

Śrīla Gurudeva

The Supreme Treasure

Vol. 1

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Tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu
Svāmī Bhaktivedānta Mādhava Mahārāja
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Śrīla Gurudeva: The Supreme Treasure

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DEDICATION

I am presenting this book as an offering of devotion to our dearly beloved *jagad-guru, om viṣṇupāda paramahaṁsa parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata*

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

who has mercifully shown us an unadulterated life of utter dedication and loving service to his beloved Guru Mahārāja, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda paramahaṁsa parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.*

This is an account of the most auspicious life, qualities and teachings of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

“Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja is expert in describing *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. He is endowed with the qualities of magnanimity and sweetness, and he is the best of great souls. Because he is always relishing Kṛṣṇa’s sweetness, he is able to freely distribute that sweetness to others. I bow down and place my head at his lotus feet.”

Because he loves to speak *hari-kathā* and relishes the sweet transcendental name, form, qualities and pastimes of the Supreme Lord, he is the most qualified to eradicate from ones heart the most dangerous enemy in the path of *bhakti*, the deceitful entrapping fallacy of impersonalism.

Tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu Bhaktivedānta Mādhava Mahārāja

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FOREWORD

THIS VOLUME IS THE FIRST BOOK about the extraordinary character and sublime teachings of our most revered holy master, *om viṣṇupāda paramahaṁsa parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja*, affectionately known as our beloved Śrīla Gurudeva. It is Śrīla Gurudeva's extraordinary mercy that he has revealed a glimpse of the spiritual world and awakened within us a taste for the supremely sweet pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīpāda 'Vidyālaṅkāra'¹ Mādhava Mahārāja is not writing just another book about some charismatic individual who is accepted by the general public as a *guru*. Nowadays the name *guru* has become quite fashionable. In the modern world we have financial *gurus*, management *gurus*, fashion *gurus* and so on, and it seems that any common man can be accepted as *guru* as long as he shows some expertise in his field. The approach of many so-called *gurus* may be of great appeal to the masses by making them feel good about the prospects of their material aspirations and the anticipated temporary pleasures of the mind and senses. One may receive some temporary upliftment from these self-styled *gurus*, but in the end, their encouragement for us to continuously chase after material happiness produces only a mental image of a possible future, but no ultimate satisfaction. That is because the material enjoyment they offer always ends in misery. This material enjoyment is just like a big fire; no matter how beautiful it is to look at, if you touch it, it will inevitably burn you and you will suffer tremendously. Similarly, harmful activities will make us suffer in the material world. People who are overpowered by the illusory material *māyā* of Kṛṣṇa feel happiness and suffering for many births under the influence of that illusory energy. Their happiness and sufferings are all the work of *māyā*, meaning 'forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa'. There are many persons in this world who may appear or claim to

¹ Śrīla Gurudeva gave the title Vidyālaṅkāra, which means an ocean of knowledge, to Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja because of his expertise in his assisting Śrīla Gurudeva with his books.

be *guru*, but a bona fide *guru* follows Śrī Brahmā, the original *guru* and grandfather of the universe. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was propounded by Śrī Brahmā aeons ago when the creation was still in its infancy. Only a bona fide *guru* representing his *guru* and the Lord can give one the essential help to attain real freedom.

Guru is a Sanskrit word and its original and intended meanings are explained in the Vedic literatures. *Gu* means 'ignorance' and *ru* means 'dispeller', so a real *guru* is someone who is in a disciplic succession of *gurus* that dispells our ignorance. Those in a material conception of life will teach others that they can and will become happy here, thus increasing their ignorance and boosting their false ego of bodily identification. A real *guru*, on the other hand, gives eternal results by initiating us on the path that activates and reveals our true spiritual identity. He mercifully gives instructions, convincing us of the many perfect philosophical conclusions of *bhakti*. Serving him and submissively hearing from him frees us from the ignorance that has been ingrained within our hearts since time without beginning. It gradually but firmly establishes within us a deep love for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the divine Youthful Couple and the soul's function fully awakens. This is what a *guru* should give – our pristine intrinsic nature, our eternal *dharma*. That's what our Śrīla Gurudeva, the deliverer of the fallen, is giving to us.

Our eternal natural function, or *dharma*, is *bhakti* or devotional service. As one cannot separate heat from fire, so similarly, the service nature of the living entities cannot be taken away from them. We have to serve someone or something. We serve either Kṛṣṇa or *māyā*. Unfortunately, during this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the insincerity and hypocrisy is so widespread that those who have a desire to follow religion are oftentimes misled; consequently they are disheartened to pursue religion with strong determination or conviction.

All religions propagated in the world are either steps leading to *bhakti* or else distortions of it. This being a fact, we should focus on our own cultivation of devotion and not worry or criticize what others are doing. We should be favourable towards the followers of other religions and have no animosity towards them. All of us advance according to the time that is ripe for us. Any religion should be respected according to its proportionate degree of purity.

In order to pursue our particular path with great devotion, we have to understand that there are mixed, polluted and imaginary concepts of *bhakti* that are falsely presented in the name of pure *bhakti*. There are different categories. One group may have a slight semblance of *bhakti* or a mixed devotion (mixed with fruitive action or speculative knowledge, etc.). These are gradations of *bhakti* but only unalloyed devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*) can give life's ultimate goal – the nectar of pure love (*prema*). Only that *śuddha-bhakti* can bestow the highest results. Yet, on the path of *bhakti*, many try to give the impression that they are practicing pure *bhakti*, though in actuality they practice only a reflection or a shadow of devotion. It is important to know that whoever you follow, you will only be able to attain what they have, not more than that. Whatever level of consciousness one's *guru* attains, the followers can advance up to that level, not higher than that. That is why the gift of the higher part, the transcendental realm, can only be obtained by the exclusive mercy of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the *ācārya* of *ujjala-rasa*, and his intimate associates. The original form of Bhagavān descended in this age as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to deliver all the living entities. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, who is *priya-svarūpa*, the very embodiment of everything dear to Him, is His foremost disciple in establishing the deepest wishes of His heart. Those who completely come under the guidance and care of the genuine followers of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī will attain realization and advance through each successive stage of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

The realm of the Supreme Lord is naturally full of love and there is never any force. Here also, we are never forced to love, but this world is a place where the Supreme Lord examines us. Do we want only Him, or do we still want something of this world? The Lord will fulfill our desire, as much as we desire, not more than that. According to what we desire in life, we will get an appropriate *guru* or spiritual teacher. If we want transcendental vision, we can only get it by the special mercy of great devotees who see and perceive the Lord at all times and in all places. Only by their mercy will we excel in the examination, be able to recognize our true selves and begin to hanker for the only thing that will satisfy us – pure *bhakti*. One can only remember the Lord in all circumstances when the inclination to serve the Lord arises in one's heart by the sweet association and

mercy of such a *sādhu*. Unless we have the opportunity to hear the pure nectar of their *hari-kathā*, we will always go back and absorb ourselves in sense gratification, even if we are inclined towards religious life. It is only by their merciful glance and the sharp words emanating from their lotus mouths that the hidden fantasies in the mind for gross and subtle sense gratification are finally eradicated from the heart forever.

If someone possesses only pretentious devotion (*chala-bhakti*), that is what their followers will get from them. Some, even in the name of *bhakti*, instruct others against the principles of *bhakti* and lead them on a path that is totally opposed to it. Therefore our previous *ācāryas* have clearly cautioned us to avoid mixed and polluted concepts of *bhakti*. Only then will our hearts be thoroughly cleansed, so that our activities can be most favourably executed for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Everyone is controlled by the desire for sense enjoyment, even when it comes to modern day religion. Most of the general public become attracted to follow certain religious teachings to get material boons from God in the form of economic development (*artha*) and sense gratification (*kāma*). They are misled to ask and search for material benedictions, rather than establishing their pure loving relationship with the Lord. Although their values are presented as the topmost and most relevant for God consciousness, they are in actuality a distortion of pure *bhakti* and the practitioner can only develop a little faith in God. Ultimately it is a deception and infinitely inferior to the flawless and completely pure *śuddha-bhakti*. That is why we should always hear the perfect philosophical conclusions of *bhakti* (*bhakti-siddhānta*) from qualified persons. Unqualified persons with the four defects of human frailty² are unable to properly teach anything transcendental that is worth hearing. We need to seek help from those who are free from these very serious defects that prevent us from getting even a glimpse of transcendence. Methods of learning under the operation of the four-fold defects are useless in our progress toward the Absolute, for they can never free us from those defects.

.....
² As described in *Śrī Tattva-sandarbha, Anuccheda* 9, the four defects of human frailty are: (1) a tendency to make mistakes, (2) the tendency become under the illusion of false ideas and beliefs, (3) the propensity to cheat and (4) imperfect senses.

What Śrīla Gurudeva has come to give is not a lower step on the staircase of mixed *bhakti*, but the topmost level of pure love. Like the *bhakti-rasācārya* Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, he has come to fulfill the innermost heart's desire (*mano 'bhiṣṭa*) of Kali-yuga *pāvana āvatārī* Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, to give us the service to Śrīmatī Rādhikā as Her confidential maidservant. If Śrīla Gurudeva had not come to make all these things accessible to us, we would have been grasping for straws, trying to understand these confidential pastimes with our mundane intellect, or we would have foolishly ignored these pastimes, because others had advised us that they were inappropriate and would compromise our spiritual lives. The person to teach us the proper understanding and method to approach the Lord's amorous relationships without offence is a bona fide representative of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, whose pure heart is immersed in these loving pastimes. Only someone like Śrīla Gurudeva, who is absorbed in the moods of these pastimes with Śrī Rādhā, can plant the seed of pure devotion and nurture it without impediments. These most confidential pastimes are not at all subject to Sanskrit scholarship or artistic creative imagination, but are only revealed to someone who has pleased the Divine Couple and Their devotees with unmotivated, pure, loving service. The supreme treasure that the most munificent Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu came to give personally would have certainly been lost from our vision unless Śrīla Gurudeva had mercifully unveiled it. Śrīla Gurudeva came to give the incomparable gift that Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and all our *guru-varga* came to give, namely the prema of *unnatojjvala-rasa-sva-bhakti-śrīyam*.³ Our material desires and pride would have kept us away if Śrīla Gurudeva had not come into our lives and qualified us with his potent *hari-kathā*. Without him, the pure desire to render unalloyed devotional service in the mood of the Vrajavāsīs would perhaps never enter our hearts.

Śrīla Gurudeva is a vastly learned scholar and author who has written and translated more than one hundred books in Hindi, that have been translated into many languages around the world, with over seventy titles in English. Even though he is ninety-one years old, he is still producing more transcendental literatures every year.

³ The prema of *unnatojjvala-rasa-sva-bhakti-śrīyam* means the *mañjarī-bhāva* of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's maidservants. (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.4)

These books are relished and appreciated by all those who are serious to study the deep Kṛṣṇa conscious meanings of the *rūpānuga ācāryas*.

People are very much eager to learn more about this outstanding preacher of *kevalā-bhakti*, who has manifest with his pen such a vast array of Gauḍīya literature and who has spread this knowledge throughout the whole world. This book helps us to know more intimately the person responsible for all of those books and gives us a chance to become more acquainted with the essential truths that he came to speak. It shows how he protected the *siddhānta* whenever it was needed and how he is the guardian of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. Here the readers will not only know about the greatness of Śrīla Gurudeva's accomplishments, but also his profound, internal purpose and moods. These things cannot be understood by outsiders, but Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja gives us a peek at the gravity and depth of his personality, which no other biographer – no matter how expert – can give.

Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja shows us in very simple language how Śrīla Gurudeva personally applies and demonstrates the instructions of his books in his own life, thereby instructing us how to ourselves act and advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Gurudeva perfectly exemplifies the conclusion of the Lord that one should teach by example. In this book you will see how Śrī Guru perfectly represents the *siddhānta* that is the very substance of the entirety of the Vedas. With logic and discrimination, Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja has described the name, fame, devotional activities and transcendental moods of Śrīla Gurudeva and he has strung this together in such a beautiful way, to show the very essence of the Absolute Truth.

He proves how Śrīla Gurudeva has an 'eternal' relationship with Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja 'based on spontaneous love' and how he is considered by him to be 'the real *guru-sevaka*', the real servant of Śrī Guru. Unscrupulous persons try to defame him in an attempt to establish their own superiority, but their attempts simply increase his transcendental fame and reputation.

Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja has done an amazing service in the form of this biography. Not only is Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja Śrīla Gurudeva's personal servant; Śrīla Gurudeva himself has said on many occasions that he is his 'mother, father, minister, doctor,

dietician, cook and bosom friend'. He personally heard from many of the contemporaries of Śrīla Gurudeva, but mostly he noted down these incidents from hearing directly from Śrīla Gurudeva himself, whom he has served for more than thirty years. He was always by his side, attentively hearing his scriptural debates with opposing parties, his answers to diverse questions, and his personal dealings with all types of different personalities and situations. He gives intimate details of the transcendental qualities and characteristics of Śrīla Gurudeva and explains how they are similar to those of the Lord. He also shows how Śrīla Gurudeva changes people's hearts by delivering the pure transcendental name, *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare* and by always describing the power, qualities and mercy of the holy name. The holy name, which is identical with the Lord, has the power to free us and associate us with those spiritual beauties of the highest possible standards of excellence.

Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja gives a detailed account of how in 1952, at the young age of thirty-one, Śrīla Gurudeva took *sannyāsa*, the renounced order. At that time he taught and presented scriptural quotes which brought about the proper chanting of this *mahā-mantra* when it was being chanted in reverse sequence by almost everyone in the holy places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vraja-maṇḍala. Śrīla Gurudeva would enthusiastically go to the pastime places of the Lord over and over again and describe the Lord's transcendental *līlās* that took place there, greatly inspiring all the devotees who came for pilgrimage. He also explains how Śrīla Gurudeva is constantly chanting the *mahā-mantra* under any circumstance. His presentation will astound even a stone-hearted person.

That mercy you get from the *rasika* Vaiṣṇava is perpetual. It goes on forever and will never stop. This is the supreme treasure. It is not something perishable, like all benedictions you receive from materialistic people. Spiritual greed (*lobha*) will increase when one associates with the *rāgānuga-rasika* Vaiṣṇava, hears from him, or hears about him. When a person hears from his lotus lips about the supremely blissful, sweet pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa – and especially the Lord's *mādhurya* pastimes with the *vraja-gopīs* – that genuine greed (*lobha*) enters the mind or the heart (*citta-vṛtti*).

This book is about the person who is a supreme treasure for the world and who gives the supreme treasure of *bhakti* to the world. People are looking everywhere in the world for treasures, but they fail to realize that the supreme treasure is right there in their heart. Unfortunately, they do not see this and are running after a mirage. Only Śrī Guru can dissolve the mirage, remove the ignorance and give us entrance into the kingdom of supreme, everlasting happiness. We want happiness, but for the most part, it escapes us. Even if we find temporary happiness in some superficial pleasures, it is short-lived and misery comes and takes its place. It is useless even to enter some kind of pseudo-religious movement and externally break our bad habits, if there is no lasting transformation. The speculations of the pseudo-religionists show that they are still completely bewildered by their material existence.

We were also painfully wallowing in total forgetfulness of the Lord, but Śrīla Gurudeva, who is the friend of the destitute and lowly, has overlooked our disqualifications to give us that supreme treasure which is our real welfare.

Ultimately material life and sensual pleasure is a deception that entraps us, bewilders us, keeps us entangled and leaves us hurt. Due to all the suffering, we gain some power of discrimination and eventually we come to the point in our life... where we are exhausted... where we have had enough... where we are truly crying out to the Lord.

When we are truly destitute and deep in our hearts, desperate to have a connection only with God, the Lord hears our sincere longing and warms our hearts by sending His pure devotee, who is our only friend and shelter in this world. Although such association is extremely rare, the Lord will reveal to us His own eternal personal associate, the *bhakta-bhāgavata*. When we know how difficult that association is to attain, then we should sincerely pray for it without duplicity.

We cannot always get the association of living *sādhus*, so in the absence of the *bhakta-bhāgavata*, the Lord's devotee, we can take the association of the other all-auspicious type of *sādhu*, the *grantha-bhāgavata*, the *śāstra*. The *sādhus*, have with great endeavor meticulously written down the *śāstras* for our benefit and we can receive their association there. When we take shelter of these two *sādhus*, the *bhakta-bhāgavata* and the *grantha-bhāgavata*, they will

make us qualified so that we will never give up Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When we always hear their *hari-kathā* laden with their potency, our intelligence will become firmly fixed in the proper philosophical conclusions.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the fountainhead of all *rasas* (*akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*) and we can offer Him our eternal loving service in the mood of deep friendship, maternal or fatherly love, or in amorous love. In the worship of other forms of the Lord, although we can completely surrender unto Him with unwavering faith and love which is fully satisfying, we are not able to offer such confidential service and unconditional love as His friends, parents or lovers.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself in the mood and complexion of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, descended to this world to give love of God. Having reflected on the living entity's difficult and unfortunate situation, Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally appeared in Their combined form of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, who is an ocean of compassion for the fallen souls. Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Mādhava Mahārāja in this book is showing how devotees all over the world are becoming happy and satisfied by hearing the pure message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu from Śrīla Gurudeva. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came some five hundred years ago to give us the topmost, all-auspicious spiritual knowledge and to show us how to practice it in pure love. He has now arranged to send His messenger Śrīla Gurudeva to us so that we can hear pure *hari-kathā* (topics in glorification of Lord Hari and His devotees) flowing constantly from his lotus mouth. If we have the extreme fortune to continually drink the ambrosial nectar that emanates from his lotus mouth and which flows from his pen, we shall never have to live again in misery, adverse to the Supreme Lord. While persons in this world are becoming more and more mad to enjoy their mundane senses, but are instead drowning in misery, searching for wealth, women and mundane reputation and fame, this book will help them to forget such fleeting happiness. Śrīla Gurudeva has never been in forgetfulness of the Lord and he can teach us how to live our life in such constant remembrance. He shows us how we can truly be happy by engaging in Kṛṣṇa's service. There is immense happiness in serving Him and a very relishable love and affection that is not found in material relationships. There are oceans of love and affection in Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode.

Not only is Śrīla Gurudeva the supreme treasure; he is also giving us this invaluable treasure, namely the awakening and nurturing of our eternal loving personal relationship with the Divine Couple. He is not giving us a partially developed understanding, but is giving us the full and perfect philosophical conclusion (*siddhānta*) of the bona fide *gurus* (*ācāryas*) including Lord Caitanya Himself.

The book also talks about some controversial subjects, misunderstandings and slanderous statements. People are deceiving themselves if they do not properly respect a Vaiṣṇava and it is an offence to the holy name to disrespect and blaspheme the saintly devotees whose characters are spotless. Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Mādhava Mahārāja addresses many mistaken viewpoints and misguided mentalities and gives the facts of many incidents that were previously presented giving the wrong impression of Śrīla Gurudeva. He does this to protect the immaculate reputation of our most illustrious Śrīla Gurudeva and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* that he represents. He presents it not as a challenge, but to acquaint the innocent with the real facts and dispel their doubts and to warn them about the seriousness of offending Vaiṣṇavas who are so very dear to the Lord.

A pure devotee has no hostile mentality, personal grudges or dissatisfaction with anyone. Thus anyone who takes initiation of the holy name must wholeheartedly reject any tendency to disregard or disrespect any Vaiṣṇava. Śrī Guru is our greatest well-wisher and best friend. There is no one more merciful than him in this world, but those who are adverse to him cannot see it. A person develops his or her mentality and body in accordance with the activities that they have performed in their previous birth. The Lord is bestowing the fruits of their action, whatever they may be, to enjoy and engage in further acts. Those who are adverse to the Lord will be impelled to act by the external, illusory energy (*māyā*) of the Lord, and those who are surrendered without duplicity will see all the virtues of the Vaiṣṇava revealed in their true features. They will see the Vaiṣṇava's extraordinary transcendental qualities and will not liken them to mundane qualities, whereas those who are impelled by *māyā* and who commit offences, will not.

The example has been given of a palace made entirely of gems. Those whose hearts are pure will see its splendor, whereas an ant or someone with an offensive mentality will only try to find the

hole. If we see how Śrīla Gurudeva is always serving Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala and how he is exclusively surrendered to Them, that will attract us and arouse in us an affection for him. And those who are not gentle and well-behaved towards him, will still unfortunately not be able to recognize the transcendental Vaiṣṇava, no matter how many virtues and material intelligence they may have developed by their *karmas*. They will not be able to judge his exclusive surrender to Their Lordships and will instead select a mundane personality.

Śrīla Gurudeva has brought with him the immaculate moods of the pure devotees and placed it right in the forefront of our consciousness. All we have to do is faithfully pay attention to him and we will benefit remarkably. He is not simply giving us an idea to ponder over like the armchair philosophers. Rather, he is showing us our exact spiritual identity and abode, and how to realize them. We should take advantage of this opportunity. This divine mercy comes only from a specially empowered personality who is overflowing with mercy from Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. No matter how low we *jīvas* have fallen, a powerful *guru* like Śrīla Gurudeva can bring us to the highest spiritual position by nourishing us and awakening our real nature and intrinsic mood of pure love of God.

We invite the sincere readers to deliberate on this first book fully and relish the nature of Śrīla Gurudeva's *śuddha-bhakti*, the ultimate goal of all scriptures. See for yourself how the nectar of the *kṛṣṇa-prema* that he came to give manifests in his life and actions. We sincerely pray that Śrīla Gurudeva, who is the personification of mercy and forgiveness, may transmit his potency into the core of our hearts, so that we can render some pleasing service to fulfill his inner heart's longing to give *prema-bhakti* to the world. If we remain aloof from adverse association, hear from the lotus lips of pure devotees and read their devotional literatures, we will receive the highest, most sublime revelation of all, the supreme treasure, service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala.

I humbly beg your forgiveness for any mistakes,

*Aspiring for the service of
Śrī Hari, Guru & Vaiṣṇavas
Rūpa-Raghunātha dāsa*

PREFACE

FOLLOWING THE SPIRITUAL HIERARCHY of India, I first offer my prostrated obeisances at the lotus feet of my initiating Guru-pādapadma, *nitya-lilā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja* and I offer my prostrated obeisances at the lotus like feet of my instructing Guru, *om viṣṇupāda parivrājakācārya aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja*.

It is on the order of my godbrothers, godsisters and other Vaiṣṇavas, that I completed and submitted this doctoral thesis, ‘The Supreme Treasure Śrīla Gurudeva’, in 2009. I achieved this PhD degree from Florida Vedic College, United States, on 26th May, 2010.

On the inspiration and order of the Vaiṣṇavas, I took this service as a challenge because it is a very hard task. I think that by the causeless mercy of Śrīla Gurudeva, our *guru-paramparā* and all the Vaiṣṇavas, I will be successful in this subject matter.

Since 1996, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja has been continuously traveling around the world. So far, he has travelled more than thirty-five times around the whole world. He is always giving discourses on *bhakti*, or selfless devotion to the Supreme Lord. He regularly had me give lectures on the subject of *guru* and the disciple in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, and particularly on *guru-sevā*. Wherever I travel with Śrīla Gurudeva, on his order, in my first class among the many classes that I give wherever we stay, I have tried my level best to discuss *śrī guru*, the relation between *śrī guru* and disciple, and how to perform *guru-sevā*. In this way, I am bound to say something about both my *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*. I collected in note form what I have heard at different times from my *śikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, my *dikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and *param-pūjapāda* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and also what I have heard from different Vaiṣṇavas and then tried to make them into a book.

For the past thirty years, I have gathered different quotations and subject matter. When I first started this work, I requested Śrīla Gurudeva to check my work to see if these points were okay or not. At the time I started this book I was in Cebu in the Philippines. When I told Śrīla Gurudeva two or three of the points, he humbly said, “No, I should not listen.”

I requested, “Why not?”

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, “It is not good for me to listen to my own glorification.”

I said, “If you don’t tell me if this is correct or not, then who will rectify me? Who will correct me?”

Gurudeva said, “No, I’m sorry, I cannot help you with this.”

Two days later, I requested Śrīla Gurudeva, “If you think that to listen to your own glories is not good for you, whenever it is your *vyāsa-pūjā*, different devotees are glorifying you. At that time, are you putting in earplugs, or are you listening to their offerings?”

The second argument I gave was as follows: “At the time of the *vyāsa-pūjā* of our beloved Parama-gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, yourself, my Guru-pādapadma, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and *param-pujyapada* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, used to glorify our Param-gurudeva. At that time, did Param-gurudeva listen to his glories from all of you or not? At that time, did he put in earplugs or not?”

My third argument was, “When Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda was present in this world, he had so many qualified disciples and at the time of *vyāsa-pūjā*, they also glorified him. At that time, did he make any objection, or did he allow them to speak about him? If Prabhupāda allowed his disciples to glorify him and if Parama-gurudeva allowed all of you to glorify him and at the time of your own *vyāsa-pūjā*, you allow all disciples and devotees to glorify you, if I glorify you and request you to check if this point is okay or not, then what wrong am I doing?”

Śrīla Gurudeva became speechless and could not refute my arguments. After that, he listened to everything thoroughly and told that, “Yes, this is very nice. It will be very good.” And then I got blessings from Śrīla Gurudeva to compile this doctoral thesis. A relevant selection of these points is presented in this work.

This treatise serves toward the fulfillment of a Ph.D. in Vaiṣṇava Philosophy from Florida Vedic College. Since the GVP is exclusively for the publication of Śrīla Gurudeva's books, this book is not printed under the GVP logo. However, it is with much gratitude that I have completed this work using the valuable materials published by GVP, from which, I have extensively made excerpts and quotations in many important sections of the book.

I would like to thank the individuals who have encouraged and assisted me in one way or another. I pray to the lotus feet of Śrīla Gurudeva (who has captured Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Divine Couple in his heart, and is serving Them continuously, twenty-four hours a day) that he blesses whoever has helped me in any way to bring forth this book, to progress rapidly in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

May Śrīla Gurudeva, who is the embodiment of the Supreme Lord's compassion, shower upon me abundant mercy by which I can attain ever-increasing qualification to serve his innermost desire. This is my humble prayer at his lotus feet, which can bestow *prema*.

If any devotee wants to reproduce or translate this work, or portions of the work, then they are advised to contact the author.

Hare Kṛṣṇa!

Source of Inspiration

The main source of inspiration in this book is *paramārādhya* Śrīla Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Many others have kindly encouraged and supported me such as: B.V. Tirtha Mahārāja, Premānanda dāsa, B.V. Parivrajaka Mahārāja, B.V. Padmanābha Mahārāja, B.V. Sajjana Mahārāja, B.V. Nemi Mahārāja, B.V. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, B.V. Tridaṇḍi Mahārāja, B.V. Dāmodara Mahārāja, B.V. Govinda Mahārāja, B.V. Harijana Mahārāja, Brajanātha dāsa, Mādhava-prīya dāsa, Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā dāsa, Amala-kṛṣṇa dāsa, Vijaya-kṛṣṇa dāsa, Dvija-kṛṣṇa dāsa, Rāmacandra dāsa, Rohininandana dāsa, Sañjaya dāsa (Sr.), Hare-kṛṣṇa dāsa, Balarāma dāsa, Sañjaya dāsa (Jr.), Subala-sakhā dāsa, Śyāmarāṇi dāsi and Vṛndā-devī dāsī.

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Apology

By the causeless mercy of Śrīla Gurudeva, *guru-paramparā* and all Vaiṣṇavas, I have tried my level best to present the readers the teachings and biography of Śrīla Gurudeva. First of all, I beg forgiveness for not putting all the events in regular historical sequence. I could have done so but this is to ensure that appropriate philosophical truths and incidents are presented timely to the readers. In this way, I have recorded many of these pastimes from memories that came first in my mind, inspired by the style of Paṇḍita Jagadānanda who wrote the pastimes of the Lord in *Prema-vivarta* according to his loving remembrances and not according to the standard sequential order. This book is therefore by no means an attempt to narrate the pastimes of Śrīla Gurudeva in chronological sequence.

This biographical style may not appeal to every reader....not possible. Still, this book may be considered as a biography full of *siddhānta*, rather than an impartial study.

Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja has written in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 2.2.85, “*prabhuryei ācaraṇa, sei kari varṇana, sarva-citta nāri arādhite* – Some may complain that I have been unduly harsh and perhaps others may object that I have been overly mild. However, I am only trying to describe the truth.”

I think *sāragrahī* Vaiṣṇavas will understand these teachings by overlooking the faults and accepting the good qualities.

I offer homage at the lotes feet of all Vaiṣṇavas holding a blade of grass between my teeth. I humbly beg for their mercy.

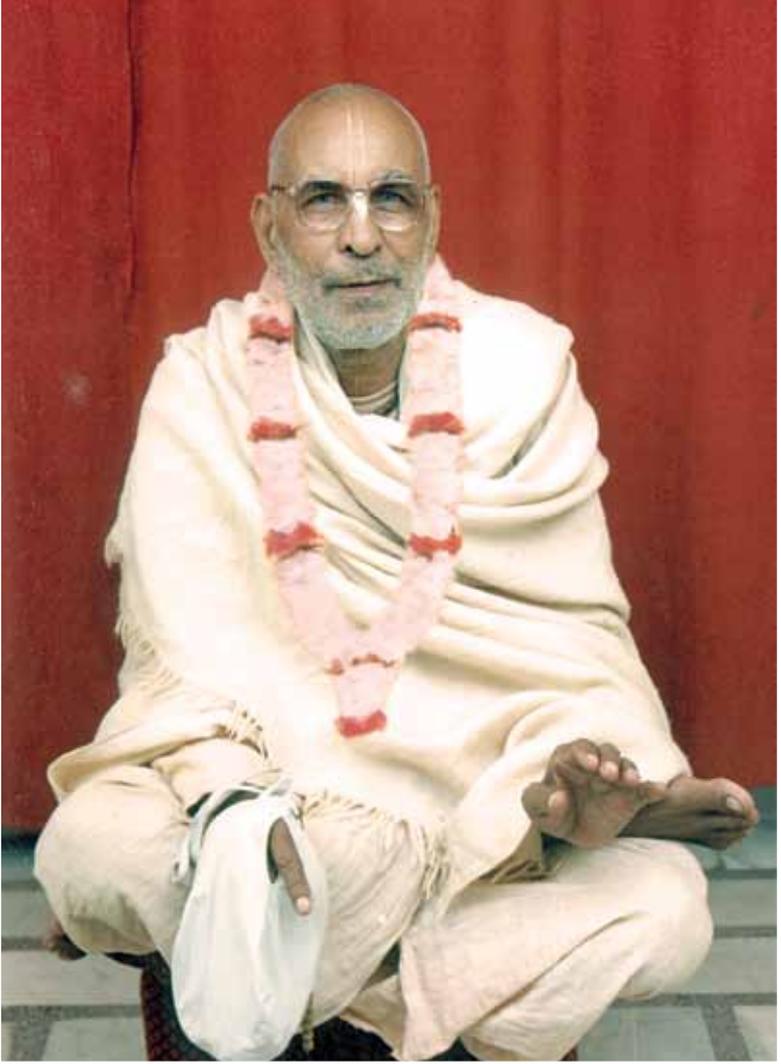
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(Dr. Navīna Kṛṣṇa Brahmācārī, PhD – Philosophy,
PhD – Vaiṣṇava Philosophy)

GURU-VARGA



The Three Pillars of Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja—

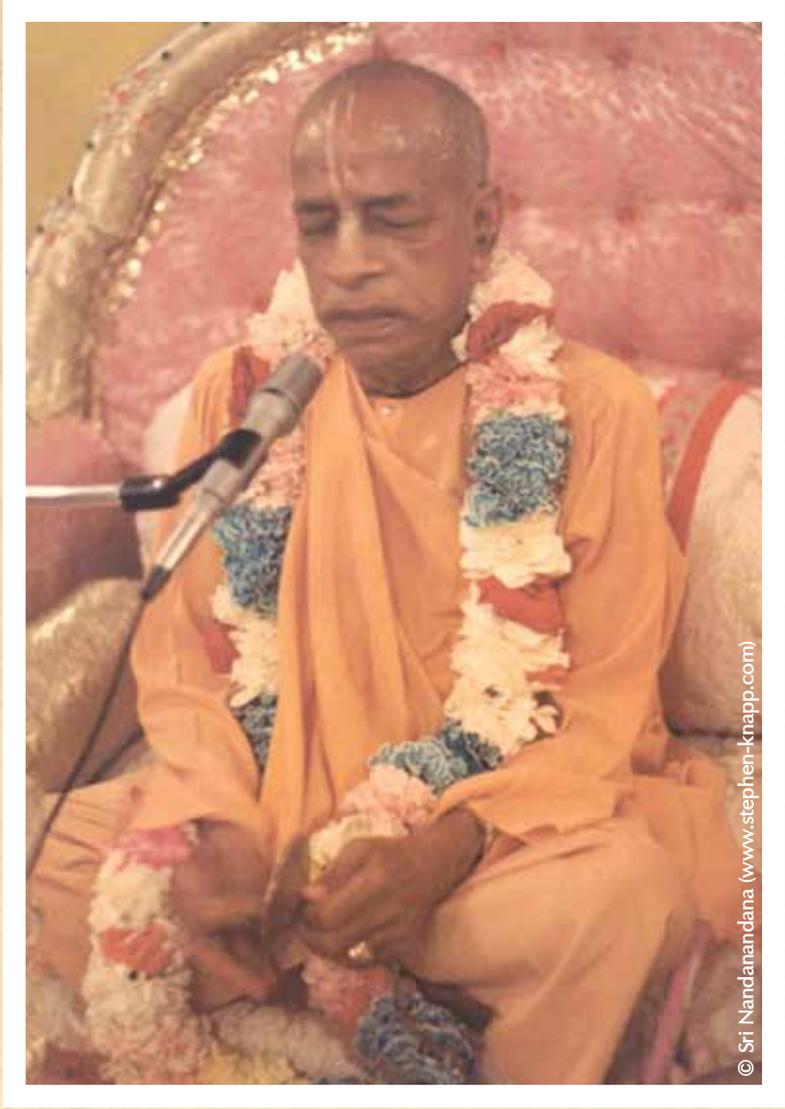
My *śikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, my *dikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and *param-pūjapāda* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja



om viṣṇupāda paramahaṁsa parivrājakācārya
Śrī Śrīmad
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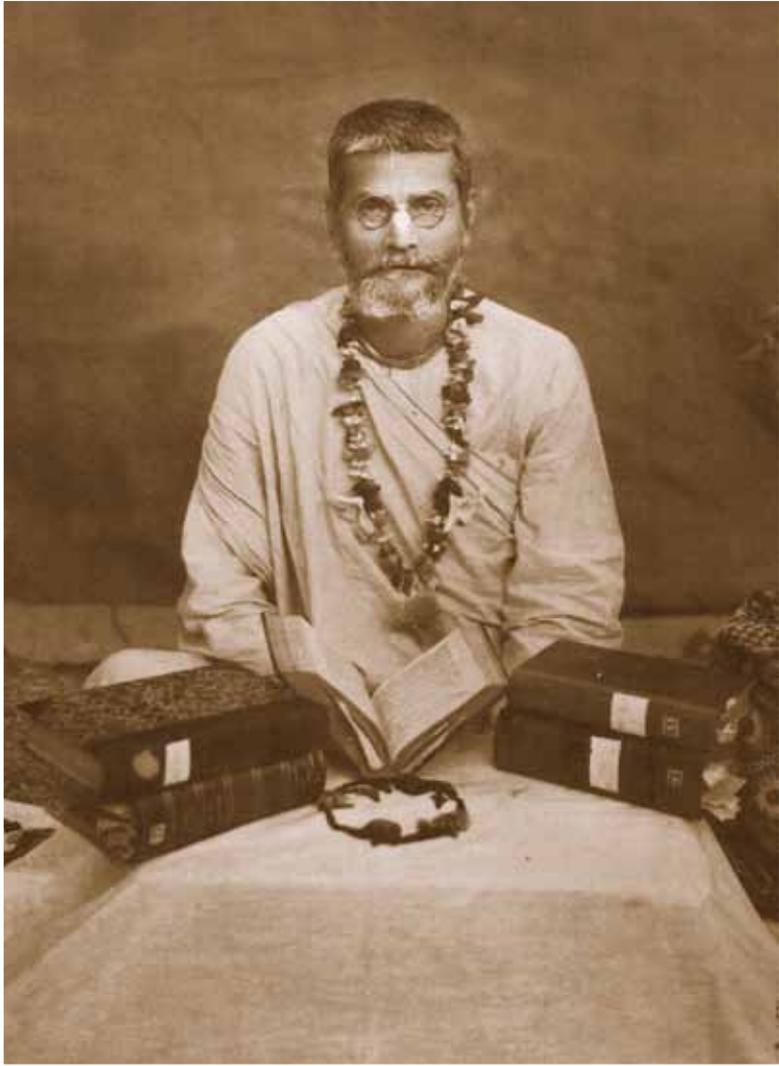


nitya-lilā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
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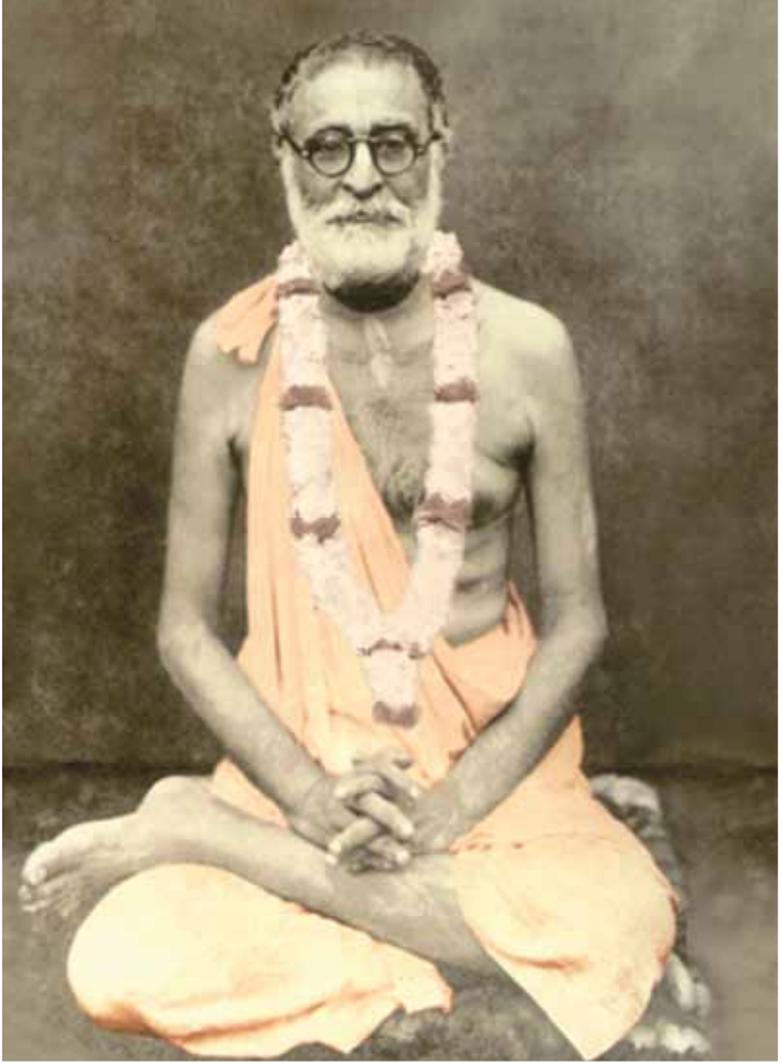
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Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja



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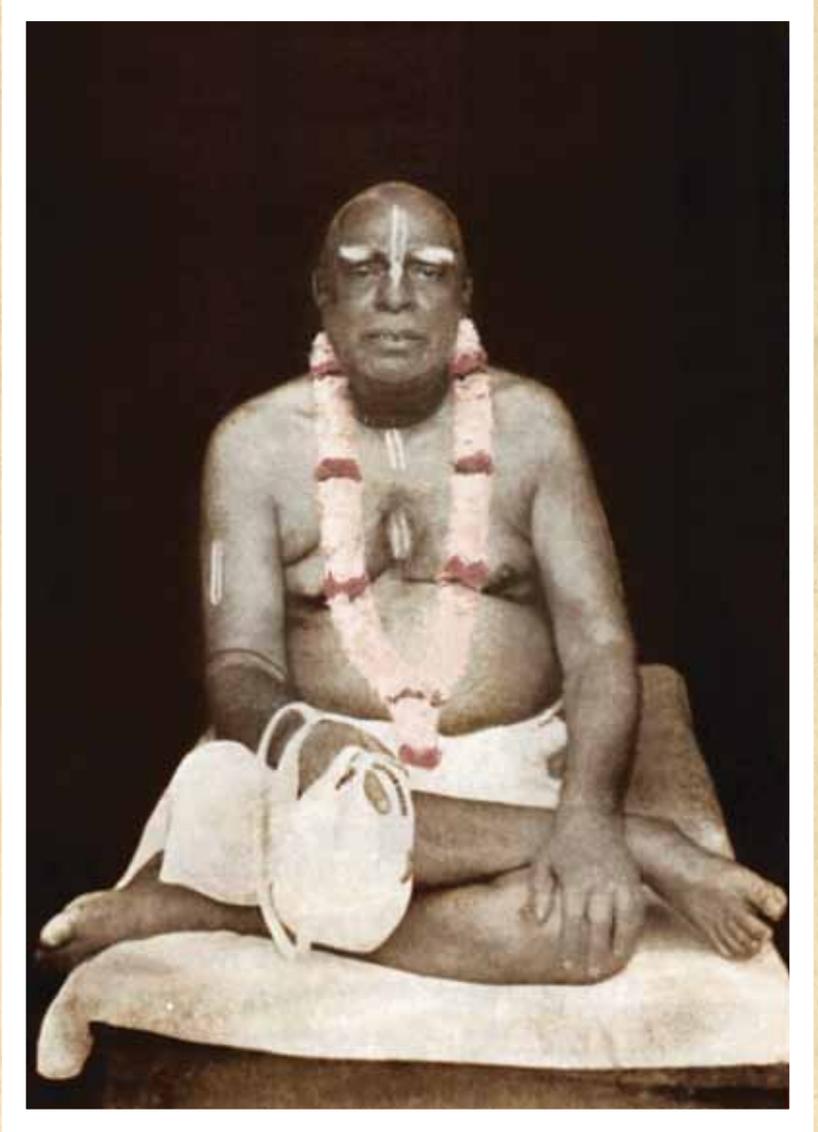
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Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda



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Śrī Śrīla
Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
Saccidānanda
Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura

INTRODUCTION

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-salākayā
cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ*

This book is about the most auspicious life and teachings of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. It is with great pleasure that we finally present this long anticipated book about Śrīla Gurudeva who is a treasure house of the most ecstatic form of pure love of God. Those who are fortunate will take advantage of this book. This is more than an historical timeline of events, for this book wonderfully summarizes the entire Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy and *siddhānta* as practised by an unalloyed, pure devotee of the Lord.

Hearing about a pure devotee is very auspicious, as it eradicates all doubts, misconceptions, misunderstandings and confusions on the path of pure devotional service. Those who are seriously looking for happiness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness must certainly give up all preconceived assumptions and transcend all sectarian designations, so that they can read this book with an open mind and get the real benefit of association with a fully realized Vaiṣṇava.

Śrī *guru* is the personification of Kṛṣṇa's mercy in this world. He comes to deliver the conditioned souls by enlightening them on the constitutional nature and eternal function of the soul. Gradually he reveals our eternal relationship and intimate service to the Lord. When we sincerely offer our life and soul to his lotus feet, our good fortune arises and in this way *śrī guru* opens the way to boundless peace and happiness for the conditioned soul.

Everyone tries to remove their suffering and increase their happiness. Some try to achieve this by hard labour and following moral principles, while others take drugs, have illicit relationships, steal and such in an attempt to improve the material conditions of their life. However, we see that all these attempts are baffled and happiness still remains elusive. Whatever happiness we find in this world is meager and not everlasting.

For example, one gains some pleasure by eating food, but if one keeps on eating, the same food that gives one pleasure will cause suffering. One does not want old age, diseases and death to come; yet they come. Any sane person will ponder over this problem and try to find a solution.

The scriptures tell us that we are not our bodies; rather we are souls, eternal parts and parcels of the supreme personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The soul's eternal constitutional function (*dharma*) is eternal service and obedience to Kṛṣṇa. When the soul forgets his true identity as an eternal servant of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and instead identifies himself with the body, he is subjected to the tyranny of the illusory potency of the Lord (*māyā*) and his eternal constitutional function becomes perverted.

In an attempt to enjoy, the soul wanders in the material world taking one material body after another. However, all of his efforts to enjoy are obstructed by the external potency of the Lord. The material body is subjected to various types of suffering such as birth, old age, disease and death. The embodied living entity is always subject to the three types of miseries, namely, miseries caused by the mind, miseries caused by other living entities and miseries due to natural disturbances. However, the purpose of suffering is simply so that the living entities can realize that this suffering is unwanted and that this material world is not their home. The living entities can then strive for something everlasting or eternal.

The only way to achieve everlasting happiness is by performing devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is infinitely merciful, sends his eternal associates to teach us this process, so a seeker of everlasting happiness must necessarily take shelter of such people and learn this process from them. Such a teacher who can give us this supreme treasure is called a *guru*.

Service to *guru* is the backbone of devotional absorption (*bhajana*). Whoever wants to enter into the realm of *bhajana*, must first dedicate his life to the service of a bona fide *guru*. Such a *guru* will never consider the disciple to be his own property. Rather, he will consider the disciple to belong to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Divine Couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. The bona fide *guru* will transfer the disciple's attachment and dedication for himself (for *guru*) to Them.

Although he is an expansion (*aveṣa*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He never considers himself to be Śrī Kṛṣṇa; He always thinks that he is His eternal servant.

Our beloved Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, is such a *guru*. Whoever reads this work will have a clear conception of the subject of Śrīla Gurudeva and his teachings. This book will be like a lighthouse that guides those aspirants who want to progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to reach spiritual perfection. Just as Śrīla Vyāsadeva got inspiration by hearing the life history of his Gurudeva, Śrī Nārada Ṛṣi, one can get inspiration from hearing the biography of Śrīla Gurudeva. Without hearing about and serving *śrī guru*, no one can advance in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness either now, or in the future.

The mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is causeless, as it is independent of any material cause or piety. It is only by such causeless mercy that the *jīva* can obtain the merciful, sidelong glance of the eternally youthful couple of Vraja Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa and join Them in Their eternal loving pastimes.

Therefore, without the mercy of real *sādhus* and *śrī guru*, pure spiritual desires for perfection will never awaken and fructify.

In describing the bona fide *guru*, it is never enough to just describe his external pastimes – what he was wearing, where, when, what foods he likes, etc. To properly glorify him, one must explain his teachings and his *siddhānta*. Unless one understands the teachings of the spiritual master, one cannot understand his mood, and if one does not understand his mood, one will not understand what his mission is all about. By understanding his mood, one can properly execute his mission. The mission of the bona fide *guru* is not independent of the previous *ācāryas*; it is the continuation of the mission that Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī established on behalf of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī understood the inner mood of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and thus wrote many transcendental books on pure *bhakti* to establish His mission. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to give *vraja-prema* through *nāma*, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. In the same way, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda is giving the same *vraja-prema* through *nāma*. The same mood and objective is being carried out by the pure devotees in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line such as Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī

Ṭhākura, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja.

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja is similarly continuing this powerful wave of pure *bhakti* – *bhakti* that is without a tinge of speculation, mundane *jñāna* or *karma*.

Śrī *guru* and his mission are thus never independent. The entire disciplic succession (*guru-varga*) is always with him. Śrī *guru* teaches lucidly and systematically all that he received from his spiritual master – the a,b,c, the x,y,z, and everything in between. Without securing his guiding grace, one will not be able to understand the deep meaning of his message.

People with ambitions other than to humbly serve śrī *guru* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are led astray by their own mind. Such unfortunate persons create enmity by finding faults in pure devotees and are unable to reconcile the apparent differences in the pure teachings of Vaiṣṇavas. We should not hear from such persons who are the cause of their own misfortune. To understand the spiritual meaning of the pure devotee's words, one has to serve the pure devotee favourably and intimately and thus by the grace of śrī *guru*, everything will be revealed in the heart. We will then be able to appreciate and understand the uncompromised quality of the *siddhānta* of śrī *guru*.

There is no confusion as to what is pure *bhakti* but as long as our heart is torn with material desires we will not be single pointed in our desire to serve purely.

Unless we are ready and willing to accept pure *bhakti* in our heart, we will not be able to recognize or fully appreciate a pure devotee. Our intelligence will be polluted and we will lose this rare opportunity which has been made accessible to humanity by the most munificent Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has clearly explained that the greatest opposition in the path of *bhakti* is the impersonal *māyāvāda* philosophy. This impersonalism comes in many forms and keeps us deeply entrenched in illusion, such as the hollow pride of empirical ignorance, which makes its way into the heart of immature devotees, who under such influence regard certain Vaiṣṇavas as enemies.

All devotees of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya should take shelter in His eternal spiritual community and unite to fight against such impersonalism and voidism.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is declared by all authorities and throughout the Vedas. Every living entity is His eternal servant. Our mind and senses are meant to be engaged in His service and only by such engagement will we be truly happy. This engagement is only given by a pure devotee. Śrī Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself to His pure devotee. To the non-devotees, Kṛṣṇa appears in His deluding feature. When the conditioned soul associates with the non-devotee, the Lord does not reveal Himself. Therefore the association of living pure devotees is most essential.

One's nature is determined and shaped by the company one keeps. Such association shapes one's character. The fruitive activities we performed in our past life and our past associations have moulded our nature in this current life.

By association with the living pure devotees and by understanding the Vaiṣṇava books, under their guidance, our lower nature will be transformed into good character.

The example is described in the Vedic scripture of a clear quartz crystal. It assumes the colour of any object in its proximity. Similarly, a person will acquire the qualities of whomever they join company with. Therefore association with saintly persons (*sādhu-saṅga*) is recommended throughout all revealed scriptures.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.23.55) clearly affirms:

*saṅgo yaḥ saṁsṛter hetur asatsu vihito 'dhiyā
sa eva sādhuṣu kṛto niḥsaṅgatvāya kalpate*

By associating with worldly-minded materialists, a person is bound to undergo severe suffering in material existence. He will certainly have to bear the consequences of his association, even if he cannot distinguish between good and bad. By associating with saintly persons, however, a person attains complete freedom from worldly attachments (*niḥsaṅgatva*).

Besides earnestly engaging in good association (*sādhū-saṅga*), it is also essential to give up unfavourable association, as recommended in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (3.31.33–34):

*satyaṁ śaucaṁ dayā maunaṁ buddhiḥ śrīr hrīr yaśaḥ kṣamā
śamo damo bhagaś ceti yat-saṅgād yāti saṅkṣayam
teṣv aśānteṣu mūḍheṣu khaṅḍitātmasv asādhuṣu
saṅgam na kuryāc chocyeṣu yoṣit-kriḍā-mṛgeṣu ca*

Worldly association destroys all of one's virtues like truthfulness, cleanliness, mercy, gravity, intelligence, shyness, prosperity, reputation, forgiveness, control of the mind, control of the senses, good fortune and opulence. One should utterly reject the company of a person who is not a *sādhū*, considering such association to be extremely miserable, for such a wicked and restless fool is but a dancing dog in the hands of a woman and is thereby simply bent on annihilating himself.

This book describes the necessity of association of saintly persons (*sādhū-saṅga*) and explains who is a bona fide *guru*, what are the rarely understood symptoms of a genuine *sādhū* and especially, how to attain the desired goal of life. The pastimes of Śrīla Gurudeva have been presented here so as to enable the devotees to associate with him.

When I joined the Gauḍīya Maṭha, my revered *dikṣā-guru* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja specifically put me under the loving care of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and ordered me to serve him. Consequently, I received the opportunity to associate closely with both of these divine personalities. They were Godbrothers, dear disciples of Parama-gurudeva Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and the respect and intimacy they shared was unparalleled. For many years my *dikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the *ācārya* and initiating *guru* of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti.

At that time Śrīla Gurudeva was not initiating disciples, but was always guiding and instructing devotees. He taught all of us in the *maṭha* by his personal example, always emphasizing the *trṇād-āpi sunīcena* verse by Lord Caitanya, which states that one should be humbler than a blade of grass and more forbearing than a tree, and that one should offer respect to everyone without desiring respect from others. His unique quality was that he was always speaking

hari-kathā and telling us that in order to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy, we should constantly pray for the mercy of His beloved Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. In his *bhajana* he was never proud, but on the contrary was always tolerant, merciful and a well-wisher of all. If there were any issues or disagreements between any devotees, whichever way Śrīla Gurudeva decided to handle the matter was always fully backed by my *dikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Therefore, whatever Śrīla Gurudeva ordered was the mandate for everyone in the Samiti.

The Vedic scriptures and the writings of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* direct the sincere seeker of the truth to the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. By submissive hearing with an open mind to the transcendental sound appearing on the lips of a pure devotee, one learns about Kṛṣṇa who is the Absolute Truth.

The conditioned soul cannot directly hear Śrī Kṛṣṇa on his own strength. His words have to be heard from the lips of a pure devotee. If one does not seek help from the pure devotee, one will surely be deluded. Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears in the heart of the pure devotee and only when the conditioned soul hears the holy name and pastimes of the Lord from the lips of such a *sādhu* can he perceive the Lord who is identical with His transcendental name, His divine form, qualities, activities and paraphernalia.

To properly understand the teachings of the great Vaiṣṇavas, one requires a service attitude that is free from mundane desires, mundane knowledge and speculation. The divine message is not transmitted by scholars interested in displaying erudition and minor details of technical knowledge. One will only be in a position to receive the divine message – that same message that was received by the *guru* in *paramparā* – when the *guru* is pleased.

One cannot approach the Lord without adhering to the method He has Himself prescribed. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself created the *guru-paramparā* system in order to receive transcendental knowledge. Thus the living pure devotee is the perfect medium for the appearance of the Lord to the conditioned souls. Otherwise, the Lord will remain covered and the teachings of the great Vaiṣṇavas will also be grossly misunderstood. This is the bona fide way to understand and attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa that He Himself has given. There is no other way. Any other

speculative and unauthorized methods to attain Kṛṣṇa are simply manifestations of impersonalism.

Lord Śiva once said to his consort Pārvatī:

“O Bhagavatī, among thousands upon thousands of persons desiring salvation, perhaps one exhibits the characteristics of a liberated soul. Among thousands upon thousands of such persons, maybe one actually achieves spiritual realisation and perfection. And among millions and millions of perfected and liberated souls, perhaps one, on the strength of his past virtuous activities (*sukṛti*) and good association (*sat-saṅga*), is devoted to Lord Nārāyaṇa. Just see, the devotees of Lord Nārāyaṇa are self-satisfied and therefore they are extremely rare. But look here. If the pure devotee who serves Lord Nārāyaṇa in the mood of servitorship (*dāsyā-rasa*) is so rare, how much more uncommon is he who serves Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the mood of amorous love (*mādhurya-rasa*).”

May this glorification of Śrīla Gurudeva, who is very dear to Śrīmatī Rādhikā, bring great happiness to the hearts of all the Vaiṣṇavas.

Completed on the occasion of Śrī Annakūṭa,
Śrī Gaurabda 524, 7 November, 2010

Tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu Bhaktivedānta Mādhava Mahārāja
(Dr. N. K. Brahmācārī, Ph.D.)

MAṄGALĀCARAṄA

vande 'haṁ śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-pada-kamalaṁ śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāṁś ca
śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātaṁ saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānvitāṁ taṁ sa-jīvam
sādvaitāṁ sāvadhūtaṁ parijana-sahitaṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devaṁ
śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānvitāṁś ca

I offer *praṇāmas* to the lotus feet of *śrī gurudeva* (both *dīkṣā* and *bhajana-śikṣā-gurus*); to our entire disciplic succession (*guru-varga*) and all other Vaiṣṇavas; to Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, and his elder brother Śrī Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, accompanied by Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and their associates; to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates headed by Śrī Advaita Prabhu, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu; and to the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, who are accompanied by Śrī Lalitā, Śrī Viśākhā and all the other *sakhīs*.

*oṁ ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

O Śrīla Gurudeva, you are so merciful. With the torchlight of divine knowledge, you have opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance. Praying from the core of my heart, I humbly offer my deep *praṇāma* at your lotus feet.

*vande śrī pādpadmāḥ śrī vāmana-nārayaṇa-trivikramāḥ
yeṣāṁ kṛpā prasādaiḥ vraja bhakti ḥṛdi prakāṣyati*

I worship the lotus feet of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārayaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja. By their

causeless mercy, *bhakti* will manifest in the hearts of those who follow them.

*śrī thākurānī priya dayitāya kṛpābdhaye
tattva-traya pradānāya vāmanāya namo namah*

I offer my obeisances to the lotus feet of *nitya-lilā praviṣṭha om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja*, who always used to address Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī as Ṭhakurānī; who is very near and dear to Her; who is an ocean of mercy; and who gives the conditioned souls transcendental knowledge of the three *tattvas*, namely, *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana*.

*śrī-nityānanda-abhinnāya gaura-kāmaika-carine
rūpānugā-pravarāya 'śrī-rāga' iti svarūpini*

He is the non-different manifestation of *akhanda-guru-tattva* (the principle of *śrī guru* as one undivided whole), Śrīman Nityānanda Prabhu. He fulfilled the inner desire of Śrī Gaurasundara by preaching *rāga-mārga-bhakti* to the whole world. I offer *praṇāma* to the most worshipable lotus feet of my Śrī Gurudeva, who is the best among the *rūpānugas* and who, in his eternal transcendental form (*siddha-svarūpa*), is Śrīmatī Rādhā Ṭhakurānī's Rāga-mañjari.

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya rādhikāya priyātmane
śrī-śrīmad-bhaktivedānta-nārāyaṇa iti nāmine*

I offer *praṇāma* to *om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja*, who is very dear to Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-lilā kathāne sudakṣam audārya-mādhurya guṇais ca yuktam
varam vareṇyam puruṣam mahāntam nārāyaṇam tvam śirasā namāmi*

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja is expert in describing *kṛṣṇa-lilā*. He is endowed with the qualities of

magnanimity and sweetness, and he is the best of the great souls. He is able to freely distribute Kṛṣṇa's sweetness to others because he is always relishing that sweetness himself. I bow down and place my head at his lotus feet.

*yugācārya prabhum vande nārāyaṇa karuṇalayam
rādhā-dāsyē lobham dattvā tārayati bhuvana trayam*

I worship Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja who was awarded the title of *yugācārya* and who is the abode of mercy. He shows the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and thus delivers the three worlds.¹

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhūtale
śrimate bhaktivedānta svāmin iti nāmine
namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-śūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

I offer my respectful obeisances to the lotus feet of *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī* who is very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O dear servant of Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Gaurasundara and delivering the Western countries which are filled with impersonalism and voidism.

*vāñchā-kalpa-tarubyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca
patitānām pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

I offer *praṇāmas* unto all the Vaiṣṇavas, who are just like wish-fulfilling desire trees, who are an ocean of mercy and who deliver the fallen, conditioned souls.

.....
¹ Śrīla Gurudeva was awarded the title of *yugācārya* by Śrīman Dipak Bhaṭṭa, the *guru* and *mahānta* (spiritual leader) of Śrī Varṣana Temple (Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's father's royal palace) in Vraja, India. The most benevolent Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu delivered pure *bhakti* to the three worlds and Śrīla Gurudeva continues to deliver that same pure *bhakti* in a similar way.

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya praṅbhū nityānanda
śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*

I offer my respectful obeisances to the most munificent Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya who is known as Gaura because of His golden complexion. I offer my respectful obeisances to His immediate expansion, Śrī Nityānanda Praṅbhū; to His incarnation, Śrī Advaita Ācārya; to His internal potency, Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita; to His great pure devotee, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita; and to all the devotees who follow Him.

*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*

ŚRĪ GURU TATTVA AND ŚRĪ GURU SEVAKA

THE PATH OF AUSPICIOUSNESS

Human life is meant for inquiry about the Supreme Absolute Truth. This is stated in *Vedānta-sūtra* (1.1.1), “*athato brahma-jijñāsa* – Now is the time to enquire about the Absolute Truth.”

This Supreme Absolute Truth is manifested in three features:

- (1) The impersonal Brahman (the effulgence of the Lord’s transcendental body)
- (2) The localized Paramātmā (Supersoul)
- (3) Svayam Bhagavān (Supreme Personality of Godhead)

This is confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.11):

*vadanti tat tattva-vidas
tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam
brahmeti paramātmēti
bhagavān iti śabdyate*

Great seers who know the nature of the Absolute Truth describe that non-dual reality in three ways: as impersonal Brahman, as localized Paramātmā and as Svayam Bhagavān, the Personality of Godhead.

Of these three features, Svayam Bhagavān is the highest and most complete manifestation of the Supreme Absolute Truth.

*haris tv ekaṁ tattvaṁ vidhi-śiva-sureśa-praṇamitaḥ
yad evedaṁ brahma prakṛti-rahitaṁ tat tv anumahaḥ
parātmā tasyāmśo jagad-aṇu-gato viśva-janakaḥ
sa vai rādhā-kānto nava-jalada-kāntiś cid-udayaḥ*

Dāsa-mūla-tattva (2)

Indeed, Śrī Hari, to whom Brahmā, Śiva, Indra and other demigods continuously offer obeisances, is the one and only Supreme Absolute Truth. The impersonal Brahman (*nirviṣeṣa-brahma*), which is devoid of *śakti*, is Śrī Hari's bodily effulgence. Mahā-Viṣṇu, who has created the universe and who has entered into it as the indwelling Supersoul (Paramātmā) of all, is simply His partial manifestation. That Śrī Hari alone, the very form of transcendental reality (*cit-svarūpa*), whose complexion is the colour of a freshly formed thunder cloud, is Śrī Rādhā-kānta, the beloved of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

Śrī Bhagavān's form (*vigraha*) is the fullest embodiment of eternity (*sat*), knowledge (*cid*) and bliss (*ānanda*). Śrī Bhagavān possesses all six opulences in full, for He has complete beauty, complete fame, complete wealth, complete strength, complete knowledge and complete renunciation. Śrī Bhagavān eternally exists as the supremely potent *puruṣa*, Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose form of eternity, knowledge and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*) is adorned with the six opulences to the highest degree.

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*

Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā (5.1)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, is the embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the controller of all controllers, and the source of all incarnations. He has no beginning or origin, though He is the source of everything and the primary cause of all causes.

All the Vedas, Upaniṣads and Purāṇas declare by direct or indirect analysis that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only subject to be known.

This is revealed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15): *vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyo*. *Vedānta-sūtra* is the essence of the Vedas and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the explanation of Vedānta. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* declares:

*ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ
kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.3.28)*

All *avatāras* beginning with Śrī Rāma, Śrī Nṛsimha and so on, are parts and parts of the parts of the Supreme Person, Śrī Bhagavān. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead, Svayam Bhagavān.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa confirms in *Bhagavad-gītā* that there is no truth greater or higher than Him:

*mattaḥ parataram nānyat
kiñcid asti dhanañjaya
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ
sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva
Bhagavad-gītā (7.7)*

O Arjuna, there is nothing superior to Me. Everything and everyone is dependent on Me, resting upon Me as pearls are strung on a thread.

To approach and to attain that Śrī Bhagavān, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, there is no other method than the process of devotional service.

*bhaktiyā mām abhijānāti
yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ
Bhagavad-gītā (18.55)*

It is only through *bhakti* that one can know the *tattva* of My glories and *svarūpa*.

The conclusion of all transcendental knowledge is devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*yo mām evam asammūḍho
jānāti puruṣottamam
sa sarva-vid bhajati mām
sarva-bhāvena bhārata*

Bhagavad-gītā (15.19)

O Bhārata (Arjuna), one who is not deluded by various opinions, and who knows Me as Puruṣottama, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, actually knows everything and he, therefore, engages wholeheartedly in *bhajana* to Me.

This Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself came as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach us how to perform devotional service. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Himself Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*yad advaitam brahmopaniṣadi tad apy asya tanu-bhā
ya ātmāntar-yāmī puruṣa iti so 'syāṁśa-vibhavaḥ
ṣaḍ-aiśvaryaiḥ pūrṇo ya iha bhagavān sa svayam ayaṁ
na caitanyāt kṛṣṇāj jagati para-tattvaṁ param iha
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā (2.5)*

What the Upaniṣads describe as the impersonal Brahman is but the effulgence of His body, and the Lord known as the Supersoul is but His localized plenary portion. Lord Caitanya is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, full with six opulences. He is the Supreme Absolute Truth and no other truth is greater than or equal to Him.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's compassion is also complete. In comparison, the mercy of all other *avatāras* – such as the fish

incarnation, Matsyadeva; the tortoise incarnation, Kūrmadeva; the boar incarnation, Varāhadeva; Lord Nṛsimhadeva; Lord Rāmacandra; and even Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra – is partial. They bestowed Their compassion only upon those who surrendered to Them and They annihilated those who were antagonistic to them. Mahāprabhu, however, bestowed His compassion even upon offenders such as Chānd Kāzi and the followers of Buddhism in South India who were antagonistic to Him. He is therefore known as the most munificent (*mahā-vadanyaya*) and His compassion is magnanimous and full of auspiciousness (*amanda-udaya-dayā*).

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to give that which was never given before: *nāma-prema*. What is *nāma-prema*? It is *prema* that manifests through the holy names: Hare, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma:

sei dvāre ācaṇḍāle kīrtana sañcāre
nāma-prema-mālā gāñthi' parāila saṁsāre
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā (4.40)

He thus spread *kīrtana* even among the untouchables and garlanded the entire material world with a wreath of the holy name and *prema*.

In this age of Kali, the prescribed religious duty (*yuga-dharma*) establishes *hari-nāma* and religious principles, but Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came especially to give *nāma-prema*. This *prema* is like a thread and the serving moods of servitude, friendship, parenthood and amorous love towards the Lord (*dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya-rasas*) are like flowers that are connected by the thread of *prema*. *Prema* is the common basis of all these serving moods just as a thread is the basis of a garland. Therefore, Mahāprabhu distributed the holy name with *prema*. He gave the *prema* of *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya-rasa*; and He especially gave the loving *mādhurya-rasa* of the *gopīs*.

*anarpita-carim cirāt karuṇayāvatiṛṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śrīyam
hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śacī-nandanah
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā (1.4)*

May that Lord, who is known as the son of Śrīmatī Sacidevī, be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart! Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what has not been given in a very long time: *rādhā-pālya-dāsyam*, the service of Śrīmatī Rādhikā as Her confidential maidservant.

That same Śrī Kṛṣṇa has mercifully appeared in this material world as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, taking the mood and bodily hue of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, to spread *unnatojjvala-rasa parakīyā-bhāva*, service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa as a maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. However, it is not possible to receive that mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu or Śrī Kṛṣṇa without receiving the mercy of *śrī gurudeva*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *śrī gurudeva*'s property, so one can never become eligible to render service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa without rendering service to *śrī gurudeva*. To serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one must first become *śrī guru*'s property. Only in this way, will one attain service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*). It is not possible to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa without taking shelter of *śrī guru* (*guru-anugatya*) and serving him (*guru-sevā*).

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda explains that knowledge of our relationship with the Absolute (*sambandha-jñāna*) is awakened only by the mercy of *śrī guru*. When this happens, we come to know that we are the eternal servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and that every object throughout the universe is an instrument for serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam*). In that self-realized, constitutional state, our only activity is to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name is truly Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, so service to *śrī nāma* is indeed service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The devotee sees that he is the servant

of *śrī nāma*, that every living entity within this universe is meant to bring joy to Kṛṣṇa and that each and every object is an instrument to be used in serving Him.

Śrī nāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy name, is the ocean of transcendental humours (*akhila-rasāmṛta-sindhu*) and the condensed form of eternality, cognizance and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*). *Śrī nāma* is directly Śrī Śyāmasundara, Yasoda-nandana. Service to *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma*, who is the ocean of all transcendental mellows is direct service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. Therefore, devotees please *śrī guru* and Kṛṣṇa by rendering uninterrupted service to Kṛṣṇa through the medium of the congregational chanting of the holy name (*śrī nāma-saṅkīrtana*).

*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo
yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi
dhyāyan stuvaṁs tasya yaśas tri-sandhyam
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

Śrī Gurvāṣṭakam (verse 8)

It is by the mercy of *śrī guru* that one receives the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Without his mercy, one cannot attain the goal of spiritual perfection. Therefore I should always remember *śrī guru* and at least three times a day I offer my respectful obeisances unto his lotus feet.

One cannot establish a loving relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇa unless one first develops a loving relationship with *śrī guru*. Thus, the path of supreme auspiciousness begins with *śrī guru*, develops with *śrī guru*, and the whole process of *bhakti* depends on the relationship with him.

THE BONA FIDE GURU

It is imperative for a serious *sādhaka* to understand who *śrī guru* is; how to one recognize a bona fide *guru*. It is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syād
īśād apetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ
tan-māyayāto budha ābhajet taṁ
bhaktyaikayeśaṁ guru-devatātmā*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.2.37)

Fear arises when a living entity misidentifies himself as the material body because of absorption in the external, illusory energy of the Lord. When the living entity thus turns away from the Supreme Lord, he also forgets his own constitutional position as a servant of the Lord. This bewildering, fearful condition is effected by the potency for illusion, called *māyā*. Therefore, an intelligent person should engage unflinchingly in the unalloyed devotional service of the Lord, under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, whom he should accept as his worshipable deity and as his very life and soul.

How can one recognize such a bona fide worshipable *śrī guru*? Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī answers this question in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta
jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam
śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ
brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.3.21)

Therefore, anyone who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the bona fide *guru* is that he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation, and is able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have left aside all material considerations and

taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, should be considered bona fide spiritual masters.

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī here uses the word *tasmād*. This indicates that ‘therefore’ or ‘for this reason’ one should approach a spiritual master. So, what is the reason? All living beings desire happiness, and human beings especially always seek happiness and try to avoid distress. However, conditioned souls (*baddha-jīvas*) are afflicted by the three-fold miseries caused by the body and mind (*ādhyātmika*), by other living entities (*ādhibautika*), and by the demigods (*ādhidaiivika*). How can the one become free from these three-fold miseries? And how can one attain one’s ultimate welfare? When this type of inquiry arises in the mind of a person, he should approach a bona fide *guru*. Ordinary men cannot give the perfect answers to all these questions. The answers can only come from a transcendental source: from *guru*, from other self-realized souls, and from the scriptures (*guru, sādhu* and *śāstra*).

The first symptom and first qualification of a bona fide *guru* is that he must be expert in all scriptures (*śāstra*) and is able to remove all the doubts of his disciples. This is the intention of the word *sābde* in the above *śloka*. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī’s next words – *pare ca niṣṇātām* – are very confidential and will be discussed later.

The next qualification of the a bona fide *guru* is complete detachment from the material world and mundane enjoyment (*brahmany-upaśamāśrayam*). Just as a lotus flower is situated above the water in which it lives, so the spiritual master, although appearing in this world, is totally detached from it.

These two qualities, *sābde* and *brahmany-upaśamāśrayam*, are the external qualifications of *śrī guru*. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda gives a clear warning in this regard. Those who have not surrendered themselves to God and who are attached to some object other than God will foster within their hearts fear, affliction, illusion, sensual desires, greed and feelings of frustration in relation to their bodies, their wealth, their friends

and so on. Such individuals who are not surrendered cannot advise others to surrender to the Lord. Their verbal instructions are ineffective because they cannot show a practical example by their own conduct.

Now we will discuss the most important and internal symptom of *śrī guru*, namely, *pare ca niṣṇātaṁ*. *Pare* means that the *guru* must be a self-realized soul. The bona fide *guru* is here with us in this world and at the same time he serves Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the divine couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual realm. *Śrī guru* is the representative of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and being Her confidential associate, is non-different from Her.

nikuñja-yūno rati-keli-siddhyai
yā yālibhir yuktir apekṣaṇīyā

Śrī Gurvāṣṭakam (5)

Śrīla gurudeva is always present with the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs*, arranging for the perfection of the Divine Couple's amorous pastimes within the *kuñjas* of Vraja.

Part of the *guru gāyatrī mantra* that is given at the time of *dikṣā* initiation is *kṛṣṇānandāya dhīmahi*. *Kṛṣṇānandāya* is made up of two words: *kṛṣṇa* and *ānandaya*. According to Sanskrit grammar, these words may have three meanings:

(1) *Kṛṣṇa* in *kṛṣṇānandaya* refers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (who is Kṛṣṇa Himself), who is the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By His own example, He reveals who Kṛṣṇa is, how to serve Him, and what our relationship with Him is. And He defines our ultimate goal of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. *Kṛṣṇānandaya* means that *śrī guru* is always giving pleasure (*ānanda*) to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

(2) Another meaning of *kṛṣṇānandaya* is that *śrī guru* is always giving pleasure to Vrajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara Kṛṣṇa, the eternally youthful son of Nanda Mahārāja in Vṛndāvana.

(3) *Kṛṣṇa* in *kṛṣṇānandaya* means Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Śrīmatī Rādhikā, the eternal consort and best servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

This third meaning of *kṛṣṇānandaya* is that *śrī gurudeva* is always giving pleasure to Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

A bona fide *guru* is with his disciples in the material world and at the same time in his *svarūpa* (eternal form), he directly serves in the spiritual realm. These are the qualifications of *śrī guru*. A question may arise in the mind, 'If the soul is a single entity, how can he be present and serving in two places?' Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains in *Jaiva-dharma* that when a soul performs *sādhana-bhajana* in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, at the time of achieving perfection he will attain two eternal forms. One will be eternally present in the pastimes of Mahāprabhu and the other will be eternally present in the pastimes of the divine couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, even while *śrī guru* is here in the material world, he can simultaneously serve in the spiritual realm in Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's pastimes in one *svarūpa* and in Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in another *svarūpa*.

Other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, no one has complete knowledge of the process to attain *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. The Lord Himself is the collective or undivided *guru*, and in His form as the separate forms of bona fide *gurus* (*vyaṣṭi-guru*) he destroys the ignorance of the innumerable souls by distributing pure *bhakti*. That form of Kṛṣṇa as *guru* is also known as *āśraya-bhagavān*. Kṛṣṇa, and nobody else, is *guru*. Kṛṣṇa is one and undivided, yet He manifests Himself as His divine effulgence (*nirviṣeṣa-brahma*), as His localized expansion who is present in everyone's heart (Paramātma), and in his complete form as Bhagavān. As previously mentioned, He also appears as the undivided *guru-tattva* or the collective *guru* (*jagad-guru* or *samaṣṭi-guru*).

Varāha Purāṇa states:

*guruḥ śrī brahmano viṣṇuḥ surānānca guror-guruḥ
mūlbhūto guruḥ sarvajanānām puruṣottamaḥ*

Śrī Viṣṇu is the *guru* of all the demigods, including Lord Brahma. Hence, Puruṣottama Śrī Viṣṇu is the root of all *guru-tattva*.

The following verse appears in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*pitāsi lokasya carācarasya
tvam asya pūjyaś ca gurur garīyān
na tvat-samo 'sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto 'nyo
loka-traye 'py apratima-prabhāva*
Bhagavad-gītā (11.43)

You are the father of this complete cosmic manifestation, the worshipable chief and the spiritual master. No one is equal to You, nor can anyone be one with You. Within the three worlds, You are immeasurable.

Here, it is mentioned that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *jagad-guru* or *samaṣṭi-guru*, which means that He is the *guru* of everyone. And He is also *viṣaya-bhagavān*, the supreme enjoyer. This is one aspect of Kṛṣṇa's manifestation as *guru*. The other aspect is the bona fide *guru* who incarnates in this world to deliver conditioned souls from material existence (*saṁsāra*). He is an expansion of the Lord called servitor Bhagavān (*āśraya-bhagavān*) or the personal *guru* (*vyāṣṭi-guru*).

When Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to Gayā and took initiation from Īśvara Purī, Īśvara Purī told Mahāprabhu:

*tumi se jagad guru janila niśchaya
tomār gurur yogya keha kabhu naya
Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa (28.128)*

By the mercy of his *guru*, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī, and by the Lord's mercy, Īśvara Purī recognized Mahāprabhu as non-different from Kṛṣṇa, and said, "Now it is confirmed in my mind that you are *jagad-guru*. No one in this world is qualified to be your *guru*, yet you have accepted me as your *guru*. I can understand that this is only to instruct the whole world and to give an example to people in general."

Although Kṛṣṇa is the sum total of all *gurus* (*samaṣṭi-guru*), He manifests as different personalities in His forms as the personal *guru* (*vyaṣṭi-guru*). Śrī *guru* as the expansion of Kṛṣṇa is to be considered non-different from Kṛṣṇa, yet at the same time He is the intimate servant of Kṛṣṇa. Śrī *guru* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa only want to deliver the suffering souls from material existence. If *śrī guru* and Kṛṣṇa were different from each other, *śāstra* would not clearly instruct us to perform the same type of *bhakti* for both. The *guru* is an empowered expansion (*aveṣa*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but still he never considers himself to be Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Rather, he always thinks that he is the servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Hence, he is the inconceivably different and non-different worshipable manifestation of the Supreme Lord.

Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states that it is a great offence for the soul to consider that the *guru* is Bhagavān Himself:

*jīve 'viṣṇu' buddhi dūre—yei brahma-rudra-sama
nārāyaṇe māne tāre 'pāṣaṇḍite' gaṇana
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-lilā (25.79)*

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu declares, “To say nothing of ordinary living entities, even Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva cannot be considered on the level of Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa. If one considers them as such, he is immediately considered an offender and atheist.”

*śrī kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda
śrī advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*

I offer *praṇāma* unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His five features as Mahāprabhu, the very personification of a devotee (*bhakta-svarūpa*); as Nityānanda Prabhu, the form of a devotee (*bhakta-rūpa*); as Advaita Ācārya, the incarnation of a devotee (*bhakta-avatāra*); as Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, a devotee (*bhakta*); and as Gadādhara Paṇḍita, the internal devotional potency (*bhakta-śakti*).

Mahāprabhu, Advaita Ācārya and Nityānanda Prabhu are considered *viśaya-bhagavān*, so it is correct to worship Their lotus feet with *tulasī* leaves. However, it is an offense to offer *tulasī* at the lotus feet of Gadadhāra Paṇḍita or Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, because they are the servants of the Lord (*āśraya-bhagavān*).

The bona fide disciple will see his *gurudeva* as non-different from Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master is a direct manifestation of the Lord because he is a pure servant and representative of the Lord. The soul gets in touch with such a bona fide *guru* by Kṛṣṇa's mercy, then in the form of the spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa delivers His devotees. The relationship of the disciple with his spiritual master is therefore as good as his relationship with the Supreme Lord. Lord Balarāma or Lord Nityānanda is the first direct expansion of Kṛṣṇa. He is therefore the original spiritual master (*akhaṇḍa-guru-tattva*), and the bona fide *guru* present in this world is his manifestation.

*īśvara-svarūpa bhakta tāñra adhiṣṭhāna
bhaktera hṛdaye kṛṣṇera satata viśrāma
Śrī Caitanya-caritrāmṛta, Ādi-lilā (1.61)*

A pure devotee who is incessantly engaged in the loving service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is identical with the Lord, for Kṛṣṇa is always seated in his heart.

In this verse, 'identical' means 'one at heart with Śrī Kṛṣṇa' or 'very near and dear to Kṛṣṇa'. It does not mean that the spiritual master has merged into Śrī Kṛṣṇa or that he is non-distinct from Him.

There are four types of spiritual masters or *gurus*:

- (1) *Vartma-pradarśaka-guru* is one who shows the path and guides us to a bona fide *guru*.
- (2) *Caitya-guru* is Śrī Bhagavān Himself as the Supersoul (Paramātmā), and inspires the living entity from within the heart.

- (3) *Dikṣā-guru* is one who gives initiation and bestows *dikṣā Mantras*. He gives knowledge of *sambandha*², the relationship between *jīva* and Kṛṣṇa. After initiation, one should serve such a *guru* with intimacy.

*yadyapi āmāra guru-caitanyera dāsa
tathāpi jāniye āmi tāñhāra prakāśa
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā (1.44)*

Even though I know that my spiritual master is a servitor of Lord Caitanya, I also know Him as a direct manifestation of the Lord.

- (4) *Śikṣā-guru* is one who gives knowledge of the process of *bhakti* (*abhideya-jñāna*). Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is the foremost *śikṣā-guru* in our line.

The *śikṣā-guru* is as highly qualified as the *dikṣā-guru* and mercifully shows one how to render devotional service. *Dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru* are non-different manifestations of Kṛṣṇa. Both are eternally liberated. All bona fide *gurus* and Vaiṣṇavas other than one's *dikṣā-guru* are to be considered *śikṣā-guru*.

It may be necessary for devotees to take shelter of a *śikṣā-guru* who has an intimate relationship with their *dikṣā-guru*. This is necessary when the *dikṣā-guru* does not have enough time to spend with the individual disciples to teach them how to enter into the process of *bhakti*, or if the *dikṣā-guru* has departed from this world. The *śikṣā-guru* should be as highly qualified as the *dikṣā-guru* and should have faith and affection for those who take shelter of him.

The disciple should also have great faith in the *śikṣā-guru* because it is from him that he can learn how to render devotional service. Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has explained that *dikṣā-guru* is the form (*rūpa*) of Kṛṣṇa, and *śikṣā-guru* is the personality (*svarūpa*) of Kṛṣṇa.

.....
² *Sambandha-jñāna* (the relationship between Śrī Bhagavān and the devotee) is discussed in more detail in the section entitled 'Preaching to the Son of the Family Guru'.

The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad states:

*yasya deva parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (6.23)

The conclusive essence of the scriptures is revealed only to those great souls who have transcendental devotion (*parā-bhakti*) unto Śrī Bhagavān and equal devotion for *śrī gurudeva*.

Here, Śrīla Gurudeva explains that *parā-bhakti* refers to *bhakti* which is under the direct shelter of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. The essence and all the meanings of the Vedas will manifest along with *bhakti* in the hearts of those who have supreme *bhakti* for the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa and who also have equal *bhakti* for the lotus feet of their *gurudeva* (who reveals Lord Kṛṣṇa to them).

There are three principles of eternal truths (*pāramārthika-tattva*):

- (1) Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead
- (2) the living entity (*jīva*)
- (3) the illusory energy of the Lord (*māyā*).

Amongst these three principles, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the supreme eternal principle and is the source and foundation of the other two principles, namely, the living entity (*jīva*) and the illusory energy of the Lord (*māyā*). This is confirmed in *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.2.13):

*nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām
eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān
tam ātmasthaṁ ye 'nupaśyanti dhīrās
teṣām śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣām*

Among the innumerable eternal conscious beings, there is one Supreme Being who fulfills the desires of all the others. Only those who are sober and perceive the Supreme Lord within their hearts through the transcendental directions of *guru-paramparā* can attain perpetual peace.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains in *Jaiva-dharma* that Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original supreme controller, with full control over *māyā*. The *jīva*, on the other hand, being marginal, is controlled by the influence of *māyā* unless they engaged in pure bhakti which is beyond the modes of nature.

THE SAMPRADĀYA

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ
proktavān aham avyayam
vivasvān manave prāha
manur ikṣvākave 'bravīt*

Bhagavad-gītā (4.1)

The Blessed Lord said: I instructed this imperishable science of *yoga* to the sun-god, Vivasvān, who instructed it to Manu. Manu in turn instructed it to Ikṣvāku.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself introduced the authorized succession of bona fide spiritual masters (*sampradāya-dhārā*). Without this authorized *sampradāya*, *jñāna-tattva* or *bhakti-tattva* could not be manifest in its pure form in this material world.

In Śrīla Gurudeva's *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī Prakāśikā-vṛtti* on *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, he states:

An incarnation of Manu appears in every *manvantara*, Svāyambhuva Manu being the first. In the current Vaivasvata-

manvantara, Manu's father, Vivasvān, was the first to receive instructions on *jñāna-yoga*. In the above *śloka* from *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Bhagavān has introduced the concept of the authorized succession of self-realized spiritual masters (*sāmpradāyika-dhārā*). Without this *sāmpradāyika-dhārā* (also known as *āmnāya-paramparā*), neither the principles of *jñāna-tattva*, nor *bhakti-tattva* can manifest in its pure form in the material world. The gravity, antiquity and significance of the subject are specifically proven only by *sāmpradāyika-dhārā*. The *guru-paramparā* that bestows complete knowledge of *bhagavat-tattva* is called *āmnāya* or *sampradāya*. *Mantras* that are not received from a bona fide *sampradāya* are fruitless. In Kali-yuga, there are four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*: Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra and Sanaka or Kumāra *sampradāya*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original source of all *sampradāyas*. Only from Śrī Kṛṣṇa does knowledge of *bhagavat-tattva* flow into this material world: "*dharmam tu sākṣād bhāgavat-praṇītam* – Real *dharma* comes directly from Śrī Bhagavān" (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.19).

As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa first instructed this *jñāna-yoga* to sun-god, Vivasvān, who then instructed Manu, who in turn gave these divine instructions to Ikṣvāku. Thus, the system of *guru-paramparā* is an ancient and reliable tradition that ensures the lineage (*sāmpradāyika-dhārā*) in which divine knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) has been preserved up to the present day. Whenever this *dhārā* is broken, Śrī Bhagavān again arranges for *divya-jñāna* to manifest in the material world. Great devotees (*mahā-bhāgavatas*) such as Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and others in the *guru-paramparā* of the Brahma-Mādhva Gauḍīya *sampradāya* realised *divya-jñāna* and instructed the common people through their enlightened commentaries. Even a person who is highly qualified in material knowledge can never understand the real import of *Bhagavad-gītā* unless he is properly situated in the *paramparā*.

It is important to protect oneself from self-made commentators, otherwise it will not be possible to realise the true meaning of Bhagavad-gītā. Although milk is pure and nourishing, it acts like poison when it has been touched by the lips of a serpent. Similarly, although topics of Śrī Hari are supremely purifying, it is destructive to hear such topics from non-devotees such as impersonalists, or from those who consider the body to be the self. In this connection, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said: “*māyāvādī-bhāṣya śunile haya sarva-nāśa* – If one hears the commentary of the impersonalists, everything is destroyed” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 6.169).

This disciplic succession, or *sampradāya*, is also called *āmnāya*, the *paramparā* that bestows complete knowledge of *bhagavat-tattva*. In Kali-yuga, there are four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* namely:

- (1) Śrī
- (2) Brahmā
- (3) Rudra
- (4) Kumara

Any *mantras* that are not received from these bona fide *sampradāyas* are considered fruitless and as such they will not deliver the proper result.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original source of all *sampradāyas*, as He Himself reveals in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa first instructed the sun-god Vivasvān, who then instructed Manu, who in turn instructed Ikṣvāku. In this way this ancient lineage, the *sampradāya-dhārā* or *guru-paramparā* has been preserved up to the present day.

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, a great devotee in our line, asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu the following key questions for our eternal benefit: “Who am I and why are the three kinds of miserable conditions always troubling me?” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.102).

Since Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī was fit to propagate pure *bhakti*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, “The living entity is the marginal energy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, simultaneously distinct and not distinct from the Lord. As such, he is the eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is his eternal constitutional position” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 20.108).

We are by constitution, pure living entities. The living entity or spirit soul is not this gross material body; nor is it the subtle body, made of mind, intelligence, and ego; it is eternally part and parcel of the Supreme Soul, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That spirit soul, however, has been covered by the illusory energy of the Lord (*māyā*), and has thus forgotten that factually he is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 22.24).

Once in Hawaii, 2004, Śrīla Gurudeva said, “Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is the epitome of *guru-sevā*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu placed him in the hands of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara, and he served his *guru* with his heart. He did not just massage him; this external *sevā* will not do so much. It is necessary to please *gurudeva* by massaging his heart; this is what is needed. How can we please *guru*? How did Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī please his *gurudeva*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu? Knowing His heart, he wrote *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*, *Lalitā Mādhava*, *Vidagdha Mādhava*, and other books. Mahāprabhu was extremely happy when Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote the following verse, showing that he knew the mood of his spiritual master:

*yaḥ kaumāra-haraḥ sa eva hi varas tā eva caitra-kṣapās
te conmilita-mālatī-surabhayaḥ prauḍhāḥ kadambānilāḥ
sā caivāsmi tathāpi tatra surata-vyāpāra-līlā-vidhau
revā-rodhasi vetasī-taru-tale cetaḥ samutkañṭhate*
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* (1.58)

That very personality who stole away my heart during my youth is now again my master. These are the same moonlit nights of the month of Caitra. The same fragrance of *mālatī*

flowers is there, and the same sweet breezes are blowing from the *kadamba* forest. In our intimate relationship, I am also the same lover, yet still my mind is not happy here. I am eager to go back to that place on the bank of the Reva under the Vetasi tree. That is my desire.”

These are some aspects of *guru-tattva*. Now the question may arise, “How does the soul become free from *māyā*?” By the grace of *śrī guru* the answer is given in what follows and throughout the pages of these books.

VYĀSA-PŪJĀ OF THE BONA FIDE GURU

The history of Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā commenced at the dawning of this world, when the Vedas were first created. Vyāsadeva later divided the Veda into four sections, and after that he further explained them in the form of the Purāṇas and the Upaniṣads.

Śrīla Gurudeva has described the attitude of the *guru* towards his disciples in the following way:

“The *guru* never thinks that he is making so many disciples. These are all Kṛṣṇa’s wealth. They are all very fragrant, very smooth, and very sweet flowers. *Guru* takes them and offers them at the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. *Guru* only does this. He never thinks, ‘Oh, all the disciples are my property.’ Never! A real *guru* thinks that all the disciples are very sweet, fragrant, small flowers of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa Conjugal. The *guru* offers the disciple like a flower at Rādhikā’s lotus feet. She then places that flower in a garland and puts that garland around Kṛṣṇa’s neck” (Cessnock, Australia, February 1, 2000).

In Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha, Mathurā, on the eve of Guru Pūrṇimā, July, 2008, Śrīla Gurudeva gave a class on *vyāsa-pūjā*. He said,

“Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā is the most holy appearance day of Śrī Vyāsadeva and His representative, *śrī guru*. The real meaning of *vyāsa-pūjā* is to surrender oneself completely at *śrīla gurudeva*'s lotus feet and to fulfill his desires. *Vyāsa-pūjā* is *guru-pūjā*, and cannot be performed until the mood of selfless surrender at the lotus feet of *śrī guru* appears in one's heart. We have to surrender unto the lotus feet of the bona fide *guru* and practice serving the Divine Couple according to his teachings and instructions. Then, and only then, we can very quickly attain the transcendental loving service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. The factual meaning of *vyāsa-pūjā* is to follow the path of hearing the authentic message of the *guru-paramparā* that *śrī guru* delivers. This is called *śrauta-patha*. We should also reject any path wherein that message is not heard from an authentic source (*aśrauta-patha*). The purpose of *vyāsa-pūjā* is to prepare oneself for service to Śrī Hari under the guidance of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

“The word *vyāsa* refers to a line drawn through the centre of a circle, connecting opposite parts of the circle. Now, if we imagine that the transcendental spiritual world is at one side of the circle and the mundane material world is on the opposite point, the line that connects both worlds is *vyāsa*. Śrī Vyāsa is an incarnation of the Lord Himself, who delivers the transcendental knowledge of the spiritual realm to the mundane world. The bona fide *guru* is His representative, who delivers the same message, and connects us with the Lord and the spiritual world. *Vyāsa* also means 'to spread'. *Guru* spreads this knowledge throughout the universe. As a circle is complete, so *guru*'s transmission of knowledge is complete; it covers every point. All spiritual knowledge and all material knowledge come from Him.³

“Vyāsadeva eagerly spread the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa everywhere, describing the Lord's name (*nāma*), form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*) and pastimes (*līlā*). By the mercy of Śrī Nārada Muni, Śrīla

³ India has achieved that knowledge. One western philosopher named Reverend Bishop has commented, “India guided by the Lord, can bring the world back to sanity.”

Vyāsadeva narrated the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī's worship of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, his father and spiritual master, was the first *vyāsa-pūjā*. Later, Śrīla Suta Gosvāmī performed the second *vyāsa-pūjā* by worshipping Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī. This is how the tradition of *vyāsa-pūjā* or *guru-pūjā* began in ancient times, and it continues to the present day. Worship of the *guru* is performed even before the worship (*pūjā*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”⁴

Vyāsa-pūjā, the appearance day of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, is respectfully observed in all the four *sampradāyas*. It always comes on the full moon day in the month of July when Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī disappeared from this world. Śrīla Gurudeva explained to us that Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī is like an incarnation of Śrī Vyāsadeva, because he has written a commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* called *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*. To fulfill Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's desire, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī relinquished not only his home, but also his post as prime minister, his abundant opulence, his servants, and everything. With the mood, “Now I am Yours,” he approached Śrīman Mahāprabhu empty-handed, and surrendered himself completely to the Lord. This alone is real *vyāsa-pūjā*.

On the day of *vyāsa-pūjā*, all Vrajavāsi men shave their heads, keeping only a small tuft of hair called a *śikhā*, and they perform *parikramā* of Śrī Govardhana hill, as Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī would do daily. Once, when Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī was performing Govardhana *parikramā* in his old age, he became faint with fatigue due to the blazing heat of summer. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Baladeva Themselves appeared there as two transcendental cowherd boys. Śrī Kṛṣṇa used His own yellow cloth (*pītāmbara*) to shade Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, while Śrī Baladeva used his own blue cloth (*nīlāmbara*) to fan him. They also sprinkled water on him and when he came to external consciousness, Śrī Kṛṣṇa told him that there

⁴ An edited transcript of the class was published in an article entitled *The True Meaning of Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā* by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (CC-BY-SA Rays of The Harmonist Issue No.19, Gaura Pūrṇimā 2009)

was no need for him to keep doing Govardhana *parikramā* and undergoing so much hardship in his old age. Sanātana said, “How I can give it up? This is my vow. As long I am alive in this world, I will do Govardhana *parikramā*.” Śrī Kṛṣṇa then gave him a *śilā* of Girirāja Govardhana, with the divine impressions of His right footprint, flute, cow-grazing stick, and an auspicious imprint of a calf’s hoofprint. Śrī Kṛṣṇa told Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī that if he performed *parikramā* of this *śilā* four times, it would be equal to an entire *parikramā* of Girirāja Govardhana. After giving the *śilā* to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, the boys disappeared. This *śilā* now resides in the temple of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara in Sevā-kuñja, Vṛndāvana, and if one requests the temple’s *pūjārī*, one may receive a special *darśana* of the *śilā*.

Many people come to see the Lord, but few can understand the glories of the Lord’s pure devotee, who captures the Lord by his unalloyed devotion. Just as the Lord came to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, He also comes to all His pure, unalloyed devotees; therefore, we should hear *hari-kathā* from such realized souls, and serve them wholeheartedly. When Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī disappeared from this world, the Vrajavāsī took his transcendental body and placed him in *samādhi* in Vṛndāvana, near Rādhā-Madana-ohana temple, where he used to live.

On the appearance day of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, all the *sampradāyas* – Śrī *sampradāya*, Brahma *sampradāya*, Rudra *sampradāya* and Sanak *sampradāya* – perform *vyāsa-pūjā* (*guru-pūja*). In the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, we observe the appearance day of Śrīla Vyāsadeva with the unique feature that we also observe the *vyāsa-pūjā*, or the appearance day, of our own *guru*.

Śrīla Gurudeva explained,

“*Vyāsa-pūjā* does not mean that a devotee or disciple will worship me, give *puṣpāñjali*⁵ to me and that I will take their

.....
5 Offering flowers at the lotus feet of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas

offerings; this is not *vyāsa-pūjā*. My *vyāsa-pūjā* means that I will do *vyāsa-pūjā* on this day. I will worship my *guru-pādapadma*, the four *sampradāya ācāryas*, Śrī *sampradāya* – Rāmānujācārya, Brahma *sampradāya* – Madhvācārya, Rudra *sampradāya* – Viṣṇusvāmi, and Sanak *sampradāya* – Nimbāditya. I will worship them by my own hand. I will give them sandalwood pulp. I will make offerings, offer *puṣpāñjali* at their lotus feet, make garlands, do *ārati*, and offer *prasāda* to them by my own hand. Moreover, I will pay my obeisances and offer *puṣpāñjali*, *ārati* and so forth, to my *paramārādhyā guru-pādapadma* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who dragged me from my police service and by force made me drink the nectar of the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. I will worship him.

“This is my *vyāsa-pūjā*. Seeing this, my devotees or disciples will make offerings to me, but I am not the enjoyer of that. I will take all their offerings, and offer them to my *guru-pādapadma*, and he will send them through the *guru-paramparā* to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Divine Couple. This is the significance of *vyāsa-pūjā*. However, nowadays many unqualified, so-called *gurus* think, ‘It is my *vyāsa-pūjā*. I am the supreme enjoyer. My disciples will give me *puṣpāñjali* and I will enjoy those offerings.’ This is not the significance of *vyāsa-pūjā* at all.”

In this way, Śrīla Gurudeva observes *vyāsa-pūjā* with the utmost humility. With great care, he takes the offerings of the devotees – be it a fruit, a flower, or a garland, no matter how opulent or simple – and lovingly offers them to his spiritual master and the *paramparā*. He lovingly offers them to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, and uses them in Their divine service.

Vyāsa-pūjā is also described as full surrender at the lotus feet of *śrī guru (ātma-samarpana)*. The sole and single highest *dharma* is to carry out *śrī guru’s* innermost desire to serve Bhagavān in a beautiful way, or to act in accordance with that desire. Therefore, the further we proceed along the path of fulfilling *śrī guru’s* innermost desire – whose center is Śrī Vyāsadeva and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam – the more we

will achieve success and perfection in our performance of *vyāsa-pūjā*.

Our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *guru-paramparā* starts from Śrī Kṛṣṇa and continues through Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, right down to present times. *Om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda* has nicely verified this in the verses of the following song:

ŚRĪ GURU-PARAMPARĀ BY ŚRĪLA BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA ṬHĀKURA

*kṛṣṇa hoite catur-mukha, hoy kṛṣṇa-sevonmukha,
brahmā hoite nāradera mati
nārada hoite vyāsa, madhva kohe vyāsa-dāsa,
pūrṇaprajña padmanābha gati (1)*

In the beginning of creation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke the science of devotional service to four-headed Lord Brahmā, who in turn passed on these teachings to Nārada Muni, who accepted Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsadeva as his disciple. Vyāsadeva transmitted this knowledge to Madhvācārya, who is also known as Pūrṇaprajña Tīrtha, the sole refuge for his disciple Padmanābha Tīrtha.

*nṛhari mādharma-baṁṣe, akṣobhya paramahaṁse,
śiṣya boli' aṅgikāra kore
akṣobhyera śiṣya jaya-tīrtha nāme paricaya,
tāra dāsye jñānasindhu tore (2)*

Following in the line of Madhvācārya were Nṛhari Tīrtha and then Mādharma Tīrtha, whose principal disciple was the great *paramahaṁsa* Akṣobhya Tīrtha. He in turn accepted as his disciple Jayatīrtha, who passed his service down to Jñānasindhu.

*tāhā hoite dayānidhi, tāra dāsa vidyānidhi,
rājendra hoilo tāhā ha'te
tāhāra kiṅkora jaya-dharma nāme paricaya,
paramparā jāno bhālo mate (3)*

From him, the line came down to Dayānidhi, and then to his disciple Vidyānidhi, who in turn introduced it to Rājendra Tīrtha. His servant was the renowned Jayadharmā, also known as Vijayadhvajā Tīrtha. This is the proper understanding of *guru-paramparā*.

*ayadharmā-dāsyē khyāti, śrī puruṣottama-jati,
tā ha'te brahmaṇya-tīrtha sūri
vyāsatīrtha tāra dāsa, lakṣmīpati vyāsa-dāsa,
tāhā ha'te mādhavendra purī (4)*

The great *sannyāsī* Śrī Puruṣottama Tīrtha was a renowned disciple in the service of Jayadharmā, and from Śrī Puruṣottama the line descended to the powerful Brahmaṇya Tīrtha, and then to Vyāsatīrtha. He was succeeded by Śrī Lakṣmīpati, who passed the line down to Śrī Mādhavendra Purī.

*mādhavendra purī-bara, śiṣya-bara śrī-īśwara,
nityānanda, śrī-adwaita vibhu
īśvara-purīke dhanya, korilen śrī-caitanya,
jagad-guru gaura mahāprabhu (5)*

Śrī Īśvara Purī was the most prominent *sannyāsa* disciple of the great Śrī Mādhavendra Purī, whose disciples also included the *avatāras* – Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Advaita Ācārya. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Golden Lord and spiritual preceptor of all the worlds, made Īśvara Purī greatly fortunate by accepting him as *dikṣā-guru*.⁶

*mahāprabhu śrī-caitanya, rādhā-kṛṣṇa nahe anya,
rūpānuga janera jīvana
viśvambhara priyaṅkara, śrī-svarūpa dāmodara,
śrī-gosvāmī rūpa-sanātana (6)*

.....
⁶ Nityānanda Prabhu took *dikṣā* from Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha, thus he was actually Mādhavendra Purī's godbrother, but He accepted Mādhavendra as His *śikṣā-guru*. Thus, we follow *bhāgavat-paramparā*, the line of *śikṣā* rather than *dikṣā*.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the combined form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and He is the very life of the *rūpānuga* Vaiṣṇavas who follow Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmīs were the dearest servants of Viśvambhara Śrī Caitanya.

*rūpa-priya mahājana, jīva, raghunātha hana,
tāra priya kavi kṛṣṇadāsa
kṛṣṇadāsa-priya-bara, narottama sevā-para,
jāra pada viśwanātha-āśa (7)*

Dear to Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī were the great saintly personalities Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrī Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, whose intimate disciple was the great poet Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's dearest follower was Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, who was always engaged in *guru-sevā*. Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura accepted his lotus feet as his only hope and aspiration.

*viśvanātha bhakta-sātha, baladeva, jagannātha,
tā'ra priya śrī bhaktivinoda
mahā-bhāgavata-vara, śrī gaurakiśora-vara,
hari-bhajanete jā'ra moda (8)*

Prominent among the associates of Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura was Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. After him, the line descended to Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, who was the beloved *śikṣā-guru* of Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was the intimate friend of the great *mahā-bhāgavata* Śrīla Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, whose sole delight was *hari-bhajana*.

*ihārā paramahaṁsa, gaurāṅgera nija-baṁśa
tādera caraṇe mama gati
āmi sebā-udāsīna, nāmete tridaṅḍī dīna
śrī-bhaktisiddhānta sarasvatī (9)*

These great saintly Vaiṣṇavas are all *paramahamsas*, or devotees of the highest order and they are all part of Lord Gaurāṅga's own spiritual family. Their holy feet are my refuge. I am a poor and lowly *tridaṇḍi-sannyāsī* named Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, with no real interest in devotional service.

This most eloquent of songs shows how the Supreme Lord and all these *mahā-puruṣas* establish and distribute *prema-bhakti* throughout the entire universe. The line of masters in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *guru-paramparā* from Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī is perpetual and uninterrupted, and consequently verses such as the following are periodically added to his song:

*śrī vārṣabhānavī-varā, sadā sevya-sevā-parā,
tāhāra dayita-dāsa nāma*

The most distinguished Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, whose initiated name was Śrī Vārṣabhānavī Dayita dāsa, was always engaged in divine service to Hari, Guru and Vaiṣṇavas.

*prabhupāda-antaraṅga, śrī-svarūpa-rūpanuga,
śrī keśava bhakati-prajñāna
gauḍīya-vedānta-vettā, māyāvāda-tamohantā,
gauravāñī-pracārācāra-dhāma*

Śrī Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī is an internal and intimate disciple of Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, following in the line of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. With full knowledge of Vedānta philosophy according to the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī annihilated the darkness of all *māyāvāda* arguments. He has given his life for the service of Navadvīpa-dhāma, which is the best example for both practicing and preaching Mahāprabhu's message.

*prabhupādera pracaraka, śrī bhaktivedānta nāma,
patita-janete daya-dhāma
keśava-priyā-mahājana, vāmana, nārāyaṇa hana
gauravani tadera prāṇa-dhana*

Most dear to Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī were the saintly personalities – Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī, whose life and soul are the teachings of Mahāprabhu.

*ei saba hari-jana, gaurāṅgera nija-jana,
tadera ucchiṣṭe mora kāma*

It is my desire to honour the remnants from the lotus mouths (their *mahā-prasāda* and instructions) of all these personal associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

A THIEF OF HEARTS

Śrīla Gurudeva took birth in the village of Tiwaripur on the new moon day of the month of Māgha (January–February). According to Vedic astrology, if someone takes birth on the new moon day, or during the dark fortnight when the moon is waning, he becomes a thief. The most prominent example of this is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who took birth during the dark fortnight on the eighth day of the moon. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the greatest transcendental thief, for He steals the hearts of His devotees. This is widely celebrated in many scriptures, especially *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. All the incarnations of the Lord and their respective consorts appear during the white fortnight, when the

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Dikṣā disciples of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja should recite his usual *praṇāma* mantras. They may also include the following *śloka* while singing Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda's song:

*prabhupādera pracāraka, śrī bhaktivedānta nāma,
patita-janete daya-dhāma*

Sarasvatī Prabhupāda's foremost disciple-preacher was Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja who has spread the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu throughout the world, and is thus a reservoir of mercy and compassion for all fallen souls.

moon is waxing. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's is the only appearance in the dark fortnight. Below is a table listing the incarnations of God and the times of Their appearance.

Personality	Month (Vaiṣṇava name)	Month (Indian name)	Month (English name)	Fortnight	Lunar day
Līlā-puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa	Hṛīkeśa	Bhādra	August–September	Black fortnight	Eighth day of the moon
sarva-viḡha-vinaśana Śrī Nṛsiṅhadeva	Madhusūdana	Vaiśākhā / Jyēṣṭhā	April–May / May–June	White fortnight	Fourth day of the moon
Śrī Viṣṇupriyā-devī	Mādhava	Māgha	January–February	White fortnight	Fifth day of the moon
Śrī Abhūta ĀcāryaPṛabhu	Mādhava	Māgha	January–February	White fortnight	Seventh day of the moon
Śrīmatī Rādīkā	Hṛīkeśa	Bhādra	August–September	White fortnight	Eighth day of the moon
Maryādā-puruṣottama Śrī Rāma	Viṣṇu	Caitra	March–April	White fortnight	Ninth day of the moon
Śītā-devī	Madhusūdana	Vaiśākhā	April–May	White fortnight	Ninth day of the moon
Śrī Varāhadeva	Mādhava	Māgha	January–February	White fortnight	Twelfth day of moon
Śrīman NityānandaPṛabhu	Mādhava	Māgha	January–February	White fortnight	Thirteenth day of moon
Śrī Baladeva Pṛabhu	Śrīdhara	Śrāvāna	July–August	White fortnight	Full moon day
Premā-puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāpṛabhu	Govinda	Phalguṇa	February–March	White fortnight	Full moon day

We have included the Vaiṣṇava, Indian and English names of the months; the fortnight (black or white); and the *tithi*, or lunar day. Both Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared on the eighth day of the moon; Śrīmatī Rādhikā fifteen days after Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the white fortnight. Thus, we see that all the incarnations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Their eternal potencies appear in this world during the white fortnight. Only Svayam Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appears during the dark fortnight.

It is mentioned in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta:

*sarva mahā-guṇa-gaṇa vaiṣṇava-śarīre
kṛṣṇa-bhakte kṛṣṇera guṇa sakali sañcāre
(Madhya-līlā 22.75)*

A Vaiṣṇava is one who has developed all transcendental qualities. All the qualities of Kṛṣṇa manifest in Kṛṣṇa's devotee.

Since the qualities of Kṛṣṇa appear in His devotee, Śrīla Gurudeva, who took his glorious birth in this world on Amāvāsyā (the new moon day), must similarly be endowed with Kṛṣṇa's qualities. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is famous as a transcendental thief. For example, the Vaiṣṇava saint Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura beautifully sings:

*vraje prasiddham navanīta-cauram
gopāṅganānām ca dukūla-cauram
aneka-janmārjita-pāpa-cauram
caurāgragaṇyaṁ puruṣaṁ namāmi
Śrī Caurāgranya-puruṣāṣṭakam (1)*

I offer *praṇāma* to that foremost of thieves, who is famous in Vraja as the butter thief and as He who steals the *gopīs'* clothes. He is also famous for stealing from those who take shelter of Him the sins they have accrued over many lifetimes.

Is Śrī Kṛṣṇa a petty thief, like a common criminal in the material world? No. Then, what kind of thief is Śrī Kṛṣṇa? In the last verse

of his prayer, the saintly Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura uses the word *caurāgragaṇyam* to describe Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This means ‘the biggest thief, the greatest gangster among thieves’. If Śrī Kṛṣṇa is such a thief, then what kind of a thief is Śrīla Gurudeva?

Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura was a *brāhmaṇa* from a highly aristocratic *brāhmaṇa* family, but somehow he became attracted to a prostitute named Cintāmaṇi. He became so much attracted to her that he would regularly come to her house to visit her. When his father passed away, his family, friends, and relatives all came to attend the ritualistic ceremony, but Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura did not care for anyone. He just gathered some sweets and went to Cintāmaṇi, desiring to please her. That night was very stormy and Bilvamaṅgala had to cross the raging river to get to her house. It was very dark and the wind was howling furiously. Seeing something floating on the water, he thought, “Maybe Cintāmaṇi has sent this wooden log for me to cross the river.” Somehow, despite the rain that had inundated the whole area, Bilvamaṅgala managed to cross the river and reach Cintāmaṇi’s gate. There he knocked and knocked, but she could not hear him because of the pounding rain and roaring wind.

Bilvamaṅgala then saw a rope hanging from the wall. Thinking that Cintāmaṇi must have left it for him, he grabbed it and somehow climbed to the top of the wall. However, his foot was wet and slippery, and he lost his balance and fell on the other side with a loud crash.

Hearing the loud noise, Cintāmaṇi went outside to see what was happening, and found Bilvamaṅgala unconscious on the ground. She brought him inside and wrapped him in warm clothes. Gradually he regained consciousness and came out of his delirium. Cintāmaṇi could not believe that Bilvamaṅgala could possibly have come in such a storm. When she asked him how he did it, he told her everything, but she said that she had never arranged for his coming. She led him outside to see the big rope he was talking about and saw a large poisonous snake in the yard. When they

went to the river, they saw that what he had thought was a log was actually a human corpse floating in the river.

Cintāmaṇi exclaimed, “You were so bewildered that you thought the snake was a rope and the human corpse was a log. How attached you are to this body of mine which is nothing but a bag full of blood, mucus, puss, urine and stool! If you had that much attachment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, your life would have been so successful. Go away from here.” In this way Cintāmaṇi became the *guru* who shows the way to Kṛṣṇa (*vartma-pradarśaka guru*).

After Cintāmaṇi had sent Bilvamaṅgala out of her house, he came to his senses and understood how depraved his life had become. Purified by genuine feelings of remorse, he immediately started on the long journey to Vṛndāvana on foot. On the way, he saw a beautiful girl fetching water from a well. She was so attractive that Bilvamaṅgala could not control his mind and he followed her to her house. The girl’s husband saw his long hair and beard and asked, “Bābā, how may I serve you?”

Bilvamaṅgala asked, “Who is the lady who just came with the pitcher of water?”

“She is my newly married wife,” replied the gentleman.

“Can you please call her?”

“Yes certainly.” He called his wife, and she came and offered *praṇāma* to Bilvamaṅgala.

“Bābā, how can I serve you?” she said.

Bilvamaṅgala said, “Please give me two hairpins.”

“Of course,” replied the beautiful lady. She went inside and returned immediately with two hairpins, thinking that Bābā perhaps wanted to use them to remove a thorn from his foot.

Bilvamaṅgala was thinking to himself, “These eyes are the root of all evil. *Na rahegā baṅsa, na bajegī bāñsuri*.⁸ If I have no eyes to view the material world, then I will no longer be attracted to it.” In this mood, standing before the couple, Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura used the two hairpins to pierce his eyes.

⁸ It is an adage which means that if the cause is removed, then the effect would also not be there.

Bilvamaṅgala continued on his way to Vṛndāvana. Walking along with great difficulty, he became very exhausted. On one hand, he thought, “How can I travel all the way to Vṛndāvana now that I'm blind?” On the other hand, he was very happy, “I have no eyes. Now I will no longer be attracted to this material world.” In this way, he was praying to Kṛṣṇa. Soon a young boy came up to him and said, “Baba, where are you going?”

“I am going to Vṛndāvana.”

“Oh! You are going to Vṛndāvana? I am going there too. You can follow me.”

“My dear son,” Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura said. “I am blind. How can I follow you?”

The boy had a very sweet nature, and he said, “You can hold on to my stick. I can lead you to Vṛndāvana.”

Bilvamaṅgala agreed. He took hold of the stick, and slowly followed the boy. As Śrī Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura was walking, in his devotional ecstasy, he sang many *ślokas* and prayers to Kṛṣṇa. These were so attractive that Kṛṣṇa experienced nectar through His ears. These prayers and *ślokas* became a book called *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*, which means, “That which gives nectar to the ears of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

After a few hours, the little boy said, “Bābā, we have arrived in Vṛndāvana.”

“Vṛndāvana? So quickly?”

“Yes,” the boy replied sweetly, and then he was gone. Bilvamaṅgala found himself alone. He called out to the boy for a long time, but there was no answer. Finally he thought, “How is it that we have arrived in Vṛndāvana so quickly? It must be by the influence of that black cheater. That black fellow came to me and said, ‘I am also going to Vṛndāvana’, and brought me here very quickly. If He does not give me *darśana* again, I will not eat or drink; I will fast to death.”

If an advanced devotee such as Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura has a wish, Kṛṣṇa is bound to fulfill it, so Kṛṣṇa felt obliged to give him *darśana*. He came before him again, but this time He was

not alone. He was with His internal potency, His *svarūpa-śakti*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. The sweet young couple came very close to Bilvamaṅgala, and at a certain point, Kṛṣṇa said to Rādhikā, “Don’t go any closer.”

“Why not? What is the harm? What will he do?” She asked.

“He will catch you.”

“How will he be able to catch me? He’s a blind fellow.”

“Yes,” replied Kṛṣṇa, “he is blind, and blind people have very sharp hearing. They can understand how close a person is by the sound they make, so don’t go too close.”

“It’s all right. I’m still far enough away. He can’t catch hold of me.”

Through this exchange with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was conveying a message to Bilvamaṅgala. He was moving closer to him, and at the same time telling Rādhikā, “No, no! Don’t go too close. You’re almost within his reach. He’ll catch You!” Śrī Kṛṣṇa was actually telling Bilvamaṅgala, “We are very close to you, and you can catch hold of Śrīmatīji.”

Bilvamaṅgala immediately caught Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s lotus feet.

“Thief! Thief! Let me go! Let me go!” She cried.

Kṛṣṇa said, “What did I tell You? I warned You not to go so close. Blind people are so expert at hearing. Now, what can be done?”

“I will not give up Your lotus feet,” said Bilvamaṅgala.

“What do you want?” asked Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

“I want to have *darśana* of both of You.”

Rādhikā then put Her hand on Bilvamaṅgala’s head, and his sight was restored. Seeing the beauty of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Bilvamaṅgala wept and continued to hold on to Śrīmatīji’s lotus feet.

She said, “You can let go of My feet now.”

“No, I will not.”

“Oh! Why not? What more do you want?”

“Please make me blind again.”

“Make you blind again? Why do you want that?”

“Now I have seen the beauty of You two. Especially, Śrīmatī,

I have seen Your lotus feet, and Your beauty. Now I do not wish to see anything else in this world. I want to keep Your lotus feet always in my memory and the beauty of Your beloved in my heart. I do not want anything else.”

Bilvamaṅgala became blind again. He wrote to Kṛṣṇa:

*vraje prasiddham navanīta-cauram
goṣāṅganānām ca dukūla-cauram
aneka-janmārjita-pāpa-cauram
caurāgragaṇyaṁ puruṣaṁ namāmi*

I offer *praṇāma* to that foremost of thieves, who is famous in Vraja as the butter thief and as He who steals the *goṣīs*' clothes. He is also famous for stealing from those who take shelter of Him the sins they have accrued over many lifetimes.

There are millions of *goṣīs* in Vraja. Some of them are bodily manifestations of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and eternal associates of the Divine Couple. But others entered Vraja at some point in time, like those who were the golden deities of Śrī Sītā in Tretā-yuga.

Lord Rāma performed fire sacrifices every year, and since he was the king, he was obliged to have his wife next to him. However, He had already sent Sītā into exile. Vasīṣṭha Muni requested Lord Rāma either to bring Śrī Sītā back to perform the sacrifice, or else, to take another wife. However, Rāma had already determined in His mind that Sītā would remain in exile, and that He would not take another wife. Therefore, He asked Vasīṣṭha Muni to make another arrangement for His *aśvamedha-yajña*.⁹

Accordingly, every year at His *aśvamedha-yajña*, He made a golden statue of His wife, Śrī Sītā, and performed *praṇa-pratiṣṭhā*, installing Her next to Him. After the golden statues of

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⁹ *Aśvamedha-yajña* is a special type of fire sacrifice the kings would perform.

Sitā had served the purpose of supporting Lord Rāma during His annual sacrifices, they all wanted to remain with Him, but Lord Rāma refused, “Only Śrī Sitā, the daughter of Janaka Mahārāja, can be with me. I will not have any other woman.”

When a woman is forever denied the company of her beloved, she feels all is lost. “What then, will I do?” each golden statue asked Lord Rāma.

Lord Rāma appeased them, “When I appear in Dvāparā-yuga as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, I will fulfill your desires.”

The golden statues later took birth in the families of *gopīs* and happily joined Kṛṣṇa in His transcendental pastimes in Vraja.

The Daṇḍakāraṇya ṛṣis from the same period also appeared as *gopīs* in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Vraja.

At the time of Rāma’s pastimes, they were performing *bhajana* in the Daṇḍaka forest, but their *bhajana* had begun to decrease a little. At this time, they saw Lord Rāma wandering through the forest while He was in exile. Seeing His beauty, they became inspired to enjoy conjugal pastimes with Him. Lord Rāma gave them the benediction: “I will fulfill your desires in the next Dvāparā-yuga.”

As a result of Lord Rāma’s benediction, those ṛṣis appeared in Vraja in the forms of *gopīs* and thereafter performed the month-long worship of the goddess Kātyāyanī (*kātyāyanī-vrata*) to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their husband. On their last day of worship, these *gopīs* invited Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Lalitā, Viśākhā, Candrāvalī, and other eternal associates of the Divine Couple to join them. As they took their bath in the river Yamunā, Kṛṣṇa crept up and stole their clothes from the river bank.

That is why Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura refers to Kṛṣṇa as “He who steals the clothes of the *gopīs*.”

Here is Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura's Śrī Caurāgragaṇya-
puruṣāṣṭakam:

*vraje prasiddham navanīta-cauram
gopāṅganānām ca dukūla-cauram
aneka-janmārjita-pāpa-cauram
caurāgragaṇyam puruṣam namāmi (1)*

I offer *praṇāma* to that foremost of thieves, who is famous in
Vraja as the butter thief and as He who steals the *gopīs'* clothes.
He is also famous for stealing from those who take shelter of Him
the sins they have accrued over many lifetimes.

*śrī rādhikāyā hṛdayasya cauram
navāmbuda-śyāmala-kānti-cauram
padāśritānām ca samasta-cauram
caurāgragaṇyam puruṣam namāmi (2)*

I offer *praṇāma* to that greatest of all thieves, who steals
Śrīmatī Rādhikā's heart, who steals the dark luster of a fresh
raincloud and who steals all the sins and sufferings of those who
take shelter of His feet.

*akiṣcanī-kṛtya padāśritam yaḥ
karoti bhikṣum paṭhi geha-hīnam
kenāpy aho bhīṣaṇa-caura īdṛg
dṛṣṭaḥ śruto vā na jagat-traye 'pi (3)*

He turns His surrendered devotees into paupers and
wandering, homeless beggars. Aho! Such a fearsome thief has
never been seen or heard of in all the three worlds.

*yadīya nāmāpi haraty aśeṣam
giri-prasārān api pāpa-rāśīm
āścarya-rūpo nanu caura īdṛg
dṛṣṭaḥ śruto vā na mayā kadāpi (4)*

Merely uttering His name purges one of a mountain of sins.
I have never seen or heard of such an astonishingly wonderful
thief anywhere!

*dhanam ca mānam ca tathendriyāṇi
prāṇāś ca hṛtvā mama sarvam eva
palāyase kutra dhṛto 'dya caura
tvam bhakti-dāmnāsi mayā niruddhaḥ (5)*

O Thief! You have stolen my wealth, my honour, my senses,
my life and everything that is mine. But where can You run to?
I have caught You with the rope of my devotion.

*chinatsi ghoram yama-pāśa-bandham
bhinatsi bhīmam bhāva-pāśa-bandham
chinatsi sarvasya samasta-bandham
naivātmano bhakta-kṛtam tu bandham (6)*

You cut the terrible noose of Yamarāja, You sever the dreadful
noose of material existence, and You slash everyone's material
bondage, but You cannot cut the knot fastened by Your own
loving devotees.

*man-mānase tāmasa-rāśi-ghore
kāragṛhe duḥkha-maye nibaddhaḥ
labhasva he caura! hare! cirāya
sva-caurya-doṣocitam eva daṇḍam (7)*

O You who have stolen everything that is mine! O thief!
Today I have imprisoned You in the miserable prison-house of
my heart, which is very fearful because of the terrible darkness
of my ignorance. You will remain there for a very long time,
receiving appropriate punishment for Your crimes of thievery!

*kāragṛhe vasa sadā hṛdaye madīye
mad-bhakti-pāśa-dṛḍha-bandhana-niṣcalaḥ san
tvām kṛṣṇa he! pralaya-koṭi-śatāntare 'pi
sarvasva-caura! hṛdayān na hi mocayāmi (8)*

O Kṛṣṇa, thief of everything that is mine! The noose of my devotion will remain tight forever, so You will continue to reside in the prison-house of my heart, because I will not release You for millions of aeons.

I have already pointed out that since Kṛṣṇa's qualities are infused in His devotee, this quality of being a thief must also be infused in Śrīla Gurudeva's heart. So, what is Śrīla Gurudeva stealing in this world?

Śrīla Gurudeva says; "Give me your heart as if it is a flower and I'll make it pure and fragrant, and offer it to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Divine Couple, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa."

The worldwide community of devotees is witnessing how, if anyone sees or listens to Śrīla Gurudeva even once with faith (*śraddhā*), that person becomes a devotee and a dedicated disciple or follower. This is because of Śrīla Gurudeva's supernatural ability to steal hearts like a thief and offer them to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Śrī Gaura-Gadādhara, and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Gurudeva is a transcendental thief, like his master, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He has no interest in material possessions or achievements. He is only interested at capturing the hearts of the devotees, and in this, he is very expert.

ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA'S PŪRVĀŚRAMA

BIRTHPLACE

The name of Tridandi Swāmī Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja in his *pūrvāśrama*¹⁰ was Śrīman Nārāyaṇa Tiwari. He took birth in a highly educated and respected *brāhmaṇa* family, in the famous village of Tiwaripur, in the Buxar district of Bihar, India. In the past, Tiwaripur was situated on the banks of the sacred river Gaṅgā, but Gaṅgā has since shifted her course, and is now some distance away. Tiwaripur was a village where only *brāhmaṇa* communities lived; everyone was educated and prosperous. Many historical events took place in Śrīla Gurudeva's birthplace, but out of genuine humility, Śrīla Gurudeva has said, "I am so unfortunate that I took birth in Bihar, the kingdom of Jarāsandha¹¹. My birthplace is the place of the atheist Gautama Buddha and it is *pāṇḍava-varjita-deśa*, the place neglected by the Pāṇḍavas. My Śrīla Gurudeva, *nitya-līlā praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, is so merciful that he grabbed me by my *śikhā* and pulled me out of material existence."

In ancient times, the state of Bihar was known as Magadha. It has always been the site of much religious importance, yet despite its colourful and glorious history, it is also been the scene of some notorious events.

The village of Tiwaripur is situated near the towns of Buxar and Dalsagar. Since the Gaṅgā shifted her course, Tiwaripur is presently two kilometres away from the sacred river. At the time of Śrīla Gurudeva's appearance in 1921, the population was around two thousand.

The village was founded thousands of years ago by the Tiwari

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¹⁰ When a renounced person is living with *guru* in the *maṭha*, the previous (*pūrvā*) *āśrama* in which he took birth is called *pūrvāśrama*.

¹¹ Father-in-law of the cruel hearted King Kāṁsa

brāhmaṇas. Tiwari, or Trivedi, refers to *brāhmaṇas* who have knowledge of three Vedas. They used their title as their surname. There are four Vedas, and those with knowledge of all four vedas are called Chaturvedi or Chaube, while those with knowledge of two Vedas are called Dvivedi. In Śrīla Gurudeva's village, there were only Tiwari *brāhmaṇas*, the outskirts of the village and surrounding villages being inhabited by other social orders (*varṇas*).

What does Śrīla Gurudeva mean when he says that he is unfortunate to have taken birth in Bihar? Here are some historical events that took place there:

Jarāsandha, the father-in-law of the wicked King Kāṁsa, was the notorious king of Magadha during the *Mahābhārata* era. With his huge ruthless army, he captured and imprisoned many hundreds of kings, with the desire to kill them.

Magadha is also known as the place that the pious Pāṇḍavas neglected (*pāṇḍava-varjita-deśa*) during their exile. At one time, the Pāṇḍava princes were banished to the forest for twelve years and had to spend the thirteenth year incognito. If Duryodhana, the head of the Kauravas, found them during the thirteenth year, they would have to start another twelve years of exile in the forest, followed by another year in hiding. Duryodhana and his uncle Śākuni devised this devious political intrigue. This culminated in a tragic series of manipulated dice games, in which the Pāṇḍavas were inevitably defeated. Stripped of their royal status and wealth, for twelve years the Pāṇḍavas roamed throughout Bhārata-varśa, the Greater India, and visited many places. Those places that were neglected by the Pāṇḍavas during their exile are called *pāṇḍava-varjita-deśa*.

Because of these inauspicious histories, some consider that the state of Bihar is not a worthy place. How is it, then, that Śrīla Gurudeva, an eternal associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, took birth in such an apparently infamous place? Due to Śrīla Gurudeva's genuine Vaiṣṇava humility,

he considers himself unfortunate to have such a birthplace. However, his place of birth is actually very glorious for the following reasons:

(1) Such is the influence of the river Gaṅgā that all places within eight miles of her banks become very auspicious and are considered pure and holy. The Gaṅgā flows very close to the village of Tiwaripur and as a child, Śrīla Gurudeva used to take bath with his father Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha Tiwari in her cool, flowing waters every day.

(2) Near the village Tiwaripur is the place where Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi, a great sage of ancient India, conducted a fire sacrifice for the benefit of the whole world. However, every time Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi began his fire sacrifice, Māṛica and Subahu, the two mischievous sons of the demoness Tārakā, caused disturbances and prevented him from completing his sacrificial rite. Viśvāmitra was powerful enough to kill the demons, but to do so would have reduced the fruit of his penance. Therefore, to avoid having to kill the troublesome duo himself, he journeyed to the city of Ayodhyā to bring the young prince Rāma and his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa back to his hermitage.

The next time Viśvāmitra Ṛṣi started the fire sacrifice, the two demons again started to create havoc by throwing flesh, bones, and other impure items into the sacred fire. With His magnificent prowess in archery, Lord Rāma swiftly used His sharp arrows to create a spinning wheel in the sky and this stopped the demons' downpour of blood, liquor and other impure items. Viśvāmitra was extremely pleased that he could successfully complete his sacrifice.

After this incident, Lord Rāma killed the demoness Tārakā and her son Subahu at that very place. From there, He also released an arrow that hurled Tārakā's other son, Māṛica, across the continent into the middle of the Indian Ocean. Much later, the demon king Rāvaṇa's brothers, angry at the slaying of their family members, arrived in the same place to meet their death at the hands of the valiant Prince Rāma.

(3) Also located near Śrīla Gurudeva's birthplace is

Ahalyāvalī, the place of Ahalyā-devī. Ahalyā-devī was the chaste wife of the powerful mystic sage Gautama Ṛṣi. During that time, a devastating drought had struck ancient India stopping the growth of grains and plants, and thus causing a severe scarcity of food. Gautama Ṛṣi, by the power of his *bhagavad-bhajana*, fed the whole population for one year. King Indra, the king of heaven, seeing how famous Gautama had become as a result of this extraordinary feat, became jealous of him and wanted to cause disturbance in his practice of austerity. Indra also felt threatened; being afraid that Gautama Ṛṣi might usurp his throne and take possession of the heavenly kingdom. He therefore enlisted the help of the moon-god, asking him to make the moon set at midnight, so that it would appear as if morning had come. The moon-god did that.

When Gautama Ṛṣi saw that the moon had set, he went to the river for his pre-dawn bath. Indra then disguised himself as Gautama Ṛṣi and taking advantage of the sage's absence in the middle of the night, entered the sage's *āśrama* and broke the chastity of his wife Ahalyā-devī.

Meanwhile when Gautama Ṛṣi arrived at the sacred river Gaṅgā he perceived that it was not morning at all and returned to his *āśrama*. As he arrived, he saw someone looking just like him coming out of his bedroom, and immediately understood what had happened. Gautama Ṛṣi cursed Indra and strongly reprimanded his wife, "Oh, how could you not have determined that this man was not me? For this, I curse you to become a stone!" Later, Gautama Ṛṣi granted a boon to his wife that she would be brought back to human form by Lord Rāma's divine touch. This history is found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

When Lord Rāma was on His way to Viśvāmitra's *āśrama*, He touched that stone with His lotus foot, and thus, Ahalyā-devī regained her human form. She offered *praṇāma* to Lord Rāma, circumambulating Him four times as a mark of respect and then went to the her husband's *āśrama*.

(4) The district of Śrīla Gurudeva's family is also the site of the *āśrama* of Nārada Ṛṣi. Nārada had *āśramas* in many different places, and one of them was in Nāradauli, no more than four kilometres from Tiwaripur.

(5) As mentioned earlier, the region where Śrīla Gurudeva grew up was previously the kingdom of King Jarāsandha. Jarāsandha, though cruel at heart, was outwardly very charitable, and every day he would give donations to people who came to him. During Lord Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes five thousand years ago, Kṛṣṇa and the two heroic Pāṇḍavas, Arjuna and Bhīma, disguised themselves as *brāhmaṇas* and visited Jarāsandha in his capital. The king gave them audience and told them to ask for anything they wanted. He was so liberal that he could never refuse any request for charity, so Kṛṣṇa said, “*Yuddham dehi* – I pray that you will grant give us a battle. We want to fight with you.”

Jarāsandha laughed at the idea of a *brāhmaṇa* requesting a battle.

“Who are you? Identify yourselves!”

Kṛṣṇa smiled and said, “I am Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, this is Arjuna and this is Bhīma.”

True to his charitable nature, Jarāsandha immediately granted their request. However, he refused to fight with Arjuna, saying that the mighty warrior was a eunuch. This degrading insult referred to the time when Arjuna was disguised as a woman, in his thirteenth year of exile. This was due to a curse, which enabled him to avoid being tracked down by Duryodhana.

Jarāsandha also refused to fight with Kṛṣṇa, enviously accusing the all-powerful Kṛṣṇa to be a coward. This referred to His performance of His wonderful Rancor pastime.

Jarāsandha finally chose Bhīma, considering him to be the fittest and most qualified candidate for him. This was exactly what Kṛṣṇa wanted. He did not want Arjuna to fight with Jarāsandha who was expert at club fighting. Arjuna was the greatest archer but Bhīma was the greatest club fighter and was more than capable of defeating Jarāsandha.

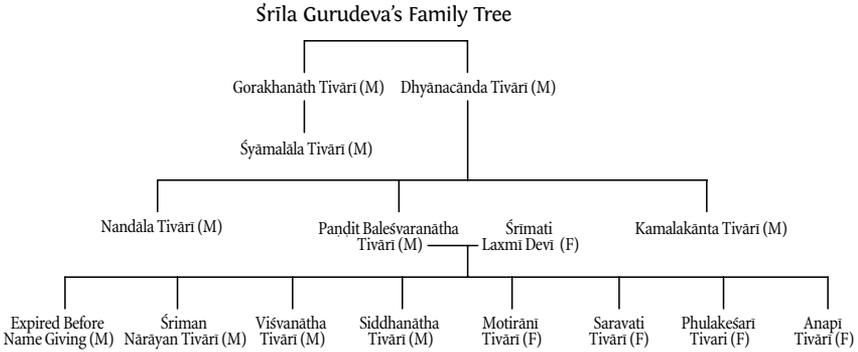
From this pastime we can see that after the exile, two of the Pāṇḍavas did set foot in Bihar along with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Now consider these two points: first of all, they were no longer in exile; and secondly, they were with Lord Kṛṣṇa. As a result, they were very happy there, so the place cannot be rightly called *pāṇḍava-varjita-deśa* as it was not entirely neglected by the Pāṇḍavas.

Śrīla Gurudeva's grandfather's name was Dyānacānda Tiwari and his grandfather's brother was Gorakhanātha Tiwari. Dyānacānda Tiwari had three sons named Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha Tiwari, Nandalāla Tiwari and Kamalākānta Tiwari. Gorakhanātha Tiwari's son was named Śyāmalāla Tiwari. Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha Tiwari, the eldest son of Dyānacānda Tiwari, was the father of Śrīla Gurudeva.

Śrīla Gurudeva's mother's name was Śrīmatī Lakṣmī-devī. Both his parents were Vaiṣṇavas belonging to the Śrī *sampradāya*. They were virtuous, truthful, generous, and were well liked and respected in their community. Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha Tiwari and Śrīmatī Lakṣmī-devī had eight children – four sons and four daughters. Their first son died as a baby even before his name-giving ceremony. Śrīman Nārāyaṇa (Śrīla Gurudeva) was their second son; the third son was Viśvanātha, and the fourth was Siddhanātha. The names of the four daughters were Motīrānī, Sarasvatī, Phulakeśarī and Anapī.

The three brothers – Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha, Nandalāla and Kamalākānta – all lived together as one extended family, along with their cousin Śyāmalāla. Along with their wives and children, they all shared the same kitchen and household facilities. That was the culture and traditional way of living. Even fifty years ago in India families lived together in this way.

Due to the death of his older brother, Śrīman Nārāyaṇa became the eldest child of Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha. When a first child dies families become very affectionate to the second child so Śrīla Gurudeva became the object of deep affection from his parents and his uncles and aunts.



ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA'S CHILDHOOD NAME

Traditionally the name-giving ceremony (*nāma-karaṇa*) is held for every young Indian child. Śrīla Gurudeva's paternal grandmother, Dulārī-devī, carefully observed her grandson's rare characteristics and chose a suitable name for him. Small children are typically naughty and mischievous. They throw things around and break them and cry a lot. Śrīla Gurudeva never did anything like this. When he was a baby he would remain quietly wherever his mother Śrīmatī Lakṣmī-devī would put him. Even when he could walk and run, he would still sit peacefully wherever his mother placed him, without protesting or weeping. He resembled a great *yogī* sitting in one place and meditating on the Supreme Lord. Seeing this, his paternal grandmother Dulārī-devī remarked, "His name should be Bholānātha because he looks like Lord Śīva meditating on the Supreme."

Bholānātha is a name of Lord Śīva meaning that he is very easily pleased. He easily grants whatever is asked of him without considering who is fit to receive benediction and what will be the consequences. He readily gives blessings without any self-interest. This is clearly evident in the story of the demon Vṛkāsura, the son of Śakuni. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that Vṛkāsura wanted to enjoy Lord Śīva's wife Pārvatī, so he performed severe austerities to placate Lord Śīva. When the lord appeared Vṛkāsura asked for

the benediction that if he touched anyone's head it would split open and kill the person instantly.

Lord Śiva granted this benediction without hesitation and the shameless Vṛkāsura immediately rushed forward to use his new power against Lord Śiva himself. The Lord turned and ran in alarm, his deerskin attire and his ḍamaru drum falling. As Vṛkāsura chased Lord Śiva around the universe, Śiva remembered his Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Lord Viṣṇu then appeared as a perfect *brahmacārī* in order to protect his devotee from the demon. The Lord's bodily effulgence was attractive to both Śiva and the pursuing demon. Using sweet words, the Lord in His *brahmacārī* form approached Vṛkāsura and convinced him not to chase Lord Śiva: "Lord Śiva resides in a cremation ground and smears his body with ashes. He lives with ghosts and hobgoblins, he has a snake around his neck, and he wears no clothes. How can you believe that someone like that has any power to give benedictions?"

The *brahmacārī* then advised the demon Vṛkāsura to test the benediction on himself. By the influence of Yogamāyā, the demon became completely bewildered and thought, "I have never heard such a sweet voice. I must follow this advice." The foolish demon then put his hand on his own head which immediately split open and he died.

This pastime shows how Śrī Kṛṣṇa protects Lord Śiva and how Lord Śiva depends on his worshipable Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It also shows Lord Śiva's quality of granting whatever he is asked for without considering whether or not the result will be good for him.

After Śrīla Gurudeva's uncle Kamalākānta had listened to Dulāri-devī's suggestion that the boy should be called Bholānātha, he pointed out a further consideration. Kamalākānta Tiwari was the youngest of the four cousin-brothers but he was the one who maintained the whole family. Further, if there was ever a legal problem or someone had to go to court or if there was a social program such as a marriage

ceremony, he would be the one to take care of all the arrangements.

Kamalākānta Tiwari thought that, although Bholānātha was an auspicious name of Lord Śiva, there were other reasons why it would not be a good name for his nephew. He was concerned that as the boy grew up children would call him “*Bhole! Bhole!*” They would tease him mercilessly and pester him with questions: “Where is your trident? Where are your crematorium ashes? Where is your snake?” and so forth.

Kamalākānta Tiwari called an experienced astrologer who said that the saintly young boy’s name should start with the letter *śa* because the zodiac sign in which the moon was situated at the time of his birth (*rāśi*) was Aquarius (Kumbha). Kamalākānta Tiwari then declared, “Yes, we should call him Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. Śrī is favourable because we are in the Śrī *sampradāya* of Rāmānujācārya. Śrī means Lakṣmī who is always together with Nārāyaṇa. Our worshipable deities are Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, so when we call his name Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, we can always remember Their Lordships, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa.

Out of the many family members present, only Śrīla Gurudeva’s grandmother, Dulārī-devī, raised an objection: “Oh, Kamalakānta, there are so many shorter names like Śiva, Śankara, Śambhu and so forth, that start with the letter *śa*. Why have you chosen this long name ‘Śrīman Nārāyaṇa?’”

Kamalākānta replied, “Mother, I have all respect and veneration for our all-auspicious Lord Śiva, but have you forgotten how our *gurudeva* related the glories of Lord Nārāyaṇa’s name?”

Dulārī-devī replied, “Oh my dear son, I always engage myself in household duties, cooking and providing nourishment for all of you. I cannot remember what our beloved *gurudeva* said about the glories of Nārāyaṇa. Please tell me again.”

Kamalākānta then told her, “Nārāyaṇa is such a powerful name. You all know the story from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* of Ajāmila and his young son Nārāyaṇa.”

Ajāmila was a first class aristocratic *brāhmaṇa*, but somehow he became entangled with a prostitute and gave up his chaste

wife and family just to be with her. There was no sin he would not perform for her sake. He became so degraded that at the time of death three Yamadūtas came to take him to hell. They were so ghastly that in terror Ajāmīla called out for his son, “Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa.” Even though Ajāmīla was only calling out for his son, when he uttered those four syllables ‘nā, rā, ya, ṇa’, Lord Nārāyaṇa sent four of his messengers, Viṣṇudūtas, to protect him. Ajāmīla heard the conversation between the Viṣṇudūtas and Yamadūtas, in which the Viṣṇudūtas established the power and glories of the name of Nārāyaṇa. Ajāmīla then resolutely determined to give up that prostitute and all his family entanglements in this world and go to Haridvāra to do exclusive *bhajana* of Lord Nārāyaṇa. Afterwards, when the time came to give up his body, those same four Viṣṇudūtas came again to bring him to the Lord’s abode. The name ‘Nārāyaṇa’ is so powerful that anyone who chants it will be benefitted.

“From this day, no one shall call him Bholānātha. He will be called Śrīman Nārāyaṇa.” From that day onwards, the child’s name became Śrīman Nārāyaṇa Tiwari. Much later, he joined the *maṭha* as a young man. When he received initiation on Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā, in March 1947, our Parama-gurudeva kept his name by calling him Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa. Later again, when he accepted the renounced order of *sannyāsa*, his name became Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, the famous *ācārya* of the Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*.

ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA’S INCLINATION AS A BOY

In Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s time, Bengal was one state, and there was no division between East and West. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s associates were mainly from Bengal and the neighbouring state of Orissa. The inhabitants of both these places are very partial to rice products, whereas in Bihar the main foodstuffs are wheat and chickpea products. Śrīla Gurudeva, however, liked to eat rice every day. His family used to say, “How is it that this Bengali boy has come

into our family? Every day he wants rice.”

In Bihar rice is cooked once a week but Śrīla Gurudeva liked to have it every day. Although he hardly wept when he was a small child he would start weeping if no rice was served. His mother, out of her deep affection for her son, who was the eldest child in the family, cooked rice for him daily, whether the other family members wanted it or not.

“So, maybe I was a Bengali in a previous life,” Śrīla Gurudeva remarked. When a pure *bhakta* speaks, even nonchalantly, it can be taken as a fact. From this statement and from many other indications that I have seen throughout his life, I have concluded with utmost certainty that Śrīla Gurudeva is an eternal associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Growing up in Bihar, Śrīla Gurudeva was greatly influenced by Lord Rāma. His father, Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha Tiwari, was a learned scholar and he and his cousin-brother Śyāmalāla Tiwari were well-known and influential in the local villages. They would frequently discuss *Rāmāyaṇa* together, and whenever they gave a public discourse, several hundred people would attend and a big festival would be held. At these times Śrīla Gurudeva would abandon all play with his friends to sit quietly and attentively listen to the narrations of the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa* which is full of the adventures of Lord Rāma.

Śrīla Gurudeva quickly learned to read *Rāmāyaṇa*. He would read with great faith, memorizing *Rāmāyaṇa* and other stories. As he would read, he would weep and weep, especially in the parts that described Lord Rāma going into exile with Sītā-devī, how the mothers Kauśalyā and Sumitrā were so unhappy, and how Daśaratha Mahārāja became distraught to the point of death. Śrīla Gurudeva would weep incessantly and the sacred book would become wet with his tears. These symptoms are not ordinary for a child but are typical of highly advanced devotees.

Early one morning, just before four, Śrīla Gurudeva had what seems to be a dream. It was not in fact an ordinary dream but a

real vision. Lord Rāma appeared in his bedroom along with Sītā-devī, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān. Even though these transcendental personalities appearing before Śrīla Gurudeva were brighter than the sun – the human eye cannot look at the sun when it has ascended in the sky – still, he was able to look at them clearly without hurting his eyes. When Śrīla Gurudeva went forward to touch Lord Rāma’s feet, the Lord disappeared along with His consort and associates. It is very rare for anyone to receive the *darśana* of the Lord even in dreams but here again is an indication of his highly advanced spiritual consciousness. Although his *sthāyī-bhāva* was not fixed in relationship with Śrī Rāma, his *darśana* of Their Lordships – Sītā, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān – was an indication of what was to come in the future.

Two of our great *ācāryas*, Śrī Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, appeared in South India. They were performing *sādhana-bhajana* in the Śrī *samprādaya*, but constitutionally they were *gopīs* of Vraja (Tungavidyā Sakhī and Śrī Guṇa Mañjarī, respectively). Although they worshipped Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa from the beginning of their lives, their *sthāyī-bhāva* had not yet manifested and when they associated with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, their moods changed and they became attracted to the *sevā* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. In Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, we find examples of *sthāyī-bhāva* not being manifested as in the case of Venkaṭa Bhaṭṭa. We also find examples of *sthāyī-bhāva* already being manifested, as in the cases of Murāri Gupta and of Anupama, the younger brother of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī. All these personalities were associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This will be discussed later in great detail.

CHILDHOOD: EATING WITH FATHER

During the day, while Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha Tiwari was out farming his land, young Śrīman Nārāyaṇa would stay at home with

the women of the household. Śrīman Nārāyaṇa's grandmother, Dulārī-devī (who would call him Bholānātha), loved her grandson dearly. She always nourished and cared for him, tending him when he occasionally became sick. Śrīman Nārāyaṇa even used to sleep with her when he was a child.

When Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha Tiwari would come home in the afternoon, tired after a day of farming, his mother would serve him his meal and he would sit down to honour *prasāda*. Seeing his father eating, little Nārāyaṇa would run to snuggle into his lap, and his father would lovingly feed him. Despite his grandmother Dulārī-devī's deep affection for him, she could not tolerate this.

“Why does this naughty boy always come and sit here whenever I feed my son? Why does he not allow my son to eat first?”

Dulārī-devī would try to chase Śrīman Nārāyaṇa out of his father's lap so that he could eat peacefully.

POWERFUL GRANDFATHER

As mentioned earlier, Śrīla Gurudeva's paternal grandfather was Dhyānacānda Tiwari, and Dhyānacānda's brother Gorakhanātha Tiwari was Śrīla Gurudeva's father's uncle. As far as Śrīla Gurudeva was concerned, they were both grandfathers.

While Dhyānacānda was extremely handsome, Gorakhanātha was physically very powerful and a keen wrestler. He was so strong that once, when a bullock cart got stuck in the mud and even two bulls could not move it, Gorakhanātha took the place of the bulls and pulled the cart out without a problem. On another occasion, two buffalos were fighting. When buffalos fight they become so fierce and violent that many times one of the beasts gets killed. Anyone who tries to separate them may be seriously injured or lose his life. Yet, Gorakhanātha Tiwari took a bamboo stick and beat the two fighting buffalos so fiercely that they stopped fighting in fear of him.

FATHER'S MANGO ORCHARD

Śrīla Gurudeva told me about the time when he was a schoolboy and how he spent his time in the village. Beyond the village of Tiwaripur was a big village called Dalsāgara. Śrīla Gurudeva's father had two orchards in between the two villages. One was a jackfruit orchard and the other had many varieties of mangoes. There were over 150 trees in the orchards. In the summer season, especially in June, at around midday, Śrīla Gurudeva would take a *khatiā* (*khatiā* is a type of bed made of a light wooden frame; the middle portion being covered by soft jute and special grass ropes) and carry it on his head to the mango garden. At that time the mangoes were ripe. Śrīla Gurudeva would do his reading, writing, and homework under the mango trees. Then, after he had completed everything, he would take enough mangoes to fill his stomach and head back home. I was curious to know as to why Śrīla Gurudeva used to go there during midday. Was he protecting the garden as a caretaker (*chaukidāra*)?

“No,” he said, “no need of a *chaukidāra*. My fathers and uncles were very liberal. Their philosophy was that whoever comes can have mangoes – no problem. Between my two villages, Tiwaripur and Dalsāgara, whoever came could take mangoes from there. No one would ever raise any objection.”

They had such a big garden that both villages were satisfied every year by their mangoes. Even when the mangoes were green, they used to make pickle and send it to their friends and relatives. Whenever any villagers asked for the mangoes his father would comply. According to the old Indian tradition they didn't want to sell anything but distributed to friends, family and neighbours.

Śrīla Gurudeva came from a family of many talents. His father was an enthusiastic wrestler and also very expert in music. His mother had a very sweet melodious voice and would sing and compose spontaneous poetry. She would often be called upon to recite poems at babies' first grain ceremonies, at name-giving ceremonies, sacred thread ceremonies (*upanayan-saṁskāra*) and marriage ceremonies.

Śrīla Gurudeva told us that his good qualities came from his

mother just as Lord Kṛṣṇa's beauty and complexion came from Mother Yaśodā.

HORSE RIDING

During Śrīla Gurudeva's morning walks during the 2009 festival near Venice, Italy, we passed an area where there were some horses. This reminded Śrīla Gurudeva of his childhood and he told us that in his school days he was good at riding horses. His maternal uncles had many horses and Śrīla Gurudeva, being athletic and fit, would visit his uncles from time to time, specifically for horse riding. Soon he became expert and would race the horses through the fields performing varieties of jumps and other tricks.

MANGO PULP CURE

In June 2009, in Italy, Śrīla Gurudeva related to us another incident from his student days when he and his brother-in-law were on their way to a neighbouring village for a wedding. His sister and her husband, who lived in a nearby village, would visit them from time to time. Śrīla Gurudeva was very much loved by all his family members.

At the time there were no vehicles and the only way to commute from village to village was by foot. It was the month of June, which is extremely hot in Bihar. There was a heat wave at the time, referred to as *lū* in Indian language. On the way to his sister and brother-in-law's house, they stopped at a big pond to bathe. Afterwards, Śrīla Gurudeva sat on the banks of the pond while his brother-in-law washed his cloth with soap, spread it out on the ground and waited fifteen or twenty minutes till it was completely dry. Śrīla Gurudeva was sitting in the sun all this time, waiting for his brother-in-law to finish, and he began to feel sick and faint. His brother-in-law quickly took him to a nearby house where Śrīla Gurudeva collapsed, completely unconscious. The gentleman of the house

hastily prepared some mango pulp by boiling fifteen or twenty green mangoes in water and discarding the seeds and skin. He then applied this pulp thickly all over Śrīla Gurudeva's body – from the soles of his feet and palms of his hands, to his chest, stomach and head.

Śrīla Gurudeva's temperature had become extremely high, but after half an hour with the powerful compress of green mango pulp, his body cooled down. He regained his consciousness and opened his eyes, completely cured. After thanking the gentleman, they continued on their way to the next village and reached the wedding party.

TASTE FOR ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

The family *guru* (*kula-guru*) of the Tiwari family was a learned scholar of Śrī *sampradāya*, and would perform a month-long recitation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. When he came to Tiwaripur, Śrīla Gurudeva would serve him attentively, decorating the stage, the deities' altar, and the seat for the speaker. Every day, for a month, he would take the family *guru* from his accommodation to the stage, and afterwards bring him back to his place. Each day, he would do the priest's laundry and massage his feet when he took rest. As a result of serving in so many ways and hearing attentively, Śrīla Gurudeva's relish for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* increased more and more. His taste for hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was enhanced by his mood of service and he acquired the same taste for hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that he had had for hearing *Rāmāyaṇa*.

As for Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Rāma, there is no difference between Them. Lord Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān; Lord Rāma is also Bhagavān. It is mentioned in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.39):

*rāmādi-mūrtiṣu kalā-niyamena tiṣṭhan
nānāvātāram akarod bhuvaneṣu kintu
kṛṣṇaḥ svayaṁ samabhavat paramaḥ pumān yo
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

I worship the original personality, Govinda, who manifests Himself in the material world as Śrī Rāmacandra and many other incarnations who are His plenary portions and sub-portions, and who personally appears in His original form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains in his purport to this verse:

Avatāras such as Śrī Rāma, Nṛsimha and Varāha are called personal expansion *avatāras*. They all reside eternally in Their own *dhāmas* in Vaikuṅṭha along with Their associates, and whenever Kṛṣṇa desires, They descend here to the material world for the welfare of the universe. All these incarnations descend to relieve the burden of the Earth, to chastise miscreants, to establish religious principles for the particular age in which They descend, and to bestow auspiciousness upon the *jīvas*. However, whenever and wherever Bhagavān descends into this material world, He does so exclusively by His own sweet will, bringing along His spiritual *dhāma* and His eternal associates. Similarly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is non-different from the Supreme Personality Śrī Kṛṣṇa, also appears in His original personal form (*svayam-rūpa*). This is the confidential meaning of the verse.

Śrīla Gurudeva was naturally attracted to Śrī Bhagavān from the beginning of his life and that strong attraction had deepened more and more.

ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA'S SCHOOL DAYS

No one dared to compete with Śrīla Gurudeva in any athletic event be it walking, running, boating, cycling, or anything else. As an adolescent, teenager and youth, he was extremely fit and excelled at high jump, long jump, running, cycling and football. He was also an adept oarsman and would speedily ply a row-boat through the Gaṅgā waters.

After taking his morning *prasāda* he would run the five miles (eight kilometers) from his village to school barefoot without stopping, and after school, he would again run the distance home. He could out-run the many other boys at school and if any schoolmate tried to overtake him, he would increase his speed so that his competitor would soon become tired.

Śrīla Gurudeva's formal education began at primary school in Tiwaripur's neighbouring village called Dalsāgara. He was then admitted into the fifth grade at Curamanpur. However, he lost a full year because the school at Curamanpur had not been successful in obtaining government registration. As a result, he decided to attend a school in Buxar, five miles (eight kilometers) from his village. There he was admitted into Bihar Bhumiḥar Brahmana High School, where he completed grades five through seven. He then went on to complete grades eight through ten at Buxar High School. Because of his extraordinary intelligence, he was always first in his class. He also had a special attraction for athletics. He was a state champion and received many prizes while in high school.

In Śrīla Gurudeva's youth, the movement to rid India of British rule was gaining momentum and he said that it was his desire to 'somehow remove the corrupt British rulers from our country'.

"How the British cheat and torment us," Śrīla Gurudeva considered, "they torment even our mothers and sisters."

The British had committed many atrocities in India. One of the best-known was the huge massacre of defenceless citizens shot dead at Amritsar in 1919, two years before Śrīla Gurudeva was born. The British were guilty of abusing many women, with incidences of rape and murder numbering in the thousands. Even their original way of gaining control of India was crooked. They took charge of India after the battle of Plassey on 23rd June, 1757. Prior to this battle, the British realised that their forces were inferior to those of the opposing Navāba of Bengal, so they bribed Mir Jafar and other commanders of the Navāba's army. Mir Jafar assembled his troops near the battlefield, but made no move to actually join the battle and

as a result the Navāba of Bengal's army was defeated. The Navāba fled but was eventually captured and executed. Thus the British won through trickery, imprisoned large numbers of Indians, and thus took control of Bengal and later, the whole of India. More than 200 years later, Mahātma Gandhi (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) started a revolution that eventually led to India's independence. The mood of Gandhi's movement was prevalent among the youth of India during the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, and Śrīla Gurudeva, as part of his *naravat-lilā*¹², sympathized with the movement.

Śrīla Gurudeva wanted India to somehow become free from the clutches of the British rulers, who were abusive, atheistic and opposed to the Vedic culture. For this reason, even though Śrīla Gurudeva eventually learned English very well, he did not want to speak English in his youth. However, he was obliged to learn it in school. The head teacher of the school, who was very strict, personally taught English, his class starting at mid-day. Śrīla Gurudeva lacked interest and although he sat in the front row of the classroom, he would become drowsy and sleepy. Nevertheless he did learn English there as he related to us: "Sitting on the first bench, how could I sleep?"

¹² Śrīla Gurudeva is an eternal associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Divine Couple. The Lord appears in this world along with His associates, and they play their roles as ordinary human beings. This is called *naravat-lilā*. Whatever activities Śrī Bhagavān and the *mahā-bhāgavata* perform are deeply significant, although we may not readily understand this due to our incompetence and inexperience. For example, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's pastimes – such as going to Gayā for His father's *pinda* ceremony (a ritual to honour one's father and forefathers), His school life, His going to the Ganges river and telling the young girls that he was the husband of Gangādevī in order to get their offerings – appear to be ordinary human-like pastimes, but they are in fact the *naravat-lilā* of the Lord. *Naravat-lilā* is the apparently ordinary, human-like pastimes of the eternal associates of the Lord. Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī's serving as ministers of the Muslim king looked ordinary, but it was *naravat-lilā*. What Śrīla Gurudeva did before coming to his *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja – for example, working as a police officer – appears just like the activities of an ordinary human being. The difference is that he always remembers and is engaged in Śrī Bhagavān's service.

PREACHING TO THE SON OF HIS FAMILY GURU

In Indian tradition, everyone takes initiation from a *guru* when they reach their teenage years. The *kula-guru*, or family priest, of the Tiwari family was a very learned scholar of the Śrī *sampradāya* and Śrīla Gurudeva's parents, uncles, and aunts were all initiated by him. However with regard to the younger generation who were growing up the family *guru* suggested that it would be appropriate for his son to become *guru* and take on the responsibility of initiation. Śrīla Gurudeva's parents, uncles and aunts thought that this was a fine idea because it would establish the *kula-guru's* son as *guru* for the next generation. The family priest was fit to be the family *guru*, for he was a very qualified and a learned scholar, and he understood the teachings and behaviour of a Vaiṣṇava.

It is mentioned in scripture that in order to advise others, one must oneself be practicing the guidelines and regulations of spiritual life. One's advice to others will be fruitful if one is practicing himself, otherwise one's advice to others will not bear fruit. Śrīla Gurudeva desired a high standard of *guru* and did not want to take initiation from anyone just as a formality. He had some reservations about the *kula-guru's* son, so when he came to give initiation, Śrīla Gurudeva asked him some questions.

“What is the necessity of initiation?”

“In order to maintain regulated life, one must take initiation,” the son of the family *guru* replied. “All your family has taken initiation, so you must also.” But Śrīla Gurudeva was not satisfied with such an answer which was not qualified by either *guru* or *śāstra*.

He asked, “Do you do *bhajana* yourself?”

The priest's son replied, “Not always. Sometimes I do, sometimes not.”

“Do you smoke? Your father never smoked. Do you sometimes smoke?”

“Yes, I smoke from time to time.”

Śrīla Gurudeva then asked him, “What is the meaning of *dīkṣā*, or initiation?” The son of the family *guru* was unable to reply.

Śrīla Gurudeva recited a śloka:

*divyaṁ jñānaṁ yato dadyāt
kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayam
tasmād dikṣeti sā proktā
deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ*

Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (2.9)

He explained that the words *divyaṁ jñānaṁ* refer to the process which gives us transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*). That transcendental knowledge is called knowledge of the relationship between oneself and Śrī Bhagavān (*sambandha-jñāna*). It refers to the relationship between the practitioner of *bhakti* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. One devotee may have a servitor mood: “Kṛṣṇa is my master and I am His servant.” Another may have the mood of a *sakhā*: “Kṛṣṇa is my friend, and I am His friend.” Another may have the mood of a parent: “I am Kṛṣṇa’s mother” or “I am Kṛṣṇa’s father,” or “Kṛṣṇa is my son.” Or someone may have the mood of amorous love towards Kṛṣṇa. That relationship between Śrī Bhagavān and the devotee (*sambandha-jñāna*) begins from the *mantra* that the bona fide *guru* gives at the *dikṣā* initiation ceremony. Also, all kinds of sins are washed away and completely uprooted. Learned scholars who know about Bhagavān and *bhakti* call this ceremony *dikṣā*.

Next, Śrīla Gurudeva asked the son of the family *guru*, “Is there any example of anyone previously taking initiation? Can you give any examples from *śāstra*?” The family *guru*’s son could not reply.

Then Śrīla Gurudeva quoted a verse from the Purāṇas:

*vina dikṣā vihīnasya
na siddhim na sad gatim
tasmāt sarva prayatnena
guruna dikṣita bhavet*

He explained that without being initiated by a bona fide *guru*, a person cannot attain perfection in *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* and will not

attain a spiritually desirable destination. First, one must be initiated by a bona fide *guru*. Then, one should please his *gurudeva* in all respects and by all endeavours.

“Even Dhruva Mahārāja took initiation from Nārada Ṛṣi, and so did Prahlāda Mahārāja,” Śrīla Gurudeva explained, as the family priest’s son listened to him attentively. “This is mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Līlā-puruṣottama* Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, also accepted initiation from Bhāguri Ṛṣi. Similarly, *maryādā-puruṣottama* Śrī Rāmacandra took initiation from Vasiṣṭha Ṛṣi.

“Here is another question: How can a husband and wife, or parent and child, accept initiation from the same *guru*? They would become godbrothers and then how would their social or familial relationship continue?” Again, the son of the *kula-guru* could not reply.

Śrīla Gurudeva further questioned, “Mahārāja Daśaratha, Mother Kausalyā, Kaikeyī, Sumitrā and other queens of Daśaratha Mahārāja took initiation from Vasiṣṭha Ṛṣi, so, again, how can husband and wife continue their social or familial relationship if they accept initiation from the same *guru*?” The family *guru*’s son was captivated and speechless.

“Actually,” Śrīla Gurudeva continued, “this is not a real issue. Initiation is for the soul, not for the body. In this material world, there is a relation between one body and another body. The relationships of husband and wife, and parent and child, have nothing to do with the soul. Therefore, Lord Rāma, Śrī Bharata, Śrī Lakṣmaṇa, and Śrī Śatrughna all took initiation from Vasiṣṭha Ṛṣi and all their wives – Lord Rāma’s wife, Sītā-devī; Śrī Bharata’s wife, Māndavī, Śrī Lakṣmaṇa’s wife, Urmilā; and Śrī Śatrughna’s wife, Śrutakirtī – accepted initiation from him as well.”

Śrīla Gurudeva cautioned the family *guru*’s son, “You don’t know about *dikṣā*, and you are entangled in this material world, so how are you going to deliver others? It is better that you return home. There’s no need for you to give initiation to anyone now.” When the family priest’s son was thus respectfully admonished by the learned Śrīla Gurudeva, whom he had thought would become his disciple, he left for his village feeling humbled and ashamed.

ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA'S PREVIOUS OCCUPATION

When Śrīla Gurudeva had completed high school, he took a position as a teacher in a primary school. After six months of teaching in the primary school, he was selected to teach in the high school there. In primary school, he taught all the subjects of the curriculum; and in high school, he taught Indian history.

After teaching for only one or two months in the high school, Śrīla Gurudeva successfully applied for a position in the police department in Sahibaganj in Bihar. As part of the selection process for entering the police department, applicants had to compete in a sprint, the length of a long field and back. The police force was under the jurisdiction of the British government ruling India at the time. Śrīla Gurudeva, sharing the widespread attitude that the British should be removed, was not inclined to fully comply with the stipulations of the police selection process. Frequently a witness to the cheating and torment that the British inflicted on Indian citizens, Śrīla Gurudeva had no desire to learn or speak English and he did not care for the British police interviewers. Since he was the son of a landowner with agricultural acreage, the maintenance of life was no problem for him, so he could afford to risk being refused the job. Considering all this, and since it was well known that he was a sports champion and expert runner, he decided to play a little trick.

Approximately one hundred candidates were asked to run the length of the field and back. Śrīla Gurudeva decided not to burn up too much energy near the start, but to conserve it for later in the race, so at first he was running very slowly. Many men ran on ahead, reached the end of the field, turned round and began running back. When Śrīla Gurudeva met the returning runners, he turned around, and ran back with them, now applying his full energy, so that he came in first.

Some of the candidates complained, "He didn't go to the end of the field!

Probably, he turned around half-way there and not at the end!"

“Very well,” responded Śrīla Gurudeva, “in that case, you’re welcome to compete with me again. Who’d like to race again? Come! Let’s run again!”

The competitors were exhausted, having run to the end of the field and back, and were not inclined to race again, especially against Śrīla Gurudeva, the sports champion. So they backed down and accepted him as the winner.

Another part of the selection process required the candidate to repeat a sentence in English, after the selecting officer. “I didn’t like speaking English,” Śrīla Gurudeva explained, “so I didn’t even listen to what the officer said. I only watched his lips to see how he moved them. When he asked me to repeat, I simply moved my lips in the way he had done. I didn’t know a single word of what I was saying.”

The selecting officer laughed, and Śrīla Gurudeva was selected for the police force. He served there for about five years.

A BUSINESS OF NO LOSS BUT ONLY GAIN

What were the causes of Śrīla Gurudeva’s decision to renounce this material world? While he was in the police department, Śrīla Gurudeva had an intimate friend, also from Bihar, who was a devout worshipper of Śrī Bhagavān. One day this friend had a particularly important responsibility to perform at his work. However, while he was performing his worship and meditation before work in the morning, he became so absorbed in *bhajana* that he forgot all about work and the important duty. His absorption did not break until it was nearly time for the completion of his duty that day. Suddenly he thought, “Oh, I am chanting *harināma*. I must go to work.” He looked at his watch and saw that there was only half an hour left before the time his duty was supposed to end.

“I can’t show up at work now, when my service for the day is supposed to be already completed,” he thought. “What shall I do?”

He decided that he would not to go to work and would just give up the job.

The next day, he went to work to test the atmosphere, prepared to resign if necessary. He found that a higher ranking official had written a report in his service book: “I am very happy with your service. You have maintained and performed your duty excellently, and very intelligently. You are the most adept employee I have ever seen and I am very happy with you. You will receive a big promotion.”

The friend approached the official and, in complete honesty explained that he had not actually come to work the previous day.

“Come on, my friend, what are you saying?” said the official. “Of course you were here. I saw you here yesterday doing your duty. How can you say that you were not here? See, here is where you signed in.”

Śrīla Gurudeva’s friend saw that there was no need to say anything further. Returning home, he reflected on the strange situation.

“It is certain that, because I was absorbed in His *bhajana*, Bhagavān assumed my form, went to work for me and performed my duty. From today,” Śrīla Gurudeva’s friend resolved, “I will give up this job and only do *bhajana* of the Lord.”

Hearing this divine incident from his friend, Śrīla Gurudeva decided, “It is better that I also give up my employment and absorb myself in *bhajana*. Why waste my life?”

At that time, there was a Bengali disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, named Narottamānanda Prabhu – who later became Śrīla Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja – who was a very good speaker of the *Bhāgavata*. A superior officer in Śrīla Gurudeva’s branch of the police force, a Bengali named Mr. Banarjī, would host Śrīman Narottamānanda Prabhu, who would on occasion give *Bhāgavata* classes in Bengali at his home. In those days Śrīla Gurudeva did not know Bengali, nor did Śrīman Narottamānanda Prabhu know Hindi. Śrīla Gurudeva would go to the home of his senior colleague when Śrīman Narottamānanda Prabhu spoke, and would sit throughout the Bengali class, although he did not understand what was being said. It was after those lectures that Śrīla Gurudeva would have his first real talks in English, when he and Narottamānanda Prabhu would discuss the subject of the

lecture in their only common language, English.

It is important to note that Śrīla Gurudeva's first talks in this life with a strict follower of Mahāprabhu were in the English language and that his first talks in English, other than the school curriculum, were about Mahāprabhu's teachings. This was a portent of times to come many years later, when he would speak in English all over the world about that prime benediction for humanity, the divine message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

One day, a report that had been compiled on a certain case went missing in one of the departments in the police station. It seemed that somebody had misplaced it; no one could find it anywhere. A supervising officer would be arriving in an hour's time, and everyone was frantically searching for the essential missing file, except for Śrīla Gurudeva.

"Oh, Tiwariji," said the superintendent, "Can you please help us find the file? We need your help."

"How can I help?" Śrīla Gurudeva responded. "It is not in my department, so I'm not familiar with the file or its content. Of what help could I be?"

"If you help in searching," said the superintendent, "it will provide sympathy and support to those in the other department."

Śrīla Gurudeva's talks with Śrīman Narottamānanda Prabhu, as well as other incidences in his life, were causing him to seriously ponder renouncing material life and taking full shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission. When the superintendent spoke, Śrīla Gurudeva silently took shelter of the Lord and gravely prayed with this oath, "O Lord, if I close my eyes and find the missing file wherever I lay my hand, I will give up my household life and dedicate myself unto Your lotus feet forever."

In his pure simplicity, with full surrender, he moved with his eyes closed and pulled out one file. When he opened it, the other officers came over, looked at the file in Śrīla Gurudeva's hand, and were astounded.

“Tiwariji has found the missing file! Here is the file!” they shouted joyfully. “Tiwariji found it!” The policemen grabbed Śrīla Gurudeva and they all began to dance spontaneously in the police station. Externally, it was a moment of great jubilation for the police officers, but internally, this was a momentous time of great spiritual significance. Śrīla Gurudeva had made that important decision that would save the lives of countless suffering souls. All the planets are spinning in tremendous orbits by the will of the all-powerful Lord and now, by His inconceivable sweet will, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotee was about to leave household life to enter the world as the devoted servant of the Lord.

Had he not made that decision, what would have been our fate?

While all the other officers were excited, Śrīla Gurudeva was internally very grave. “What I said in my mind actually happened,” he thought, “It came true.” He realised from this incident that Śrī Mahāprabhu was bestowing His mercy on him. “I will not stay here any longer. I will not remain in household life. I will give up my family to join the *maṭha* and devote my life to *bhajana*.”

An ordinary person cannot imitate the character of transcendental personalities such as Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. Being unattached, his being married or not married was inconsequential and he was able to leave family life in a moment. However, one should not artificially renounce unless one is on that level.

From that time on, Śrīla Gurudeva started chanting one *lakh* of *harināma* daily. Because of his strong upbringing in the Śrī *sampradāya* tradition, he would only chant the second portion of the *mantra*:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Śrīla Gurudeva informed his superior officer about his decision to resign.

“Why, Tiwariji?” asked the officer. “Everybody here loves you and you are to get a significant promotion in two or three more months. Why do you want to quit your job now? What do you want to do?”

“I would rather do business,” Śrīla Gurudeva replied.

“Have you discussed this with your parents and your family?” the superior officer asked.

Śrīla Gurudeva lived within an orthodox Indian family that was very close-knit and bonded. He knew very well that his elders would not allow him to fulfill his deep inspiration to leave home to become a *sādhu*.

“You can do *bhajana* here at home. There is no need to run away,” he could hear his family saying. There was no question of discussing the matter with them, so it was necessary to give false information to his superior officer.

“Yes, I have told my parents.”

“Have they agreed?”

“Yes, they agree with me. No problem.”

“What business will you do?”

[Decades later, I asked Śrīla Gurudeva, “What business did you have in mind to do?” He replied, “I fixed in my mind that I would do *bhajana* of Kṛṣṇa.” He told me that actually he wanted to tell the superior police officer exactly what he was going to do, but he knew the officer would not understand, so he merely asserted the following:]

“Well, Sir, I will do a business in which there is no loss, only profit and gain.”

This simple statement from the pure heart of Śrīla Gurudeva can be understood further from the following description quoted from *Śrī Dāsa-mūla* (10a) in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Jaiva-Dharma*:

In the mature stage of *sādhana-bhakti*, when the *jīva* becomes situated in his *svarūpa*, then by the influence of the *hlādinī* potency, the state of *bhāva* in *madhura-rasa* arises within him. In other words, the mood to follow in the footsteps of the dearest associates of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vraja arises in his heart. Gradually, he attains happiness and prosperity that

is unsurpassed in this world, in the form of the supreme service of *paramānanda-tattva*, which is known as *vilāsa*. There is no greater gain than this for the *jīvas*.

DISCIPLE'S MAIN IDENTIFICATION IS GURU-PARAMPARĀ

We have delineated some of Śrīla Gurudeva's family structure. However, the main identification or actual genealogy of one who has become a disciple of a bona fide *guru* is the *guru-paramparā*.

In Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā-devī took refuge in the *āśrama* of Vālmīki Ṛṣi while she was pregnant, and there she had twin sons, Lava and Kuśa. They did not know that their father was the great king of Ayodhyā, Lord Rāmacandra. The boys knew that Rāma was a king and that Sītā was His wife, but they did not know that the same Sītā was their mother. They only knew their mother as Vana-devī.

When the twins grew up a little, Vālmīki Ṛṣi sent them to see Lord Rāma when He was performing an *aśvamedha-yajña*. Vālmīki told them to sing a special song that he had taught them, known as *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. The two very beautiful boys went to the city of Ayodhyā and near the royal palace sang *Rāmāyaṇa* so captivately that everyone became enamoured. Lord Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata, Śatrughna, their mothers and all the subjects were charmed. The boys were so handsome that whoever saw them thought, "Oh, Lord Rāma has manifested again in the form of children." The boys looked so enchanting, just like Lord Rāma when He was a child. However, they could not say who their father was, because they did not know anything about Him.

When the twins had finished singing *Rāmāyaṇa*, Lord Rāma asked His brother Lakṣmaṇa to give them some gifts of clothing and golden coins, but Lava and Kuśa refused to accept them.

"What will we do with these things?" they asked. "Please keep them. In our *āśrama*, we eat fruits, and we wear the bark of trees made into cloth. Return these gifts and tell King Rāma that we

don't want them.”

This impressed Lord Rāma even more.

Lakṣmaṇa thought that these boys looked like Lord Rāma in a youthful form and wondered if they were His sons, so out of curiosity, he asked them to identify themselves. Who was their mother and who was their father? The boys replied, “O Lakṣmaṇajī, you are the brother of King Rāma, and you are His minister and advisor. We thought you would be very clever and intelligent. However, now we have heard your question, we are doubtful about that.”

“Why is that?” asked Lakṣmaṇa.

“Don't you know?” they replied. “Whoever lives in their *guru's āśrama*, as we *brahmacārīs* do, does not tell the name of their mother and father; they should only tell the name of their *guru*. Our only identification is that Vālmīki Ṛṣi is our *gurudeva* and we are his disciples. We have no other identification.”

In the same way, the identification of the *maṭhavāsī*, the inhabitant of a *maṭha*, or monastery, is determined by his *gurudeva* and *guru-paramparā*.

LIFE BEFORE JOINING THE MAṬHA

Pure devotees never perform *karma*, so the activities that Śrīla Gurudeva performed in his young adult life before joining his *gurudeva's maṭha* were not mundane *karma*. It is mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.12) and in *Śrī Bhajana-rahasya* (1.14):

naiṣkarmyam apy acyuta-bhāva-varjitam
na śobhate jñānam alaṁ nirañjanam
kutaḥ punaḥ śaśvad abhadram īśvare
na cārpitaṁ karma yad apy akāraṇam

Even pure knowledge (*jñāna*), which is the direct *sādhana* to obtain liberation, has no beauty if it is devoid of *bhakti* to

Bhagavān. What beauty can there be, then, in selfless action (*niṣkāma-karma*) that is not offered to Bhagavān and fruitive action (*kāmya-karma*), which is always inauspicious in both its practice and perfection?

In his *Bhajana-rahasya-vṛtti*, Śrīla Gurudeva has written:

The word *niṣkarmya* in this Text refers to *niṣkāma-karma*, selfless action. Although such selfless action does not have the variegated nature of *karma-kāṇḍa*, devotees do not accept it because it is devoid of worship of Bhagavān. Devotees also have no connection with *nirañjana-jñāna* (knowledge freed from nescience) if it is not dedicated to Bhagavān. *Vairāgya* (renunciation) that does not lead to attachment for the lotus feet of Bhagavān is also useless. The *ācāryas* have ascertained that the *jīva* who leaves the eternal service of Hari and runs towards inauspicious *karma* or contemptuous *mokṣa* becomes bereft of his own supreme auspiciousness forever.¹³

On the other hand, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said in *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.5)

*na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛti-jair guṇaiḥ*

No one can remain without performing action, even for a moment. Everyone is impelled to act under the influence of qualities such as attachment, envy and so on which are born of his nature.

These two statements appear to contradict each other, but there can be no difference or contradiction in the statements of Śrīmad-

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¹³ From the *Bhajana-rahasya-vṛtti* to Text 14 of the First Chapter – *Prathama-yāma-sādhana* (*Niśānta-bhajana – śraddhā*) by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications)

Bhāgavatam and those of *Bhagavad-gītā*. When we act for our own selfish happiness, it is called *karma*. When the same action is imbued with *bhakti*, then it is *sevā*. Why is it said that no one can exist without action, even for a moment? Sitting, standing, talking and sleeping are all forms of action. Even our breathing is an action, and is therefore *karma*. Everyone - no matter how exalted a devotee he may be - is impelled to perform *karma* (work or action).

We are bound to perform *karma* but pure *bhakti* is never covered by *karma*. The pure devotee has no fruitive desire and performs no fruitive activity. He does not try to increase his material pleasure or decrease his material suffering. His every move is to please the Lord, and that action is called *bhakti*. The following are statements by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.7–9), and Śrīla Gurudeva's commentaries on these verses:¹⁴

yas tv indriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate 'rjuna
karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate
Bhagavad-gītā (3.7)

But, O Arjuna, a person who performs action with his working senses in accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures, who regulates his senses through the mind, and who is free from all fruitive desires, is superior.

Śrīla Gurudeva's commentary

In order to purify the heart, it is imperative to perform action prescribed in scripture without attachment. Those practitioners, or *sādhakas*, who after controlling their knowledge-acquiring senses (such as the eyes, ears and tongue), perform *karma-yoga* with their working senses (such as the legs, hands and speech) without desiring the fruits of their activities, and who are careful and attentive in their endeavour, are qualified to attain *puruṣārtha*, the supreme goal of human life. Such practitioners,

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¹⁴ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* with the *Sāwārtha-varṣiṇī Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Third English Edition, CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications 2010)

who aspire for the transcendental goal, are superior to those who accept *sannyāsa* impetuously, forcibly controlling their working senses while enjoying sense objects through their knowledge-acquiring senses.

*niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ
śarīra-yātrāpi ca te na prasidhyed akarmaṇaḥ
Bhagavad-gītā (3.8)*

Perform your prescribed duties, such as the chanting of the *gāyatrī-mantra*, because action is better than inaction. If you refrain from action, you will not even be able to maintain your body.

Śrīla Gurudeva's commentary

The above statement is verified in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.26.2):

*āhāra-śuddhau sattva-śuddhiḥ
sattva-śuddhau dhruvā smṛtiḥ
smṛti-lambhe sarvagranthīnām vipramokṣaḥ*

It is by the purity of food that one's mind becomes purified. When the mind is purified, one attains a stable memory. When the memory is stable, all the knots of the heart are untied.

Furthermore it is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.13):

*bhuñjate te tv aghaṁ pāpā
ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt*

Those who cook grains and other foodstuffs for their own sake are sinful and certainly partake of sin. It is understood from this and other statements that for the

perfection of one's practice (*sādhana*), it is necessary to maintain and protect the body, and for this it is imperative to follow the scriptural injunctions for the performance of one's prescribed duties. However, those who impetuously give up all action by taking *sannyāsa* do not receive the light of knowledge in their impure hearts. Moreover, if they perform no work at all, they can even leave their bodies because they have not maintained them.

*yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ
tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara
Bhagavad-gītā (3.9)*

For humanity, all actions other than those selflessly offered to Śrī Viṣṇu are a cause of bondage to this world, O son of Kuntī. Therefore, become free from all desires for the fruits of your actions, and perform appropriate action solely for His satisfaction.

Śrīla Gurudeva's commentary

The Vedas say “*yajño vai viṣṇu – yajña*, or sacrifice, is indeed Viṣṇu.” Śrī Kṛṣṇa also tells Uddhava in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.19.39): “*yajño 'ham bhagavattamaḥ – I, the son of Vasudeva, am yajña.*” The *Tantra-sāra* also states *yajña* to be Śrī Hari Himself:

*yajño yajña-pumānś caiva yajñaśo yajña-bhāvanaḥ
yajña-bhuk ceti pañcātma yajñeṣv ijo hariḥ svayam*

In the two verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.10–11), which Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has cited in his commentary on the present verse, the word *sva-dharma-stha* (situated in one's prescribed duties) has been used twice. While commenting on these two verses, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says:

(1) One does not go to hell if he is situated in his occupational

position (*sva-dharma*) and does not transgress the activities prescribed in scripture to engage in forbidden activities. And since he has no desire for the fruits of his activities, he does not go to the heavenly planets, either.

- (2) A person who engages in selflessly offering the fruits of His prescribed duty to the Supreme by performing selfless action (*niṣkāma-karma*) is called *sva-dharma-stha*, or truly situated in his prescribed religious occupation.

When one's occupational duties (*karma*) are performed in accordance with scripture, without any selfish motive and for the pleasure of Śrī Viṣṇu, they purify the heart. Associating with saintly persons then causes knowledge of *bhagavat-tattva*, the fundamental truth in relation to the Supreme Lord Bhagavān, to appear in the heart. This then allows one to enter the path of devotion to Him that is beyond the modes of material nature (*nirguṇa-bhakti*).

The great saint Śrī Nārada has spoken the same in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.32):

*etat saṁsūcitam brahmaṁs tāpa-traya-cikitsitam
yad īśvare bhagavati karma brahmaṇi bhāvitam*

O knower of the Absolute Truth, that work which is dedicated to the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān, the controller and master of everyone, removes the three types of miseries.

Śrī Bhagavān also told the Pracetās:

*gṛheṣv āviśatām cāpi puṁsām kuśala-karmaṇām
mad-vārtā yāta-yāmānām na bandhāya gṛhā matāḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (4.30.19)*

Those who know Me to be the enjoyer of the fruits of all activities offer all of their activities to Me alone. Such expert performers of action, as well as those who spend their time hearing of and reciting My pastimes,

do not become bound by their actions, even though remaining in household life.

Like Lord Śiva, when Śrīla Gurudeva is asked for anything, he does not consider whether giving it is good or bad for himself. He simply wants to help others. There are many examples of this.

SERVING THE SOCIETY – SERVING THE DEVOTEES

During the time of Śrīla Gurudeva's own *gurudeva*, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja*, our Śrīla Gurudeva was the Vice-president of Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, the society that his *guru* founded. Śrīla Gurudeva and his two dear godbrothers – my *guru-pādapadma*, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja*, and *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja* – were the three main pillars of Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the President of the society, and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the General Secretary. When Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja resigned from the Secretary's seat, Śrīla Gurudeva took that post as well.

For many years, as Śrīla Gurudeva maintained these posts, his influence expanded within the Samiti and its congregation, and all over India as well, as he travelled and preached Mahāprabhu's mission. In 1996, he began preaching in the Western countries and as a result, his influence grew even more and he began to gain many followers.

When Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja passed away from this world in Kārtika 2002, my beloved *dikṣā-guru Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja* became as if dumb. In fact, the doctor diagnosed him as having Alzheimer's disease, because he apparently did not know or recognise anyone

around him. However, whenever Śrīla Gurudeva went to see him, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmāna Gosvāmī Mahārāja recognised his dear godbrother, and there were no signs of Alzheimer’s disease at all. Much discussion took place about the years they had spent together in the *maṭha*, right from when Śrīla Gurudeva had joined and of all the *sevā* they had done. During those days, when *brahmacārīs* of Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā came to visit him, he recognized them – he knew their names and replied to their questions. Thus, there was no sign of Alzheimer’s disease.

As is always the case in this world with the rise of a great and influential person, certain personalities felt that Śrīla Gurudeva’s growing fame and influence threatened their own positions and respect. As a result, some of them began to criticize and disrespect Śrīla Gurudeva, directly and indirectly. In March 2003, this led to Śrīla Gurudeva’s moving on from some old connections and establishing temples of his own. With the loyalty and support of many old devoted friends, his followers increased more and more.

Lord Śiva does not consider what has happened in the past; he forgets it. Whatever anyone asks of him, he will always grant it. The same is true of Śrīla Gurudeva as well. Whenever anyone who has disrespected Śrīla Gurudeva comes to see him, he treats them as if nothing has happened. He forgets or disregards those happenings of the past. He fulfills their desires and loves them as before. This is his nature.

SERVING ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVEDĀNTA SVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja¹⁵ was a godbrother of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Hence, he was senior to Śrīla Gurudeva, who respected, loved, and served him in the manner of a disciple. When Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja awarded Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja

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¹⁵ Śrīla Gurudeva’s relationship with Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja is described in more detail in the section titled ‘Association with Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja’.

the renounced order of *sannyāsa* in 1959, Śrīla Gurudeva (who took *sannyāsa* in 1952) arranged the *sannyāsa* initiation ceremony in Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā. Śrīla Gurudeva served as the priest of the ceremony and did everything for its preparation; he even prepared the *sannyāsa-daṇḍa*. He assisted in many ways, including instructing Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja in the fine details and regulations of *sannyāsa*.

Śrīla Gurudeva told us everything about his relation with Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. When Śrīla Gurudeva's *śikṣa-guru* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja was establishing ISKCON in America at the beginning of his mission in the West, he wrote to Śrīla Gurudeva many times in his own handwriting: "Please send Mathurā *peṛā*¹⁶, *karatālas*, *mṛdaṅgas*, deities. It will be best if you can purchase the *mṛdaṅgas* and *karatālas* from Navadvīpa and the deities from Vṛndāvana. I realise it is troublesome for you to go to these different places and purchase, pack and post all these things, but please do this for my service."

Śrīla Gurudeva also sent some of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja's own books to him. In these ways and others, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja dedicated himself to serve Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, and helped him from the very beginning to launch his worldwide mission. When Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja arrived back in India for the first time, Śrīla Gurudeva was the only one to greet him at the Delhi airport. Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja shared with him many wonderful accounts and details of his preaching in America. Their relationship, as Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja had written to him¹⁷, was eternal, like his relationship with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda.

In 1996, Śrīla Gurudeva followed the footsteps of his *śikṣā-guru* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja and began preaching in the Western countries. Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja

¹⁶ A Mathurā milk sweet that Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja particularly liked.

¹⁷ This is described with more detail later and can also be seen in Śrīla Gurudeva's book, 'Letters from America'.

had previously said that Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the real *guru-sevaka*, and repeatedly asked him to come to the West. Though Śrīla Gurudeva always acknowledged his request, he replied that he would do it later, as he could not leave the vital services of his *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. At that time, Śrīla Gurudeva was constantly travelling all over India to assist Parama-gurudeva (the *guru* of one's *guru*) in his preaching as his personal servant. He was also editing, publishing, and distributing two monthly Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava magazines. He helped to organize the yearly Navadvīpa and Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramās*, which attracted more than 10,000 guests and local devotees. Later he was fully engaged as the Vice-president and General Secretary of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. (Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja himself was one of the three co-founders of this society.) Due to the influence of time and circumstances, Śrīla Gurudeva was not able to physically assist Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja during that period, but later on, fulfilling his desire, he travelled all around the world more than thirty times.

As Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's physical health declined, Śrīla Gurudeva remained constantly by his side, especially towards the end of his manifest pastimes. He served him constantly, day and night.

On October 6, 1968, in the most holy *dhāma* of Śrī Navadvīpa, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, surrounded by his loving disciples and godbrothers, left this world, chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare* and holding a picture of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda to his chest. It was a Sunday evening and at the time of *sandhya-ārati* in Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha – as he was leaving this world – Śrīmatī Rādhikā's garland broke and fell from Her neck. With tears in his eyes, the head *pūjārī* quickly brought the garland to Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja as he entered the *śayana-līlā-vilāsa* of his most beloved Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-Bihārījī.

At that time, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja was in Seattle, USA. He was heart-broken on hearing the news and ordered his western disciples to observe a ceremony of separation (*viraha-sabhā*) and offer *sraddhāñjali* in all his centres, to honour the divine disappearance of his most worshipable godbrother. He personally composed a Sanskrit verse in his loving memory¹⁸:

*vairāgya-yuga-nija-bhakti-yogam
apayayan mam anabhipsu andham
śrī-keśava-bhakti-prajñāna-nāma*

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja revealed that just as Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was weeping for his *gurudeva* Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, he felt the same way towards Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He explained, “*Vairāgya-yuga* means to become detestful of this material world. The child is afraid to take medicine, but the mother uses gentle force to put the medicine into the child’s mouth. Similarly, I was not in the mood to take the renounced order. My family rejected me, and I was penniless, but I was still not ready to take *sannyāsa* and fulfill my Gurudeva’s order to go to the Western countries to preach his mission. But Pūjyapada Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave me *sannyāsa* and told me, ‘You must accept this.’”

During a lecture at that time in Seattle, in 1968, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja further elaborated, “My godbrother (Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja) insisted that I take *sannyāsa*. Without accepting the renounced order of life, nobody can become a preacher and my spiritual master wanted me to become a preacher and to go to the Western countries. So I am feeling now very obliged to my godbrother, because he carried out the wish of my spiritual master and forced me to accept this *sannyāsa* order.”

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¹⁸ You can read the full transcript of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja’s class entitled *His Divine Grace Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Mahārāja’s Disappearance Day Lecture* (Seattle, October 21, 1968) from Bhaktivedānta Vedabase Folio archive.

ETERNALLY INDEBTED TO ŚRĪLA BHAKTI PRAJÑĀNA KEŚAVA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

At that time, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja wrote a letter to Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja, one of the three most prominent disciples of his dear godbrother and *sannyāsa-guru* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja wrote, “The greatest compassion of Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja was to make me a *sannyāsī*. I had taken a vow that I would never accept *sannyāsa*, but Śrīla Mahārāja forcibly gave it to me. He would certainly have been most pleased today to see the success of my preaching... I was a staunch *gṛhamedī* (one who is absorbed in household affairs). Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda used to come to me in dreams from time to time and call me to renounce family life and come along with him. The dreams would frighten me and make me think that I would have to accept *sannyāsa*. I didn’t have any desire to take *sannyāsa*. But upon the repeated insistence of Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja bestowed boundless mercy upon this unwilling and blind person, by forcibly giving my *sannyāsa*. It seems that this desire of my gurudeva, Śrīla Prabhupāda (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura), was transmitted into his heart, and it was thus that my *sannyāsa* was accomplished. So I am eternally indebted to Śrīla Mahārāja ...”

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja says in this letter to Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja that he is eternally indebted to Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and so are we all. Where would we be if these great personalities had not come into our lives and preached to us? It is because of their pure preaching, their selfless service to their *gurus*, and their compassion that we are here today, hearing, chanting, and engaging in devotional service. Without their sacrifices and mercy, we would all be forgetful of our real nature, immersed in the illusion that this temporary world will make us happy.

In the letter, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja lovingly remembers his *sannyāsa-guru*, who requested him to speak soon after his *sannyāsa* ceremony. At that ceremony, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja spoke in English, even though most of the people present could not understand English. Later, he explained that during the time of his *sannyāsa* ceremony, he remembered his *gurudeva* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda's specific orders to preach in the English language.

The letter from Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja to Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja continues, "I feel fortunate to accept *sannyāsa* from my godbrother Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. I have known him for a long time and he is my close friend. He is a very bona fide disciple of our Jagad-guru Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura. He has kindly given me this *sannyāsa*. Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and Śrīla Muni Mahārāja have also given me inspiration to do this. The order of *sannyāsa* means to preach the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the mission of the *guru* everywhere. My *gurudeva* instructed me to preach in English in the Western countries and that is why I am writing English articles and books. I am praying to Kṛṣṇa, *gurudeva*, and all the Vaiṣṇavas that they should give me the power to preach this mission all over the world..."

Later in that letter, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja asked for a picture of his beloved *sannyāsa-guru*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. "If you have any nice photograph of Śrīla Mahārāja, then kindly send it to me. I will get a life size oil painting made of it, and, along with a picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I will place it in my prominent centers, particularly New York, Hollywood, London, and so forth..."

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja could not come to the West at that time with Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. Nonetheless, he continued to serve him without hesitation from India, sending him books, deities, *mṛdaṅga*, *karatālas* and so forth. He alone was there at the Delhi Airport to personally receive and welcome Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja after his groundbreaking preaching success in America. All through the

years they regularly maintained a very close correspondence with hundreds of letters exchanged.

During Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja's last conversation in this world, he told Śrīla Gurudeva, "Śrīla Prabhupāda (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura) had a desire to preach all over the world...I tried my best to fulfill his desire. Now we should preach together...the mission of Mahāprabhu..."

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja promised him, "Although my qualification is limited I will try to help to the best of my ability."

Finally, on that auspicious day of May 5, 1996, Śrīla Gurudeva came to preach in the West and began his first world tour. He started in Holland¹⁹, then went to England on the 15th of May, and then to America by the 6th of June. His first stop in the United States was Houston, Texas; then, he went to Los Angeles on the 18th of June. Visiting the ISKCON L.A. temple there, Śrīla Gurudeva wanted to see the sacred private living quarters of his *śikṣa-guru* (the *bhajana-kutir* of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja). Inspecting the books on the shelves there, he said with happy recognition, "Oh, these are the Bengali and Hindi books I sent for him, for his personal use, thirty years ago!"

BE CAREFUL OF THE FIRST OFFENCE IN CHANTING

Over the years, Śrīla Gurudeva has had huge success in his preaching all over the world. He is bringing hundreds of thousands of people to the process of pure *bhakti*, and is also inspiring scores of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja's followers to take charge of their spiritual lives and to continue their *bhakti* to develop pure love. However, despite Śrīla Gurudeva's advanced seniority and elevated position, some devotees in Hare Kṛṣṇa centers have continued to dishonour and disrespect him, even though they know that the first offence in chanting is to criticize the devotees who have dedicated

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¹⁹ See "Śrīla Gurudeva's Arrival in the West" for details about Śrīla Gurudeva's first trip to Holland.

their lives to propagate the holy name of the Lord,

In *Skanda Purāṇa*, Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi says in his conversation with King Bhagīratha:

*hanti nindati vai dveṣṭi vaiṣṇavān nābhinandati
krudhyate yāti no harṣaṁ darśane patanāni ṣaṭ*

To beat or kill a Vaiṣṇava, to criticize him, to be envious of him, to fail to welcome him properly, to become angry with him, and not to feel happiness upon seeing him – one who performs these six activities falls to a degraded position.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's devotional character is impeccable. It can therefore be understood that the future of those who knowingly disrespect and slander him will be inauspicious, unless they change their offensive mental disposition and futile, habitual faultfinding. No one should find fault with someone like Śrīla Gurudeva, who has spent his whole life serving Vaiṣṇavas and even now in his old age is travelling to every corner of the world, propagating the holy name, fame and pastimes of the Lord.

In any case, Śrīla Gurudeva maintains the same tolerant nature as Lord Śiva, and does not hold any malice or resentment toward these offenders. Sometimes, he even says that they are his children and he does not accept their offences. (However, a Vaiṣṇava should not tolerate *vaiṣṇava-nindā* or *aparādha* committed towards others.) A Vaiṣṇava may not personally take offence due to his humility or due to his broadmindedness. However Śrī Bhagavān and the footdust of Vaiṣṇavas will not allow this *guru-nindā* or *vaiṣṇava-nindā* to continue. They will ruin the *aparādhīs* who keep on offending. For example, a father does not feel offended when his small children harass him, pull his hair, or urinate on him. However, if full-grown children were to perform these obnoxious activities their father, mother, uncles and aunts would not tolerate such offensive behavior. Similarly, a neophyte devotee who is completely

ignorant and who does not know any *siddhānta* may be excused for his *aparādha* to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. However if someone performs *aparādha* knowingly, Lord Kṛṣṇa and the footdust of Vaiṣṇavas do not tolerate it.

It is clear that there are many similarities between the characters of Śrīla Gurudeva and Lord Śiva. Consequently, the name Bholānātha given to him in his infancy by his paternal grandmother Dulāri-devī has proved quite appropriate.

SERVICE TO VAIṢṆAVAS IS BEST

Since 1988, Śrīla Gurudeva has been a cardio-patient, so there have been so many restrictions on his food. However if someone were to bring some foodstuff for him, he would not consider whether it is good or bad for his heart condition. Consequently, they must first give it to me. I am very strict about Śrīla Gurudeva's diet; I always see whether or not that food is good for his health. If it is good, I give it to him; otherwise not.

Later on, people would ask, "O Gurudeva, have you taken that food (*prasāda*) that I gave you?"

"What? When did you give me? Oh, Mādhava Mahārāja is not giving it to me, because he thinks it is not good for me. If milk will come, he will take the cream and give me only the milk. If yoghurt will come, he will churn the yoghurt and give me the buttermilk but he will keep the butter."

Common people could not understand what Śrīla Gurudeva was saying about him getting only the milk and Mādhava Mahārāja getting the cream. Śrīla Gurudeva is explaining that he is performing *bhajana* and other hard labour, and he gives his disciples and followers the proper *siddhānta* and the essence of his realisation, like the cream of milk or the butter on top of the yogurt. In other words, the person who serves him will get only the best.

It is mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.13.3):

*śṛṅṣvāvahito rājann api guhyam vadāmi te
brūyuh snigdhasya śiṣyasya guravo guhyam apy uta*

O king, kindly listen to me attentively. The activities of the Supreme Lord are very confidential, but I shall tell you about them, for the *guru* explains to a submissive disciple even topics that are extremely confidential and very, very difficult to understand.

It is further stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.8):

*vettha tvaṁ saumya tat sarvaṁ tattvatas tad-anugrahāt
brūyuh snigdhasya śiṣyasya guravo guhyam apy uta*

You are learned because your *gurus* have bestowed upon you all the confidential knowledge given to a polite and obedient disciple. Therefore you can tell us all you have learned from them.

Śrīla Gurudeva will reveal all the confidential secrets about *bhajana* to a disciple who is very polite, gentle, and loyal to him. In the same way, Śrīla Gurudeva is saying that he is giving all these things to Mādhava Mahārāja because of the nature of the service that his disciple is performing.

KṚṢṆA IS SVAYAM BHAGAVĀN

According to *śāstra*, it is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and not Lord Śiva, who is Svayam Bhagavān. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.28) states:

*ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsah
kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam
indrāri-vyākulaṁ lokam
mṛdayanti yuge yuge*

All of the incarnations listed previously are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Supreme Person Bhagavān. However, only Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, the original Supreme Personality of Godhead. The incarnations appear on different planets to protect those who are disturbed by the enemies of Indra.

Furthermore, Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.24):

*ahaṁ hi sarva-yajñānām bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca
na tu mām abhijānanti tattvenātaś cyavanti te*

I am the only enjoyer and master of all sacrifices (*yajñas*). Therefore, those who do not recognize my true transcendental nature fall down.

Śrīla Gurudeva writes in his *Prakāśikā-vṛtti* to this verse:

Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “Why is the worship of various demigods improper? What is the result of that unauthorized worship?” This is being explained in the present verse. “In the form of demigods such as Indra, I alone am the enjoyer of all sacrifices. I am the master, the maintainer, the controller and the bestower of the results of them all. Those who worship the demigods do not know that the demigods are My potencies, or *vibhūti*; therefore, they worship them with faith, considering them to be independent of Me and the bestowers of the results of their activities. Because they are unaware of My *tattva*, they do not have faith in Me; therefore, their type of worship is unauthorized. As a result of such unauthorized worship, they fall away from the truth and remain entangled in the cycle of birth and death.

“However, by worshipping demigods such as Sūrya, considering them to be My opulence, or *vibhūti*, they gradually ascend the progressive path, and by the mercy of My devotees who know the *tattva* of Me, they come to understand the science of My *svarūpa*.

Thus, their intelligence becomes exclusively fixed on Me, Kṛṣṇa, whose *svarūpa* is eternal, all cognizant and ever blissful.”

This philosophical conclusion (*siddhānta*) is also verified in the Śrutis:

*nārāyaṇād brahmā jāyate
nārāyaṇād indro jāyate
nārāyaṇād dvādaśādityā rudrā
sarva-devatā sarva ṛṣāyaḥ
sarvāṇi bhūtāni nārāyaṇad eva
samutpadyate nārāyaṇe pratīyante*

Brahmā is born from Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Indra is born from Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śiva is born from Śrī Nārāyaṇa, all the demigods and all living entities are also born from Śrī Nārāyaṇa. When their universal duties are complete and they die, all will again merge into Śrī Nārāyaṇa.

The Smṛtis have also established the same conclusion:

*brahmā śambhus tathaiivārkaḥ candramās ca śatakratuḥ
evam ādyās tathaiivānye yuktā vaiṣṇava-tejasā
jagat tu viyujyante ca tejasā kāryāvasāne
vitejasā ca te sarve pañcatvam upyānti te*

Brahmā and Śiva, as well as the sun-god, the moon-god, the king of the demigods – Indra, and other powerful personalities empowered by Śrī Viṣṇu, are forced to give up all those powers when they die.

This conclusion is also seen in other Upaniṣads. The above statements from Śruti and Smṛti indicate a difference between the demigods and the Supreme Controller, Śrī Viṣṇu. The supremacy of Śrī Viṣṇu over demigods is established in Śruti and Smṛti, yet somewhere in them it is said that a particular demigod is equal to Śrī Viṣṇu. This statement is made either because a

particular demigod's influence is under the control of Śrī Viṣṇu, or because the demigod is very dear to Him.

If one concludes from this that it is proper to worship all demigods, considering them to be Nārāyaṇa, then the following is to be understood: everyone has generated from Nārāyaṇa, by Him they exist and in Him they are annihilated, or dissolved. None of them are Nārāyaṇa, nor can they ever become Nārāyaṇa. It has been stated in the scriptures that it is a grievous offence to equate the demigods, who are living entities, with Śrī Bhagavān. Such offenders are called atheists.

*yas tu nārāyaṇam devaṁ
brahma-rudrādi-daivataiḥ
samatvenaiva vīkṣeta
sa pāṣaṇḍī bhaved dhruvam*

Padma Purāṇa

Just as it is improper to worship the demigods with the understanding that they are independent lords, it is also atheistic to equate the demigods (*jīvas*) with Lord Nārāyaṇa.

Therefore, it is prescribed that the worshippers of the universal form (*viśvarūpa-upāsakas*) should worship the demigods as the opulence, or *vibhūti*, of Śrī Nārāyaṇa. In this regard, the scriptures make two types of statements. It is said in *Nārada-pañcarātra*, “*antaryāmi-bhagavad-dṛṣṭyaiva sarvārādhanam vihitam* – All are to be worshipped with the vision that the all-pervading Lord is dwelling within them.”

And the *Viṣṇu-yāmala* states:

*viṣṇu-pādodakenaiva pīṭhṇām tarpaṇa kriyā
viṣṇor niveditānnena yaṣṭavyaṁ
devātāntaram ādi-prakāreṇa vihitam iti*

It is with the foot bath water of Śrī Viṣṇu that one should perform activities such as offering oblations to the forefathers. And it is with the remnants of Śrī Viṣṇu's foodstuffs that one should please the demigods.²⁰

Furthermore, Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.8):

*ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravarttate
iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

I am the source of both mundane and spiritual worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who know this well engage in *bhajana* of Me, with ecstasy in their hearts.

In his *Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary to this verse, Śrīla Gurudeva writes:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the origin of both mundane and spiritual creations. Such knowledge of the essential Truth (*tattva-jñāna*) is undoubtedly attainable from the instructions and mercy of Vaiṣṇavas who are fully conversant with *tattva*. Only with the help of such transcendental knowledge can the thoughts of *sādhus* become fixed in pure devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. One cannot acquire pure *tattva-jñāna* if one through the instruction from modern concocted commentaries, which are devoid of *bhakti*, by hearing from bewildered so-called *gurus*, who are bereft of *tattva-jñāna*, or by receiving the instructions of so-called devotees. This is also confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.7.50):

*ahaṁ brahmā ca śarvaś ca jagataḥ kāraṇaṁ param
ātmeśvara upadraṣṭā svayaṁ-dṛg aviśeṣaṇaḥ*

²⁰ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* with the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Third English Edition, CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedānta Publications 2010)

Lord Viṣṇu replied: Brahmā, Śiva and I are the supreme cause of the material manifestation. I am the Supersoul and the self-sufficient witness. But in one sense we are non-different because everything rests in Me.

The *Varāha Purāṇa* also states:

*nārāyaṇaḥ paro devas tasmāj jātaś caturmukhaḥ
tasmād rudro bhavad devaḥ sa ca sarva-jñatām gataḥ*

Śrī Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme Lord, and from Him alone Brahmā, Rudra, etc., are born. Śrī Nārāyaṇa is omniscient.

This Nārāyaṇa is the *vaibhāva-vilāsa*, or Kṛṣṇa’s pastime expansion of opulence. Elsewhere in the Vedas, Kṛṣṇa is also described as the son of Devakī: *brahmaṇyo devakī-putrāḥ* (*Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* 4).²¹

We have thus established that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān. Now, the question arises, “Who is Lord Śiva?” Our *ādi-guru* Lord Brahmā has said in *Brahma-saṁhitā*, verse 45:

*kṣīraṁ yathā dadhi vikāra-viśeṣa-yogāt
sañjāyate na hi tataḥ pṛthag asti hetoḥ
yaḥ śambhutām api tathā samuṣṭhāyati kāryād
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

Śrī Govindadeva attains the condition of being Śambhu for the sake of performing a specific function, just as milk is transformed into yogurt by contact with a particular transforming

.....
²¹ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* with the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Third English Edition, CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications 2010)

agent, although yogurt is not a different substance, independent of its cause, namely milk. I worship that original personality, Śrī Govinda.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura states in his purport to this verse:

The current verse beginning with *kṣīraṁ yathā*, is an analysis of the *svarūpa* of Śambhu, who has been previously mentioned as the presiding deity of Maheśa-dhāma. Actually, Śambhu is not a separate lord independent of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; those who think that he is are offensive to Bhagavān. Śambhu's status as a lord, is subordinate to, and dependent on, Śrī Govinda's overlordship. Thus, Śrī Govinda and Śambhu are factually non-different realities. The following practical example may be given of that non-difference: as milk is transformed into yogurt by contact with a specific transforming agent, similarly by union with a special transforming agent, the Supreme Lord takes on a separate form, which is dependent on Him, and this separate form has no independence.

In this case, the special transforming agent is constituted of a mixture of the following elements: *māyā's* aspect of the mode of ignorance, the nonplenitude or minuteness aspect of the marginal potency, and a slight degree of the combined knowledge (*samvit*) and bliss (*hlādinī*) aspects of the transcendental potency. The effulgent subordinate controller in the form of Śambhu *līnga*, being united with this special transforming agent, is constitutionally the semblance of an expansion of the Supreme Godhead. He is the Sadāśīva from whom Rudradeva is manifest. Śrī Govinda is manifest in the form of Śambhu as *guṇa-avatāra*, in order to arrange the ingredient materials for creation, to annihilate certain *asuras* for the purpose of universal maintenance and to execute all functions of destruction. This Śambhu is a separated expansion imbued with the mood of a plenary expansion, and he is also known as *kāla-puruṣa*, the personified time factor. In this regard, a body of evidence has

been cited in Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (12.13.16) it is stated: “*vaiṣṇavānām yathā śambhuḥ* – of all Vaiṣṇavas, Śambhu is the greatest.” The purport of such statements is that Śambhu meets together with Durgā-devī and performs his function through his own time potency in accordance with Śrī Govinda's desire. Many *śāstras* headed by the *tantras* give instruction to follow the principles of righteous conduct in accordance with the level of eligibility of the respective *jīvas*. These principles are compared to a ladder with steps that eventually lead to the attainment of *bhakti*.

Furthermore, in accordance with Govinda's desire, Śambhu maintains and protects pure devotional service by preaching Māyāvāda philosophy and imaginary supplementary scriptures (*āgamas*). The fifty qualities of the *jīvas* are present in abundance in Śambhu, and five more great qualities not attainable by ordinary living entities are partially manifest in him. Thus, one cannot say that Śambhu is a *jīva*. Although his nature is that of a separated expansion, he is still a lord and controller (*iśvara*).²²

What will Lord Śiva do if someone takes his side and worships him? When the time and need comes, he will even fight against Svayaṁ Bhagavān Lord Kṛṣṇa – as mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.62–63. Kṛṣṇa was fighting to rescue his grandson Aniruddha from Bāṇāsura's jail. Lord Śiva knew that Kṛṣṇa is his worshipable deity, Svayaṁ Bhagavān. Nonetheless, Śiva fought on Bāṇāsura's side against Śrī Kṛṣṇa. So, to please his devotee, Lord Śiva will even fight with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, his name is Bholānātha.

Lord Śiva is not Bhagavān, but it is mentioned that Lord Śiva protects the *dhāma*. Lord Śiva protects Mathurā in the four forms of Raṅgeśvara Mahādeva, Bhūteśvara Mahādeva, Pīpaleśvara Mahādeva, and Gokarṇeśvara Mahādeva. He also protects Vṛndāvana in the forms of Gopeśvara Mahādeva and Bankhaṇḍī

²² From the English Edition of *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications)

Mahādeva. He protects Girirāja-Govardhana as Cakaleśvara Mahādeva. In Kāmyavana, he is Kāmeśvara, and in Nandagāon, he is Nandeśvara. He also manifests in Māyāpura as Vṛddha Śīva, and in Navadvīpa as Prauḍa-māyā and Kṣetra-pāla Śīva. He is even found in Bhuvaneśvara as Liṅgarāja Mahādeva.

There are also many forms of Lord Śīva in Jagannātha Purī, the main one being the form of Lokanātha Śīva. Devotees can get his *darśana* only during Śīva Caturdaśī, when they offer water, flowers, sandal paste, and *bilva* leaves to the deity. There are also other forms of Lord Śīva in Jagannātha Purī such as Mārkaṇḍeśvara and Yajñeśvara, but Lokanātha Śīva is the main form.

The evidence cited above proves then that Śīva is not Svayam Bhagavān; only Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān.

STHAYI-BHAVA NEVER CHANGES

The following pastime is from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā*, Chapter 9, verses 109–149:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's Travels to the Holy Places:

Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa is a devotee of the Rāmānuja *sampradāya*. He used to worship Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Seeing his devotion, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu became very satisfied. By associating with each other continually, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa developed a relationship of friendship, and they would laugh and joke with each other.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said; “My dear Bhaṭṭācārya, your goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī-ṭhākuraṇī is always situated on the chest of her husband, Nārāyaṇa. She is known as the crest-jewel of all chaste ladies. My worshipable Lord is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a cowherd boy who tends cows. Why is it that Lakṣmī, being so chaste, wants His association? For this reason, She has given up pleasure and for a long time, has taken regulative vows and performed endless austerities.”

(Then Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu quoted the Nāga-patnī's prayer to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.16.36):

*kasyānubhāvo 'sya na deva vidmahe
tavāṅghri-reṇu-sparśādihikārah
yad-vāñchayā śrīr lalanācarat tapo
vihāya kāmān su-ciraṁ dhṛta-vratā*

O Lord, we cannot understand what *sādhana* our husband has performed to become qualified to receive the touch of the dust of Your lotus feet. This dust is so rare that to attain it, even Your wife Lakṣmī gave up all forms of enjoyment for many, many days and performed austerities according to rules and regulations.

Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa replied, “Kṛṣṇa and Nārāyaṇa are one and the same personality. Lord Kṛṣṇa has more attractive pastimes due to their clever amorous nature. By touching the same personality, Lakṣmī's vow of chastity does not disappear. It was in great delight that Lakṣmī wanted to associate with Lord Kṛṣṇa.”

Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa then quoted a verse from scripture:

*siddhāntatas tv abhede 'pi śrīśa-kṛṣṇa-svarūpaḥ
rasenotkṛṣyate kṛṣṇa-rūpam eṣā rasa-sthitiḥ*

According to *siddhānta*, there is no difference between the forms of Kṛṣṇa and the husband of Lakṣmī. However, the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is superior in *rasa*, and therefore He surpasses Nārāyaṇa. (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.59)

Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa went on: “The goddess of fortune considered that her vow of chastity would not be broken in the company of Kṛṣṇa. Rather, she would profit by being able to take part in the *rāsa* dance. Lakṣmī-devī, the goddess of fortune, is a relisher of transcendental happiness. Therefore, what fault is there if she

wants to enjoy herself with Kṛṣṇa? Why do You joke about this?”

The Lord replied, “There is no fault there. But I know that Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune, could not join the *rāsa* dance. We hear this from the revealed scriptures.”

*nāyaṁ śriyo 'ṅga u nitānta-rateḥ prasādaḥ
sva-voṣitām nalina-gandha-rucām kuto 'nyāḥ
rāsotsave 'sya bhujā-daṇḍa-grhīta-kaṇṭha-
labdhāśiṣām ya udagād vraja-sundarīṇām*

In the *rāsa* festival, Śrī Kṛṣṇa embraced the *vraja-sundarīs* around their necks with His vine-like arms, thus fulfilling their hearts' desires. Even Lakṣmī, who eternally resides on His chest, does not attain this mercy. It is also not attained by the most beautiful girls of the heavenly planets, whose bodily lustre and fragrance resemble the lotus flower, what to speak of other beautiful women. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 10.47.60)

“What is the reason why Lakṣmī-devī could not attain this? How did the personified Vedas who also underwent austerities attain this?

*nibhṛta-marun-mano-'kṣa-dṛḍha-yoga-yujo hṛdi yan-
munaya upāsate tad arayo 'pi yayuḥ smaraṇāt
striya uragendra-bhoga-bhujā-daṇḍa-viśakta-dhiyo
vayam api te samāḥ samadṛśo 'ṅghri-saroja-sudhāḥ*

The Upaniṣads said, “By practising mystic *yoga* and controlling the life-airs, great sages subdue the mind and senses. In this way, they are able to see the Supreme Lord within the heart and ultimately enter into the impersonal Brahman. Even the enemies of the Supreme Lord attain that position simply by thinking of the Lord. But the *gopīs*, attracted by the

beauty of Kṛṣṇa, whose arms are like serpents, simply wanted to be embraced by Him. Thus, the *gopīs* tasted the nectar of the Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. By following in the footsteps of the *gopīs*, we Upaniṣads also obtain that nectar." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 10.87.23)

When Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked why the goddess of fortune could not enter into the *rāsa-līlā* whereas the personified Vedas could, Venkṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭa replied, "My mind is unable to penetrate this." He then admitted, "I am an ordinary human being with limited intelligence. I am easily agitated. My mind cannot enter into the deep ocean of the pastimes of the Supreme Lord. You are Kṛṣṇa Himself. You know the purpose of Your activities. Only that person whom You choose to enlighten can understand these pastimes."

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, "Śrī Kṛṣṇa has a special characteristic: He attracts everyone's heart by the mellow of His sweetness. By following the inhabitants of Vraja-loka (Goloka Vṛndāvana), one can attain the shelter Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. However, the inhabitants of Vraja do not know that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In Vraja someone may accept Kṛṣṇa as a son and bind Him to a grinding mortar. Someone else may accept Him as a friend and ride on His shoulders after attaining victory over Him. The inhabitants of Vraja know Kṛṣṇa as the son of Nanda Mahārāja, and they have no relationship with Kṛṣṇa in the mood of opulence. One who worships Śrī Kṛṣṇa by following the mood of the inhabitants of Vraja attains Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, where He is known as the son of Nanda Mahārāja."

Caitanya Mahāprabhu then quoted a verse:

*nāyaṁ sukhāpo bhagavān dehinām gopikā-sutaḥ
jñāninām cātma-bhūtānām yathā bhakti-matām iha*

The Supreme Lord, the son of Mother Yaśodā, is not as easily attainable by *jñānīs*, by those performing severe austerities, and by those who consider the body

the same as the self. But He is accessible to those engaged in spontaneous loving service to Him. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 10.9.21)

“The personified Vedas followed in the footsteps of the *gopīs*, worshipping Śrī Kṛṣṇa in their mood. They attained bodies like those of the *gopīs* and took birth in Vraja. They were allowed to enter into Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *rāsa-līlā* with those bodies. Śrī Kṛṣṇa belongs to the community of cowherds, and the *gopīs* are His dearest lovers. The wives of the demigods are the most opulent within the material world, but neither they nor any other women in the material universe can obtain Kṛṣṇa’s association. Lakṣmī wanted to associate with Kṛṣṇa in her form of Lakṣmī. However, she did not follow in the footsteps of the *gopīs* in her worship of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Vyāsadeva composed the verse beginning with the word *nāyaṁ* [*nāyaṁ sukhāpo bhagavān...*] because no one can enter into the *rāsa-līlā* in a body other than that of a *gopī*.”

Before Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave this explanation, Venkāṭa Bhaṭṭa had thought that Śrī Nārāyaṇa was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that worship of Nārāyaṇa was the supreme form of worship, for it was followed by the Śrī Vaiṣṇava followers of Rāmānujācārya. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had spoken so many joking words to correct Venkāṭa Bhaṭṭa’s misconception.

Mahāprabhu then continued, “Venkāṭa Bhaṭṭa, please do not doubt that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is the conclusion of *śāstra*. In Kṛṣṇa’s form as Lord Nārāyaṇa, He attracts the minds of Lakṣmī-devī and Her followers.

*ete cāmśa-kalāḥ pūṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam
indrāri-vyākulam lokam mṛḍayanti yuge yuge*

All the incarnations of the Supreme Lord are either plenary portions or parts of the plenary portions of the *puruṣa-avatāras*. However, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He incarnates in different

yugas to protect the world from the enemies of Indra.
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.3.28)

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa has four extraordinary qualities that Lord Nārāyaṇa does not possess, and therefore, Lakṣmī-devī always desires His company. The very *śloka* which you have recited [*siddhāntatas tv abhede 'pi*], is evidence that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

*siddhāntatas tv abhede 'pi śrīśa-kṛṣṇa-svarūpayoḥ
rasenotkṛṣyate kṛṣṇa-rūpam eṣā rasa-sthitiḥ*

According to *siddhānta*, there is no difference between the forms of Kṛṣṇa and the husband of Lakṣmī. However, the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is superior in *rasa*, and therefore He surpasses Nārāyaṇa. (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.59)

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, attracts the mind of Lakṣmī-devī, but Lord Nārāyaṇa is unable to attract the minds of the *gopīs*. To say nothing of Lord Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself appeared as Nārāyaṇa just to joke with the *gopīs*. He assumed the four-armed form of Nārāyaṇa in front of the *gopīs*, but the *gopīs* were not attracted.”

Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa, Trivallabha Bhaṭṭa and Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī were all great devotees of Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, but their *sthāyī-bhāva* had not yet manifested. That is why, when they associated with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, their mood changed.

Another example in this discussion of *sthāyī-bhāva* is Murāri Gupta, who was an incarnation of Hanumān. His mood never changed, even in the association of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This pastime appears in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā*, 15.137–157:

Embracing Murāri Gupta, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu began to speak about his unflinching faith in *bhakti* in front of all the

devotees. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “Previously I induced Murāri Gupta again and again to be attracted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I said to him, ‘O Gupta, Vrajendra-kumāra is supreme sweetness. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the source of all incarnations and the basis of everything. He is pure transcendental love, and the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṇa possesses all transcendental qualities. He is like a mine of gems. He is intelligent, expert, self-controlled, and the foremost enjoyer of all *rasa*. His character is very sweet, as are His pastimes. By His cunning expertise, He enjoys pastimes filled with *rasa*. Worship that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and take shelter of Him. Besides His worship, nothing appeals to the mind.’”

“Hearing these words from Me again and again, his mind was a little altered by My influence, and he said to Me, ‘I am Your servant and I carry out Your order. I am not independent.’ He then went home and spent the whole night thinking how he would have to give up his Śrī Rāmacandra, the protector of the Raghu dynasty. Thus, he was overwhelmed. He wondered how he could possibly give up the feet of Śrī Rāmacandra. He prayed to Śrī Rāmacandra that it was better for him to die that night. In this way Murāri Gupta cried the whole night. His mind disturbed, he could not sleep, but stayed awake the entire night.

“In the morning, Murāri Gupta came to me and caught hold of My feet. Crying, he submitted an appeal. He said, ‘I have sold my head to Śrī Rāmacandra. I cannot withdraw my head now, for that would give me too much pain. It is impossible for me to give up the service of Śrī Rāmacandra’s feet. But if I do not do so, I shall disobey Your order. What am I to do? You are all-merciful, so please bestow Your mercy upon me. Let me die before You so that my doubts will vanish.’

“I became very happy when I heard this. I picked Murāri Gupta up, embraced him, and said to him, ‘All glories to you, Murāri Gupta! Your worship is so firmly fixed that your mind did not alter even upon My request. The servant should have love for his Lord just like this. Even if the Lord Himself wants separation, the

servant cannot give up His lotus feet. It was just to test your firm faith in your Lord that I repeatedly urged you to change your worship from Śrī Rāmacandra to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. You are Hanumān himself, the servant of Śrī Rāma. Why should you give up the worship of Lord Rāma's lotus feet?" Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu continued, "Murāri Gupta is My life and soul. Hearing of his humility, My life becomes perturbed."

Here is another example from the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya-līlā* 4.28–43:

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī said to Caitanya Mahāprabhu, "I was born in a low family, for my family performs all irreligious and sinful activities. You have accepted me as Your servant without hatred for my family. Only by Your mercy is there auspiciousness in my family. My younger brother Anupama worshipped Śrī Rāmacandra, the protector of the Rāghu dynasty, with great determination from his early childhood. Day and night, he chanted the holy name of Śrī Rāmacandra and meditated upon Him. He continuously listened to the Lord's pastimes from *Rāmāyaṇa* and sang about them. Rūpa and I are his elder brothers. He always stayed with us. He heard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and discussions about Śrī Kṛṣṇa with us, and we both examined him. We said to him, 'Dear Vallabha, please listen. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is supremely attractive. His beauty, sweetness and loving pastimes are without limit. Engage yourself in *bhajana* to Kṛṣṇa with the two of us. We three brothers shall stay together and enjoy discussing the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.'

"We spoke to him in this way again and again, and out of his respect for the two of us, his mind changed somewhat. Finally, he said to us, 'Dear brothers, how can I disobey your orders? Initiate me into the *kṛṣṇa-mantra* so that I may perform *bhajana* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.'

"After saying this, at night he began to think, 'How shall I give up the feet of Śrī Rāmacandra?'

“The whole night he was awake and weeping. In the morning, he came before us and pleaded: ‘I have sold my head at the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmacandra. I am unable to take it back. That would be too painful for me. Be merciful to me. Please give me the order that I should serve the feet of Śrī Rāmacandra life after life. It is impossible for me to give up the lotus feet of Śrī Rāmacandra. My heart breaks when I think of doing so.’

“Hearing this, we both embraced him. We said to him, ‘Excellent! Your determination in *bhakti* is immovable.’ In this way, we praised him.”

Through these examples of Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa, Murāri Gupta, and Anupama, we can see that the practitioner of devotional service (*sādhaka*) may change his attraction to a different form of the Lord if he has not yet realized his constitutional form. We see how, when Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa associated with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he changed his mood of exclusively worshipping Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī Nārayaṇa and came in the *upāsana*²³ of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

In contrast, Murāri Gupta in his *nitya-līlā* was the eternal servant of Lord Rāma, therefore he could never change his exclusive worship of Lord Rāma even in the association of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The same is true of Anupama. His devotion to Lord Rāma was in accordance with his eternal nature, and that is why he could not change his service mood even in the association of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs, who are the foremost devotees of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Our Śrīla Gurudeva’s case is similar to that of Veṅkaṭa Bhatta. Śrīla Gurudeva had even received the *darśana* of Lord Rāma, Sītā-devī, Lakṣmaṇa, and Hanumān. Nonetheless, when he heard the sweet glorification of the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa from the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, he changed his line and mind, and determined to perform *bhajana* of the Divine Couple, as taught and exemplified by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

.....
²³ *Upāsana* means to do *sādhana bhajana*

THE PREACHING OF ŚRĪ NAROTTAMĀNANDA PRABHU TO ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL

Pūjyacaraṇa Narottamānanda Prabhu²⁴ was a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda and a very good *Bhāgavat* speaker. Once, when he went for preaching along with some other *brahmacārīs*, a police officer named Mr. Banerjee hosted the preaching party. Mr. Banerjee knew Śrīla Gurudeva to be a very faithful devotee so he invited him to his house. At that time Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu was giving *hari-kathā* in Bengali but Śrīla Gurudeva did not know Bengali, and Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu did not know Hindi, so they discussed *hari-kathā* together in English.

First of all, Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu explained the truth of the living entity (*jivātmā*), quoting from various scriptures. “Tiwarijī, please listen while I speak from *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Bhāgavatam*, about the nature of the soul (*jivātmā*). You are not this physical body. You are an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. It is mentioned in scripture (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 20.108–109):

The *jīva*'s constitutional position is to be Kṛṣṇa's eternal servant because he is the marginal potency of Kṛṣṇa. The *jīva* is a manifestation simultaneously different and non-different from Him, like a molecular particle of light from the sun, or a spark from fire. Kṛṣṇa has three categories of energy: the spiritual potency, the marginal potency and the material, external potency.

.....
24 Narottamānanda Prabhu was a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. Later he took *sannyāsa* and became Śrīpād Bhaktikamala Madhūsudhana Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He was personally responsible for bringing Śrīla Gurudeva and Śrīla Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja to their *guru*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Navadvīpa.

Narottamānanda Prabhu then said, “The *jīvātma* neither takes birth nor dies, nor does he experience repeated creation or growth. He is unborn, eternal and ever-existing. Though primeval, he remains ever-youthful. When the body is destroyed, the *jīvātma* is not destroyed” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.20).

In his *Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary on this verse, Śrīla Gurudeva explains:

The eternal nature of the soul has been established in this verse. He is beyond birth and death, and he is eternal and ever-existing. He is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. Consequently, the soul is devoid of the six types of transformations of the material body: birth, duration of existence, growth, procreation, diminution and death. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.2.18) a similar conclusion is given:

*na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścīn nāyaṁ kutaścīn na vibhūva kaścīn
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

[The meaning of this verse is the same as *Gītā* 2.20, but here, the word *vipaścīn*, which means ‘one who knows the self’ is used.] *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.25) also verifies this conclusion: *sa vā eṣa mahān aja ātmājaro 'maro 'mṛto 'bhayaḥ*. “The *ātmā* is indisputably great, unborn, deathless, free from old age, immortal and fearless.”²⁵

Narottamānanda Prabhu then recited the following verses:

*vāsāṁsi jīrṇāṇi yathā vihāya navāni grhṇāti naro 'parāṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāṇy anyāni samyāti navāni dehī
Bhagavad-gītā (2.22)*

.....
²⁵ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* with the *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Third English Edition, CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications 2010)

Just as a person discards his old garments and acquires new ones, the *jīvātma* similarly gives up old, useless bodies and accepts new ones.

In his *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī* commentary on this verse, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “Is there any harm in giving up old clothes to accept new ones? You may say, ‘By fighting against Bhīṣma, You and I will be the cause of the soul named Bhīṣma giving up his body.’ To this I reply that Bhīṣma will simply give up his old and useless body and take a new body. How can you or I be blamed for this?”²⁶

Narottamānanda Prabhu continued:

*nainam chindanti śastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ
na cainam kledayanty āpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ
Bhagavad-gītā (2.23)*

The *jīvātma* can never be pierced by any weapon, burned by fire, moistened by water nor dried by the wind.

*acchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam akledyo 'śoṣya eva ca
nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthāṇur acalo 'yam sanātanaḥ
Bhagavad-gītā (2.24)*

The *jīvātma* is indivisible, insoluble and cannot be burned or dried. He is eternal, all-pervasive²⁷, permanent, non-moving and ever-existing.

.....
²⁶ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Third English Edition, CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications 2010)

²⁷ The term *sarva-gataḥ* (all-pervasive) in this context is not the same as the Lord's all-pervasiveness. The living entities are situated everywhere. In his purport to this verse, Śrīla Gurudeva writes: “Here the word *sarva-gataḥ* (all-pervasive) indicates that due to his own actions the *jīva* transmigrates through all the species of life such as *devas*, human beings, animals and birds.”

Narottamānanda Prabhu said, “This is what *Bhagavad-gītā* tells us about the *jīva*. Now, Tiwarijī, please listen to what the *Bhāgavatam* has to say on this subject.”

He started reciting *ślokas* from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as follows:

*āhuḥ śarīraṁ ratham indriyāṇi
hayān abhīṣūn mana indriyeṣam
vartmāni mātrā dhiṣaṇām ca sūtaṁ
sattvaṁ bṛhad bandhuram īsa-sṛṣṭam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.15.41)

It is said that the material body, which is created by the Supreme Lord, is like a chariot. The senses are the horses; the mind or master of the senses, is the reins; the objects of the senses are the various destinations; intelligence is the chariot driver; and consciousness, which spreads throughout the body, is the cause of bondage in this world.

*akṣaṁ daśa-prāṇam adharmā-dharmau
cakre ’bhimānaṁ rathinaṁ ca jīvam
dhanur hi tasya praṇavaṁ paṭhanti
śaraṁ tu jīvaṁ param eva lakṣyam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.15.42)

There are ten vital life-air moving within the body. These ten life-air are compared to the spokes of the chariot’s wheels; the top and bottom of the wheels themselves are religion and irreligion.

The owner of the chariot is the living entity in the bodily concept of life. The bow is the *mantra* known as *praṇava*; the arrow is the pure living entity himself; and the target is the Supreme Lord.

*rāgo dveṣaś ca lobhaś ca
śoka-mohau bhayaṁ madaḥ
māno 'vamāno 'sūyā ca
māyā himsā ca matsaraḥ*

*rajaḥ pramādaḥ kṣun-nidrā
śatravas tv evam ādayaḥ
rajas-tamaḥ-prakṛtayaḥ
sattva-prakṛtayaḥ kvacit*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.15.43-44)

Enemies take the form of attachment, hostility, greed, lamentation, illusion, fear, madness, pride, insults, fault-finding, deception, envy, intolerance, passion, bewilderment, hunger and sleep – which the living being experiences by contact with *rajas* and *tamas*. Sometimes the living being's conceptions are influenced by *sattva* also.

*yāvan nṛ-kāya-ratham ātma-vaśopakalpaṁ
dhatte gariṣṭha-caraṇārcanayā niśātam
jñānāsim acyuta-balo dadhad asta-śatruḥ
svānanda-tuṣṭa upaśānta idaṁ vijahyāt*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.15.45)

So long as one has the chariot of this human body, with its various parts and paraphernalia, one must accept the shelter of the feet of his superiors – namely, of his *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas. By their mercy, one can sharpen the sword of knowledge and by the strength of the Supreme Lord defeat the enemies listed previously. In this way a person should become fully satisfied by the transcendental bliss within him and then, free from material contamination, he may give up the material body.

*nocet pramattam asad-indriya-vāji-sūtā
nītvotpatham viṣaya-dasyuṣu nikṣipanti
te dasyavaḥ sahaya-sūtam amuṁ tamo 'ndhe
saṁsāra-kūpa uru-mṛtyu-bhaye kṣipanti
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.15.46)*

If one fails to take shelter of the Supreme Lord Acyuta and of Baladeva Prabhu, then the senses (which are compared to horses) and the intelligence (which is compared to the driver) will inattentively bring the chariot of this body to the path of sense enjoyment. When one is thus allured again by the dacoits of sense enjoyment, the horses and chariot driver are thrown into the dark well of material existence, where one suffers the terrible fear of death.

Narottamānanda Prabhu deeply impressed upon Śrīla Gurudeva that we cannot take any material possessions we acquire in this world with us at the time of death. He then related a story that he had heard from his spritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda.

STORY OF THE KING AND THE SAINT

Once, a saintly person wanted to meet with the king. The king informed the saintly person that he, unfortunately, did not have time to see him and that he should please return in a week. When the saintly person came back a week later, the king was still unavailable, but he had left a large donation of hundred gold coins for the saintly person. The saintly person said that he had no need for a hundred gold coins; he simply wanted to meet with the king. He was again told to come back, this time in two weeks. When he returned at the end of the two weeks, the king was again unable to receive him, but the saintly person was told that the king wanted to give him five hundred gold coins for his trouble. The saintly person refused

to accept the money, and was requested to come back in a month. He returned a month later but again there was no meeting. This time he was told that the king wanted to give him a thousand gold coins. The saintly person refused the gold coins again, repeating that he only wished to meet with the king.

The saintly person now decided to go to the queen's palace. When he arrived there, the queen offered *praṇāma*, gave him a seat, offered him something to drink and asked, "Bābā, how can I serve you?"

The saintly person replied, "I went to see the king because I wanted to tell him something, but he always sent the message, 'Not today; come back next week, come in two weeks.' He just wanted to give me gold coins, which I do not need. Therefore, I will tell you what I have to say."

"What is it, Bābā?" the queen inquired.

The saintly person explained, "The king has only three more months to live. After that he will give up this world. However, he has performed good *karma* so he will go to a heavenly planet where all arrangements have been made for him. Nowadays, there are mosquitoes on the heavenly planet to which the king will go, so a mosquito net has been provided for him. However that mosquito net has a small hole in one corner so when the king leaves this world, he must take with him a small needle and a little bit of thread in order to repair the mosquito net."

Having delivered his message the saintly person left the queen's palace.

The queen began to weep and immediately sent her maidservant to call the king. The king, who had had no time to meet with the saintly person, immediately rushed to his queen wanting to know what was causing her so much distress.

"Why are you crying my queen?" he asked.

The queen then related the conversation with the saintly person.

"What kind of person was he?" asked the king. "Please describe him."

"He was in saffron robes, and he had a *śikhā*, a sacred thread and *kaṇṭhi-mālā*."

The king immediately sent a horseman to catch up with the saintly person and bring him back with great respect. It had not been long since the saintly person had left the queen's palace, so the horseman was able to find him very easily. He brought him back to the king with great honour. This time, the king received the saintly person with great respect, placed him on his own throne and sat down at his feet.

The king said, "Bābā, have you been speaking with my queen?"

"Yes, I spoke with her," replied the saintly person. "However, if you have no faith in me, you can arrest me and put me in jail. After your death, you can have your followers release me from jail."

The king asked the saintly person. "How can I take a small needle and thread with me when I die?"

"This you should consider deeply," the saintly person replied. "You have a large kingdom, and you have done so many things for your citizens and others. But what have you done for yourself? What have you got to take with you when you leave? All this large kingdom, and you are wondering how you can take a small needle and thread? You cannot take even that much with you, so what will you do? What is the purpose of your whole life?"

The king became humbled and said, "Please, Bābā, kindly tell me what should I do?"

"Do *bhajana* of Bhagavān under the guidance of a bona fide *guru*. Let all that you do, think, and speak be for the pleasure and benefit of the Lord. Then at the time of death you will be able to remember Bhagavān intensely, your path to eternal auspiciousness will become blessed, and your life will be successful."

Narottamānanda Prabhu told this story of the king and the saintly person to Śrīla Gurudeva so many decades ago, but its message was not meant for his ears only. It was meant for everyone's sober consideration.

When we leave this world, we cannot take anything from this world with us. When we come into this world, our hands are closed tight, which implies that we have come with our own *karma*.

However, when we depart from this material world, our palms are open, signifying that we will have to leave behind whatever we have accumulated here. We can take nothing with us. But one who practices remembering Kṛṣṇa during his life will naturally remember Him at the time of death and in this way he will achieve Him.

FAMILY DUTIES

Śrīla Gurudeva was a loving and respectful son. Considering his own situation, he confided in Narottamānanda Prabhu. “I am indebted to my parents. What will be their condition if I give up everything and only perform *bhajana*? Who will take care of them?”

Narottamānanda Prabhu replied, “You can still serve your parents if you do *bhajana*. Besides, whoever dedicates his life for *bhajana* of Bhagavān is not indebted to anyone.”

“How is this?” Śrīla Gurudeva asked.

Narottamānanda Prabhu replied, “One who is qualified to chant the holy name of Bhagavān gives up all fruitive activities.” He then quoted a *śloka* from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.5.41):

*devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām
na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan
sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇam śaraṇyam
gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kartam*

One who has taken complete shelter of Bhagavān Mukunda, who is affectionate towards the surrendered, is not indebted to the demigods, to his forefathers, to ordinary living entities, or to relatives and guests. He is not subordinate to anyone other than Mukunda, nor is he their servant.

Śrīla Gurudeva explains this verse as follows in his *Bhajana-rahasya-vṛtti*:

The performance of the *śrāddha* ceremony and other material activities meant to absolve one's debts to the forefathers, as presented in the *karma-kāṇḍa* section of the Vedas, is not for devotees surrendered to Bhagavān. The only injunction for these devotees is to worship Bhagavān, offer *bhagavat-prasāda* to the forefathers and accept *bhagavat-prasāda* with friends and relatives. The ultimate purport of the entire *Bhagavad-gītā* is that Bhagavān will liberate from all sins those who have surrendered unto Him and given up their reliance on all other *dharmas*.

When a person acquires the qualification for exclusive devotion, he is not obliged to follow the rules of the *jñāna-* and *karma-śāstras*, for he will attain all perfection simply by cultivating *bhakti*. Therefore, one should understand that Bhagavān's promise in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.31), "*na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*—My devotee never perishes," is placed above all.²⁸

Narottamānanda Prabhu presented an allegory so that Śrīla Gurudeva could understand this clearly:

"Suppose a man has an attentive, obedient servant in his house and one day the servant borrows 1,000 rupees from him. A few days later, the man is visited by a gentleman to whom he happens to owe 100,000 rupees, and he engages his servant in tending to the guest and pleasing him. Later, the guest says to his host, 'I like your servant very much. Would you please give him to me?'" By giving his servant to the gentleman, the 1,000 Rupees owed by the servant is nullified, as is the 100,000 Rupees owed by the man to his guest. In the same way, although we are indebted to our parents, demigods, saintly persons and so many others, if we serve the Supreme Bhagavān whole-heartedly, then all debts will be repaid, and all will ultimately be happy."

.....
²⁸ From *Bhajana-rahasya-vṛtti* commentary to Text 25 of the Second Chapter, *Dvītiya-yāma-sādhana* (*Prātaḥ-kālīya-bhajana – anartha-nivṛtti in sādhu-saṅga*) by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmi Mahārāja (CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications)

WORSHIP OF THE DEMIGODS

Śrīla Gurudeva said, “We are supposed to worship and serve many demigods and others, so won’t they be angry if we serve only Bhagavān?”

Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu then quoted one *śloka* from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.31.14):

*yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopasākhāḥ
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām
tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*

By watering the root of a tree, all its parts, such as the trunk, branches, and sub-branches are nourished; and by satisfying the life-air through eating, all the senses are nourished. Similarly, only by worshipping Śrī Kṛṣṇa are the demigods, forefathers and so forth worshipped.

Śrīman Narottamānanda further explained, “When one waters the root of a tree, it nourishes not only the root, but also the trunk, the stems, the leaves, the fruits. All the parts of the tree are nourished. When the stomach is fed, your whole body is nourished. Similarly, since Śrī Bhagavān is the root cause of all existence, if you exclusively worship Bhagavān, all the demigods and the rest are worshipped. Everything is dependent on Him and without Him, nothing can exist. He is Acyuta, always the infallible Lord, and unlike us, he can never become fallible and succumb to the illusory world of *māyā*. One may think that there is no harm in worshipping others such as forefathers or demigods, as they are all part and parcel of God. Yes, we don’t disrespect anyone, but ordinary personalities are not transcendental like Bhagavān, nor are they on the same level. They are ruled and controlled by the material qualities, and the results of worshipping them are limited and temporary. *Bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is like watering the root of a tree – the forefathers,

demigods and everyone else are automatically satisfied by such worship. One who sticks to the path of *śrī-kṛṣṇa-bhajana* under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master is glorious, and he gradually comes to the perfection of love of God. In contrast, one who leaves this path is like a man who leaves a respectable and chaste wife to live with a prostitute, or one who drinks poison.“

Narottamānanda Prabhu continued:

*jīva-rāsibhir ākīrṇa aṇḍa-koṣāṅghriṇo mahān
tan-mūlatvād acyutejyā sarva-jīvātma-tarpaṇam
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.14.36)*

This universe full of living entities is like a tree whose root is the infallible Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, one can satisfy all living entities simply by worshipping Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

“Do you know the nature of this material world?” To answer his own question, Narottamānanda Prabhu quoted a verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.9.28):

*evaṁ janāṁ nīpatitaṁ prabhavāhi-kūpe
kāmbhikāmam anu yaḥ prapātan prasaṅgāt
kṛtvātmāsāt surarṣiṇā bhagavan gṛhītaḥ
so 'haṁ kathāṁ nu viśṛje tava bhṛtya-sevām*

O Supreme Lord, like people in general, I was falling into a well full of serpents, because of my association with material desires. But the great saint Nārada Ṛṣi kindly accepted me as his disciple and instructed me how to achieve transcendence. How then, can I ever give up his service?

Śrīla Gurudeva did not answer, for he was deeply pondering Narottamānanda Prabhu's scriptural quotes. “What turn should I take in life from here?” he thought. “I am an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. My ultimate duty is to serve Him. Serving Kṛṣṇa means giving up

material attachments to family life and to family members. How can I do this? It is not such an easy task, but I must do it sooner or later.”

Narottamānanda Prabhu asked him, “What kind of person is entangled in household life in this material world? What is their destination? What is their experience? Do you know?”

“Please kindly tell me.”

Narottamānanda Prabhu quoted again from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.9.45):

*yan maithunādi-grhamedhi-sukhaṁ hi tucchaṁ
kaṇḍūyanena karayor iva duḥkha-duḥkham
tṛpyanti neha kṛpaṇā bahu-duḥkha-bhājah
kaṇḍūtivan manasijaṁ viṣaheta dhīraḥ*

Sex life is like the rubbing of two hands to relieve an itch. Householders who are entrapped in sense enjoyment think that this itching is the highest type of happiness, although it is actually simply a source of misery. Such fools are never satisfied by repeated sense enjoyment. One who is sober can tolerate this itch, knowing that it is simply a product of the mind.

Śrīpada Narottamānanda Prabhu continued, “Do you know that in this material world, Bhagavān is not in the centre? The wife is the centre. She controls everyone in household life. Do you know the nature of a woman?”

Śrīla Gurudeva was silent.

Narottamānanda Prabhu then quoted four verses about the cunning and selfish nature of non-Vaiṣṇavī women. Of course, similar things could be said of non-Vaiṣṇava men. Those who are attracted to the opposite sex, and who identify with the body – whether it be male or female – are entrapped in illusion, and consequently they are subjected to so much pain and suffering in this material world. These statements have nothing to do with the pure nature of devotee women who are faultless in their character.

The four *ślokas* Śrīman Narottamānanda quoted are:

*striyo hy akaruṇāḥ krūrā
durmarṣāḥ priya-sāhasāḥ
ghnanty alpārthe 'pi viśrabdham
patim bhrātaram apy uta*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.14.37)

Women are merciless and cunning, and cannot tolerate even the slightest wrong. They can do anything for their own pleasure, and it is said that they are capable even of killing a faithful husband or brother.

*vidhāyālīka-viśrambham
ajñeṣu tyakta-sauhṛdāḥ
navam navam abhīpsantyaḥ
pumścalyaḥ svaira-vṛttayaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.14.38)

Women are easily seduced by men. They give up the friendship of a man who is their well-wisher, and establish false friendships with fools. In this way, they continually seek new relationships, one after the other.

*śarat-padmotsavam vaktraṁ vacaś ca śravaṇāmṛtam
hṛdayam kṣura-dhārābham strīṇām ko veda ceṣṭitam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (6.18.41)

The face of a woman is as attractive as a blossoming lotus during autumn. Her words are sweet and give pleasure to the ear, but if we study a woman's heart, we can understand that it is as sharp as a razor blade. Who then can understand the dealings of women?

*na hi kaścit priyaḥ strīṇām añjasā svāśiṣātmanām
patim putram bhrātaram vā ghnanty arthe ghātayanti ca*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (6.18.42)

Women behave with men as if men are most dear to them, but actually no one is dear to them. To further their own ends, they can kill even their husbands, sons, or brothers, or cause them to be killed by others.

Hearing these statements, Śrīla Gurudeva became very much disturbed, and asked, “Why are you criticising women without any cause?”

“Oh, this is not *my* speech,” replied Narottamānanda Prabhu. “I am quoting from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It is interesting to note that the first two verses I quoted were spoken by Urvaśī, a woman of the heavenly planets, explaining the character of irrational, spiritually inept women.

“I am only explaining to you the nature of cunning, non-devotee women, as described in the *śāstra*. I myself respect ladies. I do not criticize them; rather, I praise them. I took birth from the womb of a woman; they have nourished me with their breast milk and brought me up. We should not be aggressive towards them or obsessive about them. How can I speak ill of them? No man should denigrate any woman. They should be respected and the aggressive male nature is to be seen as adverse.

“Ladies are mothers, sisters, and daughters. A lady who is your elder is to be respected as mother. A woman of your own age is to be seen as sister. A small girl is to be considered a daughter. This is the Vaiṣṇava conception.

Vaiṣṇavas always respect and protect women; they do not degrade them. We are not like those *phalgu-vairāgīs* who artificially renounce women, and at the same time are harsh towards Svayaṁ Bhagavān, His incarnations, and His devotees.

“Śrī Bhagavān has given so much honour to ladies! Bhagavān is the controller of everyone, but His mother Yaśodā was able to bind him due to her intense love. Kṛṣṇa would also dance for neighbouring mothers on the pretext of getting some broken *laḍḍūs*.

“Women’s hearts are very soft. The qualities of sacrifice and submission are clearly visible in them. The *yajña-patnīs* brought so

many offerings on their heads for the pleasure of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Balarāma, and Their cowherd friends. When their *brahmin* husbands heard this, they said, ‘Fie on us! Fie on us!’ They thought that these women who were not well-versed in the Vedas, and who were impure once every month, were able to serve the Lord, whereas they, with all their vast learning and elaborate Vedic sacrifices, were unable to do so. As you well know, it was because of Śrī Sītā that Lord Rāma built a bridge all the way to Lankā and demolished Rāvaṇa’s city, his army, and his whole dynasty. Kṛṣṇa supplied unlimited cloth to Draupadi when she was being disrobed and it was because of her that the five Pāṇḍavas killed the hundred brothers of the Kuru dynasty.

“We never insult women; rather we respect them. If they are qualified, we consult with them. Gangāmātā Gosvāmīnī initiated the King of Orissa and so many of his ministers. Śrī Jāhnavā devī, the pleasure potency of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, installed six Deities in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) when humbly requested by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, one of the previous *ācāryas* in our Gauḍīya *paramparā*. Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura prayed again and again at her lotus feet. As for Śrīmatī Rādhārānī, I can never say enough. Our highest aspiration is to be eternally engaged in Her service. To make Her pleased; even Kṛṣṇa would bow down to Her lotus feet and offer His inseparable flute to Her.

“From these examples, O gentle one, you can see how Vaiṣṇavas should always respect ladies and give them the honour they deserve.”

Śrīla Gurudeva became very happy hearing all these things and to this day he is endlessly glorifying the Lord and especially Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *hlādinī* potency, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her *sakhīs*.

The author summerizes these teachings of Srīman Narottamānanda Prabhu, that a Vaiṣṇava is:

*praiser of women, not criticizer
protector of women, not destroyer
consulter of women, not insulter
submissive, but never aggressive.*

THE PROCESS OF BHAKTI-YOGA

It is declared by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.40):

*nehābhikrama-nāśo 'sti
pratyavāyo na vidyate
svalpam apy asya dharmasya
trāyate mahato bhayāt*

Endeavours on the path of *bhakti-yoga* are neither fruitless nor subject to loss. Even a little progress on this path frees one from all the fear caused by material existence.

In his *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary, Śrīla Gurudeva explains the meaning of this verse:

Here, *buddhi-yoga* is described as being of two types. The first is *bhakti-yoga* in the form of hearing and chanting, and the second is *niṣkāma-karma-yoga* wherein the results of *karma* are offered to Śrī Bhagavān without motive. Of these two, the first is primary *bhakti-yoga* and the second is secondary *bhakti-yoga*. In fact, *bhakti-yoga* is completely transcendental to the modes of nature. No irregularities, faults or unwanted reactions can occur at the beginning of one's practice nor in the course of one's practice, even if for some reason one is unable to complete it. Rather, a little performance of *bhakti-yoga* delivers the practitioner from the terrible dangers of the material world and makes his life successful by giving him the service of Śrī Bhagavān.

The following example can be cited. Because Bharata Mahārāja became attached to a deer, he was not able to complete the full process of *bhakti*. Although in his next birth he took the body of a deer, the influence of his previous life's performance of *bhakti* enabled him to associate with pure devotees of Bhagavān. Taking birth again, he became the highest class of devotee, an *uttama-*

bhāgavata, and performed service to Śrī Bhagavān. Therefore, Bhagavān says in *Gītā* (6.40), “*pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśas tasya vidyate* – A person who has fallen from the path of *bhakti* is never lost in this world or in the next, nor does ever he obtain a miserable condition.”

On the other hand, in *bhagavad-arpita-niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, even if the fruits of one’s actions are offered to Bhagavān, it is still referred to as *karma-yoga*, not *bhakti-yoga*. By first performing *karma-yoga*, the heart becomes purified and eventually one attains *bhakti-yoga*. Therefore, this *karma-yoga* only aims at *bhakti* indirectly, from far away. Unlike pure *bhakti*, *karma-yoga* is not transcendental, nor is it free from material contamination. Rather, it is called *karma* in the mode of goodness. Moreover, if a person does not perform this *karma* perfectly or if he does not complete his practice, it may become lost and he will incur some unwanted reactions. However, as stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.25.23): *mad-arpaṇaṁ niṣphalaṁ vā sāttvikaṁ nija-karma tat*. If a practitioner of *bhakti* begins to perform this *bhakti-yoga* even slightly but leaves the path due to his own incapability, or if his practices cease due to his sudden, untimely death while he is in either the beginning or intermediate stage, his endeavours in *bhakti* will never go in vain. In other words, his endeavours do not become faulty nor does he incur any sin, even if he is unable to complete the process. In his next life, the practitioner will continue from that same point where his performance of *bhakti-yoga* was obstructed. The presiding deity of *bhakti-yoga*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa or *Bhakti-devī* herself, makes all these arrangements. In this context, there is one important point to note. If a practitioner has faith, but due to ignorance there are some irregularities in his performance, the results of *bhakti-yoga* will never be lost nor does he incur sin. However, if someone offends the spiritual master, the Vaiṣṇavas or anything that belongs to Śrī Bhagavān or is related to Him, such as *Tulasī*, *Yamunā* or the holy *dhāma*, that persons’ *bhakti-yoga* can be completely ruined.²⁹

²⁹ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Śrī Kṛṣṇa then states *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.41):

*vyavasāyātmikā buddhir
ekeha kuru-nandana
bahu-sākhā hy anantāś ca
buddhayo 'vyavasāyinām*

○ Kuru-nandana, the intelligence of those who are on this path of *bhakti* is resolute in purpose and one-pointed, but the intelligence of those who are averse to *bhakti* is many-branched and inconclusive.

Śrīla Gurudeva explains in his *Sārārtha-varṣiṇī Prakāśikā-vṛtti*:

Of the three types of *buddhi-yoga – karma, jñāna* and *bhakti* – only that intelligence which is related to pure *bhakti-yoga* is supreme. The exclusive aim and object of the primary form of *bhakti-yoga* is Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and that intelligence which is related only to Him is called *aikāntikī* or *ananyā* (one-pointed or exclusive). The practitioners of such exclusive devotion are free from the desires for mundane enjoyment and liberation, thus they are non-duplicitous. Therefore, their intelligence is resolute. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura comments on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.28). “They resolutely think, ‘Even if there are millions of obstacles in the performance of my *bhajana*, even if I lose my life, if I have to go to hell because of offenses or if lust overpowers me, I can never give up *bhakti*, whatever the circumstance may be. I will not perform *jñāna* and *karma*, even if Lord Brahmā himself orders me to. Under no circumstances can I give up *bhakti*.’ Only this type of determination can be called unflinching, or *niścaṃyātmikā buddhi*.”

Due to lack of such exclusive *niṣṭhā* in Bhagavān, a person’s intelligence remains engaged in *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*. His intelligence is called many-branched because of a variety of aims and objectives, such as the pleasures in this world or the next,

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which are related to profit (*lābha*), adoration (*pūjā*) and distinction (*pratiṣṭhā*). His intelligence is filled with unlimited desires.

According to the Vaiṣṇava spiritual masters, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Himself is the non-dual, original, Supreme Absolute Reality. He is called *nirguṇa* due to being simultaneously beyond the material qualities of goodness, passion and ignorance, and also endowed with all transcendental qualities such as opulence, sweetness, compassion and affection for His devotees. However, modern people who are uneducated and bereft of *tattva-jñāna*, and whose intelligence is covered by illusion consider *brahma*, the Absolute Truth, to be without transformations (*nirvikāra*), without variety (*nirviśeṣa*) and untainted (*nirāñjana*), accept Him as being beyond the modes of nature, in only a mundane sense.

They consider the pastime incarnations (*līlā-avatāras*) of the Lord to be the impersonal *brahma* but covered by *māyā*, and that His form and His qualities such as compassion are illusory and therefore material like their own. They say that by worshipping the impersonal *brahma* endowed with material qualities, their hearts will gradually become purified and they will become one with the impersonal *brahma* devoid of material qualities.

The establishment of such conclusions is as useless as trying to strike the sky, because scriptures such as the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which describe the transcendental form and characteristics of Śrī Bhagavān, refute this despicable concept in every regard. Therefore, pure devotion to the transcendental Absolute Reality, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is endowed with all transcendental qualities, is called *nirguṇa-bhakti*. In Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.29.11), he explains *nirguṇa-bhakti* to be of one kind only, one-pointed (*aikāntika*). Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī has stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.29.7–10) that because *sakāma-bhakti* is performed with various material desires, it has unlimited branches such as *tāmasika-sakāma-bhakti*, materially motivated devotion mixed with the material mode of ignorance.³⁰

³⁰ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Third English Edition, CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications 2010)

THE DEITY OF GOPĪNĀTHA IN REMUNĀ

The pure-hearted Narottamānanda Prabhu, representing his *guru* Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, continued speaking, “I’ll give you another example, Tiwariji, from Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta* by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī.”

He then told the following captivating history from the fourth chapter of *Madhya-līlā*:

The deity of Gopīnātha in the temple at Remunā is most attractive. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited the temple, and with great love, offered His obeisances at the lotus feet of Śrī Gopīnātha. As He did so, the headdress of flowers adorning the head of the deity fell down and landed on Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s head. He became overjoyed and started chanting and dancing in a variety of ways with the *bhakta-gaṇa*, the devotees of the Lord.

All the servants of the Gopīnātha deity were astonished by Mahāprabhu’s *prema*, His superb beauty, and His wonderful qualities. Because of their love for Him, they served Him in many ways, and that night Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu stayed in the temple.

Having heard from His spiritual master, Śrī Iśvara Purī, of the beautiful pastime that happened here in the past, Mahāprabhu was very eager to receive Śrī Gopīnātha’s Amṛta-keli *mahāprasāda*.

Mahāprabhu then told His devotees the story of how the deity became famous as the Lord who stole the sweet rice.

THE STORY OF MĀDHAVENDRA PURĪ AND ŚRĪ GOPĀLA

Once Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s grand spiritual master, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī travelled to Vṛndāvana. In the course of his journey, he came to Govardhana Hill and became submerged in love of God (*prema-āveśa*). In that *prema*, he did not know whether it was day or night. Sometimes he would stand, and sometimes he would

fall to the ground. In such a state, he was completely unconscious of his external surroundings. He could not discriminate whether he was in a proper place or not.

He somehow completed the *parikramā* of Śrī Govardhana and then proceeded towards Govinda-kunḍa, where he took bath in its sacred water. Mādhavendra Purī would never ask anyone for food, and if no one offered it, he would simply fast. Near this place, he sat under a tree without any food, and absorbed in his *bhajana*, chanted continuously with his eyes closed.

A young cowherd boy came with a pot of milk, placed it before him and smilingly said, “Mādhavendra Purī, please drink the milk I have brought. Why don’t you ask for some food to eat? What kind of meditation are you doing?”

Hearing the boy’s sweet speech, Mādhavendra Purīpāda completely forgot his hunger and had no desire to eat or drink anything. He gently inquired from the boy, “Who are You? Where do You live and how did you know that I was fasting?”

“I am a resident here in this village of Govardhana and I take care of cows,” the boy answered. “In my jurisdiction, no one remains hungry without food. Here, people can easily beg food from others. The village women who came here to fetch water saw you performing *bhajana* without eating, so they sent me with this milk for you. I must go quickly for milking, but I will come back to collect the milk pot from you.”

After saying this, the boy suddenly left. Mādhavendra Purī’s heart was filled with astonishment. He could only think of the boy’s sweet words; nothing had broken his meditation like this before. He drank the milk in great jubilation, and ecstatic symptoms appeared on his body. Washing the pot, he set it aside, waiting for the young boy to return to take it. He could only think of this sweet boy and what he had said to him and nothing else. The boy had said that he would return. So this time, he did not want to close his eyes, and kept looking in the direction where the boy left, but the boy never returned.

Mādhavendra Purī was unable to sleep and the whole night he chanted the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa under that same tree – waiting.

Finally, at the end of the night, he dozed off. As he slept, that very same cowherd boy came back to him in a dream and took him by the hand to a place in the jungle that was heavily covered with thick creepers and plants.

“I live in this bush without adequate shelter,” said the boy. “As a result, I suffer terribly from the bitter cold of winter, the downpours of the rainy season, the scorching heat of the summer, and the severe winds. Quickly gather the villagers. Have them take Me out of this bush and place Me very nicely on the crest of the hill. Build a temple on the hill and establish Me there. When you install Me, please bathe Me with plenty of cold water, so that My body may be thoroughly cleansed.” The young cowherd boy continued in the same sweet voice, “For a long time, I have been observing you and thinking, ‘When will Mādhavendra Purī come here to serve Me? I will be revealed according to his loving service, and I shall deliver from *saṁsāra*³¹ those who take My *darśana*.”

“My name is Gopāla, the lifter of Govardhana. I was installed formerly by King Vajranābha³², and here in this region I am the prime authority. When the Muslims invaded, the *pūjārī* was afraid of those barbarians, so he hid Me in these bushes and fled. I have remained here ever since, so it is very good that you have now come. Please take Me out of here with care.”

After speaking thus, the boy disappeared. Mādhavendra Purī woke up and began to ponder on his dream.

“Earlier I saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa directly, but I could not distinguish who He was at the time.” Saying this, he cried and fell to the ground in the ecstasy of *prema-āveśa*. After his deep lamentation, he peacefully fixed his mind on carrying out the order of Gopāla, who out of His own mercy revealed Himself to him. Mādhavendra Purī took his morning bath and came into the village. He called all the people and addressed them:

.....
31 *Saṁsāra* is the entanglement in the ocean of material existence or the repetition of different bodies that continually suffer in this material world.

32 King Vajranābha is the great-grandson of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Aniruddha and grandson of Pradyumna. He established many villages and installed many deities on the precise locations of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's various pastimes.

“The proprietor of the village, Govardhana-dhārī, is situated in the thick bushes in the jungle. Come, let’s all go there and carefully excavate Him. The jungle there is very dense and we will need hatchets and spades to make our way.”

Hearing this, all the villagers enthusiastically assembled, and with pleasure followed Mādhavendra Purī, who directed them in clearing a path through the dense jungle. After carefully digging at the place mentioned in the dream, they finally found Śrī Gopālajī. Awestruck and jubilant, they beheld the deity of Gopāla, all covered in dirt and grass.

The deity was so heavy that the villagers could not lift Him. After gently cleaning Him, Mādhavendra Purī, accompanied by the strongest men, carried the deity to the crest of the hill. The deity was carefully placed on a big throne of stone. Another large stone was placed at the back to give Him support.

All the *brāhmaṇas* in the village assembled to perform a bathing ceremony (*abhiṣeka*). Nine hundred pots of water were carried from Govinda-kuṇḍa and filtered. All the women and children also came, and there was a great festival with singing and dancing, musical instruments, and the tumultuous sounds of bugles and drums. People brought their entire stocks of rice, milk, yoghurt, ghee and many other ingredients. There was such a huge quantity of foodstuff that the entire hilltop was covered. There were so many sweets and other preparations that it is difficult to describe them all. The villagers also brought large amounts of *tulasī* leaves, flowers and a variety of garments.

All inauspiciousness was driven away by the continuous chanting of the holy name. Śrī Mādhavendra Purī personally began the bathing ceremony of the deity. Śrī Gopālajī was lovingly massaged with scented oil again and again till His body became very shiny and sparkling. After this, further bathings were given with *pañca-gavya*³³ and *pañcāmṛta*³⁴. Then, the *mahā-snāna*³⁵ was performed with ghee and water, using one hundred water pots. After the *mahā-*

³³ *Pañca-gavya*—five substances that are from the sacred cow: milk, yogurt, ghee, urine and dung.

³⁴ *Pañcāmṛta*—five kinds of nectar used for bathing the deity: yogurt, milk, ghee, honey and sugarwater.

³⁵ *Mahā-snāna*—an expanded bathing ceremony using various ingredients; for this, an immense quantity of water is poured over the deity.

snāna, the deity was again massaged with scented oil, and the final bathing ceremony was performed with scented water and flowers poured from a conchshell.

After the transcendental body of the deity was thus cleansed and dried, He was exquisitely dressed in new cloth. Sandalwood pulp, *tulasī* leaves, and flower garlands were then placed upon His beautiful form. Incense, ghee lamps, as well as a bountiful variety of foodstuffs such as yoghurt, milk and many kinds of delicious sweets were offered to the Lord.

Bhoga-ārati was performed. Everyone fully surrendered themselves at the lotus feet of Śrī Gopāla, offering prayers and *dandavat-praṇāma*.

Śrī Gopāla, who had been intensely hungry for many days, ate everything they offered. Although Śrī Gopāla ate all the foodstuffs offered to Him, by His transcendental touch, all the food remained exactly as before His hands touched it. How Gopāla consumed the food while at the same time the food remained there was understood transcendently by Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī. Nothing is unknown to the unalloyed devotee.

The wonderful festivities and the installation of Śrī Gopālājī were organised in one day. There is no doubt that all this was done by the potency of Gopāla, but only a devotee can realise this. All the people, from the children to the elderly, sat down to honour the *prasāda*, and eventually everyone was fed.

It was proclaimed throughout the countryside that Śrī Gopāla had appeared on top of Govardhana Hill, and everyone from neighbouring villages came to see Him. All people who came from Govardhana and other villages took *darśana* of the Gopāla deity and were offered *prasāda*. All this was happening by the mercy of Mādhavendra Purī. They were all wonderstruck by his influence. All the *brāhmaṇas* who were there were initiated into the Vaiṣṇava tradition and engaged them in different services by Mādhavendra Purī. Day after day, Mādhavendra Purī did not take anything to eat throughout the day, but at night he would have a milk preparation after he had laid the deity down to rest.

The most conducive place to execute Kṛṣṇa consciousness is Vṛndāvana, where the people are naturally inclined to love Kṛṣṇa, and He is naturally inclined to love them. Following the Vedic process, each morning the rendering of service to the deity would begin again and people from one of the nearby villages would arrive with profuse quantities of food. Day after day, more came with their offerings. Again and again the *brāhmaṇas* cooked the foodstuffs; again and again Gopāla accepted them; and again and again the *prasāda* was lavishly distributed, so that all, including old people and children, were sumptuously fed.

Not only the neighbouring villages, but all the other districts in the entire country heard of Gopāla's appearance. Whoever came there offered as much as they could afford. Bringing various presentations, people flocked from all over the land to see the deity of Gopāla and took His *mahā-prasāda* with relish. When they saw the wonderful form of Lord Gopāla, all their anxiety and lamentation went away.

MALAYAN SANDALWOOD

Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu continued to relate the story of Mādhavendra Purī and Śrī Gopāla:

In this way, a couple of years passed peacefully, and then one day, Mādhavendra Purī saw Śrī Gopāla in a dream.

“My bodily temperature is still high,” said Gopāla. “It is not coming down. Kindly bring sandalwood from the Malaya province and spread the pulp all over My body to cool Me. Get sandalwood pulp from Nilācala (Jagannātha Purī). Go quickly. No one else is able to perform this task properly, so please execute it yourself.”

After this dream, Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī became absorbed in love of God. Before leaving for Gauḍa-deśa (Bengal), Mādhavendra Purī made sure that all preparations were made for the customary deity worship to continue, engaging people in the regular duties of worship. Then, he headed east to carry out the order of the Lord.

On his way, Mādhavendra Purī reached the house of Advaita Ācārya in Śāntipura. Ācārya Advaita was delighted to see such ecstatic love of Godhead. It was obvious to him that Mādhavendra Purī had attained transcendental love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and he begged him for initiation. Mādhavendra Purī gave him *dīkṣā*, and continued on his way to Purī to execute the order of Śrī Gopal.

ŚRĪ KṢĪRA-CORĀ GOPĪNĀTHA

On his way to Purī, Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī stopped to rest in Remunā, where the deity of Śrī Gopīnātha resides. Seeing the beauty of this exquisite deity, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī was completely overwhelmed. He chanted and danced in front of the deity, and then sat down and asked the *pūjārī* about the types of food that were offered to the deity.

Observing the superb arrangements at the temple, Mādhavendra Purī presumed, by practical deliberation, that only the best foodstuffs were offered. He thought, “I shall ask the *brāhmaṇa* what foodstuffs are offered to Gopīnātha so that we can make and offer similar dishes to Śrī Gopāla.”

When he was thus questioned, the *brāhmaṇa* described in detail, item by item, the kinds of foods that they offered to the Gopīnātha deity. At one point, he glorified the sweet rice that was offered to the deity.

“At nightfall, sweet rice that tastes just like nectar is regularly offered to the deity in twelve earthen pots. This sweet rice is named *amṛta-keli* and is renowned throughout the world as *gopīnāthakṣīra*. The taste of this nectar (*amṛta*) is unknown anywhere else in the world.”

As Mādhavendra Purī looked on, the evening offering of twelve pots of sweet rice was placed before the deity. Pleased to see such nice arrangements in the temple, Mādhavendra Purī thought, “I don’t want to ask, but if a small portion of that sweet rice is offered to me, I will taste it and prepare a similar dish to offer to my Lord Gopāla.”

Then, realising that he had desired to taste the sweet rice while it was still being offered to the Lord, Mādhavendra Purī became very ashamed, thinking that it was an offense. He was simply engaged in remembering the Lord. As the offering procedure was completed, the evening *ārati* ceremony began. Mādhavendra Purī stayed for the duration of the *ārati* ceremony, then paid obeisances to the deity, and left the temple without anyone's knowledge.

Mādhavendra Purī was completely unattached and indifferent to material things, and he avoided begging. If he was offered some food without begging, he would eat, otherwise he would fast. A *paramahansa* such as Mādhavendra Purī is satisfied in the unalloyed loving service of the Lord, therefore he was totally unattached and indifferent to material things. Material hunger and thirst could not impede his activities. Since he had desired to taste a little sweet rice which was being offered to the deity, he thought he had committed an offense. Therefore, he departed from the temple and went to the village marketplace, which was vacated in the evenings. There he sat down and began to chant the holy names.

Meanwhile, the temple *pūjārī* had laid the Gopīnātha deity to rest, and having finished his duties for the day, was also resting. The Gopīnātha deity came to speak to him in a dream, and He spoke as follows. "O *pūjārī*, please get up and open the temple. I have retained a pot of sweet rice for the *sannyāsī* that came today. This sweet rice is hidden under My clothing. You failed to see it because of My trick. The mendicant *sannyāsī* named Mādhavendra Purī is sitting in the empty marketplace. Find the pot of sweet rice and quickly take it to him."

Waking from his dream, the *pūjārī* rose immediately, took bath, and entered the deity's room. He found the pot of sweet rice under the cloth, as the deity had directed in the dream. He took it, wiped the area where it had been present, then hurriedly left the temple. Carrying the earthen pot of sweet rice, he went quickly to the village. Searching for Mādhavendra Purī, he called out his name as he passed the empty stalls. "He whose name is Mādhavendra Purī, please come and take this pot of sweet rice! Gopīnātha³⁶ has concealed and kept

³⁶ For this reason this very same Gopīnātha is now famously known as Kṣīra-corā Gopīnātha – He who stole *kṣīra* (sweet rice) for Śrī Mādhavendra Purī.

it for you! Come and claim it! Will the *sannyāsī* Mādhavendra Purī please come and claim this pot of sweet rice *mahā-prasāda* and enjoy it with great happiness? There is no one more fortunate than you in all the three worlds!”

Hearing the calls, Mādhavendra Purī came forward and identified himself to the *pūjārī*, who offered his *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* and delivered the pot of sweet rice to him. The *pūjārī* then told Mādhavendra Purī all the details of the events that took place in regards to the sweet rice, and Mādhavendra Purī became saturated in ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa, symptoms of ecstasy arising in his body.

The *pūjārī* was wonderstruck. Seeing his symptoms and loving mood, he then understood why Kṛṣṇa was compelled to give Mādhavendra Purī the sweet rice, and how Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement to hide and then send it to him was very fitting. He was convinced that the Lord was elated with Mādhavendra Purī. Offering obeisances again to Mādhavendra Purī, the *pūjārī* returned to the temple. In great ecstasy, Mādhavendra Purī partook of the sweet rice offered to him by Lord Kṛṣṇa. After relishing it to the last morsel, he washed the earthen pot, broke it to pieces, and then tightly wrapped all the small pieces in his loose outer cloth to keep them safely. From then on, each day he ate a piece of that earthen pot, and immediately after eating it he would be overwhelmed with ecstatic bliss.

Having broken the pot and tied the pieces in his cloth, Mādhavendra Purī at once decided to leave that area.

FAME FOLLOWS THE DEVOTEE

Śrīla Gurudeva asked Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu, “Why did Śrī Mādhavendra Purī leave that area in the dark of night?”

Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu continued to relate the story:

Mādhavendra Purī thought, “Lord Gopīnātha has given me a pot of sweet rice. When the people hear of this in the morning, big crowds will come to seek me out and give me undue recognition and excessive praise.”

Considering this, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī offered his obeisances to Gopīnātha and quickly left Remunā at the end of night. Walking on and on, in due course of time, he finally reached Jagannātha Purī, where he saw Lord Jagannātha and became overwhelmed in transcendental bliss. In that loving ecstasy, he would sometimes stand up and sometimes fall mysteriously to the ground. Sometimes he would laugh, and sometimes he would dance like a madman and sing. In this way, he felt transcendental happiness by getting the *darsana* of Lord Jagannātha.

Śrīpāda Mādhavendra Purī's transcendental fame had spread to Jagannātha Purī. Crowds of devotees would daily follow him, offering full obeisances and prayers to him with deep veneration. Fame follows a pure devotee like a shadow. Fame for such devotion cannot be checked or restrained, even though the devotee may not like it. All transcendental qualities reside in the heart of such a devotee. Indeed, providence creates a transcendental reputation that is spread throughout the world. Such fame befits a pure-hearted devotee, yet they run away from it out of genuine humility.

In this way, Mādhavendra Purī ran away from Remunā, being fearful of this reputation. However, the ecstatic love of Godhead is so impressive and unparalleled in its magnificence that its presence makes a devotee famous. A transcendental reputation follows them wherever they go.

“The Lord is captured by the *prema* of a devotee who is doing *bhajana* like Śrīla Mādhavendra Purīpāda,” said Śrī Narottamānanda Prabhu. “So, if you follow this path, then one day Bhagavān will be captivated by you and He will also appear before you.”

The words of Śrī Narottamānanda Prabhu made a deep impression in the heart of Śrīla Gurudeva. Śrīla Gurudeva never had any interest in name and fame. From those early days of joining the *maṭha*, he was simply performing his *bhajana* in Vraja-*maṇḍala*, Navadvīpa and Jagannātha Purī, and he did not desire to go anywhere else. He continuously preached the glories of the Lord,

the holy *dhāma*, *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. He was a hidden treasure house of transcendental knowledge and renunciation, and devotees in those places would always come to him for spiritual guidance.

This Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya* was started by Lord Brahmā, who originally heard the transcendental sound from the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. The pure devotees in this line have no interest in reputation (*pratiṣṭhā*). Their only desire is to glorify the Lord and His devotees, but the Lord somehow arranges to glorify them. Lord Caitanya came to freely distribute *vraja-prema* in this world, and Śrīpāda Mādhavendra Purī is the seed of the desire tree (*prema-kalpataru*) that bestows that divine transcendental love.

Just as Śrīla Mādhavendra Puripāda's fame spread throughout the world, similarly, wherever we go in this world, Śrīla Gurudeva is like a magnet. People are immediately attracted and congregate to get the treasure of his transcendental association, to hear his words, and to receive his merciful glance.

After hearing these brilliant teachings from Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu, the young Śrīman Nārāyaṇa decided to give up his job and join the *maṭha* in Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa. He resolved to dedicate his entire life to help the suffering souls from their material bondage, to show them the real way to eternal happiness through the blissful process of *bhakti-yoga* to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

LEAVING HOME AND GOING TO NAVADVĪPA

Śrīla Gurudeva had seen Śrīpāda Narottamānanda Prabhu's ideal example and heard his expert presentation of the scripture. He had also heard from him about the glories of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Śrīla Gurudeva therefore decided to surrender his life and join the *maṭha*. He attended their gatherings daily and faithfully listened to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Hearing the powerful and extremely sweet *hari-kathā* in the association of pure Vaiṣṇavas had a great influence on him, and he became eager to

renounce this world. He made a firm resolve that he would resign from his job in the police force and go to Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Navadvīpa. There he would assist his *gurudeva*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, in spreading the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, love of Godhead, everywhere. Nonetheless, he still continued his service with the police force for some time.

When Śrīman Narottamānanda Prabhu and the preaching party left, Śrīla Gurudeva began chanting one lakh of *harināma mahā-mantra* daily. Due to his natural religious disposition, his life changed completely. By now, he had become completely detached from the material world. At this time, he was transferred to a government position in Rājamahala on the bank of the Gaṅgā near Rāmakeli (the holy place where Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu first met Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī).

For a few months prior to leaving home and joining the *maṭha*, Śrīla Gurudeva had been contacting his *guru* by letter from time to time. Our Parama-gurudeva Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja used to dictate replies to Sajjana-sevaka Brahma-cārī, then a young *brahmacārī* in the *maṭha* (later to become my beloved Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja) who then wrote and posted the letters.

In December 1946, Śrīman Nārāyaṇa Tiwari voluntarily retired from the police service and left home to make this momentous move. He had not notified his *gurudeva* that he was coming, because he thought it would be better to go there unannounced, without disturbing *gurudeva* and the other *maṭhavāsīs*. It was a journey of several hours, and it was well into the night before the train pulled into Navadvīpa-dhāma. At that time there was no electricity at the Navadvīpa station, and Śrīla Gurudeva stepped out into complete darkness. He was looking here and there, wondering how to go. He was in a town he had never been in before; it was the dead of night; he knew no one there; and could not speak the Bengali language. He did not even know in which direction to take the first step.

“Where to go now?” Śrīla Gurudeva thought. “What to do? I did not want to bother anyone at the *maṭha* and tell them that I am on my way, otherwise someone could have come for me at the railway station. If I try to ask anyone anything now, what will they be able to tell me, here in the darkness of the night? And in any case, will I even be able to understand what they say? Maybe I should wait until morning before proceeding.”

Suddenly, to his surprise, he heard someone calling loudly in the distance. For some strange reason, the person was calling out his name: “Tiwarijī! Tiwarijī!”³⁷ There in the darkness was a figure carrying a kerosene lantern. “Is Tiwarijī here?” he called, “Is there anyone here called Tiwarijī?”

Śrīla Gurudeva stepped towards him. “I am Tiwarijī,” he said. “Who are you?”

“My name is Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī,” replied the young man, “and my *gurudeva* is Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He sent me here to welcome you, pick you up, and take you to him.”

“But I never informed him that I was coming tonight,” said Śrīla Gurudeva. “How did he know?”

“My *gurudeva* is omniscient,” Sajjana-sevaka Prabhu told Śrīla Gurudeva. “He told me that you would be coming on the train tonight and that I was to come and meet you, and bring you to the *maṭha*. Kṛṣṇa must have advised him from within his heart that you were coming.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.11):

*ye yathā mām prapadyante
tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham
mama vartmānuvartante
manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*

.....
³⁷ In the same manner as the *pūjārī* of Gopinātha was calling out for Mādhavendra Puri at dark night.

To those who surrender unto Me and perform My *bhajana*,
I reciprocate accordingly.

Our Parama-gurudeva, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, was doing *bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa intensely, and so the Lord revealed, “Your *sevaka* is coming on the train this evening. Send someone to the rail station to meet him.”

Such was the divine arrival of Śrīla Gurudeva Tiwari in the holy *dhāma* of Navadvīpa. With great intimacy and devotion he began to serve the lotus feet of his gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and on Gaura Pūrṇimā³⁸ in 1947, about three months after arriving at Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha, he received both *harināma* and *dikṣā* initiations together.

.....
³⁸ *Gaura Pūrṇimā* is the appearance day celebration of Lord Gaura, the golden complexioned Supreme Lord, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who appeared more than 500 years ago.

LIFE IN THE MAṬHA

When Śrīla Gurudeva first came to Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Navadvīpa, West Bengal, the *maṭha* consisted of only three rooms. Parama-gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, lived in one room; the middle room was used as the altar room, housing Ṭhākurjī, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-Bihārījī; some *brahmacārīs* and Parama-gurudeva's godbrothers lived in the third room; and the rest lived on the veranda.

After the departure of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saravati Ṭhākura Prabhupāda in 1936, some friction developed within his Gauḍīya Maṭha. Due to unresolvable issues, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja left the original Gauḍīya Maṭha institution. That does not mean that he left the essence and current of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saravati Ṭhākura Prabhupāda's transcendental teachings (*vicāra-dhārā*). He only gave up the buildings and external paraphernalia of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. He then established Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, and constructed Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Navadvīpa-dhāma. Many of Śrīla Prabhupāda's other disciples also left the original *maṭha* with Parama-gurudeva around the same time. They included *parampūjyapāda* Śrī Bhakti Rakśaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the famous singer Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, *parampūjyapada* Śrī Bhakti Kamal Madhusūdana Gosvāmī (previously Narottamānanda Prabhu) and *parampūjyapāda* Mahānambrata Brahmacārī (who later became *parampūjyapada* Parahaṁsa Mahārāja). Altogether, over fifty devotees came to stay at Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Navadvīpa-dhāma.

RĀDHE SYĀMA SYĀMĀ SYĀMA

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa revealed a glimpse of his intense devotional mood by composing this very beautiful *kīrtana* in early 1949.

It is called *Vraja-jana-mana-sukhakāri rādhe, śyāma śyāmā śyāma*. It immediately became very popular, and to this day it is sung with great delight by his followers and other devotees. It is published in the *Śrī Gauḍīya Gīti-Guccha* and various other Vaiṣṇava songbooks. Hearing this song awakens intense greed to follow in the footsteps of the Vrajavāsīs.

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa sings this song in a greatly excited mood, his heart filled with delight and wonder. Each word is thrilled with intense love and affection for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāma. This *bhajana* is laced with *rasika* love, and when we take shelter of it, it reveals Śrīla Gurudeva's internal mood, where he is asking us to join in this great festival of love. Taking shelter of this song awakens an intense greed to serve Śrīla Gurudeva in his eternal spiritual form. With his song, Śrīla Gurudeva is stealing our mind from mundane attraction, and calling us to join that festival of happiness.

Refrain:

vraja-jana-mana-sukhakāri rādhe-śyāma śyāmā śyāma

Kṛṣṇa gives happiness in the hearts of all the Vrajavāsīs –
Rādhe! Śyāma! Śyāmā! Śyāma!

*more mukuṭa makarākṛta-kuṇḍala, gala vaijayantī-māla,
caraṇana nūṭpura rasāla rādhe-śyāma śyāmā śyāma (1)*

He wears a peacock feather *mukuṭa*, swinging *makara*-shaped earrings, and a *vaijayantī* garland around His neck, and the sound of His anklebells is full of *rasa*! Rādhe! Śyāma! Śyāmā! Śyāma!

*sundara vadana kamala-dala locana, bāki cita-vana-hārī,
mohana-vamśi-vihārī rādhe-śyāma śyāmā śyāma (2)*

His lotus face is very beautiful and His eyes are like lotus-petals. Wandering here and there, He charms everyone with His flute and three-fold curved form! Rādhe! Śyāma! Śyāmā! Śyāma!

*vṛndāvana me dhenu carāve, gopī-jana manahāri
śrī govardhana-dhārī rādhe-śyāma śyāmā śyāma (3)*

In Vṛndāvana He tends the cows in the pastures, steals the gopīs' minds, and holds up Śrī Govardhana Hill! Rādhe! Śyāma! Śyāmā! Śyāma!

*rādhā-kṛṣṇa mili aba dou, gaura-rūpa avatārī
kīrtana dharama pracārī rādhe śyāma śyāmā śyāma (4)*

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa have united and now the two have come as the beautiful golden *avatāra*, preaching *kīrtana-dharma*. Rādhe! Śyāma! Śyāmā! Śyāma!

*tum vinā mere aur na koi, nāma-rūpa avatārī
caraṇana me balihārī, nārāyaṇa balihārī,
rādhe-śyāma śyāmā śyāma (5)*

I have no one but You in this world. You descend as the *avatāra* of the beautiful name and beautiful form. Your lotus feet fill me with wonder – so this Nārāyaṇa is filled with delight! Rādhe! Śyāma! Śyāmā! Śyāma!

A WELL-KNOWN KĪRTANĪYĀ

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa came from a family with a keen appreciation for music and singing, so it was natural that he would have an immediate affinity for the lively Gauḍīya *bhajan*as. He quickly mastered the tunes and *kīrtana* styles. One day, he was practising singing by himself this song by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

*(prabhu he!) emana durmati, saṁsāra-bhitare, paḍiyā āchinu āmi
tava nija-jana, kona mahājane, pāṭhāiyā dile tumi (1)*

O Lord, I am so unfortunate that I have fallen into this material world, but one of Your pure and elevated devotees has come to deliver me.

*dayā kari' more, patita dekhiyā, kahila āmāre giyā
'ohe dīna-jana, śuna bhāla kathā, ullasita ha'be hiyā (2)*

Seeing me so fallen and wretched, he took pity on me, saying, O humbled soul, listen to this good news which will bring joy to your heart.

*tomāre tārīte, śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya, navadvīpe avatāra
tomā' hena kata, dīna hīna jane, karilena bhava-pāra (3)*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has appeared in the land of Navadvīpa to deliver you. He has already safely conducted so many other suffering souls across the ocean of birth and death.

*vedera pratijñā, rākhibāra tare, rukma-varṇa vipra-suta
mahāprabhu nāme, nadīyā mātāya, saṅge bhāi avadhūta (4)*

Fulfilling the promise of the Vedas, the son of a *brāhmaṇa*, bearing the name Mahāprabhu and of a golden complexion, has descended with His brother, the *avadhūta* Nityānanda. Together They have overwhelmed all of Nadīyā with divine ecstasy.

*nanda-suta jini, caitanya gōsāi, nija-nāma kari' dāna
tārila jagat, tumi-o jāiyā, laha nija-paritrāṇa (5)*

Śrī Caitanya, who is directly Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda, has saved the world by freely distributing His own holy name. Go also and receive your deliverance.

*se kathā śuniyā, āsiyāchi, nātha! tomāra caraṇa-tale
bhakativinoda, kāṅdiyā kāṅdiyā, āpana-kāhinī bale (6)*

O Lord, hearing those words, Bhaktivinoda has come weeping to Your lotus feet and tells the story of his life.

At that time, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja was in his room. Hearing this melodious and soulful singing, he came out and asked who was singing so attractively. When he discovered that it was his Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa, he positioned him as a prominent *kīrtanīyā*, even though Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa had only been in Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha for a very short time.

THE DANCING OF BHAKTI PRAJÑĀNA KEŚAVA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

One day at the midday *ārati* Śrīla Gurudeva was in the Mathurā *maṭha* playing *mṛdāṅga* and singing, “*Yaśomatī-nandana braja-vara nāgara...*”

He was a very good singer but he was not so expert at playing the *mṛdāṅga*. Suddenly his *gurudeva* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja came in, took the *mṛdāṅga* from his neck and started playing it and dancing ecstatically. Śrīla Gurudeva remembered this incident while we were on the ocean-side in Mauritius, 2009. He told me: “I had never seen such nice dancing and *mṛdāṅga* playing. This is only possible for Mahāprabhu and His eternal associates.”

Although My *dīkṣā-guru*, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭha* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja and *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭha* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja were also gifted singers, Śrīla Gurudeva was renowned throughout the Gauḍīya Maṭha for his sweet melodious *bhajans* and *kīrtanas*. He enthusiastically led large *kīrtana* parties followed by enlightening lectures wherever he went.

TEACHING A VERY GOOD LESSON

Narahari Sevā-Vigraha Prabhu was one of the disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda who had left the original Gauḍīya Maṭha due to the irresolvable issues that developed after the disappearance of his *guru*. He had formerly been known as Narahari Brahmācārī, and due to his tireless service attitude, his *guru*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, had given him the title Sevā-Vigraha: ‘the embodiment of service’. Śrīla Gurudeva respected him dearly like his own *guru* because he was such a near and dear godbrother of Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

In those days, dairy farmers were known by the surname Ghosh. They kept cows and buffalos, and used to sell milk and the vegetables that they had grown. They would pass by Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha every day with baskets of produce, and the *maṭha* residents would stop them at the gate to purchase fresh vegetables from them. That meant that they did not need to go to the vegetable market, and it also meant cheaper and fresher vegetables – the best pick of the crop – to offer to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa.

One morning, a few months after Śrīla Gurudeva had arrived at the *maṭha*, Narahari Sevā-Vigraha Prabhu and others were at the front gate checking the vegetables to purchase for the deities, and talking with the farmers. As they were talking, a hot argument broke out. One of the farmers spoke angrily to Narahari Prabhu, unable to control his anger, or to speak in a friendly manner. Somehow or the other, the farmer’s bamboo pole unexpectedly struck Narottamānanda Prabhu’s forehead. Śrīla Gurudeva could not tolerate this, considering it an offence to a Vaiṣṇava, a dear Godbrother to his *guru*, and he did not hesitate to defend him forcefully. Śrīla Gurudeva had come from the police force not long before, and in a mood of serving and protecting, he came out of the *maṭha* with a bamboo stick to teach the farmer not to strike Vaiṣṇavas. His mood of protection was so strong that the bamboo stick broke into pieces when he hit the farmer. Śrīla Gurudeva then went inside the *maṭha*.

This incident caused a potentially dangerous situation, as the farmers were sure to return for revenge. Śrīla Gurudeva was wearing white rather than saffron cloth at that time, so he was not easily identifiable as a resident of the temple. Narahari Sevā-Vigraha Prabhu said, “O Nārāyaṇa Prabhu, why did you do that? Now all the farmers will come back and beat us. They will quarrel with us and make it very hard for us to live here. They will be after you specifically so hide under your *gurudeva’s* bed and whatever happens, don’t come out of the room!”

Śrīla Gurudeva obeyed Narahari Sevā-Vigraha Prabhu as he was his superior, and hid under his *gurudeva’s* bed in the corner of the room. The bed had four legs and a sheet over it which touched the floor.

Sure enough, the person whom Śrīla Gurudeva had taught a lesson returned from his village with more than fifty other farmers, and they were all yelling angrily at the front of the *maṭha*, “We’ll beat him! We’ll beat him!” They entered the *maṭha* compound, intending to search the rooms, including Ṭhākurjī’s room, Parama-gurudeva’s room, and the *brahmacārīs’* quarters outside on the veranda. The *maṭhavāsīs* attempted to defuse the volatile situation.

At that time, Parama-gurudeva was doing his *bhajana* there in the *maṭha* and the farmers bowed respectfully as soon as they saw him. All the local villagers knew him as Ācārya, for he had been a pillar in the preaching movement of his *guru*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. The farmers went to each devotee in turn and asked the hostile farmer who had been beaten, “Was it this one? Was he the one who beat you?” The answer was always, “No.” The farmers became frustrated and began to question amongst themselves why they were there. Then *parama-gurudeva* spoke: “Our Vaiṣṇavas would never beat anyone! The person who beat you must have been from outside. We don’t know who it was.” *Parama-gurudeva* spoke to the farmers with such authority that they became calm, and left without any further incident. *Parama-gurudeva* never reprimanded Śrīla Gurudeva for what happened that day, nor did he ever bring it up later. It is likely that only Narahari Sevā Vigraha Prabhu knew that Śrīla Gurudeva had been under the bed.

MAṬHA-SEVĀ

On Gaura Pūrṇimā in 1947, about three months after arriving at Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrīla Gurudeva received both *harināma* and *dikṣā* initiations at one time from Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. After initiation his name became Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa dāsa.

When Śrīla Gurudeva joined the *maṭha*, there was no electricity, and he would clean the lanterns every day. The lanterns would become very black, and therefore, had to be cleaned often and carefully. Śrīla Gurudeva also used to wash the pots and kitchen utensils twice a day after cooking.

Nowadays, gas is mostly used for cooking in the *maṭha*, but in the 1940s, only wood was available and this made the pots very black. Even though Śrīla Gurudeva had been an expert authority and highly respected police officer, he undertook these menial services every day.

Śrīla Gurudeva comments that nowadays some devotees do not want to perform any menial service. Their attitude is, “I have my designated service, and I am one-pointed in my *guru-sevā*. I will follow *gurudeva*’s direct order, and I will stick to that service only, and I will not do anything else.” Even when devotees see that one devotee is working hard, they will still not work themselves. Some are working hard, and some others are hardly working; they space out.

Those who are spacing out think that they are very clever, and that others are foolish. Actually, it is just the other way round. Śrī *guru*, Bhakti-devī and Bhagavān are much more clever in every way. Those who do not want to do any menial service are not cheating Them; they are only cheating themselves. Kṛṣṇa confirms in *Bhagavad-gītā* that He is the cheater of all cheaters. He has also said, “*ye yathā mām prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham* – As they surrender unto Me, I reciprocate accordingly” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.11).

The members of our whole *guru-varga* have worked hard and given us everything for our spiritual lives. Even Svayam Bhagavān

Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Lord Śrī Rāmacandra worked hard in *gurukula*, so what to speak of ourselves! If we want to realise our constitutional loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa and go to our eternal home, Goloka Vṛndāvana, we will have to surrender and engage in unconditional devotional service.

A question may arise when we hear about the menial services that Śrīla Gurudeva was performing: “If Śrīla Gurudeva was doing all this service, what were the other *brahmacārīs* in the *maṭha* doing? Were they not doing anything?” When asked about this, Śrīla Gurudeva clarified the situation. “Yes, they were also performing so much service. When I saw them, I was inspired to do all these types of menial services. They were my seniors, and I begged these services from them, so how could I not do it?” The other *brahmacārīs* were performing so many other services.

ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA IS AWARDED THE TITLE BHAKTA-BĀNDHAVA

Śrīla Gurudeva used to serve and take care of all Vaiṣṇavas from every *maṭha*. Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja observed his friendly mood toward all the devotees and awarded him the title *Bhakta-bandhava*. *Bandhava* means ‘friend’, and *bhakta* means ‘devotee’, so *Bhakta-bandhava* means ‘friend of the devotees’.

VAIṢṆAVA-SEVĀ

One of Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s disciples in the *maṭha* at that time was called Anaṅga-mohana Brahmacārī. He was a sweet-natured, simple-hearted boy and very expert in cooking, singing and playing the *mṛdaṅga*. Anaṅga-mohana served our Parama-gurudeva as his personal assistant. After some time he became infected with tuberculosis which at that time in India was an extremely dangerous, life-threatening disease.

Anaṅga-mohana was taken to Sidha Bari, a hilly rural village in West Bengal, known for its temperate climate and conducive

atmosphere; Parama-gurudeva had been there once himself. At Sidha Bari, Śrīla Gurudeva took charge of serving Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī, attentively seeing to all his needs.

(Much later, Śrīla Gurudeva's elder godbrother *pūjyapāda* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja revealed to the author and other devotees such as Premānanda Prabhu that it was by serving Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī that Śrīla Gurudeva conquered the heart of our Parama-gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.)

Despite the attentive care and efforts of his *guru* and godbrothers, Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī's health did not improve. As his condition became worse, Śrīla Gurudeva took him to Madras TB sanitorium, where he eventually passed away.

As he was passing from this world, Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī called out, "Bābā! Bābā! Bābā..." (He was addressing his *gurudeva* whom he called 'Bābā', which means father). "Bābā! Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are calling me! I'm going to Vṛndāvana. How fortunate I am! Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are calling! O Bābā! O Kṛṣṇa! O *gurudeva*!"

Śrīla Gurudeva informed the doctor of what was happening, and when the doctor came to check the patient, he discovered that he had no pulse.

"He has no pulse at all! So, how is it that he is chanting like this?" the surprised doctor said.

Witnessing this divine incident, Śrīla Gurudeva cried out to him, "O Prabhu! You are going to Vṛndāvana. Please pray to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Conjugal that They may shower mercy on me so that I may be a pure devotee in Their service."

Anaṅga-mohana Prabhu held a photograph of his *gurudeva* to his chest and called out again and again, "Bābā! Bābā! Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are calling me! I'm going to Vṛndāvana! Rādhā! Rādhā! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! I'm going to Vṛndāvana!" In this way, he left this world.

Śrīla Gurudeva has since said that it is extremely rare to see Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa personally calling you at the time of leaving this

world. If one serves a bona fide *guru* sincerely and wholeheartedly, such will be the auspicious outcome.

The passing away of our Parama-gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's, is also very significant in this regard. I (the author) have heard repeatedly from both my *dīkṣā* and *śikṣā* spiritual masters that as he was departing, he was chanting the *mahā-mantra*:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

This incident with Anaṅga-mohana prabhu was also spoken about in a lecture given by Śrīla Gurudeva in Mathurā, India, on September 13, 2000. It is interesting to note that he spoke this on the anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja's *sannyāsa* ceremony. Here is an excerpt from Śrīla Gurudeva's very instructive speech:

“You should also consider this. Place your hand on your heart, ask yourself, “What am I doing? Am I serving my *gurudeva* as my *gurudeva* served his *gurudeva*?” My *gurudeva* was prepared to give his life for Śrīla Prabhupāda (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura) in Navadvīpa. He never cared for his life. He once wanted someone among his disciples to serve a very dear disciple of his who had become a victim of tb. All were afraid because so much blood was coming from him. All were afraid. No one dared to serve that boy. But I told *gurudeva*, “You can go and preach, and I will serve him.” He was vomiting blood everywhere; but I never cared for my life, and the result came. I was so fortunate to see that on the day he left this world, he said, “Oh, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are coming to me. They are calling me to Vṛndāvana. I am going to Vṛndāvana. O Bābā! O Kṛṣṇa! O *gurudeva*!” I then requested him, “Prabhu, you are going to Vṛndāvana. Please pray to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Conjugal that They may shower mercy on me so that I can be a pure devotee in Their service.”

That boy was illiterate, with no material qualification at all.

He was a very beautiful Assami boy of about sixteen or eighteen years old. He used to play on the *mṛdaṅga*, and he was very good at *kīrtana*. He used to cook and wash the clothes of his *gurudeva*, and he always followed him. By chanting the name of Nārāyaṇa, Ajāmīla attained far more than salvation. He went to the abode of Nārāyaṇa and worshipped Him there. What therefore will this boy attain? – Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. He was totally immersed, calling “Rādhē! Rādhē! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! I’m going to Vṛndāvana.” So, he must be there. His only qualification was that he served his *gurudeva*. No one can do *bhajana* without the mercy of *gurudeva*.

In the same way, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja never cared for his own life in obeying the orders of his *gurudeva*, and he jumped over the seven oceans. He even had a heart attack on the way, but he never cared. He had a strong will to serve his *gurudeva*. And what did he accomplish? A miracle.

You should try to learn from these examples. Otherwise, even if you are hearing and chanting, even if you have taken saffron cloth, and even if you have taken *sannyāsa*, if you have no *guru-niṣṭhā*, no *samdbandhuvat*, no *viśrambhena guru-sevā*, you cannot do *bhajana*.

It has been told in *śāstra* that among *koti koti* (tens of millions) *bhaktas*, a one-pointed *kṛṣṇa-bhakta* is very rare in this world. We should try to be one of the rare *bhaktas*, and this can only be made possible by *gurudeva*’s mercy.

Śrī Narahari Ṭhākura was one of the associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He was always with Him, and He wrote an *aṣṭakam* of eight *ślokas*, about Him. In the first *śloka* he wrote, “Śacīnandana Gaurahari was the leader of the cheaters of cheaters. He was a very big cheater – the leader of cheaters. He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, so why did he take *sannyāsa* and saffron cloth and the golden color of Śrīmatī Rādhikā? Why is His hair always standing on end in *aṣṭa-sāttvika vikāra*? It is because Rādhā’s mood is there. He is hiding Himself, and therefore, He is the greatest cheater in this world.”

In the same way, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja was also a leader of cheaters. Do you admit that he was a cheater? He cheated everyone. How? He went door to door, like a *sannyāsī*, saying, “You’ll be very happy if you are serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.” Actually, he was cheating us in so many ways, because although outwardly he had the form of an elderly *sannyāsī*, he was always in his eternally youthful *svarūpa*, serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.

Sometimes we are in confusion or doubt and we cannot reconcile his statements. He has said so many things, and everything is true to the highest extent. *Bhagavad-gītā* says, “*sarva dharman parityajya, mam ekam saranam vraja* – Completely abandon all material religious activities, and fully surrender to me alone.” On the other hand, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, “*eho bahya* – This statement is external.” This shows that Kṛṣṇa and His representatives speak according to the qualification of their audience. Many devotees could not reconcile Prabhupāda’s statements. They thought, “Previously he was telling this fact, and now he’s telling something against it.” Some of them have even lost their faith. I know that so many did. They should try to reconcile all these things. It may appear that Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja has said so many apparently contradictory things. That is why general people – that is to say, devotees who were not in good association – could not reconcile his statements. They lost their faith in Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja and left ISKCON. But we should have a very strong faith in *guru*. He may tell one, two, three, four or five things at a time, but we will have to reconcile them. Never give up your *gurudeva*; it will be a very big offence. It has been said in *śāstra* that if you have accepted a *guru* who is not qualified, who is very much attached to sense gratification, and who is not renounced from worldly desires, you should give him up at once. If a *guru* is not so qualified in *siddhānta*, that is, if he is a *madhyama-adhikārī*, but he has so much faith and *niṣṭhā* in his *guru*, he should still be honored. The qualification is not only learning.

It is stated in *sāstra* that Kṛṣṇa has no shape, and that He is *nirguṇa*. On the other hand, it is sometimes said that He is *saguṇa*: He has all qualities. We will have to reconcile so many apparently contradictory statements. If you do not reconcile them, what will happen? You will lose your faith in your *gurudeva*, and thus ruin your *bhakti*. So do not be like this. Have no doubt. So many of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's disciples followed his instructions externally, but not deeply, and that is why they lost faith.

You know that he has written everything in his books; nothing is left out. That is all right. I think that if Śrīla Vyāsadeva were here, he would have written more and more. Similarly, although Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja has written everything, if he were here, he might have translated so many more books. I know this. We know that everything is in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Then why did Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī write so many books, if everything is already in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*? Why? Because it was needed.

And if Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī had already written so many books, why did Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī write so many more? And why did Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura write so many books? Why did Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura write so many books? If any pure devotee will come later on, he will also write so many books. And there is no harm in that. *Bhakti* is endless – like an endless ocean. The qualities and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa are like an ocean. No one, not even Kṛṣṇa Himself, can fully explain or express everything about Him. New, new understandings will always come. So we should not think, “Everything has been done and there is no need of anything else. We do not want to read any books other than Prabhupāda’s.”

If someone’s teaching is in line, that is, it is in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Mahāprabhu, and our *guru-paramparā*, we should try to accept it. We have accepted Śrī Caitanya-*caritāmṛta* though there were already so many books, and now we have accepted Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Jaiva-dharma* although there are already so many books.

So try to reconcile all these things otherwise you will make an offence. If you want to develop your Kṛṣṇa consciousness, do not hear any allegations against a pure Vaiṣṇava and especially against your *gurudeva*. Never criticize him. If someone is saying anything against him, try to ‘cut his tongue’. In other words, try to refute his arguments. If you are not able to do that, then cover your ears and go away. We can learn so many things from Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja – your Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

AT DEVAGHARA IN BIHAR

Before Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī left his body, Parama-gurudeva took him to Devaghara, a place in Bihar which was known to be very good for improving health. Accompanying Parama-gurudeva and his personal assistant Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī were Śrīla Gurudeva, Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī (who brought Śrīla Gurudeva and *pūjyapāda* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja to the *maṭha*), Śrī Triguṇatrīta dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and a few others. There were all there attending the needs of Parama-gurudeva and the ailing Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī.

It was the winter season and while Śrīla Gurudeva was in Devaghara, he also became sick and developed a fever. One day, he needed to go to the market in another town, Josīḍhi. While he was at the railway station there, he was seen by one of his cousin-brothers, Kedarnātha Tiwari, the son of Cakrapāṇi Tiwari, who had lived in Tiwaripur during Śrīla Gurudeva’s life there. (Later, he relocated to the nearby village of Dalsāgara.)

At that time, Śrīla Gurudeva had only one *dhoti*. He wore half of it normally, and covered the upper part of his body with the rest of it. Kedarnātha, who was a railway guard on a train that happened to be stopped at the Josīḍhi station, recognized his cousin Śrīman Nārāyaṇa of Tiwaripur.

Kedarnātha jumped down from the train and rushed to Śrīla Gurudeva, saying, “Hey Nārāyaṇa! You are here!” They embraced

each other because he had been a very intimate friend of Nārāyaṇa's.

"How are you, my friend?" Kedarnātha asked, very interested. "Where are you situated? What are you doing?"

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa was so simple-hearted that he was unable to understand his malice and answered all his questions. "Nowadays, I am living with my Guru Mahārāja in Navadvīpa in Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha. Presently, my Guru Mahārāja is staying in Devaghara for a while, and I am there with him."

"What is the address where you are living?"

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa without hesitation gave Parama-gurudeva's complete address in Devaghara. As I said before, by nature he is simple-hearted, like Lord Śiva. He explained everything about where he was and what he was doing. Unknown to Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa, Kedarnātha Tiwari immediately informed everyone in Tiwaripur of his whereabouts. As a result, Parama-gurudeva's place at Devaghara soon became inundated with Śrīla Gurudeva's parents, uncles, aunts and many other relatives, who came to take their beloved son back to Tiwaripur. They were very anxious to take him home and pleaded with him to return with them. Śrīla Gurudeva would not move even an inch without the permission of Parama-gurudeva. As they cried and begged, Śrīla Gurudeva finally asked for permission and his *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmi Mahārāja, granted it.

"Don't worry," Śrīla Gurudeva told his anxious family. "I am going with you. Why are you weeping so much? Why are you so worried?"

Narottamānanda Prabhu, who had brought Śrīla Gurudeva to Parama-gurudeva and to the *maṭha*, became disturbed. He spoke to the Tiwaris, "Why have you come here to take him? Why do you want to change his spiritual environment?" Then he turned to Parama-gurudeva, and said in Bengali (so that the Tiwaris would not understand), "Somehow or other you have obtained this very dedicated and loyal boy. He could do more *bhajana* in the future and serve Mahāprabhu's mission. Why are you letting him go?"

Parama-gurudeva was completely unattached. "He came to me of his own accord," he replied. "I did not go to his house to fetch him. I believe this boy will not stay at home with his family for very

long. If Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wants service from him, he will be back here with us very soon. Don't worry. I am not concerned at all." Then he became silent.

Parama-gurudeva was such a grave person that when he spoke, no one dared to speak otherwise in front of him. Hearing his decision, all the devotees were quiet.

BACK TO HOME VILLAGE

When Śrīla Gurudeva returned to his home village, Tiwaripur, his parents, relatives and the villagers were all overjoyed to have him back among them, and expected him to remain there with them as before.

Some of the villagers, doing their best to convince him of this, said, “O Nārāyaṇa, it is better that you stay here and maintain your celibacy. Then you will be very strong like an elephant.” They were insinuating that Śrīla Gurudeva could become as strong as his mighty grandfather, Gorakhnātha Tiwari, if he practiced celibacy while staying at home with them in the village.

“What is the use of maintaining celibacy and becoming as strong as an elephant if there is no *bhajana* of God?” Śrīla Gurudeva replied. “Elephants are more powerful than my grandfather, but they live in ignorance. *Bhajana* is the only purpose in life.”

Someone else said, “Cut off his neck beads. They’re having a black magic effect on him.”

Śrīla Gurudeva warned, “If anyone dares to touch my neck beads, I will leave immediately.” He touched the sacred neck beads that he had received from his Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, at the time of initiation, and said, “Do not touch them!”

When news spread that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa was back in the village, many people came to see him with various inquiries.

TALKING WITH THE LEARNED SCHOLAR – VAMŚAROPANA SIMHA

One of the people to arrive in the village was Vaṁśaropana Simha, a very respectable Vaiṣṇava belonging to the Śrī Rāmānuja *sampradāya*, and a learned scholar and preacher of the *viśiṣṭa-advaita* philosophy. When Śrī Rāmānuja *sannyāsī*s would visit the

area they would always stay at Vaṁśaroṇa Śimha's place.

"Beṭā, I heard you have become a *sādhu*." In Indian village culture, a younger man is commonly addressed as *beṭā*, meaning 'dear son'. Vaṁśaroṇa Śimha approached Śrīla Gurudeva, asking, "Can you say something about *viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda*?"

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, "*Viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda* alone will not do. Besides *viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda*, you also have to know *dvaita-advaita-vāda*, *śuddha-advaita-vāda*, and *dvaita-vāda*." Vaṁśaroṇa Śimha was surprised to hear these technical terms from him.

Śrīla Gurudeva continued, "Moreover, knowing only these four is not sufficient. You also have to know *acintya-bhedābheda-siddhānta*. You also have to know many things about the *sampradāyas*."

"Beṭā, what kind of things do you have to know about *sampradāyas*?" Vaṁśaroṇa Śimha asked.

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, "In order to know any *sampradāya*, one must first know:

- (1) Who started the *sampradāya*?
- (2) Who is the prominent *ācārya* of that *sampradāya*?
- (3) What is the name of their philosophy and the *siddhānta*?
- (4) Who is their worshipable deity?
- (5) What is the commentary of that *sampradāya* on the *Vedānta-sūtra*?"

Vaṁśaroṇa Śimha's was renowned throughout the surrounding villages, therefore many respectable persons had gathered there to hear his conversation with Śrīman Nārāyaṇa.

"My dear son," he asked. "First can you please tell about *viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda*?"

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, "*Viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda*, or the doctrine of 'specialised monism', is from the *sampradāya* called Śrī *sampradāya*.

- (1) Śrī means the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī-devī, who started this *sampradāya*, and that is why it is known as Śrī *sampradāya*.
- (2) The prominent *ācārya* of this *sampradāya* is Rāmānujācārya.
- (3) The philosophy of the *sampradāya* is called *viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda*, or 'specified monism'.

(4) Their worshipable deity is Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa.”

“At some time after its inception, a branch sprouted from the Śrī *sampradāya*. The branch is called Rāmānandī *sampradāya*. Its members worship Śrī Śrī Sītā-Rāma. This *sampradāya*’s commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* is called the *Śrī-bhāṣya*.”

“What is your *sampradāya*?” Vaṁśaroṇa Simha inquired with interest.

“Our *sampradāya* is the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*,” replied Śrīla Gurudeva.

“Can you tell me something about your *sampradāya*, as you have done for the Śrī *sampradāya*?”

“Yes,” Śrīla Gurudeva said. Then, he explained Brahma *sampradāya*:

- (1) Brahma *sampradāya* means that it is the *sampradāya* that was started by four-headed Brahmā.
- (2) The prominent *ācārya* is Śrī Madhvācārya.
- (3) His philosophical opinion is known as *dvaita-vāda*, or the philosophical position of ‘dualism’.
- (4) The worshipable deity of this *sampradāya* is the dancing form of Bāla-Gopāla.

“Just as the Śrī *sampradāya* has a branch called the Rāmānandī *sampradāya*, so the Brahma *sampradāya* has a branch called the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*. The essential details of this *sampradāya* are as follows:

- (1) The worshipable deity Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the paramour mood.
- (2) This *sampradāya* has three commentaries on the *Vedānta-sūtra*: *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, *Anubhāṣya* and *Anuvākyana*.
- (3) Later on, in the middle of the seventeenth century, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu wrote a commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*, directed by Śrī Govindadeva Himself, named *Śrī Govinda-bhāṣya*.”

Impressed with the young man’s vast knowledge, Vaṁśaroṇa Simha asked again, “Can you please explain another *sampradāya*?”

Śrīla Gurudeva then explained Rudra *sampradāya*:

- (1) Rudra is one name of Śiva, from whom this *sampradāya* came.
- (2) This *sampradāya*'s prominent *ācārya* is Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī.
- (3) Its philosophy is called *śuddha-advaita-vāda*, or 'purified monism'.
- (4) The worshipable deity is Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva.
- (5) The commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* is called *Sarvajña-sukti*."

"And could you please explain the fourth *sampradāya*?" requested Vaṁśaroṇa Śiṃha. Śrīla Gurudeva replied:

- (1) "The fourth *sampradāya* is the Sanak *sampradāya*. There are four Kumāras who always appear like five year old boys. The oldest among them is Sanak, from whom the *sampradāya* came; hence its name. It is also called the *Catuṣsana sampradāya*.
- (2) Śrī Nimbāditya is the prominent *ācārya*.
- (3) Their philosophical position is known as *dvaita-advaita-vāda*, or 'dualism and monism'.
- (4) Their worshipable deity is Rukmiṇī-Dvārakādhiśa. Nowadays, due to the influence of the glories of the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, they are serving Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, but they are serving in the mood of *svakīya*, not in the mood of paramour love.
- (5) The name of their commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* is *Pārijāta-saurabha-bhāṣya*."

Vaṁśaroṇa Śiṃha was curious, "Why is your *sampradāya* named Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*?"

Śrīla Gurudeva happily explained, "The *sampradāya* started from Brahmājī, and the prominent *ācārya* is Śrī Madhva. *Gauḍīya* refers to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who appeared in our *sampradāya* in the fifteenth century AD, to guide us in, and teach *prema-dharma* – how to serve the Divine Couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in paramour love. That is why it is called Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*."

Comparative Chart of the Four Sampradāyas

Name of Sampradāya	Name of prominent Ācārya	Name of philosophical position	Name of commentary on Vedānta-sūtra	Name of worshippable deity
Brahma-Sampradāya	Śrī Madhvācārya	Dvaita-vāda	Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya, Anubhāṣya and Anuvākhyana	Bāla-Gopāla
Rudra-Sampradāya	Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī	Śuddha-advaita-vāda	Sarvajña-sukti	Śrī Nṛsimhadeva
Śrī-Sampradāya	Śrī Rāmānujācārya	Viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda	Śrī-bhāṣya	Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa
Catuṣṣana-Sampradāya	Śrī Nimbāditya	Dvaita-advaita-vāda	Pārijāta-saurabha-bhāṣya	Rukmiṇi-Dvārakādhiśa (and nowadays Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in svakīya-rasa)

“Previously, you mentioned *acintya-bhedābheda siddhānta*,”
 Vaiṣṇaroṇa Śimha recalled, “What is that?”

Śrīla Gurudeva explained, “*Acintya-bhedābheda siddhānta* refers to the inconceivable difference and non-difference between the Supreme Lord and His energies. In order to understand this, one has to have a grasp of many philosophical concepts. The *ācāryas* of all four *sampradāyas* accepted *vastu-pariṇāma-vāda*. This means that whatever we see, such as the *jīvas* (living entities) and the material world, has come from Brahman or Bhagavān. However, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said, ‘No, it is not that everything has come from Brahman or Bhagavān. It has come from His potencies. *Jīvas* have come from His *jīva* potency, and this material creation has come from His material potency.’ This conclusion is that everything has come from the transformation of the Lord’s energy, rather than from the transformation of the Lord Himself. It is called *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda*, and only Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has explained this philosophy of *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda*. Before Him, no one knew about it.

“With respect to *acintya-bhedābheda*, we see in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.2.12):

*eko vaśī sarvabhūtāntarātmā
ekam rūpaṁ bahudhā yaḥ karoti
tam ātmaśtaṁ ye ’nupaśyanti dhīras
teṣāṁ sukhaṁ śāśvataṁ netareṣāṁ*

He is one without a second, the Supreme Lord, the indwelling Supersoul of all living creatures. He makes His one transcendental form into many. Those sober-minded persons who see Him in the body (as the Supreme Lord within the heart) alone attain unending tranquility – not others.

Only the devotee who always takes *darśana* of the Supreme Lord within his own soul can get eternal happiness.

Regarding *acintya-bhedābheda siddhānta*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.9.34–35) states:

*ṛte ’rthaṁ yat pratīyeta na pratīyeta cātmani
tad vidyād ātmano māyāṁ yathābhāso yathā tamaḥ*

The Supreme Absolute Truth is the only real truth. One should understand that which is seen to be separate from this truth, or not existing within it, to be the product of the Supreme Absolute Truth’s deluding potency (*māyā*).

*yathā mahānti bhūtāni bhūteṣūccāvaceṣv anu
praviṣṭāny apraviṣṭāni tathā teṣu na teṣv aham*

The five great elements of material creation (earth, water, etc.) enter into the bodies of all living entities, high and low, from the demigods to the sub-human species. But at the same time, these elements exist independently. Similarly, I have entered into all living entities as the Supersoul, but at the same time I am situated independently in My own *svarūpa*, and I appear to My surrendered devotees both internally and externally.

Bhagavad-gītā (9.4) also explains *acintya-bhedābheda siddhānta*:

*mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ jagad avyakta-mūrttinā
mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitaḥ*

This whole universe is pervaded by Me in My *svarūpa* which is unmanifest to the material senses. All living beings and elements are situated in Me, but I am not in them.

The following is an excerpt from Śrīla Gurudeva's *Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary on the verse mentioned above:

Pariṇāma: Milk is a pure substance. In contact with a souring agent, it turns to yogurt. This is called a transformation. Thus yogurt is a *pariṇāma*, or transformation, of milk.

Vivarta: To mistake one object for another is called *vivarta*. Examples of *vivarta* are mistaking a rope for a snake and thinking that there is silver in an oyster.

The essence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's instruction lies herein. "This universe is not a *pariṇāma* (transformation) of Me, nor is it a *vivarta* (illusion). I have not transformed My existence to become either the individual living entity or the material world. Nor should they be mistaken to be Me, like a rope is sometimes mistaken to be a snake. I am the Absolute, Self-effulgent Reality. The *jīvas* and the material world are also real; both are the transformation of My potency, or *śakti*. The *jīvas* are eternal and have come into existence from My marginal potency (the *taṭasthā-śakti*), but the material world, which is born of My external, material potency (the *bahiraṅgā-śakti*), is temporary and subject to destruction, even though it is also real.

The *jīvas* and the material world are transformations of My potency, which is non-different from Me; therefore, they are simultaneously one with and different from Me. This conception is inconceivable (*acintya*), because it can be understood by scripture only and can not be experienced by ordinary, material

intelligence. Wherever one experiences both difference and oneness at the same time, the perception of difference is indeed stronger than the perception of oneness. Therefore, I am the Absolute Conscious Entity, different from both the individual living entity and the material world.”³⁹

Kṛṣṇa further explains to Arjuna:

*na ca mat-sthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogam aiśvaram
bhūta-bhṛn na ca bhūta-stho mamātmā bhūta-bhāvanaḥ
Bhagavad-gītā (9.5)*

And yet everything that is created does not rest in Me. Behold My mystic opulence! Although I am the maintainer of all living entities and although I am everywhere, I am not a part of this cosmic manifestation, for my self is the very source of creation.

In his *Prakāśikā-vṛtti* commentary on this verse, Śrīla Gurudeva explains:

“I pervade the whole material universe. All beings and elements are situated within Me, yet they do not exist in Me.” To clarify this subject further, Śrī Bhagavān tells Arjuna, “Although I am the supporter and maintainer of all beings, I am not situated within them.” This principle has also been confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.11.38): *etad īśanam īśasya prakṛti-stho 'pi tad-guṇaiḥ na yujyate*. This means that the Supreme Controller, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is not affected by the modes of nature, although He presides over material nature. This is a most wonderful characteristic of His. This act of making the impossible possible is achieved through His mystic potency, or *yoga-aiśvarya*.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura quotes Kṛṣṇa as saying, “All beings and elements exist in Me alone. Do not conclude from this that

³⁹ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Third English Edition, CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications 2010).

all beings exist in My actual self. Rather, they exist by the power of My *māyā-śakti*. You, the *jīva*, will not be able to comprehend this fact by your own limited intelligence. Therefore, understand it to be My mystic opulence, and know Me as *bhūta-bhṛt* (the supporter), *bhūta-stha* (all-pervading) and *bhūta-bhāvana* (the maintainer of all manifestations). Consider My activities to be the functions of My energy. Fix yourself in the conception that there is no difference between Me and My body, as I am absolute spirit. For this reason, I am actually completely aloof, although I am the cause and basis of the material manifestation.”⁴⁰

With respect to *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda*, it is mentioned in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā*, 7.121–127):

*vyāsera sūtrete kahe ‘pariṇāma’-vāda
‘vyāsa bhrānta’—bali’ tāra uṭhāila vivāda*

Śrīla Vyāsadeva has explained in his *Vedānta-sūtra* that everything is but a transformation of the Lord’s energy. But Śaṅkarācārya has misled the world by claiming that Vyāsadeva was mistaken. Thus, he has raised great opposition to theism throughout the world.

*pariṇāma-vāde īśvara hayena vikārī
eta kahi’ ‘vivarta’-vāda sthāpanā ye kari*

Śaṅkarācārya was of the view that *śakti-pariṇāma-vāda*, or the theory of the transformation of the Lord’s energy, leads to the conclusion that the Absolute Truth is transformed. Thus, he established his theory of *vivarta-vāda*.

*vastutaḥ pariṇāma-vāda—sei se pramāṇa
dehe ātma-buddhi—ei vivartera sthāna*

.....
⁴⁰ From *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (Third English Edition, CC-BY-ND. Gaudiya Vedanta Publications 2010).

Transformation of energy is a proven fact. It is the false bodily sense of self that is an illusion.

*avicintya-śakti-yukta śrī-bhagavān
icchāya jagad-rūpe pāya pariṇāma*

The Supreme Lord is full of all opulences. Therefore, His inconceivable energies have transformed to create this material cosmos.

*tathāpi acintya-śaktye haya avikārī
prākṛta cintāmaṇi tāhe dṛṣṭānta ye dhari*

By its energy, a touchstone turns iron to gold and yet remains the same. Similarly, we can understand that although the Supreme Lord transforms His innumerable energies, He remains unaltered.

*nānā ratna-rāśi haya cintāmaṇi haite
tathāpiha maṇi rahe svarūpe avikṛte*

A touchstone⁴¹ produces many varieties of precious gems, but it remains the same. It does not change its original form.

*prākṛta-vastute yadi acintya-śakti haya
īśvarera acintya-śakti,—ithe ki vismaya*

If there can be such an inconceivable potency in material objects, why should we not believe in the inconceivable potency of the Supreme Lord?

.....
41 Although most people today have no knowledge of touchstones, many wise people were aware of such stones during the time of the six Gosvāmīs. Similarly, a hundred years ago, if you would have conceptualised and explained how people in the future would communicate using the internet, people might have called you insane.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, when discussing *acintya-bhedābheda siddhānta*, wrote in his *Bhāgavat-sandarbhā* (*Anuccheda* 16):

*ekam eva tat param-tattvaṁ svābhāvīkācintya-śaktyā
sarvadaiva svarūpa-tad-rūpa-vaibhava-jīva-pradhāna-rūpeṇa
caturdhāvatiṣṭhāte | sūryāntar-maṇḍalastha-teja iva maṇḍala-
tad-bahirgata-raśmi-tat-praticchavi-rūpeṇa | evam eva śrī-
viṣṇu-purāṇe—eka-deśa-sthitasyāgner jyotsnā vistāriṇī yathā |
parasya brahmaṇaḥ śaktis tathedam akhilaṁ jagat || iti ||*

The Absolute Truth has innumerable inconceivable potencies, which may be grouped into four broad categories:

- (1) His internal potency,
- (2) The manifestations of His internal potency,
- (3) The individual living entities (*jīvas*),
- (4) The unmanifest state of the *guṇas* (modes of nature), known as *pradhāna*.

As the sun remains in one place, although its potency, the sunshine, expands in all directions, so the Supreme Personality of Godhead remains in one place, although His various potencies are everywhere. This is described in the following statement of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (1.22.54):

Just as a fire, which is situated in one place, spreads its illumination all over, so the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Para-brahma, spreads His energies all over this universe.

Since variegated potencies have emanated from the Absolute Truth, they must also be real. They cannot be false. The Personality of Godhead is like the sun and these potencies are like the rays of light emanating from this great sun.

Everything that exists is the potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and is simultaneously different and non-different from Him.

Because the Lord's potencies are manifested from His own form they are also simultaneously different and non-different from Him.

This can be understood through the analogy of fire and its potency, heat. Heat is the potency of fire and it has specific burning power obtained from its source, fire. In some ways, the heat is the same as the fire itself, while in other ways, it is different. Similarly, everything that exists is the potency of the Supreme Lord and is simultaneously different and non-different from Him.

Someone may argue that it is contradictory to say that the Supreme Lord remains in one place and is at the same time present everywhere. This objection, however, is not valid, for the Lord possesses all inconceivable potencies by which He can accomplish even the impossible. Thus, He can be simultaneously localised and all-pervading. The *jīva* cannot understand this by way of his material intelligence because his material intelligence is limited.

Vaṁśaroṇa Simha asked Śrīla Gurudeva, "My dear son, you have mentioned that there are four *sampradāyas*. Why did Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu choose the Brahma-Madhva *sampradāya*?"

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, "There are three significant reasons behind this, from three distinct viewpoints. These are called the consideration of philosophy (*tattva-gata-vicāra*), the consideration of *rasa* (*rasa-gata vicāra*), and the consideration of the self (*ātmā-gata-vicāra*).

1. "In the philosophical consideration (*tattva-gata-vicāra*), one's relation with Kṛṣṇa is called *sambandha-jñāna*. How to please Kṛṣṇa and the process to adopt to please Him is known as *abhideya*. This is called *bhakti*. *Kṛṣṇa-prema* is the *prayojana*, or ultimate goal. Unless and until there are two entities, namely, Bhagavān and the *jīva* – there can be no perfection in *prema*. To achieve perfection in *prema*, two entities are always needed. In Śrī *sampradāya* (also known as the Rāmānujā *sampradāya*), the doctrine is *viśiṣṭa-advaita*, or 'specialised monism'. The doctrine of Rudra *sampradāya* is *śuddha-advaita*, 'purified monism'. Sanat *sampradāya*

teaches the doctrine of *dvaita-advaita-vāda*, or ‘dualism and monism’. There is a scent of monism (*advaita*) in all three of these *sampradāyas*. However, the perfection of *prema* is not possible in monism. On the other hand, in Brahma *sampradāya* there is not even a trace of monism; there is only dualism. This is the philosophical reason (*tattva-gata-vicāra*) that Mahāprabhu accepted the Brahma *sampradāya*.

2. Then, there is Mahāprabhu’s consideration regarding *rasa* (*rasa-gata-vicāra*). The worshipable deity in Śrī *sampradāya* is Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, and in the Rāmānandī branch of Śrī *sampradāya*, the worshipable deity is Śrī Śrī Sītā-Rāma. In Rudra *sampradāya*, where Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī is the prominent *ācārya*, the worshipable deity is Śrī Nṛsimhadeva. In Sanat *sampradāya*, the worshipable deity is Śrī Śrī Rukmiṇī-Dvārakādhiśa. These three *sampradāyas* all have a strong mood of opulence; but Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not controlled by this mood. In Brahma *sampradāya*, the worshipful deity is Gopāla, who is holding the churning stick of Mother Yaśodā. He is Vrajendra-nandana Śyāmasundara in Vraja. Thus, the sweet mood of Vraja is present only in the Brahma *sampradāya*. Kṛṣṇa can be controlled only by the mood in Vraja, and not by any other mood. This is Mahāprabhu’s reason from the point of *rasa* (*rasa-gata-vicāra*) for choosing Brahma *sampradāya*.
3. The final consideration is that of the self (*ātmā-gata-vicāra*). In Brahma *sampradāya*, there is mention of the mood of the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana (*gopī-bhāva*) and how Śrī Kṛṣṇa is truly controlled only by the mood of these beautiful beloved cowherd maidens. This view is the same as Mahāprabhu’s, and that is why He chose to accept Brahma *sampradāya*.”

Vaṁśaroṇa Simha then said, “All right, my dear son; you say that the mood of the *gopīs* is present in Brahma *sampradāya*. Does that mean those doing *bhajana* in this *sampradāya* are in the mood of the *gopīs*? Where is the proof of this?”

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa replied, “The biographer of Śrīla Madhvācārya, Mr. C. M. Padmanābhācārya, composed a book entitled *The Life and Teachings of Śrī Madhvācārya*⁴². In his book, he writes:

The monks who take charge of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by rotation are so many *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana who move with and love Śrī Kṛṣṇa with an indescribable intensity of feeling and are taking rebirth now for the privilege of worshiping Him. These monks conduct themselves as if they are living and moving with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *lilās* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are perpetuated in festivities distributed throughout the year. They dance before the Lord of love to the tune of music chanting the chapters of the *Dvādaśa-stotram* and other songs of an elevating character. As the chant proceeds and the dance goes on their hair stands on end, tears flow from their eyes and their brain is on fire with emotion. Some of the devotees are more emotional than others. Soon, they are overpowered by memories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s wonderful *lilās*.

This prompted Vamśaropaṇa Sīmha to ask Śrīla Gurudeva, “My dear son, do you know about the *Dvādaśa-stotram* of Madhvācārya?”

Śrīla Gurudeva began to smile and said, “Yes, I know something from my *gurudeva*.”

“Can you recite some of its verses?”

Śrīla Gurudeva smiled, “Uncle, do you want to test me or do you want to learn?”

“No! I’m not testing you. I have heard about the *Dvādaśa-stotram*, but I don’t know any of its verses. I’d very much like to learn, if you can recite any of them.”

“Very well, since you really wish to know I will sing some of the *ślokas*:

.....
⁴² This book is in Beṅgali language so the excerpted quote above is an english translation from the book.

*nārāyaṇāmalatāraṇa (kāraṇa) vande
kāraṇa kāraṇa pūrṇa vareṇya
mādhava mādhava sādḥaka vande
bādḥaka bodhaka śuddha samādhe*

Stotram (5.3)

*devakī-nandana nanda-kumāra
vṛndāvanāñcana gokula-candra
kanda phalāśana sundara-rūpa
nandita gokula vandita pāda*

Stotram (6.4–5)

“Very good, my son,” said Vamśaroṇa Siṃha, greatly impressed, “Can you explain the meaning of these *ślokas*?”

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, “When Śrī Madhvācārya received his deity from inside the block of *gopī-candana* and was returning to his *āśrama*, he composed these *ślokas* and recited them himself. The first one that I have recited means:

‘O Nārāyaṇa, You are the cause of all causes. You are the pure cause and You are complete. You are worshipable, and I worship You and bow down to Your lotus feet. O Mādhava, O Mādhava, O *sādḥaka*, O devastator of the world, You who are full of knowledge. Anyone can receive Your mercy by pure meditation. I bow down to Your lotus feet.

“The second *śloka* means,

‘O son of Devakī, O son of Nanda, You wander in the forest of Vṛndāvana and are the moon of Gokula. You eat the roots and fruits of the forest, You are most attractive and You increase the pleasure of Gokula. Your lotus feet are worshipped by the whole world.’”

Hearing this, Vamśaroṇa Śimha began to smile, indicating that he thought that he had caught a flaw in Śrīla Gurudeva's presentation. "My dear son," he said, "you said before that in Brahma *samprādāya* there is *mādhurya gopī-bhāva*. However, here you quoted Śrī Madhvācārya referring to Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Devakī-nandana, the son of Devakī (instead of the son of Yaśodā). Devakī is the wife of Vasudeva Mahārāja, who has the mood of opulence of Mathurā and Dvārakā."

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, "Uncle, this is not the real meaning. I have heard from my Śrīla Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, that the wife of Nanda Mahārāja has two names – Yaśodā and Devakī. This is confirmed in the *Ādi Purāṇa*, "*dve nāmnī nanda-bhāryāyā yaśodā devakīti ca*." Thus, here the name Devakī-nandana refers to the son of Nanda Mahārāja's wife. It does not refer to the son of Vasudeva Mahārāja's wife. We know this by the mention of the names of Nanda, Gokula and Vṛndāvana in the verse."

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa's father, mother and many relatives of all ages were present; delighted to hear this explanation, they began to laugh and clap, cheering for him. Given the complexity of this confidential *siddhānta* and seeing that some were mere children, it seems improbable that many of them understood the discussion. Still, they were very happy that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, one of their own, was having a great debate with such a person as Vamśaroṇa Śimha, the leading, renowned scholar of that area.

Vamśaroṇa Śimha next asked, "What is the *bhajana-praṇālī* of Śrī Madhva *sampradāya*?"

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, "In the Śrī Madhva *sampradāya*, two sections became visible after Śrīla Madhvācārya's departure from this world. These have been referred to as *dāsakūṭa* and *vyāsakūṭa*.

1. The *dāsakūṭa* section consists of those who are inclined towards *bhajana* and *kīrtana*, but are less inclined towards Sanskrit scripture. In other words, they are *bhajana-ānandīs*, taking pleasure in their own *bhajana*. However, it is a

mistake to think that such persons are ignorant of *śāstra*. Many Sanskrit works have come from the *dāsakūṭa* or *bhajana* section. These works almost always take the form of beautiful sacred poetry and all members of the Śrī Madhva *sampradāya* honour this literature.

2. The *vyāsakūṭa* section, the members of which are also known as *goṣṭhy-ānandīs*, knows Sanskrit very well. They use their knowledge of Sanskrit and *śāstra* to spread the teachings of the *sampradāya*.

Vaṁśaroṇa Siṁha asked, “My son, can you explain the *siddhānta* of each of the *sampradāyas*?”

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, “Yes, I can try to repeat what I have heard from my *gurudeva*. I did not know you would test me; had I known, I would have prepared. But even so, I can say something.

“In the Śrī *sampradāya*, where the doctrine is *viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda*, Śrī Rāmānujācārya has acknowledged three *tattvas*, or fundamental truths. The first is Īśvara, or Bhagavān; the second is *jīvātma*; and the third is this world of matter. In *viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda*, Bhagavān is regarded as the noun and the *jīvas* and material world are regarded as adjective qualifying that noun.

Rāmānujācārya explained that the *jīvas* are of three types. The first type is suffering in this world since beginningless time (*baddha*). Such a *jīva* can however be liberated by performing *sādhana-bhajana*. The second type is the *jīva* who was once conditioned but has become liberated through *sādhana* (*mukta-jīva*). The third category of *jīvas* consists of those who are eternally liberated associates of Śrī Bhagavān such as Garuḍa (*nitya-mukta*). Śrī Rāmānuja explained that the *jīva* is minute and is part of Bhagavān.

“According to Śrī Rāmānujācārya, the Absolute Truth is non-dual. In other words, nothing exists separately from or independently of Bhagavān. Thus, there is no *svajātīya-bheda* or *vijātīya-bheda* in Bhagavān.

“The absence of *svajātīya-bheda* means that there is no difference between the *viṣṇu-tattva* expansions of the Supreme Lord; They are non-different from each other. For instance, *tulasī* leaves are offered only to Bhagavān, but Vaiṣṇavas offer *tulasī* leaves to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Baladeva Prabhu, Śrī Rāma and Śrī Nṛsimhadeva, because They are all *viṣṇu-tattva*, and therefore non-different from each other.

“*Vijātīya-bheda* refers to a perceived difference between Bhagavān and His various *śaktis*, or potencies – such as the *jīvas* and the material world. Śrī Rāmānuja explained that the *jīva* and the material world depend for their existence on the existence of Bhagavān. They are also always completely under the control of Bhagavān. As a result, Śrī Rāmānuja explains, ‘Bhagavān’s *śaktis* cannot be considered separate from or independent of Bhagavān. Because Bhagavān is the source of everything and is omnipotent, there can be no substance separate from Him.’

“Śrī Rāmānuja also considers *svagata-bheda* or difference between Bhagavān and His form and attributes. Śrī Rāmānuja regarded the *jīvas* and the material world as part of the body of Bhagavān and this led him to conclude that there must be a difference between Bhagavān and His form. In this way he also acknowledges a difference between Bhagavān on the one hand and the *jīva* and material world on the other.

“Rāmānujācārya said that Brahman is the *aṁśī* while the *jīvas* and the material world are His *aṁśa*, or part. Brahman means Bhagavān, who is the soul; the *jīvas* and the material world are His body. Brahman is the shelter (*āśraya*), and the *jīva* and the material world are under the shelter of Bhagavān. The *jīva* and the material world have some speciality distinct from Bhagavān. That means that although they are different from God, at the same time there is no other entity than God. Taking the analogy of a tree, a tree has a trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and so on. When you consider all these aspects in combination, you have what is called a tree. But when you separate all these aspects, they are called leaves, flowers,

and branches and so on. So collectively they are one; but separately they are different. Thus, the opinion of Rāmānujācārya is known as *viśiṣṭa-advaita-vāda*, ‘specialised monism’. It is monistic, but it emphasizes some speciality also.

“Now, Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī taught *śuddha-advaita-vāda*, or ‘purified monism’. According to this view, Bhagavān is the *vastu*, or substance. The *jīva* is a part of that *vastu* and *māyā* is the potency of that *vastu* – in other words, *māyā* is the potency of Bhagavān. Furthermore, the action of that *vastu* is this material creation. But these elements are not different from God, or *Brahma*. Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī proves that the *jīva* is a part of God by quoting from *Brahma-sūtra*.

“However, even *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.7) states:

mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ

The *jīvas* in this conditioned world are My parts and they are all eternal. Due to being conditioned and opposed to Me, they are struggling intensely with the mind and the senses in this material world.

“Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī explains that this material world is the action of *Brahman*, or the Supreme Lord, and that it is real and true. He further argues that if Bhagavān is the cause of all causes and is eternal, then the action of that cause – that is, this material world – must be true and eternal also.

“Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī admitted five difficulties (*pañca-kleśa*). They are:

- (1) ignorance (*ajñāna*),
- (2) false identification (*viparyāsa*),
- (3) difference (*bheda*),
- (4) fear (*bhaya*), and
- (5) lamentation (*śoka*).

“He also admitted the eternality of worship (*upāsana*), of the worshiper (*upāsaka*) and of the worshipable deity (*upāsya*). He wrote in his commentary, *muktā api līlayā vighrahaṁ kṛtvā bhagavantam*

bhajante: ‘Even liberated persons are attracted by the pastimes of the Supreme Lord and thus engage in *bhajana*.’

“As I mentioned earlier, the doctrine of Śrī Nimbāditya is known as *dvaita-advaita-vāda*, or ‘dualism with monism’. Śrī Nimbāditya states that the Vedic literature is the best evidence and the words of one under the guidance of the Vedic literature can also be accepted as evidence. Śrī Nimbāditya explains that there is simultaneous difference and non-difference between the *jīva* and *Paramātmā*.

“According to Śrī Nimbāditya, the category of that which is inert (*jaḍa*), may be divided into two: (1) eternal time (*kāla*) and (2) the illusory potency of *Bhagavān* (*māyā*). Time also is of two types: (1) transcendental (*aprākṛta*) and (2) material (*prākṛta*). Transcendental time is beyond this material energy of *Bhagavān*.

“Śrī Nimbāditya explains that *Bhagavān* has no faults; He is beyond any kind of fault and is worshipped by the soul. The conditional soul has eighteen kinds of faults. *Bhagavān* eternally possesses a transcendental form. All the limbs of His body are transcendental, for His hands, feet and other features are not material. Some believe that *Bhagavān* must be formless but one whose intelligence is pure and who follows *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the Vedic literature, knows that God has an all-attractive, eternally youthful form.

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa now began to discuss Śrī Madhvācārya’s *siddhānta*.

(Author’s Note: There are some differences in Śrī Madhvācārya’s *siddhānta* and Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*. Therefore, the reader is advised not to mistake Śrī Madhvācārya’s *siddhānta* for Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*.)

“Śrīman Madhvācārya accepted five categories of ontological differences (*tattvataḥ bheda*):

- (1) difference between the *jīva* and *īśvara*,
- (2) difference between individual *jīvas*,

- (3) difference between *īśvara* and matter,
- (4) difference between the *jīva* and matter, and
- (5) differences in inert matter.

“To quote one reference from *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya*, written by Śrī Madhvācārya:

*jīveśyorbhidā caiva jīvavedaḥ parasparaṁ
jaḍeśayorjaḍānām ca jaḍajīvaividā tathā
pañcavedā ime nityāḥ sarvāvasthāsu nityaśaḥ
muktānaṁ ca hīyante tāratamyaṁ ca sarvvadā
Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya (1.70–71)*

“According to the teachings of Śrī Madhva, the *jīva* and *īśvara* have been different from each other since time immemorial. The theory that the *jīva* is Brahman covered by ignorance is mischievous, for the following reasons. Brahman is infinite, whereas the *jīva* is minute and finite. Brahman is free from all fallacies, whereas the *jīva* is subject to all types of fallacies. Brahman has endless qualities whereas the qualities of the *jīva* are limited. Brahman is eternally liberated whereas the *jīva* in this world is conditioned. Hence, we can never imagine that the two are non-different and inseparable. Eternal difference between the *jīva* and *īśvara* will continue to exist, even after liberation. The *jīva* is a separate part and parcel of the Lord, so his function is to serve Lord Viṣṇu, even after liberation.

“Since the *jīvas* are distinct entities, they are different from each other as well. In material existence, the conditioned *jīvas* are sometimes happy and sometimes distressed, sometimes poor and sometimes rich; there is no unity among them. In the liberated stage, the *jīvas* are blissfully engaged in different services to Śrī Viṣṇu according to their taste, their constitutional nature, their fondness, their preference of service, their inclination, their delight, and their moods. Although they are all different, they are all harmoniously serving and pleasing the Lord.

“In some scriptures it is mentioned that at the stage of liberation the *jīvas* merge with Lord Viṣṇu. For instance, we find the statement, *sarve ekībhanti*, in the Śrutis. However this should not be interpreted to refer to extreme non-difference. One can use the word *ekībhuta* in the sentence, “It is dusk, and all the cows have assembled in the pasture.” But here, the word *ekībhuta* would indicate coming together as a group and not the merging of the cows into a single identity. One must understand the situation of the liberated *jīvas* in this context. Similarly, if it is said that ‘all the kings became united’, it is absurd to imagine utmost non-difference among the kings; rather we can understand here that the kings were previously opposed to each other, but have now become unified under a single cause or leader. In the same way, in the liberated stage, all the *jīvas* have a single common mood of service. It should be understood in this way.

“Śrī Madhvācārya explains that there is an eternal difference between Īśvara and matter. Īśvara is eternal and conscious and is untouched by matter. Matter, however is not sentient and it is perishable. Śrī Madhvācārya says that there is no question of sameness or non-difference between these two opposite categories.

“Similarly, the *jīvas* being conscious entities, are wholly different from lifeless matter.

“There are also differences between one material phenomenon and another. This is self-evident: poison is responsible for the death of a living being and nectar brings him to life; salt is salty, and molasses is sweet. We see opposing characteristics in the things of this world, and therefore, we know that they are not one and the same. According to Śrī Madhvācārya, these five differences are eternal in all time, space and circumstance.”

“After hearing all this, Vaṁśaroṇa Sīmha pondered, “My son, why didn’t Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu start a new *sampradāya*?”

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa replied, “I have heard from my *paramārādhya* Gurudeva that *sanātana-dharma* comes directly from Bhagavān. For instance, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states, “*dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam* – religious principles are enacted directly by the Supreme Lord” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.19).

To start a *sampradāya*, the Supreme Lord engages His potency or servants. Thus we see that the Śrī *sampradāya* was started by Śrī, or Lakṣmī-devī, the potency of Bhagavān. The other three *sampradāyas* were founded by Sanat, Rudra and Brahmājī – who are all *sevakas*, or servants, of Bhagavān. This is why there are four authentic *sampradāyas* and we do not see a Vāsudeva *sampradāya*, Saṅkarṣaṇa *sampradāya* or Nārāyaṇa *sampradāya* in addition to them. Śrī Rāmacandra, Śrī Nṛsimhadeva, Śrī Vāmanadeva, Śrī Varāhadeva, Śrī Baladeva Prabhu and other incarnations have never started any *sampradāya*.

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu are worshipable by all *sampradāyas*, but They Themselves do not start any *sampradāyas*. They reserve this for *āśraya-tattva*, Their devotees. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has assumed the role of *āśraya-vigraha*, but He is really *viśaya-tattva* because He is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Enjoyer. Therefore, there is no need for Him to start a new *sampradāya*.”

Vaṁśaroṇa Simha wanted to know more about the *siddhānta* of Madhvācārya and about the Brahma *sampradāya*.

Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa continued, “Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana Prabhu, *vedānta-ācārya* of the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, included the following verse in his *Prameya-ratnāvalī*:

*śrīmadhvaḥ prāha viṣṇuṁ paratamamakhilāmnāyvedyanca viśvaṁ
satyaṁ bhedaṁ ca jīvān haricaraṇ juṣas-tāratamyaṁ ca teṣāṁ
mokṣaṁ viṣṇvaṁ ghrilābhaṁ tad-amala-bhajānaṁ tasya hetuṁ pramāṇam
pratyakṣād-itrayancetyupadiśati hariḥ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-candraḥ*

“Śrī Madhvācārya has stated the following:

- (1) Only Lord Viṣṇu is the supreme object;
- (2) Lord Viṣṇu is omniscient;
- (3) Lord Viṣṇu is the Absolute Truth;
- (4) the *jīva* is different from Lord Viṣṇu;
- (5) all living entities are the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Hari;
- (6) there is a difference between the conditioned and liberated *jīvas*;
- (7) liberation for the *jīvas* lies at the lotus feet of Lord Viṣṇu;

- (8) the cause of the liberation of the *jīva* depends on unalloyed *bhajana* for Lord Viṣṇu;
(9) there are three types of evidence – direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), and the word of *śāstra* (*śabda*).

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya has propagated these nine conclusions.

“It is very clear from these conclusions of Śrī Madhvācārya that Mahāprabhu has accepted these *āmnāya*⁴³ of Śrī Madhvācārya. Therefore, the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* is known as the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*.”

VIṢṆU-TATTVA AS STATED BY ŚRĪ MADHVĀCĀRYA

“Śrī Madhvācārya taught two theories that formed the foundation of his philosophy. These are the principles of (1) independence (*svatantra*) and (2) dependence (*paratantra*).

“Lord Viṣṇu is the absolute independent *tattva*.⁴⁴

*svatantraṁ paratantraṁ ca prameyaṁ dvividhaṁ matam
svatanthro bhagavān viṣṇor-nirddoṣa-akhila-sadguṇaḥ*

Tattva-viveka (1)

The two theories of independence and dependence are the basis of his hypothesis. Only Lord Viṣṇu is the Absolute independent *tattva*. He is the endless, immaculate, virtuous person and He is the abode of limitless, flawless and beneficent qualities. He is omnipotent, fully

⁴³ *Āmnāya* – the words of the Vedas which come to us through a bona fide *guru-paramparā*.

⁴⁴ According to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*, Kṛṣṇa is the supreme personality of Godhead. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.28) states, “*ete cāmśa kalāḥ pūṁsaḥ kṛṣṇastu bhagavān svayam* – Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.” *Brahma Samhita* (5.1) states, “*iśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam* – Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, is the embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the controller of all lesser controllers, and the source of all incarnations. He has no beginning or origin, though He is the source of everything and the cause of all causes.”

independent (*svarāṭa*), controller of the conscious and unconscious world, sinless, full of eternity, knowledge and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda*) and free from difference between the different aspects of Himself (*svagata*). This means that there is no difference between His body and soul. They are one unlike our body and soul in the material world. His body, excellences, pastimes, and constitutional position (*svarūpa*) are non-different. Being eternal and the controller of all the controllers (*iśvara*), He is the master of Brahmā, Maheśa, Lakṣmī-devī and so forth.

*sarvatra-akhila-sat-saktiḥ svatantrohaśeśadarśnaḥ
nityaḥ-tā-dṛg-acit-cit-niyantā-iṣto no ramāpatiḥ*

Tattva-udyata (1)

He is the embodiment of universal pure potency in all space and time. Fully independent (*svarāṭa*), omniscient, having all auspicious qualities, the controller of everything conscious and unconscious, husband of the goddess of fortune, Ramā-devī, He is our only worshipable deity.

*matsya-kūrma-ādi-rūpāṇām guṇānām karmaṇām api
tathaiṅvāyavānāṅ ca bhedaṁ paśyati yaḥ kvacit
bhedaḥbhedaḥ ca yaḥ paśyati sa yāti tama eva tu
paśyati-abhedaḥ-evaiṣāṁ bubhūṣuḥ puruṣas-tataḥ*

Gītā-tātparya (2.25)

Those who try to find difference, or difference-with-non-difference (*bheda* or *bheda-abheda*) in the forms, qualities, pastimes and bodies of the incarnations such as the fish incarnation, the tortoise incarnation and so on, will enter into the hellish planets. Therefore, well-situated persons always try to visualise oneness in the name, form, qualities, pastimes and body-soul (*deha-dehī*) of Lord Viṣṇu; such learned persons never see the *bheda* or *bheda-abheda*.

“Śrī Madhvācārya explains in his purport to verse 1.11 of *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya*:

*nirdoṣapūrṇa guṇa vighraha ātmanantra-
niścetanātmakaśarīra-guṇaiśca hīnaḥ
ānandamātrakarapādāmukhodarādīḥ
sarvatra ca svagatabheda vivarjitātmā*

Bhagavān Śrī Hari is free from all faults; full of all full-fledged qualities; and absolutely independent. His body and qualities are entirely transcendental and there is not even the slightest trace of unconsciousness in Him. He is the deity-form with hands, legs, mouth, and stomach— the embodiment of all pleasure. He is always the real object freed from *svagata-bheda*, and He is fully omnipotent, which means that He can perform any activity by any of His senses; for example, He can eat just by seeing.

*kālācca deśaguṇato'sya na cādiranto
vṛdhikṣayau na tu parasya sanātanasya
naitādṛśaḥ kva ca babhūva na caiva bhāvyo
nāstyattaraḥ kimu parātparamasya viṣṇoḥ
Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya (1.12)*

Bhagavān Śrī Hari is greater than the greatest (*parātpara*) and the eternal object. No aspect of material space, time, or matter cause birth, destruction, growth or dwindling in Him. None but Lord Viṣṇu is the Absolute Truth, and this is so not only in the present, but also in the past, and will also be so in the future. As only He exists in three aspects of time – past, present and future – there is no existence except that of Lord Viṣṇu; so who can be greater than Him?

“Countless *sac-cid-ānanda* living entities are eternally present in the transcendental kingdom. Everything here in this world is but a perverted reflection of what exists in the spiritual world in its pure state. All living entities, from Lord Brahmā to a small insect, can be liberated and in their pure state, they become qualified to enter

the spiritual realm. These pure *sac-cid-ānanda* living entities having different forms are the image of Lord Viṣṇu without designation (*nirupādhika*).

“The purport is that all these diversities only emanate from Lord Viṣṇu, for He is the root source of all diversities. There are unlimited forms of Lord Viṣṇu which are eternally manifest. If Lord Viṣṇu did not Himself possess each of the eternal *sac-cid-ānanda* manifestations, there would be no possibility of existence for these different forms of life. The trees, deer and animals who are present in the Vaikuṅṭha planets are pure transcendental souls.”

Śrī Gaura Nārayaṇa continued, “Here another topic should be considered. At present, the gross material body that the living entities have received due to their previous *karma* is not *nirupādhika*. A person may presently have the human form, but his eternal constitutional form (*svarūpa-deha*) may be that of an animal or bird in the spiritual world. A living entity may presently be in a material fish body, but his eternal constitutional body may be a human form in the spiritual world.

“These are some of the fundamental teachings of Śrī Madhvācārya:

“The eternal constitutional body or form of the soul cannot be assumed just by seeing the gross material body. The gross body and the subtle body are only the coverings of the eternal soul. The constitutional body is *nirupādhika*, unconditioned, without limitations, and eternal. They may be of different sizes, shapes and colors. They are called *nirupādhika* images – different parts and parcels of Bhagavān; they are pure souls – independent, but inseparably united with the Lord. The original form of the *nirupādhika* image – with endless potencies, unlimited forms which are eternal, full of knowledge and bliss – is Lord Viṣṇu.

“Lord Viṣṇu, who pervades everything, has two parts: (1) image portion and (2) constitutional (*svarūpa*) portion. The unlimited *jīvas* are His image portions, while His *svarūpa* portions are His different incarnations such as, Matsya (fish), Varāha (boar) and so forth. The image portion (*jīva*) has many similarities with Lord Śrī Hari, but

His incarnations such as Matsya, Varāha and so forth, are His own portions. Images are of two types: (1) *sopādhika* (with designation), and (2) *nirupādhika* (without designation).

At the beginning of Brahma-kalpa (the first *kalpa*), Lord Viṣṇu manifested into four forms for creation: Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. In His Vāsudeva form, He provides movement to the living entities; the consort of Vāsudeva is Ramā, or Māyā. As Saṅkarṣaṇa, He annihilates the world; His consort is Jayā. As Pradyumna, He creates the universe; His consort is Kṛti. As Aniruddha, He maintains the *jīva*; His consort is Śānti.

*itthaṁ vicintya paramaḥ sa tu vāsudeva-
nāmā vabhūva nijamuktipada-pradātā
tasyājñayaiva niyatātha ramāpi rūpaṁ
vabhre dvitīyam-api yat pravadanti māyām*

*saṅkarṣaṇaḥ ca sa vabhūva puṇaḥ sunityaḥ
saṁhārakāraṇavaṇus-tadanujñayaiva
devī jayetyanuvabhūva sa sṛṣṭihetoḥ
pradyumnatāmupagataḥ kṛtitāñca devī*

*sthityai puṇaḥ sa bhagavān aniruddha nāmā
devī ca śāntirabhavaccaradāṁ sahasram
sthitvā svamūrtibhiramūbhira-acintya śaktiḥ
pradyumnaḥ rūpak imañcaram ātmanehdāt
Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya (1.6–8)*

“I will manifest all conscious living entities in order to reveal their *svarūpas* situated in My body” – taking this vow, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Hari, manifests Himself as Vāsudeva to provide the liberation to His own devotees. Taking His order, Ramā-devī has also taken a second form. The learned scholars have termed the wife of Vāsudeva with another name, Māyā.

“Again, this Supreme Eternal Bhagavān appears as Saṅkarṣaṇa, causing the universal inundation. Taking His order, Lakṣmī-devī manifests Herself as Jayā. When the Lord appears as Pradyumna for the creation, Lakṣmī-devī manifests as Kṛti. When that Supreme Lord Viṣṇu appears as Aniruddha for the maintenance of the world, Lakṣmī-devī manifests as Śānti. When the Supreme Lord remained for one thousand solar years as Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha; then Pradyumna, having inconceivable potency, handed over all the living entities to Aniruddha for their maintenance.

“Lord Viṣṇu accepts the rightful demigods, or great living entities, as His representatives and lets them perform the two functions of creation and destruction. As Pradyumna, Lord Viṣṇu infuses the creative potency into Lord Brahmā; and as Saṅkarṣaṇa, He imparts the destructive potency into Rudra. As Aniruddha, He Himself maintains the universe; and as Vāsudeva, He Himself liberates the *jīvas*. These four forms – Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha – appear again and again; and in one day of Brahmā, They manifest as incarnations such as Matsya and Varāha, which thereafter enter into their unmanifest (*aprakāṣa*) pastimes.”

AVATĀRAS AS STATED ŚRĪ MADHVĀCĀRYA

Śrī Gaura Nārayaṇa continued, “In every millennium, the Supreme Lord appears in His various forms when the earth becomes overburdened with demonic personalities and when religious principles diminish. Sometimes He appears as an aquatic form, sometimes as an animal form, sometimes as a *brāhmaṇa*, sometimes as a *kṣatriya* and so on. Although He takes these different forms, He is never influenced by distress and happiness. In the material eyes of conditioned people, He appears to grow in the womb, or appears as a very young milk-sucking child, sometimes afraid, sometimes distressed, sometimes hungry, sometimes suffering pangs of separation from relatives and friends, sometimes confined, sometimes bewildered, sometimes

dirty, sometimes lusty, and sometimes angry. In this way, displaying His human-like pastimes, He deceives the demons.

“Those who are not devoted to Lord Viṣṇu, and are in ignorance, do not know the real *tattva* and all the spiritual mysteries about Him. They therefore blaspheme Him and His very near and dear devotees, and are thrown into the most terrible hell. Those who envy the Lord are called demonic fools, for they never attain Him, and they appear again and again, birth after birth, in various demonic species of life in this material world. On the other hand, those who are His surrendered servants, and worship Him with great devotion, certainly attain the supreme destination.

“The Lord Himself appears in this world in different forms to exhibit different pastimes, and in this way He infuses *bhakti* into the hearts of devotees. The Lord has three types of incarnations: (1) incarnations of knowledge, (2) incarnations of prowess and (3) incarnations of both knowledge and prowess.

“Through the incarnations of knowledge, He rescues the devotees by imparting Vedic knowledge; by the incarnations of prowess, He maintains and protects the devotees by killing the demons; and by the incarnations of both knowledge and prowess, He performs both activities. According to Śrī Madhvācārya’s philosophy, Vedavyāsa, Kapila, Dattātreya, Haṁsa, Buddha and so forth, are the knowledge incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu.

“Kalki, Varāha, Kūrma, Narasimha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Yajña, Dhanvantari and so forth, are incarnations of strength; while Hayagrīva, Rṣabha, Matsya and so forth, are incarnations of both knowledge and strength.

*kṛṣṇarāmādirūpeṣu balakāryo janārdanaḥ
dattavyāsādirūpeṣu jñāna-kāryasa-tathā prabhuḥ
Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya (2.25)*

Janārdana Śrī Hari performs His strength pastimes in the form of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, and so forth; and performs His knowledge pastimes in the form of Dattātreya, Vyāsadeva and so forth.

Though all incarnations are full of knowledge and power, He chooses to manifest His knowledge-incarnations and power-incarnations for propagating the knowledge pastimes and the strength pastimes, respectively. Some incarnations blissfully bestow their mercy upon the devotees.

“Lord Viṣṇu’s eternal planet is Vaikuṅṭha. At the beginning of creation, two transcendental planets, Śvetadvīpa and Anantāsana are manifested. In the upper portion is Vaikuṅṭha, in the middle is Śvetadvīpa, and in the lower portion is Anantāsana. The Lord is present in all these places with His Lakṣmī-devī, served and glorified by demigods such as Brahmā, Rudra, Ananta Śeṣa, Garuḍa, Viśvaksena, Nanda, Sunanda, Jaya, Vijaya and so forth.

“There are two divisions in all places: the liberated place (*mukta-sthāna*) and the non-liberated place (*amukta-sthāna*). In the liberated place, Vedavāṇi is worshipped by Śeṣa, Garuḍa, Indra, Kāma; and His eternal associates are worshipped by Nanda, Sunanda and so forth. In the non-liberated place, Brahmavāṇi is being worshipped by Amukta Śeṣa, Garuḍa and other associates. Lord Viṣṇu is the instrumental cause of the universe, and not the ingredient cause. Though He is separate from the world, He is present everywhere.”

LAKṢMĪ-DEVĪ AS STATED BY ŚRĪ MADHVĀCĀRYA

“Śrī Lakṣmī-devī, the beloved consort of Lord Viṣṇu, is full of eternity, knowledge and bliss. She is free from material distress and happiness; from all kinds of difficulties; and she is always present with Lord Viṣṇu. She is omnipresent like Lord Viṣṇu, and she sports amorously in unlimited forms with the unlimited forms of Lord Viṣṇu.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ According to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the Supreme Goddess. Scripture states: “*devī kṛṣṇa-mayī proktā rādhikā para-devatā, sarva-lakṣmīmāyī sarva-kāntiḥ sammohinī parā* – Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the Supreme Goddess, the exclusive abode of Kṛṣṇa’s playful pastimes or the illustrious enactress of amorous *līlā*, and the shelter of all goddesses of fortune. She is superlatively beautiful. Her whole being is nothing but Kṛṣṇa, and She is incessantly absorbed in Kṛṣṇa. She is the embodiment of all splendor, and is the enchantress of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s heart” (*Bṛhad-gautamiya-tantra*).

“Śrī Lakṣmī-devī appears as the beloved consort of Lord Viṣṇu when He incarnates in this world. Like Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī-devī also has innumerable eternal names and forms. Different names of Lakṣmī are Śrī, Bhū, Durgā, Māyā, Jayā, Kṛti, Śānti, Satī, Dakṣiṇā, Jayantī and so forth. Śrī Lakṣmī-devī is the controller of three modes of material nature in her three forms, namely, Śrī, Bhū and Durgā. As the Śrī potency, she manifests goodness, bewildering the demigods; as the Bhū potency, she manifests passion, bewildering the human beings; and as the Durgā potency, she manifests ignorance, bewildering the demons.

*śrībhūrdurgārmvraṇī hriḥ ca mahālakṣmīḥ ca dakṣiṇā
sītājayantīsatyā ca rukmiṇītyādibheditā
prakṛtiḥ tena cāviṣṭā tadvaśā na hariḥ svayam
tato'nantāṁśahīnā ca valajñāpti-sukhādibhiḥ
guṇaiḥ sarvaiḥ tathāpyasya prasādāddoṣavarjitā
sarvadā sukharūpā ca sarvadā jñānarūpiṇī*

Bṛhadā-bhāṣya (3.5)

The goddess of fortune appearing in different forms with names such as Śrī, Bhū, Durgā, Amvraṇī, Hṛī, Māhālakṣmī, Kṛti, Śānti, Satyā, Dakṣiṇā, Jayantī, Rukmiṇī and so forth, are all being enamoured and subjugated by Lord Śrī Hari, but Śrī Hari is not under their control or subdued by them. These goddesses of fortunes are inferior to Śrī Hari in power, knowledge and bliss; but by His mercy they are faultless, full of knowledge and blissful.

“Śrī Madhvācārya has stated that the world is true. Making the self-born and self-existent goddess of fortune His consort, Lord Viṣṇu, at the beginning of a *kalpa*, creates different objects such as the three modes of material nature, *mahat-tattva*, the ego, and the universe with five elements (*brahmāṇḍa*). After that, He creates the fourteen planets and planetary systems; the oceans; mountains like Meru, Mandāra and so forth; rivers like Gaṅgā, Yamunā and so forth; forests, trees, rocks, medicinal plants, grains, flowers, fruits, the nine

types of gems, gold, iron and so forth. All these are temporary as the effect (*kārya*), but eternal as the cause (*kāraṇa*). As the effect, they are temporary; but they are not illusory, imaginary, or non-existent like day-dreams, or the ideas of building castles in the sky, seeing horns on a rabbit, hairs on a tortoise and so forth. They are also not false like the mistaking of a snake to be a rope.

“For a short span of duration matter exists, therefore it is temporal (*anitya*), but not false (*asatya*), or momentary (*kṣaṇika*). Although it is related to momentary relation (*kṣaṇasambandhi*), we cannot say that it exists momentarily (*kṣaṇamātravartī*).

“Śrī Madhvācārya used one verse repeatedly to establish the truth of the existence of the material world:

*viśvaṁ satyaṁ vaśe viṣṇor nityameva pravāhataḥ
na kvāpyanīdṛṣaṁ viśvaṁ tat tat kālānusārataḥ
asatyaṁ-apratiṣṭhaṁ ye jagadāhuraniśvaram
ta āsurāḥ svaṁ naṣṭā jagataḥ kṣayakāriṇaḥ
Vyāsa-smṛti-vākyaṁ in Tattva-udyata*

This universe is true – and under the jurisdiction of Lord Viṣṇu, its eternality is present in flowing succession. In all times, this universe has remained in the same manner. Those demons that refer to the world as untrue, shelterless, and godless are not only the killer of the world, but are also killing their own souls.”

THE JĪVA AS STATED BY ŚRĪ MADHVĀCĀRYA

The *jīva* is the eternal associate of Lord Śrī Hari. According to Śrī Madhvācārya, there are two theories: (1) independence (*svatantra*) theory, (2) dependence (*paratantra*) theory. The independent *tattva* is Lord Viṣṇu, while the dependent *tattva* is twofold: (1) existence (*bhāva*) and (2) non-existence (*abhāva*). Existence (*bhāva*) is further divided into two: (1) conscious or the *jīva*, and (2) unconscious or matter. There are four types of non-

existence (*abhāva*):

- (1) *prāk-abhāva* – an example of *prāk-abhāva* is that there is no clay pot now; it will be made tomorrow.
- (2) *pradhvaṃsābhāva* – an example of *pradhvaṃsābhāva* is that the clay pot was destroyed; at present it is no longer visible.
- (3) *atyanta-abhāva* – an example of *atyanta-abhāva* is that it is never present; neither in the past, the present, or the future, like the horn of a rabbit or the hairs on a tortoise.
- (4) *anyo'nyābhāva* – in *anyo'nyābhāva*, the existence feature and non-existence feature are present.

Prāk-abhāva, *pradhvaṃsābhāva* and *atyanta-abhāva* are only non-existence.

Unconsciousness or matter is of many kinds. Consciousness or the *jīva* is threefold: *sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*. In Lord Viṣṇu's body, there are innumerable living entities and these *jīvas* are divided into the above-mentioned three categories.

dṛṣtvāsa cetanagaṇān jaṭhare
śayānānānandamaya vapuṣaḥ śṛtīvīpramuktān
dhyānagatān śṛtigatām ca suṣuptisaṃsthān
brahmādikān kalīparān manuḷjām tathaikṣat
Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya (1.8)

Limitless *jīvas* are present in the body of Lord Viṣṇu. Among them, the conditioned *jīvas* are divided into three categories (*sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*). Inside His body, Lord Viṣṇu saw (1) demigods like Brahmā, who are meditating, (2) human beings who are absorbed in family-life, and (3) demons who are in the stage of profound sleep (*suṣupti*).

They are all confined by the darkness of *avidyā* (material ignorance) and the flow of fruitive *karma* from time immemorial. People in the mode of goodness are fit for liberation; people in the mode of passion are fit for family life; and people in the mode of

ignorance are destined for the hellish planets.

Demigods like Brahmā, Indra the Gāndharvas (singers of the heavenly planets), Ṛṣis, the 14 Manus, the 8 Vasus, and the best of human beings – all belong to the category of the mode of goodness (*sāttvika*). The *jīvas* in the mode of passion are the lowest among the humans; they are the fruitive workers. Kali, Kālanemi, Jarāsandha, Madhukaiṭabha, Sambara, Vṛtrāsura, Kālkeya, Poulamā, Rākṣasas and demons – all belong to the mode of ignorance.

The constitutional bodies of *sāttvika* living entities are full of knowledge and bliss; *rājasika* persons have both knowledge and ignorance; and *tāmasika* persons are distressed and ignorant. Truthfulness, kindness, purity, control of the mind and senses, renunciation, and *bhakti* are the constitutional features of *sāttvika* persons. In the constitutional body of *rājasika* persons, the inclination towards both religion and irreligion is present. Falsehood, impurity, cruelty, egoism, fickleness, uncontrolled senses, greediness for the material objects, rebelliousness, and a hostile mentality towards Hari, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavas are the characteristic features of those in ignorance (*tāmasa*).

Three types of conditioned living entities have three destinations:

*trividhā jīvasaṁghāstu devamānuṣadānavāḥ
tatra devā muktīyogyā mānuṣeṣūttamāḥ tathā
madhyamā mānuṣā ye tu ṣṛītyogyāḥ sadaiva hi
adhamā nirayā eva dānavāstu tamolayāḥ
muktīrnityā tamaḥ ca eva nāvrittīḥ punaḥ etayoḥ
devānām nirayo nāsti tamaḥ ca api kathañcana
mānuṣāṅām madhyamānām naivaitad-dvyamāpyate
asurāṅām tamaḥprāptis tadāḥ niyamato bhavet*

Mahābhārata-tātparyā-nirṇaya (1.87–92)

The living entities are in three categories, the demigods, the human beings and the demons. Among them, the demigods and the best of human beings are qualified for liberation, the mid-section of human beings are always inclined and absorbed

in family life; and lower category of human beings are destined for the hellish planets. The demons are destined for the *andha-tāmisra* hell. The demigods practically never have to go the hellish planets or become influenced by the quality of ignorance (*tamaḥ*). Similarly, the demons do not easily get liberation at any time or by any cause. The human beings in the middle are neither worthy for liberation, nor destined for *andha-tāmisra*. Therefore, only the demons go to the *andha-tāmisra* hell regularly.

The natural qualities and faults of the living entities are as follows:

*asurādes-tathā doṣā nityā svābhāvikā api
guṇadoṣau manusyaṅṅām nityau svābhāvikau matau
guṇaikamātrārūpās tu devā eva sadā matāḥ
Gītā-bhāṣya (6.9)*

In other words, among the demons, only faults are present in their constitutional nature; among the human beings, both good qualities and faults are present; and in the demigods, especially those who are performing *bhajana*, good qualities are always present.

The conclusion regarding these living entities is:

*nityānandajñānabalā devā naivaṁ tu dānavāḥ
duḥkhopalabdhimātrās-te mānuṣās-tu bhayātmakāḥ
teṣāṁ yadānyathā dṛśyaṁ tadupādhikṛtaṁ mataṁ
vijñānenātmayogyena nijarūpe vyavasthitiḥ
samyag jñānantu devānāṁ manuṣyaṅṅām vimīśritam
viparītantu daityānāṁ jñānasyaivaṁ vyavasthitiḥ
Bhaviṣya Purāṇa (2–3)*

In other words, the demigods are very powerful, full of knowledge and blissful. The demons on the other hand are always suffering. The human beings are always afraid. They have deep bodily attachments according to the bodily designations acquired from birth. They are afraid that someone will change

their situation, and they think that they may be cursed, or that someone may get a boon that will affect their situation adversely. All are eligible for reaching their constitutional position. The knowledge of the demigods is factual; of the human beings is real and unreal; and of the demons, is totally opposite to the demigods. These are the divisions in the realm of knowledge.

At the time of creation, the living entity is inactive, lying in a dormant state in the body of Lord Viṣṇu, and does not have a physical body; only the results of activities (*karma*) that the living entity performed done in the previous *kalpa* remain. According to this previous *karma* or deeds, the living entity subsequently receives an appropriate physical body by the Supreme Lord.

This physical constitutional body of the *jīva* is conditioned in the subtle body of the *jīva*. The subtle body is thus said to be beginningless (*anādi*). On the outside of this subtle body is the physical functional body which is created by Lord Aniruddha during the new creation of the universe. This happens in every *kalpa* of a new day of Brahmā when partial dissolution (*pralaya*) or the night of Brahmā is over. Each day of Brahmā is 4.32 billion solar years, or lasts a thousand periods of the four *yugas*.

During the annihilation and creation of the material universe, the living entities are lying latent inside the body of Lord Viṣṇu, and later they have to receive a physical body to become absorbed in enjoyment and activities, in accordance to their last impressions.

The *jīva* has three categories of body:

- (1) The *svārūpa-deha*, which is the eternal constitutional position of the *jīva*, full of knowledge and bliss.
- (2) The subtle or astral body, as a covering of the *jīva*.
- (3) The *karma-deha*, which is the physical body or gross covering of the *jīva*.

The body of the living entities inside the body of Lord Viṣṇu is also called *karma-deha*, but that *karma-deha* is very subtle, whereas the *karma-deha* of the created body of the living entities is gross and materially tangible.

At the end of this physical gross body, the *jīva* has to get a suffering-body (*yātanā-deha*) to experience the happiness of heaven or the distress of hell, according to the results of their actions and desires. There is no revelation of one's eternal position (*svarūpa-deha*) until the subtle body is destroyed.

The living entities in the mode of goodness (*sāttvika jīvas*) have to become free from their subtle body and reside with Brahmā through worshipping the spiritual master, cultivating scriptural knowledge and cultivating pure devotional service. *Rājasika* people, or living entities in the mode of passion, have to become free from their subtle body at the end of a *kalpa*, through the performance of favourable activities in purified consciousness. *Tāmasika* people, or living entities in the mode of ignorance, have to desire to give up prohibited *karmas* and hostility to Hari, Guru and Vaiṣṇavas. Then, after giving up animosity to Hari, Guru and Vaiṣṇavas, they have to be freed from their subtle body at the end of a *kalpa*. Then their transcendental eternal body (*svarūpa-deha*) will be manifested. Some living entities in the perfected stage of *sādhana*, being ordered by Śrī Hari, are delivered along with Brahmā, and some in the incomplete stage have to obtain another planet, to be delivered along with another Brahmā later.

*ājñāiva hareḥ kecidpūrtteḥ kecidāñjasā
vihṛtyaivānyalokeṣu mucyante brahmaṇā saha
Bhāgavat-tātparya (2.2.30)*

“When the great devastation comes, then all living beings have to join with Brahmā and later, they have to enter into Lord Viṣṇu with Brahmā.”

According to this *Suparṇa-śruti*, in this great devastation (*mahā-pralaya*), the living entities have to get the mercy of Lord Viṣṇu with

the sub-creator Brahmā. At the end of half of Brahmā's lifespan (*parārdha*), in great devastation, all living entities have to enter into supreme position (*parampada*) with Brahmā.

MUKTI AS STATED BY ŚRĪ MADHVĀCĀRYA

The Supreme Lord activates the previous *karmas* of the living entities and situates them on the path of liberation. This is done according to (1) their eligibility, (2) their previous *karmas*, and (3) their present endeavours (*ādhunika*). According to the eligibility and previous *karma*, the Supreme Lord allows the *jīva* to perform the present (*ādhunika*) deeds. In this way, He gives result according to these three functions or *sādhana* processes. Cultivation of devotional service, such as worshiping the *guru*, hearing the scripture, meditation, *kīrtana* and so forth, is included in present endeavour. Following these three *sādhana* processes, the Supreme Lord unfolds the *svarūpa* of the living beings.

After uncovering the subtle, or *līnga*, body, the real position of the *jīva's* eternal constitutional *svarūpa* is revealed through devotional processes performed by *sāttvika* people. That real position is attaining the service of Lord Viṣṇu and is called liberation (*mukti*). Thus, liberation comes only by the devotional process and not by any other method.

It is furthermore very important to know the two types of coverings of the *jīva's svarūpa*: (i) ignorance (*jīvāvaraṇa*) and (ii) external potency (*parāvaraṇa*). The *jīvāvaraṇa* is due to ignorance; just as fire is covered and hidden by the ashes, similarly the eternal constitutional identity of the living entity is covered by the darkness of ignorance (*jīvāvaraṇa*). The external potency of the Lord (*parāvaraṇa*) is like a curtain covering and obscuring the *darśana* of the Supreme Lord residing in the lotus heart of the *jīva*. If the Supreme Lord becomes pleased, He destroys the *jīvāvaraṇa* or ignorance, and removes the curtain of the *parāvaraṇa*. The *jīva* then

clearly sees the Lord that resides in everyone's heart. When the *jīva* unobstructedly sees the Lord, then there is no effect of *karma*.

In this way, as the *jīva* with purified eyes sees the form of Lord Viṣṇu, he wanders anywhere and everywhere like a mendicant, meditating on the beautiful form, and chanting the sweet name of his most worshipable Lord – the be-all and end-all of his life. He may be seen begging alms here and there, yet he always remains satisfied in his performance of devotional service to the Lord. Remaining absorbed in transcendental pleasure of the Lord, he sometimes laughs, sometimes cries, sometimes roams like a mad man and sometimes remains silent and inert like a dumb man. In order for us to attain direct (*parokṣa*) knowledge, liberated persons sometimes perform activities that may be considered rightful actions, and sometimes may be considered wrong actions (by worldly evaluation). As a result, he receives honest and dishonest persons alike – detached, and without self-interest. Even after direct perception of the Lord, the four-headed Brahmā has the inclination to create the universe, of course, by the will of Bhagavān. The liberated direct *jñānī* person has to perform welfare activities for the betterment of society; for example, Nārada Muni and Śukadeva Gosvāmī preach *hari-kathā* within the universe.

Constitutional differences surely exist, even in the liberated stage. Due to these constitutional differences, there are also differences in constitutional knowledge, and in the expressions and emotions of pleasure.

BHAKTI AS STATED BY ŚRĪ MADHVĀCĀRYA

Bhakti is of three types:

- (1) general (*sādhāraṇī*) *bhakti*,
- (2) supreme (*paramā*) *bhakti*, and
- (3) constitutional (*svarūpa*) *bhakti*.

That *bhakti* which appears in the heart of a devotee before hearing *hari-kathā* from *śrī guru* is called general (*sādhāraṇi bhakti*). Those who have not heard properly and who do not accept the lotus feet of *śrī guru*, do not understand the Vedic truths, and therefore, pray to the Lord for such things as wealth, sons, animals, houses, and so forth. This is not even called as *sādhāraṇi bhakti*; it is lower than the lowest kind of *bhakti*. It can never impart any realized knowledge (*jñāna*) or liberation (*mukti*).

That *bhakti* which arises in the heart of the devotee after direct perception, or *bhagavad-darśana*, is called *paramā-bhakti*. It is free from fruitive material desire, so it is called *amalā-bhakti*. By this *paramā-bhakti*, one receives the supreme mercy of the Lord. Receiving that supreme mercy of the Lord, one easily gets liberation. After liberation, the eternal constitutional stage of the *jīva* is reached in which *bhakti* eternally remains as pure, unmotivated, and uninterrupted (*svarūpa-bhakti*).

In the process of *sādhana*, *bhakti* is the main activity. It is the only means to get the supreme mercy of the Lord. The cultivation of knowledge in Vedic scripture that leads to liberation is the means of direct knowledge. The impersonal knowledge, which is the darkest form of knowledge, is for demoniac people. The seed of *bhakti* will appear in the heart of *sāttvika* people. Demoniac personalities such as Śiśupāla, Dantavakra, Kāṁsa, Jarāsandha and so on, had *bhagavad-darśana* and spiritual knowledge to some extent, but that did not arouse *bhakti*; rather, it increased their averse, hostile mentality. According to *śāstra*, one can obtain virtue (*puṇya*) by seeing or touching the cow; but if a tiger sees and touches the cow, this increases its enviousness. The vision of demons is like that of the tiger in this example. They become more envious instead of being purified. Śrī Madhvācārya defined *bhakti* as such:

*māhātmyajñānapūrvas-tu sudṛasarvato 'dhikaḥ
sneho bhaktiriti proktas-tayā mūktirna cānyathā*

Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya (1.86)

In *sāstra*, it is said that having firm faith in *bhagavat* knowledge, being detached from affection to kith and kin, and *nirupādhika* affection for the Lord is called *bhakti*. Through this *bhakti*, one can obtain *mukti*. By other means it is not possible.

Again, Śrī Mādhavācārya has written about the sequence of the process of *sādhana*:

*bhaktiyā jñānaṁ tato bhaktis-tato dṛṣṭis-tatas-ca sā
tato muktis-tato bhaktiḥ saiva syāt sukharūpiṇī
Anuvyākhyāna (34)*

First, a *sādhaka* earns spiritual knowledge through *śraddhā*. After that, direct *sādhana-bhakti* begins; after which, direct knowledge appears in the heart; then, *paramā-bhakti*; then, *mukti*; then, *svarūpa-bhakti*, in which serves Lord Viṣṇu in one's own constitutional form.

*mukto 'pi tadvaśo nityaṁ bhūyo bhakti-samanvitaḥ
sādhyanandasvarūpaiva bhaktir naivātra sādhanam
Bhagavad-gītā-tātparya (2.11)*

Even the liberated person remains under the subjugation of the Lord and deeply attached to *bhakti*. The *bhakti* performed by a liberated person is *sādhya-bhakti*. It is embodiment of supreme bliss – it is not *sādhana-bhakti*.

Amalā-bhakti is the only *sādhana*.

*bhaktir evainaṁ nayati bhaktir evainaṁ darśayati
bhakti-vaśaḥ puruṣo bhaktir eva bhūyasi
Māthar-śruti*

It is only unalloyed *bhagavad-bhakti* that carries the *jīvas* close to Bhagavān, brings about an audience with Him, and eternal engagement in His *sevā*. Bhagavān is only controlled by pure *bhakti*.

Certainly, such *bhakti* is most powerful.

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām*

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad (1.2.23),
Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (3.2.3)*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth, is beyond all sense perception, beyond mental or intellectual speculation, beyond any material intelligence or mundane philosophy. Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself only to whom He chooses to reveal Himself. Only that person can realise Him, no one else. Being pleased with that person's attitude of service (towards one's *guru*), Kṛṣṇa manifests to him His own form.

*yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (6.23)

The true import of the scriptures is revealed only to those great souls who have the same unflinching faith and *parā-bhakti* (transcendental devotion) for their *guru* as they have for the Supreme Lord.

TYPES OF EVIDENCES ACCORDING TO MADHVĀCĀRYA

According to the conclusions of Madhvācārya, there are three evidences:

- (1) direct,
- (2) inference, and
- (3) *āgama* (Veda)

Direct evidences are of seven types:

- (1) witness,
- (2) mind (*manah*),
- (3) seeing (*cakṣuḥ*),
- (4) hearing (*Śrotra*),
- (5) smelling,
- (6) tasting, and
- (7) touching.

Mind, intelligence, time and space – all these are witnesses. Happiness and distress are the subjects of direct perception of the mind, and the mind has to see all other subjects through the senses indirectly. The witness is fixed, but the perception seen by the eyes and mind may be transgressed, violated or adulterated.

Pratyakṣa (evidence collected by the senses) is of four types:

- (1) *Īśa pratyakṣa*
- (2) *Lakṣmī pratyakṣa*
- (3) *Yogī (Brahmā) pratyakṣa*
- (4) *Ayogī* (human beings, animals, birds and so forth).

Anumāna (inference) is used to indicate the cause, the argument, the logic, the symbol and so forth. In *liṅga*-knowledge, the knowledge occurs by the indirect object. The *liṅga-jñāna* is inference (*anumāna*). Opposition, honest opponent and obstruction – all these fallacies cause the adulteration of inference. Faultless cause can give the real knowledge. The inference favourable to direct perception, and *āgama* may be accepted as real evidence; the inference against all these faults is authentic.

Āgama (esoteric scriptures of the Hindus, Veda and *tantra*) again are of two types:

- (1) unspoken by man (*apauruṣeya*) and
- (2) spoken by man (*pauruṣeya*).

Examples of *apauruṣeya* are Vedas, Upaniṣads, *mantra*, *brāhmaṇa* (part of Veda) and so forth. Examples of *pauruṣeya* are history, the Purāṇas, *pancarātra* and so forth. The meaning of the Veda should be understood first according to *Brahma-sūtra*. If there is any doubt in the meaning of Veda, then we should explain the Veda in the light of the meaning of Purāṇas. By six types of *līṅga* (knowledge by which you can judge the *śāstra*) we have to explain the purports of the *śāstra*: *upakrama* (introductory point), *upasaṁhāra* (conclusion), *abhyāsa* (practice), *apurvatā phala* (results), *arthavāda* (praise) and *uṣṭi* (argument between differences). Veda must always dominate. Among these six points, the real significance of the *śāstra* can be determined and ascertained. Purāṇas are of three types: *sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika*.

*vaiṣṇavaṁ nārādīyaṁ ca tathā bhāgavataṁ śubham
gāruraḍaṁ ca tathā pādmaṁ vārāhaṁ śubhadarśane
sāttvikāni purāṇāni vijñeyāni manīṣibhiḥ
brahmāṇḍaṁ brahmavaivartaṁ mārkaṇḍeyaṁ tathaiṣa ca
bhaviṣyaṁ vāmanaṁ brāhmaṇaṁ rājasāni nivodhataḥ
mātsyaṁ kaurmaṁ tathā lengaṁ śaiva skāndaṁ tathaiṣa ca
āgneyaṁ ca ṣaḍetāni tāmasāni nivodhata*
Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa

Among the 18 Purāṇas, six are *sāttvika*: *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, *Nārādīya Purāṇa*, *Bhāgavat Purāṇa*, *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, *Padma Purāṇa* and *Varāha Purāṇa*. Six Purāṇas are *rājasika*: *Brahmavaivartta*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Bhaviṣya*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Vāmana* and *Brahma Purāṇa*. Six Purāṇas are *tāmasika*: *Matsya*, *Kūrma*, *Līṅga*, *Śiva*, *Skanda* and *Agni Purāṇas*.

Sāttvika Purāṇas such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are authentic. If any part or writing of a *rājasika* Purāṇa is favourable to the *sāttvika* Purāṇas, that portion of the *rājasika* Purāṇa will be accepted as authentic evidence. In the *sāttvika* Purāṇa, if anything is mentioned that is opposed to *sattva*, then, of course, it is done only to bewilder the demons. Hence, these things will be not accepted as *sāttvika*. *Tāmasika* Purāṇas are written for bewildering the demons. All Purāṇas may be accepted as authentic evidence if they are favourable to the *sāttvika* Purāṇas.

WHY DO YOU ADDRESS ŚRĪ KṚṢṂA CAITANYA MAHĀPRABHU AS GOD?

Vaṁśaroṇa Simha then asked Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa, “Oh *beṭā*, why do you address Śrī KṚṢṂA Caitanya Mahāprabhu as God?”

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, “We never say that Mahāprabhu is God. That is a title for Lord Nārāyaṇa, Lord Rāma, Lord Nṛsimha and so forth. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Svayam Bhagavān (the Supreme Personality of Godhead).”

“Is there any proof in scripture?” asked Vaṁśaroṇa.

“Yes, yes,” replied Śrīla Gurudeva, “there is so much evidence.”

“Then please present some.”

Śrīla Gurudeva then cited the following references:

*mahān-prabhur vai puruṣaḥ sattvasyeṣa pravarttakaḥ
surnimalām imaṁ śāntīmīśāno jyotiravyaḥ
Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (3.12)*

The Personality of Godhead, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, is brilliantly effulgent and imperishable like molten gold. He is the Supreme Controller. He controls the mode of goodness, and through *saṅkīrtana*, bestows spiritual intelligence on the living beings. In the guise of a *sannyāsī*, He is the source of spiritual purity and of liberation. He is therefore known as Mahāprabhu.

*kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.5.32)

In the age of Kali, Kṛṣṇa appears with a golden complexion (*akṛṣṇa*). He is constantly singing the two syllables – *kṛṣ* and *ṇa* – and He is accompanied by His associates, servitors, weapons and confidential companions. Intelligent people worship Him by performing *saṅkīrtana-yajña*.

This verse can also be understood as follows:

I worship Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva, who delivers the living entities of Kali-yuga (*kali-pāvanam*) through the congregational chanting of the holy names (*śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana-yajña*). He describes the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; and He performs *kīrtana* of the two syllables – *kṛṣ* and *ṇa*. His complexion is fair; He is surrounded by His *aṅgas* (associates such as Śrīman Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrīman Advaita Ācārya Prabhu), *upāṅgas* (servitors such as Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and other pure devotees), and *pārṣadas* (confidential companions such as Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara, Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda, Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita and the six Gosvāmīs); and He is endowed with His weapon (*astra*) of *harināma*, which destroys ignorance.

*'kṛṣṇa' ei dui varṇa sadā yāñra mukhe
athavā, kṛṣṇake tiñho varṇe nija sukhe*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.54

*deha-kāntyē haya teñho akṛṣṇa-varaṇa
akṛṣṇa-varaṇe kahe pīta-varaṇa*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 3.57

The two syllables, *kṛṣ* and *ṇa*, are ever in His mouth, or He is constantly describing Kṛṣṇa with great pleasure. His complexion is definitely not blackish. Indeed, this indicates that His complexion is yellow (*pīta*).

At the time of the name-giving ceremony of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the topmost astrologer Śrī Gargācārya explained to Nanda Bābā:

*āsan varṇās trayo hyasya gr̥hṇato 'nuyugaṁ tanuḥ
śuklo raktas tathā pīta idānīm kṛṣṇatām gataḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.8.13)*

Your son Kṛṣṇa appears in every *yuga* as an *avatāra*. Previously, He assumed three different colors – white, red and yellow – and now He has appeared in a blackish colour.

*aham eva kvacid brahman sannyāsāśramam āśritaḥ
hari-bhaktiṁ grāhayāmi kalau pāpa-hatān narān
Uḡapurāṇas / Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.83*

O learned *brāhmaṇa*; sometimes I take the renounced order of life to induce the sinful people of the age of Kali to accept devotional service to the Lord. (This verse was spoken by Kṛṣṇa to Vyāsadeva.)

*aham eva dvija-śreṣṭha nityaṁ pracchana-vigrahaḥ
bhagavad-bhakta-rūpena lokān rakṣāmi sarvadā
Ādi Purāṇa*

O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, My disguised form is eternal. In this way, with My own form hidden from ordinary sight, I take the form of a devotee and appear among the people in general in order to establish and protect religious principles.

*antaḥ kṛṣṇaṁ bahir-gauraṁ darśitāṅgādi-vaibhavam
kalau saṅkīrtanādyaiḥ sma kṛṣṇa-caitanyaṁ āśritāḥ
Tattva-sandarbhā (2), Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.81*

I take shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is outwardly *gaura* (of fair complexion), but is inwardly Kṛṣṇa Himself. In Kali-yuga, He displays His associates, servitors and confidential companions while performing *saṅkīrtana*.

*śutiṃyā ācchinu kṣīra-sāgara-bhitare
mora nidra bhāṅga haila nāḍāra huokāre
Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavat, Madhya-khaṇḍa 22.16*

[While sitting on the altar of Śrī Viṣṇu in the house of Śrīvasa Paṇḍita in Māyāpura-dhāma, Lord Caitanya said:] When I was lying within the ocean of milk, the loud cries of My devotee Nara (Śrī Advaita Ācārya) broke My transcendental slumber and awakened Me. Thus I have come.

*golokaṃ ca parityajya lokānāṃ trāṇa-kāraṇāt
kalau gaurāṅga-rūpeṇa līlā-lāvaṇya-vigrahaḥ
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*

I assume the most attractive forms to perform many pastimes. Nevertheless, I shall abandon Goloka in Kali-yuga. Thus, I shall appear in the form of Śrī Gaurāṅga to protect the devotees.

*yo reme saha-vallavī ramayate vṛndāvane 'harniśaṃ
yaḥ kaṃsaṃ nijadhāna kauravarāṇe yaḥ pāṇḍavānāṃ sakhā
so'yaṃ vaiṣṇava-daṇḍa-maṇḍita-bhujah sannyāsa-veśaḥ svayaṃ
niḥsandehamuḍāgatāḥ kṣīti-tale caitanya-rūpaḥ prabhuh
Garuḍa Purāṇa*

The Supreme Lord displayed the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra. Thus, He performed many pastimes such as the *rāsa-līlā* with the *gopīs* in Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. Moreover, He killed Kāṃsa. He became a friend of the Pāṇḍavas in the Kurukṣetra War; thus, He came to be known as Pārtha-sārathi. Doubtlessly, the Supreme Lord can make even the impossible possible. Therefore,

He will assume *sannyāsa* dress, the Vaiṣṇava staff will decorate His hand, and thus, He will appear on the earth in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

*vaivasvatāntare brahman gaṅgā-tire su-ṇya-de
hari-nāma tadā dattvā cāndālān haḍikāmstathā
brāhmaṇān kṣatriyān vaiśyān śatato'tha sahastraśaḥ
uddhariṣyāham tatra tapta-svarṇa-kalevarah
sannyāsaśca kariṣyāmi kāñcana-grāmamāsthitaḥ
Urdhvāmnāya Samhitā*

Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa Himself said, “O *brāhmaṇa*, I shall appear in the Vaivasvata Manvantara, on the shore of the holy Gaṅgā River. I shall accept the yellow bodily colour of molten gold. I shall distribute the holy name of Lord Hari to countless *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and the people of lower classes. Thus, I shall deliver them. I shall go to Kāñcana-grāma and take *sannyāsa*.”

Hearing this, Vamśaroṇa asked, “My son, those quotations from *Bhāgavatam* do not clearly mention Mahāprabhu. Is there any other evidence?”

Śrīla Gurudeva then quoted this verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.5.34):

*tyaktvā su-dustyaja-sureṣita-rājya-lakṣmīm
dharmiṣṭha ārya-vacasā yad agād araṇyam
māyā-mṛgaṁ dayitayepsitam anvadhāvad
vande mahā-puruṣa te caraṇāravindam*

O Mahā-puruṣa, I worship Your lotus feet. You gave up the association with the goddess of fortune and all her opulence, which is most difficult to renounce and is hankered after by even the great demigods. Being the most faithful follower of the path of religion, You thus left for the forest in obedience to a *brāhmaṇa*'s curse. Out of sheer mercifulness, You chased after the fallen conditioned souls, who are always in pursuit of the

false enjoyment of illusion, and are at the same time engaged in searching out Your own desired object, Lord Śyāmasundara.”

Smilingly, Vaṁśaroṇa Śiṁha said, “Beṭā, this verse refers to Lord Rāma, not to Mahāprabhu.”

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, “Uncle, I have heard from my Śrīla Gurudeva that many learned scholars have become bewildered by this verse. Lord Rāma went to the forest, it is true, but did not give up His Lakṣmī, Śrīmatī Sītā-devī. Mahāprabhu, on the other hand, took the renounced order giving up His consort Śrīmatī Viṣṇu-priya-devī.”

Hearing this vast and deep *siddhānta*⁴⁶ coming from Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa, Vaṁśaroṇa Śiṁha was extremely impressed. He announced to the crowd of locals who had gathered to listen, “This boy knows an immense amount of *siddhānta*. I believe that none of you knows the *siddhānta* that he knows. Not only that, even a scholar very learned in the teachings of his own *sampradāya*, could not explain it as simply and lucidly as our son has done. Each *sampradāya* has some very complex and difficult technical terms; this boy, however, has explained everything with great ease and in very simple language. Within only one year with his *guru*, he has become so expert. I do not know his *guru*, but that *guru* must be an exceptionally learned scholar, a great personality and a liberated soul. I predict that none can check this boy. Considering the proclivity he has for all this *śāstra*, his ability to communicate, and his taste for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, no one will be able to

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⁴⁶ The *siddhānta* of the four bona fide *sampradāyas* is vast and complicated to understand for the majority of people. It is filled with language that is difficult to comprehend and has much technical matter that goes way beyond most people's intellect. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to simplify everything for the people of this age, but unfortunately most people in this world have not heard about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; they do not know that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the purpose of His appearance. Śrīla Gurudeva had this dialogue with Śrī Vaṁśaroṇa Śiṁha while serving his own *guru* and the mission of Lord Caitanya. The villagers from his childhood birthplace and neighbouring villages gathered around to hear this conversation, and he spoke *siddhānta* in such simple language that topics that were previously perplexing became clear and comprehensible. Whoever reads and follows this dialogue that took place between Śrīla Gurudeva and Vaṁśaroṇa Śiṁha will be able to understand the essence of the teachings of the four *sampradāyas*. Then, they will surely be the recipients of the mercy of *śrī guru* and get *parā-bhakti* at the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

defeat him. This boy will one day preach widely and impart this vast *siddhānta* to the whole world.”

We are now witnessing what Vamśāropana Simha predicted many decades ago. Śrīla Gurudeva is travelling everywhere and delivering this Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* to the whole world. His knowledge is fully realized and practiced.

People cannot enter deeply into Kṛṣṇa consciousness unless they have a firm grasp of *bhakti-siddhānta*, and endeavor to please *śrī guru* and the Lord; their understanding will be only superficial and social. It is of utmost importance for progress in spiritual life to become fully grounded in the proper *bhakti-siddhānta* as preached by Śrīla Gurudeva and the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*.

RETURN TO MAṬHA LIFE

LEAVING FOR NAVADVĪPA

While Śrīla Gurudeva was back in his home village of Tiwaripur, he longed at every moment to perform *gauḍīya-bhajana* again in the company of the devotees, and he was constantly planning how to get away from the clutches of his family. When he arrived back in Tiwaripur, he had a fever, but this passed after four or five days, and he thought, “Somehow or other, I have to get away from here, but it won’t be possible to leave during the day, because there are crowds of people around me. At night, it’s the same – there are so many people. I will have to make a move quietly sometime after midnight.”

It was January of 1948 – the winter season. He was back in his village birthplace to preach, and that only after getting his *guru*’s blessings. On his return, he never entered the inner section of the house, but stayed in the drawing room where the male members of the family came to meet or discuss. There Śrīla Gurudeva slept at night inside a mosquito net with a quilt over him. One night, when he was sure that everyone was asleep, he silently slipped out of bed and arranged his quilt in such a manner that if anyone looked into the room, it would seem as if he was sleeping there under the mosquito net. Without making a sound, as stealthily as a cat, Śrīla Gurudeva made his way out of the house.

He had made his plan. He would leave Tiwaripur on foot in the dark, to avoid the risk of being seen. Furthermore, to avoid getting caught at the local railway station, he would walk past it and catch a train further down the line. He walked a long way down the railway line, and at a railway station a good distance away from Tiwaripur, he caught a train to Navadvīpa. He deliberately did not go back to Devaghara where Parama-gurudeva was.

The next day, at around 8 or 9 o’clock, Śrīla Gurudeva’s family members inquired, “Why is Śrīman Nārāyaṇa sleeping so long? He’s

usually up so early.” His father and mother said, “Oh, maybe he’s tired. People are here every day, all day and night, talking with him and asking him so many questions – sometimes until midnight. Let him rest.”

However, after 10 o’clock, his mother thought that it was time for him to rise and take some breakfast. When they lifted the mosquito net, they found that no one was there, and they all began to lament: “Oh, no! Our darling Nārāyaṇa has gone again!”

The family members hurried to the place where the Vaiṣṇavas were preaching in Devaghara in the state of Bihar, because they thought that he was most likely to be there. “I don’t know where he is,” one of the Vaiṣṇavas told them. “He has not come to us.” They understood that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa must have gone to Navadvīpa, but he had not mentioned anything to them, so they said nothing. The family members then took the devotees’ blessings and returned to their own village of Tiwaripur.

Some time later in 1949, Parama-gurudeva gave the red cloth of *sannyāsa* to Śrīla Gurudeva. This incident has been described by Śrīla Gurudeva in Parama-gurudeva’s biography:

Once when Śrīla Gurudeva was sitting in Navadvīpa with one of his Godbrothers, Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa was also sitting nearby. Paramārādhyaṭama Śrī Gurudeva looked in Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa’s direction, and said, “I want to give you the red cloth of *sannyāsa* [cloth which has been coloured saffron by *geru*, a red stone]. I have seen many non-Bengali Indians; they don’t understand the profound depth of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s elevated *bhakti-siddhānta*, especially *prema-tattva*. But you have taken to heart these moods in an unsophisticated way. Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Sanātana and our many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* remained many days in Vraja, but they could not find any *bhakta* from North India who could take to heart Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s inner moods. You are very fortunate.” Then weeping, Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇajī fell at the lotus feet of his *guru* and with great humility said, “I devote myself fully to your lotus feet. I am removing everything – the attachment of my mother, the affection of my father, the love of my wife and the friendship of my friends – and I am offering it at your lotus feet. You can keep me

naked, dressed in a loincloth, in a white cloth, in a red cloth, or you can give me *sannyāsa*. Keep me in the way which is auspicious for me. Now I solely belong to you.” Hearing his words, Śrī Gurudeva's eyes also brimmed with tears.⁴⁷

After a devotee has been in the *maṭha* for a few years, and the *guru* sees that he has become qualified and renounced from worldly attachments, that bona fide *guru* will give him *sannyāsa*, just as Śrīla Gurudeva is giving today.

TRAVELLING WITH HIS ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA

After our Parama-gurudeva's personal assistant Anaṅga-Mohana Brahmācārī left this world, Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa became an intimate servant of his *gurudeva*. Gratefully, he took the opportunity to travel with him the length and breadth of the subcontinent of India, visiting many of her ancient holy sites several times. Whenever they went to a new city on tour, he and his *gurudeva* went ahead of the travelling party to assist in arranging for accommodation, cooking facilities and *prasāda* for the large group. After securing this, they would go back to the travelling party and proceed with them to their new location. In this way, he travelled several times to all the major places of pilgrimage in the North, South, East, and West of India. This provided an excellent opportunity for him to hear *hari-kathā* and the glories of the *dhāmas* directly from the lotus mouth of his beloved spiritual master. As Parama-gurudeva's personal assistant, Śrīla Gurudeva would cook, launder his cloth, and assist him everywhere and in every way.

Śrīla Gurudeva told us that he feels deeply indebted to have had the great fortune of travelling to various pilgrimage places in India many times in the company of his causelessly merciful *guru*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the preacher of pure *vaiṣṇava-dharma*. Śrīla Gurudeva has spent the rest of his life

⁴⁷ From *Ācārya Kesari Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī – His Life and Teachings* by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, p. 146 (First English Edition published by Gaudiya Vedanta Publications).

and energy in following and serving Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and fulfills his beloved *guru's* innermost desire (*mano-bhīṣṭam*), which is to spread the mission of his own *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, who preached Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's message of *śuddha-bhakti* everywhere.

As a tree is known by its fruits, we can understand Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's glories by observing the character of his disciples. The fruits of his pure preaching, which easily prove his actual glory, are the exemplary behavior, *guru-niṣṭhā*, and *bhajana* of my *śikṣā-guru*, *paramārādhya* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja; of my *dīkṣā-guru*, *paramārādhya* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī; of *parama-pūjyapāda* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja; and of Parama-gurudeva's other disciples.

TAKING SANNYĀSA ON GAURA PŪRNIMĀ, 1952

Our beloved Parama-gurudeva, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, told his three prominent disciples – Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī, Śrī Rādhānātha Brajavāsi and Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa – that he intended to award them *tridaṇḍi-sannyāsa*. The *sannyāsa* order means to renounce the material world completely. However, they thought that they were not spiritually qualified to take *sannyāsa* because they felt very insignificant in the presence of the *sannyāsī* godbrothers of their *gurudeva*, the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who were very learned scholars and were far more expert in *bhakti-siddhānta*. Because of their Vaiṣṇava humility, the three disciples believed that they were unqualified to be *sannyāsīs*, so did not want to cause any disturbance to their seniors by taking *sannyāsa*. They felt that to accept *sannyāsa* would be an insult to their respected seniors, the *sannyāsa* disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, and that it would better

if they remained in *brahmacārī* dress.

The situation came to attention of Śrīla Bhakti Kuśala Nṛsimha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who was one of Śrīla Prabhupāda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s disciples, and also the uncle of my *guru-mahārāja*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He called the three of them together and they listened carefully as he explained the duty of a disciple.

“The primary duty of a disciple is to fulfill the desire of *gurudeva*. We do not have to be concerned about our own qualifications. It is not your position to judge whether or not you are qualified for *sannyāsa*. That is *gurudeva*’s position. Your *gurudeva* is telling you to take *sannyāsa*, so you must do so. Whatever he wants, you must follow him and fulfill his desire.”

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has enunciated in his *kīrtana*, “*mānasa, deho, geho, jo kichu mora / arpilū tuvā pade, nanda-kiśora!* – Mind, body and family, whatever may be mine, I have surrendered at Your lotus feet, O youthful son of Nanda!”

We cannot surrender anything directly to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The process is to offer everything to *śrīla gurudeva*, and *śrīla gurudeva* will transfer the offering to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The *kīrtana* composed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Mānasa Deha Geha*, from *Śaraṅgati* goes like this:

Mānasa Deha Geha

“Teaching the Process of Full Surrender”

mānasa, deho, geho, jo kichu mora
arpilū tuvā pade, nanda-kiśora!

Mind, body and family, whatever may be mine, I have
surrendered at Your lotus feet, O youthful son of Nanda! (1)

sampade vipade, jīvane-maraṇe
dāy mama gelā, tuwā o-pada baraṇe

In good fortune or in bad, in life or at death, all my difficulties

have disappeared by choosing those feet of Yours as my only shelter. (2)

*mārobi rākhobi jo icchā tohārā
nitya-dāsa prati tuwā adhikārā*

Slay me or protect me as You wish, for You are the master of Your eternal servant. (3)

*janmāobi moe icchā jadi tor
bhakta-gṛhe jani janma hau mor*

If it is Your will that I be born again, then may it be in the home of Your devotee. (4)

*kīṭa-janma hau jathā tuwā dās
bahir-mukha brahma janme nāhi āś*

May I be born again even as a worm, so long as I may remain Your devotee. I have no desire to be born as a Brahmā averse to You. (5)

*bhukti-mukti-spṛhā vihīna je bhakta
labhaite tāko saṅga anurakta*

I yearn for the company of that devotee who is completely devoid of all desire for worldly enjoyment or liberation. (6)

*janaka, janani, dayita, tanay
prabhu, guru, pati-tuhū sarva-moy*

Father, mother, lover, son, Lord, preceptor, and husband; You are everything to me. (7)

*bhaktivinoda kohe, śuno kāna!
rādhā-nātha! tuhū hāmāra parāṇa*

Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda says, “O Kānā, please hear me! O Lord of Rādhā, You are my life and soul!” (8)

On March 11, 1952, on Gaura Pūrṇimā, the appearance day of *prema-puruṣottama* Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Parama-

gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī bestowed the Vedic sacred order of *tridaṇḍi-sannyāsa* upon his three faithful disciples. Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī became Tridaṇḍisvāmī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja; Śrī Rādhānātha Brajavāsi became Tridaṇḍisvāmī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja; and Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa Brajavāsi Bhakta-bāndhava became Tridaṇḍisvāmī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

I would now like to provide the respected reader with a short history of the lives of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVEDĀNTA VĀMANA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

(Several excerpts in this section have been selected from various sources such as (1) *Ācārya Kesari Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī – His Life and Teachings*, (2) Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *Śrī Prabandhāvalī*, and (3) a lecture given by Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja on December 12th, 1998, the appearance day of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja.)

(The following section consists of the words of Śrīla Gurudeva himself. The title 'Gurudeva' here refers to his *gurudeva*, and our Parama-gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī.)

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja took birth in a respected religious family in the village of Pilajaṅga in Khulnā district, East Bengal, on December 23, 1921. His father's name was Śrī Satisācandra Ghoṣa and his mother's name was Śrīmatī Bhagavatī-devī. Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kuśala Nṛsimha Mahārāja was his paternal uncle in his previous *āśrama*.

His mother was a disciple of the founder-*ācārya* of the world-wide Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. His father, Śrī Satisācandra Ghoṣa, obtained *harināma* and *dīkṣā* from worshipable Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and was an ideal *gṛhastha-bhakta* and received the name

Śrī Sarveśvara Dāsādhikārī after receiving *dikṣā*.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's childhood name was Santoṣa, and he was the second amongst four brothers. During his childhood, he was educated in the local primary school. From his infancy, he was very patient, peaceful, religious and intelligent, and was always top of his class. He had a remarkable memory, and after hearing any verse or particular subject only once, he would never forget it in his whole life.

Once, after the head teacher left the school for another post, the new head teacher came into the classroom for the first time, and asked Santoṣa (later Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja) to read from a certain portion of the text book they were studying. Santoṣa, the leading student in the school, simply remained silent. The new head teacher became annoyed and demanded to know why Santoṣa was not picking up the book to read as he had been instructed. Another pupil spoke up and explained to the new teacher that Santoṣa had already memorised the whole book and therefore did not need to consult it. Incredulous, the teacher asked Santoṣa if this were true, and Santoṣa humbly replied that he knew by heart any book that he had ever read. Picking up a book that the class had studied previously, the teacher opened it at random and asked Santoṣa to recite what was written on a certain page. To his astonishment, Santoṣa was able to recite it flawlessly.

On March 2, 1931, Śrīmatī Bhagavatī-devī brought her son Santoṣa with her to take part in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*. After *dhāma-parikramā*, she entrusted her dear son to the hands of the manager of the *maṭha*, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī⁴⁸. From then on, he lived in the *maṭha* under Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu's care.

In those early days, the modern sewage system hardly existed in India, and the toilets in the *maṭha* consisted simply of holes in the earth with large clay pots inside. Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja would daily take those pots on his head and carry them away to empty them in an appropriate place outside the *maṭha*.

41 Our beloved *parama-gurudeva* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *brahmācārī* name.

He had no mundane ego and there was no trace of anger in him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had established an educational institute in Māyāpura called the Śrī Bhaktivinoda Institute. The headmaster was Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja and the manager was Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī. Śrī Vinoda-bihārī enrolled the young Santoṣa in this school. Daily, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī gave him some verses from Śrī *Gauḍīya-kaṅṭhahāra*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to memorize. For each verse he memorized, he got a piece of sugar candy. Every day he would memorize four or five or even twenty verses and quote them perfectly. After a short time he memorized all the verses of Śrī *Gauḍīya-kaṅṭhahāra*, and many from the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavatam*. In time, the members of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society considered him to be an encyclopedia of verses.

When Śrīla Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, was lecturing, he would sometimes forget a *śloka*, and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja would always supply it from memory. Once, when we went to Assam for preaching, Gurudeva (Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja) boldly declared that the mouths of the people there who ate meat and fish were like the drains and sewers. The members of one of the sects there were virtually prepared to stone us and challenged us: “Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is a recent personality and Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is also a modern literature. Is Caitanya Mahāprabhu even mentioned in the Vedas, or is there any evidence that he is Bhagavān?” Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī replied that there were thousands of examples, and he then told Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja to present the evidence. Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja had a notebook containing some 40 or 50 statements from the Vedic literature that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was Bhagavān. He gave this to Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who on his *guru’s* order loudly recited the *ślokas* from different scriptures one after the other as evidence. The rock-throwing and chaos that the challengers had tried to spread in the audience finally came to an end. In the middle of the mayhem,

Parama-gurudeva said fearlessly, “We *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* are not afraid of death. We are followers of Prahlāda Mahārāja and Haridāsa Ṭhākura.” Their fearlessness was discussed everywhere in the area for many days.

(In the section that follows, the title Śrīla Gurudeva refers to the author’s *śikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.)

In 1936, *Jagad-guru* Śrīla Prabhupāda (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura) gave Santoṣa *harināma*. His name now became Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī. He studied at school, and also swept the temple and the *bhajana-kuṭīras* of the Vaiṣṇavas every day and brought them water. Before *prasāda* time, he would set out the seats, plates and other necessities for *prasāda-sevā*, and afterwards he would clean the area. He was also engaged in gathering fruit, flowers, leaves, vegetables and so on from the garden in the *maṭha*. He was engaged in many other services as well.

As a young person, Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī was very shy. He was a *brahmacārī* for his whole life, and was endowed with all the good qualities befitting a Vaiṣṇava. When Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked him to give class, Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī would meekly shy away and be silent. In his earlier years, he did not like to go out with the other *brahmacārīs* to beg alms, or out for preaching engagements. He did not like to speak to outsiders, except for children. He had a sweet relationship with them and would tell them many stories. They would treat him like a friend, and flock all around him to hear him speak. He would also teach them verses and give them sweet *mahā-prasāda*. That is why they loved him so much.

At first, he had such a load of service at the temple that he did not like to go out for preaching. Later on, though, after Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja ordered him to preach, he developed such a taste for it that he could go on for hours and hours

without stop. His preaching was a grand success.

When *jagad-guru* Śrīla Prabhupāda disappeared from this world, Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha entered a dark period. The society became divided over who the next *ācārya* would be. Ananta Vāsudeva was nominated (although not by Prabhupāda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura), but in time it was seen that he was not qualified. Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja immediately advised that this person be rejected, and all the senior Vaiṣṇavas followed this advice. When this happened, those who were opposed to Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja formed a conspiracy, and accused him and those godbrothers who were with him of murder.

The accused devotees, numbering about twenty, were seized and thrown into jail. When the police came to arrest all the devotees in the temple, they left Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī, seeing that he was a boy of only fifteen years old. Other godbrothers who were sympathetic to Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja nevertheless became fearful and went away, leaving the imprisoned devotees with no one to plead their case except Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī. Thus, he had to take care of the whole temple by himself. Besides this, he had to engage lawyers on behalf of the devotees in prison, and provide the lawyers with all the information they needed. He was also obliged to attend lengthy court sessions to answer the questions of the prosecuting lawyers. In addition to all this, the responsibility to provide *prasāda* for all the imprisoned devotees now fell squarely on his head. However, in order for him to cook, it was necessary for him to have *dikṣā*. In the jail, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who had never given *dikṣā-mantras* to anyone before, gave Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī the *mantras* through the prison bars. On top of all his other duties, Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī cooked for all the devotees twice a day, carrying *prasāda* and water to the prison all by himself.

Eventually, it was discovered that the so-called ‘murder’ victim had in fact died by accident when he fell from a tree. All the Vaiṣṇavas were immediately released from jail, and the judge

officially apologized to them.

Thereafter, Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī went with *pūjyapāda* Śrī Bhaktidayita Mādhava Mahārāja and *pūjyapāda* Śrī Bhaktibudeva Srauti Mahārāja to preach in different parts of Bengal. In 1940, after the establishment of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti and Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja again asked Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī to stay with him. They travelled to many places together, all over Bengal and also to all the major pilgrimage places of India. Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī served as Parama-gurudeva's secretary. This took place a few years prior to Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa's holy pilgrimages with Parama-gurudeva.

Later, Parama-gurudeva engaged Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī exclusively in the publication department. In 1948, when the publishing of *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā*⁴⁹ started, the whole responsibility of the publication was given to him. Even though others were acknowledged as editor, printer and publisher, he was actually the backbone in accomplishing all these tasks.

On one occasion, a printing press caught his hand, crushed it and badly mutilated his fingers. When Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja saw what had happened, he began to weep, and immediately arranged for a car to take them both to a hospital in Kolkata. They did not return for four or five days. Miraculously, despite the seriousness of the injury, Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī's hand healed completely, to the extent that no one would ever guess what had happened unless they knew already. Even the missing part of his finger grew back completely.

Our Śrīla Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, remembers, "I directly saw how Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was ready to give his life for his *gurudeva*, and I understood how my *gurudeva* would feel indebted to Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja for his service. When Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's hand was caught in the printing press, Śrīla Guru Mahārāja (Śrīla Bhakti

⁴⁹ The Samiti's monthly journal.

Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja) wept, and travelled with Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja to the hospital in Kolkata. When you see *śrī guru* crying for his disciple, you can understand that his affection towards that disciple is very deep.”

Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī would also cook for the Vaiṣṇavas every day. Having done this, he would clean the whole kitchen area and the area where the Vaiṣṇavas would honour *prasāda*. He would sprinkle the area with water, sweep it and lay out banana leaves along with pieces of lemon, salt and cups of water. He would then serve *prasāda* to all the devotees, and when they had finished, he would clean the whole area again and wash all the pots.

Śrīla Gurudeva, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, affectionately remembers, “Being with Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and I used to work in the kitchen and engage in many other services. We used to clean the pots in those days, and also write sometimes. We worked at the printing press, publishing Guru Mahārāja’s books, and we also travelled with Guru Mahārāja when he went to various places for preaching. We were engaged in so much service.”

At Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā, 1952, in Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī was given *sannyāsa* by the mercy of Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. From then on, he became known as Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja. Besides all his other duties, his Guru Mahārāja sent him to preach *śuddha-bhakti* in many places of Bengal.

By Parama-gurudeva’s instruction, and under his expert guidance, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja took great pains to publish *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (with Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s commentary), *Jaīva-dharma*, *Prema-pradīpa*, *Prabandhāvalī*, *Śaraṅāgatī*, *Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga*, *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu – His Life and Precepts*, *Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta*, *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu kī Śikṣā*, *Śrī Dāmodarāṣṭakam* and other Vaiṣṇava literature.

In 1968, after Parama-gurudeva Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja entered *aprakāṣa-līlā*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was posted as the President and Ācārya of Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. He was expert in *bhakti-siddhānta*,

famous for his tolerance and always absorbed in *bhajana*. He was endowed with all the qualities befitting an exalted Vaiṣṇava. He was especially known for his preaching and *guru-niṣṭhā*.

Later on, he edited many more books on *bhakti*. He preached in all the villages of West Bengal and Assam, establishing new preaching centres of Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti in Śrīdhāma Purī; Tura in Meghalaya; and in other places such as Dhubadi, Gauhati, Silcar, and so forth in Assam.

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was very grave, quiet and tolerant. He never enjoyed praise from others for his vast erudition in scriptural knowledge. If he saw faults in others, he would never say anything about them, as if he were taking poison and digesting it. He was very eager to preach the instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and never wasted time in mundane activities such as faultfinding.

In the early morning of Gaura Tṛtīya, in the year 2004, my beloved *dīkṣā-guru*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja left this world and entered into *nitya-līlā*.

Śrīla Gurudeva says, “I pray to Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja that he will mercifully allow me to ever remain as his shadow, thereby enabling me to always follow him. I consider him to be my *śikṣā-guru*, because since the day I joined the mission, he gave me whatever I required with great affection.”

ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA TRIVIKRAMA GOŚVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja took birth on January 31st, 1916. His father’s name was Śrīyuta Āśutoṣa Kumāra Ghoṣa, and his mother’s name was Śrīyuta Kātyāyanī-devī. They were both truly religious and virtuous followers of the truth. They did not even accept water in the morning until they had served Śrī Nārāyaṇa, their household deity. They were very much honoured among the general public in their district.

In his childhood Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja was known as Śrī Rādhānātha Kumāra. His religious parents had a very great influence on his life. In his childhood, he was a particularly sharp student. Besides reading and writing, he was keen on all the subjects he was taught, and he had a special interest in music, art and medical science (homeopathy). He was the second child amongst six brothers and three sisters, and he was so expert in all matters that his older brother, father and family members rarely performed tasks without his counsel. When he passed the examination of the tenth grade, he was appointed as a teacher in primary school.

One day he was going to visit his sister in a village on the eastern bank of the Gaṅgā, adjacent to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. On the way, he saw the huge temple with nine domes at Śrī Yogapīṭha. He walked all around the temple to look at it thoroughly. Later he asked the elderly people in his brother-in-law's house about the temple, and they told him that it was the appearance place of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and that Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī (the *brahmācārī* name of Parama-gurudeva Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī) had manifested and spread its glory.

By good fortune, *mahopadeśaka pūjyaṇḍa* Narottamānanda Brahmācārī from Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti was there at the time, preaching Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *viśuddha-bhakti* with a travelling party. When Śrī Rādhānātha heard the *brahmācārī's* discourse on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he developed in his heart a strong desire to renounce the material world and to perform *bhagavad-bhajana*.

The young man Śrī Rādhānātha Kumāra did not know the full glory of Śrī Mandira, or the glory of *tulasī* or the benefit of doing such sacred circumambulation. Yet, as he himself related, hearing *hari-kathā* in the association of *sādhus*, and performing *parikramā* of Śrī Tulasī and the temple of Śrī Hari had the wonderful effect of enabling him to quickly renounce everything, including mother, father, wife, friends and the wealth of the home, and to devote himself to *bhagavad-bhakti*.

In 1942 Śrī Rādhānātha Kumāra came to the head office of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, and accepted harināma from the founder-ācārya of the Samiti, *om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja*. In 1944 he completely renounced his home and became engaged in the service of *śrī guru* and Śrī Bhagavān. Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja entrusted him to the care of *paramapujya mahāmahopadeśaka Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī*. Together, they travelled all over Bengal and India, preaching *bhagavad-bhakti*. After some time, his *gurudeva* sent him to preach bhakti independently in various places.

In 1952 on Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja kindly gave him *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa* in Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, and he became Tridaṇḍi-svāmī Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja. Due to his proficiency in Bengali, his *gurudeva* appointed him as the assistant editor of *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā*. Sometimes, in the absence of Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he was given the entire responsibility for the office of *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā*. His authoritative writing and mystical poetry was published in that magazine. After accepting *sannyāsa*, he travelled to different places in India to preach *śuddha-bhakti* under Parama-gurudeva's guidance.

After Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's disappearance, Śrīpāda Trivikrama Mahārāja accepted the post of general secretary of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. After repeated appeals to the members, he retired from this post and became absorbed in *bhajana*, though he remained attentive to all kinds of services to the Samiti.

In an article that he wrote for *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā*, he succinctly explained the real importance of *sādhu-saṅga*:

Prema is inherent within Mahāprabhu's preaching of the holy name. The glory of His *līlā* is that each and every aspect of it is imbued with *prema* – His wanderings, His conversations, His study of the scriptures, His going on pilgrimage and so forth. He thus distributed the holy name throughout India. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu moved like an uncontrolled and intoxicated lion.

It is to be noted that when Mahārabhu told someone, “Say Hari, Hari,” that person would do as He said and become maddened with *prema*. However, when an ordinary, unqualified person instructs someone to say “Hari, Hari,” the person he instructs does not achieve even a shadow of *prema*, what to speak of becoming maddened by *prema*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.3) advises, “*sanmukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām* – One should hear from self-realized devotees about Śrī Bhagavān’s holy name and transcendental pastimes.” If someone attempts to distribute the holy name, but *prema* has not arisen in his heart because he maintains separate interests (*anyābhilāṣa*), then the name that he utters will have no power to bestow *prema* upon others. Therefore, it is prohibited even to hear descriptions of Hari from the lips of such an unqualified person:

avaiṣṇava mukhodgīrṇam pūtam harikathāmṛtam
śravaṇam naiva kartavyam sarpoḥchiṣṭam yathā payah
Padma Purāṇa

The nectarean topics of Śrī Hari are always purifying, but if they emanate from the mouth of a non-Vaiṣṇava, it is prohibited to hear them, for they become as poisonous as the milk touched by the lips of a serpent.

The scriptures warn us that one becomes imbued with the qualities of the person one associates with. Unfortunate people become attracted by the preaching of those who do not desire to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or *anyābhilāṣīs*. That preaching, although full of variegated cleverness cannot rightfully be termed ‘the propagation of *prema-dharma*’.

In 2002, on Gaura Tṛtīya of Kārtika month, at around half past noon, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja entered *nitya-līlā*. Śrīla Gurudeva said to the assembled devotees on that day:

“We have lost one of the pillars of the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti today, but I feel some relief knowing that he left during this Kārtika month, during *niyama-sevā-vrata*, and that he was in Navadvīpa-dhāma. Also, he left at the time of *amṛta-yoga*, an auspicious time of the day according to the movement of the sun and moon and it was also *tṛtīya-tithi*, one of the most auspicious days of the month.

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja was extremely qualified. Our Guru Mahārāja was in charge of publications, and he put Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja in charge of organizing all the preaching, and his services included sending other preachers to various districts of Bengal. Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja would personally go collecting and preaching, especially in the district of Bardavan (Burdwan), while Guru Mahārāja did a great deal of preaching in Midnapura, Chaubis Parganas and other places.

Our Guru Mahārāja placed me in his hands and we became very close. It was Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja who taught me how to perform *kīrtana*, how to preach, and how to collect donations. Sometimes, in a very loving way, he would also rebuke me. My Guru Mahārāja never rebuked me, but Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja would do so with so much love and affection. We had such a close connection that sometimes our discussions would become very heated. Śrīla Trivikrama Mahārāja used to preach all over India, and when he would go to preach with our Guru Mahārāja, I would go with them as Guru Mahārāja’s *sevaka*. I would massage him, cook for him, wash his cloths, and carry a lantern for him because there was no electricity at that time; I also performed many other services. Sometimes I made mistakes, and then Śrīla Trivikrama Mahārāja would protect me.”⁵⁰

⁵⁰ The full transcript of Śrīla Gurudeva’s *puṣpāñjali* appeared in the report by Śrīpāda B. V. Mādhava Mahārāja entitled *Disappearance of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja – 7 November 2002* in the Kartik 2002 issue of *Rays of The Harmonist*.

ŚRĪLA GURUDEVA BEGINS SERVING IN MATHURĀ

At this point, we would like to mention the establishment of Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā by *parama-gurudeva* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja in 1954.

Parama-gurudeva was of the opinion that Mathurā was the junction of Vraja-maṇḍala, and anyone visiting there must first pass through Mathurā. “If I make a preaching centre in Mathurā,” he explained, “then, all Vaiṣṇavas are bound to come and visit there. They will make a stop here in Mathurā, and then we will get a chance to serve those Vaiṣṇavas.” With this idea in mind, Parama-gurudeva established a *maṭha* in Mathurā, rather than in Vṛndāvana, Govardhana, Kāmyavana or anywhere else.

“We will start here and later we can spread out into Vraja-maṇḍala.”

The name he chose for the *maṭha* was Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha. In Vraja-maṇḍala, there are four predominating deities (*devas*). The *deva* in Mathurā is Keśavadeva; in Vṛndāvana, Śrī Govindadeva; in Dāujī, Śrī Baladeva; and at Govardhana, Hari-deva. Parama-gurudeva named Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha after the predominating deity of Mathurā, Śrī Keśavadeva. People still sometimes think the *maṭha* is named after Parama-gurudeva, but Parama-gurudeva said, “No, the *maṭha* is not named after me, but after the predominating deity of Mathurā, Keśavadeva.”

In 1952, Śrīla Gurudeva took *sannyāsa* from Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja; and in 1954, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja posted him in charge of the newly opened temple in Mathurā, Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha.

ESTABLISHING THE PROPER CHANTING OF THE MAHĀ-MANTRA

In those early years of *pūjyapāda* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *sannyāsa*, he preached the holy name

throughout Vraja-maṇḍala. At that time, in the *dhāma*, there were many schools of thought, and the majority of people would chant the *mahā-mantra* in reverse sequence: “*Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare, Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare.*”

When Śrīla Gurudeva started preaching there, he began by informing everyone, “This is not the proper way to chant the *mahā-mantra*. The *mahā-mantra* for this age of Kali-yuga is chanted with the Kṛṣṇa name first.” He presented the people with numerous quotations from Vedic scriptures, and as a result of his preaching, almost everyone in Vraja-maṇḍala now chants the *mahā-mantra* in the correct sequence: “*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.*”

Nevertheless, some could not accept this without a challenge. The confused opponents had many different misconceptions – sometimes mixing facts and opinions, and sometimes undermining the authority of the *guru-paramparā*. Śrīla Gurudeva heard their views, and with sound logic and scriptural references, asserted the Absolute Truth as he had heard it from his spiritual master.

Of their many erroneous assumptions, the prominent one was as follows: “Śrī Rāma’s name should be chanted first in the *mahā-mantra* as He appears in Tretā-yuga which comes before Dvāpara-yuga, the age when Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears.”

Śrīla Gurudeva defeated their false reasoning by showing them Śrī Bhagavān’s *nāma-mantras* for each of the four *yugas*, as found in the *Ananta-Saṁhitā*. For *Satya-yuga*: “*nārāyaṇa parā vedāḥ nārāyaṇa parā kṣaraḥ, nārāyaṇa parā muktiḥ nārāyaṇa parā gatiḥ* – Nārāyaṇa is declared the Supreme in all the Vedas. Nārāyaṇa is the supreme of all letters. Nārāyaṇa is the supreme liberation. Nārāyaṇa is the supreme path.” For *Tretā-yuga*: “*rāma nārāyaṇa-ānanta mukunda madhusūdana, kṛṣṇa keśava kāmśāre hare vaikunṭha vāmana* – Hey Rāma! Hey Nārāyaṇa! Hey Ānanta! Hey Mukunda! Hey Madhusūdana! Hey Kṛṣṇa! Hey Keśava! Hey Kāmśāre! Hey Hare! Hey Vaikunṭha! Hey Vāmana!” For *Dvāpara-yuga*: “*hare murāre madhu-kaiṭabhāre, gopāla govinda mukunda śāure*

/ *yajñeśa nārāyaṇa kṛṣṇa viṣṇo, nirāṣṛayaṁ mām jagadīśa rakṣa* – Hare, Murāre, Madhu-Kaitabāre, Gopāla, Govinda, Mukunda, Śaure, Lord of all *yajñas* Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu! Hey Jagadīśa, please protect me! I have no other shelter.”

And finally, for *Kali-yuga*:

*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa / kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma / rāma rāma hare hare
ṣoḍa-śaitāni nāmāni / dvātrīṁśad varṇa kāni hi
kalau yuge mahā-mantraḥ / sammato jīva tārāṇe*

“*Hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare.* This *hari-nāma mahā-mantra* consists of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables. In *Kali-yuga* this *mantra* can deliver all *jīvas*.”

Then, Śrīla Gurudeva pointed out to them that the *mahā-mantra* (Kṛṣṇa’s holy name) was present as the deliverer even in *Tretā-yuga*, before the appearance of *līlā-puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa* in *Dvāpara-yuga*, with names such as Mukunda, Madhusūdāna, Kṛṣṇa, Keśava and Kāmsāri. The *mahā-mantra* is eternal; it does not just appear in one *yuga* (*Kali-yuga*) which comes after another *yuga* (*Tretā-yuga*). Material reasoning may be invalid and as such is not accepted as a bona fide proof or evidence in spiritual matters. Therefore, he pointed out, the logic and arguments given for chanting the reversed sequence of the *mahā-mantra* were invalid.

Śrīla Gurudeva further clarified that the name *Rāma* that appears in the *Kali-yuga mahā-mantra* ultimately does not refer to *maryādā-puruṣottama* Lord *Rāma*, to Lord *Balarāma*, or to Lord *Paraśurāma*. It addresses the Supreme Lord Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme enjoyer and source of all pleasure (*Rāma*). Here, the name *Rāma* is another direct name of Kṛṣṇa Himself. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer as He is always in the mood of a charming lover who wants to enjoy (*Ramaṇa*). There is no greater enjoyer than Śrī Kṛṣṇa; therefore, He is called *Rāma*. Thus, *Rāma* in the *mahā-mantra* refers to the

supreme enjoyer, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Gurudeva quoted a verse from the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* that explained that Rāma in the *mahā-mantra* refers to Rādhā-Ramaṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa who enjoys transcendental pastimes with Śrī Rādhā.

*vijñāpya bhāgavat-tattvaṁ cid ghanānandi vighrahaṁ
haratyavidhaṁ tatkāryamato haririti smṛtaḥ
ānandaikasukhaḥ śrīmān śyāmaḥ kamala locanaḥ
gokulānando nandandanaḥ kṛṣṇa īryate
vaidagdhi sārāsarvasvaṁ mūrtalilā dhidaivatam
śrī rādhāṁ ramayā nityaṁ rām ity abhidīyate*
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa

The above *śloka* ends thus:

*vaidagdhi sārāsarvasvaṁ mūrtalilā dhidaivatam
śrī rādhāṁ ramayā nityaṁ rām ity abhidīyate*

“(Śrī Kṛṣṇa) is the *lilā-vighraha* and the crest-jewel of all expertise and wisdom. Because He eternally enjoys loving transcendental pastimes with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, He is also known as Rāma (the enjoyer).”

These arguments have been further substantiated by learned scholars such as Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrī Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, each of whom provided unparalleled commentaries on the meanings of the names in the *mahā-mantra*.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains each of the four names of Rāma that appear in the *mahā-mantra* in this way:

First *Rāma*: Śrī Kṛṣṇa, crest jewel of the ingenious, knows the art of embracing. He is known as Rāma because He wanders with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, playing and enjoying with Her in the *kuñjas* of Govardhana.

Second *Rāma*: The minds of the *bhaktas* who perform *bhajana* wander in the topmost ocean of bliss, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For this reason, that Śyāmasundara *vighraha*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is known as Rāma.

Third *Rāma*: In the *kuñjas*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā pleases Śrī Hari with Her *prema*. Therefore, according to the definition of He who

gives happiness (*ramayati ānandayati*), He is called Rāma. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known as Rāma because He unites with Śrī Rādhā.

Fourth Rāma: When Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who gives pleasure to the *bhaktas*, saw all the Vrajavāsīs fearful and weeping, He swallowed the forest fire, giving them great pleasure. Therefore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who arranges for His *bhaktas* to enjoy with Him, is called Rāma.

These explanations, along with those of Śrīla Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, appear in Śrīla Gurudeva's book, *Harināma Mahā-mantra*.

In conclusion, we see that at that time, as well as all throughout his life, Śrīla Gurudeva has fixed himself in pleasing service to *śrī guru* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Over the years, he has systematically uprooted all existing misconceptions and established proper *siddhānta*. He is not afraid to speak boldly about the absolute truth or the pure holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Fixed in his resolution and unwavering devotion to his dear spiritual master Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Gurudeva has never tolerated the slightest trace of diversion from scripture, and because of this, he remains undefeated, even in the midst of strong opposition.

Śrīla Gurudeva, with so much love and affection, is always teaching us how to come to the level of pure *bhakti*. A human being who is only engaged in eating, sleeping, mating, and defending is no better than an animal. When one carefully hears from *guru*, *sādhu* and Vaiṣṇavas, and follows the four regulative principles of human life, one can begin to follow the *sāttvika* lifestyle and enthusiastically chant the holy names with faith and devotion. This is the beginning of the purification process that will help us to clearly understand the duty of human life, namely, to serve the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the dear devotees connected with Him.

Śrīla Gurudeva is kindly guiding us and illuminating our path so that we can properly execute the genuine processes of pure *bhakti*, without which there is no question of becoming eternally happy. Without hearing of *rāgānuṅgā-bhakti* from such a person as *śrī guru*,

without seeing his devotional perfection, and without accepting his merciful instructions, how would we ever be able to give up all of our superfluous activities or make real progress in entering the eternal realm of Vraja with the sweetest *mādhurya* mellow, *rādhā-dāsyam*? Without the example and direction of such a perfected soul, how would any of us know the process that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has recommended for chanting the Holy Names or be able to properly take shelter of it? This Kali-yuga has become glorious because of the unique speciality of Lord Caitanya's gift. This can only be attained by those who have given up not only all selfish desires but also the *aiśvarya* moods of chanting and performing Vedic sacrifices prescribed in the other *yugas*.

The desire to control others by one's intelligence and strength is an impediment to pure *bhakti*. The key to perfection is to perform all of one's activities with love and affection. Chanting the *mahā-mantra* will give the most desirable outcome when we chant with greed (*lobha*) and absorb ourselves in proper internal meditation, as Śrīla Gurudeva has described. Listening to one's mind and contemplating material desires while chanting will impede one's spiritual progress, so that the beneficial results will appear slowly. Spiritual progress will come if one sticks to the process of chanting and seeks progress by higher association, otherwise it will not come. Śrīla Gurudeva says that one's constitutional spiritual form (*svarūpa*) will only manifest when one is under the guidance of a *rasika* Vaiṣṇava.

The greed necessary for *vraja-bhakti* comes only by associating with a *rāgānugā-rasika* Vaiṣṇava. Without that, one will not acquire the unquenchable thirst to acquire the moods of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates. Then, how will one ever attain the *prema* that the most munificent Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advented to distribute? To attain *vraja-bhakti*, one must be absorbed and established in the required devotional mood. This is not possible if one simply follows the external actions of *bhakti* dutifully, no matter how enthusiastic one may be. For example, it is not enough to preach based on external

reality, without any deep realizations; or to chant mechanically while overcome with desires for profit, adoration, and distinction. One has to give up selfish desires and completely surrender to *śrī guru*.

In 1991, Śrīla Gurudeva explained in English to all the devotees coming to see him in the Mathurā *maṭha*: “This surrender and complete dedication of the heart to *guru* is called *tādātmya* (oneness of heart) in Sanskrit.” Unless we can develop this relationship with *śrī guru*, our endeavours will not bear the desired fruit. It is of the utmost importance for our spiritual progress.

A VISIT FROM PARENTS

As I have already related, Śrīla Gurudeva took charge of the Mathurā *maṭha* in 1954, two years after his *sannyāsa* in 1952. Eventually, his parents Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha Tiwari and Lakṣmī-devī came to know that he was in Mathurā, and they went there to see their son sometime in 1958. Tiwaripur was closer to Mathurā than to Navadvīpa, so it was more convenient to travel to Mathurā. When they arrived at Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrīla Gurudeva was sitting on a chair speaking *hari-kathā* to four or five *brahmacārīs*, who were seated on the floor around him, listening. When Śrīmatī Lakṣmī-devī saw her son, she began to weep bitterly, and in that emotional state, started beating her head against the floor.

Mahāprabhu, after taking *sannyāsa*, met his mother, Śacī-devī, at Śāntipura. Seeing His shaven head, His mother was heartbroken, but when Mahāprabhu asked her if He should give up the renounced order of life, Śacī-devī said, “No, You must remain a *sannyāsī*. Now, You have accepted the renounced order, and if You give it up, the whole society will criticise You, and the scriptures will choke my voice. I can tolerate separation from You, but I cannot tolerate Your bad reputation.”

Similarly, when mother Lakṣmī-devī saw her son, Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, in the Mathurā *maṭha*, the pain she had had for years since he left home was accentuated.

Still, deep within her heart, she appreciated the importance of spiritual life and the most exalted position of her son.

Śrīla Gurudeva got up from his chair, approached his parents, and offered *praṇāma* to them. “Mother,” he said, “why are you weeping so bitterly and beating your forehead?”

“Maybe it’s because I’ve taken the renounced order, and they have not seen me for so many years,” he thought. “It must be ten years or more since they have seen me. That must be why she’s weeping so much.”

He reassured his mother, “Mother, even though I have taken the renounced order, I am still your son, now and always. Don’t worry.”

Śrīla Gurudeva then gave an example to his mother. “O Mother, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the supreme Bhagavān, took the renounced order and yet, always respected His mother. Similarly, I will always be indebted to you and related to you. I took birth from you; I took your breast milk; you nourished me and protected me. Please don’t be sad. I am always your son.”

“I am not worried for myself,” Śrīmatī Lakṣmī-devī said, “I am worried for you.”

“Mother, why are you worried about me?”

“O Nārāyaṇa, you have spoiled your life, and now, just see, aren’t you spoiling the life of other boys? You ran away from me, and now you are teaching these boys, who are just teenagers. Have you pulled them out of their mother’s laps? I am weeping grievously for their mothers.”

A mother has deep affection for her son. Though the boys whom Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was teaching were not the sons of his mother, still she wept for their mothers, as if she were an embodiment of those other mothers. After some time, he pacified her, and she became calm and quiet.

The time came for *ārati*, and after that, Śrīla Gurudeva invited his parents to come and take *prasāda*. His mother came without hesitation but Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha said, “I will not take *prasāda*. There is no attention being given to caste and creed. There are so many castes mixed here. I don’t want to take *prasāda* in the company of some of the people here, nor do I want to be touched by them.”

Śrīla Gurudeva was disappointed by his father’s comment.

Seeing that this perspective was not in line with *guru*, *sādhu* and *śāstra*, he replied, “O father, I am living here amongst these people. I am your son, and I am a Śāṅḍilya Gotrīya *brāhmaṇa* (the dynasty coming directly from Śāṅḍilya Ṛṣi). Some of these boys also come from *brāhmaṇa* families, and even those who are not *brāhmaṇas* by birth have had the sacred thread ceremony, and they also have their *iṣṭa-deva*. Furthermore, they are worshipping Kṛṣṇa every day, and they are chanting their *gāyatrī-mantras*. They are very strict followers of *bhakti*. How can you consider that they are inferior to caste *brāhmaṇas*? Moreover, Svayam Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

cātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ / guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ
tasya karttāram api mām / viddhy akarttāram avyayam
Bhagavad-gītā (4.13)

The four-fold system of *varṇas* (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*) was created by Me according to divisions of quality (*guṇa*) and work (*karma*). Although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer (*akarttā*), being unchangeable, and that I am not the direct instigator.

Śrīla Gurudeva then quoted from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

yasya yal lakṣaṇaṁ proktaṁ / puṁso varṇābhivyañjakam
yad anyatrāpi dṛśyeta / tat tenaiva vinirdiśet
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.11.35)

If someone shows the characteristic symptoms of being a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or *śūdra*, although they may appear in a different class, then they should be most certainly accepted according to those symptoms, their qualifications, and actions; not by their birth.

Śrīla Gurudeva also related the pastime of the clash between the *mahā-yogī brāhmaṇa* Durvāsā Ṛṣi and Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, who was a *kṣatriya*.

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja used to perform austerities on the day of Ekādaśī, and on the following day (Dvādaśī), he would observe the breaking of his fast (*pāraṇa*). *Pāraṇa* must be observed within a specific time period, otherwise the result of performing the Ekādaśī vow will be lost.

One Dvādaśī morning, the time to break his fast was quickly approaching. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja had already given charity, and was performing *pūjā* of Śrī Bhagavān, when the sage Durvāsā Ṛṣi unexpectedly arrived.

Mahārāja Ambarīṣa offered *praṇāma* to Durvāsā Ṛṣi. “I am very fortunate to have an exalted person like you as my guest on Dvādaśī,” he said to the ṛṣi. “Please honour *prasāda* here.”

“Thank you, I am happy to accept your courtesies,” said Durvāsā Ṛṣi, “but first I am going to Yamunā to bath; I will return shortly and honour *prasāda* here.”

The *brāhmaṇa* Durvāsā Ṛṣi deliberately delayed his bathing at the river Yamunā. In the meantime, the allotted time period for breaking the Ekādaśī fast was coming to an end. “What am I to do?” thought Ambarīṣa Mahārāja. “If I do not break my fast in time, I will lose the results of my Ekādaśī austerities, and I will also lose my *bhakti*. On the other hand, if I do not honour my *brāhmaṇa* guest, and if I myself eat before I serve him, he may curse me, and my whole dynasty will be finished. What to do?”

Mahārāja Ambarīṣa discussed the situation with well-informed and well-behaved *brāhmaṇas* who were advanced in the culture of *bhakti*, and finally decided: “It will be better if I complete the observance of my vow and maintain my Ekādaśī *pāraṇa* by breaking my fast within this time period (*muhūrta*) of Dvādaśī, otherwise there will be a flaw in my observance of my vow.”

The scripture states that *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas who fast fully on Ekādaśī, even from water, may break their fast the next day with a little water or the Lord’s bathing water (*caraṇāmṛta*). In other words, they should break their fast by drinking rather than by eating; this maintains their vow (*vrata*) properly. Accordingly, Ambarīṣa

Mahārāja offered *praṇāma* to the deities and to all the Vaiṣṇavas and *brāhmaṇas*, and took a few drops of *caraṇāmṛtam* on his tongue. Drinking water may be accepted as eating, and also as not eating. Thus, he preserved his observance of Ekādaśī by breaking his fast at the correct time, and at the same time, avoided dishonouring Durvāsā Ṛṣi, as he did not eat before feeding his guest.

After breaking his fast, Ambarīṣa Mahārāja meditated upon the Supreme Lord within his heart and waited for Durvāsā's return. When Durvāsā Ṛṣi came back, he could understand by his mystic power that Ambarīṣa Mahārāja had drunk water without his permission.

“Oh! You are so desperate?” the ṛṣi said. “You are a *kṣatriya*, and I am very high class *brāhmaṇa*, and still you do not know that you should honour *brāhmaṇas*? You have committed an offense. You have invited me to eat as your guest, but you yourself have eaten first. Alright then, I'll teach you a good lesson because of your misconduct.”

Durvāsā Ṛṣi quickly pulled a matted lock from his head and threw it on the ground. At once, a fiery demon named Kṛtya manifested and started moving threateningly towards Ambarīṣa Mahārāja. The king remained calm. As the fiery demon drew near, the Lord's disc, Sudarśana *cakra*, suddenly appeared to protect Ambarīṣa Mahārāja. Destroying the demon in an instant, the *cakra* turned around and headed toward Durvāsā Ṛṣi.

Greatly afflicted by the Sudarśana *cakra*'s blazing fire, Durvāsā Ṛṣi immediately fled to Satyaloka, and begged Lord Brahmā for help. Brahmā said, “I cannot give you shelter. If I give you shelter, I myself will be burned by the blazing Sudarśana *cakra*.” Concerned for his life, Durvāsā Ṛṣi then rushed to Śivaloka; but Lord Śiva told him, “Oh, *beṭā*, I cannot give you shelter from this Sudarśana *cakra*. I also cannot tolerate it. This *cakra* belongs to Śrī Bhagavān, so you will have to seek help in Nārāyaṇaloka.”

The desperate Durvāsā Ṛṣi hastened to Nārāyaṇaloka, with the burning *cakra* in hot pursuit. However, Lord Nārāyaṇa told Durvāsā, “I cannot help you. Let me explain. When you have a thorn in your foot, you cannot remove it from your head. You have to remove it from your foot.”

Then Lord Nārāyaṇa said to Durvāsā Ṛṣi:

*ahaṁ bhakta-parādhīno / hy asvatantra iva dvija
sādhubhir grasta-hṛdayo / bhaktair bhakta-jana-priyaḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.4.63)*

I am completely under the control of My devotees. Indeed, I am not at all independent. Because My devotees are completely devoid of material desires, I sit only within the cores of their hearts. What to speak of My devotee, even those who are devotees of My devotee are very dear to Me.

Lord Nārāyaṇa smiled and told the ṛṣi that he must take shelter of Ambariṣa Mahārāja and ask for forgiveness. His offence would then, and only then, be nullified and the Sudarśana *cakra* would go away.

After recounting this instructive pastime, Śrīla Gurudeva then said to Paṇḍita Baleśvaranātha, “Father, please consider these things carefully. At one time, in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, the *brāhmaṇas* declined to feed Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Later, they realized their lack of devotion, and thus it has been said:

*dṛṣṭvā strīṅām bhagavati / kṛṣṇe bhaktim alaukikīm
ātmānam ca tayā hīnam / anutaptā vyagarhayan
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.23.39)*

Observing their wives’ pure transcendental devotion for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and understanding that they themselves were devoid of such devotion; the *brāhmaṇas* lamented and condemned themselves.”

Śrīla Gurudeva cited many other quotations and related other pastimes from the scriptures to emphasize the superiority of Vaiṣṇavas over the *brāhmaṇas*. One of the quotations was from *Skanda Purāṇa*:

*mahā-prasāde govinde nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave
svalpa-puṇya-vatām rājan viśvāso naiva jāyate*

Skanda Purāṇa, Uttara-khaṇḍa

Persons who do not possess sufficient pious credits can never develop faith in *mahā-prasāda*, in Śrī Govinda, in the holy name of the Lord, or in the Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrīla Gurudeva told his father, “Unfortunately due to insufficient pious credits, you have insufficient faith in the Vaiṣṇavas, and as a result, how can you be qualified to have *prasāda* with them?”

He continued, “Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna in *Ādi Purāṇa*, ‘O Kaunteya, dear son of Kuntī-devī, Arjuna, you should only worship the Vaiṣṇavas. Don’t worship the demigods. In the material world, even in the heavenly planets, the abode of the demigods, no one is as worshipable as the Vaiṣṇavas. So, worship only the Vaiṣṇavas.’

“Nevertheless, you are indicating that these Vaiṣṇavas are from a caste inferior to you. If this is truly the way you feel, you can take *prasāda* elsewhere. If you don’t have respect for these devotees, I don’t want to arrange for your *prasāda* here. Of course, I respect you insofar as you are my father, but if you lack respect for these Vaiṣṇavas, I will request that you not take here. You can go anywhere else and make your own arrangement.”

Śrīla Gurudeva did not want his father to consider a Vaiṣṇava in terms of his source of birth. One should not think, “This one is an American Vaiṣṇava; that one is an Indian Vaiṣṇava. This one is a black Vaiṣṇava; that one is a white Vaiṣṇava. This one is a *śūdra* Vaiṣṇava; that one is a *brāhmaṇa* Vaiṣṇava.” No, a Vaiṣṇava is a Vaiṣṇava; he is not only a *brāhmaṇa*, but the best of the *brāhmaṇa* servants of God. Vaiṣṇavas are beyond caste and creed. Those who are in the *viśuddha* line of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda and who perform transcendental *sevā* (*bhakti*) should be offered all respect, no matter in which family they took birth. Śrī Bhagavān says: “*bhaktiyāham ekayā grāhyāh* – I can be obtained only

by *bhakti*” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.21). When they fully surrender themselves, the *bhaktas* are above the three qualities of nature (goodness, passion and ignorance) and attain a transcendental nature.

*prabhu kahe – vaiṣṇava deha ‘prākṛta’ kabhu naya
‘apṛākṛta’ deha bhaktera ‘cid ānanda maya*

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “The body of a *bhakta* is never material. It is considered to be transcendental, full of spiritual bliss.”

After hearing all these evidences and truths from Śrīla Gurudeva, his father gave up his previous ideas and just took *prasāda* with all the devotees.

ASSOCIATION WITH ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVEDĀNTA SVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

Before his initiation, Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa had met with Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja several times. At that time, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja’s name was Śrī Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu. Abhaya Prabhu had great affection and deep *śraddhā* for his dear godbrother Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, whom he would visit regularly, both before and after the establishment of the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti.

The Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti was established in 1942 in Bose Para Lane, Calcutta (Kolkata) by Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja (at that time, Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī) and Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja (at that time Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu) were its co-founders, and they performed inauguration ceremony. As Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja himself wrote in 1968 to Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, in his native Bengali, “I have a very close connection with Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. You yourself, and particularly Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, know

well that I am one of the three persons who founded Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti”

A few days after Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa’s initiation on Gaura Pūrṇima in 1947, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja (at that time Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu) came to Navadvīpa-dhāma to see Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa offered his *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* to Śrī Abhaya Prabhu, who heartily congratulated him, saying how very happy he was that Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa had received initiation from such a bona fide and exalted spiritual master, who was so very near and dear to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda. Śrī Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu then remarked to his godbrother Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja that it was a pleasure to see that he had initiated such a sincere, qualified non-Bengali disciple.

Many years later, remembering Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Gurudeva commented, “He was always so affectionate towards me. Whenever he would come to Navadvīpa, I used to take care of him, give him *prasāda*, and ask philosophical questions.” Together they would discuss philosophy at great length.

For many years, Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu had been involved in various pharmaceutical businesses. He had been the manager of Dr. Bose’s laboratory, the Bengal Chemical. After that, he managed another big laboratory in Lucknow, and then the Prayāga Pharmacy, a big medical shop based in Allahabad. When his business was at its peak, India’s former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and other relatives would come to purchase medicines from his shop. However, after some time Abhaya Caraṇa Prabhu encountered many difficulties and eventually lost his shop. He then started working as a medical representative and distributor.

As the years went by, he considered renouncing family life. By that time, Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja had known each other very well for many years. Śrīla Gurudeva was deeply touched to see this respected godbrother of his Guru Mahārāja going here and there distributing medicines. Śrīla Gurudeva approached him affectionately,

“Why are you doing this? Your *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, directly ordered you to preach in the Western countries. Why are you engaged in this way?”

At that time, Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu had rented a room in Mathurā. He hesitated to come to live in the *maṭha*, but Śrīla Gurudeva picked up his suitcase and with loving force brought him to Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā, where he would later request Abhaya Prabhu to take *sannyāsa*.

Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu resided there for some months writing his books and preaching to the devotees. When *parama-gurudeva* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja came to Mathurā from Navadvīpa, Śrīla Gurudeva told him confidentially, “Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu is your friend. He will obey you because you are his elder.”

Parama-gurudeva Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja was a *sannyāsī*, whereas Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu was a householder (*gṛhastha*). *Parama-gurudeva* gently urged him, “Bhaktivedānta Prabhu (Abhaya Prabhu), Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and all the other boys strongly believe that you should take *sannyāsa*. I strongly support this idea as well. You should accept. Do not hesitate to take the renounced order. You are so qualified. You must take *sannyāsa* now. It will be very beneficial.”

At that time, Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu had repeated dreams in which Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda instructed him to take *sannyāsa*, so he took it all as his Guru Mahārāja’s will and finally agreed.

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja remembers, “My godbrother insisted, ‘Bhaktivedānta Prabhu...’ This title was given in my family life. It was offered to me by the Vaiṣṇava society. So he insisted. Actually it was not he who insisted to me. Practically my spiritual master insisted to me through him, saying, ‘You accept.’ Without accepting the renounced order of life, nobody can become a preacher, and he (Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) wanted me to become a preacher. So he forced me through this godbrother who said, “You accept.”⁵¹

⁵¹ From *Their Lasting Relation – An Historical Account* p. 15–16.

Another disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Sanātana Prabhu, who at that time was 90 years old, also appealed to Abhaya Caraṇa Prabhu, “If you take *sannyāsa*, I’ll take *sannyāsa* too.”

So, in 1959, *pūjyapāda* Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu and Śrīla Sanātana Prabhu accepted *sannyāsa* from Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja in the auspicious temple of Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā. Abhaya Caraṇa Prabhu became Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja and Sanātana Prabhu became Bhaktivedānta Muni Mahārāja. Śrīla Gurudeva (who was himself already a *sannyāsī*) arranged the *sannyāsa* initiation ceremony, and did everything for its preparation. Śrīla Gurudeva was also the priest of the *sannyāsa* ceremony, reciting the *yajña-mantras* and carrying out the full procedure. He prepared Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja’s *daṇḍa* and assisted him in all other ways. He also instructed Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja in the regulations of *sannyāsa* and in fine details, such as how to use *dor-kaupīn*; how to use the upper cloth (*uttariya*) and lower cloth (*bahirvāsa*); what is the status and significance of *tri-daṇḍa*; and what is the duty of a *tridaṇḍī sannyāsī*.

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja were dear godbrothers, and Śrīla Gurudeva served, respected and loved Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja like his own *guru*.

Śrīla Gurudeva fondly remembers, “My *gurudeva* then gave Abhaya Caraṇa Prabhu the *sannyāsa-mantra*. The *sannyāsa* name that he gave him is ‘Svāmī’. This is one of the bona fide *sannyāsa* names; it means ‘controller’ and ‘master.’ The title ‘Bhaktivedānta’ had already been awarded in Calcutta by some of his godbrothers, and ‘Mahārāja’ is a formal ending for those in the renounced order. This name ‘Svāmī’ was just fitting, because Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja became the controller of many, many *jīvas*’ hearts, due to his staunch faith in his *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. This is why we affectionately call him ‘Svāmījī’, not in any common disrespectful way, but showing the greatest love and respect.”

When Parama-gurudeva, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī

Mahārāja, started his society, Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, he would not give *sannyāsa* without the title Bhaktivedānta. Today also, and in the future as well, this tradition will continue.

After taking *sannyāsa*, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja started writing more profusely in the English language and six years later he began to travel around the world. He preached powerfully everywhere and systematically established the Kṛṣṇa conciousness movement. He initiated more and more devotees, eventually having thousands of disciples in the West. The enthusiastic followers distributed hundreds of millions of his books and magazines. Śrīla Gurudeva said, “In just a few years he preached all over the world, and after that he finished his duty. Kṛṣṇa called him; he therefore left this world and joined the service of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Conjugal.”

When Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja first heard in October, 1968 that Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja had disappeared from this world and entered *nitya-līlā*, he told his assembled American disciples in Seattle, Washington, “So I am feeling now very much obliged to my Godbrother, because he carried out the wish of my spiritual master and forced me to accept this *sannyāsa* order. This Godbrother, His Holiness Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, is no longer in this world. He has entered Kṛṣṇa’s abode... I did not want to accept this *sannyāsa* order but this Godbrother forced me and said, ‘You must.’... [He] did this favor for me because he was an ocean of mercy, *krpāmbudhi*. So we offer our obeisances to the Vaiṣṇavas, the representatives of the Lord, they are so kind. They bring the ocean of mercy for distribution to the suffering humanity. So I am offering my respectful obeisances unto His Holiness Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.”

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja laid the foundation for preaching in the West and on July 14th, 1967, he wrote Śrīla Gurudeva saying, “the foundation has become good here.”

(In the following volumes there will be more about Śrīla Gurudeva’s association with Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja and how after his disappearance, many preachers came to the West, but among them all, Śrīla Gurudeva is the monarch.)

Śrīla Gurudeva

Gallery

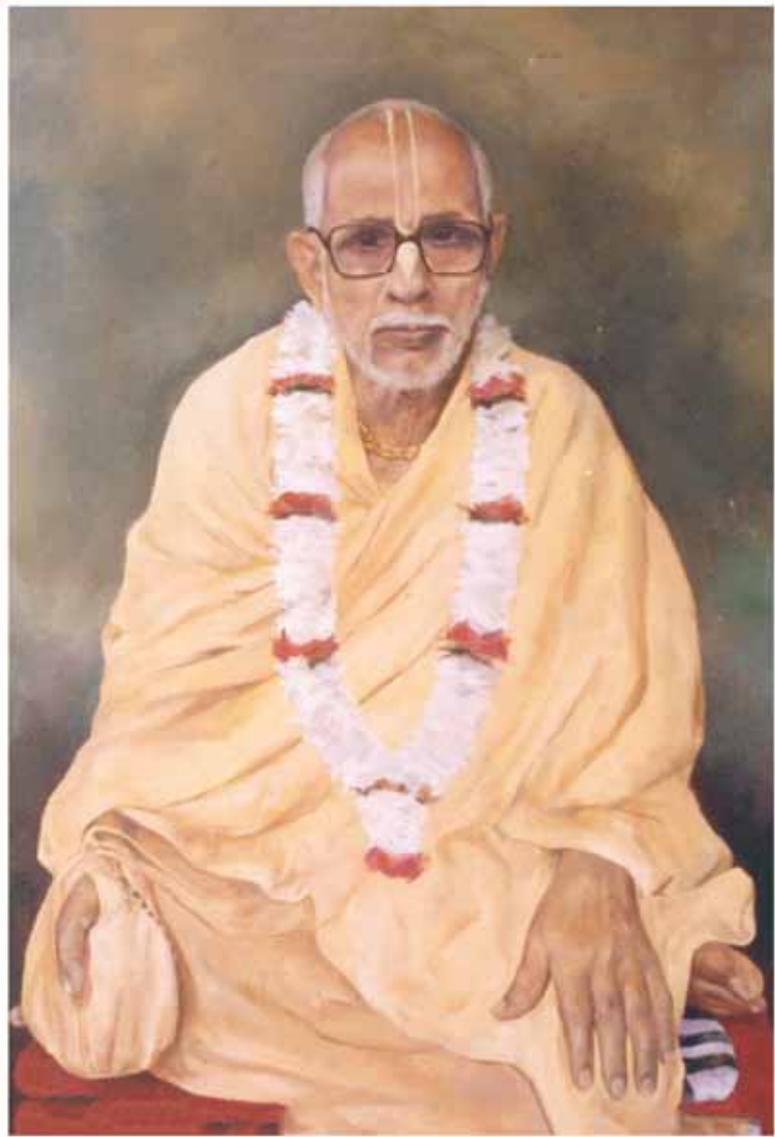




Śrīla Gurudeva's *purvāśrama* (p. 42)



Śrīla Gurudeva took birth in a highly educated and respected *brāhmana* family, in the famous village of Tiwaripur, in the Buxar district of Bihar, India. (p.42)



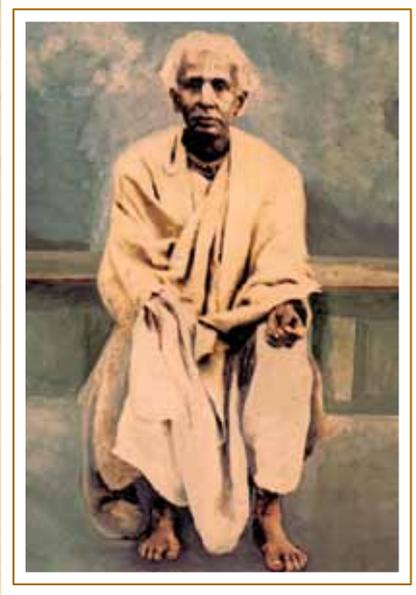
Narottamānanda Brahmācārī [who later became Śrīpad Bhaktikamala Madhūsudana Gosvāmī Mahārāja] was personally responsible for bringing Śrīla Gurudeva and Śrīla Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja to their *guru*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Navadvīpa. (p. 105)



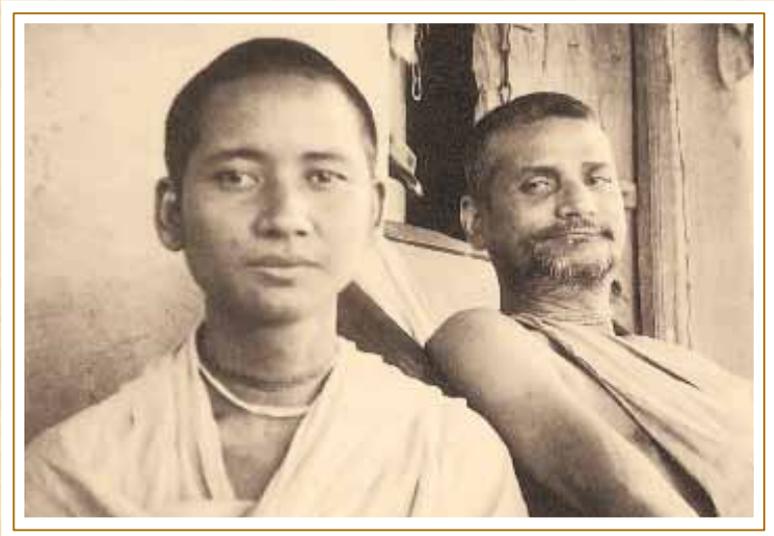
On Gaura Pūrṇimā in 1947, about three months after arriving at Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrīla Gurudeva received both *harināma* and *dikṣā* initiations at one time from Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. After initiation his name became Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa dāsa. (p. 145)



Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmi Mahārāja [center] observed the friendly mood that Śrīla Gurudeva [left] had toward all the devotees and awarded him the title *Bhakta-bandhava*. (p. 146)



Narahari Sevā-Vigraha
Prabhu –
Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
Thākura Prabhupāda, had
given him the title Sevā-
Vigraha: 'the embodiment
of service'. (p. 143)

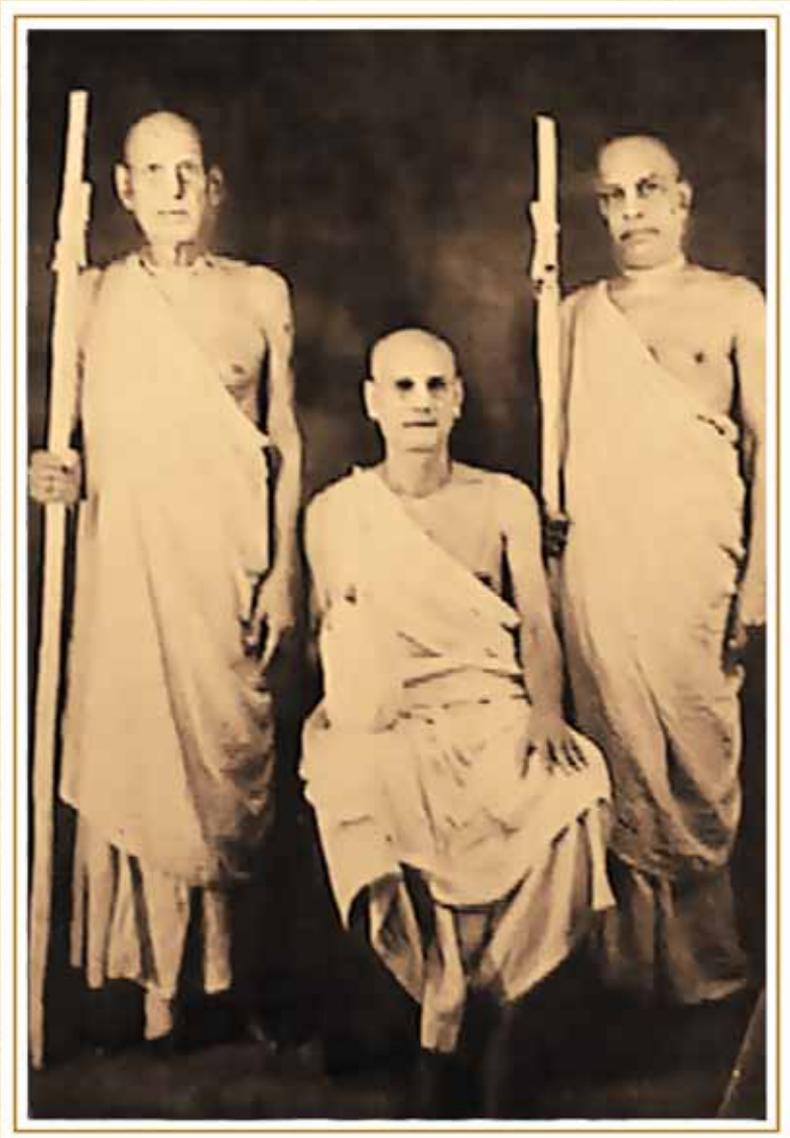


Anāṅga-mohana served our Parama-gurudeva as his personal assistant. (p. 147)

After our Parama-
gurudeva's personal
assistant Anaṅga-
Mohana Brahma-
cārī
left this world,
Śrī Gaura Nārāyaṇa
became an intimate
servant of his gurudeva.
(p. 207)



Taking *sannyāsa* on Gaura Pūrṇimā, 1952 (p. 208)



In 1959, *pūjyapāda* Abhaya Caraṇāravinda Prabhu and Śrīla Sanātana Prabhu accepted *sannyāsa* from Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja in the auspicious temple of Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā. (p. 240)



Śrī Keśavaji Gauḍīya Maṭha, 1959



Śrī Keśavaji Gauḍīya Maṭha, 2009

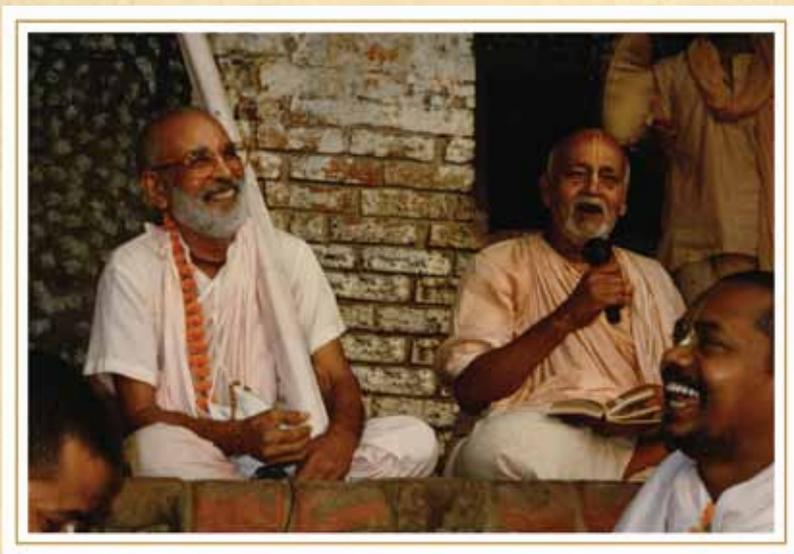


Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja [right photo] took birth in a respected religious family in the village of Pilajaṅga in Khulnā district, East Bengal, on December 23, 1921. His father's name was Śrī Satiśacandra Ghoṣa and his mother's name was Śrīmatī Bhagavati-devī. [above photo with Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja in childhood] (p. 211)



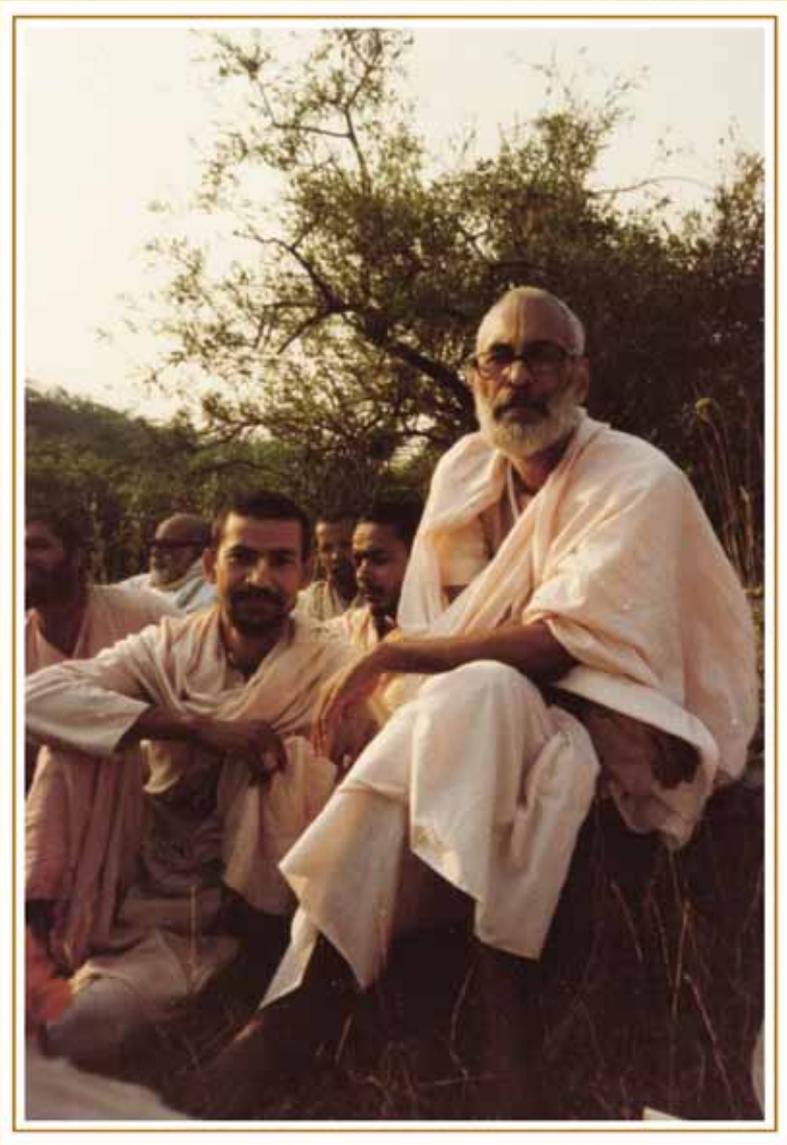
Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama
Gosvāmī Mahārāja (p. 219)

“It was him who taught me how to perform *kīrtana*, how to preach, and how to collect donations. Sometimes, in a very loving way, he would also rebuke me. My Guru Mahārāja never rebuked me, but Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja would do so with so much love and affection. We had such a close connection that sometimes our discussions would become very heated. Śrīla Trivikrama Mahārāja used to preach all over India, and when he would go to preach with our Guru Mahārāja, I would go with them as Guru Mahārāja’s *sevaka*.” (Śrīla Gurudeva, p.222)





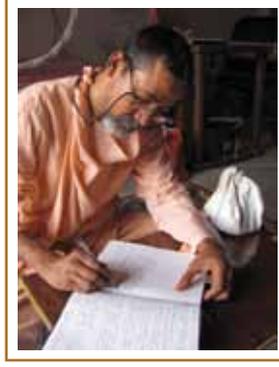
In those early years of *pūjyapāda* Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *sannyāsa*, he preached the holy name throughout Vraja-maṇḍala. (p. 224)



Śrīla Gurudeva begins serving in Mathurā (p. 223) “We will start here and later we can spread out into Vraja-maṇḍala.”



Śrīla Gurudeva is kindly guiding us and illuminating our path so that we can properly execute the genuine processes of pure *bhakti*, without which there is no question of becoming eternally happy. (p. 228)



About the Author

Svāmī B. V. Mādhava (Dr. N. K. Brahmaçārī, Ph.D.) was born into a family of Vaiṣṇavas in Midnapur, West Bengal, in 1956. He has been a full-time practising monk in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition since 1979 and accepted initiation in disciplic succession from Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a Vaiṣṇava of the highest level with all the characteristics of a true *guru* described in the scriptures. For nearly thirty years, Svāmī B. V. Mādhava has served continuously as the *sevaka*, or personal servant, of his instructing *guru*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Like his initiating *guru*, his instructing *guru* is also a Vaiṣṇava of the topmost calibre and a true *guru*, as described in the sacred texts of the tradition. In March 2000, the author was given the sacred order of *sannyāsa*, the highest level of a renunciant.

In 1977, Svāmī B. V. Mādhava graduated in Sanskrit with honours from the University of Kolkata. Thus, the author is fluent in Bengali, Sanskrit and Hindi. This has allowed him to read and study the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas, Itihāsas and later writings that comprise the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava canon in the original languages in which they were composed. Accordingly, Svāmī B. V. Mādhava is in a privileged position to undertake this study. He has dedicated the better part of his life to serving his *guru* directly as his *sevaka*. Thus, he has met all the requirements of a disciple, as set out in the Vaiṣṇava scriptures. This renders this contribution particularly authoritative and valuable.

