

Madhura Mridanga

Bharat Chandra dasa
Centre for traditional education
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yeṣāṁ śrīmad-yaśodā-suta-pada-kamale nāsti bhaktir narāṇāṁ
yeṣāṁ ābhīra-kanyā-priya-guṇa-kathane nānuraktā rasajñā |
yeṣāṁ śrī-kṛṣṇa-līlā-lalita-rasa-kathā-sādarau naiva karṇau
dhik tān dhik tān dhig etān kathayati satataṁ kīrtanastho mṛdaṅgaḥ ||5||

Those whose hearts are bereft of love and devotion unto the lotus feet of The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Kṛṣṇa who is the son of Mother Yaśoda; those whose tongue are not attracted to taste the glorification of the nectarine pastimes of the Attractor of the damsels of Vrindavan; those whose ears do not honor the sweet playful pastimes of the Sri Kṛṣṇa; for all such people, in the Kirtana, the Mridanga continuously sounds condemnation by saying “Shameful -Dhik tan”, “Shameful – Dhik tan”, “All shameful – Dhik etan”!

Srila Prabhupada's two instructions

- It is “Our Principle” to use leather from (protected) cows after they die naturally and “Not by Killing”
- “Use your American Technology” and make Mridangas



New Mridanga

- Sudama Swami, who came to spend a few months in Mayapur to get spiritually rejuvenated, was privileged to present Srila Prabhupada, at darshan, with a new, devotee-made mrdanga, recently transported from California. With theatrical flare, Sudama held the mrdanga high in the air, to catch everyone's attention. Then he dropped it. Everyone gasped, "Ohhh!"
- So many fragile clay mrdangas were hand-carried out of India at great inconvenience, only to break once when they were dropped even slightly. But this mrdanga fell and didn't break. It bounced on the floor and was fine. How was this possible?
- Sudama said, "Look, Srila Prabhupada, this mrdanga is made of fiberglass."

New Mridanga

- Srila Prabhupada was very pleased to see the first Balaram mrdanga, made in Los Angeles, by Isana dasa and others. The long-awaited drum had arrived and more would be produced. They were unbreakable, as Sudama Maharaja demonstrated. No more anxieties when someone accidentally dropped a mrdanga!
- Srila Prabhupada did not seem to mind Sudama's theatrics in dropping Sri Mrdanga on the floor, though normally that would be irreverent. He played it briefly, then asked someone else to play. For the remainder of the darshan we had kirtan, chanting Hare Krishna to the beats of the new, fiberglass Balaram mrdanga.
 - "Srila Prabhupada is Coming", Mahamayi Devi Dasi, Sridham Mayapur, Nov 1975

New Mridanga

- So after all the animal will die, let him wait for that period, why you should kill any living animal?
- Prof. Gombrich: Do you use leather in your drums?
- Prabhupada: Eh?
- Prof. Gombrich: What about the drums?
- Prabhupada: Yes, yes the dead body.
- Prof. Gombrich: Yes.
- Prabhupada: When the cow is dead that leather can be used.
- Prof. Gombrich: Yes so you have leather drums.
- Prabhupada: Yes.
- Prabhupada: Leather has there so many use but that leather is collected after the death of the animal, not by killing.
- Prof. Gombrich: No.
- Prabhupada: Yes...yes that is our principle, yes.

Officially, “very religious” – “Dharma-Dhvaji”

Prabhupāda: Now suppose somebody is not awakened to the standard of God consciousness, then he may follow religion but it is a waste of time. That is our... we don't want official religiousness, that is called, you know Sanskrit? Dharma dhvajé..

Prof. Gombrich: Hm

Prabhupāda: dhvajé means "flag."

Prof. Gombrich: Hm

Officially, “very religious” – “Dharma-Dhvaji”

Prabhupāda:....Simply just to have a flag, I belong to this religion, that's all. But if I ask him, "what do you know about religion?" He cannot explain, what is God he cannot explain. Simply he has a flag," I am Hindu, I am Muslim, I am Christian," and they fight one another. But actually one who is God conscious where there is question of fight? Everyone is brother, God is the supreme father and we are sons: “sarva-yoniṇu kaunteya sambhavanti mūrtayaù yäù täsäà mahad yoni brahma ahaà béja-pradaù pitä” [Bg 14.4]

That is God consciousness and as the Christian people, they are killing poor animals. If he has at all God consciousness why he should kill? And especially in the Christian religion it is stated, "thou shalt not kill."

Officially, “very religious” – “Dharma-Dhvaji”

Then last night that gentleman was asking me... that... "Thou shalt not kill, whom?" Oh no, where there is no question of whom. If you ask whom, at least you should not kill your father and mother. So, cow is the mother, according to Vedic understanding, cow is the mother because we are drinking milk. Cow supplies us milk therefore she is mother.

“No go-hatya”; “Sinful cannot become religious”

- Prabhupāda: ...Therefore bull is considered as father and cow is considered as mother according to Vedic principles and in the Bhagavad-gētā [Bg 18.44] - it is specifically mentioned: kãñi-go-rakña-väëijyam, vaiçya-karma svabhāva-jam. Go-rakña...
- Prof. Gombrich: Hm
- Prabhupāda: Not go-hatyā.
- Prof. Gombrich: Hm
- Prabhupāda: This is very sinful you see if one is religious, how he can become sinful? Do you think sinful man can become religious?
- This is going on, in the name of religion they are covered in sin. That is the, I mean to say, the cause of religious degradation; veda viruddha kãrya kare, veda mukhe mane, Caitanya Mahāprabhu says. They act against the Vedic principle but advertised himself, "I am Vedic, I believe in the Vedas." These nonsense things are going on. Christian going against the Christian principle but he is proud of becoming a Christian, all like that really.

Srila Prabhupada's Mridanga-making project

- Mayapur inhabitants can be engaged in such a small manufacturing enterprise as well as farming to become self sufficient. Side by side increase our spiritual consciousness by attending to the temple routine work, Deity worship sankirtana, attending class. The idea is we must have the necessities of our life as far as possible independently. But we should not be business minded. Our main business is to develop our dormant Krsna Consciousness. Side by side we may take to such enterprises as will maintain us very nicely. There is no need of sending the artisan to U.S.A. better send our disciples from here and learn the art there. In this connection manufacturing the mrdanga shells as well as the skin work on it is very essential. If possible our men may learn how to make karatalas also. At Navadvipa, there are many artisans for this purpose.
- The summary is that our men must learn these four things: doll making, mrdanga making, karatala making and if possible making saris.

Synthetic mrdanga

- Dr. Hauser: Do you use leather?
- Srila Prabhupāda: Generally we avoid it, since at the present time people are obtaining it by sending the animals to the slaughterhouse.
- Dr. Hauser: So you don't allow it?
- Srila Prabhupāda: We don't use it. For instance, none of our shoes are made of leather. Today there are so many substitutes, various plastics and other things. And every one of them is nice.

Synthetic mrdanga

Prabhupāda: There is... And who is making khol?

Baradrāj: Oh, khol. Éçāna. Éçāna dāsa.

Prabhupāda: He's doing nice?

Baradrāj: Yes. They are producing many, and they are very, very strong.

Çatadhanya: They say that you can throw them on the floor and they will not break.

Prabhupāda: How many khols he has already prepared?

Baradrāj: I don't know exactly, but I think it was close to about two hundred when I left.

Prabhupāda: Where he is making?

Synthetic mrdanga

Baradräj: Well, they are having most of the parts done outside, by outside people, professionals, and Éçäna is assembling, and he's working very hard.

Prabhupäda: It is plastic?

Baradräj: Yes, completely, everything. And it can be tuned also on the spot. There is a key, and with this key you can tune it up. The heads never break, but if they happen to break, they can be immediately replaced within... They can get extra heads, and it takes about two minutes to change, to put a new head on.

Prabhupäda: Hmm!

Baradräj: So Éçäna has worked very hard to fulfill your order, Çréla Prabhupäda.

Prabhupäda: Now he's successful.

The Fiberglass Mridanga

Āñabhadeva also brought a prototype fibreglass mādāiga shell. Several years ago Çréla Prabhupāda advised the devotees in America to make drums from fibreglass or plastic, because the clay ones they were importing from India were always breaking. Now one of our artists, Éçāna dāsa, has succeeded in making a working replica. It looked good: strong and sturdy and not too heavy. Prabhupāda liked it, but unfortunately he could not hear it because the playing heads, which are detachable, had broken in transit on the way ove



The Fiberglass Mridanga

Back in 1975 you brought the BBT to New Dvārakā, and it is still operating on a grand scale, printing your books, which you wrote with so much care and austerity, sleeping only a few hours per night to finish them. Part of the BBT is the mail-order department, which sells your books, recordings, and other spiritual paraphernalia to individual devotees and stores. One of the most popular items is the fiberglass Balaram mādāga, another of your brilliant ideas, which you inspired your disciples to produce. You instructed one of your disciples to “go to the West and make a drum that won’t break.” He did, and forty years and 6,000 drums later, the Balaram drum is as popular as ever. (Vyasa Puja Offering by devotees at New Dwaraka, ISKCON Los Angeles, California)



“Try to improve it some more”

At still another darçana, Prabhupäda saw the fiberglass Balaräma mådaiga. Many clay mådaëgas were carried out of India with great care and inconvenience, only to break once they got wet or were accidentally dropped even slightly. Içäna Däsa, a devotee musician, and others in Los Angeles had been working on a new, unbreakable, fiberglass mådaiga for several years. They named it the Balaräma mådaiga because of its strength. The first prototype had been brought to Mäyäpur in early 1976 to show Prabhupäda. This year, Içäna presented the latest version of the mådaiga to Prabhupäda and was revealing to the other devotees how light it was. They put it on Prabhupäda’s desk and waited for his response.

Mahänidhi Swami: They offered it to Prabhupäda, and he hit it once, just perfectly, and said “It is dead,” meaning the sound was flat and not as full and natural as the sound of the clay mådaiga. “The clay one is better. Try to improve it some more,” were Prabhupäda’s encouraging words.

Sripad Lokanath Swami, “Festivals”, Mayapur-Vrindavan festivals with Srila Prabhupada, 1977

Annual need for Mridangas

MAYAPUR

5 shops sell
200
Mridangas
per month

VARIOUS TEMPLES

Atleast 2-10
Mridangas

LARGE TEMPLES

Like Pune;
80 nos. in
good
condition.
Casualty
every 2
days

Annual need for Mridangas

**NUMEROUS
CENTERS**

**MIN. 1 in;
Namahatta
BACEs
Preaching
centers
Youth
forums**

**RATHA
YAYRA &
FARM
COMMUNITY**

Atleast 3-4

**DEVOTEE
FAMILIES**

**For
programs
and
children**

Mridangas – cause of killing COWS

- Demand drives supply. The Mridanga makers order the “Chamars” to supply the Mridangas. The Chamars in turn order the butchers. Butchers go to the market, select the cows and purchase live cows. They bring them to their place and slaughter and then supply the skin to the chamars who in turn supply to the Mridanga makers.
- From one cow's hide, only 2 Mridangas can be made. The small side of the Mridanga is made from the dewlap or the chin of the cow, while the large side is made from the calf's leather.



Mridangas – cause of killing COWS

- Practically, no farmer in whole of India, today, is maintaining a cow till it's natural death. No Goshala is ready to give cows that naturally die lest public anger or negative propaganda
- The “Natural Death” of few are due to vehicle accidents, diseases, floods, etc., whose leather is not of much use to Mridanga makers.
- Further, all the Mridanga makers opine that the leather obtained from so called “Naturally dead cows” are not strong. When the cow is killed, due to the shock, the skin is hard and the Mridangas become very durable as a result. Hence, they “naturally” prefer leather after slaughter.



About Mud-Mridanga

Average life span

4 years

**Some report
break down
within 6 months
of purchase**

AND

**Some within an
hour**

Vulnerable to weather

**Rains, summer,
cold have effects
on Mridanga and
hence devotees
keep atleast 2 so
as to have one in
playable
condition**

Tuning

Not very easy

**In case of loose
straps; only an
expert can tune
it**

Madhura Mridanga – fulfilling the need for next 10000 years!

- **Sound Quality** – second to none. Imitates Mud Mridanga. The pitch on the right side tuned to F5# and on the left side to F2# is equivalent to the mud Mridangas. The right side can be easily tuned even to higher octaves of G# too. Further, the “click” or the “nak”, “te” and “re” sounds on the right side is possible. On the left side, the “da” “khe” and “ghumki” sounds can be produced.
- **Durable** – for 20+ years
 - Drop test – Madhura Mridanga does not yield even with a fall from 10 feet on a hard concrete
 - The heads are highly durable. Even with heavy beating and rubbing for years together, nothing will happen. In any case, it can be replaced anytime.
 - There is no chance of “Karane” or “shyahi” to have a problem since they are from provided from inside.

Madhura Mridanga – fulfilling the need for next 10000 years!

- **Tunable** – Can be tuned anytime by anyone with the help of the spanner provided and a freely available third party app.
- **Light-weight** – Weighs only 4.3 Kg



Madhura Mridanga – fulfilling the need for next 10000 years!

- **Painless to hands** – Designed in such a way as to give pain free experience for long haul kirtans, especially for Ratha yatra, nagar sankirtans, etc.
- **Ahimsa** – 100% Ahimsa since it is completely synthetic.



Customer care and support

- Within a month, supplied 40 Mridangas.
- A Whatsapp group for customer support
- 3 Years Warranty on shell and the heads (except, the plastic Head rings)

