

The Bushes and Creepers are my Audience

Welcome to this Kartik Inspiration.

Today, while circumambulating the mountain Giriraj, I had one of the most impactful meetings in a long time. I saw a devotee on a bench, in a cross-legged position, holding a tambourine and singing in the blazing sun with such intense bhava, or devotional emotions, that I just had to stop.

There was a shade-giving tree nearby and another person who listened to him. I quickly joined them, and we listened, totally entranced or enchanted by his devotional outpourings. At first, I thought he was blind because his eyes were shut, but then, when he reached the end, after some time, he opened his eyes and saw me. I quickly approached him.

I said, “I so much appreciated your kirtan. What is your secret?” He was very shy and did not want to answer. One of the devotees who was with me showed him a video of me leading a kirtan in front of thousands of people. I don’t know where it was, but it was quite an impressive crowd. He listened and looked at it with genuine appreciation, and then he very humbly said, “You have such a big audience and do such a great service. I just have Giriraj as an audience — and these bushes, creepers, latas, and sometimes a cow.”

I said, “Yes, I have a great audience and sometimes a great ego also.” And then we started to talk about what eats up the fruit of glorifying Krishna through kirtan.

He said very nicely, “Yes, if we identify with the results of kirtan, meaning the number of people, the number of likes, the number of newspaper articles, etc., we are harboring pratistha. And this pratistha, that is pride of one’s achievements, eats the entire fruit of our singing, that is love for Krishna.” Wow! We discussed the subject matter further, and when I left, I felt I had met the best kirtan leader.

What can we learn from this devotee? When we sit in kirtan, we can switch off all the other lamps that light our path through the world. Our fame, our money, ...what else? Our material attachments, material desires, material plans, aspirations, inclinations, etc., and make this a time with Krishna. Yes, we may be surrounded by many other kirtan singers, but this is not about relating to all of them in the first place. It is about relating to Krishna, spending that time with Krishna—spending quality time with Krishna.

One good practice that I always like to do is to see myself sitting before Krishna. It could be an altar, or in a temple. It could be the spiritual world, as I have heard about it, and then I sing only for Him and Srimati Radharani. And by spending this time alone with Krishna in that consciousness, ‘I’m now with Them’, oh, so much benefit comes! So many good feelings that melt the heart, so that the real desires and the real plans start to manifest automatically.

All the best and good kirtans!
See you in the next Kartik Inspiration.

Sacinandana Swami
SACINANDANA SWAMI

When you sit in kirtan, switch off
all the lamps of worldly attachment
— to name, fame, and wealth —
and make this your alone time
with Krishna.