

Krishna Balarama Citra-kavya

by Bhakta Demian

I had been wondering what I could give to Krishna and Balarama in Their 40th anniversary. It is not exactly easy to choose a gift for a couple of boys Who own all of the universes with everything inside, including ourselves, especially if we have the ambition of giving Them something that They don't have. After some deliberation, I realized that there is indeed something They don't have: I never wrote any verses glorifying Them. In the morning, I went to the temple and prayed, "Whatever I can offer You is just like worshipping the Ganges with Ganges water, so if You wish me to write anything, please give me inspiration." In the afternoon, I had a look at some books of Sanskrit poetry to decide which genre to choose. Among dozens of different *Citra-kavyas*, poems in the form of pictures, it was not difficult to select one for Balarama: *Hala-bandha*, the plough formation! I quickly looked at some examples and they seemed quite simple, so I just moved on to find one for Krishna. Despite the great variety of pictures, none of them appealed to me. Moreover, it should be something that He likes. If I am going to give Balarama a plough, it makes sense to give Krishna a flute. I looked far and wide for an instance of a *citra-kavya* in the form of flute. Fruitless. A Google search also resulted in zero entries. Well, if I intended to do something original, this seemed to be the opportunity. After thinking a bit about how a *murali-bandha* (flute formation) should be, it became apparent why it was not done before: all *citra-kavyas* have pictures with a variety of shapes which allow the composition to be very intricate with many turns and crossings, while a flute is simply too straight. Maybe a good contrast with Krishna. Anyway, I had to conceive a new set of rules to write a poem in the form of flute in such a way that the features expected in a *citra-kavya* would also be present.

Since a flute is straight like a line, it appeared to be a good idea to have a verse which could be read the same forwards and backwards. Yet merely this wouldn't suffice, for there is already such kind of poems, which are called *anuloma-pratiloma*. To better represent a flute, I decided that eight notes (which in Sanskrit are called sa-ri-ga-ma-pa-dha-ni) should be used as in an ascending scale when read forwards, and as in a descending scale when read backwards. After drawing a diagram with sixteen notes evenly spaced and seeing the sixteen empty spaces to write a thirty two syllable verse, I was puzzled and wondered if this would be feasible. In the evening, I went again to see Krishna and Balarama, "Thanks for the idea. It was really great. Now, I am clueless about how to finish it, so please help me in that." At night, I spent some time analyzing the diagram, but I couldn't make a single word fit anywhere. In the morning, I went to the temple again, but this time I thought better to address the matter to Srimati Radharani, "Radhe, I would like to give some nice verses to Your beloved Krishna and Dauji, and you are the best person who could help. Even Sarasvati emanates from a mere particle of your splendor, so please let me find the right words." It took a few hours of work, but by the evening it was ready.

Murali-bandha



sa-vari-rbhu-ga-ksama-sa

he pava-dhama nir-vasa |

sa-vanir ma-dhava-pa he

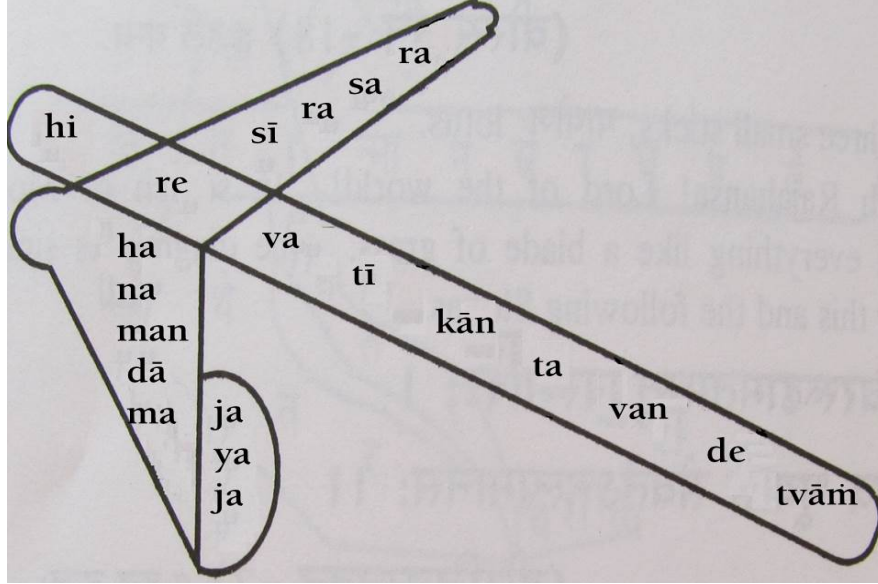
sam akṣa-ga-bhur ir vasa ||

sa – with; vari – giver of gifts; rbhu – demigods; ga – planets; ksama – favorable; sa –happiness; he – O; pava – purification; dhama – O Krishna, Who is beautiful like the moon; nis – the entirety; vasa – resting place; sa – with; vanih – wish; ma – time; dhava – master; pa – protector; he – O; sam – happily; aksha-ga – going before the eyes; bhu – being; ih – Cupid; vasa – keep on dwelling.

“O Krishna, sanctifier of the world! You are always favorable to the inhabitants of all the planets of the universe, including the demigods, who are able to give all sorts of material favors, and You bring happiness to everyone. O Lord of time, protector of the devotees! The whole existence rests within You, the Cupid of Vrindavana. Please remain dwelling happily here, being present before our eyes according to Your own will.”

Balarama’s plough was still to be composed. Somehow I was thinking that it would be a way easier and faster, but after a better look at some examples and the rules, I was a bit scared. In the next day, despite of several hours of struggle, I couldn’t get anything substantial. Several times I had a brilliant line in mind, but it wouldn’t fit the meter, and I had to start over again. In the evening, I told Balaramaji, “I know I am at fault for taking for granted that it would be easy to give you a gift, so please don’t baffle my wish.” In the next morning it was ready. The rules are as follows. It should start with three syllables which can be read the same forwards and backwards, followed by other five syllables which are also read in the same way. After this there must be one syllable which will be shared in three places, and then the verse should end with four syllables to be read the same forwards and backwards.

Hala-bandha



jayaja-hana mandama

madaman ahar ehi re |

revati-kanta vande tvam

sira-sara rasa-rasi ||

jayaja – Yamaraja, the son of the sun god, death personified; hana – annihilator; manda – with a pot, ama – going around; madaman – intoxicated; ahar – every day; ehi – appear; re – O; revati-kanta – beloved of Revati; vande – I worship; tvam – You; sira – with a plough; sara – moving around; rasa-rasi – enjoyer of rasa.

“O beloved of Revati, I worship You! You move around intoxicated carrying a plough and a pot of honey, but you are the annihilator of death and the enjoyer of rasa. Please appear to us every day of our lives.”