

# Śrī Puruṣottama-māsa-mahātmya

## THE GLORIES OF ŚRĪ PURUṢOTTAMA MONTH

By Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura



### TWO DIVISIONS OF ŚĀSTRA—SMĀRTA AND PARAMĀRTHA

The Vedic *ārya-sāstras* are divided into two sections—*smārta* (literature based on *smṛti*) and *paramārtha* (transcendental literature based on *śruti*). Those who are eligible (*adhikāri*) for the *smārta* section do not have any natural inclination or taste for the *paramārtha-sāstras*. The thoughts, principles, activities and life goal of every human is constituted according to his respective *ruci* (inclination). Generally, *smārtas* accept those scriptures which are in accordance with their respective *ruci*. Having greater *adhikāra* for *smārta-sāstra*, they do not demonstrate much regard for *paramārthika-sāstra*. Providence is the agent behind the creation of these two divisions. Therefore, undoubtedly the maintainer of the world must have a hidden purpose in having made such an arrangement.

As far as I understand, the purpose is that the *jīvas* sequentially make progress in their level of consciousness by remaining steadfast in their respective *adhikāra*. By deviating from one's *adhikāra*, one falls down. According to one's activities, a person attains

two types of *adhikāra*—*karmādhikāra* and *bhakti-adhikāra*. As long as one maintains his *karmādhikāra*, he derives benefit from the path shown by the *smārta* section. When he enters *bhakti-adhikāra*, by transgressing the *karmādhikāra*, then he develops a natural *ruci* (inclination) for the *paramārthika*, or transcendental, path. Therefore, providence has made these two divisions of *sāstra*: *smārta* and *paramārtha*.

THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF SMĀRTA ŚĀSTRA ARE COMMITTED TO KARMA

The *smārta sāstra* has made various types of rules and regulations in order to help one attain *niṣṭhā*, steadfastness, in *karmādhikāra*. In many instances, it even demonstrates indifference towards *paramārtha sāstra* to make people attain specific *niṣṭhā* in such rules and regulations. In reality, although *sāstra* is one, it manifests in two ways for the people. If the *jīva* gives up *adhikāra-niṣṭhā*, he can never attain auspiciousness. For this reason, the *sāstras* have been divided into two: *smārta* and *paramārtha*.

ADHIMĀSA (EXTRA MONTH), ALSO CALLED MALA MĀSA (IMPURE MONTH), IS DEVOID OF ALL AUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

By dividing the whole year in twelve parts, the *smārta-sāstras* have ascertained the auspicious, or religious, activities for these twelve months. All the *karma*, religious activities which are part of the *varṇāśrama* system when allotted to the twelve months, leave the extra month (*adhimāsa*) devoid of any such activity. There is no religious performance in *adhimāsa*. In order to keep lunar months and solar months in tally, one month has to be excluded every 32 months. The name of that month is *adhimāsa* (extra month).<sup>2</sup> *Smārtas* have discarded this extra month, considering it abominable. They gave it names such as *mala māsa* (impure month), *cora māsa* (thieving month), and so on.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PARAMĀRTHA-ŚĀSTRA, ADHIMĀSA IS SUPERIOR AND ADVANTAGEOUS FOR HARI-BHAJANA

On the other hand, the most worshipable *paramārtha-sāstra* acclaims *adhimāsa* as the most outstanding month for transcendental activities. Since life in this world is temporary, it is not proper to spend any part of one's life meaninglessly. It is imperative for the *jīva* to remain continuously engaged in *hari-bhajana* at every moment. Thus, the *adhimāsa*, which comes every third year, may also become useful for *hari-bhajana*. This is indeed the deep meaning of *paramārtha-sāstras*. Even though *karmīs* perceive this month to be devoid of all auspicious activities, for the deliverance of all the *jīvas*, *paramārtha sāstra*, on the other hand, has ascertained that period as the most conducive for *hari-bhajana*. *Paramārtha sāstra* says, "He *jīva*! During this *adhimāsa* why should you remain lazy in *hari-bhajana*? Śrīmad Golokanātha Himself has ascertained that this month is the best of all. It is superior even to the greatly pious months of Kārttika, Māgha and Vaiśākha. In this month, you should perform *arcana* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with special rules, or moods, for *bhajana*. You will thereby attain all types of perfection."

THE HISTORY AND GLORIES OF ADHIMĀSA AND HOW IT RECEIVED THE NAME PURUṢOTTAMA

The glories of *adhimāsa* are mentioned in the thirty-first chapter of the *Nārāyaṇa Purāṇa*. Adhimāsa considered the sovereignty of the twelve months and saw that he was being slighted. He went to Vaiṣṇava and related his dilemma to Śrī Nārāyaṇa. Out of compassion, Vaiṣṇava-pati took Adhimāsa with Him and appeared before Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Goloka. After hearing about the distress of *mala māsa* (the impure month), Śrī Kṛṣṇa's heart melted and He spoke thus:

**Puruṣottama month  
is superior even  
to the greatly pious months  
of Kārttika, Māgha and  
Vaiśākha.**

*aham etair yathā loke prathitah puruṣottamaḥ  
tathāyam api lokeṣu prathitah puruṣottamaḥ*

*asmai samarpitāḥ sarve ye guṇamayi samsthitāḥ  
mat-sādṛṣyam-upāgamyā māsānamadhipo bhavet*

*jagat-pūjyo jagat-vandyo māso 'yam tu bhaviṣyati  
sarve māsāḥ sakāmāś ca niṣkāmo 'yam mayā kṛtāḥ*

*akāmaḥ sarvakāmo vā yo 'dhimāsam praṇūjayed  
karmāṇi bhasmasāt kṛtvā mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayam*

*kadācin-mama bhaktānāmaparādheti gaṇyate  
puruṣottama-bhaktānām nāparādhaḥ kadācana*

*ya etasmin-mahā mūḍhā japa-dānādi-varjitāḥ  
sat-karma-snāna-rahitā deva-tīrtha-dviḥ dviṣaḥ*

*jāyante durbhagā duṣṭāḥ para-bhāgyopajivanāḥ  
na kādacit sukham teṣāṁ svapne 'pi śaśa-śṛṅgavat*

*yenāhamarcito bhaktyā māse 'smin puruṣottame  
dhana-putra-sukham bhūṅktvā paścād-goloka-vāsabhāk*

"He Ramāpati! Just as I am celebrated in this world by the name Puruṣottama, similarly, this Adhimāsa too will be renowned in the world by the name Puruṣottama. Now I offer all My qualities to this month. Becoming like Me, from today onwards, this Adhimāsa is the monarch of all the other months, and is the most worshipable and most adored in the world. All other months are *sakāma*, that is, they will grant worldly desires. This month, however, is *niṣkāma*. Those who worship this month, either without any desires (*akāma*) or with all types of desires, will have all their *karmas* burnt. Then

<sup>2</sup> It is stated in *Śrī Sūrya Siddhānta* that in one *mahāyuga* there are 1593336 extra months and 51840000 solar months. Therefore, there is one extra month after every 32 months, 16 days and 4 hours of the solar calendar.

they will achieve Me. My *bhaktas* sometimes commit offenses, but in this Puruṣottama month, they will be protected from committing any offense. In this *adhimāsa*, those greatly foolish persons who neglect to perform auspicious activities, such as *jaṭa*, giving in charity, visiting and bathing at the holy places, and who are envious of the *dvijas* (*brāhmaṇas*) are deemed wicked, unfortunate and living at the cost of others. Thus, they will not attain a scent of happiness, even in their dreams. Conversely, those who are filled with *bhakti* will take advantage of this Puruṣottama month to perform *arcana* to Me. After enjoying worldly happiness, such as wealth, sons and so on, they will eventually attain residence in Goloka.

THE GLORIES OF  
PURUṢOTTAMA MONTH IN  
THE CONTEXT OF  
DRAUPADĪ'S HISTORY

Many episodes from the *Purāṇas* are narrated in the context of the glories of Puruṣottama month. One such example is Draupadī. In her previous life, she was the daughter of Medhā Ṛṣi. Even after hearing of the glories of Puruṣottama month from Durvāsā Ṛṣi, she neglected to observe that month. As a result, she attained many sufferings in that life and became the wife of five husbands in her birth as Draupadī. During their exile, the Pāṇḍavas followed Śrī Kṛṣṇa's instructions to observe *puruṣottama-māsa-vrata* and thus crossed over all their sufferings. As it is said:

*evam sarveṣu tīrtheṣu bhramantaḥ pāṇḍunandanāḥ  
puruṣottama-māsādya-vrataṁ cerur vidhānataḥ  
tadante rājyam atulam avapur gata-kaṅṭhakaṁ  
pūrṇe caturdaśe varṣe śrī kṛṣṇa-kṛpayā mune*

“He Muni! During the period of their exile, the Pāṇḍavas traveled throughout all the holy places, and by the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa they observed Śrī Puruṣottama *vrata* with all rules and regulations. As a result of this they completed their fourteen years of exile without any obstacles and at the end attained an unparalleled kingdom.”

THE ACCOUNT OF KING DṚḢHADHANVĀ  
AS SPOKEN BY VĀLMIKI REGARDING  
PURUṢOTTAMA VRATA

Puruṣottama-māsa is glorified in the account of King DṚḢHADHANVĀ's previous birth. At Badarikāśrāma, Nārada heard the procedure of the *vrata* from Nārayaṇa Ṛṣi, which Vālmiki Muni then related to King DṚḢHADHANVĀ in answer to the king's questions. Just as the rules of *ahanika* (*gāyatri mantras*) for *brāhmaṇas* are ascertained in *dharma-sāstras*, similarly, the obligatory activities for one observing Puruṣottama *vrata* are also delineated, beginning from the *brahma-muhūrta* hour.

RULES FOR BATHING IN THE  
MONTH OF ŚRĪ PURUṢOTTAMA

Regarding the rules for bathing during Puruṣottama month, it is said:

*samudragā nadi-snānam-  
uttamaṁ parikīrtitam  
vāpi-kūpa-taḍāgeṣu  
madhyamaṁ kathitaṁ budhaiḥ  
gṛhe snānam tu sāmānyam  
gṛhasthasya prakīrtitam*

“There are three types of baths as declared by the wise. Bath in the rivers which meet the ocean is the topmost. Bath in lakes, ponds and wells is the second best, and bath in one's home is an ordinary bath.”

For one who is observing Śrī Puruṣottama *vrata*, after taking bath he should observe the following:

*sāpavitreṇa hastena kuryād ācamana-kriyām  
ācamya tilakaṁ kuryād-gopī-candana-mṛt-snayā*

*urddhwapundra mṛjuṁ saumyaṁ daṇḍākāraṁ prakalpayet  
saṅkha-cakrādikam dhāryaṁ gopī-candana-mṛtsnayā*

“After bathing one should perform *ācamana* with clean hands. One should then make paste of *gopicandana* clay and wear simple, beautiful, straight *urddhwapundra tilaka* on his forehead and the marks of conch, disc and so on, on his body.”

THE EXCLUSIVE WORSHIP OF ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ-KṚṢṆA IS OBLIGATORY IN PURUṢOTTAMA MONTH

The worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the obligatory activity of Puruṣottama month.

*puruṣottama-māsasya daivataṁ puruṣottamaḥ  
tasmāt sampūjayed bhaktyā śraddhayā puruṣottamam*

Vālmīki said, “He Dṛḍhadhanvā! Puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the presiding deity of the Puroṣottama month. Therefore, being filled with *bhakti-śraddhā*, you should worship Puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa with sixteen types of paraphernalia every day of this month. As it is said:

*soḍaśopacārais ca pūjayed puruṣottam*

“The worship of the divine couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is indeed obligatory in Puruṣottama māsa.”

*āgaccha deva deveṣa śrī kṛṣṇa puruṣottama  
rādhayā sahitaś cātra gṛhāṇa pūjanaṁ mama*

ACTIVITIES FORBIDDEN IN THE MONTH OF PURUṢOTTAMA

All the rules and regulations regarding Śrī Puruṣottama *vrata*, which we have presented above from these *sāstras*, should be followed by religiously devoted persons of all the *varnas* (castes). The *Nāradya Purāṇa* concludes by saying that in the holy place of Naimiṣaranya, Śrī Suta Gosvāmī spoke to the assembled devotees as follows:

*bhārate janurāsādyā puruṣottam-uttamaṁ  
na sevante na śṛṅvanti gṛhāsakta narādhamāḥ  
gatāgataṁ bhajante 'tra durbhagā janmajanmani  
putra-mitra-kalatṛpta-viyogād duḥkha bhāgināḥ  
asmīn māse dvija śreṣṭhā nāsacchāstrany udāharet  
na svapet para-sayāyāṁ nālapet vitatham kvacit  
parāpavādān na krayān na kathañcit kadācana  
parānnañca na bhujjita na kurvita parakriyām*

“Even after taking birth in India, those who are the lowest of mankind remain attached to household life and never hear the glories of Śrī Puruṣottama *vrata*; nor do they observe it. Such unfortunate persons undergo the suffering of repeated birth and death and the distress inflicted by the separation from sons, friends, wife and other relatives.

“O best of the *dvijas*! In this Puruṣottama month, one should not uselessly discuss worldly literature or mundane poetry. One should not sleep on the bed of others nor indulge in discussions of worldly sense enjoyment. One should not criticize others, eat foodstuffs cooked by others, or perform activities prescribed for others.”

THE OBLIGATORY ACTIVITIES IN THE PURUṢOTTAMA MONTH

*vittasāthyam akurvāṇo dānaṁ dadhyād dvijātaye  
vidyamāne dhane sāthyam kurvāṇo rauravaṁ vrajet*

*dīne dīne dvijendrāya dattvā bhojanam-uttamam  
divasasyāṣṭame bhāge vrati bhojanam ācāret*

*indradyumnah satadyumno yauvanāśvo bhāgīrathah  
puruṣottamam ārādhyā yayur bhāgavadantikam*

*tasmāt sarva prayatnena saṁsevya puruṣottamaḥ  
sarva sādhanataḥ śreṣṭhah sarvārtha phala-dāyakah*

**govardhana-dharaṁ vande gopālaṁ gopa-rūpinam  
gokulotsavam-īśanaṁ govindaṁ gopikā-priyam<sup>3</sup>**

*kauṇḍinyena purā proktam imān mantram punah punah  
japan-māsaṁ nayed bhaktyā puruṣottamam-āpnuyāt*

*dhyāyen-navaghana-syāmaṁ dvibhujam muralidharam  
lasat pita-pātaṁ ramyaṁ sa-rādhan puruṣottamam*

*dhyāyaṁ dhyāyaṁ nayan-māsaṁ pūjayan puruṣottamam  
evaṁ yaḥ kurute bhaktyā svābhīṣṭam sarvam āpnuyāt*

“Giving up miserliness, one should give in charity to the *brāhmaṇas*. If a person remains miserly even though he has wealth, his miserliness will be the cause of his going to Raurava (one type of hell). Everyday one should feed the Vaiṣṇavas and *brāhmaṇas* with the best foodstuffs. A person who is following the vows should take his food in the eighth part of the day. Indradyumna, Śatadyumna, Yauvanāśva and Bhāgīratha attained *sāmiṇya*, close association of Bhagavān by worshipping the

<sup>3</sup>“I worship the lifter of Govardhana, Gopāla, who has the form of a *gopa*. He is the festival of Gokula (*gokula-utsava*), the Supreme Controller of all (*īśvara*), and He is Govinda the beloved of the *gopīs* (*gopikā-priyam*).”

Puruṣottama month. One should perform service to Puruṣottama with all of one's endeavors. Such service to Puruṣottama is superior to all types of *sādhana* and fulfills all variety of desires. In a previous age, Kauṇḍilya Muni repeatedly chanted the *mantra* 'govardhana-dharaṁ vande'. By chanting this *mantra* with devotion during Śrī Puruṣottama month, one will attain Śrī Puruṣottama Himself. One should devote Puruṣottama month to constantly meditating upon *nava-ghana dvibhuja muralidhara pītāmbara Śrī Kṛṣṇa* with Śrī Rādhā. Those who do this with devotion will have all their cherished desires fulfilled.”

THE OBSERVANCE FOR TRANSCENDENTALISTS — SVANIṢṬHA, PARANIṢṬHITA AND NIRAPEKṢA

There are three types of transcendentalists: *svaniṣṭha* — those who are steadfast in their personal vows; *paraniṣṭhita* — those who are steadfast in following the vows set forth by their respective *ācāryas*; and *nirapekṣa* — those who are indifferent to the above two types of steadfastness<sup>4</sup> All the activities mentioned above for Puruṣottama month are prescribed for *svaniṣṭha* transcendentalists. *Paraniṣṭhita bhaktas* are eligible to observe Puruṣottama *vrata* according to the rules and instructions of Kārttika *vrata* prescribed by their respective *ācāryas*. *Nirapekṣa bhaktas* respect this sacred month by daily honoring *śrī bhagavat prasād* with one-pointed attention, following some routine for *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* of *śrī harināma* according to their capacity.

The following statement from *Viṣṇu Rahasya*, which is the topmost instruction of *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, recommends:

*indriyārtheṣv-asaktānāṁ sadaiva vimalā matiḥ  
paritoṣayate viṣṇuṁ nopavāso jītātmanah*

“Those whose intelligence has been purified by *bhakti* are detached from the inclination for sense enjoyment. The intelligence of such persons is naturally pure; therefore, they are *jītātma*, they have conquered their minds. It is by their innate *bhakti*, rather than by *upavāsa* (fasting) and other such activities, that they have purified their minds and are thus able to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa at all times.”

THE INNATE RUCI (INCLINATION) AND OBLIGATORY ACTIVITIES OF EKĀNTIKA BHAKTAS

Therefore, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has concluded his book *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* by presenting the following statements for one-pointed devotees:

*evam ekāntinām prāyaḥ kīrtanaṁ smaraṇaṁ prabhoh  
kurvatām paraṁ-prītyā kṛtyam-anyaṁ na rocate  
bhāvena kenacit preṣṭhaḥ śrī mūrter-aṅghri sevane  
syād icchyaśāṁ svatantraṇa sva-rasanaiva tad-vidhiḥ  
vihiteṣv eva nityeṣu pravartante svayam hite  
ityādy ekāntinām bhāti mähātmyaṁ likhitam hi tat*

“*Ekāntika bhaktas* (one-pointed devotees) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa consider *śrī kṛṣṇa-smaraṇa* and *śrī kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* alone to be the most fulfilling and valued activities. Generally, they do not engage in any other *aṅgas* of *bhakti* besides these two, which they cultivate with great love and affection. Their eagerness for these *aṅgas* is so strong that no other activity can captivate their taste. They develop an intense desire to serve the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a specific mood. Therefore, they render service to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with moods which are favorable to their own *rasa*, along with some independence (to give up the injunctions which are unfavorable to their cultivation). This alone is their *vidhi*. The *ekāntika bhaktas* are not bound to follow all the rules and regulations which have been prescribed by the *ṛṣis*. The moods of the *ekāntika bhakta*'s inborn, natural disposition generally remain prominent. This is their glory.”

ADHIMĀSA IS DEAR TO BHAKTAS AS THERE IS NO DISTURBANCE FROM THE KARMA-KĀṆḌA IN THIS MONTH.

The *bhaktas* observe Śrī Puruṣottama month according to their respective *adhikāra*; this means according to the distinctions of the moods of *svaniṣṭha*, *paraniṣṭhita* and *ekāntika bhaktas*. Bhagavān Vrajanātha Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the sovereign of this month; therefore, *adhimāsa* is dear to every *bhakta*. This is because, incidentally, in this month no disturbance from the *karma-kāṇḍa* can come to obstruct the performance of one's *bhakti*. □

(Translated from *Śrī Gaudiya Patrika* 2/4)

<sup>4</sup>*Svaniṣṭha* and *paraniṣṭhita bhaktas* are generally householders and *nirapekṣa bhaktas* are renunciates.