Shyamal (Cupid), in the form of your words, they have repeatedly bathed in the most sacred pond of the Empress of Brindaban, according to the method given by Her. Thus they come before you, once again pure and

chaste. Since both of you have performed the required atonement rites, no fault can be incurred by your talking together. Therefore, Lalite, would you please begin."

Lalita: "First of all, let alone his sovereignty over the kingdom of Brindaban, this lying cheat has no real connection with Brindaban whatsoever."

Nandimukhi: "How is that?"

Lalita replied, "Since it is that his father's kingdom of Brihadban (Mahaban), where they have always lived, is his inherited property."

Nandimukhi: "What is the proof of that?"

Lalita: "The utterances of the great sages headed by Vyasadeva, as recorded in the revealed scriptures (Puranas- first and foremost of which is the Bhagavat)."

Then Subal addressed her, "Lalite! As one of the mediators here, I have something very pertinent to add at this stage. Moreover, I will not be able to utter anything false while looking you in the face. Now my question is this- Have you attained this kingdom of Brindaban simply on the strength of the fact that Brihadban is the kingdom of Sri Krsna? If you have any evidence for this statement then we anxiously await it's mention."

Lalita replied, "Subal! Indeed there are many direct and indirect statements in the Puranas, but of the two, 'directly perceivable proof is the most substantial.' In light of this we should accept the direct evidence."

Nandimukhi: "And what might that be?"

Lalita: "Do I have to say? As if you haven't all perceived it yourselves."

Nandimukhi: "I don't remember anything in particular. Please tell us."

Lalita: "Is there anyone in the three worlds who was not bowled over by the bliss of the Ratnabhishek performed by the wives of the demigods, headed by Savitri, all to the accompaniment of an uproarious din produced from beating on drums like the dundubhi?"²

¹Mahasuddha- can also mean: 'most impure'. In any case the epithet is sarcastic in intent.

Subal: "Lalite! Yes, we all may have witnessed this event, but what you have described might be perceived differently by others. Don't forget that my friend is present here to catch you when you twist the truth too much."

Lalita: "Subal! If this cowherd boy, your (biped) two-footed friend there [dvipada-two-legged is a contemptuous term for 'man'; or, the subtle implication is that he

is an animal], does in fact imply that there is some untruth here, then why does (he), this Swami (Master), still so earnestly long to be initiated with Her mantra, that he might obtain the service of Her lotus feet alone, She who was ceremoniously installed as the Queen of Brindaban and who continues to sit on the singhasan at Mahajogpith? Have you forgotten about these previous statements of his?"

Nandimukhi laughed, "Lalite! This foppish young buck (prince) is addicted to the drug of love (Madan) and is therefore excessively lusty. Can his incoherent ravings during moments of this drug incited delirium be accepted as proof? I'm afraid we'll need something more solid than this to go on."

Brinda: "Whatever testimony Lalita produces is being refuted by the both of you (Subal and Nandimukhi), who have taken the side of this maddened and intoxicated young son of the king. Consequently, Lalita has become so overpowered by indignation that she seems to have run out of any further noteworthy arguments." or, "Lalita doesn't even bring up those arguments which are well known by everyone, everywhere."

Nandimukhi: "Brinde! Why don't you give us an account of this evidence then?"

Brinda: "Priyasakhi Sri Radha, has, through Her unbounded love, bestowed a form similar to Her very own (sarupya), upon this forest of Brindaban. Thus this forest itself is now designated as Her own intimate companion (priyasakhi) ."

Nandi: "How has this forest become as like Her portrait?"

Brinda: "Please listen- In this most beloved place (Ballabhpur), the golden Jasmine creepers and vines of Campak flowers, distinguished by their exquisite fragrance and loveliness, have attained the very form of priyasakhi Sri Radha's divine body, thus vanquishing creepers of Lightning (Vidyutballi). The lovely, full blown lotus flowers are reflections of Her charming and cheerful, lotus face.

2 Savitri-wife of Lord Brahma and tutelary goddess of the gayatri mantra.

The abhiseka of Radha as queen of Vrndavana is found in Jiva Gosvamin's Madhava Mahotsava (1555). This work is based on evidence found in the Matsya and Padma Puranas. The Gautamiya Tantra is also mentioned in an alternate reading. See MM 1.8]

As Her eyes flutter, the lotuses tremble in the gentle breeze and the lithe and lissome deer, of slow and gentle gait, are startled and run off into the forest. As Her full, lustrous lips begin to tremble, the Bimba fruits hanging in the trees swing to and fro, while Bandhuli flower buds bloom in the morning mist, blessed with fortune, having attained the form of Her glistening, honey-dew lips.

The pleasing form of Her two arms has been captured by all the tremulous creepers in this forest of Brindaban, and the beaks of the parrots have received the

eminent form of Her highly raised nose, the best friend of the sesame flowers. The flowers of this forest, all in full bloom, are the personified form of Her laughter.

The sweetly scented buds of the Kunda (one kind of Jasmine) flower, surrounded by black bumblebees infatuated by their fragrance, are blinded by the radiance of Her teeth. Rows of bumblebees in flight have found the measure of Her eyebrows disposition, and the fortunate Bok flowers have attained some of the exquisite beauty and grace of Her brilliant forehead. The tail feathers of the playful peacocks are the image of the decorated braids of Her hair.

The splendour of the bowstring of the bow of Cupid, has lost heart, after seeing the Munja ornament decorating Her ears. The fruits of the Bael, Tal (Palm) and Pomegranate trees, are modelled after Her charming breasts, poised as though waiting for the dawn in the eastern sky.

The resplendence of Her chest has lent its eminence to the multitude of golden singhasanas. The jingling of the little bells in the embellished bracelet that goes round Her hips, is echoed in the forest around the girdle of the great mountain (Giri Gobardhan), as the sound of the flute. Her excellent thighs, able to excite Cupid himself, are mirrored in the trunks of banana trees, shining with liquid beauty. The land-lilies have attained their appearance through association with Her lotus feet. Both flocks of swans, gracefully moving through the water with dextrous ease, as well as lust-intoxicated elephants, see Her gait as their guru.

Hundreds of Jambu fruits, sitting in the trees, are the reflection of the tilok markings on Her face (gopi dots); the sweet songs of the young cuckoos in the Spring, are the echo of Her enchanting words; and the wag-tails, flitting and dancing from one lotus flower to the next, have learned their movements from the corners of Her eyes that dance, within the lake Her gracious, lotus face.

The waters of the Jamuna are tears of joy produced from loving ecstasies, flowing from Her eyes and mixing with the collyrium (kajjol) that decorates them. Manas Ganga is the outward manifestation of Her pure and peaceful heart (mind), while the other lakes that adorn this lovely land, are the condensed form of Her perspiration.

The multitude of gleaming gunja berries have received their splendour from the lustre of Her body. Kunkum (Saffron) and Lotus flowers have attained their fragrance through association with Her body; a scent that makes Her co-wives (co-lovers) despondent when it enters their nostrils, but which en-gladdens the hearts of Her friends and well-wishers, a scent, that in fact, attracts and entices all the residents of Braja in one way or another.

The radiance of Her body humbles the pride of Mount Meru, crowned with lightning bolts, who worship Her bodily brilliance as the source of their own splendour. Bathing in the penumbra cast by only a minute fraction of Her lustre, they have attained their own elegance.

The land, caves, kunjās (forest bowers), houses made of gold, and mountains of stone, here in this forest of Brindaban, have all been modelled after Her form.

All of the lakes of this forest have attained the form of Her deep navel, and the black snakes that are to be found around these lakes, are manifestations of the fine, black bodily hairs that grow above Her navel, like ripples the surface of a lake.

The black crane who subsists on these snakes, trembles when he sees them.
[Cranes are always white, so this obviously refers to something, or someone else.]
The be-jewelled desire trees are extensions of Her munificence and the fine hairs of Her body, standing on end, are the benevolent preceptors for all Kadamba flowers.

The gentle and refined people of the three worlds, sing the praises of all of the liberated beings in Brindaban, born as both animate and inanimate creatures in these woods, Yet these beings are simply reflections of the beauty of Sri Radha's form and different bodily limbs. Aha! The lustre of that body is constantly described by Uma, Rati and Lakkhi, among the assembly of the heavenly damsels. The desire trees and creepers of Brindaban bestow an abundance of delightful pleasures, far exceeding even that which is available in the spiritual sky, in the abodes of the Lord of Lakkhidebi, which are virtually overflowing with ecstasy. Their effulgent presence is as evident as that of the moon, existent within the multitude of universes; thus they have attained a measure of the unmeasured fame of Sri Radha. In this way we can clearly perceive how this forest of Brindaban is said to be Her priyasakhi (dear friend)."

At this point I proudly interjected, "I have been ceremoniously installed as the all-conquering, heir-apparent of the kingdom of my father, Brajaraj Nanda. With fixed intelligence but a heart softened with love, I roam these forests with my friends, on the pretext of herding our cows, but in actuality with the sole purpose in mind of protecting my forest. Therefore, how is it possible that this forest has recently become yours, simply on the strength of some implied oneness or similarity?"

Brindadebi replied, "That person who becomes the friend, or sarupyal (identical form), of someone else; if she doesn't belong to Her, then she must certainly belong to someone else. Then why isn't she running off to emulate the forms of Lakkhidebi and Her consort, and thus accept Them and Their entourage as her very own?"

[Here, she means Brindadebi herself, because she is the personification of Brindaban forest.]

Madhumangal replied with a loud laugh, "Bho mithyabadini Brinde! (Oh you liar Brinde!) Out of greed to enjoy the pleasure of drinking condensed milk, you have abandoned your divinity to become a flatterer. Simply by reciting this false eulogy, will you make our forest of Brindaban into (the possession of) your best friend?"

Nandimukhi spoke up, "Lalite! In the absence of the authorised statements of the sages of yore, neither side can be defeated. Therefore, please quote some references from the Puranas for us."

Lalita: "If the supporters of his side are going to say such things as this, then I suggest that you go see Paurnamasi. She has a wealth of references from the Puranas for you to hear."

Subal: "We want to hear some references from you."

Lalita: "We are cowherds by caste. Moreover, we are women. Therefore we have no authority to quote from the Puranas."

Subal: "Well, this Brinda is a debi (goddess). Let her please be so kind as to enlighten us."

1 The idea of sarupya is described in BhP xi.9.22-3 by drawing on the belief that the stunned insect stored in the wasp's nest becomes a wasp itself through constant meditation on it. In the second half of the verse, Brinda refers to the type of salvation (sarupyamukti) of that name. It is said that on the planets inhabited by Narayana, all of His eternally liberated devotees have four-armed forms similar to his own. Brinda's (and Raghunath's) point is that of Rupa Gosvamin, that those devoted to Narayana do not gain the favour of Krsna.

Brindadebi posed as though she was thinking for a moment or so, and then said, "Yes! There are many statements on this matter. In fact, there are so many that I don't know where to begin. Yet these are described in different ways by different debis in different regions. The point is, who is there amongst us who has not heard the passage in the Puranas, quoted by Paurnamasi, and which subdues all other statements, namely that, "Sri Radha holds dominion over the forest of Brindaban?"

When Madhumangal saw the cheerful faces of Lalita and the other lovely young cowherd girls of Braja (Brajasundorigon), indicating their pride of victory, he very haughtily said, "Nandimukhi! In the Gopal Tapani Upanishad, the most important work among all the Puranas, this forest is celebrated by the name, Krsnaban. For this reason, the demigods headed by Lord Brahma and Lord Siva, continuously sing the praises of Priyabayasya (our dear friend) as the Prince of Brindaban. Is there anyone who is unaware of this? The utterances of the Sruti always supersede that which is stated by the Smriti. In light of this, the kingdom of Brindaban is obviously under our jurisdiction. Therefore, Sakhe Subal! Get these gopis who are so covetous of another's property, out of here."

I said, "Sakhe Madhumangal! You are my most benevolent and dear friend!" So saying, I then hugged him tightly.

Nandimukhi pretended not to notice this as she looked towards the kunj where

Radha was sitting. As Nandimukhi studied the faces of Lalita and the other sakhis, Radha smiled and softly said, "How astonishing! Simply upon hearing the word, Krsnaban, from the Gopaltapani Upanishad, this prudent pandit, without even a hint of the real meaning of the word, has attributed another meaning, thus assuming that in this one fell swoop he has made another's kingdom his own. Now he looks just like a big Kingshuk flower (red flower), and reminds us of a parrot noisily trying to figure out how to drink some water with its beak."

Lalita expressed these remarks of Sri Radha for the benefit of everyone, to the unrestrained laughter of all those present. [With a few exceptions, of course.]

I then began to consider, "Most probably Lalita will interpret this word Krsnaban in some other way."

While I was thus considering her intentions, Nandimukhi exclaimed, "Jayakankhin! (All glories to you who are so hopeful of attaining your end! [Krsna]) I have something I would like to announce! If you approve, then I can say it."

I replied, "By all means!"

Nandimukhi: "Lalita intends to defeat you and claim the kingdom as their own, by taking the word Krsnaban as a compound word, meaning Shyamban (dark forest)."

I replied, "This Lalita is the primal preceptor (acarja) in the lore concerning the fine arts of adornment with flowers and painting the body with candan (sandalwood) and mineral dyes, using a small brush. I have personal, practical experience of this as she has on many occasions embellished my form with a variety of forest flowers. But what does she know about grammar?"

Brinda smiled, "Oh most venerable and wise professor of grammar! Our priyasakhi Lalita is a very well renowned acarja in the science of grammar. Much more so than you!"

Lalita replied with embarrassment, "Oh Brinde! You're so mean. Get out of here with that nonsense."

Brinda: "I'm contending with him on your behalf and now you're mad at me?"

Lalita then said to me, "Bho! Oh tiger amongst the teachers of compound words! You have thought to frighten us with this apparition of the person you so much want to become [through this misunderstood meaning of the word- Krsnaban], but why do you vainly long after this play-ground of our priyasakhi? Since in this case it is obvious that by the use of a juxtapositional (appositional) or attributive compound the meaning of Krsnaban is Shyamban. Why persist at taking the meaning to be the forest of Krsna. I think you had just better give up on that one."

I replied, "Caturanmanye! (Think you're very clever don't you, Lalite?!) When it is perfectly plain to see that this is a determinative (tatpurush) compound, it is superfluous to try to combine it any other way. Anyway, how would you explain this statement, 'May the rascal be gratified?'"

Radha spoke softly from within the kunj, "By reason of the fact that this forest is very deep, dense and dark, the word Krsna (Shyam- dark) has been placed in apposition to forest (ban). Thus this juxtapositional compound gives the clearest meaning."

Lalita repeated these words of Radha, exactly as She had said them, which prompted Campaklata to say, with praise, "Lalite! Sadhu! Sadhu! (Bravo! Bravo! Well done!) You have spoken correctly. Since this forest is the place where he himself has manifested and accomplished a variety of activities (karma), such as killing the demons Arista and Kesi, subduing Kaliya, lifting up Gobardhan hill and performing the Ras dance, then it should be clearly obvious that this is an appositional compound (karma-dharoy)."

Lalita again expanded on the original statement of Radha's, explaining in a variety of ways how it is that Krsnaban means Shyamban. First she established where there are forests which are especially dark, like for instance in Brindaban, and that being the reason it is called Krsnaban and so forth and so on. Krsnaban is an attribute of Brindaban, or an adjective modifying Brindaban, and therefore should be understood to be an attributive compound (bahubrihi).

1 Here Lalita has made a play on words. The word for attributive compound is bahubrihi. Bahubrihi can also mean (literally): much paddy. Therefore she is saying that in this instance, the rice is blazing like fire, or, burning in the sacrificial fire. In other words, it is so obvious that this is an attributive compound word (meaning dark forest), that it is like a blazing fire. The word for juxtapositional compound is karmadharoy. Brinda said, "Satyang! Satyang! (Here! Here!) (Ay! Ay!) The place where the Ras dance is held on the banks of the Kalindi is a dark banyan forest, and the Rasasthali (place of the Ras dance) near Gobardhan (Parashali) is also very dense and dark. All of these places are renowned as being very dark places."

Indurekha said, "Lalite! Your conclusion that the word Krsnaban is an attributive compound (bahubrihi) is one hundred percent correct. This is due to the fact that there is so much paddy (brihi) growing here. That is, rice and other grains. Then of course there are also these fields of mukta brihi (pearl grains). What could be a more significant indication than this, that this word, Krsnaban, is an attributive compound (bahubrihi)."

As they all laughed heartily, their minds full of conceit, I replied, "Nanakutkalpananagari cakravartini Lalite! (Oh Empress of the imaginary city, conceived through an intricate web of prevaricating and paradoxical falsehoods!) The primary and principal meaning of Krsnaban is the forest of Krsna, in accordance with the fact that it is a determinative compound (tatpurush).

Therefore, what makes you think that you can refute this meaning simply by some invented attributive and appositional compounds, imputing to these all sorts of ridiculous and imaginary meanings?"

Lalita replied, "He Mahapandit! Tatpurush, tatpurush! What are you babbling on and on about? I ask you: Since there are many different kinds of determinative compounds (tatpurush), please be so kind as to explain which type this one is, after clearly ascertaining this yourself."

I said, "He jarabuddhike! (Oh you of decrepit intelligence!) The forest of Krsna, this Krsnaban, is famous in the three worlds as the sixth type (genitive case) of determinative compound."

Now Radha spoke softly again from within the kunj, "If the word Krsnaban is taken as the sixth type of determinative compound, meaning the forest of Krsna, then in that case, the forest of banyan trees around Sakhisthali (the grove of Candrabali) is yours, Oh lion among men, for there in Sakhisthali, sasthi-tatpurush (lit.- the sixth, that person) is always present."

Lalita laughed, "In this instance there is not even a slight possibility that this is the sixth type of determinative compound."

Nandimukhi said, "Lalite! What is this? A sutra from some treatise, pregnant with purpose? Go on. Explain to us the hidden meaning behind your sutra."

Then Lalita placed a blue lotus flower garland around my neck with the corners of her eyes as she said, "Nandimukhi! The meaning of sasthi tat purush is: sasthi-some woman [in addition to sixth, another meaning of sasthi refers to a female deity presiding over children's welfare]; and tat purush- the man of that woman, or, in other words, her husband or friend."

Visakha said, "Lalite! I understood the meaning of tatpurush, but who does sasthi refer to? What is her name?"

Lalita: "Candrabali!"

Visakha: "How is it that Candrabali is sasthi?"

Lalita: "First we have Mahabhairab (a name of Lord Siva), the servant of Kangsa, the terrible Gobardhan Malla. Then, amongst the debis (goddesses) that worship him, are secondly, his mother Bharunda (Candi); thirdly, the mother of Candrabali, Mahakarala [of massive and dreadful appearance; with notched teeth] (Carccikadebi); fourthly, Saibya (Kali); fifthly, the famous Padma (Sankhini-female ghost); and finally (sixth), Candrabali (Sasthi), the resident of the banyan forest at Sakhisthali. Because she is a resident of the banyan forest this appellation of sasthi suits her, since everywhere it is known that Sasthi debi resides within the banyan trees."

The sakhis all laughed uproariously to hear this explanation, while I thought to myself, "The excellent intelligence of these young gopis of beautiful limbs (Brajanganara) is actually quite astonishing. Even I have been silenced by their pompous boasting."

At this point there was no other recourse but to remorsefully reveal my inner feelings, "Nandimukhi! These gopis are the wives of our peasant farmers.¹ Therefore, whatever enjoyments we present them with, in payment for services rendered, be it colourful, fine cloths or whatever else, are all readily received by them. They are also decorated with ornaments made from jewels and gems presented by ourselves; pearls, coral, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds. Nevertheless, they have, as of late, become overly conceited by their newly acquired treasure of ever fresh adolescence, thus they now take their superiors (guru: heavy) very lightly and look upon them with disregard and neglect. By the corners of their restless eyes, dancing with exultation, and their proud and pompous talks, they now seek to dupe me, the formidable son of the Emperor of all these lands. Yet even though I have been deceived by them, I remain exclusively dependent on the first and foremost attendant of the respectable Bhagavati Paurnamasi, namely your good self (Nandimukhi). Since we are all from the same village, though what they have done is obviously an infringement of the accepted codes of conduct, though it is lamentable to be sure, I have thus far not given it much importance, mainly due to my apprehension of the disgrace that all of this might bring upon our good village. However, as of this moment this baseless recrimination will go no further. For now I will attack in battle, with the fatal weapons of my sharp nails, the very form of the wealth of their new-found freshness and youthfulness, which have never been seen, even by their respective husbands, namely those two colourful golden caskets, marked with the dawn-hued signs of the moon, which they keep covered with the fine, blue cloth of their bodices on their chests. Then I will cause my indomitable commanding officers to plunder the ruby gems of their unparalleled lotus lips. In this way, they will then be rendered silent."

Thereupon, as I suddenly and proudly advanced in their direction as if to catch hold of them, they all glanced obliquely in my direction with crooked, dancing eyebrows and smirking smiles, as they began to move about, hither and thither.

¹ Krishak gujarer gujari- According to either Aiswarja Kadambini or Radha Krsna Ganoddesh Dipika, 'gurjar' indicates the class of persons who looked after the goats. Nowadays however, it refers to any type of cultivator or husbandman.

Lalita addressed me, as if smouldering with rage, "Aye Shyamalrasapannirata! (Lo! You who are so busy to drink the nectarean mellows of Cupid's dalliance!) Get thee hence! Get thee hence! We are going to inform Brajeshwari (Mother Jashoda) about your indiscriminate desires, brought on by passionate infatuation."

Satyabhama laughed with astonishment as she asked Sri Krsna, "Binodin! (Pleasant one!) There's something I want to ask You."

Sri Krsna replied, "Priye! Please tell me, what is it?"

Sri Satyabhama, "How is it that Lalita and the other gopis (Brajanganagon) were able to interpret so precisely the things that Sri Radha said to herself within the kunj?"

Sri Krsna replied, "Priye! Lalita and the other gopis (Brajasundarigon) are the expansions of Sri Radha's own form. Why then should they be incapable of interpreting Her soliloquies?"

Sri Satyabhama, "He Subhag! (Oh most fortunate one!) How were you affected by the derisive and mocking retorts of Sri Radha?"

Madhumangal replied, his voice tremulous with emotion, "Priyasakhi Satyabhama! As a flower bud (manjari) and the navel of a deer are inseparably endowed with sweet fragrance, the talks between Gandharva and Giridhari cannot but be saturated with anything other than ecstasy."

As Sri Krsna drank in the words of Madhumangal as though they were some milky ambrosia, He remembered Sri Radha in such a way that the pangs of separation began to burn His heart terribly, worse than the most acutely acrid poison. Again and again His heart throbbed with pain, as though it had been pierced to the quick by a serpentine iron arrow, glowing with fire. In this condition of dire affliction, when it seemed He could bear this distress no longer, His body started to tremble violently, due to intense absorption in meditation on Sri Radha. Then His other comrades and friends in the shape of inertia, fainting, stupefaction and madness came running from one side, while from the other came paralysis, shivering and the other eight symptoms of loving ecstasy (asta sattwik bhav), all clamouring, "I'll be the one to touch him first!, I'll catch him before you do!..."

According to the rules of play, as they all engaged in this insolent braggadocio, competing with each other to see who could achieve the ultimate victory within the playground of His heart, that was now surging with activity. Then, all of a sudden they all rushed forward, climbing on top of one another as if to embrace Him simultaneously.

However, His dear friend named Sri Sri Ras, dearer than life itself, after considering which friendships here could possibly result in incompatibility (rasabhas), came forward and spoke to all the other companions (frigidity, paralysis, etc.), "Re Re vidagdhasiromaninmanyagon! (Hallo! Hallo! Most respected sirs, you who have all ascended to the pinnacle of achievement in scholarship, intelligence and humour!) This is a fine time to play now isn't it?!"

Chastising them in this way, with his brows furrowed and his eyes rolling, he continued, "Under the present circumstances it is not at all fitting for you to exhibit these moods!" Thus he restricted their rough-housing and playful antics.

This Ras narma sakha is actually the personified form of a transformation of the

most indescribable love, combined with the most pure and pleasing, intimate friendship. Thus in the form of the best medicine, endowed with inconceivable properties, he is capable of subduing all the other dear associates and attendants of Sri Krsna, who remain in his company. In fact, his very existence has sprung from Sri Krsna Himself. He is His self-same form and he is the energy behind the most glorious and radiant pleasure pastimes of Sri Krsna, beyond the realms of debate or description. The cintamani gem, as well as other priceless jewels, have all been endowed with his auspicious form. His form is like a pleasure garden, where clever wit, artful dexterity and proper understanding of the time, are all arrayed like so many rows of flowers.

Heeding all of these points, the companions and attendants bit their tongues as they exclaimed, "Bho! Bho! We have behaved improperly!" So saying, they felt quite embarrassed as they checked themselves and slowly began to back away.

Thereupon Sri Sri Jadabendra, visibly affected by those retreating symptoms of ecstatic love, with His heart still palpitating, lamented in his mind, "Ha! (Ah me!) You are the dove-cote of my life [Like a dove, my life wants to fly away, but you are its shelter], a vast river of glittering, liquid prem, showering a spray of honey-sweet drops of nectar as you bound along your course. You are a mine of artful qualities, of mirthful raillery and enigmatic glances and gestures. Oh You Who are the moonshine that nourishes my Cakora bird eyes! [The Cakora bird is said to subsist on moonshine.] Oh my Radhike! Hai! Hai! (Oh my! Oh my!) Why had I found this treasure, only to again see it fall from my hands?! [Would it have been better that I never found this treasure, because upon losing it I now feel that I must also lose my life?!]"

Satyabhama exclaimed, "Jadabendra! While drinking the drops of flower nectar dripping from Your lotus mouth, the honey of Your wanton dalliance in Gokul, I find that my thirst is simply increasing, moment by moment. Please therefore, kindly cause me to drink this nectar again."

Sri Krsna, "Priye! Please hear me."

Thereupon Madhumangal said, "Sakhi Lalite! I am the minister to uphold the inviolable statements of my dear priyasakha. Therefore, whatever excellent bribes you wish to give me, will, no doubt, go quite far in your favour, when it comes time to settle the price for the pearls."

Visakha said, "Arja Madhumangal! There is nothing suitable here to oil your palms with. However, in the evening we can definitely give you four kapardak (cowries-conchshells), so that you can purchase some bhang. If you don't trust us then we'll leave Nandimukhi here as security."

Madhumangal angrily retorted, "Re anajjabhashini gowalini Visakhe! (Oh you of improper speech, you milkmaid Visakhe!) Just forget it! I'll fix you! You're going to have to make amends for insulting me like that!"

Then he turned to me and said, "Priya Bayasya! Your soft speech, like melting ghee, only has the effect of making these milkmaids, who are as puffed-up and conceited as the God of Fire, Agni, all the more temperamental [flaring up like fire], in that they reciprocate simply by rebuking you. I wouldn't be surprised if at this very moment they are planning to bind me up and carry me off."

I replied, "Sakhe Madhumangal! The truth of the matter is, that without conquering the capital city, one cannot expect to bring any country under his control. Similarly, as long as the leader of this flock (Jutheshwari- Sri Radha) goes undefeated, then we can't expect Her followers to hold their tongues."

As I was explaining things to Madhumangal in this way, I looked towards the kunj wherein Sri Radha was seated, and breathed a sigh of sadness, "What to do?! In fear of this (Her defeat) Radha will never come before me."

When Radha heard my words She craned Her neck so that She might see me better, but then hesitated and hid Herself again within the kunj.

Satyabhama: "Then! Then?"

Sri Krsna replied, "Then I said to Nandimukhi,..."

"Nandimukhi! You know, in comparison to the treasure of new youthfulness of Lalita and the other sakhis, the blooming freshness of Sri Radha is of much greater value."

Nandimukhi: "How is that?"

I replied, "Well, the wealth of new-found youthfulness of Lalita and the others is measured by their two caskets [samput- covered boxes; treasure chests; i.e. breasts]. By comparison however, the wealth of Sri Radha's adolescent beauty is rounder than the two globes on the head of an elephant, and on account of their fullness and raised, erect posture, it appears that on either side of Her wise and experienced heart there are two golden waterpots, full to the brim. In fear of the celebrated thief of Gokul, She has tried to disguise their glaring golden effulgence by smearing them with musk."

Nandimukhi inquired, "Mohan! (Charming one!) Have you ever seen this treasure which is so carefully hidden?"

I laughed, "Yes I did, but just a glimpse, like a flash of lightning."

Nandimukhi: "When?"

I replied, "One day, Sri Radha, as She was getting out of the water at Her own lake (Sri Sri Radha Kund), since there was no one present, dropped the fine upper garment from Her delicate frame, into the water below. By chance I had come there to pilfer some flowers, so at that moment I caught a brief glimpse of Her wealth of

fresh youth.¹ Thereupon however, She felt some fear in Her heart and quickly covered Her wealth with the end of a blue garment. If at present I am so fortunate as to again get a glimpse of that pride of youthful wealth, of the eminent Sri Radha, [Who is] desirous of gaining Her own kingdom, then I will lay aside the soldiers and commanding officers of my nails and teeth, and, becoming just like Her shadow, I will examine those two golden waterpots with only my two lotus hands, thus grabbing hold of Her wealth of youthful freshness. Then this Jutheshwari Radha, will begin to tremble as the hairs of Her body stand on end, all due to a sudden outburst of emotion, thus finally having been reduced to the point of speechlessness. Having become terribly anxious about the matter at hand, her sakhigon (plural of sakhi) will then naturally gather up their own riches and flee to the four quarters, without leaving a trace. Or else, they could possibly offer their own riches to me, that they might be permitted to engage in my pure, unadulterated service. Therefore, what is the point in engaging in this wearisome and filthy debate with these boastful, yet insignificant gopis?"

Thereupon Sri Radha smiled as She looked towards Nandimukhi and softly said, "Ayi capal brahmacarini! (Oh you inconstant brahmacarini!) Flee! Flee away from here!"

Visakha said, "How surprising! This greedy, famished parrot, who is accustomed to eating only the ripened fruits of the bimba tree, is now unable to fly away after having tasted the flavour of rare and delectable grapes and raisins, previously unknown to her taste buds."

Madhumangal said to me, "Priyabayasya! Just give me my desired reward and I will bring this Radha, desirous of Her own kingdom, and deliver Her into your hand."

I replied, "Sakhe Madhumangal! If you are able to do that then certainly I will feed you some sweet-rice this evening."

Madhumangal said, "I will call [by giving a loud whistle to] the king in Mathura to send one hundred of his best soldiers here on horseback. After having bound Abhimanyu's elbows behind his back, they will then prepare to give him such a beating with their whips that the husband of Radha will personally bring Her here and offer Her to you."

Everyone laughed heartily to hear this statement of Madhumangal's.

Lalita said, "He Visakhe! Listen carefully to my petition, which I offer with the purpose in mind, of any noble-minded person present."

Visakha: "Please proceed."

¹ Here a very beautiful pun is used. The name of the flower given is, sumanah; thus, another meaning is that, "Krsna came here not to steal flowers, but to lose his mind; or to become enchanted.

As she looked towards a Kadamba tree, Lalita said, "Bho! Brindabanacar tapasyibor! Oh best of the ascetics; wanderer (thief) of the forests of Brindaban! You are famous as one who subsists only on fruits. Why then are you prepared to damage your own dignity; to pollute yourself by vainly longing after the wealth [concealed near Her heart] of that most unobtainable chaste girl, who is not even worthy of you?"

Visakha: "Lalite! This ascetic is so hungry, that in the absence of any available fruits he has been induced to do this, in spite of the demerit of such an activity. Therefore, please show him where he can obtain some excellent fruits. Thus you will also obtain religious merit by rendering service in this way."

Lalita restrained her laughter as she said, "Visakhe! Do you think this ascetic is familiar with Manas Ganga?"

Visakha: "Since this ascetic has travelled far and wide, I can't see why he wouldn't have heard of the celebrated Manas Ganga!"

Lalita: "In the Northwest corner of Manas Ganga there is a lotus flower [Padma] in full bloom, and in the centre of that flower are two very enchanting and long tumbi (a long gourd) fruits. Just in the forefront you will also see two very large and sweet bimbi fruits." [Candrabali is always in the company of Padma.]

Visakha addressed me, "Goswamin! Please proceed there without delay, so that you can enjoy these excellent [anuttam- means excellent as well as inferior] fruits, just suitable for you. In this way you can renounce your craving for the wealth of this chaste girl, and thus preserve your religious principles and happiness as well."

After the laughter had subsided, I replied, "Lalite! This ascetic follows the ajacak britti, that is, he doesn't solicit anything from anyone. His hands are his eating plate and he will not be able to enjoy the tumbi gourds because they are a forbidden fruit. However, She who is visible here by Her radiant splendour, but who nevertheless continues to conceal Herself; this golden creeper carries on its bosom two most excellent, juicy, succulent and sweet fruits, endowed with the most superb shape and loveliness. Therefore, if this golden creeper will come forward of Her own volition and intimately extend an invitation to this ascetic, in Her own sweet speech, and serve him those fruits, placing them in his hands, then he will become most happy by enjoying them, and will thus bless Her with a benediction that Her fruits will prosper [unnati- improve, increase, rise, lift]."

Radha replied softly, "This licentious clown! This cunning cheat has probably come to know that I am present here and is bandying about simply to vex me. Therefore I should now enter deep within the kunj and remain hidden."

As Sri Radha was thinking in this way, I addressed Lalita, "Priyasakhi Lalite! She Who takes great pleasure wandering through this forest of Brindaban, this despondent jutheshwari, having made you the Queen-consort, now wishes to sit

together with you on the singhasan and watch Visakha and the other sakhis give a dance recital. Therefore please give them your permission to begin the dance."

Lalita stormed in anger, "Nandimukhi! Have you forcefully brought us here simply that this buffoon can entertain us with the wealth of his jokes (as payment), instead of paying us the revenue on our pearl fields?! Listen, let's leave this delaying tactic of joking behind us, and instead make the proper arrangement, that this ascetic, in the company of Subal, commit himself in writing to the payment of the land tariff. Then you may send us on our way home, without further delay!"

Nandimukhi replied, "What amount has been agreed upon by you, for the payment of this tax? That you should first inform us of."

Lalita: "The levy on grain fields is more than that on fields of greens (fodder); and the levy on cotton fields is more than that of grains. The assessment on land for dwellings (residential) is more than that of cotton, and the tax on lands used for growing pearls, owing to the fact that the pearls are themselves priceless objects, must necessarily be a few hundred, thousand billion times more. Therefore Subal should procure a transcendental rod to measure the supernatural boundary of these pearl fields, since it is stated in the scriptures that the abode of Brindaban is supremely extra-mundane (not of this world). [Therefore it requires a rod of similar nature to measure that which is immeasurable]. These measurements he can then write down in his notebook.

Nandimukhi: "What size should this measuring rod be?"

Lalita: "If I say, then who will have faith in that? Therefore it is better that the protectress of these fields, she who is educated in all the scriptures, namely Brindadebi, ascertain the proper measurement of such a rod."

Nandimukhi: "Very well. Brinde! You should arbitrate in this matter, by fixing the size of this measuring rod."

Brindadebi replied, "Dwelling lands, grain fields, pastures of grass, cotton fields and pearl fields are all measured, first beginning with the thumb, and then proceeding successively with all the five fingers. Then again, 'Scholars say that since pearl fields are so extraordinary and priceless, they are usually measured with the ring finger.'"

Nandimukhi said, "Between these two methods of measurement, which is the more applicable in this situation?"

Lalita: "Since only a small hand sickle may be used to plow the fields suitable for producing such invaluable crops, in this instance, measurement should be taken with the small finger."

Nandimukhi: "Lalite! Although this is applicable to be sure, still, as the maidservant of Bhagavati Purnamasi, I request you, that while looking us in the

face, myself and the Son of the King of Braja as well, you settle with the ring finger."

Lalita said, "Brinde! You are expert at writing and taking measurements! Therefore let's all go to the pearl fields and take their proper measurement, with the consent of Nandimukhi and Subal, of course."

Nandimukhi: "Kunnajutheshwari! (Despondent leader of the flock!) I would like to make one request."

Lalita: "If whatever you desire seems suitable, then it must certainly be fulfilled."

Nandimukhi: "This young visitor, after leaving the land of his home, has come here to our province to seek shelter of the Queen of Brindaban. Here he has cultivated the earth with great care and sufficiently increased your wealth. Now if you insist on this measurement business, then you will suffer great loss due to inattentive care of the crops and the expense of arranging meals for this period of time. Not only that, but this individual will still be unable to pay you the tariff if you engage him in the hard labour of all this measuring. Therefore you should reject this idea of measuring the fields. Instead, accept your portion of the harvest, and, in presenting to him his proper share, give him the encouragement he deserves."

Brinda inquired, "What then is to be our share?"

Nandimukhi: "Don't you know? As level (saman) as is this brilliant field, the two shares should also be (saman) equal, since this person has come here to farm from another village."

Ranganmala meekly offered, "He is not a farmer from another village. At present he resides here in this forest and cultivates this land for Sri Brindabaneshwari. Therefore he is entitled to one sixth of the harvest. Why should he receive an equal share?"

Visakha: "Ayi Mugdhe! (Oh enchanted one! or, Stupid!) What use is it to us to try to determine the division of shares by our own direction, when we have already received the written order of the Queen, that the revenue is to be paid in accordance with the size of the land? How will we be able to determine this in our own independent fashion?"

Thereupon Brinda, while looking towards Lalita and Visakha, showed Nandimukhi her ear-ring, glancing at her from the corner of her eyes.

Nandimukhi smiled as she moved slightly forward, indicating by some token gesture to Lalita and Visakha, that she had understood Brinda's hint about offering a bribe. As she approached me she said in a soft whisper, "He Mohan! This Lalita and Visakha are the chief executive ministers for the Queen of Brindaban. Therefore, if you give them some excellent bribes, they will immediately bring

about the accomplishment of that which is desired by you."

I joyfully replied, "Sakhi Nandimukhi! Secretly bring Lalita and Visakha to a solitary kunj without anyone else's knowledge, so that I can satisfy them by giving them their desired bribes."

I Here there is a pun: man can mean measurement, or also anger, thus: "If you insist on being angry, then you will suffer a great loss in enjoyment at the expense of your anger." Since kar means hand, as well as tax: "He will still be unable to put his hands on you, if you keep up this anger."

Nandimukhi: "Sundor! The other beautiful Braja gopis (Brajasundorigon) are inseparable and non-different from Lalita and Visakha. Therefore, give up your hesitation and publicly present your bribes to them, here itself."

I replied, "Without having attained my desired goal, how will I at first give anything away in charity? If I am disbelieved then I will place my bribe with you."

Nandimukhi shook her head as she said, "Na! Na!"

I said, "Ah! (Alas!) Since you are a brahmacarini, you may become contaminated by the touch of any worldly affairs. In that case, I should offer my bribe to the dear object of my affection [who I trust, and who trusts me], the best among chaste girls, Ranganmalika."

Nandimukhi: "He Rasiksekhora! (Oh topmost of the relishers (connoisseurs) of rasa!) First of all you should tell me what you are prepared to give for a bribe and in how much quantity. Whether or not Lalita and Visakha will be satisfied with that, I will have to determine beforehand."

I replied, "Very well. Please hear me. I am the King of Brindaban. Now this Brinda has abandoned her service as custodian of my forest of Brindaban, and out of greed for wealth, devoted herself to my Queen, Sri Radharani. Therefore, my first bribe will be to bring this writer (kayastha) Brinda under my control."

Nandimukhi: "Excellent!"

I continued, "The locket that was made by the primal preceptor of the art of fashioning enchanting dresses and decorations, Gandharva [Sri Radha], which She placed on the sky of my heart [my chest] at the end of that night, overwhelmed as She was by profound feelings of passionate affection, this most exceptional and unparalleled king of all lockets, in the shape of a half-moon, I will now place around the neck of Lalita, with my own hand. Then, more refulgent than my Kaustubha mani, and on an equal par with that locket, is my cumbakmani (magnetic jewel), which, as a token of our mutually sincere affection, expressed so eagerly and with great curiosity that day at the feet of the Bakul trees, I had exchanged with Gandharva for Her own cumbak maharatna (magnetic gem), more valuable than my own, itself the personified form of the condensed cream

produced from churning the ocean of unprecedented mellows, though it be Her unrivalled favourite, I will also give to Lalita, that she might use it to adorn her lovely ear."

As I glanced repeatedly at the charming face of Visakha, I continued with a smile, "Their priyasakhi Gandharva, continuously filled with the most devoted attachment, constructed with Her own hands the most exquisite necklace, which She presented to me with great resource, in the [Kuranga] courtyard near Her own kund (RadhaKund). With this very necklace, I wish to decorate the constellation of the sky of my heart, Visakha, in the hope of pleasing her."

1 Kayastha indicates a particular caste, but can also mean, situated on the body, thus: "My first bribe will be to bring this Brinda under my control and situate her on my body."

Having heard all of this, Sri Radha spoke to me from within Her mind, "Alikrajendra! (False king!) Tistha! Tistha! (Wait! Stop!)"

Chastising me with words such as this She began to beat me with the toy lotus that She held in Her hand [still within Her mind].

Lalita said, "Having drunk the poison of Padma's lips you now have become mad! Get thee hence! Get thee hence!"

Visakha: "Arja vidushak prabor Madhumangal! (Oh best of the jesters!) Is your dear friend here your guru, or are you his guru? We are all very curious about this."

Lalita: "Visakhe! I can tell you. Just hear me. In a deceitful drama, the dancer of the name, Kusum sor (flower arrow- puspaban), has, as his jester, he who is called Suci (Sringar ras- the mellow of conjugal love). This jester has very kindly bestowed his compassion on this cunning cheat [Krsna], by accepting him as his disciple. Madhumangal however, is the celebrated disciple of the primal preceptor of all jesters, Bhojan lampat (lascivious eater) by name, who comes from a different sampradaya."

Visakha: "Lalite! Therefore I should like to feed this brahmana some sweet-rice."

Lalita: "He is very competent and learned in all the six branches of Vedic wisdom including practice, ceremonial rites and grammar; thus he is a Mahabrahman (great brahmana).¹ Therefore how can he eat food cooked by us simple cowherds, who are inferior to brahmanas?"

Visakha replied, "In that case, your desire will have to be accomplished by those two super excellent dvijas (brahmanas), Malli and Bhringi.²

Madhumangal started to tremble with anger as he replied to their sarcastic remarks, "Ore akathya bhashini! (Soho! O thou of filthy and abusive language!)

Garbita gowalini! (Puffed-up milkmaid!) Your derisive mockery, unworthy of my audition, is like an acutely pungent, bitter and salty, stale roti (piece of bread; chapati), half-cooked on the inside and burnt on the outside, intended to offend my agreeable ears. What should I say in return? All I have to say is that I am not going to ever even touch the ground which is so much as near the place where the shadow has fallen from such buffoons as you cowherd girls. Rather, tomorrow morning I will go to pay a visit to the wives of the jaggik brahmanas (brahmanas engaged in sacrifice), who are members of my own caste. There, immediately upon my arrival, they will very respectfully bathe my feet and then dress me with fine, silken garments. After giving me a nice sweet sarbat scented with camphor, they will serve me with the finest sweet-rice, ginger with sea salt and lemon, and a big pile of the most fragrant sali

1 A pun here can also mean- fallen brahmana.

2 Since Malli and Bhiringi, Sri Radha's ban sakhis (forest friends), are members of the aboriginal caste, the meaning of paramottam dvija must be taken as, 'those who have very pretty rows of teeth.'] They can cook for him and then very reverently serve him those foodstuffs."

rice, flavoured with sufficient ghee and surrounded by a vast variety of vegetable preparations. Then will come puffy balls of sugar (feni batasha), puddings and cakes made with gur, jilepi, laddu, condensed milk, sweet yoghurt, fried cakes and drinks made with buttermilk, all served with such loving attention, that when I finally make it outside to the path, I will collapse in the shade of the first big tree I see. After a nice little nap there I will come home and go back to sleep until 8 o'clock."

During a lull in the tumultuous laughter that followed I said, "Nandimukhi! The rustic inhabitants of a tiny village, when engaged in a dispute with some opposing party over land boundaries, take the help of an arbiter to reach some compromise, and this is of course all very equitable and conformable to the principles of justice, etc. However, kings acquire territory by the strength of their arms. Therefore, what is the use of following just and equitable principles as regards this kingdom of Brindaban? Rather, anyone desirous of this kingdom will now have to fight me. Whoever wins the battle; well then, Brindaban will be theirs."

Saying thusly, I very arrogantly advanced forward, ready to do battle. At this the Brajasundorigon became a bit frightened and began to move hither and thither, preparing to flee, but all the while maintaining an air of seeming indifference.

At this point Nandimukhi addressed me, "Bir! (Oh Hero!) It would be terribly unfair of you to try to forcibly defeat these illustrious and wanton wives of the cowherds (gop badhu), now, and in my presence.1 Now just listen to what I am saying and try to understand; and having done so, keep your distance!"

Then she addressed Lalita, "Just now this valiant champion of the forest is feeling very powerful in this solitary and lonely place, whereas your bodies are as soft and

delicate as a Sirish flower. In light of the present time, circumstances and your strength (desh, kal & bal), I think it would be wise to abandon this dispute."

Candramukhi said, "He Mugdhagon! (Oh bewildered ones!) Nandimukhi is correct, and for this reason, namely, that we are members of the fairer sex and of soft and tender limbs. In contrast, this individual is a solitary forest dweller and therefore very agile, moreover impulsive. Now, in the presence of our priyasakhi Srimati Radharani, he does become very docile (overwhelmed with fear), but our Empress is not here now. Meanwhile, the scurrilous Abhimanyu is unaware of these tidings and owing to that is away in a distant place with the other colonels. While we are engaged with our domestic quarrel (civil war), in this dreadful place, any number of wicked thieves might come here from any direction and quickly run off with all our pearls. In that case we would suffer heavy loss, whereas he has only his one-sixth part share to worry about. If you all approve, it would probably be best, if, for the time being, we calmly and with serene and tranquil appearance abandon discussions of the kingdom. Instead, we should retrieve all our pearls by paying even slightly more than the going price, if necessary. Better to save ourselves and our good name by safely returning home, than to suffer the calumny that would come upon us if we were so much as touched by this pick-pocket, who swoops upon his unsuspecting prey like a hawk. Then, when the Queen of Brindaban (Radharani) subsequently hears the narration of these events from us, She will, no doubt, after having first satisfied our

1The word for defeat can also mean, 'to enjoy with'.

guardians by returning to them all of the missing pearls, fly to this spot in a great rage. Rather than engage in battle Herself directly, She will stand at some distance, having adopted a pose of false pride, and from there release with Her arched eyebrows, like two powerful bows, a volley of deadly, sharpened arrows, issuing forth with tremendous velocity from the corners of Her restless eyes, Her lotus face having thus gradually assumed such a fierce visage [i.e. fearless anger-Abhimanyu]. Then, this person will feel that Abhimanyu, the Horrible, has himself arrived, accompanied by a vast battalion.1 Then, right in the middle of this forest, this respected and courageous hero will begin to so tremble in fear, that his cries of distress, like the trumpeting of an elephant, will appear as though fashioned from rubies, and the lovely necklace made of cintamani gems, in the form of obsequious and sycophantic flattery, he will then remove from his own neck to offer as a present to Sri Radharani, as he comes near Her feet, seeking shelter there. Placing his offerings there, the utterances of his heart, choked with emotion, will then act like fire on the butter-soft heart of Sri Radha, Who under the influence of Her own unlimited compassion, will become favourable towards him once again. With the javak (red dye) from Her lotus feet, like a softened dawn-coloured gem, he will then fashion an ornament for his head. And finally, surrendering all of the remaining pearls produced in this kingdom, he will also become Her attendant companion."

I thrilled with delight to hear this wonderful description of such a lovely scene, and continued laughing as I looked askance towards the kunj where Radha was

seated.

Nandimukhi laughed, "He Gokul Prabir! (Oh brave hero of Gokul!) This Empress of Brindaban, Sri Radha, an experienced fighter in Cupid's combats, is just the person to do battle with you in the War of Crooked Arrows [Cupid's arrows are crooked, or fired at oblique angles]. To see your phalanxes arrayed against Hers is truly the most beautiful sight. However, Lalita and these other gopis are extremely tender and soft. Therefore, without their Empress to lead them, how will Her subjects conduct themselves in such wanton war with you? Therefore abandon this baseless dispute, and at present deal with the matter of determining the respective prices to be paid for these pearls, for all of those present here now. Later on, Bhagavati Purnamasi debi will decide the case concerning the kingdom."

Then Madhumangal, having overheard some of the prevaricating words exchanged amongst the proud Brajasundorigon, started to shout, "Jita! Jita! (Defeated! Defeated!)" as he cupped his left hand to his mouth but continued to shout, thus producing a sound like the beating of a kettledrum, while he danced around in great ecstasy.

Brindadebi addressed him, "Bho natprabor Madhumangala! (Hallo you great dancer!) If our Empress Sri Radharani were to arrive here just now, then for Her entertainment, Her dear friend (namely you) would be beating his drum to a different tune; such as, "Ha! Ha! (Alas! Alas!)"

"Having learned your lesson you can then become six-footed (a bumblebee) {the better to dance with!}), and fly away to find your female bumblebee friend so that you can have a wild dance with her, much more ecstatic than the one you are having here now. Then, with your two-footed friend here, you can go off to join the ranks of the followers of Lord Siva, hiding in a cave within a deep, dark forest somewhere. This would then be the success of our eyes."

At this I laughed quite loudly as I said, "Nandimukhi! This Candramukhi is seriously devoted to trying to harmonise the situation here, very much unlike Lalita and her friends who are happy to escalate the points of contention. Therefore, I would be most pleased to bestow upon her some pearls, in lieu of any charge. However, since she is the crest jewel amongst counsellors, learned in a superfluity of mantras, she should, either tomorrow or the next day, come to a secluded and purified place, where, after I have purified myself by the requisite ablutions, she should then initiate me in the mantras from the great acarja, Kantadarpa.¹ Though I am just a simple cowherd boy of Brindaban, I will very swiftly thus attain beauty surpassing even that of the demigods."²

Candramukhi gave me a crooked stare as she said, "How astonishing! Even someone who gives you good counsel, your well-wisher, even me you are prepared to corrupt. I am not your counsellor. [I am not the preceptor to instruct you in mantras.] You can engage Kancanlata, who is very clever in the use and knowledge of mantras, as your preceptor (acarja)."

I replied, "Kancanlate! Seeing your expertise, the bumblebee of my mind has become very attached to you and possessed of great eagerness. If, in front of all these smiling faces gathered here, you were to affectionately place that gorgeous, nay, worshipful (one-stringed) necklace that goes round your neck, upon my most eager and impatient chest, then I will, without fail, bestow upon you all of the pearls that you most desire, for free. [Another meaning is: "If you were to very affectionately place the beautiful Radhika, Who happens to be in the vicinity, upon my eager chest, here in front of these smiling gopis, who are encircling us like a very lovely one-stringed necklace, then,] I will also decorate you, from your neck down to your navel, with three enchanting jewelled necklaces in the form of my embraces."

Having said this much, I began to pursue Kancanlata, who shot me a crooked, side-long glance accompanied by a menacing shout, as she moved away. Radha laughed, but also felt awed, in apprehension of Her own position.

Then Visakha snapped her fingers. Putting Nandimukhi in front, she signalled to her with her eyes, indicating Ranganmalika and Tulasi.

1 lit. aesthetic pride; proud paramour, etc.; This is most probably one of the many names of Cupid.

2 suradhika Sri- beauty greater than that of the demigods; can also mean, "the virtuous and beautiful Radhika.

Nandimukhi smiled, "He Mohan! This Ranganmalika and Tulasi are very devoted to the lotus feet of Sri Radha, and are thus very dear to Her. In fact, they cannot remain anywhere for hardly a moment without Her. Therefore, promptly determine the price for their [Ranganmalika and Tulasi's] pearls, and send them off to Her."

Feeling extremely delighted, I laughed as I replied, "Nandimukhi! When I am in a state of total bewilderment, from the combined effect of Ranganmalika's unprecedented, restless glance, mixed with a little black pepper; and from drinking the flower nectar of her tender words, never before heard, which emanate from her smiling lips like camphor; then, this Ranganmalika, overwhelmed with affection, should make me happy, by placing the two buds of her breasts on my chest and drinking the nectar of my lips, the veritable essence of my life."

As everyone laughed Ranganmalika and Tulasi looked down at the ground and went and hid behind Visakha.

Nandimukhi said, "Oh you who enjoys this playful pastime of carrying on commerce in pearl fruits! Why is it that you are so inattentive to ascertaining the price for the pearls of Jutheshwari Radha and Visakha?"

I replied, "If this Jutheshwari comes here personally and inquires from me the price for Her pearls, then certainly I will determine a price. Otherwise, if She is not present, then why should I?!"

Nandimukhi: "Bir! In Her absence first tell me, so that after hearing from me She can begin to collect those goods."

I said, "Owing to the fact that Radha and Visakha are so intimate, so alike and inseparable, they are extremely dear to me. Therefore, the small price that I am asking I request you to listen to carefully-

Around the middle of my back, more beautiful than a Tamal tree, the two soft, golden creepers entwine themselves, the right arm of Gandharvika and the left arm of Visakha. I will then place my two long arms, wanton with joy and anointed with the most fragrant saffron (kunkum) and sandalwood, around their soft, and modestly inclined, two shoulders. Then, as we stroll through the forest, perceiving it's sweetness scented with the intoxicating redolence of a myriad of flowers, the two of them, their lovely moon-like faces like two artistic dancers, thrill with eager delight as they mutually exchange glances, noting the matchless ornaments of loving emotion that now decorate one another. May they increase my ecstasy by sometimes, simultaneously, or sometimes separately, exhibiting their prowess in dancing, on the stage of my cheeks. [May they also sometimes glance at me with their dancing faces and decorate my cheeks with the nectar of their lips (kiss them).] In the courtyard of the house called Kuranga, on the banks of Radha Kund, under the Bakul trees dripping with flower nectar, and surrounded by busy bumblebees buzzing about, is a golden dais surrounded by an enchanting arrangement of Mallika flowers. Thereupon, I will sit down on a heavenly soft bed, with my left elbow resting on a moon-white pillow made from golden jasmine flowers, and my two legs bent at the knees. The shelter of the bee of my mind, (the flower) Visakha, having become slightly intoxicated by drinking the honey-sweet nectar of her priyasakhi Sri Radha's love, sees that the kunkum decorating the golden caskets of her friend has become slightly moistened, so, taking that liquid ambrosia and mixing it with some of the sweetly scented saffron paste from her own round breasts, she very gently and slowly begins to smear that upon my chest, that is by now thrilling with rapture. The Sarika (mynah bird) in the cage of my ribs (my heart), Sri Radhika, sometimes from Her own breasts, and sometimes from Visakha's, takes the fresh musk therefrom, and with the end of a Campak flower blossom, draws pictures of Capricorns and leafy creepers with small flower blossoms on my chest, with it's hairs standing on end. May my body, mind and words, struck with astonishment, be perfumed by the lovely fragrance of their unequalled, unrivalled, and intimate friendship."

Thereupon, Radha and Visakha, their bodies simultaneously thrilling with the ecstasy of affectionate attachment, observed one another with their four eyes and felt bashful.

Visakha said, "He Lalite! This lascivious debauch has written a play called Asombhab Manorath (Impossible Desire) and wants that we (Radha and myself)

should accept the parts of two lewd dancers who will act according to his directions. Only that he might be entertained by such a drama, has Miss Correct (Nandimukhi) here, been induced to keep us in this solitary forest, ostensibly for the purpose of presenting us with our pearls, but in actuality, simply to harass us that we might be cast in the role of his courtesans. Therefore, let those who enjoy such performances sit down here to watch this drama, performed by dancers learned in all the sixty-four arts, so that the two families (father's and husband's family) of such a chaste girl, the pride of a respectable family, can easily attain further eminence. I for one however, am going home!"

Nandimukhi said, "Sakhi Visakhe! Why do you allow yourself to become so distressed and vexed by a few wanton words uttered in jest by this mischievous person? If you just stay here a few more moments you will without a doubt receive your pearls."

Having dissuaded Visakha from going home, Nandimukhi came to me and said, "He durlil Gopajubaraj! (Oh recalcitrant prince of the cowherds!) Taking your conversation to be the most derisive mockery, Visakha and the other Brajasundorigon are continually blaming me. Now I think you should kindly conclude your mirthful sports and take up the real business at hand, namely, real business (commerce and trade). Just accept some gold in exchange for the pearls, and in this way, without further delay, bring delight to the minds of the soldiers of your dearest, Gandharva."

I replied, "He Nandimukhi! Even though Sri Radha is always very severe with me, my naturally affectionate heart, though maimed by Her cruel behaviour, upon the mere mention of Her name, remains in a state of anxious curiosity about anything even slightly related to Her. So how does it benefit me to behave with Her very dear friends in a harsh fashion? Whatever quantity of the specified value that can be brought here by them within the next two days; that much wealth of gold, silver, ornaments made of the same, colourful pigments, joking, fun, dancing and acting, juice, savoury flavours, sentiments, emotions, and loveable cows [suvarnalankaranadiraupyadirangadirasadi priyagavadikam dhanam] that are deposited with me as collateral; that same quantity of pearls they may all accept from me."

I then remained silent, but after further considering the matter, I continued, "Nandimukhi! You know that I am always engaged in my most favourite pastime of herding my cows from forest to forest. Therefore, where will I keep so much gold and such, I do not know. I don't really find anyone that I can trust sufficiently, to keep so much gold for me. I am also especially afraid of the embarrassment and infamy involved with keeping the possessions of other ladies [girls outside of one's own family]. Therefore I have to honestly say that I don't see how this exchange can be accomplished, in the absence of some other form of prompt payment."

Nandimukhi: "Mohan! Where is such extraordinary wealth to be found?! I have neither heard nor seen."

I replied, "Vidagdhe Nandimukhi! (Intelligent Nandimukhi!) Throughout this universe, what will you see or hear concerning wonderfully uncommon pearls like this, produced from the earth? Thus the price for such remarkable goods should also be something extraordinarily unprecedented. Specifically, I am not a pearl salesman. I have become encouraged to take up this line simply upon the order of Bhagavati Purnamasipad, and also, as a result of your zealous eagerness. Therefore, if you [plural- meaning all of you here] so desire, once we have settled on a price, that may be paid and then all of these gopis can take their pearls. Otherwise, let everyone go home. Please note! Almost two prahars have passed now [It is almost noon]. I will have to take my adorable cows to Gobardhan very soon."

Nandimukhi appeared visibly distressed to hear this as she approached Lalita and spoke to her softly, "Sakhi Lalite! Sakhi Visakhe! Ayi priyasakhigon! This impulsive and inconsiderate lecher, without receiving the cherished objects of his desire, will not part with any of these pearls. This I have ascertained after making repeated requests to him. Since it has already been decided that these pearls must be retrieved by any means possible, I advise that we adopt the following stratagem-

First, make him satisfied by consenting to pay the price which he has proffered, and then, after receiving the pearls, everyone can beat a hasty retreat homeward bound! Who will accept his price; and who will pay his price?!"

Lalita: "Adbhut tapassini! (What a strange ascetic you are!) Tistha! Tistha! (Just hold on a second here!)"

Having chastised Nandimukhi in this way, Lalita laughed as she addressed me, "He Dhir! (Oh most patient one!) Lalit jubaraj! (Most elegant prince!) These wonderful [apurbo] fields of Brindaban; these uncommon [apurbo] pearl seeds; these extraordinary [apurbo] pearls; this most remarkable [apurbo] pearl merchant; and this unprecedented [apurbo] price that he asks are all from the realm of strange wonder; yet we are terribly common; not [apurbo] anything out of the ordinary. Therefore, how will we ever be able to pay this peculiar price? However, this Nandimukhi is uncommonly affectionate towards us, and is also non-different from us. Now since you are an exceptional brahmacari, and she is likewise an extraordinary brahmacarini, by the power of her penance she will present you with your chosen price, and having thus satisfied you, she will accept the pearls in exchange. We however, are all going home!"

With such loving malice these Brajasundorigon, possessed of diverse emotional sentiments, seemed to make the air tremble with enraptured exultation, as they bent their heads to the side, preparing to make their exit. After collecting Sri Radha from the kunj and placing Her in the forefront, She whose transcendental form was also exhibiting a variety of ecstatic emotions, they cast their glances askance at me, smiling and tittering all the while, as they proceeded towards a temple in the midst of a most pleasant grove of Bakul trees, on the banks of Sri Radha Kund.

Thereupon, I very happily gathered up all of those pretty pearls, and taking the very best ones, fashioned with the artistic skill of my own hands, a variety of exquisite ornaments and jewellery for the lovely limbs of Sri Radha. These I placed in a golden box which was then decorated on top by the auspicious letters of Her name. The same I did for Lalita, Visakha and the other sakhis, each with their name on the outside of their respective boxes. Many unstrung pearls of the most excellent quality I then dispatched to the kunj mandir, by the side of Radha Kund, with Nandimukhi, Madhumangal, Subal, and also Ujjwal, Basanta, Kokil and the other narmasakhas, who had just arrived on the scene.

These were very jubilantly received by the smiling Radha, Lalita, Visakha and the other sakhis, all laughing in ecstasy to celebrate the joyous occasion. Madhumangal was then very affectionately served with a large quantity of delicious cooked food and a packet of tambul, while Subal and the others were satisfied with presents of scents, sandalwood and tambul, as tokens of the sakhis' loving affection. Fresh flower garlands prepared by their own hands from a variety of golden jasmine flowers, so sweetly scented and soft to the touch, the colour of the early morning dawn, plus packets of tambul scented with camphor, were also sent along to be given to me. Under the influence of their love, I felt overjoyed as I decorated myself with those flower garlands, and enjoyed the tambul. Then, in the company of my friends I set off for Gobardhan, to pasture my cows.

Lalita then unfastened the little golden chest with Radha's name on it, and delightfully decorated the transcendental form of Sri Radha, Who was also overjoyed, with those beautiful pearl ornaments. Thereafter, Lalita, Visakha and the other sakhis all decorated one another with the jewellery that I had made for them.

Later, when they all arrived at their respective homes, they presented this abundance of exquisite ornaments to their husbands and elders, thus satisfying them to their heart's content. Then they returned to Radha Kund to meet their Priyasakhi, with Whom they passed the afternoon in the amusing diversion of remembering all the sweet words I had spoken to them in jest.

Satyabhama inquired, "He Gokul vilasaram matta kokil! (Oh cuckoo of Gokul, mad with delight while sporting in your pleasure garden!) Then? Then?!"

Krsna replied, "Priye! Thus far have you heard the pleasure pastimes of Gokul. In the future you will also, no doubt, be able to hear more. Therefore, what is the necessity of my narrating anything further just now?"

So saying, Sri Krsna, in having uncovered the sweet merriment of this subject matter, became very impatient due to eager perplexity and began to lament as follows-

"She Who is the captivating golden necklace, set with sparkling jewels, that goes round my neck; my two glittering ear-rings; and Who is the veritable form of the

sandalwood and saffron smeared on my body. Hai! (Oh my! Alas!) When will Sarvadkhika Sri Radhika (She Who surpasses all others), by the strength of my insignificant pious merit, be visible before me once again?!"

After remaining silent for some time, He again fervently cried out, "Aha! She Who is the Campak flower garland resting on my chest; Who moistens my lotus eyes with ambrosia; Whose bodily beauty is the one and only place of my pleasure pastimes; the Form of my most cherished and wished-for wealth; the Tender Creeper upon which the bird of my life [my heart] is perched; and the only Medicine to sustain my existence. Hai! Hai! (Oh my! Oh my!) How many days, before I again find Her?!"

Lamenting in this way with tears streaming from His eyes, Sri Krsna became completely overwhelmed while remembering His Brindaban pastimes, and fell down on the earth. As the weeping Madhumangal came to His rescue, He embraced him and again called out, "PranBallabhe! [Satyabhama!] You please become Sri Radha, the only medicine that can save me now!" His body trembling and His voice faltering, He embraced Satyabhama while His chest repeatedly heaved with loud, long and hot sighs.

Satyabhama who was herself drenched with tears, her bodily hairs standing on end, very reverently began to fan Him with the end of her sari until He became quieted.

Having heard the narration of this story from the disciple of Paurnameji debi, Samanjasa by name, Lakkanna, her own bodily hairs standing on end, very eagerly yet sorrowfully inquired, "Sakhi Samanjase! Then? Then?!"

Samanjasa replied, "After remaining respectfully quiet for sometime, Satyabhama finally said,-

"He Pranath! Oh You Who are the one and only life of the residents of Braja (Brajon)! All glories to You! All glories to You! [Joy hauk! Joy hauk!] Please be patient! Be comforted."

Calling to Him in this way, she continued to quietly fan Him while gently stroking His body. Finally, she requested Him that they proceed to Gokul, and in this way gradually brought her Pranath back, not only to consciousness, but to a happy frame of mind.

Satyabhama considered the ocean of nectar of her own unlimited happiness, and her own offspring and family to be no more than blades of grass, thus she could very easily disregard these things, keeping them at some distance. She considered her only and continuous desire to be [merged with] non-different from [even a drop of] the happiness of Sri Krsna. She considered the lotus feet of Sri Krsna to be her only refuge. [Thinking that her Pranath would regain His composure, after going to Braja and having darshan of Srimati Radhika, she therefore tried to instigate Him to go there.] She sent a sakhi to call Sriyukta Uddhab Mahasoy.

Upon arrival, Uddhab ascertained that on the day after tomorrow [Thursday], the day of Brihaspati (guru of the demigods), the tenth day of the bright fortnight, under the presence of the constellation Dhanistha, at noon, the abhijit muhurta, endowed with specific qualities and precipitating auspiciousness, was the most favourable time for Sri Krsna to depart for Gokul.

Sri Sriman Brajajubaraj Sri Krsna, on that day at the appointed time, after completing a repast of yoghurt rice and other items suitable for consumption before making a journey, to the accompaniment of, and preceded by panegyric hymns and eulogies, invoking auspiciousness and making the way safe and free from impediments from any direction, soliciting the decrees of fate that the accomplishment of their entrance into Gokul would bring fame and good fortune on the families of all those concerned, prepared to set out for His homeland. Though His elder brother, pujyapad Srimadagraja Mahanubhab, Sri Balaram, was very anxious to accompany them to Braja, he was humbly entreated to remain as the guardian of Dwarakapuri. Then, taking Bhagavati Purnamasi in the front, and with Uddhab, Iswari Rohini, and he who is endowed with all auspiciousness, Madhumangal, they all made a quick departure, carried swiftly away by the handsome chariot named, Nandighosh. As they reached the outer boundaries of Sri Gokul it was decided, with the assent of all those present, that they should don their favourite and eternally desired apparel, appropriate to their station as cowherds [gop jati], and in this way make a colourful and exultant entrance into their beautiful village.

Having drunk with her two ears the incomparable nectar of this news, distributed so magnanimously by Samanjasa, the most fortunate and resplendent Lakkanna, comparable to the crest jewel of the manjaris, Satyabhama herself, and endowed with hundreds and thousands of excellent qualities, the sum total of all the wonderful qualities of all the Queens in Dwaraka, finding herself drowning in an ocean of ecstasy, exclaimed with fervour, "Sakhi Samanjase! Having heard this most delicious discourse I have become excessively anxious. Therefore, my only wish is that a hint of that indescribably sweet fragrance, the intimacy that Sri Radha shared with Sri Jadabendra that day when she came to meet Him in the pasture lands of Brajaraj Nanda, might be wafted my way, thus perfuming my own existence."

Samanjasa replied, "Sakhi Lakkanne! In all ways your desire will be fulfilled; even to excess!"

With bunches of straw in my teeth I pray again and again that I might repeatedly take birth as a particle of dust at the lotus feet (Sri Padapadma) of Srila Rupa Goswami. I have been incited and excited by his nectarean direction, to prepare this bouquet of flowers called Mukta Carit. Only by his teaching has this become possible.

My living body is known as Jiva [I live through his (Jiva Goswami's) body, whereas my own is already dead]. His eyes, like greedy bumblebees, are always eager to find

the Madhabi creeper of Krsna's pastimes, and it is the fragrant pollen he has left here that decorates and perfumes this bouquet [Mukta Carit].

By this bouquet of flowers [Mukta Carit] that has somehow or other been astonishingly arranged by me, may the followers of Sri Rupa Goswami decorate their ears, and in so doing, shower some of their affection on me.

Life after life, may I obtain here in Braja, the association of Krsna das Kabiraj, on the strength of which I was able to make known this most wonderful story about a superior type of pearl.

Thus ends the Mukta Caritram by Sripad Raghunath das Goswami