

2020 Guru Poornima

Why Do Saints Suffer?

As we grow older, we hear of the deaths of many people. Additionally, we see divine personalities like our most revered Shri Maharaj Ji and Amma Ji also becoming ill and leave this world. Sufferings of divine personalities and their loss wrenches my heart. How can one overcome the feelings of loss and sadness?

Answer:

I have addressed the concerns around fear of dying and loss of kith and kin in my publications of [Divya Ras Bindu](#) and [Divya Sandesh](#). I would urge you to read those articles carefully namely [Overcome fear of death](#), [Coronavirus - Grace in a mask](#) and [What Happens After Death?](#).

From the previous articles we understood that the sorrow from loss of our relatives and friends emanates due to our attachment to them. The reason for attachment to this material world is our firm faith that there is happiness in this; even though I didn't get it yet one day I will attain it. With every passing day due to repeated contemplation this notion is getting stronger. We are constantly in search of that elusive happiness. The search for happiness is our innate nature, but

गो गोचर जहँ लगी मन जाई । सो सब माया जानेहु भाई ॥

go gocara jahañ lagi mana jāi / so saba māyā jānehu bhāi ॥



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because “our senses, mind and intellect cannot go beyond the material realm” we continue to search for happiness in the material world.

We, the souls, are a fraction of God, who is the embodiment of divine, unlimited happiness. Every fraction constantly strives to become one with the whole the God, therefore this search continues on. Never before has the soul been satisfied nor will it ever be, until it attains divine unlimited and ever-increasing happiness. Out of ignorance, we seek that happiness from the [samsaar](#)- the world made of Maya, even though the *samsaar* is insentient and endowed with all the contrasting traits.

Repeatedly thinking about attaining happiness from a person (or thing) increases our attachment to the person (or thing). This attachment causes the pain and suffering when that person (or thing) is lost. The extent of attachment and resulting sorrow is directly proportional to our expectations from the person. That’s why one experiences maximum sorrow at the loss of one’s spouse, lesser still with the loss of parents, children, siblings and even lesser with the death of a servant, neighbor etc. The intensity and the duration of the sorrow depends on the extent of attachment.

This sorrow can be overcome if one assimilates the philosophy shared by Lord Shri Krishna in Bhagavat Gita and models one’s life according to that philosophy. Just before the battle of Mahabharata, Arjun refused to pick up his arms and fight. He presented several reasons in support of his argument.

Lord Krishna said-

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रजावादांश्च भाषसे |

गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः || 2.11 ||
aśhochyān-anvaśhochas-tvaṁ prajāvādānś cha bhāṣase
gatāsūn-agaṭāsūnś-cha nānuśhochanti paṇḍitāḥ

“Although your words are scholarly, yet knowledge behind it is not. Because you grieve for those who do not deserve it. The wise ones do not grieve either for the living or the dead”.

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा |

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति || 2.13 ||
dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanam jarā
tathā dehāntara-prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati

“Arjun! An embodied soul goes through childhood, youth, and old age, and then passes into another body at death. Wise men do not grieve over this”.

We all know and realize that life is temporary and has been given for a finite amount of time. It is for this reason that we say “as sure as death”. Being sad about something that is sure to happen is an indication of ignorance.

The Gita asserts firmly:

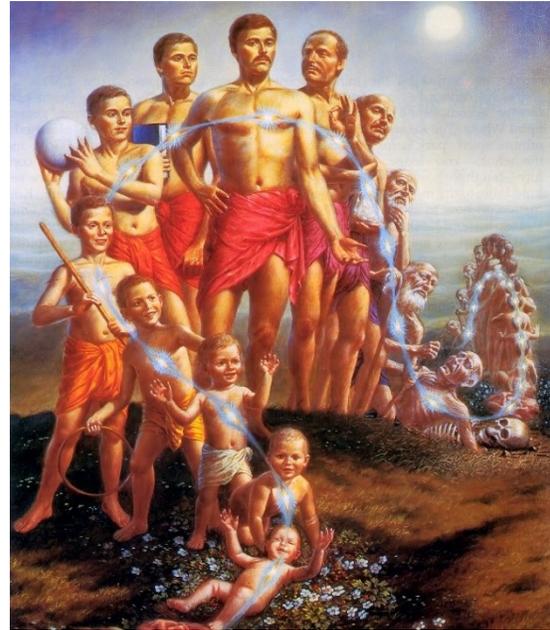


Figure 1: The soul changes bodies, but it does not change

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ 2.27 ॥
*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛityur dhruvaṁ janma mṛitasya cha
tasmād aparihārye 'rthe na tvaṁ śhochitum arhasi*

“Death is certain for those who were born and birth is sure for those who have died. Hence it is sheer lunacy to mourn the death of anyone.”

Nobody gets upset when night comes after day or old age comes after youth. Death is an inevitable reality. So, there is no reason to get upset over death. Death is so certain that even the great saints and God Himself leave their body. It is also true that the saints and God decide their own time of departure and the material beings are bound to go at the predetermined time.

Lord Ram stayed on earth for 11,000 years. When it was His time to cease His visible pastimes on the earth, Yamraj personally came to remind Him that His time on Earth has come to an end. He stood in front of Lord Ram with his folded hands and stated humbly, “O Lord! Your self-decided time to go back to your divine abode of Saket Lok has come. I am here to remind you; please do what You wish.”

Our grief at a loss of a loved one is a reflection of our pain due to the loss of the perceived happiness we derive from that person. Our grief at the loss of a spiritual personality is a reflection of our pain at the loss of the spiritual benefits we derive from them. Yet there is a big difference between the two. Attachment to the spiritual person delivers spiritual bliss, while attachment to a material being delivers *Sattvik, Rajas* or *Tamas* reward according to the spiritual status of the individual. Feeling of anguish from the death of a relative reduces accordingly as your devotion grows. This is because devotion under the guidance of a God-realized saint (see [Who is a true Guru?](#)) increases true knowledge, which naturally decreases attachment towards the world. (See [How can Maya dominate jeev](#)).

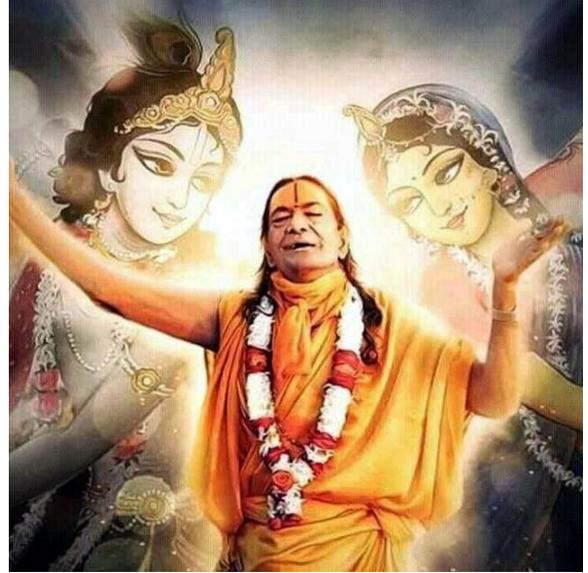


Figure 2: Jagadguruttam Swami Shri Kripalu Ji Maharaj

Many surrendered devotees are seen suffering due to various kinds of physical diseases and ailments. That happens due to their [Prarabdha](#). Still as their mind is attached only to God, they don't feel the pain. The real devotee considers these physical ailments as the grace of God. The reason for this is that we naturally remember God more when we are in distress. Kunti asked Lord Krishna for a strange boon. She said:

विपदः सन्तु नः शश्वत्त्रतत्र जगद्गुरो । भवतो दर्शनं यत्स्यादपुनर्भवदर्शनम् ॥

भा १.८.२५

vipadaḥ santu naḥ śaśvatttratatra jagadguro / bhavato darśanam yatsyādapunarbhavadarśanam ॥

bhā 1.8.25

"I wish that I would undergo those hardships again and again so that I could see You again and again. Beholding Your vision will ensure that I will no longer have to go through the cycle of repeated births and deaths."

Similarly, a saint says –

सुख के माथे सिल परे, नाम हृदय ते जाय ।
बलिहारी वा दुःख की जो पल पल नाम रटाय ॥

*sukha ke māthe sila pare, nāma hṛdaya te jāya /
balihārī vā duḥkha kī jo pala pala nāma raṭāya ॥*

"Throw stones at the happiness that makes one forget God and all glories to that sorrow that makes you remember God every moment".

These saints are imploring for hardships so they can constantly remember God. These devotees understand that remembrance of God imparts true bliss which is unlimited and everlasting.



Figure 3: Queen Kunti asking Shri Krishna for a strange boon

Some saints are seen to undergo physical suffering even after God realization. For instance, Tulsidas Ji suffered from the stomach disease *sangrahani*

(Irritable bowel syndrome), Swami Ram Krishna *Paramhans* with cancer and so on. The fact is that upon God-realization, these saints constantly remain absorbed in divine bliss, yet they continue to perform necessary worldly activities with the power of *Yogmaya*. We cannot fathom their state of mind, which is ever drowned in divine bliss (see [What will we do in Golok?](#)). As per their destiny they might appear to suffer with some physical problems, but their mind is completely detached from the body, so physical discomfort does not perturb them. Hence as per the law of God, they live comfortably without being affected by physical discomfort.

Some saints descend from God's abode for the benediction of common people. They can be divided into two categories: *Sadhan siddha* and *Nitya siddha*.

Sadhan siddha are those who have realized God in some previous life. They are also oblivious of the physical pain. If due to the nature of a material body, any disease inflicts their body they do not pay any attention. Ram Krishna *Paramhans* had developed open sores which became infested with maggots. If any of those maggots fell off, he would place them back on the wounded area again. Someone asked him, "we cannot endure even one bite of an ant, why do you keep them back instead of ousting them?" He simply answered, "it is their food, let them enjoy it". Only a saint, who is totally oblivious to the pain of the body, can do this.

Some saints are ***Nitya siddha***, which means they have never been dominated by [Maya](#). All of the original Jagadgurus, including [Jagadguruttam Shri Kripalu Ji Maharaj](#) and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu were eternally emancipated saints. They exhibit physical pain and diseases as well. The reason is their own choice. In

other words, either they take the problems of their devotees on them or pretend ailments to test their devotees.

Once Guru Nanak Dev pretended to have severe pain in his knee due to a boil. His devotees administered several medicines but none of them worked. Then Nanak Dev advised, “if any devotee can suck the pus of my boil, I will be alright”. Out of thousands of devotees, only one disciple agreed to do so. When he started sucking it, he tasted the mango juice. That was the test of the real devotees.

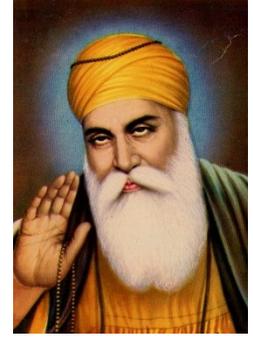


Figure 4: Guru Nanak Dev

Once, Shri Maharaj Ji was sitting in front of a brazier (अँगीठी). All of a sudden Banchary Didi and other devotees saw a severe burn appear on the left arm of Shri Maharaj Ji. They asked Shri Maharaj Ji how did it happen? But He ignored and didn't answer. Next day a devotee from the same city visited Shri Maharaj Ji.

He said, “Maharaj Ji! I don't know how God saved me yesterday. While working my hand went into the fireplace of the Railway-coal-engine, yet I escaped unscathed. I should have been scalded in the engine.” Then other devotees narrated, what happened to Maharaj Ji yesterday and that it was no-one other than his supremely gracious Guru who had saved him. Shri Maharaj Ji has taken other's calamity on himself hundreds of times.

It is said, *Gopis* felt immense pangs of separation from Shri Krishna, which would be unbearable for others. This is a glimpse of their pangs of separation -

शीर्णागोकुलमंडली पशुकुलं शष्पाय न स्पन्दते,
मूका कोकिलसंहतिः शिखिकुलं न व्याकुलं नृत्यति ।
सर्वे त्वद्विरहेण हन्तनितरां गोविन्द दैन्यं गताः,
किन्त्वेका यमुनाकुरङ्गनयना नेत्राम्बुभिर्वद्धते ॥
śīrṇāgokulamamḍalī paśukulaṃ śaṣpāya na spandate,
mūkā kokilasamḥatiḥ śikhikulaṃ na vyākulaṃ nṛtyati /
sarve tvadvirahēṇa hantanitarāṃ govinda dainyaṃ gatāḥ,
kintvekā yamunākuraṅganayanā netrāmbubhivarddhate ॥



Figure 5: Gopis lamenting after Shri Krishna left for Mathura

“The entire Gokul has become feeble, the animals are not eating, peacocks have stopped dancing. The water of river Yamuna is rising constantly due to the unending flow of tears from the eyes of the *Gopis*.”

Evidently, the state of the *Gopis* is pitiful, yet they prefer the nectar of separation over the nectar of union. In the words of Lord Chaitanya –

संगमविरहविकल्पे वरमिह विरहो न सङ्गमस्तस्मात्।
सङ्गे स इह तथैकस्त्रिभुवनमपि तन्मयं विरहे ॥ चै. महा.
gamavirahavikalpe varamiha viraho na saṅgamastasmāt /
saṅge sa iha tathaikastribhuvanamapi tanmayaṃ virahe ॥ cai. mahā.

“If I am given a choice of selecting union or separation, I prefer the bliss of separation. Because in union, He is seen at one place only, while in separation He is seen in each and every particle of the universe.”

So, we cannot comprehend the real state of the saints by evaluating them with our mental disposition. These saints leave the world physically after completion of their strategic work. Yet they always take care of their surrendered disciples according to the proportion of their submission. We don't know much about other saints. But many Shri Maharaj Ji's devotees have experienced that He constantly takes care of us. Sometimes He is apparently seen by His devotees and sometimes appears in disguise. Problems in the life of His disciples move off so smoothly as if someone has already planned how to remove it.

Hence, all we need to be ever happy and carefree is to increase faith in the words of Guru and earnestly follow them. In the words of Tulsidas Ji,

गुरु के वचन प्रतीति न जेही । सपनेहुँ सुख सिधि सुलभ ने तेही ॥
जे गुरु पग पंकज अनुरागी । सो लोकहुँ वेदहुँ बड़भागी ॥
गुरु बिनु भवनिधि तरै कि कोई । जो विरञ्चि शंकर सम हौई ॥
guru ke vacana pratīti na jehī / sapanehuṁ sukha sidhi sulabha ne tehī //
je guru paga paṁkaja anurāgī / so lokahuṁ vedahuṁ baḍbhāgī //
guru binu bhavanidhi tarai ki koī / jo virañci śaṁkara sama hauī //

“One who does not trust the words of his *Guru* cannot attain bliss even in a dream. One who loves the lotus feet of *Guru* he is blessed in the world and beyond. Without the assistance from *Guru* even the likes of Lord Shankar and creator Brahma cannot cross the ocean of *Maya*”

In a nutshell experiential evidence, logic, and philosophy - all these have to be used to grow devotion to *Guru* and God. That is the only way to rise above all pain and suffering.

In the medical field one drug cures a couple of diseases and for curing other diseases one needs to take other medicines. Those medicines might react with each other causing more trouble for the patient. Unlike those medicines, doing what the scriptures and saints have asked us to do, cures all types of pains. Loneliness, sadness, depression, anxiety, loss of wealth, loss of health and any other pain that can be there.

So, engage your mind in devotion to treat all physical and mental diseases caused by ills ([panchkosh](#), [panchklesh](#), [tritaap](#), [trikarm](#), [tridosh](#), [trisharir](#)) of present and past. This will cure all the ills in the present and such is the cure that no ills can ever return in the future.

Kripalu *Leelamritam* – *Guru* Takes Care of Surrendered Souls

Once many years back, Sushri Braj Banchary Didi Ji was giving a week-long lecture series in a temple in New York. She was staying at the same temple. Over 200 spiritual aspirants attended her lectures every-day.

One day, while the lecture series was ongoing, a devotee (Namita Ji) who was accompanying Didi Ji from India, told her that she had found a great flight deal, for a round trip to California for just \$90 and asked

Didi Ji if she would be interested in travelling. Didi Ji was excited at the prospect of going to California and told her to go ahead and book the flight. Didi Ji completely forgot about the ongoing lecture series. The next day, both of them boarded the flight to California.

No sooner did the plane take off, as if both of them woke up from a sleep. Didi suddenly remembered that the lecture series was in progress. She also wondered what had happened to her as never before had she ever gone on a pleasure trip. She felt miserable since she forgot about her *sewa* only to engage in a self-pleasure trip. What could she do now? With Shri Maharaj Ji's inspiration she rationalized that there must be some hidden secret behind this incident.

In California Didi Ji was expected to stay in an ashram. On the day of her arrival the devotees in California had organized a *satsang* in the evening. When she returned back to the ashram after the evening *satsang*, the Swami Ji of that ashram, asked her about her belongings left in the temple of New York. She found it strange that Swami Ji would be interested in her personal belongings in New York. Then Swami Ji informed her that soon after they had left the temple the entire building had caught fire and the whole temple was burnt except the room on the 2nd floor where she was staying.

Earlier, Shri Maharaj Ji used to wear wooden *charan paduka*. Before, Didi left India to do *prachar* in the western countries Shri Maharaj Ji had given her one of his extensively used padukas. That pair of *charan padukas* and a couple of pictures decorated the altar in her room. She was really concerned about the safety of her prized possessions.

When she came back to New York, she rushed to the temple to look for the *charan padukas* fearing the worst. She was so relieved and thankful to find out that the padukas and Shri Maharaj Ji's picture were safe and in good condition.

Then she realized that it was Shri Maharaj ji's grace that made her forget about her lecture series and leave the temple just in time. Incidentally, that day was the coldest day in the 100 years history of New York. Shri Maharaj Ji also wanted to save her from standing out in the freezing cold.

So, it was purely a grace in disguise.

Kid's Story – The only way to attain everything

Long ago there was a very learned scholar Jagannath Mishra. He was always engrossed in thoughts of God. He wrote a commentary on 100,000 shlokas of Mahabharat. But when he was writing the commentary on Gita he came across the verse –

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते |
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् || 9.22 ||
ananyāśh chintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teṣhām nityābhiyuktānām yoga-kṣhemam vahāmyaham



Figure 6: Shri Maharaj Ji's charan paduka in Didi Ji's room

“Those who constantly meditate on Me and selflessly serve only Me, I bear their *yogakshem*** ”.

In this verse there is a word *vahayaham* which means “I bear the burden of souls surrendered to Me”. Jagannath Mishra thought God is too great to Himself take care of the needs of an insignificant soul. He can order any of the *devi devatas* to take care of the needs. So, he crossed out the word *vahami* – which means “I bear” - and instead wrote the word *dadami* – which means “I extend help”. Then he left to take a bath in the Ganges river. Incidentally, that day there was no food in their house to cook even a single meal.

Meanwhile, Lord Shri Krishna assumed the form of a young child and arrived at the door of Jagannath Mishra with a basket of 20 kg full of vegetables, rice and other grains. The Lord then gave the basket to his wife. The wife noticed that the boy was very beautiful but it seemed like somebody had punched his mouth.

She asked, “who has bullied you”?

The young boy replied, “Jagannath Mishra punched me”.

Her husband was a calm and even-tempered person. She knew he was not capable of hurting anyone. She was very confused and asked the young boy, “Why did he hit You”?

The boy innocently replied, “I said something. It was right but he didn’t agree with it. So, he punched Me,”.

Then the boy left.

When Jagannath Mishra reached home he found his wife very upset with him that he hurt an innocent cutest little boy she had ever seen and he also asked Him to deliver such a heavy basket of groceries.

Jagannath did not understand what his wife was saying. When the wife narrated the whole story Jagannath Mishra understood that his Lord had come to take care of his physical needs to prove to him that God himself takes care of the needs of a totally surrendered soul. Jagannath fell to the ground on his knees and cried bitterly for having hurt his Lord by making the change in the original text of Gita.

Moral

Bhagwat Gita is the veritable words of Supreme Lord Shri Krishna. In Gita Shri Krishna affirms if someone has given up all material desires and also renounced the desire of liberation and surrenders exclusively unto Me, I give what the soul does not possess and preserves whatever they have.

** to bear [Yogakshem](#) - protect what they have and give them what they don’t have.

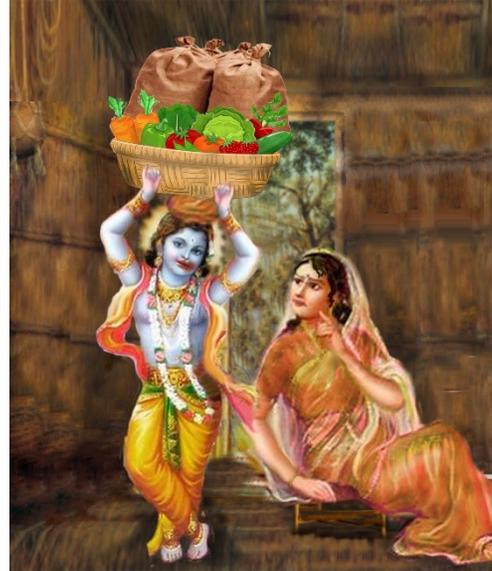
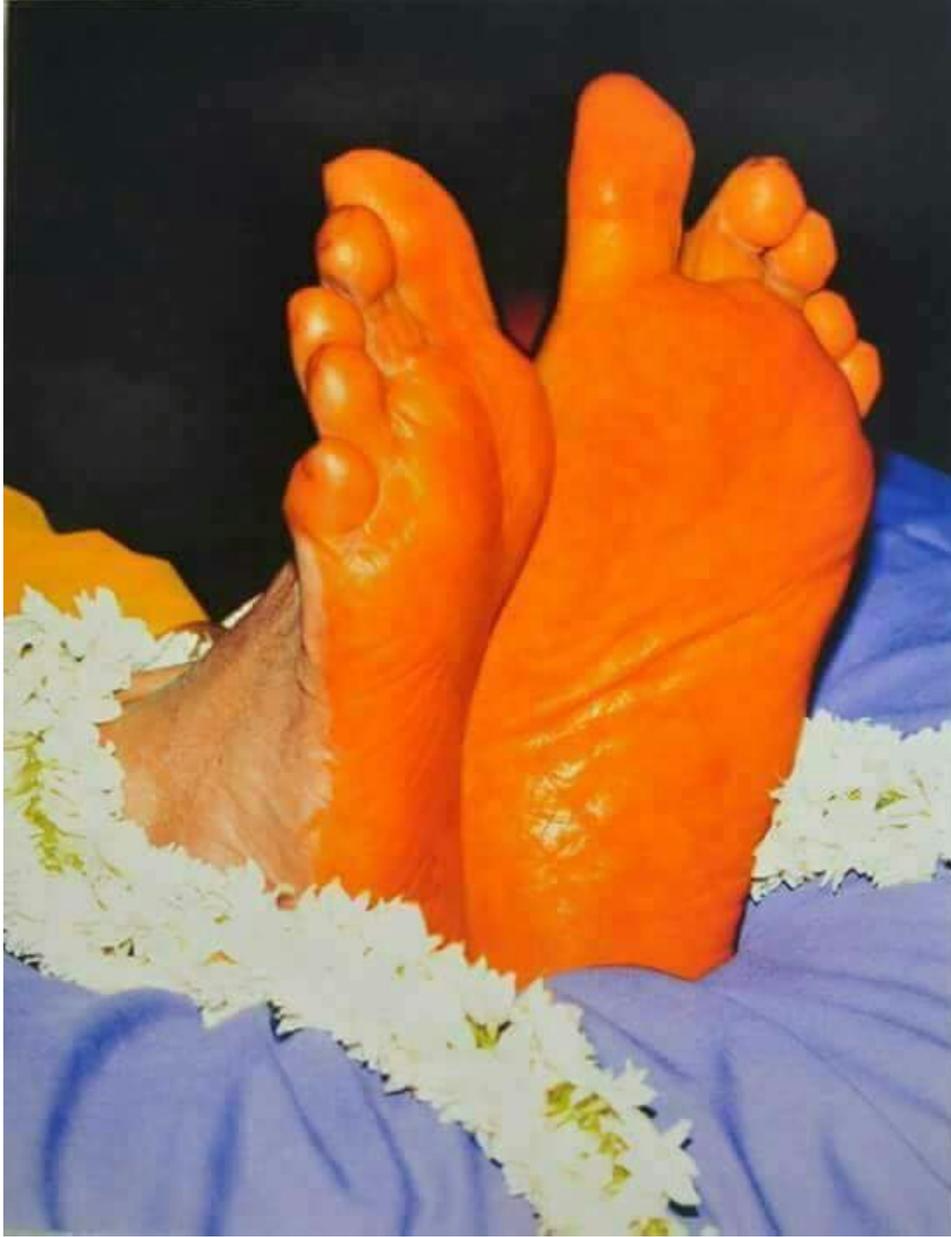


Figure 7: When the young boy delivered a basket full of food items to Jagannath Mishra's wife, she noticed his bruised mouth.

Wishing you a Very Happy Guru Poornima

(The day of adoration of Guru)



प्रथम नमन गुरुवर पुनि गिरिधर । जोई श्री गुरुवर सोई गिरिधर ॥

First, I bow to my Guru and then to Shri Krishna.

Guru and Shri Krishna are one and the same.