

KARTIK INSPIRATIONS 2024

THE 3 KEYS TO VRINDAVAN

Welcome to this *Kartik Inspiration*.

Today, I want to share something that you may already know, but I witnessed an inspiring example of it. It's about a rule we all know: you are where your mind is. In other words, you can be in Vrindavan, and if your mind is full of problems, then you are dwelling on those problems. Or, you can be in the West and think of Vrindavan, and then you are truly in Vrindavan.

This morning, I saw something so wonderful. I observed a stream of pilgrims walking through the forest of Giriraj, next to His side. Some of them looked troubled by the long walk barefoot. They appeared exhausted and sweaty. It was a clear sign that they were thinking, "I really suffer here."

Then I noticed a lone pilgrim coming toward me. He was singing with his arms stretched out. His

face was radiant with devotion, and he sang the song, "Radhe, tere charno ki, Shyama tere charno ki." This song reminded me of the three rules for a pilgrim. Listen to these three rules, as they can enhance your life in Vrindavan, but also if you stay in America, India, China, or anywhere else.

The first rule for a pilgrim on the path to a transcendental goal is to seek out Radha and Krishna in everything that happens to them. In other words, when they meet people, chant, study, engage in kirtan, or circumambulate and perform *parikrama* of a holy place, they should seek out Radha and Krishna.

The second rule is to recognize that behind everything that happens to you—the good, the pleasant, the bad, the ugly, the wonderful, the ecstatic, the enjoyable and the less-than-mentionable—there is the hand of the Lord, moving you forward, even through the purifying experiences. Everything is arranged for you and doesn't happen to you. It is arranged for you to bring you closer to Krishna.

The third rule is to ask a simple question in every interaction you have: what would please Radha and Krishna now? Then, adjust your words and actions accordingly. You will witness miracles simply by following these three keys of pilgrimage.

This principle of being Krishna-centered also applies as we tune ourselves into chanting:

We should try to be fully present! Anytime our mind wanders, we find ourselves back in the material world because we are where our mind is. Therefore, try to bring your mind to Krishna by following the three rules of the pilgrim.

FOLLOW THE THREE RULES OF A PILGRIM: SEEK OUT RADHA AND KRISHNA IN ALL EXPERIENCES, RECOGNIZE THE LORD'S HAND IN EVERY SITUATION, AND ASK YOURSELF: WHAT WOULD PLEASE THE DIVINE COUPLE NOW?

Śaṅkara
ŚACINANDANA SWAMI