




# My BELOVED MASTERS

*The Incomparable Commanders of  
Śrīla Prabhupāda's Army*

Inspired by the lectures of  
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTI VIJÑĀNA BHĀRATĪ GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



*śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ*

# **My Beloved Masters**

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THE INCOMPARABLE COMMANDERS OF ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA'S ARMY

Inspired by the lectures of  
**Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

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## Introduction

In his poem *Vaiṣṇava Ke*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda has described that the main impediments to *bhajana* are *kanaka* (wealth), *kāminī* (objects of desire) and *pratiṣṭhā* (prestige). Although abandoning the thirst for *kanaka* and *kāminī* is certainly not without its challenges, the thirst for *pratiṣṭhā*, Māyā-devī's final assault, is even more formidable. Its subtlety allows it to remain deeply rooted in the heart without being detected by others or, tragically, even oneself.

*pratiṣṭhāśā dhṛṣṭā śvapaca-ramaṇī me hṛdi naṭet  
kathaṁ sādhu-premā sprśati śucir etan nanu manaḥ  
sadā tvaṁ sevasva prabhu-dayita-sāmantam atulaṁ  
yathā tām niṣkāśya tvaritam iha taṁ veśayati saḥ*

Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā (7)

In this verse, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has explained that the immaculate sun of *prema*, divine love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, will never rise in the heart as long as a hankering for *pratiṣṭhā* dwells there. Are the sincere practitioners on the path of *bhakti* then hopeless? “No!” Śrīla Dāsa Gosvāmī assures us. “There is a way!”

He explains, “*sadā tvaṁ sevasva prabhu dayita sāmantam atulaṁ*—always serve our Prabhu’s incomparably powerful commanders.” These words refer to the beloved (*dayita*) and incomparably (*atulaṁ*) powerful commanders (*sāmantam*) in the armies of either Prabhu Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Mahāprabhu Śrī Caitanyadeva—such as Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī and others. However, many different meanings arise in my heart when I read, remember or recite this phrase. A few of these meanings are as follows:

1. *Prabhu-dayita* refers to Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who revealed his eternal identity as Śrī Vārṣabhanāvī-dayita dāsa, and *sāmantam-atulaṁ* refers to his ‘incomparably powerful commanders,’ like my most worshipful *gurupāda-padma*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.
2. *Prabhu* refers to ‘my beloved masters,’ the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, *dayita* refers to Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (Śrī Vārṣabhanāvī-dayita dāsa), and *sāmantam-atulaṁ* refers to ‘the incomparable commanders’ of his army.
3. *Prabhu* refers to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and *dayita-sāmantam atulaṁ* refers

to his ‘most beloved and incomparably powerful commander,’ Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

4. *Prabhu* refers to *śrī guru*, and *dayita* refers to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who is *sāmantam atulaṁ*, an ‘incomparably powerful commander.’
5. *Prabhu* refers to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and *dayita-sāmantam atulaṁ* refers either to His ‘most beloved and incomparably powerful commander,’ Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, or to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who appeared as a bright sun on the horizon of my good fortune.

Although these meanings may not perfectly comply with the rules of Sanskrit grammar, I request the devotees to accept the essence of the intended import of these explanations. The title of this book is inspired by the second of the above mentioned meanings.

When Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His associates appeared before Śrīla Prabhupāda in a vision and instructed him to immerse himself in the service of preaching, the Lord promised, “I will arrange for the required men and money.” We can therefore infer that those who took shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda were associates of the Lord sent by Him. Hence, they too are included among the beloved, incomparable commanders sent by Mahāprabhu, and constantly serving them banishes the deviancy of *pratiṣṭhā* from the heart.

It is the duty of an army commander to lead his troops to victory in defeating the enemy, thereby protecting and expanding his king’s empire. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, the foremost commander of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s army, was so eager to serve the Lord’s order that without selfish interest and at risk to His own life, He delivered His master’s message to even the most sinful persons.

Just as a commander executes every order given by the ruler of his nation, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, on the command of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, manifested the pastime places of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa that had become hidden over the passage of time. Additionally, they personally directed many devotees to the path of *bhakti* by providing guidance and composed many *bhakti* literatures in which they established the teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and conclusively defeated the heretical doctrines of their opponents—*apadharma* (improper religion), *upadharma* (false religion) and

*chala-dharma* (cheating religion).

An army's commanders peacefully tolerate all hardships for the protection of their country. They perform their duties despite any hostile conditions they might encounter. In the same manner, the army of Śrīman Mahāprabhu accepts all sorts of difficulties in order to fulfill His command to guard the realm of *bhakti* from the attack of envious opponents.

Now the question arises: How can we possibly serve these beloved, incomparable commanders of our Prabhu in perpetuity once they conceal their pastimes in this world and enter into the Lord's eternal pastimes? The answer is that at such a time, they are served by repeatedly hearing, reciting and remembering the conceptual legacy they practiced and preached.

*vaiṣṇavera guṇa-gāna, karôye jīvera trāṇa*  
*śuniyāchi sādhu-guru-mukhe*

Śrī Gopāla-govinda Māhanta  
Śrīla Prabhupāda-vandanā (18)

Singing the glories of the Vaiṣṇavas causes the conditioned souls' deliverance; this I have heard from the mouths of *sādhus* and *śrī guru*.

Remembering Vaiṣṇavas is our prosperity, and forgetting them causes calamity. With this in mind, when *vaiṣṇava-sārvabhauma* Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja came to know that our most worshipful *parama-gurudeva* Śrīla Prabhupāda was an expert in astrology, he mercifully instructed him to publish the *Śrī Navadvīpa-pañjikā* calendar. He told him that in it, he should note the appearance and disappearance days of Vaiṣṇavas, so that when such holy days arrive, the community of ardent devotees may properly hear about, glorify and remember them. Indeed, it is an offence not to remember them on their appearance or disappearance days.

From the very beginning of my residency in the *maṭha*, I witnessed that on the disappearance and appearance days of Vaiṣṇavas, my most worshipful Guru Mahārāja, *om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata śrī* Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, as well as *om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata śrī* Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Puri Gosvāmī Mahārāja and the many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda would retire whichever book or series was regularly being read in their daily classes to instead speak on the specialty of that particular day. For many years without fail, I have followed their legacy by consulting the Vaiṣṇava calendar practically every morning and, as much as possible, accordingly observed the holy occasions recorded therein.



Although the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* glorified in this publication may at times appear to have different approaches to serving Śrī Viṣṇu and the Vaiṣṇavas, sincere *sādhakas* should view such differences not as inconsistencies or deviations, but as specialties. If a person compares the various *ācāryas*' conduct without obtaining the necessary qualification, it only proves he has not learned the first thing about the transcendental nature of the Vaiṣṇavas. Such a critic undoubtedly invites his own destruction:

*je pāpiṣṭha eka vaiṣṇavera pakṣa haya  
anya vaiṣṇavere ninde sei jāya kṣaya*

*Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata  
(Madhya-khaṇḍa 13.161)*

Those sinful persons who take the side of one Vaiṣṇava and blaspheme another are certainly ruined.

Therefore, taking into account their conditioned nature, *sādhakas* should avoid approaching matters beyond their capacity of understanding, lest they cause their own annihilation. Those who are qualified to see beyond the veil of external appearances and distinguish between the Vaiṣṇavas' marginal and intrinsic characteristics, however, are never bewildered.

Just as a cook may prepare a delicious curry by mixing two generally incompatible ingredients such as jaggery and chili, and just as the dissimilarity of the sounds of assorted instruments in *kīrtana*—*karatāla*, *mṛdanga* and *kaṇsa*—is secondary when they all converge into a single, cohesive rhythm, similarly, although the various *ācāryas*' approaches may be multifarious, the end result of their collective preaching is tastefully harmonious. An inexperienced person can only attempt an approximation, and therefore, whatever he produces will be laughable; he can never effect the palatable result of an experienced cook or *kīrtanīya*, who understands how to properly employ diversity to his advantage.

There is another consideration in this: for intelligent discerning persons, no amount of secondary ingredients can make up for the absence of the primary ingredient, whereas the mere presence of the primary ingredient is sufficient to arouse appreciation, even without the support of secondary ingredients. For example, a lack of *bhāva*, or heartfelt sincerity, is for a singer a fatal flaw, no matter how melodious, in-key or on-beat he may be. Inversely, if a chef adds just the right amount of salt to a curry, no deficiency or overabundance of the other spices used will displease his patrons.

In this way, the exclusive surrender to Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas exemplified by the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* described in this publication should be taken as the key ingredient in their preaching, and all other secondary circumstances should be seen in light of this one harmonizing and unifying quality.

During his early days in the United States, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja's disciples found a copy of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Śrī Caitanya: His Life and Precepts* in a library. This demonstrates that Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda's teachings reached the West without him having to set foot outside of India. In the same way, although Śrīla Prabhupāda and the majority of his disciples never physically left India, it is by their combined dedicated efforts that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda's conceptual legacy is gaining recognition due to extensive preaching.

Although a few of my beloved masters—the incomparable commanders of Śrīla Prabhupāda's army—acted 'on stage,' the majority served from 'behind the curtain.' One who has truly performed *sādhū-saṅga* will be blessed with the ability to comprehend the proper method by which to honor such Vaiṣṇavas and thereby recognize and appreciate their tremendous contributions. Otherwise, the devotee will fail at any attempts at reconciliation, and his condition will be like that of a young child who, upon watching a television program, sees only the actors appearing on-screen and remains unaware of the laborious efforts of show's director, writers, producers, cinematographer, designers and artists working off-camera. Indeed, his disinterest during the closing credits reflects his ignorance.

We are greatly delighted to see that gradually, devotees are emerging within the Vaiṣṇava community who are developing a firm grasp of the multitude of deep concepts at hand and offering due respect unhesitatingly.

In my lectures and conversations over the years, I often illustrate the glories and qualities of those disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda with whom, by the ceaseless compassion of my Guru Mahārāja, I was blessed with the opportunity to associate and serve. Although I have associated with many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda other than those glorified in this abridged edition, because of my advanced age, I am unable to recollect the many memorable experiences I had with them. Sometimes, by their mercy, such remembrances appear from the archives of my memory when the need arises. My hope is to include my memories of these incomparable commanders of Śrīla Prabhupāda's army in a future edition of this book. However, whether this actualizes depends upon on

the sweet, independent will of these personalities.

Until today, no one has ever attempted to publish my anecdotes about Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples, whom I regard as saviors of the world, nor had it occurred to me that my experiences, conceptions and narrations were of a caliber worth publishing. But now, at almost ninety-one years of age, when my condition is such that I may at any moment leave this world by the will of the Lord, a number of devotees have become convinced that my glorifications of these Vaiṣṇavas would benefit the entire world.

For this reason, they began collecting and transcribing whatever I spoke. Whenever they felt they were unable to establish the essence of a particular story, they would consult with me, and I would resolve the issue with ever-increasing enthusiasm. They then edited that adjusted draft and organized its contents. Incidentally, this process sparked an even deeper level of remembrance in me, thus unearthing long since forgotten memories of the Vaiṣṇavas.

This publication has been presented in the style known as *bhāva-anuvāda*, which clearly conveys the moods and intended meanings of my spoken words. As with any anthology of anecdotes, the stories herein are independent accounts that can be read without concern for sequence. The reader can start and stop at any point without loss.

I am deeply appreciative of the devotees involved in this publication for their ardent efforts and genuine desire to preserve the glories of the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda described herein. In this book, the publishers have, in a manner utterly devoid of speculation, presented the *vāñī* and conduct of our *guru-varga* purely, just as I have heard and witnessed it.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to present the Vaiṣṇavas in order of their seniority. In the words of Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī, who narrated the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates, “*keha kôribāre nāre jyeṣṭha-laghu-krama*—the sequence of who was senior and who was junior could not be given” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 10.5). Therefore, just as Śrī Devakīnandana dāsa has expressed in his *Vaiṣṇava-vandanā*, I say, “*karma-bhaṅga doṣa nā laibā*—please do not take offense to my deviating from the proper sequence.” I beg forgiveness for my inability to do so.

I am now old and the diminishing strength of my memory presents substantial impediments. I am unable to do anything but penance and remember the words “*nija karma-doṣe, ei deha hōilā bhajanera pratibandha*—due to the faults of my actions, this body has become an obstacle to performing *bhajana*.”

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has cautioned that one who does not glorify the Vaiṣṇavas is guilty of ungratefulness. I am therefore relieved that today, this publication serves as a testament to my undying gratitude to the Vaiṣṇavas from whom I have received everything.

The example the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda have set in the service they rendered to their *guru* and their firm conviction in him is our ideal. Indeed, it is our very life. May such conviction appear in our hearts. With this prayer, I conclude my introduction.

“*Vaiṣṇavera nāma labā, āra kichu nā karibā*—I will do nothing other than take the names of the Vaiṣṇavas.”

Vaiṣṇava-dāsānudāsa,

Śrī Bhakti Vijñāna Bhārātī

The disappearance day of  
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita  
Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja  
2 February, 2017

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sarvasva Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## His bold competence

Once, in Burma, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sarvasva Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja showed up at the British governor’s house in a horse-drawn cart. The governor was furious with his gatekeeper and guards. “Even big, important officers do not have the nerve to enter here riding on a horse. How did this *sādhū* get in here on a horse-drawn cart? Why did you let him inside?”

Because Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja spoke English very well, he could understand everything the Governor was saying. He was accustomed to lecturing in English as per the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and so he did not hesitate to speak to the governor in English. He said, “I request you not to become angry with these people. They only let me in because I showed them the letters from the Governor General.” Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja handed him the handwritten letters, which were personally addressed to Śrīla Mahārāja.

The governor was astonished. “Who are you?” he demanded. “From where have you come? And why did the Governor General write you these letters? I too receive letters from him, but to this day, I have never received a single letter with his signature on it. They are always marked with the words ‘from the Governor General.’ And you have not one, not two, but three letters, penned with his own hand, no less.” As he said this, he escorted Śrīla Mahārāja into his chambers with the utmost regard.

Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja explained, “I first met the Governor General when I submitted a proposal to him in Kolkata. I proposed that the government allocate land for my *gurudeva*’s mission and assist in our preaching. He asked me about the mission, and I explained that its goal is to benefit the whole world.

“ ‘Frankly, I cannot have a part in anything that benefits a particular caste or creed,’ he told me.

“I boldly asked him, ‘If I can prove you have assisted a particular caste or religious group in the past, will you agree to also assist us by agreeing to my proposal?’

“The Governor General hung his head and remained silent. He was not angered by my statement, but pleased. He said, ‘I appreciate those who speak to me straightforwardly, as you have just now.’

“After conversing for a long while, we developed a mutual friendship.

Therefore, whenever I sent him messages on his birthday and other occasions, he replied with personal, handwritten letters. I have come to you today to request you to similarly assist in my *gurudeva*'s preaching mission."

In this way, Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja convinced many dignitaries to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission. He used to say, "When Śrīla Prabhupāda read the letters the Governor General sent me, he was very pleased and said, 'My joy knows no bound when I see our *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* going from place to place and acquainting people with their competence.'"

### **According honor to the right object at the right time**

Once, when Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja was preaching in Burma, the head of the Bengali committee there told him, "Mahārāja, you have come during the time of Durgā-pūjā. Who will listen to you speak about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu or Śrī Kṛṣṇa if everyone is busy worshipping Goddess Durgā?"

Śrīla Giri Mahārāja replied, "There are three types of official telegraphs: standard, express and state. When a state telegraph arrives at any office, the staff regards the messages of any standard or express telegraphs that may have arrived as insignificant by comparison. The priority shifts in favor of the state telegraph, and the staff deploys its entire energy in fulfilling the instructions therein.

"Similarly, the golden opportunity to hear about Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the teachings and exemplary character of His identical manifestation—Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the savior of this age of Kali—affords infinitely more benefit than the worship of His external potency, Durgā-devī. One who does not discard the worship of Durgā-devī to take advantage of this opportunity will be deprived of its glorious results. By neglecting to understand the comparative significance of two objects, a person fails to accord them due honor and thereby cheats himself. In this way, he becomes the loser."

### **Serving his godbrothers financially**

If any *brahmacārī* or *sannyāsī* happened to be in need, Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja would immediately send him money. For instance, when Guru Mahārāja was collecting money for the bail of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, and a number of other devotees who had ended up in jail due to false allegations, Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja handed Guru Mahārāja forty-five of the fifty

rupees he had to his name.

Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī) was once visited by his godbrother Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya on the day of Ekādaśī in his *maṭha*, which was at the time a rented house at Bospada Lane in Kolkata. Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī was greatly distressed that day by the fact that he did not have a single *paisa* to serve his godbrother during his visit. Miraculously, a sparrow dropped a small packet containing six-and-a-half *annas* (about forty *paisā*) in the courtyard, and with that he was able to serve his godbrother. That same day, he also received a money order for one hundred *rupees* from Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who had tracked him down and sent it after hearing he had left Śrī Caitanya Maṭha without taking anything with him.

When Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja went to preach in the West, he did not take any money with him, but rather resolved to depend entirely on whatever donations he would manage to solicit during his preaching there. When Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja found out about this, he sent a money order to him, as well.

After recovering a few miniscule expenses, Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja would always donate the entire proceeds he received from his preaching to the service of his godbrothers. This was the extent of his detachment. He used to say, “Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura has instructed us:

*jadi thāke bahu dhana, nīje ha'be akiñcana,  
vaiṣṇavera karô upakāra  
jīve dayā anukṣaṇa, rādhā-kṛṣṇa-arādhana,  
karô sadā ha'ye sadācāra*

*Kalyāṇa-kalpataru (1.12.4)*

If you have great wealth, remain detached and use it to serve the Vaisnavas. Always be kind to everyone and engage yourself in the constant worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa while maintaining saintly conduct.

### **His desire before leaving this world**

Śrī Giridhārī Lāla Bhārgava, a resident of Kānpura, donated land in Vṛndāvana to Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja so that he could establish Śrī Vinoda-vāṇī Gauḍīya Maṭha there. Shortly after, the same Śrī Giridhārī Lāla Bhārgava wanted to donate another nearby plot of land for Guru Mahārāja. When Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja was informed of this, he told Guru Mahārāja, “I would be pleased if you accept that land and stay here in Vṛndāvan

on your own. But if you build a *maṭha* so close to mine, my presence here will serve no purpose.”

Guru Mahārāja said, “If Giridhārī Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the lifter of Govardhana Hill, desires to personally give me land through this other Giridhārī (Lāla Bhārgava), then I should abide by His wish. Although I will construct a *maṭha*, I shall remain at your lotus feet, for you are my senior godbrother.”

Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied. “In the presence of your glory, mine is miniscule. Because of your enormous influence, many people follow you wherever you go. What, then, will happen to my mission?”

Appreciating his concern, Guru Mahārāja empathetically reconsidered his previous statement and resolved, “In that case, I will not accept this land. My first priority is to serve the Vaiṣṇavas. I will never position myself to be the cause of their disturbance. I will establish a *maṭha* elsewhere in Vṛndāvan, at some distance from yours. Please do not worry.”

Many years later, Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja expressed his desire to hand over Śrī Vinoda-vāṇī Gauḍīya Maṭha to Guru Mahārāja, who told him, “We have already established a branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha here. It would be unwise of me to accept a second establishment in the same locale. Please see if another godbrother of ours will accept it.”

Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja then took Guru Mahārāja’s hands in his own and said, “It is only after you accept this *maṭha* that I will be able to leave my body peacefully.” Saying this, Śrīla Mahārāja wept. Being profoundly impacted by the intensity of his emotion, Guru Mahārāja agreed to accept Śrī Vinoda-vāṇī Gauḍīya Maṭha.

When Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja later fell from a roof, Guru Mahārāja engaged Śrī Nitāi Prabhu, his own disciple, in Śrīla Mahārāja’s service. Guru Mahārāja was greatly pleased by the way Śrī Nitāi Prabhu served Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

### **Affirming Śrīla Prabhupāda’s blessings**

Guru Mahārāja organized a grand three-day festival to celebrate the deity installation ceremony at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was among the prominent disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda present for the occasion. In his address, he said, “Śrīla Prabhupāda had sent me and Śrīpāda Paramānanda Prabhu to procure this very place for the Gauḍīya Maṭha, but we were unable to do so. Today, I am absolutely certain Śrīla Prabhupāda, being exceedingly pleased that Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja has



constructed a *maṭha* here, is showering his mercy upon him. Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja’s success in securing this location is proof that he is a special recipient of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s unrestrained mercy.”

### **The importance of following rules**

Once, when Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja arrived at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha branch in Kṛṣṇanagara, he realized he had not received the required letter of permission from Guru Mahārāja to stay there for a few days, and that he had altogether forgotten to inform him about his intention to do so. “What should I do now?” he asked me.

“Mahārāja,” I said, “a distinguished person like you has no need for a letter of permission. Everyone here knows who you are and that Guru Mahārāja would never hold you to such formalities.”

Śrīla Mahārāja replied, “That may be true, but it is always good to follow the rules. Although no harm may come to an influential person who takes advantage of his status and neglects to follow procedure, those who are unaware of his qualification and intentions may imitate him and thereby invite inauspiciousness for themselves. By diligently abiding by the rules ourselves, we cause good fortune for everyone.”

### **Honoring the remnants of his godbrothers**

Once, Guru Mahārāja invited many of his godbrothers to a grand festival at the Kolkata branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, which at the time was situated in a rented building on Rāsa-bihārī Avenue. There were three designated places where *prasāda* was served to the devotees attending the event, but Guru Mahārāja’s godbrothers were served *prasāda* in Guru Mahārāja’s quarters. Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the most senior godbrother there, and so we seated him at the head of the line and served him the various *prasāda* preparations first.

Once Guru Mahārāja’s godbrothers had finished honoring *prasāda*, they called out “*Nitāi-Gaura haribolo!*” and got up. One by one, they trickled out the door, until finally, only Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja remained. Just as I was about to collect the discarded leaf plates and take them to the dust bin, I saw Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja begin to honor remnants from each and every one of his godbrothers’ plates. I immediately notified Guru Mahārāja, who was standing just outside the room. Guru Mahārāja then entered the room and, following Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja, also began honoring the remnants of

his godbrothers.

My amazement surpassed all limits. I thought, “Although Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja is the most senior of all Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples present, his humility has fully illuminated the concept of *trṇādapi sunīcatā*, feeling oneself more lowly than straw, which is the chief pillar of the Vaiṣṇava world.”

When I found an opportune moment, I sought understanding from Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja regarding his astonishing act. I told him, “As a measure to guard against blind faith, it is my practice to follow something only after I have grasped its actual significance. Because of this, the following question came to mind when I saw you honoring the Vaiṣṇavas’ remnants: Should one consider a Vaiṣṇava’s level of advancement before accepting his remnants?”

Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “I cannot say, but what I can say with certainty is that by honoring the remnants of the Vaiṣṇavas, one will acquire their moods. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī’s relative Śrī Kālidāsa always faithfully honored the Vaiṣṇavas’ remnants without considering their qualifications, and as a result he became qualified to obtain the water that had washed Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s lotus feet. It is also described in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya-līlā 16.60):

*bhakta-pada-dhūli āra bhakta-pada-jala  
bhakta-bhukta-avaśeṣa tīna mahā-bala*

The foot dust of the devotees, the water that washes their feet, and their remnants are three greatly powerful items.

“Furthermore, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Śrī Nārada Ṛṣi personally attributes his conviction in spiritual life to accepting the remnants of the ṛṣis. In this account, also, there is no mention of any differentiation of status. Why, then, should I try to assign any other certification to those whom *śrī gurudeva* has accepted and certified as Vaiṣṇavas? In my view, they are all worthy of my service, because they have more conviction than me and they serve more than I do. Thus, it is a matter of good fortune to receive an opportunity to merrily honor the remnants of my master’s dear kin, for it is written, ‘*gurura kiṅkara haya mānya se āmāra*—the servant of *śrī guru* is always respectable for me’ (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Madhya-līlā 10.142).”

**The blessings of Śrī Gaura**

Guru Mahārāja employed many techniques in his earnest attempts to comprehensively propagate the current of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s precepts. He traveled to many places, established *maṭha-mandiras*, published magazines, bestowed *dīkṣā* to new initiates, awarded *sannyāsa* and saffron cloth to *maṭha* residents, and performed many other favorable activities.

Just as Śrīla Prabhupāda would bestow Śrī Gaura Āśīrvāda, a certificate indicating the blessings of Śrī Gaura, on the day of Śrī Gaura-pūrṇīmā to those who had rendered extraordinary service to Śrīman Mahāprabhu, so too did Guru Mahārāja bestow the same certificate to various *brahmacārīs*, *gṛhasthas* and *vānaprasthīs* on behalf of Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī Pracāriṇī Sabhā

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Uniquely, instead of signing the certificate himself, Guru Mahārāja would have his senior godbrother Śrī Śrī Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja sign it, and after Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s disappearance, Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja was assigned that task. Guru Mahārāja would accord them great honor by appointing them chairman of Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī Pracāriṇī Sabhā, and he would ask them to personally present from their own lotus hands the certificates to their respective recipients. The Śrī Gaura Āśīrvāda certificate awarded to me when I was a *brahmacārī*, for example, was presented by Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja and bore his signature.

### **A special instruction for gṛhasthas**

Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja would often tell *gṛhastha* devotees, “Scripture states that a *gṛhastha* should dedicate a portion of his monthly income to the service of Bhagavān and His devotees. If for some reason that is not possible, he should annually offer at least one month’s income. Ultimately, everything is intended for Bhagavān. It is for His service alone that we have received everything we have. We will incur fault if we do not acknowledge this and act accordingly.”

In this way, Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja inspired many *gṛhastha* devotees of Burma (now Myanmar) and India to yearly offer one month’s income for the service of Bhagavān and His *bhaktas*.

### **The consideration of true seniority**

Once, when Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja came to our *maṭha* in Kṛṣṇanagara, I requested him to speak *hari-kathā* one morning during his stay.

“Actually, I have never heard you speak,” he said. “Speak *hari-kathā* today and I will listen from my room upstairs.”

“Mahārāja,” I said, “you are one of my *gurus*. You are so senior to me. Why would you want to listen to my class?”

He said, “In the realm of *bhajana*, there is no consideration of senior or junior. Śrīla Kāvīrāja Gosvāmī has written ‘*jei bhaje sei baḍō*—those who serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa are great.’ True seniority in the *maṭha* depends on the extent to which one respects and follows the teachings imparted here, and not on the number of days one has physically spent in the *maṭha*.

“There is one more thing,” Śrīla Mahārāja continued. “With *vaiṣṇavatā* comes the eligibility to be worshiped, because at that point, one is considered *tadīya-vastu*, or among Bhagavān’s property. Keeping this principle in my heart, I request you to please speak *hari-kathā* today.”

Heeding Śrīla Mahārāja’s words as his kind instruction, I spoke *hari-kathā* that morning. Afterward, when I went to offer *praṇāma* to him, he said, “I heard your class. It was excellent. You chose a good subject and narrated it with sound reasoning. True *hari-kathā* is achieved when the speaker’s motive is not to indulge in the pride of influencing others through instruction, but to cause his own spiritual benefit by reminding himself repeatedly of that which he previously heard from his *guru-varga*. In this way, he avoids becoming a platform speaker and instead preaches by following the ideals he teaches. This preaching by practice is the foremost specialty of those who have taken shelter of Mahāprabhu.”

### **A lesson in Vaiṣṇava patience**

Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was unhurried in all his activities. He would take longer than usual to finish bathing, get dressed, or for that matter, complete any activity. Knowing this, those who cooked for him would often approach him well before they had even begun preparing his meal and ask, “Mahārāja, how much longer will you take? Your *prasāda* is almost ready, and it would be good if you take it while it is still hot.”

Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja would reply, “I am coming very soon.” However, he would not be ready even after his meal actually was prepared. On being called again, Mahārāja would say, “Why have you called for me a second time? I told you the first time that I am coming just now.”

One morning, when he and I were slated to go together to Kṛṣṇanagara to register the sale of his land in Svarūpa Gañj, he asked for hot water for his

bath. Accordingly, I brought him hot water, but because he was busy with something else, the water became cold after some time. So, I heated his water up a second time. Before his bath, I asked him, “Mahārāja, would you like to have flat rice with milk or yogurt for breakfast?”

“Milk doesn’t suit me,” he said, “but yes, I can have yogurt with flat rice. That will be fine.”

“Great,” I said. “I will prepare it while you take your bath and perform *āhnika*.”

I readied his breakfast, but he took so long to do his *āhnika* that it jeopardized our work in Kṛṣṇanagara. “Mahārāja, it is getting late,” I told him. “Please have your breakfast.”

“Save it for later. I will have it with noon *prasāda*,” he said, as he continued with other morning duties.

Before I knew it, it was lunch time, and Śrīla Mahārāja still had not finished with his activities. Next, he took so long to have lunch that by the time we arrived to register the sale of his land, the office clerk said, “It is too late to accept any new forms today. Please come tomorrow.”

I asked the clerk to please call for the registrar, to whom I then spoke about the glories of Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Somehow, I convinced him to accept our form.

It was dusk by the time we finished our errand. As we headed back to the *maṭha*, Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja said, “Today, you did not once become irritated by my slow nature. Instead, you glorified me and helped me by expertly convincing them to register the sale of my land. I have observed the same quality of patience in your *gurudeva*, Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja, as well. Paying no attention to the behavioral quirks of Vaiṣṇavas, he gives greater gravity to the fact that they are Vaiṣṇavas, and behaves with them accordingly.”

He continued, “We cannot recognize a Vaiṣṇava by whether he is slow or fast, on time or late, clean or filthy, well- or shabbily-dressed, or by his habit of eating large or small amounts. The true measure of *vaiṣṇavatā* is not any external trait, but rather one’s *citta-vṛtti* (proclivities of the heart) and principles. As you refrained from becoming impatient with me, so too do my godbrothers. Observing my leisurely manner, they tease me as a gesture of sweet endearment. And what could I do even if I wanted to move more quickly? I am limited by my habit and nature. Should I be held accountable for something I cannot control?”

The childlike manner in which Śrīla Mahārāja confided his heart to me was

profoundly unassuming and innocent.

### **Simple yet vital instructions**

Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja once sat me down beside him and gave me the following instruction: “Unless honoring *prasāda* in a group, never eat anything in front of others lest you cause them to crave it. Do not wear clothes others would want to wear, and do not furnish your room in the way householders do; keep it simple and neat.” These were principles that he not only taught, but followed himself in the course of leading a very renounced life.

### **Remembering his invocation**

Although Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was very lean and thin, his voice was so distinctly loud that he never required the use of a microphone in any assembly, even if the audience were huge. Without fail, he always began the invocation to his *hari-kathā* with the same verse, upon hearing which his audience would become awestruck by such a divine vibration:

*ājānu-lambita bhujau kanakāvadātau  
sankīrtanaika pitarau kamalāyatākṣo  
viśvambharo dvija-varau yuga-dharma pālau  
vande jagat-priya-karau karuṇāvatārau*

*Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Ādi-khaṇḍa 1.1)*

I venerate Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, whose arms are long, reaching past Their knees; whose complexions are like that of pure gold; who are the inaugurators of *sankīrtana*; whose eyes are lotus-like; who maintain the universe; who are the best of the *dvijas* (twice born); who uphold the ultimate spiritual practice for the current age; who are the world’s benefactors; and who are incarnations of compassion.

### **His surrender to the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas**

Once, Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja enacted such a grave illness pastime that he required both an eye operation and a blood transfusion. He was admitted to the Presidency Government Hospital in Kolkata, which during British rule treated only officers working in top positions. After India gained independence, however, it was made open to everyone, and Śrīla Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was checked in to the hospital’s finest division, the Woodburn Ward.

When Guru Mahārāja informed his disciples that someone was needed to donate blood for Śrī Gīrī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s transfusion, the devotees were

practically vying for the chance to give blood. I was included among the few devotees who had their blood tested. My blood group turned out to be O. The doctor said, “This blood type can work, but it would be better to find someone with the same blood group as Mahārāja.” When he later discovered that my godbrothers Śrī Bhakti Vijaya Vāmana Mahārāja and Śrī Madana Prabhu shared the same blood group as Śrī Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he gave Śrīla Mahārāja the blood of Śrī Vāmana Mahārāja.

When Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja returned to the *maṭha* after his operation and transfusion, he said, “My eyesight now is similar to that of my college days. The Vaiṣṇavas have consistently saved and cared for me. The scriptures describe six limbs of surrender. Unless these six limbs of surrender for the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas manifest in a person’s heart, he can never surrender himself to Bhagavān. Again and again, I say to the Vaiṣṇavas, ‘*mārobi rākhobi jo icchā tomāra, nitya dāsa prati tuwā adhikāra*—kill me, nurture me or do with me as you please, for you have full authority over your servant.’ ”

### **An object of his godbrothers’ special affection**

Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja shared a special affection, partly because Śrīla Prabhupāda had awarded them *sannyāsa* on the same day. At the same time that Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastime, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was undergoing treatment at a nursing home in Āgrā and required the use of a catheter. As soon as Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja heard that his godbrother entered *nitya-līlā*, with catheter in hand and despite the doctor’s objections, he left the hospital and departed for Vṛndāvana. There, he personally supervised all aspects of Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *samādhi* ceremony.

I have personally witnessed renowned Vaiṣṇavas—such as Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabha Bhakti-sāra Gosvami Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahansa Mahārāja and others—express their immense affection for Śrīla Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja. That such exalted devotees possessed faith in him is a testament to his illustrious Vaiṣṇava qualities.

## **Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sarvasva Giri Mahārāja Enters Nitya-līlā**

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī  
Mahārāja

### **Indifferent to worldly talks**

*Pūjyapāda* Giri Mahārāja appeared in a distinguished, aristocratic family in the city of Ḍhākā, East Bengal (now Bangladesh), in 1899. From childhood, he displayed a rather detached disposition. He was indifferent to what he ate or wore and had no taste for playing. He was of a sober nature. He spent a great portion of his time associating with *sādhus* and pious persons. Observing his attachment to religious activities, his father and mother thought that perhaps either a demigod was controlling him or that he was under the influence of some astrological event. Being worried for the trajectory of his life, they anxiously prayed at Śrī Bhagavān's lotus feet for their son's welfare.

### **Meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda**

In November, 1921, during the month of Kārtika *niyama-sevā*, our most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda was lecturing on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in Ḍhākā at the house of Śrī Sanātana dāsa Mahāśaya, a renowned and wealthy landowner who has since passed. During that time, many educated, high-class individuals became attracted to Śrīla Prabhupāda, for they had never before heard anything quite like his discourses. Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciple *parivrājakācārya tridaṇḍī-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja, who has since left this world, also lectured on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for some days there. Śrīmad Giri Mahārāja, then known as Indu Bābū, would visit Śrī Sanātana dāsa Mahāśaya's home to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda's *hari-kathā*. Later, when he took shelter of *paramārādhyatama* Śrīla Prabhupāda, he became Śrī Gaurendu Brahmācārī, and once he received *sannyāsa*, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave him the name *tridaṇḍī-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Sarvasva Giri Mahārāja.

### **A fearless speaker**

From that time onward, as per Śrīla Prabhupāda's order, Śrīpāda Giri Mahārāja vigorously preached in various places in India, thereby fulfilling his *gurudeva's* innermost desires.

*Pūjyapāda* Giri Mahārāja was a fearless speaker who captivated audiences with his thunderous voice and the spirited, compelling language he utilized in his lectures. In fact, his voice was so powerful that he never required the assistance of a microphone.



## **A cause of Śrīla Prabhupāda's boundless joy**

His dedication to the truth was such that he was not the slightest bit hesitant to fearlessly speak the truth before anyone, including governors and the Viceroy. In a personal meeting with Governor General Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy of India, Śrīla Mahārāja was the first to convey to him the message of truth as issued from the lotus mouth of *paramārādhyatama* Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda. Being pleased with Svāmī-jī's bold words, the Viceroy awarded him with several commemorating certificates. News of this delighted *paramārādhyatama* Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda. In a letter to some of his disciples, dated the twenty-fourth day of Kārtika, 1926 and published in the first volume of his collected letters, Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote of Śrī Giri Mahārāja's travels in India:

I was delighted to review the certificate Bhakti Sarvasva Giri obtained from the English. I experience boundless joy to see our *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* going from place to place acquainting people with their competence.

We saw that various other governors, viceroys and distinguished royal personages had sent Śrī Giri Mahārāja many other letters in which they profusely praised his preaching efforts and displayed plentiful enthusiasm regarding the widespread propagation of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's religion of divine love.

## **An expert in spoken and written English**

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda had many highly educated and English-speaking disciples in his Śrī Caitanya Maṭha—his principal *maṭha* in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura—and its various Gauḍīya Maṭha branches, Giri Mahārāja's style of both spoken and written English was profusely praised by especially qualified individuals, like Śrī Nīśikānta Sannyāl (Śrīman Nārāyaṇa dāsa Bhakti Sudhākara Prabhu), a professor of history at the Ravenshaw College in Cuttack.

## **His exemplary conduct**

*Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja possessed an amazing ability to captivate his listeners. As *paramārādhyatama* Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Vaiṣṇavas under his guidance accept a person's natural qualities above all else, they all loved his speeches.

His qualities—his pure, holy and spotless character, his childlike innocence, his contentment with whatever he received, his unprecedented

conviction in the service of *śrī guru*, his indomitable enthusiasm in and attachment to performing *bhāgavat-kathā* and *kīrtana* everywhere, and his ability to subdue dissenters—were truly exemplary.

### **His comprehensive service**

Through his body, mind and words, Śrī Giri Mahārāja made sincere, wholehearted efforts to fulfill the innermost desire (*mano'bhiṣṭa*) of *paramārādhyatama* Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he preached that *mano'bhiṣṭa* in the temples and *maṭhas* Śrīla Prabhupāda established, as well as in various places all over India. He spread the sacred teachings practiced and preached by Śrīman Mahāprabhu by unveiling *Sat-śikṣā Pradarśinī* exhibitions in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, Kolkata, Dhākā, Patnā, Allahabad, Kurukṣetra and other places. He also distributed devotional literatures and magazines and rendered comprehensive services in Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala, Śrī Kṣetra-maṇḍala and Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala. All of Śrīpāda Giri Mahārāja's service efforts are, in all respects, noteworthy.

### **A driving force in Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission**

During the manifest presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīmad Giri Mahārāja was the driving force behind establishing a Gauḍīya Maṭha in Rangoon, Brahmadeśa (Burma), where deities were later established due to his tireless efforts.

In order to transform the Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha center Śrīla Prabhupāda established in Lucknow into a permanent *maṭha*, he occupied a huge two-story house in 1938 and acquired deities.

*Pūjyapāda* Giri Mahārāja was principally responsible for procuring the land for Śrī Sārasvata Gauḍīya Maṭha in Haridvāra, and he also oversaw the construction of its residential quarters. Additionally, he gave much of his life's energy to the service of Śrī Paramahaṁsa Maṭha in Naimṣāranya.

### **His special contribution**

It was after listening to the *hari-kathā* issuing from the worshipful lotus mouth of Śrīla Giri Mahārāj that Rāya-Bāhādura Śrī Madana-gopāla Sardānā Mahodaya, the then Superintendent Engineer of Irrigation for Uttar Pradesh, obtained the fortune of accepting the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet. *Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja even imparted the message of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga to Rāya-Bāhādura J.N. Rāya, the resident District and Session Judge of Lucknow who is now deceased, as well as other distinguished figures in Uttar Pradesh.

Through these personalities, Śrī Giri Mahārāja accomplished tremendous service to *śrī maṭha*.

### **His noble enthusiasm and strict dedication**

After *paramārādhyatama* Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance pastime on 1 January, 1937, his distinguished disciples gathered in Śrī Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha to form a governing body that would oversee the maintenance of the *maṭhas* and temples he established. For a period of time thereafter, Śrīpāda Giri Mahārāja served as a member of this governing body and rendered much service to *śrī maṭha* with noble enthusiasm and a strict dedication to the truth.

### **His relationship with Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha**

*Pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja, the overseer of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, shared a genuine bond of friendship with Śrīla Mahārāja. Śrīmad Giri Mahārāja was a prominent member of the managerial committee for the Sanskrit school Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja established at Īśodhyāna, Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. Also, on the annual occasion of Śrī Gaura Janmotsava, Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja would appoint him as chairman of the Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī Pracāriṇī Sabhā hosted by Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura.

### **His final prayer**

Śrīla Giri Mahārāja left this world listening to the recitation of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* while the devotees of the *maṭha* performed *mahā-mantra kīrtana*. Śrīla Mahārāja was fully conscious and coherent up to the last moment of his manifest presence, when he attained the dust of Vraja. Earlier during that day, he wept distraughtly as he remembered his *śrī gurupāda-padma* and called out with great urgency, “Prabhupāda! Please protect me. Have mercy on me. Please forgive all my offenses and give me a place at your worshipful lotus feet.”

### **Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja's concern for him**

When Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja first received word of Śrīla Mahārāja's illness, he issued specific directives by both wire and letter to the *sevakas* of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Vṇḍāvana to serve him by all means and to arrange for his treatment. Bhakta Śrī Nitai dāsa remained with Śrī Giri Mahārāja day and night, and he tirelessly and smilingly engaged in serving him in every way. Being satisfied by Śrī Nitai dāsa's sincere service, Śrīla Giri Mahārāja blessed him profusely.

## The effect of his absence

The absence of a pure Vaiṣṇava such as Mahārāja overwhelms everyone’s heart with pain. Perhaps it was because he knew, by divine ability, that he would not remain in this world for long that he was inspired to offer the responsibility of Śrī Vinoda-vāṇī Gauḍīya Maṭha to Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja, even though he had *sannyāsī* disciples to whom he could have bestowed this service.

## The greatest sorrow

Śrī Śrīman Mahāprabhu asked his foremost associate Śrīla Rāya Rāmānanda, “*duhkha madhye kona duhkha haya gurutara*—of all sorrows, which sorrow is most grave?”

In response, Śrī Rāya said, “*kṛṣṇa bhakta-viraha vinā duhkha nāhi dekhi para*—I do not see a sorrow greater than that experienced in separation from Kṛṣṇa’s devotee.”

Among the 8,400,000 species of life, attaining that of a human is indeed rare, for although it can end in a moment, it is especially favorable for *bhagavad-bhajana*. Even the demigods of heaven sing profuse praise of the attainment of this spiritually advantageous human birth within the land of India, which is considered the courtyard of Vaikuṇṭha, the spiritual realm. However, it is stated, “*tatrāpi durlabham manye vaikuṇṭha-priya-darśanam*—among the embodied forms of life, the fickle human form is rare, but even more rare is to catch a glimpse of a devotee who is dear to the Supreme Lord.” What greater sorrow can there be than being deprived of the company of a pure devotee who has surrendered to a bona fide *guru* and is dedicated to the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas?

*kāhāra nikaṭe gele pāpa dure jāya  
emôna dayālu prabhu kebā kothā pāy*

Where can one find such a merciful personality by whose mere proximity one’s sins go far away? \*

## His only aim

The divine message that issued from Śrī Giri Mahārāja’s worshipful lotus mouth liberated hundreds and hundreds of souls from the bondage of material existence and inspired them to take up the path leading to ultimate liberation. His holy life was completely dedicated to pure *bhakti*, and he possessed a genuine attachment for Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s associates and devotees. Beholding

his sweet, radiant, moonlike form, hearing his *hari-kathā* and remembering him would sanctify one's heart and arouse within it a longing to perform *bhagavad-bhajana* with one's body, mind and words. His *śrī gurupāda-padma* displayed great compassion toward him and granted him the name 'Bhakti Sarvasva,' which means 'he whose all in all is *bhakti*.' Until the very last moment of his manifest presence, he lived up to that name by leading a spotless, exemplary life of supreme sanctity with *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* as his only aim.

### **A matter of supreme joy and pride**

Today, the pain of no longer being able to have *kṛṣṇa-priya-darśana*—the sacred audience of he who fulfilled the innermost desire of his *śrī gurupāda-padma*, the beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa—has truly affected the core of our hearts. Still, even in the midst of this great sorrow, it is a matter of supreme joy and pride that he has attained the eternal shelter of not only Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana-jiu

2  
—the presiding deity of *sambandha-tattva* (the principle of divine relationship) and the very life of Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī—but also his *śrī gurupāda-padma*, whose eternal identity is conveyed by the name Śrī Vārṣabhānavī Dayita dāsa—the servant of the beloved of Śrī Rādhā, the daughter of Śrī Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja—and who is Śrī Rādhā's *nayana-maṇi*, the jewel of Her eyes. Such great fortune is never indicative of ordinary spiritual merit.

*jatô dekhô vaiṣṇavera vyavahāra-duhkha  
niścaya jāniha sei parānanda sukha*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 9.240)*

Know for certain that whatever behavioral sorrows one observes in a Vaiṣṇava are actually the utmost ecstatic joy.

Śrīla Mahārāja's enactment of illness was a grand example of these words, which have been proclaimed by our exalted predecessors.

### **Serving śrī guru was his very life**

*Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja never employed a single *paisā* of the donations he received in his own gratification. Rather, he offered everything to the *maṭha* and temple for the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, thus living up to

the title ‘Bhakti Sarvasva.’ What stone-like heart would not melt upon losing such a soul mate, a *parama-bhāgavata* devotee whose life and soul was the service of Kṛṣṇa and *kaṛṣṇā*, those who belong to Kṛṣṇa.

Serving the innermost desires of Śrīla Prabhupāda was his very life. Prabhupāda, who is supremely compassionate, therefore granted him, his dear associate, the eternal qualification to serve as the servant of the servant of the beautiful lotus feet of Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-dayita Śrī Madana-mohana. Śrī Śrī Madana-mohana-jī inspired the hearts of His Gosvāmī servants and the honorable mayor of Śrī Vṛndāvana to be favorably inclined toward him. In this way, He gave His dear associate a place close to His lotus feet, thereby granting him the eternal qualification to serve Him. Blessed is *bhakta-vatsala* Bhagavān’s affection for His devotees.

### A universal truth

After the birth of his son, Śrī Nanda Mahārāja traveled to Mathurā to deliver his annual taxes to the reigning king of Mathurā, Kāṁsa, in order to keep him satisfied. After submitting his taxes, he met with his bosom friend Śrī Vasudeva. During their conversation, Śrī Nanda Mahārāja said:

*naikatra priya-saṁvāsaḥ  
suhṛdāṁ citra-karmaṇām  
oghenā vyūhya-mānānām  
plavānām srotaso yathā*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.5.25)*

Just as it is unlikely that the wooden sticks flowing in a stream will meet or stay together, it is rarely possible for friends whose fates are divergent to remain together.

This truth certainly applies to all of us, as well.

*kṛpā kôri’ kṛṣṇa more diyāchila saṅga  
svatantra kṛṣṇera icchā hōilô saṅga-bhaṅga*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 11.94)*

Mercifully, Kṛṣṇa gave me his association. By Kṛṣṇa’s independent will, our exchange has ended.

### Heart-breaking circumstances

*Pūjyapāda* Giri Mahārāja was the embodiment of humility. Memories of his innocent, sweetly smiling face appear in my mind today, casting my heart into a pit of despair. Recollections of his life in the *maṭha*, from beginning to

end, first melt me with joy, and then throw me into an ocean of sorrow. Just a few days before he left this world, he appeared to me in a dream looking recovered and healthy. This infused my heart with great hope. But alas! All my hopes have been dashed. It is heartbreaking to realize I will never again have his *darśana* in this life.

### **Our inseparable relationship**

*Śrī gurupāda-padma* is our eternal master, birth after birth, and similarly, his intimate companions who have offered their lives to him will forever remain our closest friends. We remain eternally rooted in an inseparable relationship with them life after life. It is only as a result of *gurur-avajña*, the grave offense of disobeying the spiritual master, that a person's heart becomes hard-hearted, deviates from this knowledge of our eternal relationships, becomes the servant of *Māyā* and thereby becomes bound by the chains of worldly desires.

### **A pitiful prayer at his lotus feet**

*Pūjyapāda* Girī Mahārāja has attained the eternal shelter and guidance of his *śrī gurupāda-padma*, the crown jewel of the *āśraya-vigrahas* (the repositories of devotion) who rests now at the feet of Śrī Govardhana-Girirāja, the principal *viṣaya-vigraha* (object of devotion) in Śrī Vraja-dhāma. It is said, “*vaiṣṇavera kṛpā jāhe sarva-siddhi*—all perfections are attained by the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.” I therefore submit this pitiful prayer at his lotus feet: May he grant us the qualification to tread the same path to Vraja.

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[1](#) Lit. ‘the Assembly for Preaching the Message of Śrī Caitanya;’ an annual conference established by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

[2](#) Śrī Vinoda-vāṇī Gauḍīya Maṭha is situated on the same lane and approximately two hundred meters south of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana’s temple in Vṛndāvana.



# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Meeting Gauḍīya Maṭha devotees

During his time in college, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then Śrī Narendra Bandopādhyāya) was an exceptionally bright college student, well liked by both teachers and students. He displayed a natural aptitude for drama and theatre, and because he had studied in an English medium school, he was fluent in English.

Śrī Narendra was his father's tenth and youngest son and was also very dear to him. After he finished his collegiate studies, his father fell seriously ill, and due to this, some of the family moved from their village and rented an apartment in Gāṇḍāriyā Pallī, Ḍhākā, where his father had been admitted to the hospital and was undergoing treatment. Soon after their move, however, Śrī Narendra became aloof from virtually all social activities. He suddenly found himself unconcerned for the affection of his family and friends. Instead, he nourished his increasingly growing compulsion to find a bona fide *guru*, perform *kṛṣṇa-bhajana*, and thereby make his life worthwhile.

Bhagavān makes all kinds of arrangements for those who sincerely seek after Him, and so around this time, as a result of his powerful *bhakty-unmukhī sukṛti*

<sup>1</sup>, Śrī Narendra somehow came in contact with the devotees of Śrī Madhva Gauḍīya Maṭha in Ḍhākā. There, Śrī Narendra heard about Śrīla Prabhupāda's extraordinary glories, and before long, he decided to set out for Kolkata to have a glimpse of his holy feet on the pretext of picking up medicine for his father.

At Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha, Kolkata, Śrī Narendra Bandopādhyāya obtained the audience and inexhaustible affection of Śrīla Prabhupāda, whose powerful *hari-kathā* inspired him to begin a new life. He decided not to return to Ḍhākā at all, and instead arranged for someone to deliver his father's medicine while he remained at the *maṭha* in Kolkata.

After further hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda's *hari-kathā* for some days, Śrī Narendra Bandopādhyāya requested Śrīla Prabhupāda for *harināma* and *mantra-dīkṣā*. According to the verdict of the scriptures, both *guru* and disciple must examine one another before establishing a formal relationship based on initiation. Therefore, before giving his sanction, Śrīla Prabhupāda examined Śrī Narendra by asking him to compose an article, in his own words,

conveying some of what he had assimilated.

Śrī Narendra carefully wrote an essay titled *Ātmīya Ke* (*Who is One's Own*). Although the word *ātmīya* is generally interpreted as relating to either the gross or subtle body, Śrī Narendra explained it in relation to the soul (*ātmā*). That Śrī Narendra Bandopādhyāya deeply understood such a grave subject matter in only a short time indicates he must have associated with *sādhus* either earlier in his current life or in previous lives, for it would have been otherwise impossible.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was so pleased by Śrī Narendra Bandopādhyāya's essay that he had it published in his weekly *Gauḍīya* magazine (Year Two, Issue Forty-eight, 26 July, 1924). In this way, Śrī Narendra Bandopādhyāya passed his test. Shortly after, he received *pāñcarātriki-dīkṣā* from Śrīla Prabhupāda and became known as Śrī Nanda-sūnu Brahmācārī.

Once he received *dīkṣā* initiation from his *śrī gurupāda-padma*, Śrī Nanda-sūnu Brahmācārī constantly strived, at every moment, to adhere to the concept of *viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā*, performing intimate service to *śrī guru* without hesitation or reservation. Śrī Nanda-sūnu Brahmācārī was never seen diverting his attention from his efforts to serve Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas to indulgence in sense gratification, for even a second.

### **Preaching under Śrīla Prabhupāda's guidance**

On 29 January, 1925, the day of Śrī Viṣṇu-priyā devī's appearance, a pilgrimage tour of Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala commenced under the guidance of Śrīla Prabhupāda. During the expedition, Śrīpāda Nanda-sūnu Brahmācārī spoke in many places as ordered by Śrīla Prabhupāda and executed countless other services for *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, thereby becoming the recipient of his *śrī gurupāda-padma*'s profuse love and affection. That year, on 4 September, 1925, he accepted *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa* at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda and became known as *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

One of Śrīla Prabhupāda's cherished pursuits was to impart the message of pure devotion through the medium of his spiritual *Sat-śikṣā Pradarśinī* exhibitions. Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was significantly involved in designing and decorating the exhibits in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, Kolkata, Dhākā, Paṭnā, Kāśī, Prayāga and Kurukṣetra. He was particularly involved in designing the dioramas of Śrī Govardhana and the *sakhīs*' groves at Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa for an exhibition in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura.

## Revealing the heart of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī after an indication from śrī guru

Every solar eclipse, hundreds of thousands of people journey to Kurukṣetra to ritualistically take bath in Brahmā-sarovara, but the deep import of this ritual remains unknown to the vast majority of these pilgrims. Once, some time before such a solar eclipse, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a letter to Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja in which he mentioned, “Śrīmatī Rādhīka will soon go to meet with Kṛṣṇa in Kurukṣetra, and so we have some service to perform there, as well.”

Although the message was short and cryptic, Śrīla Mahārāja understood that his *śrī gurupāda-padma* wanted him to manifest to the whole world a confidential pastime, which previously appeared in the heart of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī by the divine mercy of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. To this end, during a month-long local fair in Kurukṣetra, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja expertly created an exhibition with dioramas that beautifully depicted the following:

- Nanda Bābā meeting with all the senior Vrajavāsīs before a solar eclipse
- The Vrajavāsīs preparing to depart for Kurukṣetra
- The deep, dark forests they encountered on their journey being illuminated by the natural radiance of Śrī Rādhā’s body, which protected them against the attacks of wild animals
- The Vrajavāsīs’ meeting with the Dvārakāvāsīs
- Nana Bābā and Mother Yaśodā’s tearful reunion with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who burrowed Himself so deeply into Yaśodā’s lap that it appeared as if He were trying to merge into her
- Everyone’s bathing in Brahmā-sarovara on the day of the solar eclipse
- The queens of Dvārakā’s proposal to donate to Nārada Muni Kṛṣṇa’s weight in a precious substance during the solar eclipse, and Nārada Muni’s condition that he will take Kṛṣṇa away with him should they be unable to match Kṛṣṇa’s weight
- The queens of Dvārakā’s prideful acceptance of Nārada Muni’s proposal, followed by their inability to give him a sufficient amount of gold
- Their weeping at the thought of Nārada taking Kṛṣṇa away
- The advice of Mother Rohiṇī to bring all the *gopīs*, headed by Śrī Rādhā

- Śrī Rādhā replacing all the queens’ gold with a single *tulasī* leaf on which She had written the name ‘Kṛṣṇa’
- That *tulasī* leaf outweighing Śrī Kṛṣṇa, thus establishing that *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself are non-different (it was the weight of the *tulasī* leaf that tipped the scale)
- Śrī Kṛṣṇa meeting with the *gopīs* in a secluded place on the pretext of falling ill, and their subsequent conversation
- Śrī Rādhā complaining to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His attempt to pacify Her
- The *gopīs* demonstrating the insignificance of opulence (*aiśvarya*) in the face of of sweetness (*mādhurya*)
- The weeping of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa
- The *gopīs* pulling Kṛṣṇa in His chariot back to Vṛndāvana
- Śrīman Mahāprabhu manifesting the mood of Śrī Rādhā while dancing in front of Jagannātha’s chariot and ecstatically reciting a verse from a seemingly mundane poem:

*yaḥ kaumāra-haraḥ sa eva hi varas tā eva caitra-kṣapās  
te conmīlita-mālatī-surabhayaḥ prauḍhāḥ kadambānilāḥ  
sā caivāsmi tathāpi tatra surata-vyāpāra-līlā-vidhau  
revā-rodhasi vetasī-taru- tale cetāḥ samutkaṇṭhate*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 13.121)

He who has stolen away my youth is now my husband. These are the same moonlit nights in the month of Caitra, when we first met in our youth. The same breezes from the *kadamba* forest are blowing the same light, sweet fragrance from the blossoming *mālatī* flowers. In our intimate relationship, I am also the same lover. Nonetheless, my heart is longing for the amorous, love-laden play of our first meeting at the foot of the *vetasī* tree on the bank of the river Revā. \*

- Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī mentally composing a parallel verse that revealed the mood and intended meaning of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s poetic recitation:

*priyaḥ so ’yaṁ kṛṣṇaḥ saḥacari kuru-kṣetra-militas  
tathāhaṁ sā rādhā tad idam ubhayoḥ saṅgama-sukham  
tathāpy antaḥ-khelan-madhura-muralī-pañcama-juṣe  
mano me kālindī-pulina-vipināya sprhayati*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 1.76)

My dear friend, in this Kurukṣetra is that very same Śrī Kṛṣṇa who had secretly

engaged in amorous pastimes with Me in Vṛndāvana. I am also the same Rādhā, and the happiness of our meeting is still the same. But nonetheless, My heart is yearning for that very forest of Vṛndāvana, situated on the banks of the Yamunā, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa used to continuously engage in pastimes and play the fifth note of His charming *muralī* flute. \*

- Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī later writing this verse on a palm leaf and keeping it in the thatched roof of his *bhajana-kuṭīra*
- Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s ecstasy upon finding and reading that verse, and His admittance that Rūpa Gosvāmī was able to understand His heart because He had previously blessed him in Prayāga

Next to each diorama, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja placed a brief description and also posted a devotee to further explain its depicted pastime. Śrīla Prabhupāda was highly pleased by this arrangement. All those who attended the exhibition were endlessly grateful to have learned the real purpose of visiting Kurukṣetra during a solar eclipse.

It is exceedingly difficult for a disciple to understand the intentions of *śrī guru*, who, being a sincere follower of *śrauta-vāṇī*—the teachings of the Vedas, which are often conveyed indirectly—relishes *parokṣa-vāda*, or indirect speech. Only his *antaraṅga* disciples are capable of understanding the true intended meanings of his words. The term *antaraṅga*, or ‘internal,’ refers to one who has proven himself to possess such firm faith that *śrī gurudeva* relies on him completely and, without hesitation, allows him to enter into the innermost chamber of his heart.

Because Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was an intimate *antaraṅga* associate of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he understood the true meaning of his *gurudeva*’s mysterious instruction and was thus able to serve him in a way that fulfilled his heart’s desire.

### **His natural talent**

Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja had a natural, God-gifted talent for public speaking, which flourished even more by the mercy of the venerable Śrīla Prabhupāda. He could speak without pause for hours on end in Bengali, Hindi, and English. Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded him with the title ‘Vāgmi-pravara,’ which means ‘the greatest of orators.’ Through his mastery of language and his deeply devotional lectures, he connected many people with Śrīla Prabhupāda. While delivering *hari-kathā*, his eyes would move continuously

like a gramophone. He often spoke for hours on end, yet never suffered from issues with his throat, medical or otherwise, up to the very end of his life.

Carrying on his head the gracious blessings and orders of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja constantly preached Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga’s divine message of pure devotion across India—from the Bay of Bengal to the Indian Ocean to the Himalayas—with dauntless enthusiasm and total fearlessness. By Śrīla Prabhupāda’s boundless mercy, Śrīla Mahārāja assisted in establishing Gauḍīya Maṭha branches in various places in India, including Madras, Kabhūra (where Śrīman Mahāprabhu met Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda), Kāśī, Naimiṣāraṇya and Kurukṣetra, thereby rendering an invaluable service in propagating the teachings of Śrī Caitanya-deva.

### **Sending a worthy preacher**

The message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu concerns *jaiva-dharma*, the innate propensity of all living entities, regardless of the country in which they happen to reside. Following the desire of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want the preaching of this message to be limited to India alone. Thus, he met with Śrī Rabindranath Tagore, who had recently returned to India after receiving a Nobel Prize in the West, and asked him, “In your opinion, to which Western country should we first send preachers to spread the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu?”

“None,” the poet replied. “Many unscrupulous persons who earlier visited these places to preach Vedic *dharma* have tarnished the image of *sādhus*. As a result, Westerners have lost faith in Indian saints.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda then explained to him Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s message, and in particular, made cutting remarks regarding the popular sects of the *prākṛta-sahajīyas*, or mundane sentimentalists who believe Śrī Bhagavān is attainable through material means. After attentively hearing everything, Śrī Rabindranath Tagore asked, “What exactly does the term *prākṛta-sahajīya* mean? I have never heard it, nor have I seen it in any dictionary.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, “The word *sahajiyā* is a highly sacred term. It refers to those truly pure devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa whose hearts are filled with a spontaneous, unconditional love and affection for Him that does not depend on the statements of scriptures that glorify Him as Bhagavān. The eternally perfect residents of Vraja—like Śrī Nanda, Śrī Yaśodā, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and others—are shining examples of such *sahajiyā* devotees. Nowadays, many unqualified conditioned souls try to imitate the moods of these transcendental

personalities by deceitfully imposing such moods on their own character. Therefore, I use this word, *prākṛta-sahajiyā*, to refer to such persons, because the prostitution of words—that is, grossly misrepresenting the true meanings of words in order to support one’s vested interests—has now become common practice. These days, the vast majority of people are incapable of understanding the actual imports of words, and so perversions of terminology often remain unchecked.”

Śrī Rabindranath Tagore, being captivated and moved by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s presentation of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, said, “It is only if you yourself visit the Western countries that great success in preaching will be assured. Everyone will surely greet you with honor.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “If I choose to send someone, it will be someone equally as qualified as myself.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was so proud of his worthy disciples’ accomplishments that he resolved to send them across the oceans to the West. Thus, he determined to send Śrīla Vana Mahārāja and my Guru Mahārāja (then Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī), for in his opinion, their personal conduct and ability to deliver the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as presented by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura mirrored that of his own. However, Guru Mahārāja was prevented from going to the West, not only because he was needed in India for his expertise in preaching and his ability to maintain Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *maṭhas* through collecting sizable donations, but also because some of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples felt his effulgent, youthful beauty made him a target for the affection of Western women, who had no understanding or appreciation of the celibacy of Indian *sādhus*. Thus, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja was sent in his stead.

### **Renouncing even renunciation for the service of Śrīman Mahāprabhu**

Śrīla Prabhupāda once asked Śrī Kuñjabihārī Vidyābhuṣaṇa Prabhu to buy an expensive pair of shoes for Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who out of his natural renunciation never wore footwear during his stay in the *maṭha*. Śrī Kuñjabihārī Prabhu then brought those shoes—which cost thirty-two rupees, a considerable expense at that time—to Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja with an instruction from Śrīla Prabhupāda to appear before him wearing those shoes. When Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja abided by this instruction and came before him wearing the shoes, Śrīla Prabhupāda declared, “Today your renunciation has achieved perfection, because you have renounced even your

renunciation for the service of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.”

### **Preaching in England and Germany**

During Śrīla Prabhupāda’s previously-mentioned conversation with Śrī Rabindranath Tagore, Śrī Rabindranath Tagore suggested, “If you are going to send your preachers to foreign countries, it would be best for them to first go to Germany, not England. This is because the German people are interested in our Vedic Indian Philosophy, whereas the English have a superiority complex toward us. They consider us their subjects and feel we are inferior to them in every respect. They will not listen to your preachers, nor will they appreciate their message.”

When Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned this to Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Mahārāja told him, “We must first preach where there is more difficulty. It is only when we are successful there that we will move on to places where success is inevitable. I do not wish to waste the wealth of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s service on mere sightseeing.”

Appreciating his view, Śrīla Prabhupāda first sent him to England, and later to Germany. In England, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja preached the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Exeter, as well as at various establishments in London. At Oxford, he was invited to speak for just fifteen minutes, but in that brief period, he so impressed his audience that he was invited to Buckingham Palace to address the royal assembly there.

With the grace and permission of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja established the London Gauḍīya Mission Society, and the Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, attended the inaugural ceremony as chairman. A number of affluent members of London high society, being deeply interested in the notion of a true religion, initiated correspondence with Śrīla Prabhupāda and posed various questions to him. The London Gauḍīya Mission Society’s main topics of discussion were Śrīla Prabhupāda’s answers, which arrived weekly in London by airmail.

When Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja wanted to preach in Germany, he was advised against speaking in English due to political tensions. He was given the option to speak either in his native language through a German translator, or directly in German. Thus, Śrīla Mahārāja opted to learn German, which he accomplished in only six months, after which he composed two books in German. As in London, his preaching in Germany met with great success. He delivered addresses at universities in Königsberg, Leipzig, Dresden, Berlin



and Munich, and was even invited to speak in cities in other countries, including Prague, Vienna and Paris, where he was given special regard by His Majesty the former Kaiser of Germany.

Upon Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's return to India in December of 1936, he was honored and celebrated by many distinguished Indian intellectuals of the time. He brought with him two German devotees who were eager to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet. One of these individuals later became known as Śrīpāda Sadānanda Svāmī. Thus, it was due to Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's preaching efforts that Śrīla Prabhupāda commenced the initiation of Westerners into Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *dharma*.

### **Preaching in universities and colleges**

Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the first of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples—and possibly the first person in the line of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—to preach in universities and colleges. He considered that if young people were to accept the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then others would automatically accept it. This technique was later adopted by many Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*.

He was invited several times by various universities in the West to expound the specialty of *śrī bhāgavata-dharma*, the religion of worshipping the Supreme Lord, as described in the Vedic canon. The prominent feature of his preaching was that he established the unparalleled specialty of India's Vedic philosophy, specifically what was preached and practiced by Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja travelled to America twice. First, in 1939, where he preached extensively across the East Coast, delivering lectures on Śrī Gaura's message in the cities of New York, Boston, Stockbridge, Washington D.C. and Philadelphia, and eventually made his way to Chicago in the Midwest. After this, he went to Japan and returned to India via Hong Kong. In 1960, he went to West Germany, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and various other places. Later, between 1974 and 1975, he again visited America to propound the glories of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's philosophy.

His translation of *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* was accepted as a thesis by universities in America and Sweden, where he was awarded honorary doctorates in literature and divinity, respectively.

To train the youth of Vraja about Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, specifically Śrī Caitanya-deva's *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*—the inconceivable

principle of simultaneous oneness and difference between the Supreme Lord and all that exists—he went to great lengths to establish the Institute of Oriental Philosophy in Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana, as well as a primary school on the banks of Śrī Pāvana-sarovara in Śrī Nandagrāma. Originally, he gave the Institute of Oriental Philosophy the name ‘Vaiṣṇava Theological University,’ but for various reasons, he was compelled to change it.

### **His prolific literary contribution**

After Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja lived somewhat independently and focused on writing several books in English, Bengali and Hindi, which included *Vaikuṇṭha-pathe (On the Path to the Spiritual Realm)*, *My First Year in England*, *Viraha-vedanā (The Pain of Separation)*, *Geeta as a Chaitanyaite Reads It*, *Shree Chaitanya*, *The Search*, *My Lectures in England*, and his translation of *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. He also published the quarterly English magazine *Indian Philosophy and Culture*.

During most of 1938, he lived in Ayodhya, studying the Vedas under the guidance of a scholar of the *Yajur-veda*. There, he wrote a book in Bengali called *Vedera-paricaya (An Introduction to the Vedas)*.

### **The sons of Sarasvatī**

Once, I went with a group of devotees to Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* in Vṛndāvana to have his *darśana*, but upon our arrival, we learned he was unwell. Just as I was about to depart after paying my respects outside his door, Śrīla Mahārāja called me inside. He was a bit displeased that I was ready to leave without first seeing him. I explained, “I did not want to bother you, since you are feeling unwell. I heard that your doctor has advised you to speak as little as possible.”

Śrīla Mahārāja replied, “Must I simply lay in bed and count the beams on the ceiling? Am I not to speak with the Vaiṣṇavas? We are *sarasvatī-putra*, the sons of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. As long as we are speaking *hari-kathā*, we feel healthy. It is when we are cheated of that opportunity that we truly feel ill. So, do you want me to be healthy or sick?

“Furthermore, the doctors of this world may prescribe us many instructions for our physical wellbeing, but we wish to follow the instructions of *śrī guru*, the doctor concerned for our spiritual wellbeing, who mentioned, ‘No harm can come to one who properly takes the type of ‘food’ that nourishes the soul. But one who avoids or takes an inadequate amount of such ‘food,’ and

instead concerns himself with nourishing only the gross and subtle bodies, invites sickness in the truest sense. Unfortunate is the day that we do not receive the chance to hear or speak *hari-kathā*, which is the soul’s sustenance. *Nityam bhāgavata-sevayā*, the daily service of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, is one of the primary limbs of *bhakti*.’ ”

### **His love and respect for Guru Mahārāja**

Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the chairman of the memorial assembly held after Guru Mahārāja’s disappearance. He wept the entire time he spoke, so much so that his speech was virtually incomprehensible. However, through the tears, he managed to say, “Although Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja was junior to many of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples, it was he who followed Śrīla Prabhupāda’s example fully, in both his preaching and conduct. The rest of us have made small adjustments and changes along the way, but Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja never displayed such a tendency for change for even a single moment, neither in his personal conduct nor his preaching.”

When Guru Maharaja disappeared from the world, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave me many instructions on how to perform the *samādhi* ceremony. He told me that the size of the *samādhi* should be one-and-one-quarter the size of the body of the recipient of *samādhi*; that prior to covering the body with earth and salt, one must cover the body, including the head and face, with a new saffron-colored cloth, so that the earth does not directly touch the body; and that the location of the *samādhi* should be an adequate distance from the road, so that it need not be moved if by chance the municipality tries to acquire part of the *maṭha*’s property in order to widen the road.

### **Firm faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s guidance amid discomfort**

In 1978, on the occasion of the first *vyāsa-pūjā* of Śrīla Prabhupāda to be celebrated at his appearance place in Purī, I was given the responsibility of arranging accommodations for all the invited devotees. I arranged two places for Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, so as to provide him with an alternative option. One was a rather poor room in our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, which at the time consisted of an old building that had been acquired with the purchase of the land, and the other was a decent room with suitable amenities in Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha*. Naturally, disregarding any consideration of material comfort, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja preferred to stay at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s birthplace. “Who knows how

long I will stay in this material world?” he told me. “I may never again receive the opportunity to return to this place. It is better to stay where my spiritual master appeared and performed his childhood pastimes. I shall stay here, the place Śrīla Prabhupāda decorated with his lotus feet.”

Hearing his decision to stay in our *maṭha*, I quickly constructed a private latrine for him in only one night, using coconut leaves and a heavy rainproof cloth for the roof. Although the facilities in our *maṭha* were quite meager, Śrīla Mahārāja happily tolerated everything, thus demonstrating the depth of his *guru-niṣṭhā*.

It was Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja who performed the *ārati* and all other aspects of the *vyāsa-pūjā* celebrations. During *hari-kathā* that evening, he said, “It will be a matter of great delight if, from now onward, the followers of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Gosvāmī Prabhupāda continue to gather and celebrate his *vyāsa-pūjā* here and his *tirobhāva-mahostava* at his *samādhi-mandira* in Māyāpura.”

Śrīla Mahārāja’s desire is now being fulfilled; annual festivals celebrating Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance and disappearance days are held at these locations in Śrī Purī-dhāma and Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, respectively.

### **Love for and dedication to his deities**

Before leaving this world, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja constructed his own *samādhi*, so as to not trouble anyone or elicit any sort of service from his godbrothers or disciples. Additionally, he had a strong desire to remain close to the deities he established. He therefore feared that his disciples or godbrothers may choose to place him in some other location. For this reason, he arranged everything himself, thus exhibiting the extent of his dedication to and love for his deities.

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1 Spiritual fortune that leads one toward the path of *bhakti*.

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prakāśa Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Intelligence beyond education

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prakāśa Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja never took a break from chanting the names of Śrī Hari, speaking Śrī Hari’s glories and pastimes, or serving Śrī Hari. He was fully engaged in these activities for all twenty-four hours of the day. Without fail, he would ask all those who approached him a question pertaining to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy. He spared no one in this. Somehow or other, he would always initiate a spiritual discussion.

When I first came to the *maṭha*, I received the good fortune of having his *darśana*. The moment he saw me, he asked, “What is the first verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*?” After I recited the verse, he asked me the meaning of the word *suśrūṣayā*. At the time I did not know so much, but I repeated to him whatever I had grasped. Afterwards, he handed me a newsletter and said, “Read this thoroughly, make corrections to it, and rewrite it eloquently.”

Owing to Vaiṣṇava etiquette and some internal fear, I did not ask him why he ordered me, a very new devotee, to edit his newsletter. Later, I questioned his godbrother Śrī Uddhāraṇa Prabhu, “Śrīla Mahārāja knows so much himself. Why, then, did he choose me to edit this newsletter? I told him I am inexperienced.”

“*Are bābā!* Don’t you know?” Śrī Uddhāraṇa Prabhu replied. “Śrī Araṇya Mahārāja is illiterate. He cannot read or write at all.”

When I heard this, I could not contain my surprise. From then on, each time I heard Śrī Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s discourses or conversed with him, this surprise only increased. His *hari-kathā* humbled even highly esteemed scholars, and consequently, these intellectuals viewed him as their superior. No one could have imagined, even in a dream, that he could be illiterate.

## Stern yet affectionate instructions

As per the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja would collect monthly donations from many places. He would also regularly visit my Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, while Guru Mahārāja was staying in a rented house prior to joining the *maṭha*.

On one such visit, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja brought his godbrother Śrīpāda Kīrtana Prabhu along with him. Seeing the portrait of Śrī Caitanya

Mahāprabhu in the hall of Guru Mahārāja’s home, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked Guru Mahārāja, “Do you feel happy upon seeing this very beautiful portrait of Śrīman Mahāprabhu?”

“Yes, Mahārāja-jī,” Guru Mahārāja replied. “I do.”

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja gravely asked, “Is it the duty of Śrīman Mahāprabhu to please you by remaining present here, or should you be the one making endeavors to please Him?” He further inquired, “You have accepted Śrīla Prabhupāda as your spiritual master. What arrangements have you made for his cooking?”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “I have appointed an Oriya *brāhmaṇa* to cook for me. He is responsible for everything related to kitchen services.”

Hearing this, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja confronted Guru Mahārāja, saying “Have your hands been eaten by crocodiles? Why are you unable to cook *bhoga* and offer it to Bhagavān on your own, without the help of others?

Before Guru Mahārāja could respond, Śrīpāda Kīrtana Prabhu whispered to Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “You should not speak to him like this. He comes from an affluent family. It is irrational to expect him to be able to do all the cooking himself; he has no experience with such things. Your harsh statements may make him lose faith in the Gauḍīya Maṭha and become dissatisfied with us.”

Although Śrīpāda Kīrtana Prabhu was quietly whispering, Guru Mahārāja could hear everything. Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja became even more displeased after hearing Śrīpāda Kīrtana Prabhu’s statement and said, “If I will not tell him, then who will? He is my godbrother, and I therefore possess the right to say anything I wish to him at anytime.”

Guru Mahārāja became overwhelmed with joy to hear this. The *mamatā* (possessive affection) Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja displayed for him was unprecedented, and for this reason, Guru Mahārāja remained eternally grateful to him throughout his life

Once they departed, Guru Maharaja arranged for new pots to be brought to his home, and he refused to eat for the two days it took for them to be collected. From then onward, he himself cooked and offered *bhoga*.

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja always taught that Bhagavān’s name and deity form—which includes His portrait—are non-different from Bhagavān Himself. Guru Mahārāja accepted this teaching with firm faith and always demonstrated through his own conduct the standard by which one should show proper respect to the images of Bhagavān and His pure devotees. He did not

frivolously place such images here and there, nor did he allow any of his disciples to engage in such irresponsible conduct. He sent the oil painting of Śrīman Mahāprabhu that had adorned his wall to Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha, where it was kept on a chariot during every *nagara-saṅkīrtana* procession organized by the *maṭha*.

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvami Mahārāja never said anything simply to appease anyone. He spoke only the truth, and that too in such a way that it brought about all auspiciousness for everyone who heard it.

### **Warning against the misuse of Kṛṣṇa’s property**

Whenever Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja collected donations, he would speak to people in a distinctive manner. He would never approach donors timidly, nor would he persuade them through flattery. Rather, his attitude was “*asura luṭiyā khāya kṛṣṇera saṁsāra*—demons loot this world, which belongs to Kṛṣṇa, and devour everything.” He would explain to potential donors, “Those who do not utilize their wealth in Kṛṣṇa’s service, which rightfully belongs to Him, are considered demons. Behaving dishonorably, they steal what is His and use it for their own indulgence. As a punishment for their thievery, they become increasingly entangled in the vicious web of this material world.”

He would then ask those potential donors to ensure their welfare by graciously offering something for the service of Bhagavān. He would also say, “Do not think you are obliging me through offering alms to me. Instead, you should consider yourselves to be grateful that I have accepted the responsibility of utilizing your offerings in the service of Bhagavān.”

### **Speaking on the inspiration of śrī guru**

Once, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja went with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Guru Mahārāja (at that time Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī) to preach at Bārīpada College in Orissa. While Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Guru Mahārāja delivered their lectures, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja sat chanting *harināma* for nearly two hours in front of a portrait of Śrīla Prabhupāda positioned on the dais. When it was his turn to speak, he prefaced his *hari-kathā* by saying, “I am completely illiterate. I have nothing of my own to say. I will simply speak before you whatever my *gurupāda-padma*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, inspires me to speak.” Everyone present that day was incredibly moved by his *hari-kathā*.



### **Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy for a sincere performer of anukīrtana**

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja once told me, “One day, I asked Śrīla Prabhupāda if there was some specific service I could perform for him. ‘Yes,’ he answered. ‘You should always preach the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas everywhere.’

“‘I am totally illiterate,’ I replied. ‘How can I possibly preach?’

“Śrīla Prabhupāda responded, ‘Simply repeat whatever you have heard from the lips of the Vaiṣṇavas. Always strive to perform *anukīrtana*, *kīrtana* under guidance. Bhagavān personally inspires His simple-hearted devotees.’

“It is on the strength of this instruction and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy that I remain fearless and constantly travel everywhere performing *kīrtana* of his *vāṇī* (divine message). Sometimes I see that scholars become stunned when they hear persons like myself repeat Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words. By Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy, I manage to remember the titles of books, the verses therein, those verses’ page numbers, and other such details. If anyone asks me to cite references as evidence, I tell him which verse number to search for in a particular book in my trunk and then prove my point once he has found the verse.”

### **His humble faith in Guru Mahārāja**

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja was adorned with a natural humility. Although he was a senior, he always had great love for and faith in Guru Mahārāja.

Śrīla Mahārāja faithfully sent many of his renounced disciples to Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. He would write our Guru Mahārāja a letter saying, “I have sent my disciple to you so that he may become thoroughly entrenched in the conceptions of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. By staying in the association of you and your disciples, he will receive ample opportunity to learn. I never managed to teach anything to those who stay with me. I would be pleased if you could kindly accept the responsibility of teaching him.”

### **Spiritual perspectives on normal matters**

Once, while Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja was manifesting a sickness pastime, one *brahmacārī* took him to see a doctor. After the doctor prescribed him some medicine, they returned to the *maṭha*. The next morning, the *brahmacārī* asked Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja how he was feeling. Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja responded by quoting a verse from *Bhagavad-gītā*

(2.20):

*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin  
nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ  
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo  
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*

The soul neither takes birth nor does he die, nor is he affected by the repeated growth and dwindling of the body. He is unborn, eternal and ever-existing. Though primeval, he remains ever-youthful. When the body is destroyed, the soul is not annihilated.

He said, “According to Bhagavān’s own words, the soul is not a material entity. How then can it become sick? Do you think I am a material entity? Am I not a soul?”

The *brahmacārī* was rendered speechless. He later approached me, saying, “One must carefully consider one’s words before speaking to Śrīla Mahārāja. You are bound to get in trouble if you ask him anything in a normal manner.”

### **All attempts must be made to fulfill a Vaiṣṇava’s request**

One evening, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja arrived rather late to our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Vṛndāvana. At that time, the in-charge of the *maṭha*, my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja, served him *prasāda*. When Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked if there was any milk, Śrī Purī Mahārāja replied, “Mahārāja, there is no more milk. If I had known you were coming, I would have saved you some. Please forgive me.”

“What!” Śrī Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja exclaimed. “How is it possible there is no milk in Mādhava Mahārāja’s *maṭha*?”

In fear of this reaction, Śrī Purī Mahārāja rushed to purchase milk from a nearby teashop. When he offered it to Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Mahārāja asked, “Where did this milk come from all of a sudden?” and then gave him an instruction: “If somebody asks for something, it is improper to simply say there is none left without making an effort to arrange for more.”

### **The behavior of pure devotees is not to be imitated**

I once accompanied Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja to the bus station in Kṛṣṇanagara to see him off to Māyāpura. As he was getting on the bus, the conductor told him to purchase a ticket. Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja became upset and replied, “What! A ticket? Whose bus is this? Who is demanding a fare, and from whom are they demanding it? *Asura luṭiyā khāya kṛṣṇera saṁsāra*. Everything belongs to my Kṛṣṇa, and this bus is no exception.

I am not an ordinary servant of His; I serve Him with the utmost love and affection. Instead of asking me for money, you should give money to me to employ in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's service." He then brushed past the conductor and sat down.

We should not even dream of imitating Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja's conduct. Although some may perceive him as arrogant, after serious and impartial deliberation on his intentions, one can plainly see that everything he said or did was grounded in unadulterated truth. He was straightforward and sometimes became angry, but his anger was never lasting. He would become happy and contented after only a short while.

### **The impact of a moment of his association**

Once, as Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja was performing *parikramā* of the Śrī Govinda-deva temple in Vṛndāvana, a Māyāvādī *sannyāsī* approached him and said, “*Oṃ namo nārāyaṇāya*,” which means “I offer my respects to you, who are Nārāyaṇa Himself.”

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja furiously chastised that *sannyāsī*. “You are a hypocrite! You consider the living entity and Bhagavān to be one. You live in Vṛndāvana, but have never heard a single thing from the true residents of Vraja. You are so offensive! You consider yourself to be *brahma*, but you are unaware of the simple fact that *brahma* is merely the effulgence of Bhagavān's divine body. Come with me. I will arrange for your food and give you a place to stay. Your only duty will be to hear *hari-kathā* and try to properly follow the conclusions of the scriptures.”

The Māyāvādī *sannyāsī* was quite shaken up by Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja's statement, but he followed Śrīla Mahārāja to the *maṭha*, just as he was instructed. When they arrived at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrīla Mahārāja asked for my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja. When he was informed that Śrī Purī Mahārāja had stepped out, Śrīla Mahārāja told one of the *maṭha*'s *brahmacārīs* to bring white garments for the Māyāvādī *sannyāsī* to wear.

When the white garments were brought, Śrīla Mahārāja asked the Māyāvādī *sannyāsī* to change his garb. He then told the *brahmacārī*, “Tell Purī Mahārāja that Araṇya Mahārāja has brought this man to the *maṭha*, and that he should instruct him in the teachings of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, whereby this man's birth in the human species shall become a worthy success.”

The Māyāvādī *sannyāsī* was simple and sincere. He solemnly followed

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s instructions and eventually became an excellent *sevaka*. Later, he admitted to me, “Earlier, I ignorantly accepted and repeated whatever philosophies were put before me. But now I accept teachings only after careful deliberation.”

This incident demonstrates the extent of Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s fearlessness, as well as the immensely positive impact even a moment’s association with him bestows.

### **The vast difference between the consciousness of a realized devotee and that of a neophyte**

Once, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja stayed in our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kṛṣṇanagar for a few days, until he suddenly set off for Māyāpura one morning. When he arrived in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, I requested him to stay in Guru Mahārāja’s *bhajana kuṭīra*. Happily accepting my proposal, he removed his wooden shoes on the veranda outside Guru Mahārāja’s room and went inside. Some time later after bathing with the hot water I provided, he came out and asked, “Where are my shoes?”

I replied, “Mahārāja-jī, they are here, right where you left them.”

“No, these are not my shoes,” he said.

I was confused. “These must be your shoes, Mahārāja-jī. I saw you wear them up here. None of us living in the *maṭha* wear our shoes on Guru Mahārāja’s veranda.”

As soon as I said this, he realized what had actually happened. He gravely picked up the shoes and placed them on his head in great respect. In a heartbreaking voice, he said, “The Vaiṣṇavas’ shoes will always remain on my head,” and recited a verse from the scriptures:

*jñānāvalambakāḥ kecit  
kecit karmāvalambakāḥ  
vayaṁ tu hari-dāsānām  
pāda-trāṇāvalambakāḥ*

Śrī Padyāvalī (58)

Some follow the path of *jñāna*, while others follow the path of *karma*. We, however, are simply the carriers of the shoes of Śrī Hari’s servants.

He explained the meaning of the verse and lamented, “Alas, alas! I have mistakenly worn a Vaiṣṇava’s shoes. I am so unfortunate to have touched a Vaiṣṇava’s shoes with my feet. May the Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura who owns these

shoes forgive me.”

He did not simply slip on those shoes and think, “What difference does it make now? I have already worn them here.” Rather, he internalized his mistake and never wore them again. He put them in a bag and, some days later, returned barefoot by bus to Kṛṣṇanagara, where he returned them to their owner and prayed for his forgiveness. Such was his elevated consciousness.

I happened to visit our Kṛṣṇanagara *maṭha* some days before he departed Māyāpura. There, a *brahmacārī* told me, “A crazy *sannyāsī* came and took my shoes. But it is fine, because I am using his shoes.” When I heard this, I was able to grasp just how expansive the gulf of difference was between the etiquette, humility, realization and conduct of Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja and that of the unmindful *brahmacārī*.

### **Encouraging others to serve according to their nature**

At one point, Śrīla Bhakti Prakāśa Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja exhibited the pastime of having an ocular disease that affected his vision and made it difficult for him to recognize people. Guru Mahārāja arranged for his treatment in a hospital in Kolkata and sent me to see to Śrīla Mahārāja’s needs.

A specialist at the hospital told me, “Before operating on his eyes, we must first control his diabetes. In order to do this, we need to manage his diet, and so his food must come from the hospital.”

I told the specialist, “Śrīla Mahārāja will not eat hospital food. We can prepare and provide him with whatever foods you advise.” The doctor accepted my proposal, and I began bringing Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja food prepared in the *maṭha* especially for him.

The day of Śrī Annakūṭa *mahotsava* eventually came, and a grand festival was held at our *maṭha* in Kolkata. Śrī Amiyā Rāya, a female disciple of Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja, was in attendance at the festival. She honored *prasāda* in the *maṭha* and packed some to take to her family members at home. On her way home, she stopped by the hospital to see her *gurudeva*. By providence, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja was accepting *prasāda* at that time. Seeing her *gurudeva* taking simple *prasāda*, she became upset and said, “Today is Annakūṭa. What kind of *prasāda* are they serving you?”

Before Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja could answer her, Śrī Amiyā Rāya filled his plate with the *annakūṭa-prasāda* meant for her family. At her insistence, Śrīla Mahārāja honored some of the *prasāda*. His blood sugar increased, and the date of his operation was postponed as a result.

The specialist told me, “The food you are giving Mahārāja is more regulated than what he would have received from the hospital. But please explain to him that he is not to accept food from anyone’s hands but yours.”

When I conveyed the specialist’s order to Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he told me, “Look, there are two ways of serving: according to one’s own desires as permitted within the scope of scriptural injunctions, and with the consideration of what is most beneficial for the object of our service. Amiyā Rāya understands only the former; she serves according what she feels is best for herself. She is not yet advanced enough to practice the latter, in which she would serve according to what is best for her object of service. Anyway, I will do as you and the specialist say.”

Once Śrīla Mahārāja’s sugar levels returned to normal, the doctor performed the operation, and Śrīla Mahārāja regained his normal eyesight after only a few days.

### **Affectionate exchanges between godbrothers**

Following the completion of Śrī Vraja-Manḍala *parikramā* one year, a number of us travelled by train from Mathurā to Kolkata in a private reserved coach. On the way, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked, “Has anyone brought milk for me?”

His godbrother Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya teased him, saying, “Isn’t it a mother’s duty to carry milk on a journey for her thirsty child? Is your mother travelling with us, Mahārāja?”

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja remained silent.

When the train stopped in Kānpura a short while later, I asked Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, another disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, for his two-and-a-half liter *loṭā* (flask) and went to purchase milk from the station. When I placed the *loṭā* of milk in Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s hands, he said to his godbrother, “Nārāyaṇa Dā, look! Where did this milk come from? Do the Vaiṣṇavas not proclaim that within the heart of a Vaisnava is the love and affection of countless millions of mothers? Whose desires, then, are not fulfilled by these Vaiṣṇavas, who are like wish-fulfilling trees?”

All the devotees present in the coach were delighted by the insight they reaped as a result of hearing such affectionate exchanges between these two godbrothers.

### **Bhagavān will provide**

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja was firmly established in the primary meaning of the word *vairāgya*,

<sup>1</sup>

and so it was only natural that he was endowed with its secondary meaning,

<sup>2</sup>

as well. He always kept only three sets of clothes. If he ever acquired more clothes than he needed, he would give them away rather than store them for later use. He would tell me, “If I make a habit of keeping extra garments for myself, I will turn into a sense enjoyer. Bhagavān has solemnly promised in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.22):

*ananyāś cintayanto mām  
ye janāḥ paryupāsate  
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām  
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*

For those who are devoid of other desires, who are always absorbed in contemplation of Me and who always worship Me, I personally carry their necessities and preserve what they presently have.

“Bhagavān is everywhere. By His desire, whatever I need will become available at the very moment I need it. Why should I hoard things? If I do not trust in the words of Bhagavān, then what good will hearing the scriptures, associating with *sādhus* and performing *sādhana-bhajana* do for me, even if done for many years? By personally bringing milk for Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī, Bhagavān has demonstrated that He will provide whatever necessities His devotees require. The time of my death is nearing. If not now, then when will I develop faith in the words of Bhagavān and His intimate companions?”

### **Elevated reverence for Vaiṣṇavas**

One day in Kolkata, my godbrother Śrī Vīrabhadra Prabhu called me over and said, “Look, Mahārāja! Even though they are Srīla Prabhupada’s disciples and incredibly senior to us, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu are removing all the Vaiṣṇavas’ shoes from the shoe rack one by one and paying their respects to them.”

I was astounded to see this. I thought, “What reverence they have for the Vaiṣṇavas!” Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja would always tell us to be careful to maintain an attitude of service toward Bhagavān and His devotees, and not one of indulgence. After that day, I stopped keeping my shoes on the rack. I

considered it better to risk them being stolen than to commit an offense to these two Vaiṣṇavas.

### **Serving the Vaiṣṇavas to their satisfaction**

During one Ekādaśī in the Hyderabad branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, one of the *maṭha's brahmacārīs*, who was an expert cook, prepared fried peanuts, a vegetable dish containing peanuts, coconut, raisins, almonds and cashews, papaya *pāyasama*

3

with nuts, as well as a number of other delicious preparations.

As everyone was honoring *prasāda*, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja commended the cook. “The dishes you prepared were wonderful,” He told him. “Everyone is praising your cooking.” He then asked, “But what shall I eat? I have no teeth.”

Śrīla Mahārāja then caught hold of the *brahmacārī's* ear and gave it a good twist. He said, “The scriptures state:

*catur-vidha-śrī-bhagavat-prasāda-  
svādv-anna-tṛptān hari-bhakta-saṅghān  
kṛtvaiṣa tṛptim bhajataḥ sadaiva  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

Śrī Gurvāṣṭakam (4)

I adore the lotus feet of *śrī guru*, who feels much contentment in satisfying Śrī Hari's devotees with the four kinds of *bhagavat-prasāda*—that which is chewed, sucked, licked and drunk.

“If you wish to properly serve the Vaiṣṇavas with your cooking, you must prepare all four types of *prasāda*. Otherwise, not everyone will be satisfied, and your service will be considered incomplete.”

### **His astonishing disappearance pastime**

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja was always preoccupied with preaching. Wherever he found himself—be it in a car, horse buggy, bus, the *maṭha* or a devotee's home—he always spoke *hari-kathā*. I witnessed this first hand each time I received the opportunity to travel with him.

His *hari-kathā* possessed an extraordinary appeal. Once you started listening, to get up to perform some other service before he had finished speaking was difficult, even painful. He would say, “Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered me to always preach.” And he never stopped preaching, even when he was



unable to walk properly and his vision was severely impaired. Wherever he was, he would arrange a *hari-kathā* festival and invite all the locals.

Śrīla Mahārāja left his body while speaking *hari-kathā* on Saphalā Ekādaśī in the village of Dhalatikhā, near the city of Basirhāṭa Mahākumā in West Bengal. At the time, he was sitting on the *vyāsāsāna* explaining the verses *sarva dharmān parityajya* from *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66) and *tava kathāmṛtam tapta-jīvanam* from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.31.9). When I heard about his disappearance pastime, I was reminded of a verse quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* (Ādi-khaṇḍa 7.136):

*anāyāsena maraṇam  
vinā dainyaṇa jīvanam  
anārādhita govinda-  
caraṇasya katham bhavet*

How is it possible for one who has never worshipped the lotus feet of Śrī Govinda to live comfortably and die in peace?

## **A Eulogy for Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prakāśa Araṇya Mahārāja**

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

### **A recipient of the Lord’s unprecedented mercy**

The *śāstras* state, “*ante nārāyaṇa smṛtiḥ*—in the end, one ought to remember Nārāyaṇa.” Thus, the fact that *pūjyapāda* Śrī Bhakti Prakāśa Araṇya Mahārāja, while manifesting his disappearance pastime, used his last breath to utter the verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.33.9) beginning *tava-kathāmṛtam*, which was spoken by the *gopīs* when they were overcome with separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, illustrates that he was the recipient of the unprecedented mercy of Kṛṣṇa and His associates.

### **A living mṛdaṅga**

Śrīpāda Araṇya Mahārāja, a divine personality infused with the potency of his most worshipful *śrī gurupāda-padma*, was one of the principal champions—a living *mṛdaṅga*, so to speak—in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *śrī caitanya-vāṇī saṅkīrtana-yajña*, the ceremonial and congregational propagation of Śrī Caitanya’s divine message.

### **A preacher of pure devotion**

Although he did not receive much in the way of formal education, he has become immortalized in the esteem of learned society, for until the last moment of his life, he helped revive the purest form of knowledge through his dauntless conviction in *śrī kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, which gives life to its bride, spiritual enlightenment. Even highly educated and authoritative graduates, teachers and administrators were mesmerized by his unprecedented and specialized explanations of pure devotion, which is devoid of all pursuits of erudition and fruitive action. As a result of hearing his *bhāgavata-kathā*, many persons—whether rich, aristocratic, noble and highly intellectual or ordinary, destitute, and uneducated—attained the rare fortune of taking shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s most worshipful lotus feet. He was also a recipient of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s supreme grace for his tremendous assistance in collecting funds on behalf of Śrīla Prabhupāda for accentuating the magnificence of Śrīdhāma, the maintenance of *maṭhas* and temples, and facilitating the printing of many books and magazines.

### **A fearless and impartial speaker**

His *hari-kathā*, which teemed with the terminology used by Śrīla Prabhupāda, stunned and delighted those who had taken shelter of pure devotion. He was a fearless and impartial speaker when it came to refuting non-devotional notions and establishing the conclusive truths of pure *bhakti*. Verily, he was a blazing, deadly sun to all darkness that attempted to obscure the true conception of *śuddha-bhakti*. Additionally, he astonished all by his unparalleled powers of memory, which he gloriously retained right up to his final moments.

### **His exemplary conduct**

Originally, his home was in a village called Gaṅgārāmapura in the district of Yaśohara, West Bengal. He was a householder at the time he became attracted by Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the founder of the Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha institution. In a short time, he renounced his householder life in an act of exemplary conduct that is echoed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*’s description of Jaḍa Bharata:

*yo dustyajān dāra-sutān  
suhṛd rājyaṁ hṛdi-sprśaḥ  
jahau yuvaiva malavad  
uttamaśloka-lālasaḥ*

Although he was in his youth, he gave up all that is difficult to renounce—his wife, children, friends, kingdom and everything else dear to him—as if it were stool, for he longed to perform *bhajana* of Śrī Bhagavān, who is glorified by the choicest of hymns.

### **Our prayers to him**

*Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja displayed genuine camaraderie and constant good will toward not only Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples and grand-disciples, but also those who found Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings and conduct to be favorable.

Today, having lost such a bosom friend and an ideal Vaiṣṇava, we are all deeply afflicted. Our prayer is that while he is forever absorbed in the service of his eternally cherished *śrī gurupāda-padma*, he may bless us to attain the unique services for which we yearn.

Excerpts from articles published in  
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[1](#) *Viśiṣṭe parama-puruṣe rāga*, or a special attachment to the Supreme Person.

[2](#) *Vigata-rāga*, or the absence of worldly attachment.

[3](#) A grain-less, milk-based sweet dish.

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Happily enduring difficulty for the service of Śrī guru

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja once went to Ambālā to assist in setting up a spiritual education exhibition at Kurukṣetra, as per the desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Being unable to find accommodations for themselves, they resorted to spending the night under a bridge, where they bared the cold weather by embracing each other for warmth and remembering Kṛṣṇa's pastime in which He spent a night in the forest with Sudāmā while serving their *guru*.

## The natural humility of Vaiṣṇavas

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja and my Guru Mahārāja (then known as Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī), once preached in the city of Madras (now Chennai). At that time, a debate between Dr. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇan—who contrary to his name was a strong proponent of the school of *advaitavāda* (non-duality, or impersonalism)—and Dr. Nāgarāja Śarmā—who contrary to his name was a firm promoter of *dvaitavāda* (duality)—was published in the English daily paper *The Hindu* in the form of a series of articles. Through these articles, both men put forth arguments in favor of their respective faiths while refuting the other's arguments. This continued for some time, until the *dvaitavādīs* and *advaitavādīs* of Madras decided to organize a debate between the two men under the chairmanship of a representative from the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Whatever conclusion the chairman would reach was to be considered final and acceptable for all.

When the local residents approached Guru Mahārāja with the proposal to appoint a representative from the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution as chairman for the debate, he was very pleased and requested Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to accept the chairmanship. In a humble manner befitting a Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja accepted the proposal.

In the meantime, Guru Mahārāja received a telegram from Śrīla Prabhupāda ordering him to come to Kolkata. When Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja heard about Śrīla Prabhupāda's message, he said to Guru Mahārāja, “O Hayagrīva Prabhu, I will not be able to accept the post of the chairman for the debate if you are absent.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Although Śrīla Prabhupāda will certainly be pleased if I were to leave now for Kolkata as he has instructed, I firmly believe that he will be much more pleased to hear that the Gauḍīya Maṭha was awarded the chairmanship of a debate to be held in such a great assembly of dignitaries, even if it results in a slight delay in my reaching Kolkata.”

On the day of the debate, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was formally appointed as the chairman. In his opening address, he humbly said, “Although I am not qualified to hold the post of chairman for this debate, I have accepted the position in order to fulfill the instructions and desires of the Vaiṣṇavas and noble members of the society.”

When the debate started, Dr. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇan spoke first and attempted to establish the superiority of *advaitavāda*. Afterward, when *dvaitavādī* Dr. Nāgarāja Śarmā was asked to establish his viewpoint, he began his address by saying, “Because Vaiṣṇavas are humble by nature, they introduce themselves by saying ‘*dāso ’smī*—I am your servant.’ *Advaitavādīs*, however, being unable to appreciate such dignity, are always eager to proudly introduce themselves by saying ‘*aham brahmāsmi*—I am *brahma* (the Absolute Truth).’ ” Indirectly referring to the humble conduct of Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he then said, “Truly speaking, there is no need for Vaiṣṇavas to exhibit their humility in all places and circumstances.” After this, Dr. Nāgarāja Śarmā went on to establish his views on *dvaitavāda*.

At the end of the debate, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja said in his concluding speech as chairman, “It is a fact that a person’s pride becomes inflated when he associates with those lesser than himself. But such false pride can never enter a person who always remains in the association of transcendental personalities. Just as a father naturally behaves as a senior in front of his son and as a junior in front of his own father, a person who associates with those who have attained the topmost perfection—service to the Supreme Personality—no longer externally demonstrates humility by force; rather, divine humility naturally manifests in his heart and is reflected in his conduct. But if a person associates with someone inferior to him, then pride is bound to arise in his heart.”

Being humble is not a mechanical process, but rather a natural byproduct of spiritual realization. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has referred to himself by saying:

*jagāi mādhai hôite muñ se pāpiṣṭha*  
*purīṣera kīṭa hôite muñ se laghiṣṭha*

*mora nāma śune jei tāra puṇya kṣaya  
mora nāma laya jei tāra pāpa haya*

*emana nirghṛṇa more kebā kṛpā kare  
eka nityānanda binu jagata bhitare*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 5.205-207)*

I am more sinful than Jagāi and Mādhāi and even lower than a worm in stool. The pious activities of that person who hears my name are completely destroyed. Anyone who utters my name commits a sin. Who in this world but Nityānanda could show His mercy to such a vile person as me?

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the foremost authority of the realm of *bhakti*, has expressed similar sentiments:

*adharo ‘py aparadhanam  
aviveka-hato ‘py aham  
tvat-karuṇya-pratikṣo ‘smi  
prasīda mayi madhava*

*Stava-mālā, Volume 1  
Praṇāma-praṇaya-stava (14)*

Although I am a mine of offenses, and although I cannot tell right from wrong, I still hope for Your mercy. O Mādhava, please be merciful to me.

Śrī Mādhava Sarasvatī, a Vaiṣṇava *kavi* (poet) from South India, has expressed his humility as follows:

*jñānāvalambakāḥ kecit  
kecit karmāvalambakāḥ  
vayaṁ tu hari-dāsānām  
pāda-trāṇāvalambakāḥ*

Some are inclined to *jñāna*, and others are inclined to *karma*. We, however, are inclined to take shelter of the shoes of the lotus feet of Śrī Hari’s servants.

By analyzing the humble expressions of such great personalities, one can clearly understand the actual position of the impersonal *advaitavādīs* as compared to that of the *dvaitavādī* Vaiṣṇavas. The former of the two groups possesses the self-conception of *aham brahmāsmi* and “*pāśa-baddho bhavet jīvaḥ pāśa-muktaḥ sadāśivaḥ*—a person bound by the ropes of *māyā* is a *jīva*, but when he is released from those bonds, he becomes *Sadāśiva*,” while members of the latter group conceive of themselves in the following manner:

*maj-janmanaḥ phalam idaṁ madhu-kaiṭabhāre  
mat prārthanīya mad-anugraha eṣa eva  
tvad bhṛtya-bhṛtya-paricāraka-bhṛtya-bhṛtya  
bhṛtyasya-bhṛtyam iti mām smara lokanātha*

*Mukunda-mālā-stotra (25)*

O Lokanātha (Lord of all)! O slayer of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha! Please be merciful to me and grant my prayer that You may remember me as a servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of Your servant's servant.

## **Exposing imposters**

Once, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his godbrother Śrī Svādhikārānanda Prabhu, who later became known as Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, were preaching in Ambālā on the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda. There, they met the superintendent of the Ambālā railway station, who repeatedly requested them to meet a so-called *sādhū* proclaiming himself to be Bhagavān. Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja explained to the superintendent that it is grossly improper to accept a mortal person as Bhagavān, and Śrī Svādhikārānanda Prabhu declined by saying, “We do not have time to meet such people.” Still, the superintendent strongly insisted.

Although they had absolutely no interest in meeting an imposter, they relented and accompanied the superintendent to meet the so-called *sādhū* at the railway station. After arriving there, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja initiated a conversation by saying, “Please introduce yourself to us.”

The so-called *sādhū* replied in English, “I am Lord Kṛṣṇa. I am Mohammed. I am Christ. I am Buddha. I am Caitanya.”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja told him, “You are speaking to a sensible person. Please speak accordingly.”

Hearing Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja's words, the fraudulent *sādhū* became irritated and said, “Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, is a dog to me. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the President of United States of America, is a cat to me.”

Seeing their *gurudeva* becoming angry, his disciples asked Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “Why are you upsetting Bhagavān?”

The superintendent said, “Bhagavān and His devotee are having a conversation. Do not interfere.”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja then asked the imposter, “What is cause of your irritation?”

Without being goaded or pressed, the imposter himself explained, “I



sacrificed so much for India's independence, but no one stepped forward to help me financially when my wife fell sick in Delhi. She died as a result. Am I mad that I will continue to sacrifice my life for those who have done nothing to help me, a soldier who fought so diligently for their freedom? They have cheated me, and now it is my turn to cheat them."

Being shocked to hear this, many of the imposter's prominent guests left, one by one. Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja turned to Śrī Svādhikārānanda Prabhu and said, "*Ĵa palāyate sa jīvati*—Those who discard the association of this wicked person will be saved. All others will be trapped."

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a recipient of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mercy, had an uncanny ability to identify imposters, uproot their deception and expose their true nature to everyone.

### **Defending the authenticity of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam**

Once, a scholar told Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, "Many people do not accept *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* among the authentic scriptures Śrī Vyāsadeva manifested. And at a least to some extent, their argument seems logical." He explained, "A linguistic comparison between *Bhāgavatam* and Vyāsadeva's other scriptures reveals troubling dissimilarities. It is evident that *Bhāgavatam*'s modern morphology contrasts with that of the ancient language used in Vedavyāsa's other scriptures. Naturally, this leads many to question not only the era of *Bhāgavatam*'s origin, but its authenticity as well. What is your opinion on this?"

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja's response was extraordinary. "Oh, yes," he replied, his words dripping with sarcasm, "*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was certainly composed yesterday."

He then earnestly asked the scholar, "Is antiquity the sole factor by which a scripture's authenticity is to be assessed? Should we not assign greater value to a relatively recent text whose gravity and depth is far superior to the ancient texts against which it is being compared? Should the potency of the atom bomb, which is undisputedly the deadliest and most powerful weapon ever created, be dismissed merely due to its recent invention?"

He continued, "*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the butter churned from the *bhakti-śāstras* and Upaniṣads. The date of its origin is irrelevant to the superiority of its depth. Whether ancient or composed yesterday, it remains far superior to the Upaniṣads. Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura Mahāśaya, a prominent personality in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava lineage, has stated:

*cāri-veda ‘dadhi’ bhāgavata ‘navanīta’  
mathilena śuke khāilena parīkṣita*

*Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata  
(Madhya-khaṇḍa 21.16)*

The four Vedas are like yogurt, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is like butter. Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī churned that yogurt into butter, and Śrī Parīkṣit Mahārāja relished the result.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja concluded, “An unqualified person’s inability to assess the true worth of an invaluable albeit recently created object is a testament to his foolishness. An intelligent person, however, accepts apprenticeship at the feet of a learned mentor who can instill in him the ability to assess an object’s value based on merit alone.”

### **On knowing the Unknowable**

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja once preached in Bombay (now Mumbai) before the establishment of a Gauḍīya Maṭha there. Śrī M.P. Engineer, the first Advocate General of independent India, was at that time the chairman of the Theosophical Society, and he invited Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to speak at one of the Society’s gatherings. Because many speakers had been invited, each speaker was asked to keep his speech to a concise fifteen minutes.

In his speech, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja mentioned that the Supreme Lord Śrī Bhagavān is *advaya-jñāna para-tattva*, which means one cannot attain true knowledge about His supremacy simply by one’s own endeavors, nor can He be made understood by anyone else:

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhya  
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena*

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad (1.2.23)*

The Supreme Soul can never be attained by one’s intelligence, by delivering sermons nor by extensively hearing about Him.

Upon the conclusion of Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s presentation, Śrī M.P. Engineer posed a question to Śrīla Mahārāja before he could even take his seat: “Mahārāja, you have just professed Śrī Bhagavān to be unknown and unknowable. If this is true, then for what purpose have you given up the material comforts of this world and accepted the renounced order of life, if not to attain Him?”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja immediately responded, “Śrī Bhagavān

can most certainly be known.”

Hearing this, Śrī M.P. Engineer good-humoredly said, “I must admit that according to my vision, you do not appear to be a renunciant in any true sense, because you have instantly changed your stance on this matter, just like a lawyer.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “You had given me a time limit. I was able to express only one viewpoint of a highly profound subject matter, and the allocated time was over before I could mention the other viewpoint. Therefore, I could not complete the description of my desired subject matter in the allotted time.”

Hearing the words of Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī M.P Engineer said, “You began explaining a highly insightful topic in a very beautiful way. Therefore, please take another fifteen minutes and complete your presentation on this subject matter.”

Śrīla Mahārāja then went on to firmly establish the full, proper *siddhānta*: “Although the *śāstras* mention that Śrī Bhagavān is the non-dual Absolute Truth, it is mentioned in the same scriptures that if He, the Supreme Absolute Truth, does not possess the ability to make Himself known to whomever He desires, then His supremacy and His qualities of being limitless and infinite are immediately called into question. Therefore, it is said:

*yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas  
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām*

*Kaṭha Upaniṣad (1.2.23)*

The Supreme Soul is attainable only by one upon whom He has bestowed His mercy.  
To such a person, He reveals His personal form.

“In other words, it is impossible for one to gain knowledge about Bhagavān through one’s own endeavors or through the help of someone on the same level of devotion. However, when the Supreme Lord observes in one the inclination to serve Him, He imparts knowledge by which one can understand Him, either directly or through one of His associates.”

*ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi  
na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ  
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau  
svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*

*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.234)*

The name, form, qualities and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa cannot be perceived by the material senses; they become manifest when one's senses, starting with the tongue, are permeated with the desire to render service.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja's presentation had such a profound effect on Śrī M.P. Engineer, that when Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura later visited Bombay, he humbly requested Śrīla Prabhupāda not to deprive the city's residents of his *vicāra-dhāra* (line of philosophical conceptions) and to establish a *maṭha* there. Later, as per the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, a property was rented in Bombay to establish a Gauḍīya Maṭha, from which the preaching of the Gauḍīya line in that city was initiated.

### **The messengers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's vāṇī**

Once, Guru Mahārāja (at the time, Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī), went along with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then Śrī Siddha-svarūpa Brahmācārī) and Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to preach in Sylhet, East Bengal (now Bangladesh), where they had been invited to speak at a three-day spiritual function. On the first day, Śrī Siddha-svarūpa Brahmācārī, in his address, made use of very straightforward but harsh and immoderate words while establishing the superiority of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu over the popular *māyāvāda* philosophies prevalent at that time. He referred to Vivekānanda, whose name means 'one whose takes bliss in having intelligence' as 'Vi-vekānanda,' or 'one who takes bliss in being ignorant,' and to Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa as 'Rāma-hansa,' or 'a large but worthless swan.' Upon hearing these epithets, many residents of Sylhet became irritated. That night, leaflets that denounced the Gauḍīya Maṭha and demanded the cancellation of the function were published and distributed all over town.

The next day, Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī met with the convener, the district judge, who expressed his concerns about safety and said that since the event had faced such great opposition, it would be advisable to cancel the remaining two days of the function, just to rule out the possibility of any undesirable incident. Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī assured the judge that the speaker who had used incendiary words the previous night would most definitely not be speaking again, and that only he and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja would address the audience. The judge replied, "It is on your assurance alone that I will allow the function to continue. I will make all the necessary arrangements for providing increased security, but please be mindful of the content of your *hari-kathā*."

The next evening, the venue was filled with antagonistic objectors. Śrī Haryagrīva Brahmacārī was the first to address the crowd, and he began by praising the hospitality of the Sylhet people. After he finished his speech and established his objective, he conceded the podium to Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. During his presentation, Śrīla Mahārāja said, “Our Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, has taught us that in our preaching, we are delivering the message of Svayaṁ Bhagavān Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself. Our only purpose in coming here is to deliver, through fearless yet fair speech, the *vāṇī* (teachings) that incessantly flow from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the natural commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*, as it has been presented by Śrīman Mahāprabhu and our line of *guru-varga*—which includes Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and others—who make up our *bhāgavata-paramparā*. We are not here to preach with the apprehension and shyness of a lady hiding her face behind a veil.

“What to speak of the philosophical doctrines of personalities like Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, Jamini, Patañjali, Kaṇāda and so on, the ideology manifested by Svayaṁ Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu is unparalleled and vastly superior to the ideologies established by even the previous four Vaiṣṇava *ācāryās*—Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrīla Madhvācārya, Śrī Nimbāditya and Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī. Through His teachings, He has highlighted the shortcomings of such doctrines and has conclusively defeated all erroneously fabricated philosophies. Therefore, in our presentation of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s ideology, how is it possible that the ideologies of persons like Vivekānanda, Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa and Bhandarkar will not be contested?

“Moreover, we are simply messengers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; our duty is merely to deliver his teachings. If anyone in this assembly has any objections, he may kindly address them to Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Vedavyāsa or Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Although we have unflinching faith in their *vicāra-dhārā* (line of ideology), we will undoubtedly surrender to any person who can present an ideology superior to that presented by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. But if such a person is not present in this world, what intelligent being would be unwilling to follow or feel uninspired by such a highly auspicious spiritual path as the one described by Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His followers?

“*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has clearly described Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Svayaṁ Bhagavān:

*ete cāmśa kalāḥ puṁsaḥ  
kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayaṁ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.3.28)

All *avatāras* are either plenary portions or portions of plenary portions of the Supreme Person, but Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.

“Furthermore, Kṛṣṇa Himself has stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that He is the ultimate object of surrender in such verses as:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya  
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja  
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo  
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (18.66)

Completely abandoning all *dharma*, take shelter of Me alone. I will free you from the reactions of your sins. Do not lament.

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto  
mad-yājī māṁ namaskuru  
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te  
pratijāne priyo 'si me*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (18.65)

Offer your mind to Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer *praṇāma* to Me. By this, you shall attain Me. I swear this truth to you because you are dear to Me.

*ananyāś cintayanto mām  
ye janāḥ paryupāsate  
teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām  
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (9.22)

For those who are devoid of other desires, who are always absorbed in contemplation of Me and who always worship Me, I personally carry their necessities and preserve what they presently have.

“Therefore, what benefit is there in accepting the ideology of Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa, who advocates the worship of *devatās* (demigods)? Such worship is averse to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (4.31.14), which has firmly established:

*yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena  
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaśākhāḥ  
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām  
tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*

Just as pouring water on the root of a tree nourishes its trunk, branches, leaves and sprigs, and as giving food to the stomach nourishes all the senses and bodily limbs, all the demigods are automatically worshiped when one worships Śrī Acutya (Bhagavān).

“The philosophy of Vivekānanda is ‘*jīve prema kare jei jana sei jana seviche īśvara*—one who has love for living entities actually serves the Supreme Lord.’ However, we see that his followers kill and eat animals, and we must therefore conclude that in this slogan, the word *jīva*, as used by Vivekānanda, refers only to human beings. But the true meaning of the word *jīva* refers to all living entities.

“You should all deeply consider these points. There is no need for us to say anything further. You are all free to make complaints against any imperfections in our methods of delivery, but you must know for certain that the philosophy we have presented remains immaculately pure at all times, without the slightest trace of contamination.”

After Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja concluded his speech, the audience responded with thunderous applause. Indeed, they were truly pleased, and they requested that the organizers extend the function for an additional fifteen days. In this way, the preaching of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s *vāṇī* in the city of Sylhet was a great success. As Sylhet was well known as a city with good-quality lime, the residents, in their appreciation, arranged for a wagonload to be used in the service of whitewashing the walls of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, the temples at Yogapīṭha and other buildings in Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s Śrīdhāma Māyāpura.

### **His non-duplicitous glorification of A junior godbrother**

Every year after the Gaura-pūrṇimā festival, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja used to invite many of his godbrothers to attend a function at his Śrī Caitanya Sarasvata Maṭha at Kolera Gañj, Navadvīpa-dhāma. During one such occasion, my Guru Mahārāja, after the completion of the Gaura-pūrṇimā festival, was engaged in managing the affairs of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha—such as bidding farewell to the pilgrims and settling accounts—and despite his most sincere desire and efforts to reach Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Maṭha in a punctual manner, he arrived somewhat late to the assembly of Vaiṣṇavas gathered there. Upon seeing that Guru Mahārāja had arrived, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja said, “Mādhava Mahārāja, you have arrived very late today. We have been waiting for you for a long time.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Mahārāja, because many pilgrims had come to our *maṭha* for Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, we have incurred a great debt.

Today I was busily engaged in settling these debts and resolving other issues, so that the services of the *maṭha* can continue. You and all the other Vaiṣṇavas present please forgive me for my delay.”

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, having heard the response of Guru Mahārāja, said, “*Nārambhān ārabhet kvacit*—one must never attempt to unnecessarily increase one’s material opulence.”

Hearing this, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja said, “Mādhava Mahārāja, I would like to reply to *pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Mahārāja’s comment.”

“Yes, Mahārāja-jī. As you please,” Guru Mahārāja relied.

“For an elephant,” Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja began, “a stick of sugar cane is as insignificant as *nasavāra* (snuff tobacco), whereas for an ant, the same sugar cane stick is like a mountain. An activity that to us may seem like a huge endeavor is nothing but an insignificant task for *pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja; he can perform such deeds without any difficulty.

“In this regard, I have had first-hand experience. Śrīla Prabhupāda had sent *pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja—then known as Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī—and me to acquire some land at the meeting place of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Rāya Rāmānanda at Kovvur, near the banks of the Godāvarī River, in order to establish Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s footprints (*pada-pīṭha*) there. After many days of endless endeavor, I said, ‘Hayagrīva Prabhu, Śrīla Prabhupāda has sent us here with great hope to obtain a piece of land on which to establish Mahāprabhu’s *padapīṭha*. My *brahmācārī* name given by Śrīla Prabhupāda was Rāmānanda dāsa, and this is the meeting place of Mahāprabhu and Rāmānanda Rāya. Although we have tried our best to acquire land, we have not been successful. What is your opinion? Should we stay here longer, or should we leave for Madras for preaching?’

“Śrī Hayagrīva Prabhu replied, ‘It is my feeling that we have thus far not made any special endeavors. I think we should continue our efforts for some time more.’ ”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja then mentioned to all the Vaiṣṇavas present, “You may estimate his capability from this statement of his. The apparent end point of our attempts was for him a beginning point of fresh endeavors. Later, through his tireless efforts, a plot of land was acquired in Kovvur and a *maṭha* was established there. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to refer to Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī as having ‘volcanic energy.’ Śrī Vāsudeva Prabhu used to call him *sarva ghaṭe*, one who excels in completing all types of tasks.



“My personal view about *pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja is that he is comparable to none other than Śrīla Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, an associate of Śrīman Mahāprabhu who could dance continuously during *kīrtana* for seventy-two hours without becoming fatigued.”

Beyond the glorification of my Guru Mahārāja, this narration relates a significant lesson. Although Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was senior to my Guru Mahārāja, having joined the *maṭha* and having been awarded *sannyāsa-veśa* earlier than him, he did not hesitate in observing and speaking about the good qualities of his junior. Śrī Goloka Vṛndāvana is the topmost abode, superior to all other Vaikuṇṭha planets, and it remains eternally free from even the faintest scent of jealousy and envy. Because Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja is among the great personalities who are sincere (*nirmatsara*) followers of the loving residents of this very Goloka Vṛndāvana, he remains free from the material limitations of this world, and was therefore able to offer such genuinely humble and non-duplicious praise.

### **The repugnance of *pratiṣṭhā***

A devotee once asked Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “In his *kīrtana* entitled *Vaiṣṇava Ke?*, Śrīla Prabhupāda has written, ‘*tomāra pratiṣṭhā, śūkarera viṣṭhā*—your prestige is hog excrement.’ Why has he specifically chosen the words *śūkarera viṣṭhā*, ‘the stool of hogs,’ to describe *pratiṣṭhā* (worldly prestige)?”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “*Pratiṣṭhā* is abominable and worthless, and it is only proper to compare it to an equally worthless object.

<sup>1</sup>  
Had Śrīla Prabhupāda discovered a more worthless substance than the stool of hogs, he would have utilized that substance in his metaphor.”

### **Encouraging others to speak *hari-kathā***

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja once inquired from me, “If I were to ask you, could you deliver a spiritual discourse on stage?”

“No, Mahārāja,” I replied. “I am just a newcomer. How can I deliver a speech when I am not well-versed in scriptural conclusions?”

Śrīla Mahārāja further asked, “Tell me, what is your view on Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu?”

I replied, “I have no independent view on Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Bhagavān Himself. But, I can try to present before you whatever I have heard and understood from *śrī guru* and the *Vaiṣṇavas*.” Mahārāja consented, and I

described whatever I knew to the best of my ability.

Śrīla Mahārāja then asked, “What do you know about the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the process to follow those teachings?”

I replied, “Śrīman Mahāprabhu has described the four prerequisites for performing *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*:

*tṛṇād api sunīcena  
taror iva sahiṣṇuna  
amāninā mānadena  
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka (3)

“A chanter of *kīrtana* must consider himself to be more worthless than straw in the street and more tolerant than a tree. He must be devoid of all pride, and he must offer due respect to all. Śrīman Mahāprabhu is the very embodiment of these four principles. In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 3.20), Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has recorded Śrīman Mahāprabhu as saying, ‘*Āpani ācari’ bhakti śikhāimu sabāre*—I shall teach *bhakti* to everyone by practicing it Myself,’ and ‘*Āpani nā kaile dharma śikhāna nā yāya*—If I do not practice it Myself, then pure *bhakti*, which is the essential principle of religion, will not be taught.’ ”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja said, “What you have just spoken easily develops into a full speech by simply adding a few more details.” He went on to describe how *tṛṇād api sunīcena*, the quality of being humbler than a blade of grass, manifests automatically by being in the association of advanced devotees. “Other than *sevā-sādhana*,” he said, “no *sādhana* is required.”

### **The fruit of cultivating a mood of service**

One day, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave me the following instructions: “Instead of paying attention simply to a *kīrtana*’s melody and rhythm, you should instead always focus on its deep meaning and try to follow the moods of the Vaiṣṇava who composed it. Try to become *ugraśravā*. That is, always hear the narrations of Bhagavān’s pastimes exclusively from the lotus lips of advanced devotees, for such narrations are tremendously powerful.”

I asked, “Mahārāja-jī, how will it be possible for me to always hear from advanced devotees?”

Śrīla Mahārāja replied, “Everything is possible by sincerely serving the Vaiṣṇavas. Serve advanced devotees whenever you receive the opportunity to do so.”

Firmly fixing Śrīla Mahārāja’s advice in my heart, I never allowed an opportunity to serve advanced devotees pass me by. In my life, I have served them in countless ways, including providing them warm bathing water, washing their clothes, cleaning their rooms, assisting them in their travels, attentively hearing their *hari-kathā* and discussions and closely observing their conduct.

Being pleased with my mood of service, the many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda who visited our *maṭha* would often specifically request Guru Mahārāja to assign me to their service during their visit. In this way, I received the rare fortune of serving some of the most exalted Vaiṣṇavas, each of whom was capable of purifying the whole world. In their service, I directly witnessed their standards for performing *bhajana*, in addition to receiving the golden opportunity to hear the deepest, subtlest and most secret teachings of the scriptures from their lotus lips.

### **Sarasvatī-putra—the sons of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura**

I once went with a few Punjabi devotees to Śrī Navadvīpa to have *darśana* of Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. However, when we reached Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *sevaka* informed us that we would be unable to meet with Śrīla Mahārāja, as he was feeling unwell. We offered *praṇāma* from outside Śrīla Mahārāja’s room and were preparing to leave, when Śrīla Mahārāja called for his *sevaka*. “Who has come?” he asked. “I heard voices.” The *sevaka* mentioned my name, and Śrīla Mahārāja told him to call us.

When we entered his room, he expressed a bit of displeasure with me. He asked, “Were you about to leave without meeting me?”

“No, Mahārāja-jī,” I said. “It’s not like that. We were about to leave only because we were told you were unwell. We did not want to disturb you, and so we offered *praṇāma* from outside.”

Śrīla Mahārāja then spoke about his different preaching missions to Punjab during the time Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present. He particularly mentioned the warm hospitality of the Punjabi people. He then said, “We are *sarasvatī-putra*, the sons of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, and we will remain healthy as long as we engage in the service of Sarasvatī

by speaking about Bhagavān and Bhagavān’s associates. We will be greatly

fortunate if by destiny we leave this world performing *kīrtana* and *hari-kathā*.”

## Glorification of Pūjyapāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja

By Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

### His appearance and early life

*Pūjyāpāda* Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja commenced his manifest pastimes at an auspicious moment on the ninth day of the fortnight of the new moon in the month of Kārtika, Saturday 10 October, 1895, in the village of Hāpāniyā in Kālnā, Bardhamāna, West Bengal. When he appeared, he accepted the foremost scholar Śrīyukta Upendra Candra Bhaṭṭācārya Vidyāratna Mahodaya as his father and Śrīmatī Gaurī-devī as his mother. Both of his parents were devoutly religious and noble individuals dedicated to the Lord, and they gave their jewel-like son the name Śrī Rāmendra-sundara Bhaṭṭācārya.

Later, beginning in 1923, Śrī Rāmendra-sundara Bhaṭṭācārya became attracted by the grace of the most worshipful Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda and began visiting the Gauḍīya Maṭha, located at No. 1 Ultadaṅgā Road in Kolkata, to take advantage of the good fortune of hearing *hari-kathā* from his lotus mouth and pursuing the true purpose of human life. He listened to Prabhupāda’s discourses with rapt attention. Before long, he offered his full participation to the above-mentioned Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha establishment in December of 1926 and became a recipient of Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda’s special affection.

In the month of Vaiśākha (April), Śrī Rāmendra-sundara Bhaṭṭācārya received initiation into the chanting of *śrī harināma mahā-mantra* from Śrīla Prabhupāda, and on the twenty-sixth day of Śrāvaṇa (August), he was awarded *mantra-dikṣā* according to *pāñcarātrika* conventions. His initiated name was Śrī Rāmānanda dāsa.

Very soon after, in the year of 1930, Śrīla Prabhupāda—noting Śrī Rāmānanda dāsa’s exclusive dedication to the practices of *bhajana* on which he had been instructed, his genuine attachment to the service of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and his exceptional expertise in delivering the truths of scriptures according to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s current of thought—granted him *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa* and gave him the name Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara, which means ‘the guardian of devotion and the emissary of its beauty.’ Śrīla Mahārāja has truly fulfilled the meaning of this name, and thus, by the blessings of *śrī guru*, has become revered worldwide.

### **His exceptional ability**

All virtues befitting a Vaiṣṇava were resplendent in him. By the grace of *śrī guru*, one obtains the grace of the Lord and, additionally, all the demigods along with their virtues take up residence in one who is exclusively devoted to the Lord. Although he was born in an aristocratic *brāhmaṇa* family with ample luxuries, erudition and physical beauty, we never saw him display any sort of arrogance in the *maṭha* regarding his birth or learning. The calm and composed manner in which he somberly refuted, before vast assemblies of scholars, the misconceptions opposing devotional scriptures was exceptional, as was his ability to then establish the proper conceptions.

### **His thesis-like discourses**

As a result of hearing *pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s unparalleled and analytic sermons on devotional scriptures, such as *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, many earnest and pious members of affluent society attained the fortune of succeeding in life’s true purpose by taking shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus feet. Each and every one of his discourses was like a thesis. Anyone could have easily earned a doctorate degree simply by studying the notes of his classes.

### **His unprecedented explanation of brahma-gāyatrī**

As referenced in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the commentary of *brahma-gāyatrī*, the mother of all the Vedas. In accordance with the verdict of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Mahārāja explained *brahma-gāyatrī* as a meditation on the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā—*śrī rādhā-padam dhīmahi*. The unprecedented elegance of this explanation is revered throughout the community of refined scholars who are adept at transcendental sentiments (*rasa*).

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.30.28), [while searching for Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* state,] “*anayārādhito nūnaṁ*—this fortunate maiden has surely worshipped (*ārādhita*) [Bhagavān Hari].” Since She is acclaimed as having truly worshipped Kṛṣṇa, which means He finds bliss in Her, can there be any way to attain the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa other than taking shelter exclusively of *svarūpa-śakti*, this intrinsic potency of His, which is the personified potency of bliss (*hlādinī*)? This in itself is the amorous worship devised by the maidens of Vraja—*vraja-vadhu-vargena yaḥ kalpita*.

[Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written:]

*rādhā bhajane jādī mati nāhi bhelā  
kṛṣṇa-bhajana tava akāraṇe gelā*

If your mind does not incline towards the worship of Rādhā, your worship of Kṛṣṇa has been in vain.

This alone is the instruction of *śrī gurupāda-padma*, who is eminent among the followers of Śrī Svarūpa-dāmodara Gosvāmī and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda. Reciting this instruction as if it were a *mantra* causes the witch of illusion to flee.

*Bhagavad-gītā* (10.10) states “*dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te*—I grant them the true intelligence and understanding by which they can attain Me.” This statement refers to pure, determined intelligence aimed at attaining the eternal service of Śrī Bhagavān, for which one must pray to Gāyatrī-devī, the mother of the Vedas. This explanation manifested in *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja’s heart by the mercy of Śrī Rādhā’s eternal associate, his *śrī guru*, who identified himself as Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-dayita dāsa, the servant of the beloved of Śrī Vṛṣabhānu’s daughter.

According to the primary meaning of the words of the Vedas *śyāmāc-chabalaṁ prapadye śabalāc-chyāmaṁ prapadye*, the quintessence of the Lord’s intrinsic potency (*svarūpa-śakti*) of bliss takes refuge within Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes refuge in the essence of that blissful energy (*hlādinī*). When this logical understanding can be deduced from the above, what is the point of speculating and applying the secondary meaning of the word *śyāma*, which is *hārda-brahmatva*, or ‘the all-pervasive monist spirit within the heart.’

The true intent of *brahma-gāyatrī* is to meditate on the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā—*śrī rādhā-padaṁ dhīmahi*. It is only when one adheres to this understanding that the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhānātha, the master of Śrī Rādhā (that is, Śrī Śyāmasundara), become attainable. That Personality alone is the Absolute Truth.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja has thus received ubiquitous acclaim for his purport on *gāyatrī*.

### **An object of deferential regard**

*Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja was so well adept at *bhajana* that the great majority of eminent *sannyāsis*, *brahmacārīs*, *grhasthas* and *vānaprasthī* devotees of our Gauḍīya Maṭha mission treated him with deferential regard and experienced great joy in discussing matters of the Lord with him.

The worshipful *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti

Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja and *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa pūjyapāda tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja both accepted *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa* from *parama-pūjyapāda* Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī.

During his manifest presence, the world-renowned *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja—who accepted *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa* from *pūjyapāda* Keśava Mahārāja and extensively preached the message of Śrī Caitanya in the Western countries, establishing many temples worldwide—showed great regard for his senior godbrother *pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Mahārāja, recognizing him as an expert in *bhajana*, and he rejoiced in visiting him to hear *kṛṣṇa-kathā* whenever he was able.

### **His natural genius**

In school, *pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Mahārāja simultaneously learned Sanskrit and English under the tutelage of highly learned mentors. Since he was born in a celebrated family of scholars, his natural genius in composing Sanskrit poetry was noted at an early age, and under the shelter of our most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda, this innate, God-given ability only blossomed further. Śrīla Prabhupāda, during his manifest presence, would express his immense pleasure to read verses Śrīdhara Mahārāja composed, especially his *Śrīmad Bhaktivinoda-viraha-daśakam*.

By reading several of his poetic Sanskrit compositions—such as *Śrī Śrī Prabhupāda-padma-stavakaḥ*, *Śrī Dayita-dāsa-praṇati-pañcakam*, *Śrī Śrī Dayita-dāsa-daśakam* and *Śrī Śrī Prabhupāda-praṇatiḥ*—it is easy to grasp the extent of the staunch, compelling devotion and attachment he nurtured for his *śrī gurupāda-padma*. Aside from these, he composed *Śrīmad Gaura-kīśora-namaskāra-daśakam*, *Śrīmad Rūpa-pada-rajah-prārthanā-daśakam*, *Śrīman Nityānanda-dvādaśakam*, *Śrīla Gadādhara-prārthanā*, *Ṛk-tātparyam*, *Śrī Gāyatrī-nirgalitārtham*, *Śrī Prema-dhāma-deva-stotram* and *Śrī Gaurasundara-nutī-sūtram*, all of which are highly revered through-out the Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

Two of Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda’s dear associates, the exalted Vaiṣṇava *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa* Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, who was always immersed in the bliss of *bhajana*, and *tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja had a special appreciation for the abovementioned compositions and would sing and relish them with great enthusiasm.

### **The compiler of a poetic gem**

In Śrīla Mahārāja's *Śrī-Prema-dhāma-deva-stotram*, almost all of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's pastimes—from *ādi* to *antya*, beginning to end—are recorded in brief. Published on its own as a book, with word-for-word purports and translations, this poetic gem of a *stotra* would prove to be a sizeable devotional literature worthy of regular study.

The Vaiṣṇavas also sing with great honor the Bengali songs he composed describing Śrī Gaurasundara's birth, such as *Aruṇa Vasane Sonāra Sūraja*, in which he describes Śrī Caitanya-deva as a golden sun wearing a saffron cloth.

### **His contribution for the bṛhad-mṛdaṅga**

Under *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja's editorial direction, the entire *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* has been translated into Bengali and published with Sanskrit verses, commentary, and *anvaya* (word-for-word translations that follow the sentence structure). Besides this, he has published *Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā*, his *Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛta*—a collection of Sanskrit verses regarding *śaraṇāgati* from various scriptures—as well as several other books, both in Bengali and English. These books have been widely distributed and well-received by Western academics.

It has been a matter of great joy for us to see that so many earnest, pious seekers, having come from the West to Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Māṭha in Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, have been attracted by hearing *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja's delivery of the message of pure devotion, and have thus gained the fortune of receiving the shelter of his lotus feet. They tape recorded many of his instructions delivered in English while he was either partially or fully confined to bed, and later published these recordings as books, which have been well-received by the English-speaking academia. With heartfelt and spirited effort, these devotees have established preaching centers in such places as London, whereby Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda's message of pure devotion is being widely propagated. Although Mahārāja remained in one place throughout most of his life, amazingly, he served to fulfill Śrīman Mahāprabhu's prediction:

*pr̥thivīte āche jātô nagarādi grāma  
sarvatra pracāra hōibe mora nāma*

My name will be propagated in every town and village all over this Earth.

### **A true follower of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura**

The day before Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda disappeared, he blessed *pūjyapāda*



Śrīdhara Mahārāja with the order of singing Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura Mahāśaya’s *Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī-pada* and various other songs. *Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja carried that merciful blessing on his head throughout his life and, until the moment he disappeared, dedicated his life to fulfilling the heartfelt ambition of Prabhupāda, the foremost of the followers of Śrī Svarūpa-dāmodara Gosvāmī and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda.

Just days before Śrīla Prabhupāda disappeared, he said, “The legacy of Śrī Bhaktivinoda will never be checked. You must all pledge yourselves to propagating the ambition of Śrī Bhaktivinoda with even more enthusiasm.”

Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda is our exalted predecessor and the foremost of the followers of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda. Our most worshipful Prabhupāda set the magnificent ideal of fulfilling Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda’s cherished desire. His dearest disciples—*pūjyapādas* Tīrtha Mahārāja, Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Mādhava Mahārāja, Vana Mahārāja, Yāyāvara Mahārāja, Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrīdhara Mahārāja and other prominent Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*—have emulated that ideal and have come to be counted among the followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the follower of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda. Now that Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda and many of his associates have entered the Lord’s eternal pastimes, if the servants of his servants wish to attain his lotus feet, they must be dauntless in cultivating their hope to fulfill the innermost desire of *śrī guru*. In this task, the dust of the feet of the *rūpānugā* Vaiṣṇavas, the water that has washed their feet, and the remnants of their food shall be our sole sources of strength and courage.

### **His dedicated servakas**

During Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s pastime of illness, the manner in which his Eastern and Western disciples preoccupied themselves with serving his sacred form day and night was truly amazing, incredible and exemplary. Following the example of Śrī Śrīla Īśvara Purīpāda’s service to Śrī Śrīla Mādhavendra Purīpāda during his final days, several young Bengali *sevakas*, especially one boy named Tapana, offered their body, mind and words in the service of their *guru* in an extraordinary manner, thus becoming recipients of their *gurudeva*’s boundless merciful blessings.

### **My good fortune**

Four days prior to *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja’s disappearance, on Monday, 8 August, it so happened that I was fortunate enough to be present in Śrī Caitanya

Sārasvata Maṭha to have *darśana* of *pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Mahārāja. I stayed there until his disappearance and was blessed to be in his proximity every so often and render some service. The ritual aspect of his *samādhi* ceremony was performed under my direction.

### **Our grand misfortune**

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has captured in verse form the words Śrīman Mahāprabhu spoke in the context of Śrī Śrīla Nāmācārya Ṭhākura Haridāsa’s passing:

*kṛpā kôri’ kṛṣṇa more diyāchilô saṅga  
svatantra kṛṣṇera icchā hōilô saṅga bhaṅga  
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 11.94)*

Mercifully, Kṛṣṇa gave me [Haridāsa Ṭhākura’s] association. By Kṛṣṇa’s independent will, our exchange has ended.

*haridāsa āchilô prthivīra ratna-śiromaṇi  
tāhā binā ratna-śunyā hōilā medinī  
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 11.97)*

Haridāsa was the crown jewel of this Earth. Without him, it is as if she is bereft of all jewels.

Today, we have lost an intimate associate of our most worshipful Prabhupāda. Remembering the pastime of Ṭhākura Haridāsa’s passing, we have become submerged in an ocean of grief. The void created by his absence can never be filled.

It is our grand misfortune that the supremely effulgent suns of the Sārasvata Gauḍīya sky are disappearing one by one, casting that sky under the cover of darkness. Alas! Alas! We are gradually being deprived of guardians and caretakers. I see that the cloud of fallacies and illusion is beginning to cover the sun of pure devotional truths once again.

### **Who will selflessly show me compassion in his absence?**

In the course of their dialogue, Śrīman Mahāprabhu asked his associate Śrīla Rāya Ramānanda, “*duḥkha-madhye kona duḥkha haya gurutara*—among all sorrows, which sorrow is the greatest?”

This evoked the answer, “*kṛṣṇa-bhakta viraha vinā duḥkha nāhi dekhi para*—I cannot think of any sorrow greater than that experienced in separation

from Kṛṣṇa’s devotees.”

Truly, there is no limit to the pain of separation from Kṛṣṇa’s devotees, nor is there any consolation. Who but a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, whose life belongs to Kṛṣṇa, who is a veritable ocean of compassion, and who is fully empathic—he feels the pain of others and suffers when he sees the suffering of others—will strive to deliver the souls who have lost Kṛṣṇa and lead them in His direction by speaking *hari-kathā*? Who else will selflessly try to dispel the ghost of delusion afflicting such a fallen, miserable soul as I, who am blinded and bewildered?

### **The associates of Śrī Gaurahari**

Devotion alone is the supreme function of all souls. As corruptive misconceptions enter devotion, an outbreak of irreligion occurs. It is to dispel this perversion and reinstate the pure principles of religion that Śrī Bhagavān incarnates in every age along with His associates. In the interim, He sends His devotees to preach pure *dharma*, and thereby manifests His compassion for the living entities. Thus, the supremely compassionate Śrī Gaurahari sent His associates Śrī Śrīla Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura and, more recently, their associates—*pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Mādhava Mahārāja and other such personalities—to effect the establishment of pure religion.

### **A piteous prayer at his lotus feet**

Alas! Today, as they gradually disappear from view, we have become totally bereft of our protectors. O Gaurasundara, please protect us! Surely, *pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Maharaja has arrived in the presence of *paramārādhyā* Prabhupāda’s worshipful lotus feet and has become engaged in his eternal service. My piteous prayer at his lotus feet is that he cast a glance of mercy from there upon this wretched and destitute individual.

Vaiṣṇavas ignore the faults of others. We therefore humbly and pitifully pray at *pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s lotus feet that he may forgive and rectify any offenses, mistakes or oversights we may have committed either knowingly or unknowingly. He has become engaged in the eternal service of Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda, and so I submit this prayer at his feet: May he mercifully fulfill our lives by granting us the qualification to serve the lotus feet of Prabhupāda and Prabhupāda’s associates.

Excerpts from an article published in

*Śrī Catanya-vāṇī* (Year 28, Volume 7)

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[1](#) Here, the question may arise as to why Śrīla Prabhupāda referred specifically to the excrement of hogs, when human excrement seems just as worthless. Because hogs are nourished by consuming human excrement, it is considered to have at least some value. The excrement of hogs, however, it absolutely worthless, because all species of animals avoid it, including hogs.

[2](#) ‘Sarasvatī’ is also the name of the goddess of speech.

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Exceptionally brilliant from childhood

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja appeared in this world in Baḍagaḍa-grāma, a village in the Gañjām district of Orissa, on the day of Kṛṣṇa Pratipadā during the month of Kārtika. He was born in an elite *brāhmaṇa* family, and his parents gave him the name Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha. For generations, his forefathers had reverently carried out the momentous role of serving as royal priests for the king of Baḍagaḍa.

Since Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha was the son of a royal priest, the king had a special affinity for him. Noting the boy's exceptional brilliance, he invited Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha to the royal assembly, where many dignitaries, like royal poets and scholars, were present. There, the king intended to showcase the boy's scholarship by engaging him in discussions and debates on a variety of topics. Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha defeated all the assembled scholars through his intelligent arguments. The king was so impressed by Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha's brilliance that he awarded him the title 'Pāṭa-yośī,' champion of studies. The king also recognized him as a *śreṣṭha-sabhākavi*, a great poet of the royal assembly, and appointed him *rāja-guru*, the royal spiritual advisor.

## Appreciating simplicity

Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha studied both Sanskrit and English during his schooling, but when he noticed the gross disparity between the pronunciation of similarly spelled English words, like 'put' and 'but,' he concluded that English was unbecoming those who value logic. He therefore made excellence in Sanskrit his only aim and went on to achieve great proficiency in the language.

## The rarity of well-wishing critics

Around the time Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha assumed the role of *rāja-guru*, the king was planning to construct a new wing of the royal palace. After looking at the blueprints, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha told the engineer, "Cracks will develop in the building if it is constructed in this way. My advice is that you should rethink your plans before moving ahead."

The engineer paid no heed to his counsel, and sure enough, cracks began to appear soon after the building was completed. The engineer then recalled what

Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha had previously told him and visited him.

When the engineer asked him on what basis he had made his prediction, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha said, “Look, I am not an engineer; this is true. But because this place is so close to the flowing river, I was able to assess with all surety that things would go wrong by the way you planned the building’s foundation and structure.

“My parents have instilled in me that we must pay attention to the words of distinguished personalities. Sincere critics who can catch our flaws and point them out to us are indeed rare in this world. If you had given even the slightest bit of value to my words, you would not have wasted so much time and money. Just remember: you will benefit greatly if you resolve to acknowledge of the opinions of the wise and amend your mistakes accordingly.”

### **As a result of his fearless determination, the blessings of a corpse**

Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha, the *rāja-guru* of Baḍagaḍa, and Śrī Liṅgarāja Miśrā, the *rāja-guru* of Dharākoṭa, together started practicing the arts of *tantra*

[1](#)

. As a part of that practice, they once went to a cremation ground on a dark moon night. There, they practiced their *mantras* while sitting on the chest of a corpse. When, by the power of the *mantras*, the corpse raised its hand, Śrī Liṅgarāja Miśra got up and ran away out of fear. Śrī Ujjvaleśvara, on the other hand, started shouting at the corpse, “*Mṛṣā, mṛṣā*—Whatever you are doing will go in vain,” and continued reciting his *mantras*.

He repeatedly pushed the corpse’s hand back down until the corpse, exasperated, finally asked him, “Why are you doing this?”

“To gain knowledge,” Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha replied.

“Then go,” said the corpse, “and you will attain the topmost knowledge. You need not worry at all.” And so it came to pass that Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha became a distinguished scholar.

### **A conversation with a ghost**

One time, *rāja-guru* Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha was returning home after selling the season’s harvest from the fields he leased to farmers, when he ran into a fierce typhoon-like storm. The torrential rain and punishing hail kept him from continuing on, and so he took shelter at a *pān* shop in the nearby village. There, he asked the shopkeeper if he could stay the night.

The shopkeeper asked, “Do you have your own bedding?”

“Yes, indeed I do,” he said.

“Then you can stay in the empty house out front.”

The shopkeeper showed him the house and left. A short while after Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha had fallen asleep, an evil spirit inhabiting the house began to cause a commotion. Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha woke up and found a gigantic ghost standing in front of him. He asked the ghost in Sanskrit, “Who are you?”

The ghost replied, “I am a *brahma-daitya*

[2](#)

.”

“Why have you come here?” Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha asked.

“I live here. You are the one who has come here.”

“Well, what do you want?”

“I want to devour you.”

“Why?”

The ghost was taken aback. “What kind of question is this? I make a meal of whoever dares step into this house.”

Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha said, “But I am a *brāhmaṇa*. Are you not afraid of killing a *brāhmaṇa*? How is eating me going to benefit you? You will be stuck in this form of a ghost.”

“What is there to fear in killing a *brāhmaṇa*? I am a *brahma-daitya*; I was once a *brāhmaṇa* myself. I am destined to remain a ghost no matter what, so I may as well gain some satisfaction by eating you.”

“Why are you unconcerned with delivering yourself from your current state?”

“Where am I supposed to find someone qualified enough to deliver me?”

“I will deliver you,” Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha assured him.

“Look,” the ghost said, “not just anyone can deliver me. Only an exceptional person who observes Ekādaśī the way *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has described Śrī Ambarīṣa Mahārāja observed it can deliver me by offering me the fruit of observing one such Ekādaśī.

[3](#)

But like I said, where will I find such an exalted person?”

Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha said, “I follow all Ekādaśīs in this manner. I will deliver you.” Saying this, he took water in his hand, vowed to offer the fruit of one of his Ekādaśī fasts, and threw the water on the ghost. The ghost was immediately delivered, and he disappeared with a sharp hissing sound like that of soda bottle being opened.

As this encounter was quite lengthy, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha did not fall asleep until late in the night. The next morning, when the shopkeeper observed



that the house was still bolted from inside, he gathered his fellow villagers to investigate what had happened inside the house. Hearing the noise of the villagers outside the door, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha opened it. The villagers were awestruck. “Are you okay?” they asked. “Has nothing happened to you?”

“What was supposed to happen?” he asked.

The villagers said, “Some sort of monster lives here. No one survives a night in this house. That shopkeeper is a fool for telling you to stay here. We are extremely grateful to God that you are safe. Did the ghost say anything to you?”

“He said what he had to say, and I said what I had to say. I delivered him by giving him the fruit of observing just one Ekādaśī. Now he has left this place. From now on, no one will have any problem staying here.”

When the villagers found out that he was Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha, the king’s *guru*, they told the shopkeeper he was lucky nothing happened to Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha, otherwise who knows what punishment the king might have inflicted on not only him, but all the villagers as well.

### **Recognizing a tantric spell**

While Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha was once staying the night in a village with a large group of people, a Tantric priest began distributing sweets to everyone. Because Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha had practiced *tantra-yoga*, he could tell that the sweets were actually animal excrement. He told everyone this, but one or two people doubted him. He then collected a particular type of grass and touched it to the sweets, where upon they transformed, revealing that they were indeed stool.

### **Exposing a fraudster**

Once, a man announced that he would come to Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha’s village on a particular day to perform an incredible fire sacrifice. He claimed that he would offer oblations of chilies into the fire in such a magical way that the attendees would experience neither difficulty breathing nor irritation in their eyes. Almost all the villagers were intrigued. In the coming days, they spoke only of the mysterious man and eagerly anticipated the scheduled date.

When Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha came to hear of this, he resolved to expose the man as a fraud. He began experimenting with various methods of burning chilies in order to discover a way in which they would produce inoffensive smoke. Finally, he learned the process. After soaking chilies in *ghee* for some

time, he burned them in a fire sacrifice he performed in front of the villagers. The villagers were astonished to breathe in the innocuous smoke. “How is this possible?” they asked. “What *mantra* did you use?”

Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha told them, “That man was trying to make fools of you. After much experimentation, I figured out that soaking chilies in *ghee* makes them harmless when burned. Many people use *mantras* as an aid to fool common men, but it is not that difficult to figure out the truth behind the trickery and ill intentions of such persons.”

When the fraudster heard that Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha had exposed him, he decided not to appear on the scheduled day.

### **His exemplary honesty**

Because Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha was a *rāja-guru*, the employees of the royal kingdom would come to his house every now and then to give him raw goods like grains, beans and flour as gifts, sometimes on the king’s behalf and sometimes of their own accord. They would tell him not to save any of the provisions, but to finish them off.

Once when they came, he refused to accept their offerings. He said, “I still have so much left over from last time.”

The royal employees said, “Never before, for any reason, have the other *rāja-gurus* ever refused these offerings.”

Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha replied, “How anyone could use such a large quantity of items, I cannot say. Perhaps they bury them in the ground or do something else with them. But regarding myself, I can say this with all certainty: I am not an elephant. I cannot consume the large supply you send me, nor I am inclined to be dishonest. Please take your goods back.”

From this incident, we can conclude that Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja must have possessed such a staunchly exemplary character from his very childhood.

### **Service must not inconvenience one’s worshipful deity**

Before Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha met Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, he worshiped Sūrya, the sun god. He had taken a staunch vow to refrain from eating anything before first seeing and worshipping the sun.

Once while he was on his way to Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana for pilgrimage, the wintertime fog obstructed his view of the sun from morning until almost

evening, and so he fasted without accepting so much as a drop of water. When his train reached Delhi, he caught a glimpse of the sun from his window. He thought to get down at the station to get water and buy fruits, but before he could do that, the train's air horn sounded, indicating that the train was preparing to leave the station.

At that very moment, a man carrying a large basket on his head rushed up to Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha's window and asked him to help unload the basket at the door. Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha helped the man unload the basket, but when he turned around, no one was there and the train had left the station. When he looked back at the basket, he saw it was full of ripe, out-of-season fruits and first class sweets.

He understood that his worshipful deity, Sūrya-deva, had personally given him those items. He concluded, "It is the devotee's duty to worship his worshipful deity. But to undertake a vow that inconveniences that worshipful deity is grossly inappropriate." Instead of taking those fruits and sweets for himself, he distributed them among *sādhus* when he reached Vṛndāvana. Thereafter, he decided to give up the vow that caused his worshipful deity to serve him.

### **Simplicity is necessary in visiting the dhāma**

During his travels, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha went to Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana and then to Navadvīpa, where he arrived in Śrīdhama Māyāpura. There, he received *darśana* of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura. As fortune would have it, the annual Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* was about to commence, and so Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha decided to stay and set out his bedding under a jackfruit tree. In those days, *parikramā prasāda* consisted of locally harvested fat-grain brown rice, which Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha was unable to eat. He did not mention this to anyone. Instead, he filled up on broken biscuits stirred into water. Although Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha was a learned scholar, born to an elite family of *brāhmaṇas*, as well as an esteemed *rāja-guru*, he had not the slightest sense of self-importance. We can infer from his example the mentality we should maintain when visiting the *dhāma*.

### **The impact of a single statement from Śrīla Prabhupāda**

One day during Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha was crossing the Sarasvatī River by boat to go to Śrī Godrumadvīpa. Śrīla Prabhupāda was also in the boat, along with several *sannyāsīs* and

*brahmacārīs*. Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha had a habit of chewing *pān*, and so, due to the force of habit, he spat into the Sarasvatī. Śrīla Prabhupāda saw this and immediately said, “We regard Sarasvatī to be identical to Gaṅgā.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement was so powerful that Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha began to reproach himself. He thought, “People go through so much trouble and spend so much money just to catch a glimpse of the Gaṅgā and bathe in her sacred waters. She is venerated by demigods, sages, seers and great personalities. Because of my bad habit, I have made the offense of spitting into her waters. Moreover, I have made a *sādhū* unhappy by doing this.” As he thought this, he removed his box of *pān* from his pocket and threw it into the Sarasvatī. He vowed, “From this day forth, I shall never again take *pān* as long as I live.”

This anecdote teaches us the real way to listen to and sincerely follow the words of *sādhū*s.

### **Surrendering his life at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda**

During a short, few-day visit to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha heard Śrīla Prabhupāda’s charismatic *hari-kathā* and the glories of all the places visited during Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa *parikramā*. Through this, he internalized Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism’s current of immaculate precepts, and thereby realized that his erudition and respectable position as a *rāja-guru* were worthless. Without further delay, he accepted the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus feet and received *harināma* and *dikṣā* from him. My *śikṣā-guru* Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī also received *dikṣā* on that same day. Having observed Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha’s approach to performing *bhajana*, his service-oriented attitude and his boundless conviction, Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded him *sannyāsa* about two years after his *dikṣā*, and he personally chose his *sannyāsa* name: Śrī Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Mahārāja.

Many of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples were astonished to see Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha receive *sannyāsa* within such a short span of time, especially because Śrīla Prabhupāda was known to withhold *dikṣā* from many devotees, even those who had been waiting several years.

### **Establishing the superiority of vaiṣṇavatā over brāhmaṇatā**

Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja preached in many places after accepting *sannyāsa*. Once, after a tour in Balasore, Orissa, he went to the city of Berhampura, where the *rāja-gurus* of three different states approached him

and said, “Even though you are *kulīna brāhmaṇa* and were previously a *rāja-guru*, when you joined the Gauḍīya Maṭha, you began accepting the company of people from all types of castes and races. This has greatly harmed the reputation of our respectable position as both *rāja-gurus* and *brāhmaṇas*.”

With all humility, Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja explained to them the glories of *daiva-varṇāśrama*, a principle revived by Śrīla Prabhupāda. He helped the *rāja-gurus* understand the difference between the soul’s constitutional and conditional positions. He explained that the true, inherent identity of the *jīva* (living entity) is that of an eternal servant of Bhagavān, but in the conditioned stage, that identity is covered by many temporary material designations, of which *brāhmaṇa* is but one.

Upon further discussion, the *rāja-gurus* developed faith in the Gauḍīya Maṭha and in Śrīla Prabhupāda. Although they previously spoke ill of Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, they ultimately agreed that he had actually increased their honor and dignity exponentially.

### **The repository of others’ faith**

Once, Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed his desire to organize a month-long event at Śrī Puruṣottama Maṭha, his *maṭha* at Cāṭaka-parvata in Purī. When devotees asked him who should be responsible for organizing that event, he said, “Śrīpāda Vaikhānasa Mahārāja will be able to manage everything very nicely.”

Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was preaching in another city when he received word of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s directive. On one hand he was extremely delighted, and on the other he was worried about how to arrange everything. At that time, a businessman told him, “Do not worry in the least. There is no need for you to trouble yourself with collecting the necessary items or transporting them to Purī. I will arrange everything without getting up from my seat.”

This instance conveys the significance of the faith people had in him. They were so devoted to him that they could not tolerate seeing him even momentarily worried about anything.

### **The proper method of deity installation**

Before having *darśana* of any deity of Bhagavān, Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja would always ask, “Who installed these deities?” If he was informed that a genuine Vaiṣṇava had installed Them, then he would offer *praṇāma*. But if not, his next question would be, “Has a distinguished Vaiṣṇava

ever had *darśana* of Them?” If affirmed, he would offer *praṇāma*. Otherwise, he would leave immediately.

He would often say, “The scriptures forbid one to offer *praṇāma* to deities that have not been installed by a realized Vaiṣṇava. Deities become direct, worshipful personifications of Bhagavān only when any of the senses of a *mahā-bhāgavata* comes in contact with Them. In other words, They become *śrī vigraha* when a Vaiṣṇava touches Them, has *darśana* of Them, names Them or offers *praṇāma* to Them by reciting *mantras* of glorification. Otherwise, they remain nothing but statues composed of material elements like wood or stone. What intelligent person would want to invoke misfortune by offering respects to deities installed by non-Vaiṣṇavas?

“Although a lawyer may have drafted an immaculately intelligible deed for a property’s transfer of ownership, the typist may have made no mistakes in finalizing it on stamped paper, and the prospective buyer’s name may have been explicitly mentioned, it is useless without the signature of the present owner, just as currency has no value without the governor’s signature. Similarly, no one can approach or serve Bhagavān unless a *mahā-bhāgavata* confers his *prāṇa-dhana* (life’s wealth)—the inconceivable and unapproachable Supreme Lord Himself—upon that person.

“This is the real process of deity installation. Why should I offer *praṇāma* to an idol and thereby support those who follow an unauthentic process?”

The above is a teaching I learned through his direct instruction and by observing his conduct.

### **An expert reciter of mantras**

As long as Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was physically present in this world, Guru Mahārāja had him install the deities in all of the branches of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha that were established at that time. I noticed that when he recited *mantras* during those installation ceremonies, he never referred to a book; an uninterrupted current of *mantras* would issue forth from his mouth. Although he would instruct his assistant in the installations, my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Suhr̥t Dāmodara Mahārāja, to cross check his recitation against a book of reference and correct him when needed, he never made a mistake.

### **Remaining careful to accept only what is required**

On the instruction of Guru Mahārāja, I once presented Śrīla Vaikhānasa

Gosvāmī Mahārāja with four sets of garments I had dyed and prepared according to his measurements. However, he returned one set to me, saying, “I only ever keep three sets of clothes at one time. If I keep four, I will become a sense enjoyer. Please think of my well-being and keep this fourth set for yourself.”

### **An extraordinary display of simple-heartedness**

Once, Guru Mahārāja took Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja by plane from Kolkata to preach in Guwāhaṭī. While in the air, Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja told Guru Mahārāja, “Mahārāja, I need to pass urine.”

“Then go to the bathroom and relieve yourself,” Guru Mahārāja replied.

Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja innocently said, “Mahārāja, our *guru-paramparā* has instructed us ‘*jīve sammāna dibe jāni kṛṣṇa-adhiṣṭhāna*—respect all living entities, knowing that Kṛṣṇa is present in every one of them.’ Kṛṣṇa dwells as the Supersoul, *paramātmā*, in all living entities. How, then, could I possibly pass urine in this airplane?”

“What do you mean?” Guru Mahārāja asked.

“The urine I pass will end up on someone’s head when it falls from the hole in plane’s bathroom, and this will become a serious impediment to my spiritual progress.”

Guru Mahārāja clarified that this is not the way it works. Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja then got up and went to the bathroom without worry.

### **His careful discernment**

Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja would engage others in serving him *prāsada* or water only after assessing their state of consciousness by quizzing them. He would ask various questions, like “What is the supreme duty of those who have obtained human life?” “What is the purpose of living in the *maṭha*?” “Why should we perform *hari-bhajana*?” and so on. He would ask them for something only if their answers were satisfactory and appropriate for performing *hari-bhajana*. Otherwise, he would remain silent and not ask for anything.

One time, when Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja came to our Kolkata *maṭha*, he called one *brahmacārī* over and asked him, “Why have you become a resident of the *maṭha*?”

The *brahmacārī* replied, “It is easy to maintain celibacy in the *maṭha*; I have come to observe celibacy.”

Seeing me pass by as he was talking to the *brahmacārī*, Śrīla Mahārāja called me and told the *brahmacārī* to leave. When the *brahmacārī* left, Śrīla Mahārāja had a peculiar look on his face. He said to me in a low, endearing voice, “Narottama, that *brahmacārī* has come here to practice celibacy, not *hari-bhajana*. If I accept water from his hand, his tendencies will enter into me. I therefore want you alone to bring me some water to drink.”

I was always amazed to see how subtly and carefully he analyzed his every action.

### **His gentle yet firm manner of pointing out faults**

Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja once found an error regarding the date of an Ekādaśī listed in the Śrī Navadvīpa calendar published by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kusuma Śramaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. When he noticed the mistake, he first consulted with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahansa Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. When the error was unanimously confirmed, he proceeded to draft a letter, which he gave to my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Suhr̥t Dāmodara Mahārāja and me to deliver to Śrīla Śramaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

When I read his letter, I appreciated his ability to be simultaneously firm and gentle while pointing out another’s honest mistake. He wrote, “Śrīpāda Śramaṇa Mahārāja, if you assign Ekādaśī to this particular date in your calendar, then how will the verse of *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* that describes how one should properly calculate *ekādaśī-tithis* hold true?” Śrīla Śramaṇa Mahārāja later replied that he regretted the error and would rectify it by pasting a sticker that mentioned the correction on all the undistributed calendars.

In those days, devotees were not ashamed when others pointed out their shortcomings. Rather, they would accept their flaws with grace. The model nowadays, however, is quite different. Although many devotees present themselves as Vaiṣṇavas externally, they experience no shame in behaving in a manner unbefitting a Vaiṣṇava when their impropriety is exposed. They perceive it as a personal assault to their prestige and self-respect, even though they may internally concede their shortcomings after careful introspection. Even when the scriptures and the precedents set by exalted personalities do not substantiate their views, such persons continue to defend their transgressions. By maintaining a stubborn attitude, they simply inflict misfortune upon themselves.



### **Serving Vaiṣṇavas in whatever way possible**

We, the devotees of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, were under strict instructions from Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja to notify him whenever we would pass through Berhampura. He used to say, “Though I may be unable to do much service for the Vaisnavas, I can at least send *prasāda* from my *maṭha* in Gañjam to those travelling through Berhampura. Naturally, I will be angry if you deprive me of this service. Now that I have told you this, you will be at fault should I become angry; do not blame me for it.”

His *maṭha* in Gañjam was quite far from the Berhampur railway station, and we did not want to inconvenience him in any way. Still, we would always honor his instruction by notifying him of our travels and graciously accepting the *prasāda* he sent, understanding it to be a token of his true mercy. In this way, whenever anyone would travel through Berhampura, they would ask my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Lalita Giri Mahārāja or me to send a letter to Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja notifying him of their journey, because ours was the only Bengali handwriting he was able to read.

### **Honoring an extremely junior devotee**

In 1962, when Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja manifested illness pastimes and was admitted to a hospital in Berhampura, Guru Mahārāja sent me to serve him. Before I departed for Berhampura, he told me many stories about Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja that illustrated his service propensity. After reaching Berhampura, I served Śrīla Mahārāja as much as I possibly could.

After a few days, Guru Mahārāja sent me a letter in which he said, “Many of the services at the Māyāpura *maṭha* have been put on hold in your absence. I am sending Śrī Bhakti Śaraṇa Sādhū Mahārāja to Berhampura. When he arrives, return to Māyāpura after taking the permission of Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.”

When Śrī Sādhū Mahārāja arrived and I asked Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja for permission to leave as per Guru Mahārāja’s instructions, Śrīla Mahārāja told me, “This is the first time you have come here, so have *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Kiśora-Kiśorī-jī in our Gañjam *maṭha* before you leave.”

“As you wish, Mahārāja,” I said. Śrīla Mahārāja then had one of his disciples arrange for my visit to the *maṭha* and travel with me to the *maṭha* in Gañjam.

When we reached the bus station in Gañjam, I was welcomed by a large

party of devotees performing *saṅkīrtana*. As they escorted me to the *matha*, they continued the *saṅkīrtana* in a grand procession. To my amazement, they laid down four lengths of white fabric that they would cycle out as I walked. I was embarrassed and hesitant to walk on it. When I asked the devotee who accompanied me why they had gone to such considerable lengths to respectfully welcome someone like me, he said, “We are simply following Guru Mahārāja’s instructions on how to honor Vaiṣṇavas like you.”

I was speechless. I began weighing my own condition against that of Śrīla Mahārāja in the light of a verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.81.16):

*kvāhaṁ daridraḥ pāpīyān  
kva kṛṣṇaḥ śrī-niketaṇaḥ  
brahma-bandhur iti smāhaṁ  
bāhubhyāṁ parirambhitaḥ*

[Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa said:] I am a sinful, wretched and unqualified *brāhmaṇa*, and Kṛṣṇa is the shelter of the goddess of fortune. Still, He has embraced me in His arms.

Although this verse was spoken by Sudāmā in reference to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it perfectly captured how I felt about the honor shown to me by Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who was not only my *guru-varga*, but Guru Maharaja’s *sannyāsa-guru* as well.

### **Remaining chaste in his cooking services**

Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was an exceptionally talented cook. He personally cooked for his deities, Śrī Śrī Kīśora-Kīśorī-jī, even though he was elderly and had many disciples. When he would offer us some of Śrī Śrī Kīśora-Kīśorī-jī’s *prasāda*, we were reluctant to accept the dishes he had prepared, considering him to be a Vaiṣṇava worthy of our service. I once asked him, “Why do you continue to cook in your advanced age?”

He replied, “Am I some sort of unchaste wife who stops cooking for her husband? Whom will I serve if not Them?”

The chutney he made from banana peels and his sweet rice were so delicious that I can remember their taste even today.

### **A humorous and affectionate comment**

Each time my godbrother Śrī Lalitā-carāṇa Prabhu would serve Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja a variety of *prasāda* preparations, Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja would joke, “Lalitā-carāṇa, today you have

become the munificent Dātā Karṇa.”

<sup>4</sup>

This comment made such an impression on my heart that even today I repeat the same thing when someone gives me many things to eat.

### **Teaching at every step**

Wherever Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja would go, he would describe Śrīla Prabhupāda’s glories, exemplary character and teachings. Although Śrīla Mahārāja delivered all his lectures in Sanskrit, his use of the language was so simple that everyone was able to understand, whether Bengali, Oriya, Assamese or Hindustani. His lectures, his personal conduct and his interactions with others were chock-full of teachings; there was a lesson to be learned at every step.

### **The auspiciousness of the Vaiṣṇavas’ kīrtana**

I once went to a *saṅkīrtana* program in Berhampura under the guidance of Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja at the home of one of his disciples. The many devotees that gathered there sang various Vaiṣṇava songs. Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja delivered *hari-kathā* and, at the end, addressed the hosts: “Today, the Vaiṣṇavas performed *kīrtana* in your home. This has undoubtedly brought you great auspiciousness. Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja has said that a home in which saintly persons do not assemble and perform *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana* is comparable to a fearsomely deep, dark well.”

### **A prediction**

When Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* was under construction, he made a prediction of sorts when he told his disciples, “Do not worry about money. Someone will come and make all the necessary arrangements on his own accord. Simply engage in *bhagavad-bhajana*.”

Śrīla Mahārāja left this world shortly afterward making this prediction, and his words proved true: a beautiful *maṭha* was built, thus fulfilling the statement “*satyaṁ vidhātu nija-bhṛtya-bhāṣitam*—Bhagavān upholds his devotees’ words by making them come true.”

### **Experiencing separation from him, even today**

Although it has been over fifty years since Śrīla Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja entered *nitya-līlā*, when I think of him, it is as though I can see him standing before me.

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Mahārāja's Viraha Mahotsava

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī  
Mahārāja

## His swift surrender to śrī guru

We have heard that during his life as a householder, *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Mahārāja (then known as Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Pāṭa-yoṣī Ratha), being disinterested in worldly affairs, sincerely sought a bona fide *guru*. One day, as fate would have it, he came across a picture of our most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda. Simply by seeing that picture, his heart was captivated and drawn to the lotus feet of Prabhupāda, who brought auspiciousness to the entire world. At that very moment, within his heart, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha became eager to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he accepted him as a bona fide *guru* and best friend who would take sole responsibility for his spiritual life. By Prabhupāda's causeless mercy, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha was able to sever his worldly ties with exemplary swiftness and arrive in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura in 1933, where he took shelter of Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda's exquisite lotus feet. Seeing his heartfelt attachment to following the path of pure devotion, Prabhupāda gave him *kṛṣṇa-nāma mahā-mantra* and *mantra-dikṣā* initiation after only a short while.

## His intense passion for performing bhajana

After receiving *dikṣā* from our most worshipful Prabhupāda, Śrī Ujjvaleśvara Ratha became known as Śrī Ujjvala-rasānanda dāsa. Noting his disciple's ever-increasing, intense passion for performing *bhajana-sādhana*, Śrīla Prabhupāda granted him *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa* on the auspicious full moon day of Śrī Śrī Gaura's appearance, Friday, 1 March 1934, at Yogapīṭha in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, the same place where Śrīman Mahāprabhu appeared in this world. His *sannyāsa* name became *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Mahārāja. From then on, under the auspices of *śrī guru*, he assumed the role of a roaming mendicant and dedicated his very life to propagating the divine message of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga in various places throughout India, from one region to the next.

In his later years, following the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, at the fervent behest of his Oriya disciples he established Śrī Sārasvata Āśrama in the village of Gauṇju-grāma, near Brahmapura, otherwise known as Behrampura.

After establishing the service of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Govinda-jiu there, he remained at that place and performed *bhajana-sādhana* until concluding his manifest pastimes in this world.

### **The ideal nature of a Vaisnava**

*Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja was naturally resplendent with the multitude of attributes found in Vaiṣṇavas, but in recalling his simple-hearted, amiable dealings and his sweetly peaceful presence, my heart becomes especially overwhelmed. After the disappearance of our most worshipful Prabhupāda, he bestowed *sannyāsa* to many of his prominent godbrothers, such as Śrīmad Bhakti-Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja (the founder of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha), Śrī Bhakti Saudha Āśrama Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Śaraṇa Śānta Mahārāja, myself and others. Although he accepted the position of *sannyāsa-guru*, he continued to show us the respect due one's godbrothers, and thereby demonstrated the ideal nature of a Vaiṣṇava, which entails offering respects to others while not expecting any in return.

### **His favorite prayers and kīrtanas**

We were stunned to see that even in his extremely advanced age, Śrīla Mahārāja's acute powers of memory remained unaffected. Every day, we heard him recite songs and prayers from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, such as *Garbha-stuti*, *Brahmā-stuti*, *Rāsa-pañcādhyaṃya*, *Bhramara-gīta*, *Prahlāda-carita*, and *Gajendra-mokṣa*. Additionally, he would often recite *Brahma-saṁhitā* and the entire *Bhagavad-gītā*, as well as various Vedic *mantras* and the many hymns composed by Śrī Rūpa and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmīs.

### **An ancient devotee**

Although *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja passed away at a very advanced age, today, in separation from such a highly learned personality—who is actually an ancient devotee of the Lord—we are experiencing acute anguish in our hearts. May he be pleased with us and distribute among us his affection and mercy.

Excerpts from articles published in  
*Śrī Caitanya-Vāṇī* (Year 6, Volume 3)

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1 The magical and mystical formularies described in the scriptural canon known as the Tantras.

2 The ghost of a *brāhmaṇa* who has died prematurely after his *upanayana-saṁskāra* (sacred thread ceremony).

3 Eating only once the day before Ekādaśī, fasting from everything including water on the day of Ekādaśī, performing *hari-saṅkīrtana* through the night, and eating only once the following day.

4 Karṇa, a personality mentioned in *Mahābhārata*, is known for charity and selflessness.

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Accepting the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda

Although Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja's forefathers were originally from Orissa, he took birth in Durmuth, Medinīpura District, West Bengal. Śrīla Mahārāja, then known as Śrī Sarveśvara Paṇḍā, was still very young when he encountered Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prasūna Bodhāyana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in Jagannātha Purī. After hearing the teachings and glories of Śrīla Prabhupāda through Śrīla Bodhāyana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Sarveśvara Paṇḍā took shelter at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda at Śrī Puruṣottama Maṭha in Jagannātha Purī, and was given the name Śrī Sarveśvara Brahmācārī after receiving initiation.

## The astrologer's prediction

Once, a famous and reputable astrologer read the palms of both Śrī Sarveśvara Brahmācārī and another renowned *brahmācārī*. At the end of the reading, the astrologer confidently told them, “Both of you will marry and enter household life. It is definite; there is no way out of it.”

Although Śrī Sarveśvara Brahmācārī was quite young, Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to give him *sannyāsa* due to his expertise in *kīrtana* and his vast knowledge of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*. But because of the astrologer's prediction, Śrī Sarveśvara Brahmācārī was reluctant to accept *sannyāsa*, fearing that the desire to marry may be latent within him. Sensing Śrī Sarveśvara Brahmācārī's reluctance, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “*Sannyāsa* means to completely surrender at the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Why are you fearful of taking shelter of *abhaya-caraṇāravinda* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose lotus feet bestow fearlessness?”

Śrī Sarveśvara Brahmācārī received *sannyāsa* in 1936 and was the last *sannyāsa* disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was given the name Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja.

The other *brahmācārī* implicated in the astrologer's prediction eventually married, but Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja never did. Sometime much later, when the astrologer again met with Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja and looked at his palm, he said, “I do not know what to say. The lines of your hand have changed, and along with them, your destiny. I have heard from the

Vaiṣṇavas, ‘*kṛṣṇa bhakta jādī haya balavān, vidhira kalama kāṭi kare khāna khāna*—if a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is very powerful, he can easily cut into pieces that which is written down as his destiny.’ Previously, I never had much faith in this statement, but I now see before me the evidence of its truthfulness. *Bhakti* truly can change a person’s destiny.”

**Do not be quick to praise anyone—they may become puffed up and fall down**

Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was *dūra-darśī*—he was able to very clearly see all future happenings. There is one pastime in this regard: In 1960, my Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, organized a festival at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Vṛndāvana to celebrate the installation of the Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda deities, to which he had invited almost all of his godbrothers, including Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Because it was such a large gathering, there was no single location large enough to provide both residence and *prasāda* to all of the attending Vaiṣṇavas. Various *dharmasālās* were thus booked, and the arrangements were made in such a way that the Vaiṣṇavas would be able to honor *prasāda* in their respective dwellings.

During the festival, a very young devotee who had only recently accepted *sannyāsa* spoke *hari-kathā*. Being quite learned and scholarly, he delivered his lecture in fluent English and quoted many verses from the *śāstras*. Everyone was impressed to hear such a well-presented lecture.

The next day while honoring *prasāda*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāśa Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a *sannyāsī* disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, began glorifying the young *sannyāsī* who had spoken the previous day. Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī were also present in the room. Because I was responsible for providing and serving them *prasāda*, I too was there.

Hearing this praise, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja immediately interrupted Śrīla Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja by loudly saying, “There is no need to glorify this young *sannyāsī* at this time. Although he surely spoke *hari-kathā* nicely, being a new devotee, who can say how much he realizes in his heart of what he spoke? Speaking is one thing, but how fixed is he on this path? There is much time remaining in his life. Let him first live and grow in this Vaiṣṇava world before glorifying him.



“There is a Bengali proverb: *morile jâdi urale chāi tabe satīra guṇa gāi*. This means it is improper to call a woman chaste until she has lived chastely her entire life, up until the point when her body is cremated and her ashes vanish into the air. Then and only then can she be called chaste. Similarly, unless a person has displayed proper conduct and etiquette throughout his life, it is unintelligent to glorify him for whatever qualities he may have, like the ability to speak nicely. Mundane scholars can also speak nicely, but we generally see that they have no faith in Śrī Hari, *guru* or Vaiṣṇavas. Therefore, whatever qualities such persons may possess are simply material.”

Prior to this pastime, I had only known Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to be immensely soft-spoken by nature. He was always straightforward and direct, and he spoke whatever he felt.

In 1962 during the time of Kumbha Melā in Haridvāra, it was found that the young *sannyāsī* was not so fixed on the path of *bhakti*. There, he mixed intimately with women, and this caused him to leave the association of the Gauḍīya Maṭha *sādhus*. Afterward, he began criticizing everyone.

### **Affectionate concern for godbrothers**

Once, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja went to Kālnā while Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was serving in the Ananta-vāsudeva temple there. When he met with Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he said, “You have taken responsibility for this temple as well as different responsibilities at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. How can you manage all these things single-handedly? It would be better for you to invest your full time and energy in wholeheartedly serving at only one place.” After accepting his advice, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja dedicated his full energy to his services at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha.

### **Just engage in kīrtana—Kṛṣṇa will provide whatever is required**

One day, the *brahmacārīs* of Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s Śrī Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Medinīpura became distressed upon seeing that there was no rice whatsoever to cook and offer to Ṭhākura-jī. When they expressed their concern to Śrīla Mahārāja, he immediately understood the situation and consoled them by saying, “Do not worry.” Then, after locking the temple’s gate from inside and keeping the key with him, he turned to the *brahmacārīs* and ordered them, “Please speak *hari-kathā* and perform *kīrtana* for the pleasure of the Lord. There is no need to worry about anything,

especially since you are devotees.” After this, he proceeded toward his room on the second floor of the *maṭha*, where he began to chant *harināma* loudly.

After some time, someone began to knock on the temple’s gate and call out for someone to come and open it, but nobody was able to hear him due to the loud *kīrtana* the *brahmacārīs* were performing in the temple hall. Finally, Śrīla Mahārāja noticed from his room that someone was outside the gate. After one *kīrtana* had finished and before the next started, Śrīla Mahārāja dropped the keys from the second floor onto the ground floor and instructed one of the *brahmacārīs* to open the gate and see who had come. When they opened the door, they found that the man who had been knocking was standing outside the gate with a giant bag of rice.

When the residents of the *maṭha* inquired about who had purchased those provisions, the man replied, “I do not know. All I know is that someone asked me to deliver these things to this *maṭha*. I have no idea who he was.”

The *brahmacārīs* asked, “Has he paid the fare for your *rikśaw*?”

“Yes,” the man replied.

Because Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was completely surrendered to the Lord, the Lord, seeing the pain Śrīla Mahārāja was experiencing upon being unable to offer *bhoga*, supplied whatever was needed for this service.

### **Just engage in kīrtana—Kṛṣṇa will award peacefulness**

Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja used to sing wonderful *kīrtanas* from the core of his heart. Once, the electricity went out while he was performing *kīrtana*. Being unsure of what to do, the devotees became restless. Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, however, immediately reacted, telling them not to become disturbed. He then began singing “*bhajahu re mana, śrī nanda-nandana, abhaya-caraṇāravinda re*—O mind, worship Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose lotus feet bestow fearlessness.”

His conduct was a testament to his complete surrender to the Lord. In this way, he never worried for anything, and he wanted others never to worry, either.

### **An omnipotent doctor**

Once, a devotee consulted a doctor regarding an infection he developed from a hand injury he previously sustained. After examining the devotee, the doctor concluded that the only solution was to amputate one of the devotee’s fingers. He told the devotee to return for the surgery after a couple days.

Before returning to the doctor to have his finger removed, the devotee visited Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. After offering *praṇāma* to Śrīla Mahārāja, he mentioned that within a day or two he would have to have his finger cut off. Hearing this, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja responded, “You must have committed some *vaiṣṇava-aprādha*, and the result is the loss of your finger. Quickly go and beg for the forgiveness of whomever you have offended.”

The devotee became grave and admitted, “Yes. I committed an offense at the lotus feet of a pure devotee. But that devotee has left this world. What should I do?”

Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja told him, “Go to the place where his body was cremated and beg and cry for forgiveness.”

The devotee followed these instructions, and afterward, when he returned to the doctor’s office for one last examination before having his finger amputated, the doctor became astonished. He asked, “What kind of medicine have you taken, and from whom have you acquired such a medicine?”

The devotee replied, “I haven’t taken any medicine. Why are you asking this question?”

The doctor said, “This is incredible. When I previously examined you, there was no other option but to amputate your finger. But now I can see there is no need for anything. Your hand will heal just fine by itself.”

### **Who but Mādhava?**

Every year just after Gaura-pūrṇimā, many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda would visit the *maṭha* of Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Koladvīpa to meet together and honor *prasāda*. One year on this occasion, my Guru Mahārāja informed his godbrothers that there was an opportunity to purchase the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda in Jagannātha Purī, and he suggested they purchase the land collectively.

After discussing the matter amongst themselves, a few of his godbrothers pledged whatever money they could, but the total amount was almost insignificant in relation to the amount needed. Feeling perplexed about what to do, Guru Mahārāja mentioned, “We will have to think of another way to collect the required funds.”

At that time, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja mentioned one verse from the *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*:

*mādhavo mādhavo vāci*

*mādhavo mādhavo hr̥di  
smaranti mādhavaḥ sarve  
sarva kāryesu mādhavam*

Mādhava is in one's words. Mādhava is in one's heart. All saintly persons remember Mādhava, the husband of Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth, in all their endeavors.

Although the name 'Mādhava' in this verse refers to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja spoke the verse in reference to my Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita 'Mādhava' Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and thus implied, "Mādhava Mahārāja is in the words and hearts of his godbrothers. All his godbrothers remember Mādhava Mahārāja, because he is able to collect any amount of *lakṣmī* (money). All his godbrothers remember Mādhava Mahārāja in all their endeavors. What, then, can he not accomplish? What is the need to rely on anyone else?"

Upon hearing this, Guru Mahārāja understood that his godbrothers were blessing him by entrusting this service to him. After offering prostrated *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* to all of them, he gratefully accepted the entire responsibility of acquiring Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance place.

### **His sevā-niṣṭha**

After the property of Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance place had been purchased, and while the *maṭha* was still under construction, Guru Mahārāja arranged for a festival to be held there for the occasion of Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance day in 1979. He sent out personal hand-written invitations to all his godbrothers that read "Please bless us by attending this festival." Those who were able to attend arrived on the day of the festival. Because there had been no reply from Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Guru Mahārāja assumed that his invitation had been lost in the mail, and he immediately sent him a telegram. As soon as Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja received the telegram, he packed a bag and departed for Jagannātha Purī to attend the festivities.

Generally, when a guest arrives at his destination, the first thing he wants to know is where he can keep his luggage, where he can bathe and where he will be staying. Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, however, was not like this. When he arrived at the festival, the first thing he did was join the *kīrtana* party. He considered, "Unless and until I do some service here in the *maṭha*, what right do I have to ask for a place to even keep my bags? Let me first perform service; only then will it be proper for me to request a place to stay." Such was his service mood.

### **Always distributing mercy**

Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja would offer all his visitors *prasāda* immediately upon their arrival. Once, he was staying at a place where no *musambīs* (a type of orange) were locally available, and so a visitor brought some from a far distance. Although these fruits were brought especially for him, he at once cut them into slices and offered them to all the devotees present. Such was his personality.

### **His purifying kīrtana**

Part of Śrīla Prabhupāda's last instructions to his disciples was for them to collectively preach the message of Śrī Rūpa-Raghunātha. Keeping this instruction in mind, my Guru Mahārāja used to tell his godbrothers, "Somehow, by the will of providence, we are forced to stay in separate places and create different organizations. But in order to fulfill the desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda, we should all meet whenever possible." In this way, he would invite all his godbrothers each time he hosted functions in our *maṭha*, providing his godbrothers with an opportunity to speak about the glories and teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

During one such festival, an invited dignitary, a judge named Durgānātha Vasu, who was also the *sabhā-pati* (chairman), rose from his seat and informed Guru Mahārāja that he had to leave for another engagement. Thus, the *sabhā* (assembly) would conclude for the night.

Guru Mahārāja ordered me to assist the judge to his car and give him some *prasāda*. After he offered *praṇāma* to Ṭhākura-jī and the Vaiṣṇavas present, we proceeded to walk together toward his car. In the meantime, Guru Mahārāja had requested Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to perform *kīrtana*, as he did not receive the opportunity to speak due to a lack of time. Abiding by his request, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja stood up and began performing a beautiful, transcendental rendition of the *kīrtana Nārada Muni Bājāya Vīṇā*. By then, the judge was already seated in the car and ready to leave. But upon hearing Śrīla Mahārāja's *kīrtana*, he became so mesmerized that he exited the car and returned to his seat in the assembly.

After the *kīrtana* concluded, the judge requested Guru Mahārāja, "Please bring this *sannyāsī* to my house tomorrow. I have never before experienced the kind of bliss I felt upon hearing his *kīrtana* just now. It was such a heart-melting and purifying *kīrtana* that I want my entire family to experience this as well. I will send a car. You should all please come along with this Mahārāja to

my home for *kīrtana* tomorrow.”

### **The meaning of the word ‘jīva’**

Once, during an assembly in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja spoke on one of the famous slogans of Vivekānanda: “*jīve prema kare jei jana sei jana seviche īśvara*—one who has love for living entities actually serves the Supreme Lord.”

Śrīla Mahārāja said, “According to this statement, only humans—men and women—are to be classified as *jīvas*, or living entities. Are not goats, chickens, fish, birds and other animals also living entities? Do they not have ears and eyes? Will they not bleed when pricked? Do they not also eat, sleep, mate and defend as humans do? Although they may reside in different places, like the water or the forest, they are all living entities. Therefore, why do the followers of Vivekānanda eat such living entities? Do they build hospitals and schools only for humans because they believe only humans are worthy of love? In reality, all conscious beings are living entities, or *jīvas*. When a person’s understanding of Bhagavān is complete, he easily realizes that all living entities are part and parcel of the Lord. Thus, he will naturally have love for all living entities, and not just humans.”

After Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja finished his *kathā*, one gentleman stood up and said, “Vivekānanda was different from you *sādhus*; he was extensively involved with improving the welfare of all people by building hospitals, schools and by doing many other types of charity work. But we do not see the *sādhus* of the Gauḍīya Maṭha performing such charitable acts.”

Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja then asked the chairman, a university professor named Śrī Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī, if he could be allotted more time to respond to the gentleman’s comment. However, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī said, “It is better that I, being a neutral party, comment on his statement.” Addressing the gentleman, he said, “When you use the word *jīva* in this slogan, to whom does it refer? For Bengalis, the word *jīva* also refers to the tongue. Does it then mean that you are serving Bhagavān by serving the tongue and giving it whatever it desires? All living entities are called *jīvas*, not only humans. Why then do the followers of Vivekānanda eat eggs, meat and fish if they are supposed to love all *jīvas*?

“If Vivekānanda’s followers accept that the word *jīva* only refers to humans, then what is the need for prisons? Should we not close all the prisons and serve all the prisoners whatever they desire, like alcohol, drugs and so on?

Is that really *jīva-sevā*? Will this be the equivalent to serving Bhagavān? I hope Vivekānanda is not implying that we should serve such people, who have no control over their senses or their desires to harm other living entities. Long before Vivekānanda was even born, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave the perfect conclusion of the *śāstras*: ‘*jīve dayā, kṛṣṇa-nāma, sarva-dharma-sāra*—the essence of all religious principles is to show compassion to the living entities and chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma*.’ ”

When the gentleman who objected to Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *kathā* heard Śrī Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī’s explanation, he apologized, admitting he did not understand the deep meanings of the scriptures and that he was attracted to Vivekānanda’s popular slogans without understanding whether or not they were in line with the scriptures.

### **His love for cooking and Jagannātha prasāda**

If Śrīla Mahārāja came to know that a devotee had come from Jagannātha Purī, he would ask him if he had brought any *prasāda* back with him and where it was. He especially liked Jagannātha’s rice and *rāhini-dāl prasāda*, which keeps even after two days. Knowing this, as a service to him, we would always bring this *prasāda* for him when we would visit Jagannātha Purī.

He was also an excellent cook. He was expert in finding and using whatever was available to him when he had no ingredients. Once, when he did not have the proper ingredients to make chutney, he saw a tree with leaves and asked, “What tree is this?” When he understood it was a tamarind tree, he made chutney from its leaves.

### **Engaging everyone in the service of Bhagavan**

Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja used to engage everyone in the service of Bhagavān according to their respective qualifications and qualities. If a *sannyāsī* or *brahmacārī* were to come to the *maṭha*, he would tell them to speak *hari-kathā*. This included me. However, because he was extremely senior to us, we were embarrassed to speak in front of him. Detecting our shyness, he would say, “Do not worry, I will not be present,” and then depart for his room upstairs. Later, he would tell us that he had heard everything we had spoken. He possessed the conviction that one should immediately engage whomever one meets in the service of Bhagavān.

### **His blessing and encouragement to me**

Once, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja spoke about me in an assembly,

saying, “This devotee does not possess jealousy, enviousness or a hostile mood toward anyone. He is a *nirmatsara-sādhū*, a person whose heart is devoid of envy.”

Although in truth I did not possess such qualities, he spoke in this way to bless me, so that I one day could. By my Guru Maharaja’s mercy, I had the opportunity to serve Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. During the course of this service, I was able to have his association, see his conduct and receive his blessings.

## **Glorification of Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja in the wake of his disappearance**

By Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

### **A recipient of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s affection**

It is a matter of heart-rending grief that on Monday, 15 October 1984, the day of Kṛṣṇa-ṣaṣṭhī, on the occasion of Śrī Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya’s disappearance, a supremely dear disciple of my most worshipful *śrī gurupāda-padma* and a recipient of his affection left this world. At approximately six in the evening, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s last *sannyāsī* disciple, our godbrother *parama-pūjyapāda tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja, entered *nitya-līlā* in Śrī Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Medinīpura while fully conscious and remembering the beautiful lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Gāndhārvikā-Giridhārī-jiu amid a grand *saṅkīrtana* performed by the resident devotees of the *maṭha*.

### **Attaining the mercy of śrī guru**

In *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja’s Śrī Śrī *Bhāgavata-gītāmṛta*, he has written the following in a song titled *Śrī Guru-kṛpā-labha*, ‘Attaining the Mercy of Śrī Guru’:

*sad-guru sambandha āra bhāgavata-gāthā  
purī-dhāme giyā āmi pāinu sarvathā*

By going to Purī-dhāma, I attained everything—a relationship with a bona fide *guru* and the opportunity to hear the glories of the Lord.

*jagannātha dīna-bandhu patita-pāvana  
āmā ākarṣiyā dilā sad-guru-caraṇa*



Jagannātha is the friend of the wretched and the savior of the fallen. He attracted me and gave me the feet of a bona fide *guru*.

*guru-binā gati nāi jāninu jakhôna  
sad-gurura anveṣaṇe chuṭinu takhôna*

When I knew I had no hope without a *guru*, I went searching for a bona fide spiritual master.

*jagannātha-dhāme more śrī-guru-caraṇa  
teraśa' tetriśa sāle pāinu daraśana*

In Jagannātha-Dhāma, in 1333 (Baṅgābda), I received my first view of the lotus feet of my *śrī guru*.

*om śrī bhaktisiddhānta sarasvatī viṣṇupāda  
tini-ī āmāra guru śrīla prabhupāda*

Om Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, is the direct representative of Viṣṇu. He alone is my *guru*, this Śrīla Prabhupāda.

From this song, we learn that *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja went to Śrī Jagannātha-kṣetra and took shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord of the universe, Śrī Jagannātha-deva, with the hopes to soon meet a bona fide *guru*. Śrī Jagannātha, who is supremely compassionate and affectionate to those who take His shelter, quickly arranged for him to meet a bona fide *guru* and come in contact with His identical manifestation, the most worshipful Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda.

*guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe  
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa-kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.45)*

The verdict of the scriptures is that *guru* is the form of Kṛṣṇa. In the form of *guru*, Kṛṣṇa bestows His mercy on the devotees.

## **His appearance and early childhood**

*Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja appeared in a religious *brāhmaṇa* family with the surname 'Pāṇḍā.' The family lived in a small village called Duramuṭha, which is in the Kāñthi subdivision of the Medinīpura district of West Bengal. His mother and father, who were both devotees, were amazed to see their darling son's natural attachment to the Lord from early childhood, and they always prayed at Bhagavān's lotus feet to grant him a long and devotional life.

When he began his studies, his teachers and guardians were amazed at his

extraordinary brilliance. Cultivating knowledge as a student for many years only strengthened the boy's natural desire to worship Bhagavān. It was as if the Lord personally sent him to Śrī Puruṣottama-dhāma, where by the boundless mercy of Śrī Puruṣottama Jagannātha-deva, he attained the fortune of accepting shelter at the lotus feet of a bona fide *guru*. Śrī Hari is like a desire-tree, and He never leaves the desires of His devotees unfulfilled. Rather, He fulfills them quickly.

### **The exemplary character of a resolute sādḥaka**

In 1926, on the auspicious occasion of Śrī Śrī Gaura's appearance, he received *śrī harināma mahā-mantra* and *īṣṭa-mantra dīkṣā* from *śrī gurupāda-padma*, and thereafter became known as Śrī Sarveśvara dāsa Brahmācārī. On the instruction of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he engaged himself with great conviction in the ritual worship (*arcana*) and service of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Gāndhārvikā-Giridhārī-jiu three times daily at the principal temple, *ākara maṭha-rāja* Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. He also diligently studied *Śrī Harināmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa* and other scriptures at the *maṭha's* institute for higher learning. Never wasting any time in sleep, laziness or idle gossip, Śrī Sarveśvara Brahmācārī spent all of his time in the practices of worship as directed by his *śrī guru*; serving Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas; and studying *Śrī Bhagavad-gītā* and *Bhāgavatam*. In this way, he exhibited the exemplary character of a resolute *sādḥaka*.

His character was exceedingly pure and spotless, and he was the embodiment of peacefulness, gentleness and sweetness. His exchanges with everyone were innocent and affectionate. The Vaiṣṇavas of the *maṭha* and pious people who came to hear *hari-kathā* were attracted by the simplicity with which he presented scriptural conclusions regarding spiritual relationship (*sambandha*), practice (*abhidheya*), and the ultimate goal (*prayojana*). He would especially captivate and attract the hearts of audiences by singing in his honey-like voice the sweet songs of the previous Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*.

### **Ornamented with endless vaisnava qualities**

The scriptures state, “*kṛṣṇa-bhakte kṛṣṇa-guṇa sakali sañcāre*—Kṛṣṇa infuses His devotees with all of His qualities.” Truly, Śrī Yāyāvara Mahārāja was ornamented with endless Vaiṣṇava qualities. The simple language he used to explain extremely difficult philosophical concepts charmed scholars and non-scholars alike. All types of listeners yearned to repeatedly hear his

unprecedented lectures on scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I personally witnessed *pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Mahārāja attract the hearts and minds of the chairman, the chief guest, and all the earnest listeners gathered at an illustrious assembly of learned scholars at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in southern Kolkata.

### **His publications are worthy of careful study**

Even while he was ill, with the help of his scholarly disciples, *pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Mahārāja published several books, one of which was his *Śrī Śrī Bhāgavata-gītāmṛta*. In the first and second sections of this book, he published several songs he composed himself. Of the contents therein, the poetic and simple explanations of *Bhagavad-gītā* and the four-verse (*catuḥ-śloki*) form of *Bhāgavatam* are particularly worthy of careful study.

### **The world's great loss**

Today, with the loss of such an exalted devotee and kindred spirit, my heart feels especially hollow. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community is gradually becoming bereft of devotees who relish pure *bhakti-rasa*. The diminishing number of earnest speakers and listeners dedicated to the conclusive message of pure devotion as propagated by Śrīman Mahāprabhu is a great loss for the world. The void left by this loss is unable to be filled, and it heralds dark days and great misfortune. These dark days keep any chances for good days at bay.

### **Utterly irreplaceable**

By His mercy, Kṛṣṇa eventually draws all of His associates back to Him and admits them into His eternal pastimes. But if from time to time He decides to withhold His mercy and order them not to return to this mortal world, there is no way to dispel the resulting dark days the living entities of this world experience as they are devoured by *māyā*. Overwhelmed with separation on the occasion of Ṭhākura Haridāsa's disappearance, Śrīman Mahāprabhu said:

*kṛpā kôri' kṛṣṇa more diyāchilô saṅga  
svatantra kṛṣṇera icchā hôilô saṅga bhaṅga*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 11.94)*

Mercifully, Kṛṣṇa gave me [Haridāsa Ṭhākura's] association. By Kṛṣṇa's independent will, our exchange has ended.

*haridāsa āchilô prthivīra ratna-śiromaṇi  
tāhā binā ratna-śunyā hôilā medinī*

Haridāsa was the crown jewel of this Earth. Without him, it is as if she is bereft of all jewels.

Truly, Vaiṣṇavas like *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa* Śrīmat Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja are saviors of this world and are utterly irreplaceable. They can be compared only with themselves.

### **Millions of millions of times more exalted than me**

The founder of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa puṇyapāda tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja and *pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Mahārāja were especially close friends. During the various special festivals organized in Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja's centers, *pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Mahārāja would come and grant all his godbrothers and their disciples the great fortune of his rare association. He would especially visit the Kolkata *maṭha* often, even apart from festivals, and bless us with his divine association. Today, recalling the heartfelt, genuinely affectionate words he spoke during such visits causes my heart to become exceedingly agitated and overwhelmed with emotion.

We viewed *pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Mahārāja as our worshipful Prabhupāda's youngest son, whom he treated with great respect and heartfelt affection. Śrīla Mahārāja was approximately seventy-eight at the time of his disappearance. Although he was somewhat younger than me in age, in terms of knowledge and *bhajana*, he was millions of millions of times richer and more exalted.

### **My anxious prayers at his lotus feet**

Alas, I am so unfortunate! I could never have imagined he could have left us so soon, thereby drowning us forever in an ocean of sorrow. My inability to foresee this deprived me of receiving his *darśana* one last time.

Surely, he regarded all of his godbrothers equally, but it seems he looked upon such a fallen, destitute and unfortunate wretch as me with more affection. Whatever the case, I anxiously pray at his lotus feet that he may bestow his causeless mercy upon me and absolve me of any offenses I may have committed against him, whether knowingly or unknowingly, for he is the

topmost among Vaiṣṇavas and ignores the faults of all others.

Śrī Yāyāvara Mahārāja is a dear and intimate associate of our supremely worshipful Prabhupāda, who has surely granted him the eligibility to enter the pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. May he supplicate at the feet of the most compassionate Śrīla Prabhupāda to grant a genuine glance of mercy upon this wretch.

### **His life's concern and effort**

After *paramārādhyā* Prabhupāda's disappearance, our godbrothers' sense of cooperation faded due to a divergence in views, and many groups were formed as a result. But throughout his life, *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja's concern and effort was fixed in fulfilling the inner desire of Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda, who instructed his disciples, "You should remain together under the guidance of the *āśraya-vigraha*, the repository of devotion, for the express purpose of satisfying the transcendental senses of the one Absolute Truth."

### **His firm conviction in performing genuine rāga-bhakti**

Śrīla Mahārāja's conviction in performing *nāma-bhajana* was highly exemplary. Even when he was very ill, he set an example of performing one lakh *nāma* daily. Both *paramārādhyā* Śrī Śrīla Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda and Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda outlined that distinctions between Vaiṣṇavas should be determined according to the varying degrees of taste they have in *nāma*. Should a person be devoid of conviction in *nāma-bhajana*, neither Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura nor Śrīla Prabhupāda would ever accept their pretense of *rāgānugā-bhakti* as genuine *rāga-bhakti*.

### **A prayer for enthusiasm in bhajana**

In *pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Mahārāja's absence, the *maṭha* and *mandiras* he established appear as if lifeless. Like the residents of those institutions, we too have become melancholy in the absence of our Vaiṣṇava friend. My sole entreaty at his lotus feet is that he infuse his potency into his disciples and bring them back to life. I pray he may cast a glance of mercy toward us as well, and thereby grant us enthusiasm in *bhajana*. The disciples of *pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja and also the new *ācārya* of Mādhava Mahārāja's institution are all the recipients of *pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Gosvāmīpāda's affection. They are all anguished by his separation and are praying for his mercy. Everyone's anxious prayer is that he may shower his affection upon them from that eternal abode.

Excerpts from articles published in  
*Śrī Caitanya-Vāṇī* (Year 24, Volume 10)

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Full surrender means leaving nothing behind

Prior to joining the *maṭha* fulltime, Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then known as Śrī Atulacandra Bandopādhyāya) worked for Indian Railways, which provided him with a stable residence. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda once visited and stayed there for three days in 1921. As a result of his divine association during that three-day visit, Śrī Atulacandra Bandopādhyāya decided to dedicate his life to serving the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Following the principle of the verse *gurum evābhigacchet* from *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.12), He understood that upon approaching *śrī guru*, one ought to surrender oneself completely without returning home for anything. Therefore, he packed all his household items—his table, chair, bureau and so on—on a truck and brought them to the *maṭha*. He did not leave anything behind, so as to ensure he would never have to revisit his house to settle pending matters.

## The dear associate of Śrīman Mahāprabhu

Śrī Atulacandra Bandopādhyāya and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prakāśa Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja visited many homes and offices to collect donations and find new subscribers for the Gauḍīya Maṭha’s weekly magazine, titled *Gauḍīya*. In those days, *Gauḍīya* was publishing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in installments, often including pictures of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and other Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*.

One day, a person asked Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is said to be non-different from Bhagavān. Why, then, have you included pictures of mortal humans on its same pages?”

For whatever reason, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja kept silent, and so Śrī Atulacandra Bandopādhyāya gave an eloquent yet assertive reply: “You have not fully understood the special divine characteristics of *grantha-bhāgavata* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*) and *bhakta-bhāgavata* (the devotee of Bhagavān), nor have you learned the purports of the many essential verses that describe the nature of devotees, such as:

*sākṣād-haritvena samasta-śāstrair  
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ  
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The scriptures unanimously proclaim *śrī guru* to be *sākṣāt-hari*, directly Śrī Hari. This is a fact jointly corroborated by all saintly persons. Yet at the same time, *śrī guru* is very dear to Bhagavān. I adore the lotus feet of that *śrī gurudeva*. \*

“How, then, will it be possible for you to comprehend that the photographs published in *Gauḍīya* are not of ordinary persons, but of very special, self-realized personalities? Moreover, it will be difficult for you to understand that because of their eternal relationship with Bhagavān, these liberated persons are non-different from Him in the same way *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is non-different from Him.

He ended the discussion by remarking, “I am from a *brāhmaṇa* family so high that fourteen generations of your family would consider themselves grateful if but one of them happened to drink water from a place where I had passed urine. But for some reason, you are questioning the master at whose feet I have offered my head, as well as the magazine I have come to distribute.”

In the evening, Śrīla Aranya Gosvāmī Mahārāja recounted the story to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He told Śrīla Prabhupāda that although he was unable to answer the man’s question, Śrī Atulacandra Bandopādhyāya, who was relatively new to the *maṭha*, gave an apt reply.

Upon hearing this, tears flowed from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s eyes. He said, “Śrīman Mahāprabhu has sent one of His close associates to assist us.”

We have heard that Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His associates appeared before Śrīla Prabhupāda and assured him that They would provide both the means and the manpower required to spread *śuddha-bhakti* among the masses. In the above-mentioned pastime, Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed that Mahāprabhu Himself had sent His dear associate Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

### **Causing others’ faith in the real thing is the best type of collection**

Whenever he collected donations, Śrī Atulacandra Bandopādhyāya always dressed in formal attire consisting of a coat and pants. One day, he visited the house of a *seṭhājī*, a wealthy person. He rang the doorbell, and the owner personally answered the door.

When Śrī Atulacandra Bandopādhyāya introduced himself as a member of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, the *seṭhājī* replied by saying, “I have no faith in the Gauḍīya Maṭha.”



Ignoring the man's words, Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu brushed past him and entered the house.

The *seṭhajī* became irritated. "Did you not hear me?" he asked. "I said I have no faith in the Gauḍīya Maṭha."

Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu took a seat in a nearby chair, saying nothing in reply.

The *seṭhajī*, now irate, repeated, "I said I have no faith in the Gauḍīya Maṭha!"

This time, Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu responded, "Yes, yes. I heard you. This is exactly why I have come to your house: to generate your faith in the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Even before I came, I knew that you had no faith in the Gauḍīya Maṭha, for if you had, you could not have resisted visiting." Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu then expertly explained the aim of the Gauḍīya Maṭha's mission and its unique specialties.

Being highly influenced by Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu's scholarly presentation, the *seṭhajī* gratefully offered him a large donation. Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu refused the donation. "I have not come for a donation," he said. "Believe me when I say I have come only to generate your faith in the Gauḍīya Maṭha."

With great respect, the *seṭhajī* personally drove Śrī Atulacandra back to the Gauḍīya Maṭha, where he received *darśana* of Śrīla Prabhupāda and offered the donation to him directly. Thereafter, he visited the Gauḍīya Maṭha regularly.

### **Delivering an offender**

Once, Śrīla Prabhupāda took Śrī Atulacandra Bandhopādhyāya and an entourage to preach in Kānpura. While Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu went to the city for a short time to collect donations, the local district magistrate came to visit Śrīla Prabhupāda. During their conversation, the magistrate made a derogatory comment to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He said, "Most of your followers seem highly educated. Is it your mission to turn educated people into mendicants?" With this, the magistrate got up and abruptly left.

Later, when Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu returned to see Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Prabhupāda informed him of his encounter with the magistrate. As Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu listened to Śrīla Prabhupāda, he noticed that the magistrate's criticism had made Śrīla Prabhupāda unhappy. He immediately hailed a horse cart and went to the magistrate's house. When he arrived, he told

him, “Śrīla Prabhupāda is an extraordinary personality. He is a personal associate of Bhagavān. Your disrespectful comment has ensured your total ruin. You have played with fire, and now fourteen generations of your family will have to suffer in hell.”

The district magistrate became frightened. He humbly asked Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu what he must do to make amends. Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu instructed him to beg Śrīla Prabhupāda for forgiveness and serve him somehow.

The magistrate and Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu at once returned to the *maṭha*, where Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu implored Śrīla Prabhupāda, “Please be kind to this man and absolve him of his offense to your lotus feet.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda then spoke to the magistrate on many topics, and the magistrate served him by offering a donation of five hundred rupees.

Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu accepted a huge responsibility when he resolved to save the district magistrate from committing a serious offense. This anecdote demonstrates many of Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s transcendental qualities. He had firm conviction in the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He could recognize the awful fate in store for those who offended Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he mercifully strived to find a way for them to atone for their offenses. By this, he delivered many offenders and, like a true well-wisher, did whatever he could to cultivate auspiciousness on their behalf.

### **Defending Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers**

While Śrīla Prabhupāda was heading to perform Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* with his associates one year, Śrī Halagu Lāla, the head of the managing committee of the Śrī Bāṅke Bihārī temple, issued a statement to almost all of the prominent temples in Vṛndāvana, notifying them that Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī would soon arrive with all his followers. “They are all *harijanas*

<sup>1</sup>,” he said. “He and his followers are not to be allowed entrance into our temples.”

When Śrī Atulacandra Bandhopādhyāya came to hear of this, he took a group of his *brāhmaṇa*-born godbrothers, including Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, my Guru Mahārāja (then Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī), Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī (later Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja), Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī (later Śrī

Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja) and others, to meet with the *gosāl*, or head priest, of the Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana temple.

In conversing with the respected *gosāl*, Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu asked him, “Do we, who have taken birth in *brāhmaṇa* families, seem like fallen deviants to you? Have we not conducted ourselves according to the words of scriptures when we resolved to follow the path of pure *vaiṣṇava-dharma*? Śrīla Prabhupāda has propagated the principles of *daiva varṇāśrama-dharma*, the social designation of individuals according not to race or familial lineage, but innate propensities. To maintain a mundane conception of Śrīla Prabhupāda will bring only ill fortune to the world.

“Moreover, may I remind you that I am Atulacandra Bandhopādhyāya. When the *brāhmaṇas* of your family approached our family seeking the hand of my daughter in marriage, I forbade it. I told them, ‘We are *kulīna brāhmaṇas*. How could we possibly consider allowing our daughter to marry into your family, when we despise even the idea of dining in close proximity to you?’ ”

The *gosāl* begged for forgiveness and accompanied Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu to see Śrīla Prabhupāda. He then brought Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *parikramā* party for *darśana* of Śrī Rādhā-Madana-mohana-jī and conferred great respect unto Śrīla Prabhupāda. Observing the conduct of the Śrī Madana-mohana-jī temple *gosāl*, the head priests of all the other prominent temples of Vṛndāvana also accorded befitting honor and respect to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

It was only the *gosāl* of the Śrī Bānke Bihārī temple who maintained some objection to allowing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples to enter his temple, saying that Śrī Bihārī-jī would be frightened by the *tridaṇḍas* the *sannyāsīs* carried. When Śrīla Prabhupāda heard of this, he said, “Fine. If this is the case, we shall not enter the Śrī Bānke Bihārī temple. We do not wish to frighten Ṭhākura-jī.”

### **Collecting from a materialist**

Once, Śrī Atulacandra Bandhopādhyāya took his godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to visit a miserly businessman in Madrās (now Chennai) who spoke only Tamil, of which the two godbrothers knew not one word. Before their visit, Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu told Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “I will communicate with him through hand gestures only. All you must do is advance toward him with your *tridaṇḍa* and back off when I tell you.”

“And why exactly am I supposed to run back and forth with my *tridaṇḍa*?”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked.

Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu replied, “He will either think that I am depriving him of a blessing from Śrī Nārāyaṇa, who is embodied by your *tridaṇḍa*, or that I am protecting him from you turning him to ashes with it.”

When Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja advanced toward the businessman with his *tridaṇḍa* during their meeting, Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu stopped him and held up his ten fingers, pointing to the businessman. The businessman, in return, held up one finger. Again, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja advanced toward the businessman until Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu stopped him. This time, Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu held up nine fingers and the businessman held up two. They went on like this until eventually they both held up five fingers. As soon as Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu stood up as if ready to leave, the merchant made a gesture signaling him to stay and then went inside his house.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu, “What does this mean, holding up five fingers?”

“Mahārāja, I have no idea,” Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu answered. “It could be five rupees, fifty rupees, five hundred or something else. Whatever it is, let us wait and see.”

The merchant then brought five hundred rupees from inside and put it in Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s hand. He then begged him to bless him on the forehead with his *tridaṇḍa*, and Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja obliged.

As they were leaving, Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu kicked the ground at the doorway. When Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked why he did that, he said, “I do not want to deal with this kind of person ever again, otherwise I fear I will become a covetous materialist (*viṣayī*). I am kicking this man’s association, kicking it with spite.”

Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja would often say, “Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu was like a radish farmer, whose crop is completely uprooted during harvesting; He would approach a person once, receive what he could, and never return. Others, however, were like eggplant farmers, whose crop continues to give even after harvesting; they would repeatedly go to the same person to acquire whatever they needed. Neither is intrinsically better than the other. They are simply different approaches. The best approach is always that which is most favorable for the service of Śrī Hari according to time, place and circumstance.”

## **A queen’s donation**

Once, Śrī Atulacandra Bandhopādhyāya stayed in a temple in Orissa. At that time, the temple's services were being funded by an elderly queen who was popularly known as Rānī Mātā. One day, Rānī Mātā sent her servant to inquire whether Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu's stay there was comfortable enough and whether he was experiencing any inconvenience. Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu replied that everything was fine, except that he was having a hard time sleeping without a pillow.

Rānī Mātā then graciously sent him a pillow and told him he could keep it. As soon as Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu received the pillow, he set off for Śrīdhāma Māyāpura and took it with him. Upon his arrival at Śrī Yogapīṭha, he opened the pillow and found about two-and-a-half thousand rupees inside.

Traditionally in Indian culture, it is men who offer donations to *sādhus*, and not women. Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu was perceptive enough to understand that by sending her servant to check up on him, Rānī Mātā was looking for an opportunity to serve him in some way. His request for a pillow was actually meant as a chance for her to offer a donation in secret. Such were his wondrous ways of collecting donations.

### **Posing as a lawyer for the service of the Gauḍīya Maṭha**

At the bidding of the queen of the Sītāpura district in Naimiṣāraṇya, a man resolved to donate land for the construction of a Gauḍīya Maṭha there. Some time later, however, an Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) officer, a foreigner, complained that the queen ought to donate the land to her subjects if she had so much. He questioned how the locals would benefit by giving land to outsiders from Bengal or anywhere else. Hearing about this, the donor retracted his pledge to give land to the Gauḍīya Maṭha devotees.

Sometime later, Śrī Atulacandra Bandhopādhyāya overheard the devotees he was with discussing the matter at the Sītāpura train station while waiting for a train to Kolkata. As fate would have it, their train was three hours late, and so he informed the devotees he would pay the man a visit.

On the way, he purchased a notebook and tucked it under the arm of his coat to make himself appear as a professional. He approached the man who withdrew his pledge and said, "I am the Gauḍīya Maṭha's legal advisor, and I am here to sue you for defamation. When you promised land to them, they printed notices in many newsletters and magazines about the proposed *maṭha* in Naimiṣāraṇya. But now that you have gone back on your word, their name will be tarnished."

The man explained his position and showed Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu what the I.C.S. officer had written. Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu shouted at the man, “What does that fool know! We want this land not for the sake of taking, but for giving. We will develop this area by investing assets gathered from elsewhere. There is not a single person in your entire state who would come forward to develop this area like we would. And even if someone were to come forward, he would end up costing you much more than he would invest. Our investment in this community, on the other hand, would be greater—say, ten times greater—than the value of the land you would give us. But never mind that. The main point is that you must make good on your promise, otherwise I will have no choice but to file a lawsuit against you.”

When the man finally agreed to donate the land to the Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu insisted he pay a ten thousand rupees fine for the inconvenience he caused. Ultimately, the man agreed to pay a fine of five thousand rupees. Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu collected the fine and returned to the train station in time to make his train.

### **His presence of mind**

Before Śrīla Prabhupāda sent Śrī Atulacandra Bandhopādhyāya abroad to preach, he asked Ernst-Georg Schulze, a German disciple of his whose initiated name was Sadānanda dāsa, “What title should I give Atulacandra when I send him to preach in the West? I need to give him a title that properly conveys his superiority to all the preachers I have sent until now.”

Śrī Sadānanda Prabhu suggested the title ‘Missionary-in-Charge,’ which Śrīla Prabhupāda liked. He then gave this title to Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu and sent him to preach abroad.

Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu did not accept even one *paisā* from the *maṭha* for his overseas preaching. The donations he collected abroad funded the entire venture.

One day, the housekeeper where he was staying informed him, “A large envelope with your name on it has come, but it is too big to fit in the letterbox. It is hanging out. You best retrieve it now.”

When Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu opened the letter, he found that the king of Bardhamāna had sent him a check in his name. Although he did not have an English bank account, he decided to go to the bank anyway.

At the bank, the manager told him, “We cannot cash your check unless we get a signature from someone who can verify your identity.”

It just so happened that a photograph of Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu shaking hands with the Marquis of Zetland had been published in the newspaper that day. Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu saw a newspaper lying on the manager's desk, took it, and opened it to the page with his picture. He showed it to the manager and asked him, "Who is the person in this photograph?"

The manager read the title on the bottom of the photograph. "Indian monk A.B. Gosvāmī and Marquis of Zetland," he said.

"Am I not the very same person?" Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu questioned. The manager looked at the photo and back at him a few times. "So?" Śrī Atulacandra Prabhu prodded. "What do you say?"

"It is definitely you."

"Then you yourself can verify my identity and sign." The manager did just that. Such was Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja's presence of mind.

### **Maintaining faith in disheartening situations**

After Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, the Sārasvata Gauḍīya mission faced a host of disturbances. During that time, a certain distinguished personality made the following comment about a particular disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda: "I do not trust him when he says *hā* (yes), nor do I trust his brother when he sarcastically says *hū* (yes). The mouths of the fathers of those who have faith in their *hā*'s and *hū*'s will be full of these two brothers' stool.

[2](#)

They are cheating us. We should teach them a lesson."

Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied not ferociously, but peacefully, according to his tranquil nature. He said, "Bhagavān is all-knowing, and He always guides and protects His devotees. If while being cheated by the Vaiṣṇavas we maintain faith in them nevertheless, even at the cost of detriment, that faith will be the genesis of our future happiness."

### **Acquiring land in Māyāpura**

From the very beginning, Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja was entirely disinterested in procuring land and building a *maṭha* in Māyāpura. He would repeatedly say, "Already in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura are Śrīla Prabhupāda's Śrī Caitanya Maṭha and Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja's Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. What, then, is the necessity for me to toil to build another place? I do, however, want my godbrothers to accrue as much land as possible, because otherwise, undesirable people will create establishments there in the future and try to tarnish the sanctity of the *dhāma*."

He would also say, “I will provide my godbrothers with as much money as they need to purchase and develop land. But with this, they must accept the responsibility of properly maintaining their establishments.”

Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja possessed incredible foresight; today, many undesirable factions have established themselves in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura and engage in many activities opposed to the cultivation of *bhakti*.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was insistent that Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja establish a *maṭha* in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, and so Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja, yielding to the request of his godbrother, purchased a plot of land there. On the day the foundation was to be consecrated by performing an auspicious cornerstone laying ceremony beneath the shade of an acacia tree there, Śrīla Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja did not conduct the ceremony himself, but had Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja do it.

Our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha provided the *mṛdaṅgas*, *karatālas* and *āsanas* for that ceremony. I consider myself supremely fortunate and blessed to have witnessed and heard the heartfelt *kīrtanas* sung by those who had taken shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda, their exemplary and genteel interactions, and the profound *hari-kathā* they spoke that day. Afterward, devotees distributed nothing more than a light, hollow sugar candy called *batāsā* as *prasāda*, but no one was dissatisfied; everyone was quite pleased.

The simple end to the grand festival brought to mind a verse I had learned when I was a child:

*ajā-yuddhe ṛṣi-śrāddhe  
prabhāte meghā'mburā  
dāmpatyē kalahe caiva  
babhārambhe laghu-kriyā*

The sparing of rams, the service rendered by saints, the sound of thunder in the mornings, and the squabbles between a husband and wife are loud in the beginning and quiet in the end, accomplished ultimately by the smallest of gestures.

Although I had always felt that this verse was not applicable in modern times, I realized it was most certainly relevant to Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja's feast that day.

### **An example of his humility**

While Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *maṭha* in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura was under construction, he stayed in Guru Mahārāja's *bhajana-kuṭīra* in our Śrī Caitanya



Gauḍīya Maṭha. He was highly punctual; he would come and go at exactly the same time every day. One day, for some reason, he arrived at our *maṭha* five minutes earlier than normal. Before entering Guru Maharaja's *bhajana-kuṭīra*, he asked us in all earnestness, "Prabhus, today I have come five minutes early. May I come inside the *maṭha*, or should I atone for my unpunctuality by waiting outside?"

### **Accept only that service which you can properly manage**

When Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja would host festivals in his *maṭha*, he would invite only one or two devotees from each *maṭha*. He would explain, "By his own conduct, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has taught that, as etiquette dictates, we must invite only as many Vaiṣṇavas as we are capable of serving at one time without losing a respectful attitude. If we invite too many devotees, we run the risk of making offenses due to our inability to attentively serve every one of them in a befitting manner."

### **His deep respect for the dhāma**

When Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja would walk from Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha to his *maṭha*, his servant Śrī Gaura dāsa Prabhu and I would support him from either side. One day, as we were leaving Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, we saw Nīlu, Śrī Yogapīṭha's generator room guard, driving a new bicycle *rikśāw*, a vehicle that had been only recently introduced in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. Seeing this, Śrī Gaura dāsa Prabhu asked Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja, "Mahārāja-jī, would you like to go by *rikśāw*?"

Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied gravely, "Me, on a *rikśāw* in the holy *dhāma*? Never. This will never happen. I know well that you people will all ride in cars in the future, but you will not get a license to do so from me." It is a fact that in his entire life, he never sat in a *rikśāw* or car in the *dhāma*. When travelling to the *dhāma* in a car or *rikśāw*, he would stop at the limits of the *dhāma* and start walking.

Śrī Gaura dāsa Prabhu said, "Mahārāja, we are afraid you might fall and injure yourself if you walk all the time."

Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja joked, "Ah, that is your problem, not mine."

Later, when he reached his *maṭha*, he loudly called to another of his dear servants, Śrī Vana-bihārī Bābā, "O Vana Bābā! This Gaura has just about killed me today. He made me walk all the way here. I am so worn out."

His relationships with his disciples were always sweet and humorous.

### Everything is justified in service

Once, Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his servant Śrī Gaura dāsa Prabhu came to our Māyāpura branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha to visit the *gośālā*, which I managed in those days. Śrīla Mahārāja saw two healthy, happy calves there and asked me, “How old are these calves?”

“Mahārāja-jī, they are about one year old,” I replied.

Without hesitating, he offered this advice: “If you turn them into oxen

<sup>3</sup>

, you will be able to get a great amount of work out of them.”

When Śrī Gaura dāsa Prabhu heard this, he said, “Mahārāja! Would you have dared to even suggest such a thing, let alone do it, had you been living with your family?”

“No,” Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied. “I would have been declared an outcaste and removed from our society. But I am no longer a *brāhmaṇa*; I am a transcendental *mleccha*, a divine outcaste of sorts. If an activity befitting a *mleccha* is performed with the intention of serving *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān, it is considered spiritual, not mundane. Everything is justified in service.”

### Remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates in all situations

One time, Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked me, “What is your name?”

“Narottama dāsa Brahmācārī,” I replied.

When he heard this, he was reminded of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. He said, “Your name is Narottama? Then you are my master, my Prabhu.”

In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 4.85), Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has mentioned, “*Ĵahā Ĵahā netra paḍe tāhā kṛṣṇa sphure*,” which when applied to this situation means “Wherever a perfected personality casts his eyes, Kṛṣṇa manifests to him.” The word *kṛṣṇa* in this verse refers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa accompanied by His associates. Therefore, when Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja heard that my name was Narottama, he immediately became immersed in remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s intimate associate, Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.

This is the specialty of Vaiṣṇavas. Ordinary persons can never imagine, even in dreams, the transcendental consciousness in which Vaiṣṇavas remain situated.

### Honoring all prasāda with equal reverence

When Śrīla Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja sat to honor *prasāda*, he would do so only after first mixing together all the preparations on his plate—everything

from *karelā* (bitter melon) to sweet rice. The first time I saw him doing this, I was still new to the *maṭha* and I therefore lacked understanding of *vaiṣṇava-siddhānta*. I told him, “Mahārāja, you will not be able to relish the original, individual tastes of these preparations if you mix them all together.”

Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “Why should I indulge the desires of this wicked and insignificant tongue of mine, which measures a mere two-and-a-half inches? Do you not recite this verse before accepting *prasāda*?

*mahā-prasāde govinde  
nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave  
svalpa-puṇyavatām rājan  
viśvāso naiva jāyate*

*Skanda Purāṇa (Utkala-khaṇḍa)*

Those who have very few pious activities to their credit can never develop faith in *mahā-prasāda*, in Śrī Govinda, in the holy name of the Lord, or in the Vaiṣṇavas. \*

“And what has Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura written about *mahā-prasāda*?

*śarīra avidyā-jāla, jaḍendriya tāhe kāla,  
jīve phele viṣaya-sāgare  
tā’ra madhye jihvā ati, lobhamaya sudurmati,  
tā’ke jētā kaṭhina saṁsāre*

O brothers! The material body is a web of ignorance and its inert senses are the cause of its ruination, for they throw the soul into the ocean of material enjoyment. Among the senses, the tongue is the greediest and wickedest; it is very difficult to conquer it in this world. \*

*kṛṣṇa baḍô dayāmaya, kôribāre jihvā jaya,  
sva-prasād-anna dilā bhāi  
sei annāmṛta pāo, rādhā-kṛṣṇa-guṇa gāo,  
preme ḍāḱô caitanya-nitāi*

Kṛṣṇa is so merciful that He has given us His own food remnants to help us conquer the tongue, O brothers. Honor these nectarean foods, sing the glories of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and with *prema* call out, “Caitanya! Nitāi!” \*

“In other words,” he explained, “*śrī kṛṣṇa-prasāda* is just like nectar. To discriminate between preparations is improper. We should not think, ‘I want less *karelā* and more sweet rice,’ or, ‘I do not want this item, please serve me more of that one.’ ” He then quoted Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who said:

*dvaite bhadṛābhadrā-jñāna, saba manodharma*

*ei bhālô, ei manda—ei saba bhrama*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.176)*

In this world of duality, conceptions of ‘auspicious’ and ‘inauspicious’ are all functions of the mind. It is delusional to think “This is good and that is bad.”

Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja concluded his point by saying, “It is therefore better for us to honor the items on our plate with equal reverence, considering them all to be *prasāda*.”

If someone would ask him how he liked the *prasāda* he was served, he would always answer, “It was very good. They prepared it very well.” But if he heard a devotee complain that a dish had not been properly prepared, he would say, “Go and call the cook at once. He must be punished for being inattentive in his service to Bhagavān. He should be suspended from his service for two or three days and instructed to atone for his misdeed by constantly weeping and chanting *harināma*. Bring him here at once, so that I may reprimand him.”

His words were not merely lip service; he set a precedent by actually punishing those who were inattentive in their service.

### **Valuing vaiṣṇava-sevā over bhagavad-sevā**

Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja would often mention, “I have not come to the *maṭha* to serve Bhagavān; I have come to serve Vaiṣṇavas. In this world, we receive many opportunities to serve Bhagavān, but the opportunity to serve Vaiṣṇavas is exceedingly rare. It is much more spiritually beneficial to serve Vaiṣṇavas than Bhagavān, for by doing so, one learns how to properly serve Bhagavān and gradually develops a true, lasting taste for such service. Engaging in the direct service of Bhagavān without first serving Vaiṣṇavas does not ensure one’s spiritual benefit.”

### **Seeing all Vaiṣṇavas as his masters**

When Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja manifested an illness pastime, I bought him a portable commode made of cane, an item that was available in Navadvīpa and Kṛṣṇanagara in those days. When Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja saw it, he told me, “I will never use this. A Vaiṣṇava would have to clean it every time I use it. I cannot bear to think about that. Throughout my life, I have never considered any Vaiṣṇava to be my servant. I have always regarded everyone, newcomers and seniors alike, as worthy of my service.”

No matter what I said to him, I could not convince him to use it. Finally, I

constructed a commode out of bricks with my own hands, which he happily accepted.

### **Explaining the need for new maṭhas and deities**

Someone once asked Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja during one of his preaching tours, “What is the need to build new temples and *maṭhas* in India, when there are already so many? And why install new deities when there are currently so many deities being neglected?”

Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “The root cause of India’s troubles is overpopulation. This is evident by the fact that the government has created various initiatives to keep the population under control. Those who have fewer children, for example, receive ample assistance from the government. If overpopulation is a national crisis, why do childless couples make efforts to have children of their own? Would they not be as content with adopting an orphan? No, they would not. The degree of affection one may possess for another person’s child can never match the affection one would have for one’s own. Similarly, the attachment one may have to a temple, *maṭha* or deities established by others is far exceeded by the attachment one has to one’s own.”

### **The Vaiṣṇavas’ pastimes extend beyond the external**

Once, Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja fell ill in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura and needed to be taken to Kolkata for medical assistance. I accompanied him and the devotees who were engaged in his personal service on part of their journey. We first took him across the Gaṅgā by boat to Svarūpa Gañja, and then boarded a bus to Kṛṣṇanagara, where I arranged for them to take a train to Kolkata. I also explained to his *sevakas* how to reach Dr. N.R. Sena Gupta, a reputable doctor in Kolkata.

After Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja recovered and returned to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, he told me, “I was fully conscious the whole time you took me from the *ghāṭa* to Svarūpa Gañja, and then to Kṛṣṇanagara. But I remained quiet, thinking that I should let the Vaiṣṇavas do as they felt was appropriate.”

I was astonished as Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja went on to recount the day’s events in such sharp detail. I was reminded of Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura’s words in *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 9.240)*:

*jatô dekhô vaiṣṇavera vyavahāra-duḥkha  
niścaya hi jānihô sei parānanda-sukha*

Know well that whatever suffering a Vaiṣṇava may appear to experience is actually spiritual happiness.

I was amazed: although he appeared severely unwell outwardly, he was fully aware internally. Perhaps it is with reference to such instances that the scriptures state, “*vaiṣṇava cinīte nāre devera śakati*—even the demigods are incapable of understanding the divine habits and activities of Vaiṣṇavas.”

### **His astounding life teachings**

We have received the following teachings from the exemplary life of Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

1. Devotees need not be concerned with experiencing opposition, nor should they worry about adverse circumstances. Bhagavān is like an affectionate parent for His devotees; He always protects them.
2. The process of *bhajana* cannot develop if corrupted by a propensity for sense gratification. A person attached to gratifying his senses never attains true welfare. It is only when we remain supremely satisfied with whatever *prasada* Bhagavān mercifully arranges for us that we will attain perfection in our *sādhana*.
3. Fully attentive and dedicated service to Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas is the true expression of deep-rooted love for them.

## **The Disappearance of Pūjyapāda Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

### **The principal pillar of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s preaching mission**

*Tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja, was one of the foremost pillars of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda’s preaching mission, which aimed to spread the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to the entire world. Thus, he fulfilled his beloved *śrī gurupāda-padma*’s most cherished desire.

### **A model of humility and a fearless guru-sevaka**

*Pūjyapāda* Gosvāmī Mahārāja was a prominent member of the Śrī Viśva Vaiṣṇava Rāja Sabhā

, the chairman of the weekly *Gauḍīya* magazine’s editorial board, a humble model of *guru-sevā* and the greatest of speakers. Now, he has attained the eternal shelter of the gentle lotus feet of his *śrī guru*, who propagated throughout the world the glories of Śrī Gaura’s sacred abode, name, and most cherished desire. Through his divine conduct, *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja demonstrated a fearless example of service to *śrī guru* until the very last moment of his physical presence. If we can attain the fortune of following him, to even a fractional degree, then our lives will be blessed beyond all fortune.

### **His unpretentious, genuine and exemplary character**

*Pūjyapāda* Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the foremost assistant of *śrī gaura-karuṇā-śakti*—Śrīla Prabhupāda, who was Śrī Gaura’s potency of compassion—in fulfilling the most cherished ambition of Śrī Gaura. By the desire of Gaura-sundara, that great servant of *śrī guru* who possessed the most unpretentious, genuine and exemplary character appeared in the world with great nobility. Today, he has concluded his magnificent vow of service and bid farewell to the mundane realm.

*kṛpā kôri’ kṛṣṇa more diyāchilô sāṅga  
svatantra kṛṣṇera icchā, hôilô saṅga-bhaṅga*

Mercifully, Kṛṣṇa gave me his association. By Kṛṣṇa’s independent will, our exchange has ended.

Excerpts from articles published in  
*Śrī Caitanya-Vāṇī* (Year 4, Volume 4)

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[1](#) Lit, ‘people of Hari.’ Mahātmā Gandhī used this term to describe members of the various labor communities (washermen, drain cleaners, street sweepers, leather workers, etc.), who are generally considered untouchable outcastes.

[2](#) In other words, the two brothers’ association is so harmful that it affects not only a person who associates with them, but that person’s father, as well. Just as good association delivers one’s forefathers, bad association adversely affects them.

[3](#) Castrated bulls trained for use as service animals.

[4](#) An informal, worldwide organization founded by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. The words *viṣva-vaiṣṇava-rāja* refer to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and *sabhā* refers to those devotees who follow His teachings.



# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Extraordinary instances of an extraordinary personality

My *śikṣā-guru*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, used to say, “When I was in my mother’s womb, a renounced person came to our house and gave my mother a sweet, which she accepted and ate. According to her, this was the reason why I never had any material desires, why I always wanted to become renounced, and why I came to Śrīla Prabhupāda at a very young age.”

When Śrīla Mahārāja was a baby, a large bird took him in the sky and brought him back. Such events can never happen to ordinary persons; they are indicative of extraordinary personalities.

## His patha-pradarśaka gurus

Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja made his divine appearance in the village of Vānarīpāḍā, within the district of Variśāla, Bangladesh. He belonged to a family of wealthy landowners. When he was young, his paternal aunts Śrī Sarojinī dāsī and Śrī Priyatamā dāsī brought him to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Because Śrī Priyatamā dāsī left her body early on, we generally hear more about Śrī Sarojinī dāsī in the narration of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s life story.

## A jewel among *sevakas*

In the beginning of his *maṭha* life, Śrīla Mahārāja was known as Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī, and Śrīla Prabhupāda later awarded him with the title ‘Kṛti-ratna,’ a designation by which he became well-known. *Kṛti* means ‘activity,’ and *ratna* means ‘jewel,’ and therefore the title ‘Kṛti-ratna’ refers to a personality who is expert in performing activities related to the service of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and who considers such activities his life and soul. This title rightly befitted Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī, as he was a jewel among *sevakas*.

## Reconciling seemingly conflicting instructions

When Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī accepted the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda at an early age, he stayed as a *brahmācārī* in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. One day, after receiving a letter from Śrī Vinoda-bihārī

Brahmacārī's mother, Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī to pay her a visit at home. Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī meditated sincerely on what to do. On one side was a teaching he had previously received from Śrīla Prabhupāda:

*sakala janme pitā-mātā sabe pāya  
kṛṣṇa guru nāhi mile, bhajahô hiyāya*

*Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala (Madhya-khaṇḍa)*

One gets a mother and father in every species of life. But it is rare to get a bonafide *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. One must realize this in the core of one's heart.

On the other side was Śrīla Prabhupāda's order to visit his mother.

While contemplating these seemingly conflicting instructions, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī considered that the former instruction reflected Śrīla Prabhupāda's internal mood based on unbiased truth, and that the latter was possibly given to examine him or his dedication to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī concluded, "Śrī *guru* would never ask a disciple to maintain worldly relations, through which the disciple becomes bound by the ropes of attachment. Instead, he always instructs his disciples to realize their relationship with the eternal entity, Śrī Bhagavān. Therefore, I will follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction to realize the rarity of attaining the association of *śrī guru*. I will refrain from visiting my mother's home. By doing so, I will not be disobeying Śrīla Prabhupāda. In fact, he will be more pleased than if I were to carry out his immediate order of visiting my home."

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī's instinct to please his *gurudeva* by remaining in the *maṭha* was correct, and thus Śrīla Prabhupāda bestowed his mercy on him.

### **Serving through generosity**

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī's father was a wealthy landlord, and he was therefore accustomed to lavish spending during his time at home. After accepting the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and joining the *maṭha*, he was given the service of managing the properties of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, which required him to visit various properties in Māyāpura on horseback. Just seeing him made the residents fearful. Whenever he would cross the Gaṅgā, he would pay the boatman not by counting the exact fare, but by reaching into his pocket and offering whatever he pulled out. All the boatmen would beg him, "O Vinoda Bābū, please come with me! Let me take you across in my boat."

A devotee once complained to Śrīla Prabhupāda, “We labor arduously to collect donations for the *maṭha*, but Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu needlessly spends those hard-earned funds to pay people much more than they are owed. He pays no heed to the amount he gives. Is this proper?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked that devotee, “How much money did you spend daily when you were living at home?”

“One *paisā*,” the devotee answered.

“And how much do you spend now?”

The devotee sheepishly replied, “About ten *paisā*.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Vinoda-bihārī used to spend approximately one hundred rupees daily, and now he spends about five rupees. Which of you, then, is truly renounced?”

Those who lacked proper vision saw that Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī was wasting donations meant for the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. But Śrīla Prabhupāda understood his actual intentions. Through his generosity, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī was creating allies who would support Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in case of any future opposition.

### **An active response to a passive inquiry**

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī always did whatever was required for the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Once, Śrīla Prabhupāda unemphatically asked him, “Are we unable to acquire Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *bhajana-kuṭīra* in Godrumadvipa?” Although the question was passive, it held great gravity for Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī. He found himself unable to remain peaceful as long as he had not acquired that property. Such was his service mood for Śrīla Prabhupāda. In addition to Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *bhajana-kuṭīra*, he also successfully acquired the place of Chand Kazi and many other places in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura.

### **Protecting devotees from violent offenders**

In addition to managing the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha’s properties, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī was given the service of managing the institution’s court cases. Muslims in those days were occupying many holy places of Māyāpura, including Candraśekhara-bhavana, Śrīvāsa-aṅgana, Śrīdhara-kholaveca’s residence and Chand Kāzī’s *samādhi*. One day, the Muslims occupying Chand Kāzī’s *samādhi* beat a few *brahmācārīs* from Śrī Caitanya Maṭha. Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī was unable to tolerate this violent behavior toward devotees.

Being protective, he filed a court case on behalf of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, and some of the Muslims were put into jail as a result.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not appreciate that the Muslims were jailed. He said, “We should oppose the unrighteous activities being performed rather than the people performing them. We should not look to punish people by putting them in jail, but rather by boldly standing up for the principles we uphold and speaking out against unrighteous activities.” Thus, on the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the devotees posted the Muslims’ bail.

### **Risking his life to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda**

In his time, Śrīla Prabhupāda fearlessly preached against many of the practices and beliefs of the *apasampradāyas* (deviated philosophical lineages) claiming to be in the line of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He loudly declared that it was immoral to charge pilgrims for having *darśana* of Bhagavān’s deity and erroneous to consider that *brāhmaṇas* are the only qualified candidates for the position of *guru*. His dissemination of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s true Gauḍīya doctrine contradicted and challenged the tainted philosophies of these bogus sects, and thus jeopardized their donations and sense of prestige. As Śrīla Prabhupāda’s fame and influence continued to spread, these groups grew increasingly envious.

During the Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* of 1925, Śrīla Prabhupāda led a group of about five thousand pilgrims and one hundred eight *mṛdaṅga* players. At the front of the massive *parikramā* party was a band and the deity of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, who rode magnificently atop an elephant. The antagonists from the envious *apasampradāyas* descended upon the *parikramā* procession at Prauḍhāmāyā Talā with the wicked intention of taking Śrīla Prabhupāda’s life.

Sensing the immense danger his *gurudeva* was in, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī did not hesitate to act. He quickly escorted Śrīla Prabhupāda to a safe place, where he then brilliantly exchanged his white clothes for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s saffron-colored garments and arranged for him to be sent back to the *maṭha* with a few other devotees. Posing as Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī then waited out the attack at great risk to his life.

Meanwhile, Śrī Paramānanda Brahmācārī, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s personal *sevaka*, disguised himself as a local, so that nobody would recognize him as a Gauḍīya Maṭha devotee. Replacing his *dhotī* with a *gamacha* and carrying a *hookah*, he went to the police station to report the attack. Police officials soon arrived on the scene and the crowds dispersed.

Just as a person instinctively raises his arm to protect himself from an aggressor's blows, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī—who was a limb of and non-different from Śrīla Prabhupāda—reflexively protected his *gurudeva* from not only this vengeful physical attack, but also from philosophical attacks. Through his bold and tenacious preaching, he fearlessly defended Śrīla Prabhupāda's philosophical conclusions.

### **Firm faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda, the emissary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura**

In several places, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written that it is unnecessary to construct temples or *maṭhas*, as such activities inevitably lead to court cases in which the members of an institution will fight for its various properties and assets. Yet, we see on the other hand that Śrīla Prabhupāda constructed many *maṭhas*. We should not, however, conclude that Śrīla Prabhupāda ignored the instructions of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Rather, we should understand he perfectly executed Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's will.

As an intimate associate of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda understood the Ṭhākura's heart. Therefore, he could easily comprehend the subtle reasoning and implications behind every one of his instructions. Every teaching has both positive and negative aspects. In describing the establishment of spiritual institutions to be unnecessary or even unfavorable, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura warned of the negative result of such endeavors. But this does not mean the establishment of spiritual institutions is without positive aspects. Śrīla Prabhupāda understood that even at the cost of potential infighting, the construction of a *maṭha* will be successful if but one of its residents sincerely progresses on the path of pure devotion to Bhagavān.

All the devotees of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission, including Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī, worked hard to acquire land and construct and maintain *maṭhas*. They never once questioned Śrīla Prabhupāda's allegiance to properly carrying out Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's instructions. They firmly believed that the words and activities of Śrīla Prabhupāda were in line with the teachings of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and that Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's approval was with him.

### **Exposing an incompetent leader**

After the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the time came to select a new President-*ācārya* of the Gauḍīya Maṭha.

Guru Mahārāja believed Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja to be the worthiest candidate. However, in due time, Śrī Ananta-vāsudeva Prabhu was unanimously appointed to the position, with Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī serving as Secretary.

When Śrī Ananta-vāsudeva Prabhu's ill repute came to light, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī called for Guru Mahārāja and said, "Hayagrīva Prabhu! We have stuck our hands in wet stool. Had it been dry, it would not have been so revoltingly foul-smelling. But unfortunately, the reality is that its stench and repulsiveness are excessive. We must feel remorse and atone for having supported Ananta-vāsudeva and for having taken so long to understand what was actually going on. An incompetent person should be helped, but an incompetent person who makes fools of the general public by playing the part of a competent leader must be shunned. Let us help the people of the world by exposing this person, so that everyone may see his true nature.

"Because of your refined, gentle Vaiṣṇava temperament, everyone considers you a friend and gives importance to what you say. Therefore, please bring everyone together and arrange a meeting, so that we may together determine how to oppose him."

As per Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī's request, Guru Mahārāja gathered their godbrothers together and held a meeting, whereupon it was decided to file a court case against Śrī Ananta-vāsudeva Prabhu. It was this court case that made it possible for the Gauḍīya Maṭha to legally split into two factions.

### **His intolerance of even the slightest deviation**

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī's preaching inspired his elder brother to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda and join the *maṭha*. When Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered his brother to accept *sannyāsa*, he was unwilling. Although Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī was younger, he chastised his older brother, saying, "Why are you not fulfilling Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire to give you *sannyāsa*?" After considering these words of encouragement, his brother agreed to accept *sannyāsa*, and he became known as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kevala Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Some time after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja observed Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his followers deviating from the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda in three ways: (1) they taught that the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* is not to be chanted loudly, but rather silently in such a way that no one can hear the sound vibration; (2)

although Śrīla Prabhupāda had personally initiated some of his disciples, including Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja, into the *sannyāsa* order, they gave up their saffron *sannyāsa-veśa* (dress) and instead wore white *bābājī-veśa*, preaching that *sannyāsa-dharma* is strictly prohibited in Kali-yuga; and (3) although Śrīla Prabhupāda personally established Śrī Navadvīpa *parikramā*, they rejected its performance.

Unable to tolerate even the slightest deviation from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja completely severed his relationship with Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja and those who followed him. He would never allow his disciples to go to Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha or to any other place where Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his followers resided. If Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja were to discover that one of his disciples went to Śrī Auḍulomi Mahārāja’s *maṭha*, he would order that devotee to fast for three days, taking only *pañca-gavya* (the five products of the cow—milk, yogurt, ghee, dung and urine) as his atonement. He would say, “Why have you gone there? You are now impure; you must purify yourself by performing this atonement.”

Finally, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja decided to file a case against Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his followers, boldly announcing that because they did not accept many of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, they could not be considered his true disciples, and consequently should not be allowed to reside in his *maṭhas*.

My Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, gave me the service of transcribing Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s dictations regarding the court case. I would then take those dictations to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who would adjust the language and edit for clarity. When everything was complete, I would go to the court and submit the finalized documents.

The day the judge was to present the verdict, Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his followers appeared in court wearing saffron *sannyāsa-veśa* and were followed by a large procession loudly chanting the *mahā-mantra*. Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja had given eight people *sannyāsa* just that day.

In front of the judge, they said, “We are doing Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, wearing saffron dress, and carrying our *sannyāsa-daṇḍas*. Also, we have established a *maṭha* in the name of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and have established his *mūrti* (deity form) in the *maṭha* we are

constructing in Godrumadvīpa.”

Although previously they had no plans of having a *maṭha* in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s name or keeping his *mūrti* there, feeling threatened by the bold endeavors of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, they named their *maṭha* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gauḍīya Maṭha. They denied all the allegations put forth by Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and audaciously said, “Just see! We are chanting loudly, wearing *sannyāsa* dress, and we have named our *maṭha* after Śrīla Prabhupāda. How can he claim we are not disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda?”

Seeing this to be true, the judge awarded the decision in favor of Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his followers. It appeared as though Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja had been defeated. I pleaded, “Many of your godbrothers were involved in building this case for a long time. I too labored so much in transcribing your dictations, going to Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja for editing and providing information to the court. Now that we have lost the case, will you not appeal the judge’s verdict?”

Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “We will proceed further only if they again go against Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings.” He then asked, “How many punches can you tolerate?”

I replied, “Not even a single punch. I would strongly object to being punched.”

Śrīla Mahārāja asked, “And how many could you tolerate if your hands and legs were tied with ropes?”

I replied, “I would be forced to tolerate however many were given.”

“In the same way, whenever someone makes mistakes and goes against the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda, we will bind their hands and beat them to our fullest capacity until they accept those teachings.” He then explained, “My only desire was for them to again follow the line of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and we see that they are now doing this. They are now wearing *sannyāsa* dress, awarding *sannyāsa* to others and loudly chanting the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*. This was my objective. In this way, we were victorious. Our fight was not for anything other than establishing the proper *siddhānta* (conclusive truths) and reconnecting them with Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

Even now, all of Śrīla Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s followers and devotees of Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha accept *sannyāsa*, perform Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, loudly chant *mahā-mantra*, and perform *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. This is all due to the mercy of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.



### **“We are not here to deal in real estate”**

While Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī desired to buy a piece of Muslim-owned land adjacent to Śrīvāsa-aṅgana, which was owned by Śrī Caitanya Maṭha. The Muslim owners, however, refused to sell that land to Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, as they were envious of the organization’s growing influence in Māyāpura. After some disagreements following Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī officially separated from Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, moved to Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma and formed Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. After accepting *sannyāsa*, he became known as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. After hearing of his recent departure from Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, and in an attempt to sabotage the institution, the Muslim owners then became very happy to sell the land to Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

As soon as the devotees of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha came to know Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja had acquired that land, they broke its boundary wall and claimed it to be part of their property.

When I mentioned this to Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he laughed and said, “That is quite fine. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was here, I wanted to purchase that land and take it from the Muslims. It irritated me that we owned all the surrounding property except for this small piece of land, which was owned by people performing activities against *bhakti*. I did not purchase this land for my own enjoyment, but for the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda. There is no harm if Śrī Caitanya Maṭha claims it. Rather, I am fortunate that they have taken it for the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

He then asserted, “We are not here to deal in real estate. Our only duty is to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Vaiṣṇavas.”

### **“We have not joined the maṭha to accrue property”**

A similar incident happened after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance. The devotees of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha wanted to sell a property they owned that had a mango orchid. The property was at a place called Rāutalā in Śrī Navadvīpa. Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, however, opposed the sale and filed a court case against them. Being unable to use his own name to file the court case because he had been previously jailed due to false accusations made against him, he instead filed it under the name of his godbrothers Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Āśrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Khagena Prabhu. However, when devotees from Śrī Caitanya Maṭha came to testify in court, they insisted they

never intended on selling that property, and that they had no intentions of selling it in the future. They also presented the court with a written statement to this effect. Hearing this, the judge threw out the case and noted in the record that the land will never be sold.

Because I was extremely junior to Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja, I initially possessed a respectful fear of him and never asked him any questions. But as I continued my daily transcription service with him, that fear gradually faded.

When I expressed my disappointment at losing the court case despite our best efforts and after incurring considerable debt, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja said, “You are very young. You cannot understand anything.”

I was puzzled by his reply. “I don’t understand,” I told him.

He then explained, “Although legally it may seem that we have lost and they have won, in reality it is we who have won and they who have lost.”

This only confused me more. “Again, I don’t understand. How could we have won when the case was thrown out?”

Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja said, “Apparently I have to be explicit for you to understand. Listen, we have not joined the *maṭha* to accrue property. This court case was not about land. It was about principle. This land belonged to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he wanted it to be used for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission. As a result of our court case, they have submitted a formal document to the court stating that they will never sell it. They are now bound by law to keep the land. Therefore, we have won and they have lost.”

### **The lion-like ācārya**

Although Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja appeared thin and frail, he was as fierce as a lion in his conduct and his dedication to Śrīla Prabhupāda. When he manifested his sickness pastimes, Guru Maharāja and Śrī Jaga-mohana Prabhu visited him, taking me with them as their *sevaka*. During their visit, Guru Maharāja asked Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja “How will we continue with these court cases if you are manifesting sickness pastimes?”

Although Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja appeared to be very ill, his response was so powerful that it continues to resonate in my ears even to this day. He said, “No matter what happens to me, the residents of the *maṭha* must continue these court cases, otherwise they will have no right to stay in the *maṭha*.”

### **Concerned only for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission, not profit or loss**

In its early days, Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Navadvīpa consisted of only two rooms: one for Ṭhākura-jī and one for Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja and his *sevaka*. Although his possessions were few and his funds were meager, he was the first person to initiate an annual *parikramā* of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma separate from Śrī Caitanya Maṭha. He took out loans from various individuals to facilitate the *parikramā* and welcomed as many pilgrims as possible, without asking anyone for an attendance fee. He was unconcerned with profit and loss; his only concern was to continue Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission. Such was his elevated consciousness.

Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja used to say, “Although many people stayed with Śrīla Prabhupāda during the *maṭha*’s earliest days, he never ordered any of them to beg alms. The devotees were served through whatever donations donors gave of their own accord. Because of a dearth in provisions, for lunch *prasāda*, everyone would get a single bowl of rice and wild greens. When we performed *parikramā* with Śrīla Prabhupāda, everyone stayed under trees. Śrīla Prabhupāda knows our current condition, so he is sending many things. Now when we perform *parikramā*, we stay under large tents and serve large amounts of *prasāda* to the pilgrims.”

Although in reality he did not have much and had to borrow money to host *parikramās*, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja indubitably saw Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy everywhere and genuinely never felt any lacking.

### **Pilgrimages by private train**

Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Maharāja was the first person in Gauḍīya Maṭha history to organize *parikramās* of the holy places in India. He would book a private train and lead pilgrims on tours of North India, South India and other places around the country. The private train had two sections: one for cooking and one for cleaning and other services. The *parikramā* party would stop wherever they wanted for as long as they desired before moving on to the next place.

## **A Glimpse into Transcendental Affection and Relationships**

*[The following is a letter written by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja in 1988 on the occasion of the disappearance day of Śrī Śrīmad*

*Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, in which he has expressed his heartfelt humility in separation from his godbrother. The English translation presented here was first published in Rays of the Harmonist (Volume 9, Winter 2001).]*

All Glory to Śrī Śrī Guru and Gaurāṅga Śrī Gopinātha Gauḍīya Maṭha ISHODYAN P.O. Śrī Māyāpura Dt. Nadia (W.B.) Pin . 741313

Tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu Śrī Bhakti Promoda Purī

Dated: 26/10/1988

This is a humble submission by this fallen *dāsānudāsa jīva* at the lotus feet of *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa parama-pujanīya tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja*, on the occasion of his *tirobhāva-tithi-pūjā*.

Pūjyapāda Mahārāja,

Today is your *aprakāṣa-tithi-pūjā* (Disappearance Day). However, you are a *nītyā-jāna*, an eternal associate of Paramārādhyā Śrī Guru-pāda-pādma, and you are absorbed in his eternal service. You are *aprakāṣa*, but you have nonetheless manifested your *nityā prakāṣa-līlā* at your dearest place, Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa-Māyāpura. There, at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, you are overwhelmed in the bliss of eternal service to Paramārādhyā Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda. This place is the birthplace of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, and is non-different from Śrī Vṛndāvana. Your most beloved godbrother Śrī Śrīla Narahari Dā is also engaged there in the eternal service of Śrīla Prabhupāda, as your prominent assistant.

Both of you blessed this fallen younger godbrother of yours at the beginning of his *maṭha* life with your affection, and he received the opportunity to serve the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda in the guidance of your *śrī caraṇa* throughout the three periods of the day for many years. Those were the days when you profusely encouraged your unqualified, fallen brother in *sevā*, by fully opening the shower of the unlimited storehouse of your affection. At that time I became bound by your affection and made up my mind to pass my whole life in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura serving Śrīla Prabhupāda. However, by the will of providence, I had to live in Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Bāgbāzār, Kolkata, for a long time. Then, after the disappearance pastime of

Śrīla Prabhupāda, I resided at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, Calcutta, established by our godbrother, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa* Śrīmad Bhakti Dāyita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

In the last part of my life, I have once again come to Śrī Gopināṭha Gauḍīya Maṭha at Isodyāna, Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. I have been staying here for the last eight months. Unfortunately, here, too, I am passing my time in great distress, being devoid of the *saṅga* of genuine *bhajana-vijñā* Vaiṣṇavas (Vaiṣṇavas who are well-versed in the art of *bhajana*). Therefore, afflicted with this grief, I am praying today at your *śrīpāda-pādma* (lotus feet): O *adoṣa-darśi* Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura (who does not look at the faults of others), please do not forget your unfortunate younger brother. Despite remaining unmanifest, please always shower the nectar of your affection upon him as you used to do before.

At Katwā you accepted the *tridaṇḍa sannyāsa-veśa* from *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa parama-pūjyapāda tridaṇḍi-yati* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. At that time, this fallen one was also present there. I think that, by the desire of *pūjyapāda* Śrīdhara Mahārāja, I lit the sacrificial fire. During your manifest pastimes, I occasionally had the good fortune to have your *saṅga* at places like Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Navadvīpa, Chunchurā Maṭha, and Calcutta.

Today, I have become completely helpless here. I entered the ninety-first year of my life last 15 October 1988, and I have now become incapable. I cannot willfully go from one place to another to have the *saṅga* of the *śuddha-bhaktas*, and thus I feel myself cheated of such fortune. In this state, please protect the spiritual life of this fallen younger brother of yours. Although you remain hidden from our sight, in this state, please protect the spiritual life of this fallen younger brother of yours by nourishing him with the stream of the nectar of your affection. Today, my heartfelt solicitation at your lotus feet is this: O *adoṣadarśi vaiṣṇava-pravara*, by your own magnanimous qualities, please rectify all my known and unknown faults and discrepancies, and bestow upon me the *adhikāra* to engage in the *nityā-sevā* of Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is my sole submission at your lotus feet at this auspicious moment of your Disappearance Day.

Vaiṣṇava-dāsānudāsa,

Śrī Bhakti Pramoda Purī

## **Glorification of Pūjyapāda Keśava Mahārāja**

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī  
Mahārāja

### **The appearance of an extraordinary personality**

Śrī Bhagavān arranged for His intimate associate Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī to appear in a devotional atmosphere in an aristocratic family. The virtues he displayed—for instance, his righteous character, his attachment to religiosity, and his fearless and vehement opposition of wrongdoing—roused the amazement of his relatives and wise acquaintances, who made him the sole topic of their discussions. They predicted he would soon prove to be an extraordinary personality.

### **Taking shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda**

When Śrīpāda Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī first arrived in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura in 1915, he was highly fortunate to obtain the *darśana* of *paramārādhyatama* Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus feet, as well as the opportunity to extensively hear *hari-kathā* from him. In 1919, he took shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus feet, becoming a lifelong celibate, and began living permanently in Vraja-pattana Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, where he surrendered his life to engage in earnest spiritual inquiry and cultivate a disposition of servitude. Thus, he received plentiful teachings from his *śrī gurudeva* on the truths of *dharma* and scriptural conclusions.

### **Refuting māyāvāda**

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī paid particular attention to what Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke on the topic of *māyāvāda*, or the delusional doctrine of monism: it is a notion lethal to devotion and kills the soul. Śrīman Mahāprabhu did not accept this philosophy in any way, but rather deemed it antagonistic to *bhakti*. Hence, it is entirely unsanctioned by Him. Brahmācārī-jī firmly assimilated these teachings in his heart, where they became deeply rooted. Accordingly, he collected some ten to twelve commentaries on the philosophic treatise of Vedānta by various authors and, having studied these works, gave speeches at Cuttack’s Ravenshaw College and other learned communities on the irrationality and inauthenticity of Śaṅkara’s doctrine. Later, the essential points of his speeches were published in the Gauḍīya Maṭha’s daily newsletter at the time, *Dainika Nadiyā Prakāśa*. He expounded the concepts of *Brahma-sūtra* primarily on the basis of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s teachings concerning the worship of the holy name. He wrote:

“The word *brahma* factually refers to *śabda-brahma*, or divine sound vibration. This *śabda-brahma* is what Śrīman Mahāprabhu preached as *śrī-nāma-brahma*, divinity incarnated as the holy name. The notion that *brahma* is a formless, indistinguishable, featureless oblivion is not mentioned anywhere in the approximately five hundred fifty axioms of *Brahma-sūtra*. If *brahma* is devoid of qualities, then surely *brahma* is not of a compassionate nature. Śrī Vedavyāsa did not mention the words *nirākāra* (formless), *nirviśeṣa* (indistinct) or *nirguṇa* (featureless) anywhere in *Vedānta-sūtra*.”

### **Classifying the various Buddhas**

Once, Svāmī-jī was giving a weeklong lecture series on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the village of Śrī Rāmapura, near Chuñchurā, at the Sanskrit school of the respected attorney Śrīyūta Phaṇi-bhūṣaṇa Cakravartī Śāstrī M.A., B.L. During that time, he discovered that his host had a huge library, which he received the opportunity to peruse. Among the many books, a volume of Buddhist origin, titled *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, drew his attention, and he borrowed it from the lawyer to study. At one place in this book, it is written: “Rāvaṇa used to take a plane to the top of the tallest mountain to visit Buddha, who had come there, and discuss *advaita-vāda*, the doctrine of monism.” Svāmī-jī quotes this *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* as scriptural evidence on page twenty of his *Māyāvādera Jīvanī*. Thus, he collected historical evidence of *advaita-vādīs* dating all the way back to Treta-yuga.

Once, in 1946, while Svāmī-jī was observing *ūrjā-vrata* in Kāśī, he made a trip to Buddha-Gayā, where he discovered that the temples were under the care of a distinguished Śaṅkarācārya *mahanta* of the *advaita-vādī* lineage in accordance with traditions dating back to ancient times. That *mahanta* was essentially the proprietor of Buddha-Gayā.

Out of curiosity, Svāmī-jī asked the *mahanta*, “How is a renowned *ācārya* of the Śaṅkara lineage the head of the Buddhist *maṭha*? Is Śaṅkara’s lineage a sect of Buddhism?” The *mahanta*, being somewhat displeased, gave him a book called *Lalita-vistāra* to consult. Evidence from the twenty-first chapter (page one hundred seventy-eight) of this book is cited on page nineteen of *Māyāvādera Jīvanī*: “The Śākya Buddha decided that Buddha-Gayā, the birthplace of the previous, ancient Buddha, was the appropriate place for him to attain perfection, and so he sat beneath a fig tree and performed his austerities.”

Svāmī-jī has written: “The ancient name of this Buddha-Gayā is Kīkaṭa.

Buddha-deva's deity is still worshipped at this place by the 'Giri' *sannyāsī* leadership of the Śāṅkara lineage. They accept that Buddha-Gayā is the birthplace of the ancient, original Buddha, the Viṣṇu-Buddha. It is where the Śākya-simha Buddha performed spiritual practice to attain liberation. This clearly proves that the ancient *avatāra* Buddha and the more recent Gautama Buddha are not the same. In the *Amara-koṣa* dictionary, Lord Buddha's other name is given as 'Samanta-Bhadra.' Samanta-Bhadra is listed among the Bodhisattvas, while Gautama is one of the mortal Buddhas. He became renowned by the name 'Buddha' after attaining enlightenment. Thus, we know there are three classifications of Buddhas: the mortal Buddhas, the Bodhisattva Buddhas and the original Buddha."

### His distain for *māyāvāda*

Svāmī-jī especially cautioned practitioners pursuing the path of devotion to entirely reject the animosity to *bhakti* that is *māyāvāda* and to avoid the company of Māyāvādīs, which is lethal to devotion. To this end, he quotes various statements by Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, headed by "*māyāvādī-bhāṣya śunile haya sarva-nāśa*—if you listen to the doctrine of Māyāvādīs, you will meet with utter ruin" (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā*, 6.169).

He also cites Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

*viṣaya-vimūḍha āra māyāvādī-jana  
bhakti-śunya duñhe prāṇa dhare akāraṇa*

The materialist engrossed in pleasures and the impersonalist Māyāvādī are both bereft of *bhakti* and therefore lead meaningless lives.

*se du'yera madhye viṣayī tabu bhālô  
māyāvādī-saṅga nāhi māgi kono kālā*

Of the two, the materialist is still better. I never want the company of a Māyāvādī.

*māyāvāda-doṣa jāra hṛdaya paśila  
kutarke hṛdaya tāra vajra-sama bhela*

Once the blight of Māyāvāda enters a person's heart, various corrupting contentions render it as harsh as a thunderbolt.

*bhaktira svarūpa āra 'viṣaya,' 'āśraya'  
māyāvādī 'anītya' bôliyā saba kaya*

The Māyāvādī deems the nature of devotion, along with its object and subject, to be



temporary.

*dhik tā'ra kṛṣṇa-sevā śravaṇa kīrtana  
kṛṣṇa-aṅge vajra-hāne tāhāra stavana*

Fie on their service of Kṛṣṇa, their so-called hearing and chanting. Their praise of Kṛṣṇa amounts to hurling bolts of lightning at Him.

*māyāvāda-sama bhakti pratikūla nāi  
ataeva māyāvādī-saṅga nāhi cāi*

There is nothing more unfavorable to devotion than Māyāvāda. Therefore, I do not want the company of Māyāvādīs.

In this way, Svāmī-jī's efforts to refute the doctrine of *māyāvāda* and thereby elicit the hearty pleasure of Bhakti-devī, the goddess of devotion, is a primary facet of his *bhāgavata-jīvana*, his transcendental life dedicated to the Lord.

### **A miraculous occurrence**

For several unavoidable reasons, Brahmācārī-jī left Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in great sadness in June of 1940. In 1941, he accepted *sannyāsa* and rented a house on 33-2 Bose-pāḍā Lane in the Bāgbāzār neighborhood, where he founded Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti on the day of Akṣaya-tṛtīyā. During this period, an extraordinary incident occurred.

It must have been 1941 or '42 on the day of Ekādasī, when Svāmī-jī was sitting in his room at 33-2 Bosa-pāḍā Lane, the location of his Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, and his godbrother Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa dāsa Mukhopādhyāya Sevā-suhṛt Prabhu made the trip from his home at 14 Pharadai Lane to visit him. He arrived in the morning, and the two passed a significant amount of time talking. Seeing his guest preparing to return home, Mahārāja was keen to offer him something to eat, but at the time, he did not have single *paisā* at hand. He could not even offer *batāsā* (small hollow sugar puffs) with water. Was he to simply bid his godbrother goodbye like this? Mahārāja, a son of nobility, began to weep at heart.

At that very moment, a sparrow—sent by the Lord, presumably—perched itself on the wall of the house and dropped a small packet down the ventilator shaft. The packet fell into the room and landed on the floor with a sound. When Śrī Keśava Mahārāja opened it, he saw there were six *ānās* inside (about 35 *paisā*). “Surely, the gods have sent this,” he thought. Summoning a *brahmācārī*

*sevaka*, he asked him to purchase some *sandeśa* (sweet curd) with the money. Thus, he was able to lovingly offer his godbrother Sevā-suhṛt Prabhu suitable *prasāda*.

After that, there was not one *paisā* left in his treasury by which he might have had something for himself to eat. But just then, there was a knock at the main gate. A courier had arrived. It was incredible! Blessed is the Lord, who is so affectionate to His devotees, and blessed is His transcendently causeless mercy, which makes the impossible possible. His affection for His devotees is unprecedented. The supremely worshipful *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Sarvasva Giri Mahārāja, a godbrother of Mahārāja-jī who has since attained the eternal abode, had sent a money order in his name for one hundred rupees. Everyone who witnessed the incident was stunned and began to praise Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga again and again. Although he was in the grips of extreme poverty, Svāmī-jī savored this mercy of Śrī Bhagavān and felt encouraged to always be dauntless in his readiness to render service.

### **Winning the respect of all**

From the very beginning, when Śrī Vinoda-bihārī first came to the lotus feet of his most worshipful *śrī gurudeva*, Śrīla Prabhupāda entrusted him with the weighty responsibilities of maintaining the *maṭha*'s properties in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura and further expanding the glories of serving the most transcendental *dhāma*.

The guardian of *ākāra maṭha-rāja* Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, Śrīpāda Narahari Brahmācārī Sevā-vigraha, was his inseparable comrade and counterpart. Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī accomplished many services for the sake of Śrīdhāma with his companion's consultation, thereby bringing great joy to *paramārādhya* Śrīla Prabhupāda.

In those days in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, the residents of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *dhāma* respectfully addressed Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī as 'Manager Bābu.' Hindus and Muslims alike all regarded him as a truly beneficent friend and well-wisher. At a word from him, everyone would heed his reconciliations, which were geared toward keeping rogues in check and nurturing the gentle folk. He never indulged in any manner of wrongdoing. Because of his sound judgment and management, the poor rarely had to waste money on court visits and fees. Even the local Muslims lent their wholehearted assistance to the *maṭha*.

All of the local high-ranking officials—from the district magistrate of

Nadīyā to the officers, attorneys, landowners and oligarchs, as well as the teachers, professors and administrators of the schools and colleges—regarded Vinoda Bābū with ubiquitous respect as an esteemed citizen and munificent gentleman whose life was dedicated to *dharma*. Indeed, they found themselves won over by his virtues.

Every year, he evoked profuse joy in Śrīla Prabhupāda by his otherworldly service during Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa *parikramā*, the festival of Śrī Gaura’s appearance at Śrī Yoga-pīṭha, the auspicious convening of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma Pracārīnī Sabhā, as well as when the exhibition on spiritual life was unveiled in 1929.

Aside from this, as a *brahmacārī*, he further evoked the happiness of his *śrī gurupāda-padma* by his tireless toil in establishing the printing press in the Śrīdhāma, in overseeing the printing of the daily spiritual newspaper *Dainika Nadiyā Prakāśa* and countless scriptural texts, in constructing Śrīdhāma’s roads and riverbanks, in supervising the land leases and in other various tasks of service.

All of the resident *sevakas* of the *maṭha* were won over by his considerate, caring interactions. In the endearing saturation of his and Śrīpāda Narahari Dā’s affectionate care, even the young pledges who had taken refuge in the *maṭha* were able to forego the loving arms of their mothers and fathers, all the while maintaining a healthy fear of his affectionate chastisement.

Disciples of the most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda were eager to approach these two godbrothers, literally dancing in delight at the prospect. In those days, Śrīdhāma Māyāpura was the life of devotee’s lives, and Vinoda Dā and Narahari Dā were everyone’s bosom friends, the dearest of their lives. Even *paramārādhyatama* Śrīla Prabhupāda was always eager to come to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura from the Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata. Upon reaching there, his heart would feel soothed and at peace. But alas, “*te hi no divasā gatāḥ*—those days have gone.”

Śrīdhāma Māyāpura was the very life of Śrīpāda Keśava Mahārāja. Upon being deprived of living in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, like a fish out of water, Svāmī-jī felt as if life itself was an affliction. After the disappearance of our most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Keśava Mahārāja consulted with his inseparable confidant Śrīpāda Narahari Dā and moved to Tegharī-pādā, Koladvīpa in Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, where he established the principal seat of his Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti.

He named the *maṭha* Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha and, on six *bighās*

(four and one-third acres), constructed a huge, towering temple, a large *nāṭya-mandira* event hall, ample accommodations for the *sevakas*, and many other facilities. To honor the Purāṇic significance of Koladvīpa, the fifth of Navadvīpa's nine islands, Svāmī-jī installed the deity of Śrī Bhagavān Varāhāvatāra on a separate throne next to that of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Gāndharvikā-Giridhārī-jiu in a grand ceremony with a qualified *ācārya* priest present to conduct the necessary rituals.

Now, as of the 6 October 1968, Svāmī-jī's transcendental form has been interred in *samādhi* to the west of the massive *nāṭya-mandira* assembly hall in front of that temple. The devotees hope to soon build a large *samādhi* shrine there.

### **Observing Ratha-yātrā**

Every year for some twenty-five years, *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja held the Ratha-yātrā festival of Śrī Śrī Jagannātha-deva from Chuñchurā's Śrī Uddhāraṇa Gauḍīya Maṭha. Last year, in a grand event, Śrī Śrī Jagannātha-deva's Ratha-yātrā was held at Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Śrī Koladvīpa, also.

### **Propagating śuddha-bhakti**

By establishing preaching centers under Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti in various places throughout India, *pūjyapāda* Keśava Mahārāja propagated the message and verdicts of *śuddha-bhakti*, or pure devotion, and planted its seed in the hearts of many fortunate souls. By the impact of hearing his compelling sermons, many men and women attained the fortune of pursuing the path of pure devotion as revealed by our most worshipful Prabhupāda. Bathing and vitalizing them in the sacred current of Śrī Śrī Bhaktivinoda's teachings, Svāmī-jī made their mortal lives successful and blessed beyond belief.

### **The steadfastness of his conviction**

Once Śrī Keśava Mahārāja understood something to be true, his conviction in it was such that even fear itself was afraid to dissuade him.

### **Nourishing his disciples with affection**

Śrī Keśava Mahārāja expressed a disposition of being harder than a thunderbolt, yet softer than a flower—*vajrād-api kaṭhorāṇi mṛdūni kusumād-api*. His affection for his disciples was exemplary. If ever his disciples faced a serious illness or injury, his soft, flower-like heart would melt entirely. He would be ready to trade all he had to bring them back to health. Although he

had to combat extreme poverty in the beginning, by the Lord's will, he eventually established temples in various places, most notably the large *maṭha-mandira* in Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, with the help of a few wealthy devotees.

### **A few of his accomplishments**

During his pastimes as an *ācārya*, he held huge *parikramās* in Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala, Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala and Śrī Kṣetra-Maṇḍala. Besides these engagements, he organized pilgrimages to almost all of the renowned holy places in Āryāvarta (North India) and South India. He also held a large pilgrimage of Śrī Śiva-dhāma Śrī Baidyanātha-dhāma and stayed there for one month, observing *niyama-sevā* (Kārtika) and executing the schedule of appropriate vows and daily *kīrtanas*.

His enthusiasm in the field of education was exemplary. In the *maṭha* in Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, he established a day school for Sanskrit, a residence for students, a printing press for books and magazines, a bookstore, and a warehouse. He personally oversaw these services, thus encouraging everyone in the service of the *śrī maṭha-mandira*.

### **Inexpressible separation**

Today, having lost such an exemplary *ācārya* who was eager to serve and was endowed with all good qualities, the pain we feel in our hearts cannot be expressed in words. Separation from a godbrother so completely dedicated to the service of *śrī guru*, Gaurāṅga and Śrī Gaura-dhāma fills our hearts with extreme agony. May Śrīpāda Keśava Mahārāja be pleased with us. That is our pitiful prayer.

*Excerpts from an article published in  
Śrī Caitanya-Vāṇī (Year 8, Volume 10)*

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Unparalleled service to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s bṛhad-mṛdaṅga

In 1922, at the age of twenty-four, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then Śrī Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī) accepted complete shelter at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda on the most auspicious day of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī. On that day, he accepted both *harināma* and *dīkṣā* initiations and engaged himself exclusively in the service of the *maṭha*. Previously, he had been a science student who later switched to studying the arts. After finishing his secondary schooling and receiving his Indian School Certificate, he went on to study the arts at the university level and acquired a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Knowing Śrī Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī to be well educated, Śrīla Prabhupāda called him near and said, “I desire to publish a daily spiritual newspaper titled *Dainika Nadiyā Prakāśa*, and I want you to be its editor.”

Śrī Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, “What are the duties of an editor?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “When you begin your service and start publishing the newspaper, you will automatically understand what must be done. When a devotee accepts the responsibility of performing a service with the intention of pleasing Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, then they themselves reveal all the necessary knowledge to him and invest him with the required competence to properly perform that service. There is no need to externally advise or instruct him on what must be done.”

Under the editorship of Śrī Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī, *Dainika Nadiyā Prakāśa* preserved and broadcasted the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and when it was distributed among the masses, it illuminated the whole world with its literary and spiritual excellence. Contemporary scholars were baffled that someone was publishing a spiritual newspaper, and that too on a daily basis.

I heard the following instance from the lotus mouth of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja himself.

Once, while speaking with Śrīla Prabhupāda at Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Bāgbāzār, Kolkata, Śrī Madana-mohana Malaviya, the founder of the world-famous Banaras Hindu University in Vārāṇasī, Uttar Pradesh, with great astonishment asked him, “For how long will you be able to run this *Dainika*

*Nadīyā Prakāśa*? From where will you obtain the great number of spiritual articles needed to keep it in print every day?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “Your astonishment pales in comparison to the astonishment I feel in seeing that you, a person regarded as foremost among the best scholars of India, is expressing wonder about these concerns. This material creation is merely the reflection of a quarter of the transcendental creation.

“Across the globe, countless newspapers are published every day in different languages, and this earth planet is only one part of the fourteen-fold planetary system, which belongs to just one of the innumerable *brahmāṇḍas* in the material creation. Despite the mundanity of the articles in these newspapers, everyone feels they are ever-fresh. Therefore, why would you be astonished about the daily publishing of but one newspaper, the *Dainika Nadīyā Prakāśa*, which focuses on the transcendental spiritual world? In fact, we have enough transcendental content about the spiritual realm to publish numerous daily newspapers for all eternity.”

For approximately seventy-five years of his life—from the time Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present until well after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s departure—Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja experienced great internal bliss in his persistent and enthusiastic service of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *bṛhad-mṛdaṅga*, his printing press.

I personally witnessed how he engaged in publication services, even in his advanced age. In his later years, his bent back prevented him from sitting straight and from writing for long periods of time, and so he used a wooden plank to support his back and continue writing. Although his hands trembled from the effect of old age and his previously elegant handwriting gradually became less legible, he never stopped writing. Despite his advanced age, he never discontinued his service to the *bṛhad-mṛdaṅga*, for Śrīla Prabhupāda had personally entrusted this service to him.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s untiring service has greatly benefitted each and every devotee among the Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. During the time Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present, Śrīla Mahārāja served as the editor of *Dainika Nadīyā Prakāśa*, wrote articles for the weekly *Gauḍīya* magazine, and rendered various services for the publication of different scriptures, including an edition of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s commentary and his own introductory overviews of each chapter entitled *Kathā-sāra*. After Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance, he became the editor of the monthly magazine

*Gauḍīya* and, later, *Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī*, which was founded by my *gurupāda-padma*. Additionally, he wrote numerous articles for a number of other magazines, and he edited and published many scholarly books.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's publication services presented each of the truly sincere followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda with an opportunity to obtain their highest spiritual welfare. For this, the Śrī Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas remain eternally indebted and forever grateful to him.

Whether Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja is acknowledged or not, all the Gauḍīya Maṭha branches and sub-branches established in the wake of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance—as well as those that will be established in the future—bear a strong, unbreakable relation, whether direct or indirect, to the transcendental words (*vāṇī*) expounded in his literary contributions. No respectable, virtuous person will ever deny this.

### **Complete dependence on Bhagavān**

The various disturbances that manifested within the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution following the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda inspired Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his godbrother Śrī Ānanda-līlā-maya Prabhu to relocate to a place on the banks of the Gaṅgā in Kālanā, a town in the district of Bardhamāna. Kālanā was sanctified by the foot dust of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu during Their visit there.

During one of his preaching missions to England, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja met the king of Bardhamāna. In 1959, on the recommendation of Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the king donated the ancient Ananta-vāsudeva Temple in Kālanā to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. At that time, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja had already been serving his personal deities Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha for a considerably long time. Honoring the king's request, he then began serving both Ananta-vāsudeva and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha with great love and affection.

The *arcana* (deity worship) performed by liberated personalities—for instance, the worship of Śrī Gopāla by Śrīla Mādhavendra Purīpāda, Śrī Govinda-deva by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda, Śrī Madana-mohana by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda, Śrī Rādhā-vinoda by Lokanātha dāsa Gosvāmī, *śrī girirāja-śilā* by Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmīpāda, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa by Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmīpāda, Śrī Vṛndāvana-candra by Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Śrīman Mahāprabhu by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrī Syāmasundara by Śrīla Śyāmānanda Prabhu, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gokulānanda by



Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Śrī Radha-vijaya by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu and the many deities served by recent *ācāryas*—is not the same as the *arcana* performed by ordinary conditional souls. The difference between them is like that between heaven and hell.

Liberated personalities are able to realize the transcendental non-difference between the three forms of Bhagavān: His name, His deity form and His intrinsic form (*svarūpa*). Therefore, they are able to serve Him in an appropriate mood. But the conditioned souls, lacking such transcendental realization, must abide by the prescribed rules and regulations when performing deity worship.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was fully renounced throughout his entire life. He always considered serving Śrīla Prabhupāda’s printing press, a service that was entrusted to him by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, to be his primary objective. When the opportunity arose to perform other services, he would perform them with great sincerity, but he never developed such an attachment to them as he did to serving Śrīla Prabhupāda by publishing spiritual literature.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja never directed even a fraction of his energy toward intentionally collecting money, attracting followers, garnering recognition or acquiring land. He would always say, “A person is led to that in which he invests his energy.”

As part of his daily deity worship, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja would bathe the deities in water he personally fetched from the nearby Gaṅgā, offer Them *bhoga* and then perform *āratī*. When he would go out to collect *bhikṣa* (alms), Śrī Ānanda-līlā-maya Prabhu would serve the deities, and conversely, when Śrī Ānanda-līlā-maya Prabhu would collect *bhikṣa*, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja would serve the deities.

Once, Guru Mahārāja sent me a letter when I was in Kolkata. He wrote, “To commemorate the appearance day of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrī Purī Mahārāja is arranging for a festival to be held at the Ananta-vāsudeva temple in Kālanā on Maghī-pūrṇimā (the full moon day in January-February). It would be good if you could assist him. I have also asked Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu, Śrī Madhu-mathana Prabhu, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu and others in Māyāpura to join the festivities.”

When I reached Kālanā one day before the festival, I saw that the devotees Guru Mahārāja had mentioned in his letter were already there. Also present were Dr. S.N. Ghoṣa and Dr. Navīna Rañjana Sena Gupta, both of whom were disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda and residents of Kolkata. That evening, I asked

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “Śrīla Mahārāja, is something wrong? I noticed there is nothing to cook, nor are there any cooking utensils. There are not even flowers with which to decorate the temple for tomorrow’s festival. What has happened?”

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “Śrī Ānanda-līlā-maya Prabhu never mentioned anything to me. I suppose these things will be managed somehow.”

Feeling dumbfounded, I thought, “Śrīla Mahārāja has invited so many people to this festival, but he is not the slightest bit worried that, as of yet, nothing has been arranged. Moreover, I do not understand why Śrīla Mahārāja has mentioned Śrī Ānanda-līlā-maya Prabhu’s name. To the best of my knowledge, Śrī Ānanda-līlā-maya Prabhu was never made responsible for arranging anything. Who knows what deep *bhāva*, what confidential mood Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja must be experiencing.” Although I tried, I was unable to ignore my concern. I asked Śrī Ānanda-līlā-maya Prabhu about the situation, but I was unconvinced by his reply. Thus, I returned to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and asked, “Mahārāja, when and from where are the ingredients for preparing *bhoga* to arrive?”

Śrīla Mahārāja replied, “I cannot say, but I have firm faith that by the will of Bhagavān, everything will be just fine.”

“Certainly,” I replied. I then asked, “Is it possible to borrow large pots and cooking utensils from someone nearby?”

He replied, “Śrī Prakṛti Bhūṣaṇa Datta lives close by. He is the chairman of the Kālanā municipality and has many such items. You can ask him.”

Early the next morning, on the day of the festival, I went to the house of Śrī Prakṛti Bhūṣaṇa Datta and knocked on the door. When he sluggishly approached the entryway, I realized I had just woken him. I first offered my apologies and then explained the reason for my visit. Without asking any questions or saying anything, he called for his servant and gave him the keys to the room where the pots and utensils were kept. “Let him take whatever he needs,” he said.

After I brought all the necessary pots and utensils to the *maṭha*, all the devotees cleaned them. In the meantime, a couple of persons had brought a few meager ingredients for cooking *bhoga*, but the amount was far from sufficient. After I placed large pots of water on the stoves to boil, I sat back and waited for more ingredients to arrive. Within a very short time, people began to arrive one after another, like a line of ants, offering scores of items, like jaggery, sugar, rice, pulses, flour, vegetables, milk and curd. Suddenly, there

was no shortage at all; the *maṭha* appeared as if it were a grocery. Seeing the abundance, I was reminded of a verse from *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.22):

*ananyāś cintayanto mām  
ye janāḥ paryupāsate  
teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām  
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*

For those who are devoid of other desires, who are always absorbed in contemplating Me and who always worship Me, I personally carry their necessities and preserve what they presently have.

I considered myself fortunate to witness such a practical example of this verse manifest before me. My bliss knew no end.

Seeing that no one was available to cook for the festival, I gratefully accepted the responsibility and cooked under the guidance of Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, who used to cook for Śrīla Prabhupāda. Never before had I cooked for so many people at one time. I cooked all the preparations ordered by Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and did not stop until everyone was fully satisfied. Lunch *prasāda* was served the entire afternoon until evening approached. Innumerable devotees honored that *prasāda*. Many of them even took some *prasāda* home with them, but still there was no scarcity. In fact, the remaining ingredients were so plentiful that they lasted an entire month. Even so, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was as indifferent toward saving those ingredients as he was toward collecting them from the start. He was genuinely unconcerned for the future, and appeared to be the embodiment of the following verse:

*alabdhe vā vinaṣṭe vā  
bhakṣyācchādāna-sādhane  
aviklava-matir bhūtvā  
harim eva dhiyā smaret*

*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.114)

Even if a practitioner of devotion is unable to obtain the necessities of life or if he loses something after obtaining it, he should remain untroubled and continue remembering Śrī Hari.

Organizing a festival after having first collected all the necessary items is not the same as organizing a festival without having collected anything in advance. One way or another, Bhagavān undoubtedly fulfills the desires of a surrendered devotee. By Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's mercy, I was able to

attend this most memorable and distinctly unique festival and thereby, for the first time in my life, gain the opportunity to receive *darśana* of several deities, including Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda Prabhu served by Śrī Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita-jī; the deities established by Śrī Surya-kānta Sarakhela, the father of Śrīman Nityānanda Prabhu's wives, Śrī Jāhnavā devī and Śrī Vasudhā devī; the tamarind tree associated with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's pastimes; the deity of Śrī Nāma-brahma served by Śrī Bhagavān dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja; as well as a number of other worshipful deities and places in Kālanā.

I attended many festivals organized by Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha, the *maṭha* established by Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, both while he was present in this world and after his disappearance, when his disciple Śrī Bhakti Bibudha Bodhāyana Mahārāja began organizing the festivals. I can say that although modern convenience has made it relatively easy to arrange extravagant festivals, I never again saw a festival as remarkable as the one I experienced in Kālanā, for which no prior arrangements were made. Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's transcendental glories manifested at that festival, and witnessing them firsthand left a deep impression on my heart.

### **Seeing only virtues, ignoring faults**

Once, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked me to write a report about the spiritual activities happening at the Gokula branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, where I was staying at the time. The report was to be published in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha's monthly magazine, *Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī*. Although I had no previous experience in composing articles for publication, I followed Śrīla Mahārāja's instruction, considering it to be non-different from that of my Guru Mahārāja.

I sent my finalized report to him with a cover letter stating, "Śrīla Mahārāja-jī, although I have no prior journalistic experience, I have written this report to the best of my limited ability. Please accept whatever you deem adequate and reject the rest." When the report was published in *Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī*, I noticed that he had published it exactly as I had sent it, with not a single word omitted or changed.

The next time I met with Śrīla Mahārāja, he told me, "Your writing was quite erudite. I did not find anything out of place or in need of editing, so I kept everything as it was."

Hearing this reminded me of how Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī described Śrī Haridāsa Paṇḍita, the *pūjārī* of the Śrī Govinda-deva temple, in

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 8.62) by saying, “*Vaiṣṇavera guṇa-grāhī, nā dekhaye doṣa*—He accepted the good qualities of the Vaiṣṇavas and ignored their faults.” Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s conduct—not only in this instance, but throughout his life—served as proof that he too possessed this special quality of seeing only the positive attributes of others.

### **Apraṇayi-bhakta**

In earlier times during Ratha-yātrā, the festival management used to arrange a special area in front of the chariots where devotees could perform *kīrtana* without any disturbance; common people were not permitted to enter there. Once, while Gauḍīya Maṭha devotees were performing *kīrtana* in that area under the guidance of my Guru Mahārāja, the servants, or *paṇḍās* of Lord Jagannātha became so ecstatic by hearing the *kīrtana* that they lifted Guru Mahārāja on their shoulders and forcibly carried him onto the Lord’s chariot.

Meanwhile, absorbed in the mood experienced by the *vraja-gopīs* when they meet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Kurukṣetra, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was dancing and singing the following song in front of the chariot:

*sei tō’ parāṇa-nātha pāinu  
jāhā lāgi’ madana-dahane jhuri’ genu*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā, 13.113)

Now I have gained the Lord of My life, in the absence of whom I was being burned  
by Cupid and was withering away.

While Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was fully absorbed in singing this *kīrtana*, all the devotees around him also became immersed in the same mood of meeting and were feeling jubilant. A pickpocket used this opportunity to steal Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s wallet from his bag. Since most of the devotees were absorbed in the *kīrtana*, no one noticed except one of my godbrothers, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Brahmācārī (later known as Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja), who rushed forward and caught the pickpocket.

While restraining the thief, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Brahmācārī desperately tried to get the attention of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, but Śrīla Mahārāja was so absorbed in *kīrtana* that he didn’t pay any attention to his words. When Śrī Nārāyaṇa Brahmācārī tried more insistently, Śrīla Mahārāja suddenly became very upset and chastised him, “Why are you disturbing me? Let him take the money. Money will come and go, but the mood that we are experiencing at this moment may not come again.”

Among the people who witnessed this, who could truly understand Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s internal mood or the cause of his irritation? It is only when one is highly sincere and spiritually mature—or in other words, completely surrendered—that one will be able to even notice such a subtle thing, what to speak of understand it. Therefore, although a *praṇayi-bhakta* may be present before us, and though we may personally witness his conduct, we will be unable to recognize him until we become completely sincere and surrender ourselves to his will. Without sincerity and surrender, we will not realize that his activities are those of a *mahā-bhāgavata*, and not of an ordinary devotee.

It is only when we become truly sincere that a *praṇayi-bhakta*, out of his non-duplicitous mercy, reveals his true identity and exalted position. At such a time, we will be able to not only understand the conduct of the *praṇayi-bhaktas*, but also keep it in our mind and heart and preserve it by imbibing it in our lives. By the mercy of those elevated Vaiṣṇavas, we will be granted the vision to clearly understand the true form of their transcendental activities and the deep moods behind them.

There is no possibility that *praṇayi-bhaktas* will manifest their mercy in a place where a fault in surrender is present. In the absence of their mercy, we will remain unable to recognize such advanced personalities, and because of this, we will at times misconstrue their conduct as being improper.

*mahat-kṛpā binā kona karme ‘bhakti’ naya  
kṛṣṇa-bhakti dūre rahu, saṁsāra nahe kṣaya*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.51)*

One cannot attain *bhakti* without the mercy of a great devotee. What to speak of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.

Therefore, it is only when one receives the mercy of *praṇayi-bhaktas* that one can identify both *praṇayi-bhaktas* and those who are sincere in their efforts to become *praṇayi-bhaktas*.

We have seen that if anyone would give even a single rupee to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he would take it, touch it to his forehead and then very carefully keep it in his bag, saying, “This money has been sent by Śrīla Prabhupāda for the service of Bhagavān.” But in the above-mentioned incident, Śrīla Mahārāja has said, “Let them take my money, but do not bother me.” Why is it that he has in one instance shown deep respect for an object he considers to be sent by his Guru Mahārāja for the service of Bhagavān, but in another

instance has exhibited disregard for that very same object? Through this, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja is demonstrating that when one is absorbed in performing a higher service, a smaller service may be automatically neglected. There is no consideration of loss or harm in this.

Many people were present when the pickpocket was stealing Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's money, and each reacted to the incident according to his respective qualification. The senior Vaiṣṇavas, who were fully absorbed in *kīrtana* and relishing the divine moods of the Ratha-yātrā festival, were not at all agitated, whereas the junior, neophyte devotees who hurried to apprehend and punish the pickpocket must have felt disappointed when Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja chastised them for disturbing his mood.

When I witnessed this incident, I was reminded of a verse from *Bhagavad-gītā*: (2.69):

*yā niśā sarva-bhūtānāṃ  
tasyām jāgarti saṁyamī  
yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni*

*sā niśā paśyato muneḥ*

Intelligence related to the soul is like night for common, materialistic persons. However, a steady and controlled person with fixed intelligence remains awake in that same intelligence. The common person remains awake when intelligence is engaged in sense objects, but for he who perceives the Absolute Truth, this same situation is like night.

Materialistic persons are conscious only of things related to this material world, and their concern for collecting money is such that they may fight over a single penny. They have no time to think about their true, spiritual welfare (*paramārtha*), nor are they the least bit bothered to inquire about it. Conversely, those who are completely aware of *ātma-tattva*, or the truth about the soul, always endeavor to accrue their real, transcendental wealth; they do not waste even a single moment by caring for material possessions, knowing well that such things hold no true value.

In accordance with this verse from *Bhagavad-gītā*, I could observe that the senior Vaiṣṇavas participating in Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *kīrtana* were completely absorbed mood similar to his. Due to their absorption, they were oblivious to the pickpocket. The neophyte devotees, however, were oblivious to the senior Vaiṣṇavas' absorption, and so their priority was to apprehend the pickpocket.

## **Parikramā without the association of praṇayi-bhaktas is not parikramā**

I had the good fortune of performing *parikramā* of Śrī Navadvīpa-dāma, Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala, North India and South India with my Guru Mahārāja and many other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. They carried deeply intense feelings of separation within their hearts, and their words were so powerful that we would experience great bliss in their association, despite our being engaged in the physical labor of organizing the *parikramā* from morning until night.

Once, during Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* in Govardhana, the *parikramā* party reached Govinda-kuṇḍa later than the scheduled time.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja addressed the assembled devotees, saying, “Although it is very late and I am not a capable speaker, Śrī Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja has given me the service of speaking about every place we visit by reading excerpts from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Bhakti-ratnākara* and other scriptures in which the glories of those places have been described. I do not mind speaking here, but it is late and there are still many other places we must go. You all must be feeling quite hungry. Therefore, I will speak only if you are willing to listen; otherwise, we will take *darśana* of the other places now and speak their glories when time permits, so that you may take *prasāda* sooner rather than later.”

Everyone replied, as if in unison, “Food is plentifully available in our homes. We have come to perform *parikramā* and taste the nectar you are pouring into our ears. We are not here to simply eat, drink and sleep. Please kindly narrate the pastimes associated with these places we are visiting.”

At that time, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja began reading from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* about the pastimes of Śrī Mādhavendra Purīpāda, as well as the glories of Govinda-kuṇḍa and the pastimes that took place there. Next, he spoke on the glories of Girirāja-Govardhana and recited *Śrī Govardhana-vāsa-prārthanā-daśakam*, composed by Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, in which Śrīla Dāsa Gosvāmī prays, “*nija-nikaṭa-nivāsaṁ dehi govardhana! tvam—O Girirāja-Govardhana! Please give me residence close to you.*”

The entire assembly listened very attentively and remained so quiet that anyone could have heard a pin drop. Tears flowed from the eyes of many, and nobody experienced hunger or thirst; all were fully absorbed in *hari-kathā*.

Nowadays, the devotees performing and arranging *parikramā* do not have to undergo the same level of strenuous labor as devotees did in the past; they have sufficient time to relax and hear *hari-kathā*. Despite this, we do not see the



type of bliss we used to experience during *parikramā* manifesting in the current *parikramā* parties.

When we perform *parikramā* in the association of *praṇayi-bhaktas*, there is never any time for nonsense; rather, we become completely focused on hearing, chanting and remembering. Only in the association of such exalted devotees can one understand and realize the real benefit of performing *parikramā*.

### **Hearing the glories of the dhāma is true dhāma-parikramā**

Our *parikramā* party once stayed at Vṛndāvana Daravājā Dharmaśālā in Mathurā during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*. It had rained heavily that particular year, and so Yamunā's water level was much higher than normal. Due to his advanced age, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja walked slowly and generally remained in the back of the *parikramā* procession. My service at that time was to trail behind and prevent pilgrims from becoming separated from the group. Fortunately, this gave me the opportunity to walk beside Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and hear him comment on the glories of each place we passed.

Noticing the locals passing urine and stool very close to the *ghāṭas*, many pilgrims in our *parikramā* party would spit in disgust as they walked past those places and remain fixated on it, keeping it as a topic of discussion for much of the *parikramā*. Seeing this, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja expressed his displeasure with these pilgrims by saying, “These people have not come here to have *darśana* of the *dhāma*, but of stool and urine. The proper method of having *darśana* involves hearing the glories of the *dhāma* from the lips of a realized Vaiṣṇava *sādhū*. These pilgrims have yet to realize that actual, authentic *darśana* cannot be attained through one's material senses.”

### **The severity of offending Vaiṣṇavas**

Once, my godbrother Śrī Viṣṇu dāsa (later known as Śrī Bhakti Viveka Paramārthī Mahārāja) and I accompanied Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja on a train from Kolkata to Purī. While the train was standing on the platform at Howrah Station in Kolkata, a wealthy man, in the presence of many other passengers, spoke to Śrī Viṣṇu Prabhu in a rude manner, cursing at him and calling him many derogatory names.

The nature of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja exactly mirrored scripture's description of extraordinary personalities: “*vajrād api kaṭhorāṇi mṛdūni kusumād api*—harder than a thunderbolt and softer than a flower.” When the

same wealthy man who had cursed Śrī Viṣṇu Prabhu tried to offer *praṇāmī* to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, in whom the qualities of sweetness and softness were prominent, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja manifested his quality of forcefulness and strongly rejected his offer. He told the man, “You have committed *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*. What to speak of accepting an offering, I do not even want to speak to or keep any relation with a person like you.”

The wealthy man said, “Mahārāja, I want to serve you. Please be merciful and accept this small offering from me.”

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja said, “If I accept service from you, I too will be implicated in your offense. I will never accept anything from you.”

Despite his insistence, the wealthy man was unsuccessful in his attempts to persuade Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja to accept his offering. Unfortunately, he was unable to pick up on Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s subtle hint that he should ask forgiveness from Śrī Viṣṇu dāsa for his offence.

### **Great eagerness to serve the Supreme Lord**

One night, the deity Śrī Gopīnātha-jiu of Agradvīpa, Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala appeared to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja in a dream. Previously, Śrī Gopīnātha-jiu was served and worshipped by the expert singers and eternal associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Govinda Ghoṣa and his two brothers, Śrī Vāsudeva Ghoṣa and Śrī Mādhava Ghoṣa. In this dream, Śrī Gopīnātha-jiu expressed His desire to eat sweet rice cooked by Śrīla Mahārāja.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave fulfilling Śrī Gopīnātha’s desire the highest priority. Without delay, he inconspicuously hired four *rikśaws* early that very morning with the help of Śrī Bhūpen Mitra and departed for Agradvīpa with great enthusiasm. Several devotees, including my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Nīlaya Maṅgala Mahārāja and myself, accompanied him. As soon as we arrived, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja prepared sweet rice for Śrī Gopīnātha-jiu.

Previous to this experience, I had no knowledge of that place, nor had I known Śrī Gopīnātha-jiu resided there. It is due to Śrīla Mahārāja’s mercy that I was able to have *darśana* of Śrī Gopīnātha-jiu.

### **Dhama parikramā is a limb of deity worship**

During Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, Guru Mahārāja would respectfully engage Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja in leading the *parikramā* party. In this way all the pilgrims could perform *parikramā* under Śrīla Mahārāja’s senior

guidance.

Every morning in the *maṭha*, before the *parikramā* party departed, a number of devotees and I would serve *prasāda* to the *sannyāsīs*, *brahmacārīs* and pilgrims. Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Guru Mahārāja, however, would not accept *prasāda* at that time; I noticed they would accept *prasāda* only after our *parikramā* reached Yogapīṭha and they had *darśana* of the deities. I requested Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “Please kindly explain the reason you and Guru Mahārāja have only now accepted *prasāda* here at Yogapīṭha, and not in our *maṭha* this morning. I am unable to understand the mysterious principle behind your conduct.”

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “*Dhāma-parikramā* is a limb of *arcana* (deity worship). Just as a *pūjārī* accepts *prasāda* only after completing his *arcana*, and is thereby not obliged to fast until the midday offering, we do not accept *prasāda* until our first *darśana* of the day and do not observe any further fasting.”

### **Everything given by Vaiṣṇavas is transcendental**

Raw rice belongs to the mode of goodness and when it is cooked, it is suitable for offering to Bhagavān. Therefore, the only rice *prasāda* I would accept was that which had been cooked from raw grains. This habit was shared by Guru Mahārāja and Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, as well.

Once, during a deity installation festival I attended with Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja at Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabha Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha*, we were served parboiled (processed) rice. As I hesitatingly stared at my plate, Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja requested us to begin honoring *prasāda*. Knowing well that I would not accept processed rice, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja looked at me and said, “A Vaiṣṇava has ordered us to accept *prasāda*. Everything offered by the Vaiṣṇavas is *nirguṇa*, or transcendental and free from the effects of the three modes of material nature.” He then began honoring *prasāda*. Humbled by Śrīla Mahārāja’s personal conduct, I decided to accept processed rice for the first time in my life. I began honoring the rice *prasāda* for the pleasure of the Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave greater significance to a transcendental item given by a Vaiṣṇava than to his own personal vow. By observing this, I received a profound teaching: a person may strictly maintain vows in order to attain objects belonging to this fourteen-fold planetary system, but *bhakti* can be attained only by giving precedence to *vaiṣṇava-sevā*. Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī

Mahārāja personally lived this teaching.

### **His unprecedented honor for all Vaiṣṇavas**

One of the services I was assigned during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* was to provide the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura with hot water for their morning bath. Each time I would bring Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja his bucket of hot water, he would first sprinkle a few drops of that water on his head. I heard him explain, “This water has been brought by a Vaiṣṇava. Everything given by a Vaiṣṇava is *prasāda*, his mercy. How, then, can I use this water to wash my feet? Before using it, I must first honor it by touching it to my head. Only then will I use it to wash my body. I must treat this water in the same manner as the remnants given by senior Vaiṣṇavas, like clothes and other items. Such items are tangible manifestations of the Vaiṣṇavas’ mercy, and can be utilized to aid in our service if necessary.”

That he treated me, an ordinary person who can be counted among his disciples, with the respect due a Vaiṣṇava attests to the immense veneration he possesses for his fellow godbrothers and senior Vaiṣṇavas.

### **A realized kīrtanīya**

In the month of Kārtika during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja would, according to the eight divisions of the day (*aṣṭa-yāma*), sing *kīrtanas* composed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura that are based on the eight verses of *Śikṣāṣṭakam* and relate to *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*

<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, he would sing the *kīrtanas* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura composed as adaptations of verses from Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī’s *Śrī Govinda-līlāmṛta*. His voice was naturally sweet, and the various melodies he used, which were appropriately chosen according to the time of the day, were so enchanting that it was as if divine nectar was being poured into the ears of his listeners.

As he would sing, his heart would rejoice, and his melodious voice would attract one and all, young and old alike. Upon hearing such a glorious sound, every single pilgrim would leave aside his or her chores and rush to participate in Śrīla Mahārāja’s *kīrtanas*; no one could remain absent.

While Śrīla Prabhupāda was still physically present, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then known as Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī) used to perform Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *kīrtanas* on the radio. In this way, he served Śrīla Prabhupāda by assisting him in his mission

to expose the living entities to pure *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, which has the potency to deliver the entire world.

Once, while Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Darjeeling, he listened to Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī sing *Gopīnātha Mama Nivedana Śunō* on the radio. The divine ecstasy Śrīla Prabhupāda experienced upon hearing this *kīrtana* was so immense that when he returned to Kolkata, he called Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī to his room and asked him to sing it for him in private. Perhaps this is why *Gopīnātha Mama Nivedana Śunō* was Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's favorite *kīrtana*.

### **Recognizing his humble position in Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission**

In a letter addressed to Śrī Atendriya dāsa Adhikārī, the compiler of *Śrī Gauḍīya Kaṇṭhahāra*, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has revealed a wonderful pastime by describing himself as a sweeper of Śrī Nāma-haṭṭa, the marketplace where *śrī harināma* is bought and sold. We, with our hundreds of collective mouths, will follow the footsteps of the great personalities who came before us. We will present ourselves as brooms to accomplish his task of *prapañca-mārjana-līlā*, or removing the dirt of ignorance born of materiality from the hearts of the conditional souls. In other words, we shall preach *hari-kathā* everywhere and endeavor with all sincerity to save others from harmful association. Although this activity may not appeal to the people of this world, it is the sole means by which they will attain true auspiciousness.”

Each time Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja would recite this quotation, he would add, “Śrīla Prabhupāda has instructed us to become brooms to clean the dirt of ignorance from the hearts of the conditioned souls. Still, it is not by becoming an independent broom that I will consider myself most fortunate and my life to be successful. Rather, I wish to become just one of the twigs of Śrīla Prabhupāda's transcendental broom.”

### **The hallmark of high-class association**

Once, the Māyāpura branch of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha organized a festival to commemorate the appearance day of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. My godbrother *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja and I were appointed as the assembly's *sabhāpatīs* (chairpersons) for the first and the second days, respectively.

During the assembly, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja humbly said,

“Although my *bāndhavas* (sincere friends), the servants of Śrī Gopinātha Gauḍīya Maṭha, have organized a grand festival today for my birthday, I am completely unqualified to accept this worship.

“My most worshipful *gurupāda-padma*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, is present here in the form of his portrait. He is the embodiment of all our previous *ācāryas*, and I am the most insignificant servant of his servants. In the book *Śaraṇāgati* (3.3.1), Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has taught us:

*sarvasva tomāra, caraṇe sāpiyā,  
paḍechi tomāra ghare  
tumi tō’ṭhākura, tomāra kukura,  
bôliyā jānahô more*

Having surrendered everything at Your lotus feet, I remain prostrated at Your house.  
You are my Lord. Kindly accept me as Your dog. \*

“Inspired by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s example of the ideal mood of a servant, I hereby proclaim myself to be the pet dog of the servants of the servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

“In my opinion, the root cause of your honoring and worshiping me is my relationship with my spiritual master. Therefore, your worship is actually directed to him, and not me. Because I am his servant, I am naturally seated at his lotus feet. It is only due to my proximity to him that the elements of this grand worship have happened to touch my body. This worship belongs not to this pet dog, but to my beloved master. This is my firm belief. I am extremely joyful when I see my master being worshiped. Therefore, it would greatly please me if you could understand that this is the subtle essence of the divine worship you are performing today.”

The humble manner in which Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja presented his views indicated that he was firmly situated in the most exalted Vaiṣṇava association. In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Ādi-līlā* 3.21), Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has stated:

*āpane nā kaile dharma śikhānô nā jāya  
ei tō’siddhānta gītā-bhāgavate gāya*

A person cannot instruct others in religious principles if he does not practice them himself. This is the conclusion of *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Through his own conduct, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja demonstrated that

the conception of *śrauta-paramparā*, the divine disciplic lineage through which pure spiritual knowledge descends, becomes adulterated when one accepts the adoration shown by others as one's own. It is only when one is firmly in line with the *śrauta-paramparā* that one is adorned with transcendental realization.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's humble address on his appearance day reminded me of the divine humility demonstrated by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī and other exalted personalities in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava lineage. It was then that I understood just how advanced and realized Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was.

### **An exchange of affection between godbrothers**

One day, Guru Mahārāja called me into his room and, after handing me flowers, fruits, sweets, a set of saffron-colored clothes and an envelope containing *praṇāmī*, he ordered, "Go and give these things to Śrī Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja and offer *praṇāma* to him with the utmost devotion. Offer *praṇāma* on my behalf, as well. I am sending you, because he may be hesitant to accept these items if I were to offer them personally."

According to Guru Mahārāja's order, I went to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's room, offered *praṇāma* and the items given by Guru Mahārāja, and then relayed the message that Guru Mahārāja also offers his *praṇāma*. Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja laughingly said, "According to the *tithi*, today is my birthday. All this is for me on my birthday! Even though he is so busy, Mādhava Mahārāja remembered my birthday."

This was the first time I came to know the date of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's appearance day. In this way, Guru Mahārāja initiated the practice of honoring the appearance day of his dear godbrother.

When I returned to Guru Mahārāja and informed him that I had given everything to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he said, "One should worship the Vaiṣṇavas on their appearance days by remembering and serving them. We should hear the glorifications (*kīrtana*) of their most sublime qualities and divine character. Because Śrī Purī Mahārāja is my senior godbrother, I have taken a room directly below his, so that I may always honor him by keeping him on my head, and thus receive the shelter of his lotus feet."

In the core of my heart, I felt overwhelmingly pleased that I could become the medium to deliver Guru Mahārāja's affectionate and loving gifts to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

### **His disinterest in viewing others as his property**

Whenever Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was absorbed in service, he would often send devotees with spiritual questions to me, so that I could resolve their issues. This especially happened in his later years. He would tell such devotees, “My memory is weakening day by day. Please approach Śrīpāda Bhāratī Mahārāja. He will be able to answer any questions you may have.”

We often see that many so-called *gurus* view their disciples as their own property and forbid them from seeking the guidance of qualified Vaiṣṇavas. But Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja never felt his disciples belonged to him. Rather, he firmly believed they belonged to Bhagavān and his *gurupāda-padma*, Śrīla Prabhupāda. Only those endowed with *anyābhilāṣa-sūnyatā* (the quality of being devoid of desires other than pleasing Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and the prerequisites for performing *hari-kīrtana*

[2](#)

are able to hold such a view and non-duplicitously send their disciples and followers to others for instruction.

### **A godbrother’s glorification**

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu, a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, would repeatedly tell us, “Even if a scholarly and realized Vaiṣṇava like Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja does nothing but sit and chant *harināma* in the *maṭha*, he brings about auspiciousness for conditioned souls like us. By his divine potency, many people from outside will be attracted and come to him. And by virtue of his mere presence, the residents of the *maṭha* will serve diligently. Even if we were to loudly beat our own drum, we could never attain even a fraction of the glories or the divine character with which he is adorned. Therefore, you should pray to always remain in his association.”

In my life, I too have seen that the presence of an elevated personality causes his surrounding area to become elevated as well. It is natural for a disciple to glorify his spiritual master, but that a godbrother would glorify him is truly a testament to his extraordinary qualities.

### **His eagerness for bhagavad-darśana**

Once, my godbrother Śrī Brahmānanda dāsa Adhikārī came from Vanagrāma to Purī to have *darśana* of the *dhāma*. After Śrī Brahmānanda Prabhu repeatedly requested Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja to accompany him, Śrīla Mahārāja relented and agreed to go with him to have *darśana* of Śrī



Ananta-vāsudeva in Bhuvaneśvara. Śrī Brahmānanda Prabhu, who was quite ignorant about how to accord due honor and respect to senior Vaiṣṇavas, spent a great deal of their time visiting other places along the way, like Khandagiri, Udayagiri and so on. By the time they reached Bhuvaneśvara, the temple of Śrī Ananta-vāsudeva had closed. They had no choice but to return to Purī.

For the rest of the day, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja fasted from even water. On the way to Bhuvaneśvara, he had mentioned to Śrī Brahmānanda Prabhu that he would not accept water or *prasāda* until they received *darśana* of Śrī Ananta-vāsudeva. It was only for Śrī Ananta-vāsudeva's *darśana* that Śrīla Mahārāja had agreed to go to Bhuvaneśvara in the first place; he was uninterested in visiting many different places. Needless to say, he was quite upset.

When they reached the *maṭha*, it was only after first bathing, applying *tilaka* and performing *gāyatrī* that Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja honored the *śrī jagannātha-prasāda* brought by my godbrother Śrī Navīna-madan Brahmācārī (later known as Śrī Bhakti Nirmalānanda Vana Mahārāja).

Where can one find such eagerness and dedication for *bhagavad-darśana* or *vaiṣṇava-darśana* nowadays? Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's conduct made me realize he was not of this world; it made me understand that he was comprised not of the elements of this material world, but of the divine elements of the spiritual world.

### **Recognizing the value of a fault-finder**

When the devotees of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha would perform *parikramā* of South India under the guidance of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Mahārāja would earnestly inquire about the history of every place we would visit—the deities, their pastimes, their glories, the method in which they were worshiped, the procedure for receiving their *darśana*, and many other details. He would note all these details in his diary, and when we would return to Kolkata, he would write an elaborate report for Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī describing the *parikramā*.

One day, I was sitting in his room reading a draft of one such report. Seeing that he had forgotten to mention a particular place we had visited, I mentioned it to him.

“You are right,” he responded. “I will include that, also.”

He continued, “It is my principle to accord more appreciation to those who notify me of mistakes in my work than to those who may notice but remain

quiet. Yes-men are easier to come by, but it is rare to find a *bāndhava*, a sincere well-wisher with honest intentions. I do not consider those who simply agree with and praise whatever I may say or write to be my *bāndhavas*. I much prefer the company of a proofreader—or for that matter, any individual—who is unafraid to point out my mistakes than someone who remains excessively idle.”

Almost immediately after this incident, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja approached Guru Mahārāja and said, “If you wish to ensure that the publishing of *Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī* remains proficient, please allow Bhāratī Mahārāja to join its publication team. Though others may not appreciate his reluctance to readily agree with anyone and everyone, it is this reluctance that makes him qualified to serve on the publication team and help me to improve the quality of the magazine.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “This very quality is the reason I consider Bhāratī Mahārāja my right-hand man. If I were to allow him to work with you, I would not have anyone qualified to oversee other equally important services. I desperately need him for the new *maṭha* we are currently constructing. Please allow me to keep him with me for the time being.”

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who was like a simple, gentle child at heart, easily accepted Guru Mahārāja’s request without any protest.

### **Seeing himself as the cause of others’ hostility**

Once, when Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja went to have *darśana* of a godbrother, that godbrother, instead of meeting Śrīla Mahārāja, sent one hundred rupees as donation through his *sevaka* and sent Śrīla Mahārāja away. When Śrīla Mahārāja returned to the *maṭha*, he fasted for the entire day. He did not accept even water. Without keeping a single *paisā* of his godbrother’s donation for himself, he put the entire hundred rupees into Ṭhākura-jī’s donation box.

When I asked him the reason why he was fasting, Śrīla Mahārāja replied, “I went for *vaiṣṇava-darśana*, but I was unable to attain it because I am an offender. I am fasting in order to atone for my offenses. *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* (*Madhya-khaṇḍa* 8.197) states, ‘*sarva-mahā-prāyaścitta jê prabhura nāma*—chanting the Lord’s names is the highest form of atonement.’ Therefore, I shall disengage myself from all activities today other than chanting the holy names of Bhagavān.”

I said, “It appears to me that it was not you who committed an offence, but

rather the person who refused to meet with you.”

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied by quoting a verse from a *kīrtana* in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru* (*Ucchvāsa* 2.7.6). He said, “‘*Vaiṣṇava-caritra, sarvadā pavitra*—The Vaiṣṇavas’ character is ever-pure.’ If a Vaiṣṇava behaves maliciously with us, we should remain guided by the principle of the verse *tat te ’nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo*.

3

We should remain dependent on Bhagavān’s mercy and consider such hostility to be the result of our past *karma*.”

### **His view on vaiṣṇava-aparādha**

During the time of *pāraṇa*

4

one Dvādaśī day, all the devotees were seated in a line waiting to honor *prasāda*. Just as *prasāda* was finished being served, one *brahmacārī* removed a particular *sannyāsī*’s leaf plate, threw it away and ordered the *sannyāsī* to leave that place and never return.

Witnessing such behavior, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja became gravely upset and said, “I cannot remain here any longer. For so many years I have stayed with Śrī Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja, whose standards for diligently serving Vaiṣṇavas are renowned. Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja demonstrated those standards through his conduct, and he served even those who opposed him.”

A few devotees tried their best to pacify Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, but were unsuccessful. Śrīla Mahārāja then quoted Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī:

*mahāntera apamāna je deśa-grāme haya  
eka janāra doṣe saba deśa ujāḍaya*

*Śrī Caitanya-cairtāmṛta (Antya-līlā 3.164)*

He explained, “The entire village must suffer if even one person living there insults a great personality. This can be seen in the life of Rāmacandra Khān. His offense to Haridāsa Ṭhākura later led to him offending Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, and subsequently, his entire village was destroyed as a result. And when Devānanda Paṇḍita remained a mute spectator while his students dragged Śrīvasa Paṇḍita out of his assembly, he too was implicated in that offence and became deprived of Mahāprabhu’s mercy.

“While narrating the instance of Dakṣa Prajāpati and Saṁ, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* asserts that if one cannot punish a *vaiṣṇava-aparādhī* by either

cutting out his tongue or publically rendering him speechless through scriptural arguments, then one is required to leave that place.”

This incident inspired Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja to write a multitude of essays on the subject of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, including the grave consequences of committing such offenses.

### **The ācārya of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha**

Guru Mahārāja knew well that *Gopīnātha Mama Nivedana Śunô* was Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s favorite *kīrtana*, and also that he used to worship the deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha. Hence, he referred to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja as ‘the ācārya of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha.’ Guru Mahārāja always used this title when printing invitations for events at which Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was scheduled to speak. This was long before Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja formally established Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha. It was as if Guru Mahārāja was predicting Śrīla Mahārāja would later establish an institution with this name.

Many years later when, by the desire of Bhagavān, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja established a *maṭha*, he did not opt for a new name for his institution. Rather, he respectfully kept the name his godbrother had revealed. Thus, his *maṭha* is now known by all as Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha.

### **Our guide on the path of bhakti**

After Guru Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastimes and entered *nitya-līlā*, it was Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja who, due to having resided in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha for such a long time, acted as the foremost savior of Guru Mahārāja’s disciples. He was our main guide who helped us navigate the rugged road that lay ahead, and he advised us regarding what is proper and what is improper. The shelter of his lotus feet always provided us with the utmost tranquility. Nowhere else have we found such peacefulness.

### **Expressing the grief of separation from a dear friend**

After the completion of the Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* that followed Guru Mahārāja’s disappearance pastime, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja addressed the final assembly as follows: “Śrī *gaura-kiśora-keli-bhavana*—Śrī Māyāpura, the place of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s pastimes as a youth—was *pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja’s life and soul, just as it was for our most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda. *Pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja often enthusiastically discussed the glories of the *dhāma* with his dear associates, and

he engaged everyone in revealing the brilliance of those glories by encouraging them to perform *dhāma-sevā*.

“In *Śrī Śrī Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga* (26–27), Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has described Śrī Īśodyāna, a magnificent garden in Śrī Māyāpura:

*māyāpura-dakṣiṇāṁśe jāhnavīra taṭe  
sarasvatī-saṅgamera atīva nikaṭe  
īśodyāna nāma upavana suvistāra  
sarvadā bhajana-sthāna hauka āmāra*

In the southern part of Māyāpura on the bank of the Gaṅgā—near its confluence with the Sarasvatī River—is the enormous garden of Īśodyāna. May that garden always remain my place of *bhajana*.

*je vane āmāra prabhu śrī śacīnandana  
madhyāhna kareṇa līlā laye bhakta jana  
vana-śobhā heri’ rādhā-kṛṣṇa paḍe mane  
se saba sphuruk sadā āmāra nayane*

Seeing that garden, in which my Master Śrī Śacīnandana performed His midday pastimes with His devotees, I am reminded of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. May such places always appear before my eyes.

“*Pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja, the servant of the servant of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, fulfilled the Ṭhākura’s ardent desire to manifest the glories of serving Īśodyāna to the whole world. Although there is ecstatic rejoicing on the spiritual plane in Īśodyāna today because *pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja now resides here eternally in the form of his *samādhi*, we on this material plane are experiencing unbearable distress in separation from him. Tears now fill the eyes of his godbrothers, his disciples and all those who have been attracted by his qualities. In his absence, the presence of the thousands assembled here and the resounding *kīrtana* they perform are as if meaningless to me.”

Śrīla Mahārāja then ended his address by quoting the words through which Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, in his *Śrī Stavāvalī* (*Śrī Prārthanāśraya-caturdāsakam* 11), expressed the torment of his separation from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda: “*śūnyāyate mahāgoṣṭham*—the land of Vraja has become desolate.”

Such was the strong, affectionate bond shared by Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Guru Mahārāja. Their intimate relationship was the reason Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja displayed deep parental love for Guru Mahārāja’s

disciples.

### **The cornerstone laying ceremony of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha, Māyāpura**

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja entrusted his disciple Śrī Gopīnātha Prabhu with the responsibility of finding and acquiring land in Śrīdhama Māyāpura, where the first branch of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha would be constructed. When Śrī Gopīnātha Prabhu had come to Māyāpura and narrowed his choice down to two lots, he asked for my opinion on which of the two lots he should purchase.

I told him, “It is best to establish your *maṭha* on whatever land is in closest proximity to the other Gauḍīya Maṭhas of Māyāpura. That way, devotees will always be nearby, and you need not be concerned about the *maṭha*’s security should you have to leave. Moreover, you can ask the nearby *maṭhas* for provisions when you are in need. Being near the other Gauḍīya Maṭhas is not only convenient, but is conducive for *bhajana*, as well.”

Following my advice, Śrī Gopīnātha Prabhu acquired the land where the Māyāpura branch of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha is presently located. Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja also gave his consent, saying, “Why seek any further? For what should we be concerned when a Vaiṣṇava has already selected a piece of land?”

Once the date for the auspicious cornerstone laying ceremony was decided, Śrī Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja wrote me a letter saying, “I want you to be present during the cornerstone laying ceremony.” When I reached Māyāpura two days prior to the ceremony, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-dhana Banerjee, a disciple of Śrīla Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, handed me another letter from Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Through that letter, Śrīla Mahārāja intimated his deep faith and affection for me and awarded me his mercy.

Śrīla Mahārāja wrote, “The grandmother of my dear Gopīnātha Prabhu has left this world. She was also my disciple. Her funeral and related services will be held in Amata, near Kolkata, and I must attend. I am pleased to know you have already reached Māyāpura. I can completely rely on you to conduct the cornerstone laying ceremony in my stead. I wholeheartedly accept whatever you chose to do, as I trust it will be most auspicious.”

As I processed Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s order, I found myself struck by his humble *vaiṣṇava* nature. I thought, “Since I joined the *maṭha*, I have seen Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja preside over formal ceremonies as per Guru

Mahārāja’s desire. He is renowned as being an expert in these matters, and I have always considered myself fortunate to have served as his assistant during such functions. But today, by his mercy, I will perform the cornerstone laying ceremony for his *maṭha* on his behalf.”

I invited Vaiṣṇavas from all the *maṭhas* in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma to attend. On the day of the ceremony, at an auspicious time, I reached the future site of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha with a spade, bricks and other building tools and materials. The number of devotees assembled for the occasion was much greater than I had expected. Even devotees from Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, who generally never attended such functions, were present.

As all the assembled devotees enthusiastically performed *kīrtana*, five bricks were worshipped according to the Vedic prescriptions for laying a cornerstone. Śrī Phanī Lāl, a disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, untiringly played *mṛdaṅga* for several hours. I distributed *sandēśa* and other sweets I had purchased from Navadvīpa, but they were quickly finished by the many devotees in attendance. We then purchased and distributed all the sweets available from the one sweet shop in Māyāpura. If I remember correctly, the turnout was so great that even after this, there were still some devotees left who did not receive *prasāda* sweets.

It was due only to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s reputation as one of the community’s most exalted Vaiṣṇavas that so many people devotedly attended the cornerstone laying ceremony.

### **Non-viousness between godbrothers**

Once when I was at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Jagannātha Purī, the vice principal of Khadīrpura University, Dr. Nārāyaṇa Bandhopādhyāya of Behālā, Kolkata, came to stay in the *maṭha* with his wife for the month of Kārtika. I noticed that although his wife would attend *hari-kathā* daily, he never did.

One day during *hari-kathā*, I was explaining the four main qualities of Bhagavān: He is *vadānya* (munificent), *kṛtajña* (aware of all activities), *bhaktavatsala* (affectionate toward His devotees) and *samarthā* (capable of achieving everything). As I explained the meaning of the word *kṛtajña*—‘one who knows (*jña*) the activities (*kṛtya*) everyone performs’—Dr. Nārāyaṇa Bandhopādhyāya happened to walk by. This explanation piqued his interest, as he had never before heard it described in this way. He remained listening in the back of the hall.

After I finished my lecture, he approached me and said, “Your *hari-kathā* was quite touching. I would like to hear *hari-kathā* from a devotee like you every day. Please accept me as your disciple and give me shelter.”

“I do not give *mantra-dīkṣā* to anyone,” I replied. “You may accept *dīkṣā* from a pure devotee and thereby make your life successful.”

After performing the month-long *kārtika-vrata*, Dr. Nārāyaṇa Bandhopādhyāya and his wife returned to Kolkata. There, in Behālā, they would daily visit Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha*, Śrī Caitanya Āśrama, to hear *hari-kathā*. By hearing from Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, they gradually became familiar with the tenets of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. As they became increasingly convinced of the need to accept a *guru*, they went to Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata with the desire to accept *mantra-dīkṣā* from Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

When they introduced themselves to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Mahārāja asked, “Why haven’t you requested Śrī Santa Mahārāja for *dīkṣā* in Behālā? Why have you come here instead?”

Dr. Nārāyaṇa Bandhopādhyāya explained, “Mahārāja-jī, we would like to accept *dīkṣā* from a *brāhmaṇa*-born Vaiṣṇava.”

“This concept is improper,” Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja said. “*Brāhmaṇatā*, the quality of being a *brāhmaṇa*, is intrinsically present in *vaiṣṇavatā*; Vaiṣṇavas subsume all the qualities of *brāhmaṇas*. They are naturally and firmly established in *ātma-dharma*, the principle of identifying oneself as a soul. It is offensive to identify or distinguish them based on *śarīra-dharma*, on bodily considerations like caste and race.”

He continued, “You are mistaken in considering Śrī Santa Mahārāja to be a non-*brāhmaṇa*. An intelligent person will never leave the nearby Gaṅgā to bathe in a faraway lake. You should therefore make your lives successful by accepting Śrī Santa Mahārāja’s shelter. Moreover, the scriptures declare that one must atone for the offense of distinguishing a Vaiṣṇava based on *śarīra-dharma*, or bodily considerations, by immediately taking shelter of that Vaiṣṇava.”

ārcye viṣṇau śilā-dhīr guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhir  
viṣṇor vā vaiṣṇavānām kali-mala-maṭhane pāda-tīrthe ‘mbu-buddhiḥ  
śrī-viṣṇor nāmni mantre sakala-kaluṣa-he sabda-sāmanya-buddhir  
viṣṇau sarveśvare tad-itara-sama-dhīr yasya vā nārakī saḥ

Padma Purāṇa

A person is bound for hell who considers the deity to be made out of wood, stone or



any alloy; who considers the *guru*, who is an eternal devotee of Bhagavān, to be an ordinary human who is subject to death; who considers a Vaiṣṇava to belong to a particular caste or creed; who considers *caraṇāmṛta*, water which has washed the feet of Śrī Viṣṇu and the Vaiṣṇavas, to be ordinary water when in reality it destroys the evils of the age of Kali; who considers the holy name and the *mantra* of Śrī Viṣṇu, which destroy all types of sinful reaction, to be ordinary material sound vibrations; and who considers the supreme controller Śrī Viṣṇu to be equal to the many demigods. \*

As per the advice of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Dr. Nārāyaṇa Bandhopādhyāya and his wife took shelter at the lotus feet of Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

The above incident prominently demonstrates Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s sincere *vaiṣṇava* humility, his ardent desire to bring about the welfare of those who approached him, as well as the deep faith and non-envious affection he possessed for his junior godbrother Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

### **Persistence in bhajana despite illness**

Once, while Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was staying in a room with a temporary asbestos roof at Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha’s newly acquired property at Cakra-tīrtha, Jagannātha Purī, he fell sick due to the cold weather. He was brought to Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha at Grand Road so that he could be provided comfortable facilities while he recovered. Upon his arrival at the *maṭha*, I immediately called for a specialist from the hospital. After examining Śrīla Mahārāja, the doctor advised us to admit him for a night in the hospital, where he would receive oxygen and a saline drip. My godbrother Śrī Gaurāṅga-prasāda Brahmācārī (now Śrī Bhakti Saurabha Ācārya Mahārāja) said, “Those who go to the hospital in Purī never return.”

Hearing this comment, a few of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s female disciples began crying, and many devotees became reluctant to admit Śrīla Mahārāja to the hospital. Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, however, had faith in my council. He told his *sevakas*, “You should follow whatever Bhāratī Mahārāja feels is appropriate.”

I said, “Mahārāja, it would be best for you to go to the hospital, for they are able to provide oxygen and saline drips there. Moreover, the doctor is recommending you be admitted for only one night.”

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja agreed, and we admitted him to the hospital. He felt a bit hot at that time, and so I personally brought two of the *maṭha*’s standing fans for him. I stayed with him through the night and brought him

back to the *maṭha* when the doctor gave permission the following day.

While in the hospital, he recited his daily *stavas* and *stutis* (verses of prayer and praise) just as he would in the *maṭha*. I was astonished that his condition had no effect on his conduct, his gentle temperament, his forbearance or his spiritual practices.

### **A solemn prayer to remain unaffected by wealth**

To commemorate the one hundredth appearance day anniversary of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha arranged a festival in Jagannātha Purī. When Śrīla Mahārāja arrived at the assembly, he respectfully requested Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, my godbrother *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja and me to sit on the dais. After we seated ourselves, Śrīla Mahārāja personally applied sandalwood paste to our foreheads and garlanded us.

As he spoke *hari-kathā* that day, he mentioned one point that struck me as especially significant and remains fixed in my memory even today. He said, “The life we lead now is vastly different from the kind of life we used to lead. Previously, we considered a donation of two or three lakhs

<sup>5</sup>  
rupees to be enormous. But nowadays, such donations no longer seem significant, because by the grace of Śrīla Prabhupāda, devotees from both within India and abroad currently make such large contributions to our mission.

“Now that our supporters are many and we are financially prosperous, I pray to the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda and to the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates that my disciples may not fail to practically apply the principle of ‘*tṛṇād api sunīcena*—remaining humbler than straw,’ and that they do not become influenced by the false pride that comes with wealth and followers. I pray that the opulence we have acquired may not obstruct their *bhajana*, that they remain steadfast, that they shall not deviate from the path of *bhakti*, and that their life’s goal remains fixed. I pray that they remain unaffected by opulence, and that they may realize and follow the essential teachings in the following instructions of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.”

Śrīla Mahārāja then quoted two verses:

*prāpañcikatayā buddhyā  
hari-sambandhi-vastunaḥ  
mumukṣubhiḥ parityāgo  
vairāgyaṁ phalgu kathyate*

When *sādhakas* who desire liberation renounce that which is related to Hari, such as the scriptures, the deity, the holy name, *mahā-prasāda*, the spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas, considering them material, their renunciation is called futile renunciation, *phalgu-vairāgya*. This is unfavorable to *bhakti*. \*

*anāsaktasya viṣayān  
yathārham upayuñjataḥ  
nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe  
yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate*

A person without attachment to sense enjoyment who accepts whatever facilities are appropriate for the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not bound by such activities. Such detachment is said to be *yukta-vairāgya*, renunciation through always maintaining a connection with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. \*

### **Honoring all Vaiṣṇavas both senior and junior**

Because of his natural humility, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s life and character demonstrated the full import of Śrī Devakīnandana dāsa’s words:

*hōiyāchena hōibena prabhura jātô dāsa  
sabhāra caraṇa vandô dante kôri’ ghāsa*

Holding a straw between my teeth, I venerate the lotus feet of all the servants of my master who ever were or will be.

Not to speak of his senior godbrothers, he would offer *praṇāma* even to those he inspired to join the *maṭha*, like Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, me—although I am so junior to him and like his disciple—as well devotees who joined the *maṭha* much later than I did. He would clasp his hands and plead, “Please tell me the means by which I can repay the debt of your affection.”

### **Expressing gratitude for a godbrother**

In writing about his godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja has said, “Śrī Santa Mahārāja’s inner moods match perfectly his external behavior. This quality of his is delightful and exemplary. This wretch is forever indebted to him for the mercy he has shown me. May he be victorious.”

### **Śrīla Prabhupāda’s final instructions**

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja would frequently mention the following in his *hari-kathā*:

“The entirety of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions and the example he personally set deserve perpetual scrutinization and implementation. This is certainly true. However, in keeping with the popular adage ‘*pūrvaparayoḥ para-vidhi balavān*—the latter directive trumps those preceding,’ I present to you now the instructions Śrīla Prabhupāda imparted to a group of devotees, just eight or nine days before he manifested his disappearance pastime.

“He said, ‘In every place in this world there exists a scarcity of *hari-kathā*, which bestows ultimate perfection, the perfection of devotion. Our sole duty and *dharma* is to dispel this scarcity by preaching the service of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and Śrī Bhagavān. Every place where *hari-kathā* is present is to be considered a holy place.

“ ‘We have not come to this world to be carpenters or masons. We are simply the carriers of the message of Śrī Caitanya-deva. Śrī Rūpa established the innermost desire of Śrī Caitanya-deva in this world. The dust of his lotus feet is the object of our life’s sole ambition.’

“In our attempts to follow these instructions, which Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly uttered in the final days before his disappearance, we must remember the following words of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura:

*guru-mukha padma-vākya, cittete kôriyā aikya,  
āra nā kôrihō mane āśā  
śrī guru-carāṇe rati, ei se uttama-gati,  
je prasāde pure sarva āśā*

*Prema-bhakti-candrikā (1.2)*

Make the words emanating from the lotus mouth of *śrī guru* one with you heart and aspire for nothing more. Attachment to the lotus feet of *śrī guru* is the ultimate attainment, for his mercy fulfills all desires.

“I convey my gratitude to all the devotees sincerely striving to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda and preach the message of *Bhāgavata*, wherever and in whatever form they may preach it.”

### **The importance of publication sevā**

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja used to say, “I often heard from my most worshipful *gurudeva*, Prabhupāda Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, that the summum bonum of our lives should be to publish books and preach the

message of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and other predecessor Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas. This is the only way in which the conditioned souls can ever hope to attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*, the highest goal of life.”

Taking this instruction to heart, Śrīla Mahārāja always maintained that it is the duty of Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas to distribute all over the world magazines and books that illustrate the sublime teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. To this end, he spent his entire life in publication services, and he encouraged devotees for the same, saying, “The teachings must be distributed throughout the world.”

### **On vraja-vāsa and rāgānugā-bhakti**

When Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja held a festival at the old Daujī temple he acquired in Vṛndāvana, he instructed me to speak on the glories of Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma. After my address, he spoke the following:

“I am now in the very last phase of my life. My only wish is to spend the last few days of my life chanting *harināma* at the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī, the queen of Vṛndāvana. Without the blessings of the devotees, it is impossible to receive Rādhārānī’s blessings, for it is said, ‘*vaiṣṇavera kṛpā jāhe sarva-siddhi*—all perfections come through the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.’

“Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has expressed:

*jagāi mādhai hôite muṁ se pāpiṣṭha  
purīṣera kīṭa hôite muṁ se laghiṣṭha*

I am more sinful than Jagāi and Mādhai and even lower than a worm in stool.

“Although in following the *mahājanas*, the great authorities, I may repeat similar expressions of humility, my statements will amount to nothing but mere deception if genuine humility has not appeared in my heart. Now, at the end of my life, I have no desire to make any pretense of humility. I am no longer capable of giving lectures. Still, you have all spent a great amount of money to bring me here and to construct an opulent new room for me. In addition to your collective wellbeing, I pray that I may not be affected by even a particle of egotism due to accepting this service of yours, for Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has said:

*āmi tô’vaiṣṇava’—e buddhi hôile,  
amānī nā ha’bô āmi  
pratiṣṭhāsā āsi’, hṛdaya dūṣibe,  
hōibô niraya-gāmī*

If I develop the idea that “I am a Vaiṣṇava,” then I will never become humble. My heart will become contaminated with the desire to receive honor from others, and I shall go to hell. \*

“The purpose of residing in Vṛndāvana is to obtain the dust of the Vaiṣṇava’s lotus feet, follow in their footsteps, and chant *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma*.

“Our divine spiritual master has mercifully revealed his identity as Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-dayita dāsa, the servant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s beloved. Śrīla Prabhupāda is eternally Rādhārāṇī’s personal associate. Without his mercy and the mercy of those Vaiṣṇavas who comprise his spiritual family, we cannot make our residence in Vṛndāvana meaningful. We must fervently pray for the ability to forever follow in their footsteps and constantly remember their lotus feet.

“We cannot achieve the mood of Vṛndāvana through simply following *vidhi-mārga*, the path of regulative principles. Therefore, we must necessarily take up *rāgānugā-marga*, the path of spontaneous, absorptive love. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has said:

*iṣṭe svārasiki rāgaḥ  
paramāviṣṭatā bhavet  
tanmayi yā bhaved bhaktiḥ  
sātra rāgātmikoditā*

*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.272)*

The intense and spontaneous absorption in the object of one’s adoration (*iṣṭa*) is called *rāga*. Devotion that is characterized by such *rāga* is called *rāgātmikā-bhakti*.

“*Rāgānugā-bhakti* is defined as devotion that follows the example of the Vrajavāsīs’ *rāgātmikā-bhakti*. We must all strive for this kind of devotion.”

### **His samādhi ceremony**

In the month of Kārtika, 1999, Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha’s month-long Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* culminated in a grand two-day festival beginning on Utthāna Ekādaśī to commemorate Guru Mahārāja’s appearance day. It was just after the completion of the festival that the *sevakas* of the Purī branch of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha informed us that Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja had manifested his disappearance pastime and entered *nitya-līlā*. Upon hearing the news, I immediately decided I must attend Śrīla Mahārāja’s *samādhi* ceremony.

Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s disciple Śrī Bhakti Bibudha Bodhāyana Mahārāja was preaching overseas at the time, but he spoke with my godbrother *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja by phone. *Pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja then called me to his room and briefed me on his discussion with Śrī Bodhāyana Mahārāja. He said, “Śrī Bodhāyana Mahārāja is greatly distressed that he will be unable to reach Māyāpura in time for his *gurudeva*’s *samādhi* ceremony. He has humbly requested for at least one of us to attend the *samādhi* ceremony if we are unable to both go.”

*Pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja then requested me to go to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura without him and assist with the ceremony. He promptly arranged a plane ticket and gave me five thousand rupees to contribute toward Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *viraha-mahotsava* (festival of separation).

I left for Delhi in the evening, and from there flew to Kolkata early the next day. I reached Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha in Māyāpura around two o’clock in the afternoon, by which time the *samādhi* ceremony had almost been completed. After the ceremony, I accepted *prasāda* there in the *maṭha*. It was agreed that a *viraha-mahotsava* would be held the following day and that I would act as *sabhāpati* (chairman) for the assembly. Śrī Bodhāyana Mahārāja arrived in Māyāpura on the day of the *viraha-mahotsava*. During the assembly, I read aloud Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s will, wherein Śrī Bodhāyana Mahārāja was officially appointed the *ācārya* of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha.

### **His surrender-inducing conduct and qualities**

By Guru Mahārāja’s mercy, I received the fortunate opportunity to serve and associate with many disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. My association with Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was especially intimate and extensive, lasting approximately forty-five years. Throughout the course of our relationship, I was often astonished by his ideal conduct and his inexhaustible dedication toward serving Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. His faith in performing *parikramā* of both Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala and Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma was so firm that he insisted on walking even in his advanced age, when he required the assistance of devotees. He would perform *parikramā* slowly, stopping frequently to rest. Nevertheless, when he would finally arrive at a particular pastime place, he would narrate its glories, take the dust of that place on his forehead and, if he was visiting a body of water, perform *ācamana*.

Whenever he narrated the glories of pastime places, his absorption was so intense that he would become completely oblivious to the external world.

When he served the deities, his passion was such that anyone could understand he was serving someone dearer than his own self, and that he was prepared to offer everything for Their pleasure. When he glorified devotees connected with Śrīla Prabhupāda, his voice would choke up and he would weep. Though he tried his best, it was impossible for him to conceal his deep love and devotion for Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Simply witnessing the gentle manner in which he dealt with other Vaiṣṇavas was enough to inspire anyone to sell his life at his lotus feet for all eternity. Hearing him perform *kirtāna*, especially the *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā yāma-kīrtānas* sung during the month of Kārtika, felt as if someone was pouring nectar in our ears and transporting us to another world.

His unwavering dedication to serving the *bṛhad-mṛdanga* demonstrated his firm faith in the service Śrīla Prabhupāda personally entrusted to him, as well as the faith he had in the order of his *gurudeva*. Such dedication inspires us to pray for similar *niṣṭhā* (determined conviction), toward *śrī guru*.

He possessed deep insights into the conceptions of Gauḍīya Sārasvata philosophy. All that he spoke was based on the scriptures and the words of our previous *ācāryas*. He carefully listened to everyone's questions with great seriousness before answering, even to inquiries that seemed simple.

From his conduct I learned that one should never make loose comments; he never spoke carelessly about anyone or anything.

During the time he intentionally concealed his divine potency by leading a simple life and remaining under the guidance of his godbrothers, very few persons came forward to serve him. But after he manifested that potency, I heard a number of people who were previously absent from his association say things like, "I associated and served Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja so much." Hearing such fabrications would remind me of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's statement, "*keśāva tuā jagata vicitra*—O Keśava, strange is your world." The nature of conditioned souls is to lie for the sake of fame and adoration.



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1 The eightfold transcendental pastimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs with His eternal associates in Goloka Vṛndāvana.

2 The prerequisites for performing true *hari-kīrtana* are humility, compassion, a desire to give respect to all, and a complete lack of desire for prestige.

3

*tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo  
bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam  
hṛd-vāg-vapurbhir vidadhan namas te  
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.8)*

One who, while always expecting Your mercy, tolerates the results of his previous misdeeds and constantly offers respects to You with his heart, speech and body, is eligible to receive the inheritance of Your lotus feet.

4 The specified time for breaking a fast.

5 One lakh equals one hundred thousand.

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja

## His life: a lesson in surrender

In 1933, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura awarded *dīkṣā* to Śrī Abhay Charan De, giving him the spiritual name Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda dāsa. Even while Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present, Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu used to submit articles he composed to the Gauḍīya Maṭha publication team to include in their magazines.

Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu to preach in the western countries. However, at that time, Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu was unable to fulfill his *gurus'* desire due to his family responsibilities as a householder. He did his best to maintain his family by establishing several pharmaceutical businesses in cities such as Kolkata, Mumbai and Allahabad, but despite his arduous efforts, his ventures proved unsuccessful. As a result of the great hardships he faced, his family members were constantly dissatisfied with him. Even when he fell ill, not a single member of his family came forward to help him. At that time, my *gurupāda-padma*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja kindly arranged for Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu's treatment.

Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu accepted *sannyāsa* at the repeated insistence of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and was given the name Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. Shortly after that, he relocated to Vṛndāvana. During his years in Vṛndāvana, he would mention time and again, "I have not carried out the order of my *gurudeva*; I have not preached in the western countries. This neglect is the cause of my suffering and the reason I was unsuccessful in all my endeavors. I have everything, because I have firm faith in *śrī guru* and his instructions. But at the same time I have nothing, as I have not done anything to fulfill his order. Although I have grown old, I will fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's orders to preach in the West and thereby atone for the offence of disobeying him."

With this mood, he travelled to America aboard a cargo ship. However, after only a short while of preaching, he fell ill and returned to India. Later, he would repentantly express, "I went to the West to fulfill my *gurudeva's* orders, but I returned to India out of fear when I became a bit sick. I am not fully surrendered. I will now return to the West and preach until my dying breath, even at the risk of death."

With this solid conviction, he returned to the West, where his preaching

service met with tremendous success, so much so that he himself was amazed by the results, what to speak of others.

Bhagavān is the master of all opulences, and His pure devotee Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura inherited that wealth. Those who are completely surrendered to Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet will never face scarcity of any kind. Bhagavān will always fulfill the vow He has made to maintain His surrendered devotees:

*ananyāś cintayanto mām  
ye janāḥ paryupāsate  
teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānām  
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*

*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (9.22)*

For those who are devoid of other desires, who are always absorbed in contemplation of Me and who always worship Me, I personally carry their necessities and preserve what they presently have.

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's relatives never cared for his wellbeing, neither when he was at home nor after he accepted *sannyāsa*. Yet, after he departed from this world, in order to argue rightful claims to his assets, those very same persons declared, "He was my father!" "He was my husband!" and so on. Such are the strange ways in which the people of this world behave.

### **His desire to unite all the Gauḍīya Maṭha branches**

Both before and after accepting *sannyāsa*, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja repeatedly beseeched his godbrothers Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the *ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kevala Auḍulomi Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the *ācārya* of Bāghbazār Gauḍīya Maṭha, to put aside the trivial differences, individual motives and arguments between them and their godbrothers. He told them, "We must all unite and enthusiastically preach the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rūpa-Raghunātha, just as Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed us."

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja always had this sincere desire in the core of his heart, and his intentions were always pure. But as fate would have it, unification proved impossible, and so following the example of many of his godbrothers, he too was compelled to establish an independent institution of his own.

### **His fearlessness in service**

Every so often, while Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja was living in Śrīdhāma

Vṛndāvana, he would visit Delhi to print his self-published magazine, *Back to Godhead*. He had very little money in those days, and so he would perform *bhikṣā*, even in the scorching summer sun. During his visits to Delhi, he would often stay in the Karol Bāgh branch of Śrī Gauḍīya Saṅgha, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja's institution.

One day, just before Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja was about to perform *bhikṣā* in the fierce heat, Śrī Bhakti Vaibhava Mādhava Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja, stopped him, begging, “Mahārāja-jī, please do not go out in this heat. Your advanced age makes you more susceptible to heat stroke.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “Someone has promised me a donation of five rupees, Mahārāja. I must retrieve it if I wish to print my magazine.”

“I will give you ten rupees,” Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja pledged. “But please do not go out at this time of day.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja said, “Fine. Because of your affection, I will stay back for now. But in the future, I will not keep any stone unturned in my endeavors to serve Bhagavān. I will remain completely dependent on Him. I firmly believe that no harm can come to me as long as He wishes to utilize this body of mine in His service.”

### **His time in Vṛndāvana**

Prior to travelling to the West, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja resided in Vṛndāvana, initially at Chipī-galī and later near Sevā-kuñja at Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Mandira. He would regularly meet and perform *kīrtana* with his godbrothers Śrī Rāghava-caitanya Prabhu and Śrī Girindra-govardhana Prabhu at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. My godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja and I would sit behind them with a number of devotees, singing in response to the call of their *kīrtana*.

When Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja first saw our Vṛndāvana *maṭha*'s *kīrtana* hall, he said, “Previously, we Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas had no place of our own to sit and perform *kathā* and *kīrtana* in Vṛndāvana. Thankfully, Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja has now filled that void.”

### **Śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana for all occasions**

The assembly hall in the Vṛndāvana branch of our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha was completed in 1964. Around that time, I was informed that the state governor, Śrī Viśvanātha dāsa, was planning to visit Vṛndāvana. On behalf of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, I sent him a postcard invitation to visit the *maṭha*,

which he kindly accepted.

Guru Mahārāja was not present in Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana at the time, and because my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja and I considered ourselves junior, both in age and in the realm of *bhajana*, we invited two of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples—Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja and Śrīmad Rāghava-caitanya Prabhu—to receive the governor and speak to him about the specialty of the Gauḍīya Maṭha.

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja explained to us, “There is no better greeting than the performance of *saṅkīrtana*. Bhagavān incarnates wherever *saṅkīrtana* is conducted. What could be more auspicious for the governor than the presence of Bhagavān Himself? Because the governor has already accepted your invitation, we will hold nothing back in our efforts to bring about his spiritual welfare. The Gauḍīya Maṭha extensively preaches that *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the only means of deliverance in this age of Kali. The governor will certainly understand this message once he hears our *saṅkīrtana*.”

When the governor arrived, we welcomed him with *saṅkīrtana* performed under the guidance of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja. Afterward, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja related to him the glories and unique contributions of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Throughout the course of their conversation, the district magistrate accompanying the governor repeatedly intimated through hand gestures that it was time to leave. The governor, however, dismissed him. “Just wait a bit,” he said. “Where else will we receive the opportunity to hear such wonderful *saṅkīrtana*?”

Seeing the governor’s reaction made me realize the transcendental glory of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s advice that *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is truly the solution to all situations.

### **The Origin of the name ‘ISKCON’**

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s sole intention for coming to America was to fulfill the innermost desire of his *gurudeva* by successfully disseminating the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the West. At first, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja had many ideas about how to do this. In the end, however, after observing the local peoples’ condition and by the inspiration of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān, he began sitting in a park and chanting the *pañca-tattva mantra* and *mahā-mantra*: “*śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya, prabhu nityānanda, śrī advaita, gadādhara, śrīvāsādi gaura bhakta vṛnda*” and “*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*,” respectively. As a result of

his total surrender to the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his intense desire to follow his *gurudeva*'s instructions, his *kīrtana* began to attract many sincere souls.

One day, a devotee asked him, “What inspired you to name your institution ISKCON?”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “When I was sitting in a park in America one day and singing the *mahā-mantra* and *pañca-tattva mantra*, a stranger approached me and asked, ‘What kind of consciousness does this type of singing awaken?’

“By Bhagavān’s inspiration, I answered, ‘Kṛṣṇa consciousness.’ On that day, I decided I would name my future organization the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness.”

### **Serving śrī guru through the service of others**

I heard from some of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s disciples that during his early days in the West, he would not only cook and serve *prasāda* to newcomers, but he would even dispose of their plates, clean the place where they ate, and wash the cooking pots himself. This went on for a long time. He never asked anyone to assist him in any service. Rather, he encouraged them to give their full attention to receiving *śabda-brahma*, divine sound vibration. It was only after that *śabda-brahma*, in the form of his *hari-kathā* and *kīrtanas*, poured through their ears and entered their hearts that one of the regular visitors stepped forward and asked Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja if he could help him. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja welcomed this service, and after that, many more people began to come forward to serve in various ways.

When I heard that Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja served in this way at such an advanced age, I came to realize the depth of his dedication to fulfilling the desire of his *gurudeva*, and that he was indeed a most exalted, transcendental personality.

### **Protecting all from bogus ‘Bhagavāns’**

Many of India’s spiritual figures have achieved great success preaching in the West, both prior to and after Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s efforts there. A number of them, being devoid of surrender and pure-heartedness, declared themselves to be God, such as the fraudulent ‘Bhagavān’ Rajanīśa, otherwise known as Osho. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja preached against such imposters with bold determination, proclaiming the purport of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s

statement:

*sāksād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair  
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ  
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The scriptures unanimously proclaim *śrī guru* to be *sākṣāt-hari*, directly Śrī Hari. This is a fact jointly corroborated by all saintly persons. Yet at the same time, *śrī guru* is very dear to Bhagavān. I adore the lotus feet of that *śrī gurudeva*. \*

He repeatedly urged everyone, “*Jīvādhame īśvara jñāna kabhu nā kôribā*—never think a lowly soul to be the Lord.” In this way, he protected everyone from this frightening, undesirable proclivity (*anartha*).

### **A fully surrendered soul never succumbs to the temptations of luxury**

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja knew both impoverishment and abundance. But this is inconsequential. What is significant is that the moods in his heart, his inclination to serve, and his surrender to *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān never changed. Not everyone has the capacity to refrain from enjoying. It is difficult for most people to resist enjoying, even to a slight degree, the luxuries afforded them, nor do many possess the ability to utilize such luxuries in the service of Bhagavān. It is rare to see a person’s views and conduct remain unaffected by wealth. In this regard, there is a cautionary tale about King Nahuṣa.

When King Nahuṣa attained the position of Indra, he expressed his desire to enjoy Indra’s wife, Śacī. When Śacī found out about this, she consulted a group of *ṛṣis*, who advised her to inform the king that if he truly wants her, he must come to her on a palanquin carried on the shoulders of *ṛṣis*. Śacī followed the *ṛṣis*’ advice and sent King Nahuṣa the message.

King Nahuṣa, being unable to digest and adapt to his new luxurious life, became exceedingly covetous, so much so that he did indeed order *ṛṣis* to carry his palanquin. Moreover, while being carried, he order them, “*Sāpa, sāpa!*—Go faster, go faster!” Seeing his wretched mentality, Śrī Agastya Ṛṣi cursed him to become a snake.

Because he lost his composure with his newfound wealth, King Nahuṣa fell into a wretched condition. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja, however, remained unaffected, because he was fully surrendered to the lotus feet of Bhagavān and firmly dedicated to fulfilling the cherished desire of his *gurudeva*. All the

luxuries in the world could not have affected him.

### **India's true ambassador**

Gradually, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja introduced the West to almost all the aspects of the world's ancient Vedic culture, including the congregational chanting of Bhagavān's names; the study and recitation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures; the proper method to install Bhagavān's deity forms and the standards and regulations by which to worship Them; the observance of Vaiṣṇava etiquette; the Vedic Indian style of dress, that is, *dhotī* (lower garment) and *kurtā* (traditional shirt) for men, and *sārī* and petticoat for women; and the importance of applying *tilaka*, maintaining a *śikhā* and wearing a sacred thread.

Additionally, he taught his disciples how to not only prepare exceptionally delicious and nutritious vegetarian dishes using milk, yogurt, fruits, roots, vegetables and grains, but also how to offer those dishes to Bhagavān and respectfully honor them as *prasāda*. He also inspired them to become self-sufficient through such sustainable practices as farming, serving cows and establishing *gurukulas*.

Rather than absorbing the foreign ways and customs of the Western people, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja taught them to accept and properly follow traditional Vedic culture and thereby become expert in all its fields. It is for this reason that a famous Bengali newspaper, *Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā*, honored him by printing the following commendation:

The diplomatic ambassadors of today are embarrassed by the native culture of India. They return from abroad having adopted foreign attire, conduct and cuisine. Failing to introduce other nations to the great customs of India, they instead disgrace our country and waste the nation's wealth. The Founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON, Śrī Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, however, has proved himself to be a true ambassador of India, even without the financial support or regard of his country. Through his selfless work, he has set a noble precedent for all political leaders.

### **Curbing society's problems through Kṛṣṇa consciousness**

I heard Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja once say that a couple somewhere in the West had filed a court case against him that accused him of brainwashing their son. They wanted the court to deny him permission to visit or preach in their country. The judge, however, not only ruled in Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's favor, but also praised him, saying, "Despite the fact that we, the government, have spent millions upon millions of dollars to end the rampant drug abuse and



promiscuity prevalent among urban youths today, we have been unable to check it even slightly. This *svāmī*, however, has inspired thousands of individuals to renounce such habits and dedicate their lives to spiritual pursuits. Actually, he should be rewarded for his unmatched service to our society.”

### **Progress is the principle**

One day, my godbrother Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī (now Śrī Bhakti Mayukha Bhikṣu Mahārāja) asked Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja, “Mahārāja-jī, although scripture clearly states that *tilaka* is to be applied up to the hairline, your disciples apply *tilaka* that extends to the top of their heads. Why do you not correct them?”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja responded, “Prabhu, as of yet, I have told them only of the glories of wearing *tilaka*. They are very new to Vaiṣṇava society and are entirely unaware of Vedic customs. Just as new students progress from first grade to second grade to third grade and so on, my disciples will gradually climb all the successive steps of the staircase leading to the spiritual realm. Most of them used to eat the flesh of cows, but have since renounced such abominable habits and are now trying their level best to observe proper conduct, bit by bit.

“I am delighted by their progress, and I am firmly convinced that if they maintain such steadfast dedication, they will continue to progress even in my absence by attaining the foot dust (mercy) of advanced Vaiṣṇavas, by whose mercy they will gain the qualification to understand the subtle principles of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s *prema-dharma* and thereby make their lives successful.”

### **An expert and patient teacher**

Another time, Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī was waiting outside Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s room hoping to have his *darśana*, when he saw a new Western devotee sitting nearby, about to apply *tilaka*. The devotee had a piece of *gopī-candana* in his hand, but had no *ācamana* cup or any water at all with which to make a paste, and so he spat into his hand and started rubbing the *gopī-candana* in it. Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī was shocked to see this. He immediately called out to the devotee, “This is completely improper! Why are you doing this!”

At that time, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja came out of his room, called for Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī to come over and very softly said, “There is no

need to instruct this devotee. Somehow or other, he has received the inspiration to put on *tilaka*, which does not exist in his native culture. What problem is there if he is not aware of all the rules and regulations just yet? The time will surely come when he will learn the proper way to perform all the activities of *bhakti*.”

Here, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja did not establish a new *siddhānta* for his disciples to follow for all time. Rather, because he was an expert teacher, he taught this particular disciple according to his nature and qualification.

### **Winning the respect of a local paṇḍā**

Once, while Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja and his disciples were visiting Śrī Jagannātha Purī, Śrī Gopīnātha Khuṭiyā, the Gauḍīya Maṭha branches’ local *paṇḍā* (priest), went to pay him a visit. As fate would have it, the fan in the room had stopped working that day, and one of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s Western disciples was trying to fix it. In doing so, the devotees climbed atop a stack of boxes containing copies of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* labeled “For free distribution—not for sale in India.”

Seeing this, Śrī Gopīnātha Khuṭiyā told him, “No Indian Hindu would ever touch even a box of ordinary books with his feet, not to speak of a box of *Bhāgavatams*. This is a perfect example of why Westerners are not allowed to enter Jagannātha’s temple despite being devotees. It will take a century for you to develop proper cultural impressions (*saṁskāras*). Your *gurudeva* is most magnanimous and glorious to have assumed the grave responsibility of patiently and affectionately teaching you as if you were a child. I respectfully offer *praṇāma* to him.”

### **ISKCON’s relationship with Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha**

After Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja procured land in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura to establish an ISKCON temple, many of his disciples—Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu, Śrī Bhavānanda Prabhu and Śrī Jaya-patākā Prabhu, to name a few—supervised all the preliminary construction work while staying in a hall at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. The hall was directly in front of my room at that time. I arranged for their *prasāda* and looked after their belongings when they would go to the West. Considering helping them to be serving Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja, I took up these responsibilities with great enthusiasm and regard.

At one point, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja sent Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu to our Kolkata *maṭha* to learn Bengali, *kīrtanas* and other things. Śrī Acyutānanda

Prabhu became proficient in Bengali after spending almost three years in the *maṭha*. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja once wrote him a letter ordering him to send Śrī Bhavānanda Prabhu an English-Bengali dictionary if possible.

In Bengali, Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu replied, “I have fully learned Bengali. What will Bhavānanda Prabhu do with a dictionary? Why not engage me in whatever service it is you need done?”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja would write to Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu from time to time and instruct him to send various items to the West. I would assist Śrī Acyutānanda Prabhu in his service by helping him purchase and ship those items.

### **Registering BBT**

When Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja registered Bhaktivedānta Book Trust, he included Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja as trustees. After a series of discussions, they mutually decided that the trust’s profits would be used for the development and renovation of Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala.

### **Visiting his godbrothers’ maṭhas during the construction of his ISKCON Māyāpura temple**

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja set a noble example by staying in a bamboo hut in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura while his temple there was under construction. A devotee who is immersed in *bhajana* lives happily anywhere and is supremely satisfied by any and all circumstances.

Before his bamboo *bhajana-kuṭīra* was built, he stayed in Kolera-ḍāṅgā at Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Maṭha with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Each morning, he would cross the Gaṅgā and spend the day overseeing the construction of his ISKCON temple in Māyāpura. During that time, he often honored lunch *prasāda* with us at our Māyāpura branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, where I received the good fortune to serve him *prasāda* on many occasions.

### **On the title ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda’**

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja invited all his godbrothers for the deity installation festival of the ISKCON Māyāpura Śrī Caitanya-candrodaya *mandira*. At that event, my Guru Mahārāja expressed his concern about his adopting the title ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda.’ He inquired, “My dear Śrīpāda Svāmī Mahārāja, we godbrothers have a deep, unshakeable reverence for our *gurudeva*, Śrīmad

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, whom we affectionately call ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda.’ With all sincerity, we want to ask why you allow your disciples to call you by this title. It brings us, your loving godbrothers, great pain. Please kindly help us understand.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “Mahārāja-jī, my disciples once asked me about the formal designations used to respectfully address one’s *gurudeva*. I simple-heartedly replied that one might use any number of respectful titles, such as ‘Viṣṇupāda,’ ‘Bhagavadpāda,’ ‘Śrīpāda’ or ‘Prabhupāda.’ I am unsure how or when, but they all jointly decided to call me ‘Prabhupāda.’ ”

Guru Mahārāja then asked, “Can you not forbid them from addressing you with this title? Just as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas use the title ‘Mahāprabhu’ for Śrī Caitanyadeva only and members of Rāma-kṛṣṇa Mission use the title ‘Paramahansa’ exclusively for Vivekānanda’s *guru*, Rāma-kṛṣṇa, we, the disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, have been accustomed to hearing and using the title ‘Prabhupāda’ for our *gurudeva* from the time he was physically present.”

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “I too am accustomed to using this title exclusively for our *gurupāda-padma*. But I have grown tired of repeatedly explaining this to each and every one of my disciples. Despite my exhausting efforts, I am unable to stop them from calling me ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda.’ ”

Even today, many years after Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s disappearance, many people are confused when they read or hear the name ‘Śrīla Prabhupāda.’ They are unsure if it refers to Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura or his disciple Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. A disciple must remain discerning when trying to understand the inner desires of his *gurudeva*. Sometimes, even a simple act, though done innocently and with good intentions, can create difficulty for *śrī guru*.

### **Patiently and affectionately teaching his new disciples**

Soon after establishing the ISKCON temple in Māyāpura, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja inaugurated his annual Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*. During the *parikramā*, he would send his disciples to have *darśana* of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, Īśodyāna. When the *parikramā* party arrived before the deities, some of the newer Western devotees entered the temple with their shoes hanging around their necks from tied-together shoelaces. Guru Mahārāja was present in the temple hall at that time. When we told them it is inappropriate to enter the temple or go before the deities with shoes, they replied, “We were

told not to wear them on our feet while entering the temple. No one told us we cannot put them around our necks.”

Guru Mahārāja then very affectionately explained, “If it is prohibited in the temple to wear shoes on our feet, the lowest limbs of our bodies, what can be said about wearing them on any other higher limb? If our shoes happen to touch any limb above our feet, we must purify ourselves by bathing in the Gaṅgā with our clothes on. If you are told that someone is unqualified to speak to you, does this not imply he is unqualified to speak to your superiors, also?”

The Western devotees were quite satisfied by Guru Mahārāja’s explanation. They said, “We are very new to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Our spiritual master spends most of his time patiently teaching us many things. Being very affectionate toward us, he does not become angry, even when we continually make mistakes. Today you have kindly taught us a new lesson that we will always try to follow.”

### **My advising his disciple in a debate**

During the time Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja was still physically present in this world, one of his disciples, Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, was preaching in Hyderabad with a group of devotees. In one of his lectures, Mahārāja proclaimed, “Those who do not worship Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa will go to hell.”

Many people became upset by this statement and raised objections. Śrī Nirañjana Deva Tīrtha, the in-charge of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya’s Bhoga-Vardhana (Govardhana) Maṭha in Jagannātha Purī, vehemently opposed Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja and made many hostile statements against him. He argued, “Reading the Quran and Bible is a prescribed duty (*dharma*) for Muslims and Christians, respectively, just as reading the Vedas is for Hindus. Do you mean to imply that although Muslims and Christians follow their prescribed *dharma*, they too will go to hell? Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said:

*yānti deva-vratā devān  
pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ  
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā  
yānti mad-yājino ’pi mām*

*Bhagavad-gītā (9.25)*

Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, those who worship the forefathers go to the planets of the forefathers, those who worship the spirits go to the planets of the spirits, and those who worship Me will surely come to Me. \*

“He has not said, ‘All those who do not worship Me are bound for hell.’ How, then, can you speak like this?”

I was residing in Hyderabad at the time, and I read about this issue in the local newspaper. I also read that Śrī Nirañjana Deva Tīrtha had challenged Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja’s *gurudeva*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, to an open debate on the subject.

After inquiring, I discovered that Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja was staying in the Sarasvatī hotel with a few devotees. My godbrother Śrī Dhīra-kṛṣṇa Prabhu, the in-charge of the Hyderabad branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, and I went to the hotel and met with Mahārāja. I asked him if he knew about the newspaper’s mention of the opposition against him and his *gurudeva*. He said he was aware and that he was drafting a response. He showed me a letter he was writing with the help of Śrī Hari-prasāda Bujurka, a devotee from the Śrī Sampradāya.

The response appeared to be appropriate to me. I suggested they also mention that while it is certainly true that not all who neglect to perform *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* will go to hell in the literal sense, they will definitely go in the figurative sense. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.19.18) states:

*karmaṇām pariṇāmitvād  
ā-viṛiṇcyād amaṅgalam  
vipaścin naśvaram paśyed  
adr̥ṣtam api dṛṣṭa-vat*

An intelligent person should see that any material activity is subject to continuous change, and thus inauspiciousness exists even on Brahmāloka. Indeed, a wise man understands that just as all that he has seen is temporary, all things within the universe similarly have a beginning and an end.

Therefore, even attaining the abode of Brahmā—the highest attainment in the fourteen planetary systems—is simply inauspicious. For this reason, devotees consider any position in this material universe equivalent to hell.

Moreover, such designations as ‘Hindu,’ ‘Muslim,’ and ‘Christian’ are all temporary and subject to change. They are merely material designations the soul amasses over time. They have no relation to the soul’s actual, eternal constitutional function (*dharma*). In the Vedic scriptures, the soul is referred to as “*ajo śāśvato nityam ayam purāṇo*—the unborn, unchanging and eternal ancient being” and “*acalo ayam sanātanaḥ*—immovable and ever-present,” not as ‘Hindu,’ ‘Muslim,’ ‘Christian’ or any other such designation.

When Śrī Nirañjana Deva Tīrtha read Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja’s

response, he replied, “This Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja is a *mleccha*, an outcaste. I refuse to enter into a debate with him. I challenge his *guru*, Śrī Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. I will converse only with him.”

When Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja read Śrī Nirañjana Deva Tīrtha’s reply, he asked me, “What should I say now?”

I told him to write and ask which Śaṅkarācārya this Śrī Nirañjana Deva Tīrtha follows, because he could not possibly be a follower of the Śaṅkarācārya who had stated, “*jīvo brahmaiva na paraḥ*—the living entity is *brahma*.” How can the *jīva* be a *mleccha* or a *brāhmaṇa* or anything else if he is *brahma*?

Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja liked this response and sent it as his reply. No counterargument came back from Śrī Nirañjana Deva Tīrtha after that.

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja was in Russia during the debate. However, when Śrī Tamāla-kṛṣṇa Mahārāja informed him of my response by letter, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja replied, “I was delighted to read his answer. It was highly appropriate.”

Sometime after this incident, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja visited Hyderabad with a large party of people, but Śrī Nirañjana Deva Tīrtha was nowhere to be found. No one had any idea whether he was in Hyderabad or not. It was as if he had totally vanished.

### **A reciprocal invitation**

When Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja came to Hyderabad another time, I invited him to honor *prasāda* in our *maṭha*. He mercifully accepted my invitation and honored *prasāda* with great joy. As he was leaving, he invited me and my godbrother Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī (now Śrī Bhakti Mayukha Bhikṣu Mahārāja) to one of his events. Fortunately, we were able to attend. At the event, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja had Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī play *mṛdaṅga*, and following the lecture and *kīrtana*, he mercifully had us sit with him to honor *prasāda*.

### **Paying due honor to an ācārya**

I once invited Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja to visit Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Chandigarh while he was visiting the ISKCON temple there. He graciously accepted my invitation and arrived at the *maṭha* on the scheduled day. During his visit, my godbrother Śrī Rāma-prasāda Prabhu offered him a new wooden *vyāsāsana*, which he had constructed and carved with his own hands. Śrīla

Svāmī Mahārāja, however, refused to sit on it. He explained, “A new *simhāsana* must first be offered to and used by the *maṭha*’s *ācārya*.”

That day, we served Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja and his disciples *prasāda*. He very lovingly honored *prasāda*, and later appreciatively told us, “Today, after so long, I have honored the type of *prasāda* I am used to honoring. My disciples cook many preparations for me, but there is a big difference between their way of cooking and ours. They use large amounts of *ghee*, which I cannot digest. I would probably stay in this world longer if I were to regularly receive the type of *prasāda* we honored here in the *maṭha* today.”

Later, when Guru Mahārāja came to Chandigarh, he too declined Śrī Rāmaprasāda Prabhu’s request to accept the *vyāsāsana* he had made for Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja. He said, “How could I sit on it if my godbrother refused to do so? According to my godbrother’s words—‘Only the *ācārya* of the *maṭha* should sit on a new *simhāsana*’—I will place my *gurudeva* on it, for he is the true *ācārya* of this *maṭha*.”

Thereafter, Guru Mahārāja kept a portrait of Śrīla Prabhupāda on the *vyāsāsana*.

### **The responsibility inherent in accepting offerings**

Just before Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastimes, Henry Ford’s great grandson Alfred Ford, whose initiated name is Śrī Ambarīṣa dāsa, told Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja of his desire to fund the construction of a university in Kurukṣetra dedicated to teaching *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

However, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja declined his offer. “I will not be in this world for much longer,” He said. “If I take your money without being able to ensure it will properly be used in the Lord’s service, then I will be at fault.”

Through this example, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja has demonstrated that we should accept only that which we are certain we can utilize in the Lord’s service, otherwise there is a chance of incurring fault.

### **My situation at the time of his disappearance**

I was overseeing a pilgrimage of Northern India when Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastime during the month of Kārtika. We were in Siddhapura—also known as Māṭrī Gayā, the site where the philosophical exchange between Bhagavān Kapiladeva and his mother, Devahūti, occurred—when I read about his disappearance in the newspaper:



Śrī A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī, the great personality who shook the whole world these past ten years, has manifested his pastime of disappearance.

Although I had a strong desire to attend Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's *samādhī* ceremony, my obligations with the pilgrimage kept me from going. However, when my godbrother Śrī Maṅgala-nīlaya Brahmācārī (later Śrī Bhakti Hṛdaya Maṅgala Mahārāja), who was also serving on the pilgrimage, expressed a desire to go to Vṛndāvana for the ceremony, I did not prohibit him. Instead, I encouraged him to go and assumed his responsibilities in his absence.

When the devotees of ISKCON held Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's *virahotsava* (festival of separation) in Śrī Jagannātha Purī in 1978, they requested Guru Mahārāja to be chairman of the assembly. Although he was unwell, he faithfully participated in the festival out of deep regard for his godbrother.

## **Glorification of Pūjyapāda Svāmī Mahārāja**

Composed under the editorship of Śrī ŚrīmadBhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

### **Receiving devotional instructions in childhood**

In 1896, Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja appeared in a family of devotees in Kolkata. In his previous *āśrama*, his father's name was Gauramohana De. The name his father gave him was Abhaya-caraṇa De. Gauramohana De was initiated in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. Abhaya-caraṇa received many instructions from his father on the subject of devotion to Śrī Gaura and Kṛṣṇa. He received a B.A. from Scottish Church College with honors in philosophy. Afterward, in the course of his career, he became the manager of a pharmaceutical company—a laboratory on Amherst Street operated by Doctor Kārtika Vasu. After working there for some time, Abhaya-caraṇa De began producing medicines independently.

In 1922, he married, and in 1933, while still married, he took shelter of the most prominent among the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, *jagad-guru paramārādhya nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda*, who is more glorious than the sun. His initiated name became 'Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda dāsa Adhikārī.'

### **The beginning of his bṛhad-mṛdaṅga service**

In 1944, Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu began publishing the monthly

English magazine *Back to Godhead*. This magazine is now well-renowned. Hundreds of thousands of copies of this magazine are printed every month in various languages and are sent to devotees in numerous countries. Besides this, Śrīmat Svāmī Mahārāja published many books in the English language.

### **Accepting sannyāsa**

In 1958, Śrī Abhaya-caraṇāravinda Prabhu accepted *tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa* from the founder of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja, a disciple of *paramārādhyā* Prabhupāda Śrī Śrīla Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, and became known as *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. Later, he would introduce himself as Śrī A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja.

### **Residing in Vṛndāvana**

In 1959, Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja came to live in the Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana. During this period, he translated into English the first two cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He was also translating *Bhagavad-gītā* and several other books at the time.

### **Establishing ISKCON**

In 1965, at the age of seventy, he traveled virtually empty-handed to the United States of America. After his steamship docked in Boston for two days, it eventually made its way to New York. A year later, he rented an apartment at Twenty-six Second Avenue, Manhattan. It was there that he founded ISKCON, the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. In Tompkins Square Park, with a pair of *karatālas* in hand, he began his preaching of the *mahā-mantra*. There, two young boys became his disciples after being attracted by his classes. These two were given the names Śrī Bhavānanda and Śrī Jaya-patākā.

### **Preaching in every corner of the Earth**

Gradually, Śrīmat Svāmī Mahārāja attracted droves of pious people. In only twelve years, his preaching reached practically every corner of the Earth. Many educated and wealthy men and women took shelter of him. One by one, many preaching centers, temples and monasteries were established worldwide. The wind everywhere began to resonate with the chanting of *mahā-mantra*. Shortly after entrusting the responsibility of running his society and preaching to twelve disciples, he passed on to the Lord's eternal abode.

### **His delightful English translations**

During his time, Śrīmat Svāmī Mahārāja also presented Śrī Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī Prabhu's *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in its original Bengali script with an English transliteration of each and every verse, followed by an English word-for-word translation and an expert English translation. This in itself is a matter of particular delight for all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. English readers express abundant praise for this rendition, because they have the convenience of learning Bengali as they read through this book, which was published in several volumes.

All of his books concerning Śrī Gaura and Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes have been well-received and revered by Western scholars.

### **A matter of great pride**

The deities of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Gāndhārvikā-Giridhārī-jiu are now being worshiped everywhere, and many festivals like Jhulana-, Dola- and even Śrī Śrī Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadra's Ratha-yātrā are being held in numerous famous places in Europe and America. This is a matter of great pride for all of us. We pray with our whole hearts that the services of the society Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja founded continue to be managed beautifully in all respects and with enthusiasm.

### **His fortune to attain shelter of Śrī Vṛndāvaneśvarī**

Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja had been manifesting his sickness pastime since this past Dola-pūrṇimā, but still, even in such a condition, he went to survey his various centers and temples in the West, including London just this past August. By the Lord's desire, he was residing in Śrī Vṛndāvana since the middle of September. There, he attained the shelter of Śrī Śrī Vṛndāvaneśvarī.

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahāśaya, who was present in Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana when Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja disappeared, made his auspicious arrival in our Kolkata Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha on 20 November, 1977. We heard from him that Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's disciples were surrounding his bed and chanting *harināma* tirelessly. Although Svāmī Mahārāja stopped speaking, his lips were active until his last moment. When Śrīpāda Vana Mahārāja, Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and other esteemed Vaiṣṇavas would visit him, his disciples, speaking loudly into his ear, would tell him who had come, and he would show them due respect by raising his hands to his forehead. He was fully conscious until his final moment.

His disciples chanted *harināma* loudly throughout the entire night, even after he disappeared. On Tuesday (Śuklā Pañcamī), they placed him on a decorated palanquin and took him to the seven main temples of Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana accompanied by loud *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. The Gosvāmī directors of each of the temples extended to him the respect due a Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* and honored him with garland and *candana* remnants of their respective deities. Thereafter, he was placed in *samādhi* at his Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple in Ramaṇa-Reti according to the directives of scripture.

### **His unique accomplishment**

During his evening *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class, the President-*ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Matha, Śrīla Ācāryadeva Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja, expressed the grief of his separation from his godbrother Svāmī Mahārāja, and extensively glorified Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's stupendous feat of preaching Śrī Caitanya's message throughout the entire world in such a short time. He further illustrated Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja's unique accomplishment in transforming his western disciples' ingrained habits of dress, diet, conduct and behavior. They accepted the humble garb of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, began accepting only *bhagavat-prasāda* (foodstuffs offered to the Lord), wearing strands of *tulasī* beads around their necks, chanting the holy names on *japa-mālās*, and bearing marks of *gopī-candana tilaka* on all limbs of their bodies. In this way, they adopted all the conventions of Vaiṣṇava etiquette and became committed to incessantly performing *kīrtana* of *mahā-mantra* without hesitation. It is a matter of great joy that they also began deeply studying devotional literatures and performing worship of the deities.

### **His ardent efforts to fulfill Srila Prabhupada's desire**

In Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, there are serious plans to build a temple almost two hundred fifty feet high for the Śrī Māyāpura-Candrodaya temple he has already established there. We hope that his disciples, who are very qualified, will soon endeavor to fulfill this desire of their *gurudeva*.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu predicted:

*pr̥thivīte āche jātô nagarādi grāma  
sarvatra pracāra hōbie more nāma*

My name will be propagated in every town and village all over this Earth.

Śrī Śrīla Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda and Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda, two intimate

associates of Śrī Gaura, have also expressed particular ambitions in their predictions concerning preaching in the West. Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja went to great lengths to propagate and fulfill this desire of theirs.

Excerpts from an article published in  
*Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī* (Year 17, Volume 10)

# Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja

## Receiving dīkṣā initiation

Generally, Śrīla Prabhupāda would grant *dīkṣā-mantras* to aspiring devotees only on the specific recommendation of senior devotees. Prior to awarding *dīkṣā*, the birth names of the aspiring initiates would be noted in a register. Alongside each of those names, Śrīla Prabhupāda would personally choose and write a suitable Vaiṣṇava name to be conferred to each aspiring devotee.

On the day Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja was to receive *dīkṣā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written down the name ‘Śrī Sarveśvara dāsa Brahmācārī’ beside his previous name. When Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja presented himself in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s quarters to receive the *mantras*, a devotee mistakenly told him he would not be receiving *dīkṣā* that day. Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja replied, “It is only appropriate that things proceed according to my *adhikāra*, my qualification. It is quite sufficient for me to learn how to properly honor and chant the *harināma* I have most mercifully received.”

Overhearing this, Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded him *dīkṣā*, but changed the name he had written from ‘Sarveśvara’ to ‘Svādhikārānanda,’ which means ‘he who delights in his qualification.’

## Simple living, high thinking

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja perfectly exemplified the maxim “*sādā jīvana, ucca vicāra*—simple living, high thinking.” On his upper body he wore a *phatuā*, an armless shirt with two pockets sown onto the front, and around his waist he wore a short, knee-length cloth. In the winter, he found it sufficient to wrap himself in a simple blanket and go about his business. Although he always accepted others’ gifts, he rarely used them himself. Instead, he would distribute them among the Vaiṣṇavas in Vṛndāvana.

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja would say, “Śrī Nārada Ṛṣi instructed the hunter Mṛgārī to break and throw away his bow, give up all concerns for his livelihood and simply perform *bhajana*. After promising he would arrange for all Mṛgārī’s necessities, Śrī Nārada Ṛṣi left that place. When he returned six months later, Mṛgārī said, ‘Gurudeva! Please do not send so many things.’ Śrī Devarṣi Nārada told him to use whatever he needed and distribute the rest.

“I have taken the lesson of this story to heart. I consider all the items people give me as having been sent by my *gurupāda-padma* as manifestations of his

mercy. I never think that a particular person per se is giving these items to me. Rather, I consider such donors as postmen sent by my *gurudeva* to deliver various items on his behalf. Whatever I need, I keep, and whatever I have no use for, I distribute to other devotees.”

### **His carefree detachment**

A Vrajavāsī once donated a piece of land to Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja in Ramaṇa-retī, Vṛndāvana. With the assistance of a few devotees, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja secured construction materials like bricks, gravel, sand, stone and cement and had them delivered to the site. However, when he visited the land just a couple days before the scheduled cornerstone laying ceremony, the brother of the donor approached Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja and said, “The land my brother donated to you was not this lot, but actually the adjacent lot. Please construct your *bhajana-kuṭīra* over there.”

When Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja heard this, he said, “Forget it, brother. I have no need for a *bhajana-kuṭīra*. My godbrothers have many places of their own and they readily offer me shelter at their lotus feet. If I am faced with issues before the construction of my own place has even begun, I can only imagine the grief I should expect in the future. Please keep this land for yourself. *Hare kṛṣṇa*.”

As Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja turned to leave, the man told him, “Wait! At least take all your building materials with you. You can use them elsewhere.”

“Keep them,” Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja replied. “They are now yours.”

When Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja told me about this incident, he remarked, “The nature of material possessions is such that the greed to own them causes conflict between even brothers.”

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was so detached that he was completely disinterested to meet the donor of that land even once. He thought it to be a waste of time.

### **Inspiring grand service while remaining possessionless**

Once, while Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was visiting the house of Śrī Banavārī Lāl Simhāniyā in Kolkata, he performed *kīrtana* throughout the entire night. In the morning, Śrī Banavārī Lāl Simhāniyā’s niece told her father, “Śrīmatī Rādhārānī was dancing to the beat of Bābājī Mahārāja’s *kīrtana* the entire time he sang.”

Later that morning, when Śrī Banavārī Lāl Simhāniyā-jī tried to offer Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja a donation, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja said to him, “I have no need

for anything. If you truly want to offer some service, then arrange to build a temple at the place of my *gurupāda-padma*’s appearance in Śrī Jagannātha Purī, which Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja has acquired.”

Śrī Banavārī Lāl Simhāniyā-jī began to cry. When his sister-in-law asked him why he was crying, he told her everything and considered, “I am sure the three of us—my father, my brother and I—can manage to build a temple.” After consulting with his family, it was decided they would surely construct a temple there.

In this way, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja’s encouragement and inspiration accomplished such a great service, though he himself was possessionless and maintained his life by begging alms.

### **Sweetly welcoming a godbrother**

In 1956, Guru Mahārāja travelled to Mathurā from Kolkata in a reserved coach accompanied by a large group of devotees to lead Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha’s Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*. Along with Śrī Dīna-bandhu dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja travelled to the Mathurā rail-way station all the way from his residence at Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *bhajana-kuṭīra* in Nandagrāma. When Guru Mahārāja and his party arrived at the station, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja jubilantly welcomed them by performing exceptionally beautiful *saṅkīrtana* and sweetly playing *mṛdaṅga*.

He used to say, “Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja is especially venerable for having carefully protected the tradition of performing Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, a practice Śrīla Prabhupāda had earlier reestablished.

### **His heart-touching kīrtana**

In 1962, after the conclusion of the Kumbha Melā in Haridvāra, it so happened that by chance, Guru Mahārāja and the presiding *ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha travelled to Dehradun at the same time with separate preaching parties. It was during this time in Dehradun that Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja left the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha party and, with his little bundle of bedding in hand, met with Guru Mahārāja at Gītā Bhavana. Guru Mahārāja was just finishing his morning lecture when Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja arrived. Seeing him, Guru Mahārāja became overwhelmingly delighted and called out, “Bābājī Mahārāja! *Madhureṇa samāpayet*—with sweetness, we conclude. Please retire this assembly with your melodious *kīrtana*.” Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja then sang *Sakhe! Kalaya Gauram Udāram*.



At that time, my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja said to me, “Sanskrit *kīrtanas* like this do not suit the audience here. Who will understand its meaning? Only *nāma-kīrtanas* like ‘*rādhe rādhe govinda, govinda rādhe*’ will be appreciated.”

I did not respond to this, but remained silent. When Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja concluded the *kīrtana* by chanting the *mahā-mantra*, the in-charge of Gītā Bhavana, an elderly gentleman wearing large pendant earrings, jumped to his feet and called out, “*Sohnā, sohnā!*”

“What is he saying?” I asked Śrī Purī Mahārāja.

“*Sohnā* is Punjabi for ‘very beautiful,’” he replied.

I then asked, “You were saying that Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja’s *kīrtana* would not be well received here and that no one would understand it. If this is the case, why is this person saying, ‘Very beautiful?’ Is he not Punjabi?”

“Yes, he is Punjabi,” he said, “but I do not have an answer to your question.”

The next day, Guru Mahārāja asked another person, an expert singer, to perform *kīrtana* before his class. Two minutes into the *kīrtana*, the same elderly person stood up and, with folded hands, said, “Please request Bābājī Mahārāja to sing. Although we do not understand the words he sings, his voice touches our hearts.”

Guru Mahārāja then asked Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja to perform *kīrtana*. Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja sang *Namāmī Nanda-nandanam, Rādhe Jaya Jaya Mādhava Dayite, Kṛṣṇa Deva Bhavantaṁ Vande* and other Sanskrit *kīrtanas*, and everyone listening was immensely pleased.

After the *kīrtana*, I told Śrī Purī Mahārāja, “According to my understanding, there are three reasons these people appreciate Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja’s *kīrtana* despite having no understanding of Sanskrit. Firstly, Bhagavān Himself has said, ‘*mad-bhaktaḥ yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭhāmi nāradaḥ*’—I am present wherever My devotees sing My glories.’ Having become *anyābhilāṣitā śunyaṁ*, or free from even the slightest tinge of extraneous desires, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja performs *kīrtana* from the core of his heart, and thereby engages in *ānukulyena kṛṣṇānuśīlana*, a favorable activity performed purely for the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His *kīrtana* is therefore fully capable of compelling Śrī Bhagavan, the embodiment of bliss, to appear and turn this place into His residence, Goloka Vṛndāvana. When the embodiment of bliss is personally present, isn’t it only logical that everyone present will experience bliss, directly or indirectly?

“Secondly, it is said:

*smarantaḥ smārayantaś ca  
mitho 'ghaughā-haraṁ harim  
bhaktyā sañjāṭayā bhaktyā  
bibhraty utpulaḱāṁ tanum*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.3.31)*

The devotees remember and remind one another of Śrī Hari, the remover of all misfortune. Thus, their devotion causes the appearance of devotion in others, and their bodies become agitated with ecstasy, with the hairs of their bodies standing on end.

“According to this verse, *bhakti* is infused in the heart by the *bhakti* already present in another’s heart. Although language is essential in communicating matters of the heart, for one whose heart is devoid of *bhakti*, mere knowledge of language is insufficient to inspire *bhakti* in the hearts of others. It is only because of the pure *bhakti* present in the heart that one’s words are infused with divine power. Only then is it possible for *bhakti* to be transmitted to the hearts of one’s listeners, and only then will the listeners feel inspired to render devotional service.

“Thirdly, Bābājī Mahārāja’s *kīrtana* is the very embodiment of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s words ‘*hṛdaya hōite bole, jihvāra agrete cale, śabda rūpe kare nṛtya*—when one speaks from one’s heart, Kṛṣṇa dances on one’s tongue in the form of sound.’ It is for this reason that Bābājī Mahārāja’s *kīrtana* touches the hearts of those who hear it.”

### **His unpretentious, easygoing nature**

One time, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja joined our Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* party while we were camped at Śrī Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa. At that time, I was charged with the service of managing suitable lodgings for the pilgrims and was staying in a rather humble shed-like structure. Upon seeing my simple shelter, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja decided it was favorable for his *bhajana*, and so he set up his bedding there, next to mine.

I was immediately apprehensive. “He is like a *guru* to me,” I thought. “It is inappropriate for me to stay with him, as if he is some familiar roommate.” Remaining honest, I humbly told him, “Bābājī Mahārāja, your sleep is likely to be disturbed if you stay here, because I get up many times during the night to check on the camp patrol. Please allow me to arrange a more suitable place for you.”

“No, no,” Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja said. “You will not disturb me. Perform your service without worry for my comfort.”

During those nights together, I observed that no matter how many times I got up and came back, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja would be sitting up-right in his mosquito net chanting the *harināma mahā-mantra* the whole night through. He chanted in a very soft voice, so as not to disturb the devotees nearby. He was always incredibly sensitive and considerate when it came to the convenience of devotees.

### **His exemplary humility**

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja always remained equipoised. He did not respond to praise with immodest gushing like milk boiling over or by becoming puffed up like an inflated balloon, nor he would flare up into a fit of rage at criticism. In either situation, he would simply say “*Hare kṛṣṇa*” and move on.

Once, one of his godbrothers wrote him an insulting letter in language quite unbecoming a Vaiṣṇava. Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja responded by writing, “O Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura! You have written the truth because you really love and care for me. Previously, you used to encourage me through praise, but through your recent letter, you have bestowed your most sincere mercy upon me.”

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was always absorbed in the most exemplary humility.

### **A friend to all**

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was *ajāt-śatru*. In other words, he never considered anyone to be his adversary. Although he divided most of his time between the association of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Guru Mahārāja, he would freely visit all his godbrothers without any inhibition whatsoever.

The bond between Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja and Guru Mahārāja was especially thick. His postcards to Guru Mahārāja would always begin with the words “to the supremely merciful Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja,” and they never consisted of more than a couple sentences. Those who read his letters or heard him speak were thoroughly convinced that he was entirely indifferent to discussing worldly matters.

### **Performing kīrtana during Guru Mahārāja’s disappearance pastime**

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was well-known for savoring the taste of *kṛṣṇa-*

*nāma* as he was constantly performing *kīrtana* wherever he went. He was particularly keen on performing *kīrtana* of *śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma mahā-mantra*, and he would become so overjoyed to hear others chanting it that his eyes and face would blossom.

A few days before Guru Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastime, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja came to the Kolkata branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. Every day during his stay, he would sit nearby Guru Mahārāja and deeply absorb himself in performing *kīrtana*. The night before Guru Mahārāja entered *nitya-līlā*, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja performed *hari-kīrtana* in the Gauḍīya library adjoining Guru Mahārāja’s *bhajana-kuṭīra* all night long in a mood of painful separation.

When Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja heard of this, he said, “I too wish to leave this world while listening to the *kīrtana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, who is perfected in chanting the holy name.”

When Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja saw that Guru Mahārāja’s disciples were suddenly without shelter, he overwhelmed us with boundless affection and encouraged us from the core of his heart to preach the message of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga.

### **Mercifully granting me the opportunity to serve him**

Once, when Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja enacted the pastime of becoming ill, I stayed with him for some days after he was admitted to a hospital in Delhi. When I was informed I had to leave for some other urgent service, I engaged my godbrother Śrī Navīna-madana Brahmācārī in his service.

After completing my service elsewhere, I returned to the hospital to serve Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja. Upon my arrival, he softly told me, “When you serve me, I do not feel the slightest bit awkward or hesitant. I prefer your service over that of all others.”

By enacting the pastime of falling ill, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja, who would rarely accept service from anyone, bestowed great blessings upon me by granting me the opportunity to serve him.

## **Glorification in the wake of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja’s Disappearance**

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## **Nāma-siddha**

Śrī Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja appeared in a highly educated, respected family of physicians. He attended Dhākā University and completed a Bachelor of Arts degree before taking shelter of the most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda's holy feet, sometime between 1925 and 1926. The *brahmacārī* name his *gurudeva* gave him was Śrī Svādhikārānanda dāsa Brahmācārī.

In the *maṭha*, we have long since and repeatedly witnessed Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja's profound attachment to performing *nāma-bhajana* day and night. He also possessed a remarkably powerful memory. We were always amazed to hear the many Sanskrit prayers and hymns he could recite, which were so numerous that it would be impossible to cover them all in a full month of non-stop recitation. He memorized by heart Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta, Rāsa-pāñcādhyaṃya, Brahmā-stuti, Stavāvalī, many songs from Stava-mālā, Virudāvalī, Vilāpa-kusumāñjalī and many more Sanskrit compositions. He would somehow recite all these prayers daily and chant one hundred thousand names of Bhagavān. *Pūjyapāda tridaṇḍī-gosvāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja used to call him *nāma-siddha*, or realized in the holy names. His Sanskrit pronunciation was strikingly beautiful as well as crystal clear, and his voice was very sweet. He was also proficient in playing *mṛdaṅga*.

## **Never Inclined to Argue**

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja's Vaiṣṇava humility and renunciation were exemplary, and his character was pious and dignified. Never was there a day when he was seen expressing anger, violence or hatred. If anyone would say anything to him in anger, he would simply respond with 'Hare kṛṣṇa' and laugh. He was never inclined to argue with anyone.

## **A prime recipient of Bhakti-devī's mercy**

The scriptures state, '*kṛṣṇa bhakte kṛṣṇa-guṇa sakali sañcare*—Śrī Kṛṣṇa infuses His devotees with all of His qualities.' This was always glaringly apparent in Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja's character. He was a prime recipient of the mercy of Bhakti-devī, the goddess of devotion, who is the empress of all virtues. All the demigods took up residence within him, as he is replete with all good qualities. His beautiful mouth pronounced the names of Hari at every moment.

## **Ajāta-śatru**

Practically all of the Vaiṣṇavas of the *maṭha* loved Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja.

Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja had great affection for him. Drawn by this affection, Bābājī Mahārāja resided in many of his *maṭhas* and participated in various festivals and pilgrimages, thus repeatedly pleasing Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja.

Prior to entering into his unmanifest pastimes at his *bhajana-kuṭī* in Nanda-grāma, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja used to stay at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha branch in Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana. However, his most beloved place to perform *bhajana* was a tiny secluded chamber in the original *ākara-maṭha-rāja* Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, on the third floor of the Bhakti-vijaya Bhavana, the *bhajana-kuṭī* of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Aside from there, in whichever *maṭha* he visited among the many all over India, he would always look for a quiet place to perform his *bhajana*. He was the living example of the words of the great personalities before us: “*dekho bhāi nāma vinā dina nāhi jāya*—look brother, let not a single day go by without the chanting of *nāma*.” He never spent his time in useless conversation. He was *ajāta-śatru*, that is, he never considered anyone as his enemy. Today, the more I remember him, the deeper and deeper I feel his absence, and my heart becomes exceedingly distraught.

During *parikramā*, I often had the good fortune of sharing lodgings with him. It was then I saw how he sat and chanted *nāma* throughout the night and recited the countless verses he knew. Although he would sing the holy names while playing *mṛdaṅga* for the entire distance of our *parikramā*, I never saw him become even a little fatigued. He was always smiling.

### **Constantly Immersed in contemplation of Bhagavān**

Many wealthy people would give Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja money and expensive things, but he would never keep any of it for himself. Instead, he would distribute those items for the service of Bhagavān and the Vaiṣṇavas. He usually wore just a short knee-length garment around his waist, and he kept a simple bed mat and sheet. He gladly went through the harsh cold of winters with a simple blanket while wearing an ever-smiling face, always satisfied at heart. A person who is constantly immersed in contemplation of Bhagavān does not notice the goings-on around him.

### **The personification of *tṛṇād-api Sunīcena***

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was never eager for any material gain, worship or prestige. Indeed, he did not long for such things at all. It was as if he was the personification of the *tṛṇād-api* verse as instructed by Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

Alas! Now that I have lost the company of such an exemplary Vaiṣṇava who took such great delight in the worship of the holy names, who knows how long I will have to endure the hellish torture of this unlucky life on the earthly plane.

### **A Propagator of the mahā-mantra**

The stickers Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja printed in Hindi and Bengali about the principle of *kīrtanīyā sadā hariḥ* and *mahā-mantra* can be seen almost everywhere in Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala, in many places in Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala and Śrī Kṣetra-maṇḍala, as well as in almost all of our branches of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. Reading or even seeing these stickers always brings to mind sweet memories of him. There are also many places in Vraja where he propagated these teachings by means of stone etchings.

### **His very dear songs**

Very dear to Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja were the many songs written by the presiding *ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, the most venerable *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, such as Śrī Śrīla *Prabhupāda-padma-stavakaḥ*, Śrīmad *Bhaktivinoda-viraha-daśakam*, Śrī Śrī *Dayita-dāsa-daśakam*, Śrī Śrīmad *Gaura-kiśora-namaskāra-daśakam*, and the seventy-verses of Śrī Śrī *Premadhāma-deva-stotra*, especially the following verse:

*kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa-nāma kīrtanam  
rāma rāma gāna-ramyadivya-chanda nartanam  
yatra yatra kṛṣṇa-nāma-dāna-loka-nistaram  
prema-dhāma-devam-eva naumi gaura-sundaram*

Śrī Śrī *Premadhāma-deva-stotra* (22)

I venerate that Lord, the abode of love Gaura-sundara, who always danced as He sang the names “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa” and “Rāma, Rāma” in beautiful melodies. Wherever He went, He bestowed the names of Kṛṣṇa and delivered the people of that place.

He often sang the above verse as well as one of the lines from Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda’s song *Vaiṣṇava Ke?*: “*karô uccaiḥ-svare harināma-rava*—chant the names of Śrī Hari at the top of your voice.”

### **His indomitable enthusiasm for practicing and preaching harinama**

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja printed a small booklet containing a collection of teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His dear associates, the Gosvāmīs,

regarding *nāma-bhajana*. He would distribute this booklet everywhere free of charge and give it to others to distribute, as well. He was possessed of indomitable enthusiasm when it came to the practice and preaching of *śrī harināma*. Kṛṣṇa was very merciful to have granted us the fortune of associating with a Vaiṣṇava so dedicated to the holy names. Today, it is a matter of great misfortune that we have been deprived of his company. But as it is said, “*svatantra kṛṣṇera icchā hōilô saṅga bhaṅga*—it is by the independent will of Kṛṣṇa that my association with him has been severed.”

### **Our last interaction**

During Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* last Kārtika, when we had his audience at that same *bhajana-kuṭīra* in Nandagrāma, he repeatedly declared, “I will not go anywhere else.” Nandagrāma was time and again the place he chose as most favorable for his *bhajana*. Hence, Śrī Hari, who is a wish-fulfilling tree, granted him the eternal shelter of His lotus feet at that very place.

Being a Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja saw no faults in others. All I pray is that he may, out of his good nature, purify me of the various offenses and mistakes I committed at his feet, either knowingly or unknowingly.

### **Our prayer at his lotus feet**

It is our misfortune that one by one, Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda’s intimate associates are all leaving to that eternal abode to render eternal service at his beautiful lotus feet, thereby depriving us of the great fortune of their company. As Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja has recently entered those eternal pastimes, my sole prayer at his lotus feet is to accord me the ability to very soon serve the lotus feet of my eternally worshipful *gurupāda-padma*.

### **His attempt to educate us**

By leaving this world, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples are attempting to educate us, as it is said, “*śeṣāḥ sthāvaram icchanti kim āścaryam ataḥ param*—the greatest wonder is that people think they will live forever, despite the inevitability of death.” Or, as Lakṣmaṇa has said, “*niśvāse naiva viśvāsaḥ kadā ruddho bhaviṣyati*—one cannot trust when one might stop breathing.” But we are so unfortunate that even after listening and witnessing these lessons, we are unable to learn them, and thus continue to act in ignorance.

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# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## His early days and joining the maṭha

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja appeared in the village of Narmā, West Bengal and was given the name Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa after his family's worshipful deity, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa. His father, Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya, was a *jamindār* (landowner) as well as a practicing astrologer and Ayurvedic doctor. Being highly impressed by his first encounter with Gauḍīya Maṭha preachers, he invited them to stay for some days in his home. After regularly extending such invitations to devotees, Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya became closely acquainted with the Gauḍīya Maṭha.

The preachers of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha were so pleased with Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya's service and hospitality that they would stay only at his house during their visits to his town. Because he was not particularly attached to the opulence enjoyed by landowners in that era, he would spend most of his time treating patients and calculating astrological charts. He rendered profuse, wholehearted assistance to the *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* collecting funds for the Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* held by Śrī Caitanya Maṭha. He had a potent ambition for seeking his spiritual welfare, and so despite his worldly opulence and landowner affluence, he never hesitated to personally collect donations. He firmly believed that the association of *sādhus* is the only means of attaining wellbeing in this human life.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmacārī (later known as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja) once visited Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya's home to collect provisions for the upcoming Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*. Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya offered them one hundred eight rupees worth of silver coins in *praṇāmī*, and Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa and his brother, Kṛṣṇa dāsa, received the good fortune to serve them.

During his five-day stay, Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmacārī observed that Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa spent the majority of his time sitting peacefully in the temple room, either hearing *hari-kathā* or performing *kīrtana*.

One day, after Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmacārī sang *Jīva Jāgô Jīva Jāgô*, he and the boy, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa, discussed the meaning of the *kīrtana*. Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmacārī was amazed to see an ardent love for *kathā* and

*kīrtana* in such a young boy. He said to Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya, “Your son’s behavior is rather atypical for a child. His natural attraction to spiritual matters amazes me. We would be greatly pleased to have him stay in our *maṭha*. There, he can gain both spiritual knowledge and a regular education. Will you allow him to come with us?”

Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya replied, “If he agrees to your proposal, you may surely take him with you. I have no objections.”

Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī asked Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa, “Will you come with us to live with the *sannyāsīs* and *brahmācārīs* in our Kolkata *maṭha*, where you can receive both spiritual and material educations?”

“Yes!” Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa immediately answered.

“There, you will have to serve *sādhus* all of the time, just as you are doing here,” Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī told him.

“That will only increase my good fortune,” he replied with a youthful enthusiasm. In this way, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa agreed and accompanied the two visiting Vaiṣṇavas back to the *maṭha* at 1 Ulṭadāṅgā Road, Kolkata, which at the time was a rented apartment.

Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa’s mother, Śrī Ratna-mayī devī, was a considerably devotional woman. He was her third and youngest son and had been raised amid wealth. Before he left for the *maṭha*, she appropriately instructed him about his future stay in the austere atmosphere of his *guru*’s residence. She hugged him, kissed his forehead and said with tears in her eyes, “*Bābā!* Your purpose is noble. Make accomplishing this purpose your life’s only goal.”

Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya accompanied his son to Kolkata, where he had *darśana* of Śrīla Prabhupāda and talked to him about the boy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa, “So, *khokā*

<sup>1</sup>  
, will you be able to stay here?”

“Yes, yes,” the boy said. “I will definitely be able to stay.”

Upon joining the *maṭha*, the boy enrolled in a nearby school, the New Indian High School, and thus spent his time between his services in the *maṭha* and his studies. Sometimes Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī washed the clothes of the accomplished *sannyāsīs* and *brahmācārīs*, and sometimes he cleaned their rooms. Other times, he cleaned the temple room with great delight. The devotees of the *maṭha* were captivated by the boy’s enthusiasm and sincere inclination to serve. Also, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa’s voice was very sweet. He would sit with the devotees and sing *kīrtana* with them, heightening their ecstasy.

One day after Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī had completed his studies at the New Indian High School, Śrīla Prabhupāda told the *sannyāsī* and *brahmācārī* disciples crowded around him, “When I see how sincerely and quickly this boy performs his services, it occurs to me that if he were to spend his life in the *maṭha*, I could delegate many services to him without worry. But since he is young and has just finished his schooling, it is up to his parents whether he continues to stay here.”

Sometime later, Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya visited the Kolkata *maṭha* and asked his son, “Do you want to continue your studies? If you want to acquire a higher education, then I am happy to talk to Śrīla Prabhupāda and make arrangements for you to do so.”

Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī said, “I have heard from Śrīla Prabhupāda ‘*jaḍa-vidyā jātô māyāra vaibhava*—material knowledge is simply the opulent manifestation of Bhagavān’s illusory potency.’ Also, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda has stated in *Śaraṇāgati*, ‘*vidyāra gaurave bhrami*’ *deśe deśe dhana upārjana kôri*—in the pride of having acquired worldly knowledge, I simply wandered from one country to another accumulating material wealth.’ Furthermore, Śrī Caitanya-*bhāgavata* (*Ādi-khaṇḍa* 12.49) mentions:

*paḍe kene loka? kṛṣṇa-bhakti jānibāre  
se jādī nahilô, tabe vidyāya kī kare?*

Why do people study? In order to know *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. But what is the use of acquiring knowledge if that devotion does not arise?

Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī continued, “Because I have heard and taken to heart the true purport of these statements and other similar declarations found in scripture, I am determined not to waste my invaluable time in this human life on acquiring higher education, material comforts or earning a livelihood. I want to obtain spiritual knowledge and thereby fulfill the true purpose of living in the *maṭha*.”

After Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī consulted with Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī regarding his future, he decided that according to his current interest and inclination, it would be best to study Sanskrit under Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciple Śrī ‘Kavya-vyākaraṇa-tīrtha’ Gaura dāsa Paṇḍita in order to comprehend the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scriptural canon. Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī submitted this proposal to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who gave his permission. Thus Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī relocated from Kolkata to Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura.

Sometime later, when Śrīla Prabhupāda held a grand event to showcase the *Sat-śikṣa Pradarśinī* exhibition in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura in the year 1930, he ordered Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī, who was then absorbed in studying Sanskrit grammar, to dedicate himself to the services related to the exhibition. As per Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī would deliver scripturally sound explanations to the guests regarding the exhibition's many displays. Unbeknownst to him, Śrīla Prabhupāda listened in on these explanations, and when Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's mother, father and two elder brothers came to see the exhibition, Śrīla Prabhupāda praised the boy profusely.

He told Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya and Śrī Ratna-mayī devī, "Your youngest son has accrued substantial qualifications for someone his age. At present, he is studying Sanskrit grammar and sincerely serving the residents of the *dhāma*."

At the exhibition, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī spoke with his family members for some time about Śrīla Prabhupāda's glories, the legacy of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings, the specialty of the Gauḍīya Maṭha and the profound purpose of the exhibition's themes. Then, he requested them to invite good fortune to their lives by taking shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet. Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya and Śrī Ratna-mayī devī were rendered speechless by their amazement with their youngest son. They decided then and there that they and their three sons would all become Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples.

Śrīla Prabhupāda showered his mercy on Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya, his wife Śrī Ratnamayī devī, and their sons, Śrī Rādhā-śyāma Rāya, Śrī Rādhā-vinodā Rāya, and Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Rāya, by giving them all *harināma*. He asked Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's parents, "Do you object to Rādhā-ramaṇa continuing to stay in the *maṭha*?"

Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Rāya and Śrī Ratna-mayī devī replied, "Please consider this boy as having been offered for the service of your lotus feet."

### **His astuteness in service**

According to the desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the daily newspaper *Dainika Nadiya Prakāśa* was printed from Māyāpura. One day, it so happened that there was no paper stock for the following day's issue, and the rainy weather was making it difficult to procure a new supply. Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī, the paper's editor at that time, informed Śrīla Prabhupāda about the situation and asked him what to do.

Śrīla Prabhupāda asked, “Is there anybody who can bring paper from our Bhāgavata Press in Kṛṣṇanagara?”

Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī mentioned, “Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī is here. I am certain he will go if you tell him.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda then ordered Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī to go, and the boy left immediately for Kṛṣṇanagara by bicycle. After riding a considerably far distance in the pouring rain, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī reached his destination. The devotees at Bhāgavata Press bound the paper supply to the back of his bicycle. The knots they made, however, were quite loose, and the entire bundle of paper fell to the wet ground during his return journey. Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī immediately removed his *dhotī*, which measured approximately five meters, and replaced it with his *uttarīya* (upper cloth), which measured only two meters. Then, using the *dhotī*, he nicely bound the paper, secured it to the bike and carefully brought it to Māyāpura. Śrīla Prabhupāda was informed of the situation once Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī returned, and he praised the boy, acknowledging that although he was very young, he displayed great astuteness in a difficult situation.

### **Receiving mantra-dīkṣā**

When Śrīla Prabhupāda saw for himself how skillful Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa was during the *Sat-śikṣa Pradarśinī* exhibition in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, he included his name in the list of devotees he would send to Ḍhākā to hold an exhibition there. When Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī found out about this, he appealed to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Viveka Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “My grammar studies have already been paused during the exhibition in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. If I go to Ḍhākā, they will practically cease altogether.”

When Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja put the matter before Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Prabhupāda called for Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī and told him, “To think we must first obtain some qualification before attempting to serve Śrī Hari simply invites obstacles in our lives. Who knows what may happen in the time spent pursuing perfection. Our time in this human form of life is momentary. We cannot trust our breath will last.

“The rice paddy in the field must be dried while the sun is still shining. It is best to seize whatever opportunities for *hari-sevā* may arise. Your qualification will increase more by serving the Lord than by independently pursuing grammatical knowledge. Only a life led under guidance brings auspiciousness for a spiritual seeker residing in an *āśrama*.”

Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī took Śrīla Prabhupāda's merciful instruction to heart and fixed it as the main instruction guiding him to the path of spiritual welfare. Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī was thus always faithfully preoccupied with various services, and in 1934, at Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata, Śrīla Prabhupāda granted Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī *mantra-dīkṣā*.

### **The praise and criticism of ordinary people is meant for their own sense enjoyment**

The devotees of Śrī Madhva Gauḍīya Maṭha in Ḍhākā once wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda, requesting him to send a *kīrtanīyā* for the *maṭha*. Knowing Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī to be an exceptional *kīrtanīyā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked him if he could manage to make the journey on his own. Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī confidently affirmed that he could, and accepting the order of his *gurudeva*, he departed for Ḍhākā, which required him to travel first by steamship and then by road.

Being the first passenger to arrive on the steamship, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī took a seat next to one of the ship's windows. After some time, the ship slowly began to fill with passengers. Those who arrived after him told him, "Move over. Why are you sitting near the window, anyway? You are a small child and can sit anywhere. Fresh air is required for old people. Why have you taken this seat? Get up from here and go sit elsewhere."

Another person commented, "Nowadays, people give birth to children and, without accepting the responsibility for looking after them, leave them in the *maṭha*. These children then become 'sādhus' due to their laziness and their aversion to work." After hearing these comments, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī quietly got up from his seat and stood near the ship's entrance, so that no one would be bothered further. Seeing this, everybody became satisfied and remained peaceful.

Approximately ten minutes later, an announcement was broadcasted over the loudspeaker: "Everyone please be attentive. The ocean is very rough today, and we have no control over the ship. We are in perilous danger. Anything can happen, so everyone please remember God and pray to Him for our safety."

Hearing this, an old man who had previously complained about Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī began to cry, lamenting, "My daughter is to be married soon, and I am carrying her dowry and wedding ornaments. If something happens to our ship, what will happen to my daughter's marriage? Everything

will be ruined!”

Another passenger responded, “Didn’t you hear the announcement? They are saying to remember God, so this is not the appropriate time to speak such things.”

The old man replied, “God will not listen to us, because we never did His *bhajana*. But surely He will listen to this young *sādhū*. Although he is very young, he has understood the true value of life.”

After this, all the passengers who had previously complained about Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī forcibly sat him down among them and requested him to pray for their safety. He replied, “I have heard from my Guru Mahārāja that the Lord only hears the prayers of His surrendered devotees. As I am not yet surrendered to Him, He will not even hear me, what to speak of fulfilling my requests. However, my Guru Mahārāja has also mentioned that we should always perform *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. Therefore, I can chant the *hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*, and all of you can repeat it in *kīrtana*. But I cannot guarantee that God will hear or save us.” The passengers accepted his proposal and began to perform *kīrtana*. After some time, the ship safely arrived at its destination.

Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja often mentioned this pastime, and in doing so taught us that both the criticism and praise of ordinary people have absolutely no value. Therefore, we should never become affected by whatever people may speak. Such people praise and criticize only for their own sense enjoyment.

### **On addressing godbrothers and other Vaiṣṇavas as ‘Prabhu’**

Once, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī asked Śrīla Prabhupāda why godbrothers refer to each other as ‘Prabhu,’ and Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the following response:

“It is said ‘*gurura sevaka haya mānya āpanāra*—the servant of one’s *guru* is to be revered.’ According to this notion, we address all of our godbrothers, both senior and junior, as ‘Prabhu’ so that we may cultivate a sense of being humbler than a blade of grass. If a person considers himself to be a Vaiṣṇava and others to be junior or less advanced than him, he nurtures only mundane egotism. In the realm of spirituality, if we see each other as the servants of our *guru*, the notion that another is inferior to or less qualified than us will never enter our hearts. Then, we will not have a chance to feel malice or disregard for others.

“This is the secret of addressing each other as ‘Prabhu.’ If one wishes to

relinquish gross egotism and become a servant of *śrī gurudeva*, one must not regard *śrī gurudeva*'s servants in terms of senior and junior. As the scriptures state, '*tad bhṛtya bhṛtya bhṛtasya bhṛtyam iti māṁ smara lokanātha*—O Lord of the universe, I wish to forever remember that I am but the servant of the servant of the servant of Your servant." We must deeply internalize this conception. In this way, scripture ordains that the servants of *śrī guru* and indeed all Vaiṣṇavas are to be addressed as 'Prabhu.' "

### **His deep vision and concern for the residents of the maṭha**

Once, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī and Guru Mahārāja (then known as Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī) were staying in the Madras Gauḍīya Maṭha. Although they were *brahmācārīs* and not *sannyāsīs*, they were accepted as experienced seniors because they sincerely followed Śrīla Prabhupāda.

During their stay, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī noticed that a particular *brahmācārī* refused to mix with the other residents of the *maṭha* and hardly spoke with anybody. He instead sought solitude wherever he could find it, just to focus on his reading and chanting. Sensing something suspicious about these activities, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī approached Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī and expressed his concerns, saying, "Prabhu, although this *brahmācārī* is chanting and reading a great deal and avoiding gossip, I feel something is wrong. Can you please investigate?"

Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī understood the legitimate reason for Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's concern. He called for the *brahmācārī* and asked him, "I have heard that you do not associate with any other residents of the *maṭha*, what to speak of joking with them or sitting with them to take *prasāda*. Why is this?"

The *brahmācārī* replied, "I do not wish to become involved in gossip, and that is why I prefer to keep to myself."

Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī said, "I think it would be better for you to sit with them and develop relationships. Try to lead your life in a natural way, as the other residents of the *maṭha* do. It is not a problem if you sometimes have to joke and engage in gossip with them. Why? Because there is something to learn in each and every activity of the devotees."

Feeling utterly confused, the *brahmācārī* replied, "Prabhu, although you are very senior to me, you are instructing me to do the opposite of what I have heard from other senior Vaiṣṇavas. I do not want you to feel as though I am challenging you, but Śrīman Mahāprabhu has directed us not to listen to or



speaking gossip. But you are asking me to indulge in material talks with *brahmacārīs* if required. This is greatly puzzling.”

Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmacārī then explained himself. “Listen properly,” he said. “Presently, you are residing in this *maṭha* only with your body, and not with your mind. If you do heed my words, then after some time your body will also go from here; you will surely return to your home. But if you follow what I have suggested, at least you will continue to stay here by body, and then gradually your mind will come to stay in the *maṭha* as well. Therefore, be peaceful and please try to follow my advice.”

This instance shows that although Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmacārī was considerably young, he was *dūra-darśī*, capable of seeing what will come in the future beyond the present circumstances.

While ordinary persons hold an external conception of proper and improper conduct, the perception of those who are *dūra-darśī* extends beyond external conduct. Such persons can clearly see what is deep inside the hearts of others, as well as what will become of them in the future. Both my Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmacārī could ascertain that because this *brahmacārī*’s mind was not fixed in being a servant of Śrī Hari, *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, he would quickly tire of his rigorous *sādhana* and leave the *maṭha*.

Sometime later, that *brahmacārī* received a letter. But instead of having it sent to the *maṭha*, he had the sender address it to a nearby *gr̥hastha* family. Seeing that a letter had come for a resident of the *maṭha*, that family explained the situation to Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmacārī and handed him the letter. Upon reading it, Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmacārī learned that the *brahmacārī* had previously sent a letter to his mother, informing her that he would soon return home, and that she should therefore arrange both a job and a wife for him. The letter Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmacārī received was the mother’s reply, in which she accepted the responsibility and told her son to return quickly. Shortly after the letter’s arrival, the *brahmacārī* left the *maṭha*.

Although the *brahmacārī* displayed absolutely no visible indications of mental unrest while staying in the *maṭha*, both Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmacārī and my Guru Mahārāja could understand the situation very clearly. Fortunately, due to impressions he received as a result of staying in the *maṭha*, this *brahmacārī* later accepted the real truth and returned to the *maṭha* around the age of sixty-five. Remembering the *dūra-darśitā* of Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he accepted *sannyāsa* from him some time after.

### **His courage to accept the truth**

Śrīla Prabhupāda left this world shortly after the end of Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's childhood. Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's heart was broken upon seeing the regretful state of the Gauḍīya Maṭha organization in the wake of Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure. Being still quite young, he felt it would be better to return to his family instead of enduring the regrettable situation in which he found himself. Thinking in this way, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī expressed this desire to his father, Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Prabhu, who accepted his proposal and welcomed him home.

Hearing the news of Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's departure from the *maṭha*, my Guru Mahārāja arrived at his home and asked Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Prabhu, "You are the disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Even if your son is asking to return home, how can you allow it?"

Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Prabhu replied, "Actually, I do not wish for him to leave the *maṭha*, but at the same time I don't want him to be discouraged and think there is no one to support him due to his having chosen another path; I don't want him to feel abandoned or unentitled to his inheritance. For this reason, I have allowed him to return home. If you prefer him to remain a *brahmācārī* and return to the *maṭha*, then he can go with you if he agrees to it. I have no objection. In fact, I would be pleased by this."

Guru Mahārāja discussed the matter with Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī, who said, "Śrī Hayagrīva Prabhu, you have gone to so much trouble for me. In coming to bring me back to the *maṭha*, you have treated me like the best of friends. I am indebted to your lotus feet for this. However, even if I agree to again live in the *maṭha* and, as a service to Śrī Hari, become involved with the ongoing court case, I doubt I will be able to reconcile my concerns for the future of the *maṭha*. Given the impression I have of how the residents of the *maṭha* dealt with each other following Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, I do not find myself very eager to march back there. Please forgive me for this. I promise you that I will deeply evaluate all these matters soon."

After Guru Mahārāja left, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa thought, "What have I done! I have foiled the plans of a Vaiṣṇava who was concerned for my welfare and humiliated him by forcing him to turn back." Knowing that this would become an impediment to his *bhajana*, he spent the days that followed in regret, eating and sleeping only out of habit.

After a few days, a particular scriptural adage occurred to him: "*śubhasya śīghram aśubhasya kāla haraṇam*—good deeds should be done immediately

and bad deeds should be delayed.” With this in mind, he presented himself before Guru Mahārāja, who was then preaching in Medinīpura. Guru Mahārāja was so joyful and awestruck to see Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī’s determination to dedicate his life to the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas that he felt he should be awarded *sannyāsa*. Because Guru Mahārāja was not a *sannyāsī* at the time, he requested Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to award *sannyāsa* to Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī. Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja accepted the proposal and awarded him *sannyāsa* at the Kṣīra-corā Gopīnātha temple in Remuṇā. Since that time, he has been known as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

We had never heard about this incident from anyone, not even Guru Mahārāja, until Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja himself spoke about it during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* in Vṛndāvana, and later at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Chandigarh. Śrīla Mahārāja would often declare, “I have been tremendously benefited by the affectionate guidance of *pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja. He saved my life. What would have happened to me had I stayed at home? He saved me from great danger.”

Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and my Guru Mahārāja were among the many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda who stayed in Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Medinīpura, West Bengal. Although Guru Mahārāja collected many donations and purchased the property for constructing that *maṭha*, he did everything in the name of Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and not his own. Such was the affection he had for him. Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja used to say, “I am not the master of anything or anyone. I am only a servant. As long as my godbrothers accept my service, I will give it. Should they no longer be interested in receiving it, I will stay with whosoever agrees to give me shelter.”

### **His magnetic hari-kathā and kīrtana**

Many people would come to the *maṭha* just to hear Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s beautiful *hari-kathā* and *kīrtanas*. Once, he accompanied Guru Mahārāja to Jammu with a preaching party. Although he sang *kīrtanas* in Bengali, a language the people of Jammu do not understand, many people were nonetheless attracted.

Everyone in attendance appreciated his *kīrtanas* so much that they would repeatedly request him to sing, and so he sang a *kīrtana* about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: “*varṇa-cora, kothā mātāī calve re*—O You who have stolen the complexion [of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī]! You have intoxicated us. Where, now, do

You wish to take us?”

After returning from the daily *nagara-saṅkīrtanas* held during the program, he would sing the following song, which dripped with *rasa* as it emanated from his lotus lips:

*nagara bhramiyā āmāra gaura elô ghare  
gaura elô ghare āmāra nitāi elô ghare*

After roaming throughout the towns and villages, my Gaura has come back home.  
Gaura has come back home and my Nitāi has come back home.

*dhūla jhari’ śacī-mātā gaura kole kare  
dhūla jhari’ padmāvatī nitāi kole kare*

Brushing off the dust [from His body], Mother Śacī takes Gaura upon her lap. Brushing off the dust [from His body], Mother Padmāvatī takes Nitāi upon her lap.”

As the preaching party for that trip was quite large, two programs were held each day. Although Śrīla Mahārāja was not proficient in speaking Hindi, his *hari-kathā* was simple and easily understandable for all, and it therefore attracted many people. Honoring the requests of the residents of Jammu, he performed *kīrtana* and spoke *hari-kathā* twice daily.

### **His strictness and gravity**

Whether he was attending a meeting, arranging a festival or sitting as chairman of an assembly, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was always extremely punctual. We have observed that if he was presiding over a function and someone spoke *hari-kathā* beyond the allotted time, Śrīla Mahārāja would immediately interrupt him by terminating his address. If the speaker was senior to Śrīla Mahārāja, he would politely but firmly request him to stop speaking. But with juniors, he would grab them by the ears and order them to sit down.

Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja did not tolerate inattentiveness. If he observed anyone—whether a *brahmacārī*, *sannyāsī*, lady, child or whosoever—doing anything besides sincerely hearing during the time of *hari-kathā*, he would reprimand that person without giving them a chance to speak, saying, “Please leave. You do not know the etiquette of sitting in an assembly of Vaiṣṇavas.”

Once, a *mātā-jī* came to hear *hari-kathā* with her grandson, who was approximately one or one-and-a-half years old. When the boy started crying loudly during the *kathā*, she tried to pacify him. Seeing this, Śrīla Santa

Gosvāmī Mahārāja told her, “Do not stay in this assembly any longer. Only attentive people who give first priority to *hari-kathā* are welcome here, and not anybody else. You think the care of your grandson to be of the utmost importance and *hari-kathā* to be secondary. Do you think this is a place where people can sit and do as they please? Our time is very precious, and we have no interest in wasting it. Please leave immediately.”

If Śrīla Mahārāja ever saw a person who had dedicated his life to *brahmacarya* fail to honor the required rules and regulations, such as shaving on *pūrṇimā*, he would chastise the person, saying, “Why have you accepted the clothes of a *brahmacārī*? You are only cheating yourself. Stop trying to ruin your life. Simply follow the teachings of our *guru-varga*. Even if you do not understand the purpose of each and every principle, you will still be benefitted by following them.”

### **Establishing siddhāntain few words**

Once, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja hosted a function at his Bihālā *maṭha* in Kolkata and invited many different guests to speak. Among them were a number of disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, like Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Bhūdeva Śrautī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, as well as Śrīla Prabhupāda’s grand-disciples from various *maṭhas*, such as *pūjyapāda* Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and myself. Also in attendance was an old *brāhmaṇa* university professor from a local college. His face displayed a lack of interest during the gathering, and when it came time for him to deliver his lecture, he spoke *māyāvāda* philosophy, declaring, “*Aham brahmāsmi*—I am *brahma*,” along with several other *māyāvāda* slogans. After finishing his speech, the professor rejoined the other speakers on stage and continued to look visibly disinterested during any subsequent speeches.

When the time came for Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja to give his speech, Śrīla Mahārāja asked, “Are you *brahma*?”

The professor answered, “Yes, I am.”

Śrīla Mahārāja asked, “Then is it true you do not undergo *vikāra* (change, or transformation)?”

“Correct. I do not,” the professor replied.

Then, with one hand gripping his *sannyāsa-daṇḍa* and the other in a clenched fist, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja abruptly rose from his chair and charged at the *māyāvādī* professor, mimicking as if he were going to beat him. Viscerally startled, the old man flinched in sheer terror. Śrīla Mahārāja

repeated this threatening motion two more times, and in both instances the man recoiled in fear.

Śrīla Mahārāja declared, “You are not *brahma*! *Brahma* is *nirvikāra*; it never undergoes change and never reacts to anything. No one can harm *brahma*, and therefore *brahma* will never react in any situation. By becoming fearful just now, you revealed to the entire assembly that you are not *brahma*.”

In so few words, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja exposed the old *brāhmaṇa*’s philosophy as false. Then, with the entire assembly, including the children, roaring in laughter, the old professor felt mortified and begged Śrīla Mahārāja for forgiveness.

### **A special meaning of ‘kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa’**

I have heard Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja speak his opinion on Śrī Caitanya-deva’s teaching to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda:

*jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya—kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 20.108)*

He said, “This verse states that the *svarūpa* (eternal form) of the *jīva* is as Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant, and while this is most certainly true, I would like to interpret it in a slightly different way. From my point-of-view, the word *kṛṣṇa* here does not mean ‘Kṛṣṇa who is performing His pastimes in Goloka Vṛndāvana.’ Instead, I take it to mean ‘Kṛṣṇa who appears in this world in the form of *guru* to deliver sincere souls out of the clutches of *māyā* and bring them to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, where they may engage in His loving service.’ The statement of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī supports my stance:

*guru rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.45)*

In His form as *guru*, Kṛṣṇa distributes His mercy to the devotees.

“Therefore, it is not incorrect to say *jīvera svarūpa haya gurura nitya-dāsa*.

“Why have I accepted this point-of-view? Because since time immemorial I have been wondering about the universe in different forms, accepting bodies of the different 8,400,000 species, and only in this lifetime has Kṛṣṇa manifested Himself in front of me as *śrī guru* to bless me with everything. Thus, I consider that form, His form as *śrī guru*, to be eternally worshipful.

“When I was preaching in Rangoon, I wrote an article titled *Bhṛtyera*

*Paricaya: The Identity of a Servant*, in which I included a poem of mine that expressed the following:

The glory of service to *śrī gurupāda-padma* exceeds that of service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Why? While it is true that the *jīva* is constitutionally an eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the conditioned soul has forgotten this relationship due to his aversion to Him since time immemorial. *Śrī śrī gurudeva* is the giver of *sambandha-jñāna*, knowledge of one's eternal relationship with Bhagavān. As one engages everything—body, mind and words—in serving him, he becomes *gurudevātātma*, one in spirit with *śrī gurudeva*. Then, by *śrī gurudeva*'s mercy, the practitioner gradually realizes the purport of the teaching from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 1.45), “*guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe*—in the form of *śrī guru*, Kṛṣṇa bestows His mercy on the devotees.”

Not to speak of the stage of *sādhana-bhakti*, even in the liberated state, when the soul is situated in his eternal nature (*svarūpa-siddhi*), none of his efforts bear fruit without the guidance of *śrī śrī gurudeva*. Even in the stage of *vastu-siddhi*

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, the *jīva*'s attainment of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala's service is dependent on the guidance of *śrī guru*. Therefore, *śrī gurudeva* is the embodiment of Bhagavān's mercy, and his mercy is not limited to this world alone.

It is said, “*śrī guru caraṇa satya, tāhāra sevaka nitya*—the lotus feet of *śrī guru* are truth, and I am eternally his servant.” The relationship of servitude that the disciple establishes with *śrī gurupāda-padma* at the time of *dīkṣā* is eternal. Even in the perfected stage, in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes, this relationship exists in a special form. Thus, in order for the *jīva* to realize his position as the eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it is absolutely necessary for him to serve *śrī gurupāda-padma*. For this very reason, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has stated in *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, “*viśrambhena guroḥ sevā sādhu-varmānu-varttanam*—one ought to render intimate service to *guru* and follow the path of the *sādhus*.”

*Śrī gurudeva* is the personification of Śrī Bhagavān's mercy. In terms of potency of mercy, *śrī guru* and Śrī Bhagavan are one. Bhagavān's possesses all potencies. Among all His potencies, His mercy potency reigns supreme; all other potencies of His are subordinate to this potency. Although *śrī gurudeva* is not omnipotent, the omnipotent Bhagavān is under his sway due to the power of his *prema*. Therefore, the mercy of *guru* is all-in-all.

“After I completed this essay, I gave it to my senior godbrother, Śrī Bhakti Sudhīra Yācaka Mahārāja, who then sent it with great delight to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, where it eventually reached the lotus hands of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Once Śrīla Prabhupāda read it, he gave it to Śrī Praṇavānanda Brahmācārī to read and said, ‘What Rādhā-ramaṇa has written is correct. It is a matter of great delight that he has gained such spiritual insight at his young age. His conclusions in this essay are perfect and factual, and it should be published in our magazine, *Dainika Nāḍīyā Prakāśa*, for all to read.’ Later, Śrīla Prabhupāda personally sent me a letter conveying his blessings to me.”

Vaiṣṇavas like Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and many other disciples of

Śrīla Prabhupāda are *mahān-vibhūtīs*, great personalities. Their lives, their conduct, their thoughts, their vision and everything else about them is such that our astonishment at their divine qualities increases the more we hear and speak about them.

### **An affectionate refusal**

Being very merciful to me, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave me the opportunity to serve him in various ways. Once, my Guru Mahārāja sent me to Purī along with our Śrī Yasoda-jīvana Brahmācārī, Śrī Bhakti Saurabha Ācārya Mahārāja (whose name was Śrī Gauraṅga-prasāda Brahmācārī at the time), and others for the important work of acquiring the property of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s birth site in Jagannātha Purī. While there, we stayed with Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja in a small house he purchased for the purpose of converting it into a *maṭha*. When the time of the Ratha-yātrā festival came, I sent Śrī Gauraṅga-prasāda Prabhu to humbly request Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja to allow us to leave and stay in a nearby *dharmasālā* during the upcoming festival, as we expected many of his disciples would be coming to stay with him in the small house. We could return after the festival, but we did not want to impose on Śrīla Mahārāja or his followers.

Upon hearing our request, Śrīla Mahārāja affectionately, yet firmly, replied in great surprise, “How is it possible that I can accept this? The words ‘Yes, you can stay somewhere else’ can never come from my mouth. Why? Because the work you came here to do—purchasing the property of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s birth site—was actually our duty, since we are his disciples. While we have not made the slightest endeavor for that, we see that you are very enthusiastically accomplishing this work. Therefore, it is impossible for me to accept your proposal, and I request that although we are unable to provide you with so many facilities, please make any necessary adjustments with the facilities we are capable of providing, so that you can peacefully stay with us.”

A Vaiṣṇava never considers, “This place is ours and we can manage everything. Everything should be done according to our desire.” Instead, they think, “No, this is not our place. This place belongs to the Vaiṣṇavas, and we are its members, not its owners. We will cooperate with whoever comes, accommodating them according to the available facilities.”

Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja later gave me the opportunity to construct a proper *maṭha* at the site of that house. He asked me, “This is such a small place, but my disciples are telling me that you can create a decent plan and layout for



the construction of a *maṭha*.”

I mentioned, “Yes, but because it is small, it cannot be constructed in a rectangular manner. It should be done in a parallel way. The *āśrama* can be on one side, and the temple can be on the other side.”

He replied, “I don’t understand ‘parallel construction,’ ‘rectangular construction’ or any of these things. Please just do it in such a way that everything will be done properly.” After that, I made the plan, inspected everything and oversaw the entire construction process.

### **Extending an invitation to a king on his behalf**

Another time, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja wanted to organize a large festival for the twenty-fifth anniversary of a *maṭha* he built in Keśīyāḍī, in the district of Bardhamāna, West Bengal. Although the king of Purī was invited to be a guest of honor at the festival, he declined. Knowing that I had a friendly relationship with the king, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja sent a letter ordering me to convince the king to attend the function.

On Śrīla Mahārāja’s order, I visited the king, who said, “I have already told them it is impossible for me to attend.”

I jokingly replied, “From that sentence, just remove the word ‘not,’ and then it will be possible.” The king then explained that although he wanted to attend, he had a prior engagement elsewhere during the same time as the festival. After inquiring further, I came to know that the *maṭha* was on the way to his other engagement. I told him not to worry, and that I would arrange for his travel and everything if he would agree to visit the *maṭha* for a short while on the way. Hearing this, the king accepted my proposal. I was then able to personally accompany him to Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* for the inauguration festival.

That very day, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja ordered me to speak *hari-kathā*. I chose to explain the need for a Gauḍīya Maṭha in Keśīyāḍī, a place known for its abundance of temples. I explained that despite the town’s many temples, there was in fact a dire need for a Gauḍīya Maṭha, because even if people had the opportunity to visit every one of those temples, their hearts would never change. The *maṭha*, however, is a place where people can make their lives successful by smearing the foot dust of pure devotees all over their bodies. In the *maṭha*, a spiritual teacher is present, and those who want to become real, sincere spiritual students are always welcome to come, learn and practice. The *maṭha* exists for the wellbeing of such persons, and it provides a

great opportunity to its visitors to become fortunate by taking the mercy of the devotees residing there. In the association of such *sādhus*, learning the true, deep meanings of the *śāstras* is inevitable.

Afterward, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja mentioned to me, “The devotees greatly appreciated your presentation and would like you to stay with them for as long as your schedule allows.”

### **Humbly recognizing his position as a servant of the servant of our guru-varga**

During our time together in Keśīyāḍī, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and I received the opportunity to visit the appearance place of Śrī Rasikānanda-deva, a disciple of Śrī Śyāmānanda Prabhu. The devotees there wanted to offer *praṇāmī* to Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, but he flatly refused, saying, “This is the place of our *guru varga*. How can I accept *praṇāmī* here?” Instead of accepting the devotees’ *praṇāmī*, he offered *praṇāmī* to them.

### **Following his instruction, despite my embarrassment**

By the mercy of Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, I was able to render various services to him. As a result of these services, he became pleased with me, our relationship deepened, and his affection for me became so strong that whenever we stayed in the same place, he never allowed me to take *prasāda* without him or to stay anywhere other than his room.

During festivals or any other functions where my Guru Mahārāja or his godbrothers were present, I always sat on the ground while they sat on the dais. But once, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja ordered me to join them on the stage. Being embarrassed to sit on the same level as my *guru-varga*, I declined. But my Guru Mahārāja told me, “Because *pūjyapāda* Santa Mahārāja has given the order, you must sit with us. Do not say no.”

He was the first disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda to ask me to sit on the dais. From then on, I began to sit on the stage; I never did so before that.

### **Appreciating a beloved godbrother**

Śrīla Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja once spoke the following on the apperane day of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

“Two of our most worshipful Vaiṣṇavas, Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, mercifully brought this unworthy soul to the proximity of His Divine Grace ŚrīlaPrabhupāda, whereby I attained the shelter of his lotus feet. It is impossible

for me to repay the infinite compassion they showed me. All I can do is express to them my most sincere gratitude. That I have been able to adhere to this path of *bhakti* even at the age of eighty-four is possible only because of Śrīpāda Purī Mahārāja's continuous guidance, and I am deeply indebted to him for this.

“Śrīla Purī Mahārāja is extremely well-educated and well-versed in scripture. Learned men are plentiful, but a truly knowledgeable man is rare. The knowledge he imparts is not merely bookish, nor should it be considered speculative reasoning. Rather, it is most relishable and enlightening, simply because it is transcendently beautiful and divine in nature. By the grace of his *gurudeva*, the divine qualities of a bona fide *ācārya* were already evident in his activities from the outset of his spiritual pursuits. Although he was always grave in his dealings, he never disregarded anybody. He never cheated anyone, nor was he ever dishonest. His exemplary life and conduct can be aptly described through the following verse of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*:

*tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābigacched  
samit pāṇi śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham*

“This means that in order to obtain *bhagavad-bhakti*, one should humbly approach a spiritual master who is well-versed in that science and offer to him his body, mind and speech. In other words, he should completely surrender to *śrī guru*.

“I consider myself Śrī Purī Mahārāja's younger godbrother, and he is also my *śikṣā-guru* from whom I have learnt the subtleties of the Vedic scriptures.”

### **A few of his teachings**

The following are a few of Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's teachings that left an indelible impression on my heart:

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In order to taste *bhakti-rasa*, two components are indispensable: a realized speaker and a sincerely inquisitive listener. Our inability to experience this *rasa* is solely due to an absence of either of these two requirements. Such genuine, transcendental experience can never be achieved through a mere act of imitation.

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*Śrī guru* is an ocean of mercy, whereas the material world is an ocean of birth and death. The only means to cross over this woeful ocean is to surrender exclusively to the lotus feet of the spiritual master. *Śrī guru* has no occupation other than performing *bhagavad-bhakti*, and by the infinite grace of his preceptor, he is well-versed in every aspect of the transcendental realm. Having already obtained the mercy of his predecessor *ācāryas*, he too possesses all the qualities of a true *ācārya*. Thus, *śrī guru* is qualified to bestow blessings on others and deliver the fallen souls.

If we deeply consider the principle of *śrī guru*, we find that the root words *gu* and *ru* in Sanskrit mean ‘darkness’ and ‘that which destroys or eliminates,’ respectively. Therefore, it is evident that one who is incapable of removing the darkness of ignorance from the hearts of the living entities cannot be considered a true *guru*.

Living our lives in this material world is difficult and dangerous, like walking on the sharp edge of a razor; every step gives rise to sorrow and pain. Moreover, to be bereft of spiritual knowledge is a source of great misery.

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It is impossible to realize the Absolute Truth through parrot-like preaching or the pursuit of speculative knowledge. The purports of the Vedic scriptures are revealed through the medium of *śrī guru* only to the surrendered *bhaktas* who serve the spiritual master with the same completely pure and unalloyed devotion with which they serve Bhagavān.

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Real education begins when one’s capacity to learn is directed toward serving Śrī Hari. Many individuals study scriptures merely to exhibit their half-baked knowledge, but such ambition is strictly forbidden. True knowledge is that which inspires one to seek the service of Bhagavān.

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1 Bengali colloquialism for ‘boy,’ similar to the English word ‘kiddo.’

2 The stage following *svarūpa-siddhi* that is characterized by the *jīva*’s absolute liberation from every last tinge of materiality and the complete attainment of his spiritual form, whereby he is granted entrance into the unmanifest pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This is the *jīva*’s highest attainment.

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Surrendering to Śrīla Prabhupāda

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja appeared in a family of *brāhmaṇas* and was previously known as Śrī Nṛpendra Sanyāla. Prior to taking shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet, Śrī Nṛpendra Sanyāla worked as a reporter for the famous Bengali newspaper *Amṛta Bāzār Patrikā*. He and a number of other reporters once went to Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha to cover the *Sat-śikṣā Pradarśinī* exhibition organized by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Through a series of dioramas, the exhibition exposed various corrupt practices prevalent in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community. Such practices included shelling peanuts with worshipful *śāligrāma-śilās*, demanding money for the *darśana* of deities, making money through the recitation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the bestowal of *mantras*, the *brāhmaṇas*' consuming of meat and wine, and the Bābājīs' shameless associating with women although they have accepted the external dress of a renunciate. Śrī Nṛpendra Sanyāla was naturally inclined to gain as much knowledge as possible, and so he posed many questions to the devotees present. Observing his inquisitiveness, the devotees took him to their *gurudeva*, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura.

It was then that Śrī Nṛpendra Sanyāla met Śrīla Prabhupāda for the first time and received the opportunity to hear from his lotus mouth the pure concepts of the Gauḍīya line regarding *bhāgavata-dharma*, *bhāgavata-paramparā* and the inseparable connection between *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas.

The way in which Śrīman Mahāprabhu arranged for each personality to come to Śrīla Prabhupāda is an amazing affair. Śrī Nṛpendra Sanyāla was so thoroughly impressed by Śrīla Prabhupāda's fearlessness that whenever the opportunity arose, he would visit the *maṭha* to hear *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana*. He deeply contemplated the significance of important subjects as *sādhū-saṅga*, the true purpose of human life, and the glories of a bona fide spiritual lineage.

After careful introspection, Śrī Nṛpendra Sanyāla decided, "I will take shelter of this great personality's lotus feet, become his most insignificant servant, try to understand his true internal moods, and dedicate my life to the auspicious work he has begun." He was profoundly impacted by Śrīla Prabhupāda's decision to dedicate his life to undertaking such grave

responsibilities. Shortly after, he revealed his heart to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded him *harināma* and *mantra-dīkṣā* and gave him the name Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī.

### **Serving in separation**

Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī was a skilled reporter and especially proficient in English. Upon observing his attentiveness and his ability to eloquently repeat whatever he heard, Śrīla Prabhupāda sent him along with other *sannyāsīs* and *brahmācārīs* to preach in Mumbai under the guidance of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. There, Śrī M.P. Engineer—the chairman of the Theosophical Society and, later, the first Advocate General of independent India—invited the Gauḍīya Maṭha preachers to speak at one of the society’s gatherings. He was greatly inspired by Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s lecture, as well as by the *kīrtana*, conduct and convictions of the devotees.

Later, when Śrīla Prabhupāda visited Mumbai, Śrī M.P. Engineer requested him to establish a Gauḍīya Maṭha branch there. Before offering a reply, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī, “Would you feel inconvenienced if I were to assign you the responsibility of preaching in Mumbai?”

In reply, Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī quoted a *kīrtana* composed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

*tomāra sevāya, duḥkha haya jātô  
seo tô’parama sukha  
sevā-sukha-duḥkha, parama-sampada,  
nāśaye avidyā-duḥkha*

*Śaraṇāgati (Ātma-nivedana 8.4)*

Whatever distress I may experience in the course of serving You is actually the greatest of joys. The pains and pleasures of serving You are the greatest wealth, for they destroy the misery of ignorance.

He continued, “Although a neophyte devotee like me derives the greatest amount of spiritual benefit in the direct association of *śrī guru*, still, I am convinced you will not deprive me of that same benefit if I obey your instruction to serve you from a distance.”

According to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions and guidance, Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī preached all over Mumbai. While he was there,

Śrīla Prabhupāda mercifully blessed him by sending him a set of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s twelve cantos inscribed with the name 'Narottamānanda Brahmācārī.' Recalling this instance, Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja used to say, "I considered Śrīla Prabhupāda's gift as an instruction to preoccupy myself with the practice and preaching of *śrī bhāgavata-dharma*."

### **The lotus of devotion**

Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī would deliver exceptionally sweet sermons on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, explaining every subject with sound reasoning and in no uncertain terms.

Śrīla Prabhupāda kept a complete record of his disciples' preaching activities. Being highly pleased by the enthusiasm and expertise with which Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī preached *bhāgavata-dharma*, he thus conferred upon him a Śrī Gaura Āśīrvāda certificate and the title 'Bhakti Kamala,' which means 'the lotus of devotion.' Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja honored this title when he awarded Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī *sannyāsa* and gave him the name 'Śrī Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Mahārāja.'

### **The fruit of his invaluable preaching service**

Initially after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahansa Mahārāja joined together and preached the message of Śrīla Prabhupāda under the banner of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, an organization they founded. Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja would accept disciples, and Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Paramahansa Mahārāja would preach under his guidance. It was by the preaching and association of Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja that Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja obtained two prominent and invaluable jewels: Śrī Rādhānātha Vanacārī and Śrī Gaura-nārāyaṇa Vanacārī, later known as Śrī Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja and Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, respectively. This contribution of his will forever remain embedded in golden letters in the chronicles of the Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas.

### **Acquiring the land for his Māyāpura maṭha**

When differences arose among the prominent members of the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, Guru Mahārāja was called to reconcile those differences and resolve the situation. After hearing each of their views, Guru Mahārāja concluded, "Śrī Keśava Mahārāja has many renounced disciples, and therefore



it is better that Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha remains with him. Śrī Madhusūdana Mahārāja should continue preaching from the *maṭha* in Bardhamāna, and later I will personally assist him in acquiring a plot of land in Māyāpura and in building a *maṭha* there. Śrī Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja should be given a sufficient amount of funds, so that he can purchase land in Māyāpura and continue his services most suitably.”

The solution Guru Mahārāja proposed was readily accepted by all parties involved. Soon after, Guru Mahārāja inspired a lady devotee, Śrīmatī Pannā Mā—a disciple of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja who had taken up the path of *bhakti* after hearing *hari-kathā* from Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja—to acquire land in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura for Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and, true to his word, personally assisted in the construction of Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* to the furthest extent possible.

### **A unique perspective on prasāda**

During the deity installation festival at Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Maṭha, Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* in Māyāpura, I assisted Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja in performing the installation ceremony. It was then that Śrīla Madhusūdana Mahārāja revealed to me a special view concerning the *prasāda*.

Upon observing that the deities’ *bhoga* offering would be delayed due to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s advanced age and commitment to perfection, Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja told me, “Quickly prepare Ṭhākura-jī’s offering plate and keep it inside the altar room, so that Śrī Purī Mahārāja can make the *bhoga* offering when it is convenient for him. The Vaiṣṇavas assembled here today have come from various places and have services to perform elsewhere. I do not want to make them wait too long; I am certain they would like to return to their respective homes and *āśramas* punctually. Once the first portion of *bhoga* has been kept aside for Ṭhākura-jī, I will begin distributing the *prasāda* among the Vaisnavas.”

Śrīla Mahārāja explained, “I do not subscribe to the idea that *prasāda* is not to be considered *prasāda* until all the preparations from Ṭhākura-jī’s plate have been mixed back in with the respective receptacles from which they came. I believe that in special circumstances, there is no fault in distributing *prasāda* to the Vaiṣṇavas once the first portion of *bhoga* has been set aside and taken to the deity room for offering. There is even no need to wait until the *pūjārī* has brought the *bhoga* offering out from the deity room. On occasions such as this,

the auspicious installation of Bhagavān’s deity form, there is bound to be some delay. But as Vaiṣṇavas are the objects of our service, we should not make them wait. Therefore, apart from those who want to observe the new deities’ *bhoga* offering and *bhoga-āratī*, it is only appropriate that the devotees be served *prasāda* punctually.”

Once the *bhoga* offerings were brought into the deity room, Śrīla Mahārāja instructed a few devotees to distribute *prasāda*. That was the first time in my life that I saw *prasāda* being distributed immediately after Ṭhākura-jī’s plate had been prepared and before the actual offering was made.

### **His exemplary compliance with senior Vaiṣṇavas**

During the manifest presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja remained under the direct guidance of his *gurudeva*. After Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance, he served under the guidance of his senior godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and, later on, another senior godbrother, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who also awarded him *sannyāsa*. He would always consult his godbrothers and receive their permission before proceeding with any service. In this way, he substantiated the principle that *vaiṣṇava-dharma* is to be observed while remaining under the guidance of senior devotees, and that one cannot become steadfast in *vaiṣṇava-dharma* while remaining independent and unrestrained.

### **Regarding his godbrother as a manifestation of śrī guru**

Some Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas maintain that while reciting the *jaya-dhvani* or even in general, one ought to use the term *om viṣṇupāda* only in conjunction with the name of one’s *dīkṣā-guru* and no one else, not even one’s *śikṣā-guru*. However, I always personally witnessed Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, whom I recognize as an authentic *guru* in our line of spiritual masters, use this honorific before uttering the name of his senior godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who granted him the *sannyāsa-mantra* and whom he regarded as his *śikṣā-guru*.

Śrīla Mahārāja used to say, “Since *dīkṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru* are considered non-different in *tattva*, it is only proper to include *om viṣṇupāda* before both their names. In fact, it would be improper not to do so. Because he has fully internalized Śrīla Prabhupāda’s exemplary character, conduct, teachings and conceptions, I consider Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to be

like a second manifestation of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Therefore, I feel he is worthy of the title *om viṣṇupāda*.”

Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s fathomless surrender to one of his own godbrothers is exemplary. This further signifies and prominently establishes his highly evolved disposition and Vaiṣṇava humility.

### **His considerate and gentle nature**

When Guru Mahārāja planned for the deities of the Kolkata branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha to enter their newly constructed room on the auspicious day of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *puṣyābhiṣeka* (showering of flowers), he invited almost all his prominent godbrothers, including Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, to participate in a five-day festival in celebration of the occasion. When Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja arrived at the *maṭha*, he called me to his room and softly asked, “You won’t be displeased if I point out a mistake you have made, will you?”

“Of course not, Mahārāja,” I said. “In fact, I would be grateful to be given the chance to make amends. Please tell me what I have done wrong.”

Śrīla Mahārāja then pointed at the walls of the room. “You have not put hooks on the walls to tie up a mosquito net,” he said.

“Mahārāja,” I said, “I did not have hooks installed, as they would have interfered with the plastering work that was happening. But now that the work has been completed, I will arrange for hooks to be installed right away.”

Despite Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s exalted stature, he would never speak to anyone in a raised tone. He was very mindful and considerate in his dealings with junior devotees, and he was always careful not to hurt anyone with his words.

### **His deep respect for Guru Mahārāja**

One day, during a festival at the Hyderabad branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, I witnessed a friendly, humorous conversation between Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāśa Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. As they remembered their times together during Śrīla Prabhupāda’s manifest presence, they affectionately teased each other, saying things like, “It was your fault I couldn’t perform Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*,” and playfully accused each other, saying, “You did this,” and, “You did that.” However, I was amazed to see that as soon as Guru Mahārāja walked in the room, their joking immediately subsided and they began to discuss amongst

themselves in a disciplined manner. Then, once Guru Mahārāja left the room, they returned to their fun.

From their conduct, I understood that although Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja behaved as typical friends with one another, they possessed a reverential respect for Guru Mahārāja.

### **Accomplishing his service through the most appropriate means**

I personally witnessed that Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja would interact with Guru Mahārāja in various different ways according to time, place and circumstance. Once, at Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* in Navadvīpa, on the occasion of Śrī Jagannātha Miśra Mahotsava (the day after Śrī Gaura-pūrṇīmā), he addressed Guru Mahārāja as if he were complaining. “You have come late,” he said. “Is it appropriate to make everyone wait for you? Please do not be late again.”

Another time, in Śrī Jagannātha Purī, he praised Guru Mahārāja, saying, “No one else has been able to render the same unique service as you have. By your grace, we are fortunate enough to have gathered here today at the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

Yet another time, he said to Guru Mahārāja during an explanation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, “It is only by following every instruction of *grantha-bhāgavata* that one can become *bhakta-bhāgavata*.”

The key to understanding the import of these different modes of behavior is found in a *kīrtana* of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura: “*antare-bāhire, sama vyavahāra, amānī mānada ha’bô*—no disparity shall remain between my internal and external behavior. I shall not desire honor for myself and shall instead offer respect to others.” In other words, Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja would conduct himself according to the demands of service. Whether it was teaching, instructing, praising or chastising, he always chose the means that would best accomplish the pleasure of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

### **His recognition of my cow sevā**

When Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja once saw the effulgent bodies of the cows at our Māyāpura branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, he asked me, “Who serves these cows?”

I replied, “I do, Mahārāja-jī”

“What is your name?” he asked.

“Narottama Brahmācārī.”

“No, I want to know the surname you used prior to joining the *maṭha*.”

“I was previously known as Narottama Cakravartī.”

“Cakravartī, you say? Yes. You have come from a *brāhmaṇa* family, and you definitely possess the qualities befitting Vaiṣṇavas, who are the true *brāhmaṇas*. This is why you are serving these cows so nicely. Due to possessing an inferiority complex, one of my disciples refuses to serve the cows in our *maṭha*. He says, ‘I am a *brahmācārī*. I should serve Ṭhākura-jī. Why should I serve cows?’ Well, I can plainly see that Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja knows very well whom to engage in which services.”

### **A senior godbrother’s appreciation**

On the instruction of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja led Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* from Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Maṭha for many years and also served as the editor of the *maṭha*’s Bengali magazine, *Śrī Gaudīya-darśana*. Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja would say, “Servants are plentiful, but it is a matter of great fortune to find devotees like Śrīla Madhusūdana Mahārāja who are willing to accept full responsibility for a task and achieve it. It is solely because of him that I need not worry about many things and can perform my *bhajana* in peace.”

### **His appreciation of Guru Mahārāja’s determination**

On the occasion of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *vyāsa-pūjā* in 1978, Guru Mahārāja organized a grand festival at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s newly acquired appearance place in Purī. When Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja addressed the assembly, he said, “We disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda are many, but other than Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja, not one of us attempted to preserve Śrīla Prabhupāda’s glorious appearance place. Although many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda had ample means at their disposal, they did nothing. But what Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja lacked in financial resources, he made up for in ardent determination. It was by this determination that he managed to accomplish the impossible.”

After Guru Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastime, I also recall the way Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja came forward to impart some much needed inspiration when the deities of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Nāyana-maṇi were installed in the newly

established *maṭha*.

## **Glorification of Pūjyapāda Madhusūdana Mahārāja**

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī  
Mahārāja

### **His indomitable enthusiasm and expertise**

Our most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda noted Śrī Narottamānanda Prabhu's sincere inclination toward serving Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, especially his particular attachment to hearing and speaking *hari-kathā*. For this reason, Śrīla Prabhupāda sent him along with numerous veteran *tridaṇḍi-sannyāsīs* to preach all over India the principles of pure *bhakti* as issued from the lotus mouth of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. There were many occasions where Śrīla Prabhupāda personally observed the indomitable enthusiasm and expertise with which Śrī Narottamānanda Prabhu delivered lectures and performed *kīrtana* in assemblies graced with the presence of distinguished intellectuals, and he also noted the way he took on numerous responsibilities related to establishing *maṭhas* and temples. Śrīla Prabhupāda was highly pleased to see that Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī was always ready and eager to render all types of services with a peaceful mind and while wearing a sweet smile. On behalf of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma Pracāriṇī Sabhā, Śrīla Prabhupāda conferred upon him profuse, affectionate blessings by awarding him with the devotionally significant title 'Bhakti Kamala,' which means 'the lotus of devotion.'

### **The cause of his godbrothers' delight**

*Nityā-līlā-praviṣṭa pūjyāpāda* Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja, *pūjyapāda* Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja, *pūjyapāda nāma-bhajanānandī* Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, *pūjyapāda* Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja and other prominent, intimate disciples of Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda would always experience great delight upon hearing *pūjyapāda* Madhusūdana Mahārāja's classes on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

### **A Treasury of all virtues**

All of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's qualities manifest in His devotees, and Śrīpāda Madhusūdana Mahārāja was gifted with endless Vaiṣṇava qualities. Today, we are acutely experiencing the absence of this Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsī*, who was a treasury of all virtues. The sorrow of being unable to see him any longer is

becoming utterly intolerable for us.

### **Our heart's profound torment**

Devotees who are truly committed to performing *kīrtana*—that is, propagating the message and conclusive truths of pure *bhakti* as expounded by Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga—are very rare in this world. The absence of such devotees from the frame of our vision brings profound torment to the heart, so much so that it could never possibly be expressed through words. However, the desires of the sovereign Supreme Person, Puruṣottama Kṛṣṇa, who controls all by His own free will, are completely independent and indisputable. He retrieves from this world those who are dear to Him and gives them a place at His feet, thus immersing us in an ocean of separation. He causes us to remember these words: “*vaiṣṇavera guṇa-gāna kôrile jīvera trāṇa*—singing the glories of the Vaiṣṇavas delivers the living entities.” Thus, He teaches us to follow the ideals exemplified by His devotees’ *bhajana*. This alone constitutes the waters that may console our hearts, which are burning in a fire of anguish.

Excerpts from an article published in  
*Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī* (Year 31, Volume 8)

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabha Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## Accepting the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabha Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja appeared in the Khulna district of East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh) and was given the name Nanda-dulāla. He studied engineering at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack, where he came in contact with Śrī Śrīmad Vraja-bihārī dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, the in-charge of the local *maṭha* established by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Although Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was not well educated, he lectured daily on Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, as per Śrīla Prabhupāda's order. Because of his illiteracy, his manner of presenting discourses was not particularly scholarly. Nevertheless, illustrious academics and English professors were so moved by his simplicity that they joined the Gauḍīya Maṭha and became initiated devotees. He often told his listeners, "I am but a peon of my *gurudeva* and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. My delivery may be inadequate, but I always put forth my best effort in making sure their message reaches your ears. Since you are learned, kindly correct whatever mistakes I may have made."

Impressed by Śrīla Vraja-bihārī Bābājī Mahārāja's simplicity, Śrī Nanda-dulāla took full advantage of his daily association. Thus, a strong desire arose within him to take shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet. Through this pastime, Śrī Nanda-dulāla taught that the worldly knowledge of platform speakers can never infuse devotion in a person's heart. Although a well-spoken politician may expertly prepare a moving speech in less than half an hour, the effect of his rhetoric is merely temporary. Conversely, the incoherent speech of an entirely illiterate but surrendered devotee is so courageous that it inspires devotion in the hearts of those who hear it, even though it may be devoid of any scriptural references. It was with such surrendered devotees in mind that Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in his poem *Vaiṣṇava Ke?* (17), "*prāṇa āche tā'ra, se hetu pracāra*—he has life, he can preach."

When Śrī Nanda-dulāla notified his greatly pious mother and father of his desire to accept the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda, his father encouraged him to join the *maṭha*. "If you want to perform *hari-bhajana*," he told his son, "I will personally take you to Śrīla Prabhupāda and offer you at his lotus feet." Śrī Nanda-dulāla accepted this proposal, and his mother and father both accompanied him to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, where Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed to



award the three of them *harināma* and *dīkṣā* initiations. Henceforth, Śrī Nanda-dulāla became known as Śrī Nani-gopāla Brahmācārī.

After offering his son at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrī Nanda-dulāla's father told his son, "I am very pleased you have decided to surrender yourself to Śrīla Prabhupāda. May you always serve our *gurudeva*'s lotus feet. I beg you: please forget me and never return home. It would make me proud if you were to follow this instruction of mine."

In this way, Śrī Nanda-dulāla's father proved himself to be his son's true guardian:

*sei se parama-bandhu se pitā-mātā  
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caraṇe jei prema-bhakti-dātā  
Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala (Madhya-khaṇḍa)*

He who gives you loving devotion for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is your ultimate friend, your father and your mother.

That very year, in 1930, Śrī Nani-gopāla Brahmācārī was appointed as a teacher at the Ṭhākura Bhaktvinoda Institute in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura and assigned to the editorial team of the Gauḍīya Maṭha's daily newspaper, *Dainika Nadiyā Prakāśa*. Eventually, on the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he went on to preach in many cities in India.

After Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, Śrī Nani-gopāla Brahmācārī remained under the guidance of Śrīla Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who awarded him *sannyāsa* and gave him the name Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabha Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He became the editor of *Śrī Sārasvata Gauḍīya*, a monthly magazine published by Śrī Gauḍīya Saṅgha, the institution Śrīla Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja established. By authoring many articles that were printed in various Gauḍīya Maṭha magazines, Śrīla Mahārāja contributed to the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *bṛhat-mṛdaṅga*, his printing press. Additionally, in Vṛndāvana, he managed the Imlitalā *maṭha* for a long time and is largely responsible for its stunningly beautiful preservation.

Whenever my Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, would visit Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja would always visit him. Their relationship was very sweet and respectful. Without fail, Śrīla Mahārāja would always insist on bringing Guru Mahārāja to Imlitalā, where he would serve Guru Mahārāja and all his devotees *prasāda*.

After Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja's disappearance, Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja was appointed the *ācārya* of Śrī Gauḍīya Saṅgha, but upon

encountering various disturbances, he regarded his appointment as unfavorable for his practice of *bhakti* and promptly resigned. He submitted his resignation letter in person to the concerned parties, thus demonstrating his complete lack of conceit and selfishness. His simplicity was boundless, and he was entirely *niṣkiñcana*; he accepted Kṛṣṇa as his only wealth.

Through his personal example, Śrīla Mahārāja established that a *sādhaka* must give up all that is unfavorable for the practice of *bhakti*. He was not attached to the prestige that comes with a high-ranking position. Rather, he was interested only in rendering service to Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

We should be careful not to conclude that Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave up his service; he simply decided to perform that service in a situation he found more favorable for the execution of *bhakti*. After resigning from his post as *ācārya* of Śrī Gauḍīya Saṅgha, he established a *maṭha* in Siuḍi, West Bengal, where he once invited Guru Mahārāja to deliver a series of lectures.

### **Serving Śrī Hari, guru and Vaiṣṇavas by any means possible**

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahansa Mahārāja donated half of his property in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura to his godbrother Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja so that Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja could construct a *maṭha* there. However, as soon as Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja began laying the foundation, some Bangladeshi refugees pitched tents and began squatting on that land, citing the authority of a particular police officer. Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja was unconcerned about the situation. He told his godbrother Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, “I will not build anything there. Who wants to get involved in all these problems? I will simply stay with one of my godbrothers.”

One day, when Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī accompanied me to the *ghāṭa* to take a boat to Kṛṣṇanagara, he showed me Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s land and said, “Look. Some people are camping there with the support of the police, and Śrīla Bhaktisāra Mahārāja is not very motivated to deal with the matter. Can you help him with this?”

“Certainly,” I said. “It wouldn’t take me more than half an hour to evict all these people. Send word to the father of that policeman. Tell him Bhārātī Mahārāja says, ‘If your son wants to keep his job, the place should be totally empty by the time I return to Māyāpura. Otherwise, you must teach your son a lesson by filing a lawful complaint against him.’”

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa Keśava Prabhu did as I requested, and the squatters left the next day after receiving a small compensation for the cost of their tents.

Once his land was cleared of all refugees, Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja told me, “Due to my godbrother Śrī Kṛṣṇa Keśava Brahmācārī’s concern for me, you delivered a harsh message to that policeman’s father. Generally speaking, it is inappropriate for someone wearing the garb of a *sādhū* to speak in such a manner. However, it is your duty to extend yourself as far as necessary in order to serve *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān. There is no fault if such service requires you to resort to threats.”

### **A frank reproach**

Guru Mahārāja regularly held religious assemblies in many places, including Kolkata, Purī and Vṛndāvana. On the invitation cards, he always included the names of his invited godbrothers, along with brief introductions. Once, one of Guru Mahārāja’s godbrothers became angry to see that Guru Mahārāja had not included an introduction next to his name. He told some of his other godbrothers, “Why hasn’t Mādhava Mahārāja included an introduction of me? He has introduced himself and his other godbrothers as the Founder-*ācāryas* of their respective institutions, but he has not mentioned any details about me. This is entirely improper.”

In reply, Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who was straightforward and without malice, said, “You have only recently acquired a small place that has but two rooms. You have not held any festival there, so Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja has no way of knowing where it is. Are you a *sādhū*? If so, then you must always remain humble. Does your disposition reflect the meaning of *trṇādapi sunīcetā*, the quality of being humbler than a blade of grass? In the past, Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja has shown you great respect, even though you are his junior. Why, then, are you so angry? You cannot even imagine the depth to which Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī has entered the innermost region of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s heart. Do not pay attention to all these trivialities and thus cheat yourself of the essence, which is association with and service to *sādhū*.”

### **Whose service is most superior?**

Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja told me he once posed a question to his godbrothers: “According to their respective capacities, the many *sannyāsīs* and *brahmācārīs* of the *maṭha* are busily engaged from morning to night in various services. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *grhastha* and *vānaprasthī* disciples, also, perform

many different services. Do considerations of superiority and inferiority apply to the activities of service? If so, then which service is considered most exalted, and whose service is topmost?”

After an extensive discussion, they could not reach a solid conclusion, and so they relayed the question to Śrīla Prabhupāda via Śrī Paramānanda Prabhu. Śrīla Prabhupāda answered with one sentence: “The more love one has for the Vaiṣṇavas, the more exalted one’s service is.”

In other words, there are no big or small services. Rather, it is the servant’s mood that makes his service either first, second or third class.

### **Five instructions**

One day, while giving *darśana* to his disciples, Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja said, “I have spoken many things, and you have all heard so much. Remain engaged in spiritual activities. Thus, you will go somewhere and one day obtain what you seek.”

Speaking this much, he fell silent. After a few moments, he got up from his chair and as he went into his room, he asked one of disciples to speak *hari-kathā*. His disciple spoke on the rather unlimited subject his *śrī gurudeva* had just conveyed in only a few words:

“*I have spoken many things.* Despite his advanced age, Śrīla Guru Mahārāja has tirelessly and repeatedly explained, at great length and in a simple manner, the scriptural truths pertaining to *bhajana-sādhana* and the process to attain the lotus feet of Śrī Hari.

“*You have all heard so much.* Here, Śrīla Guru Mahārāja is saying, ‘Day after day, morning, noon and night, I have unfailingly spoken *hari-kathā*, sometimes addressing easy subject matters, and at other times tackling difficult ones. You have all heard so much and grasped something, some more than others. Because of your extensive hearing, your path towards the ultimate goal of life has been without difficulty.’

“*Remain engaged in spiritual activities.* Now that you have understood many profound concepts concerning spiritual life, go forward and follow those teachings properly with firm conviction and according to the guidance offered by the scriptures.

“*Thus you will go somewhere.* If you can daily and attentively serve—that is, worship the deities, behold Them, study scripture, perform *kīrtana*, chant *japa* and meditate—under the guidance of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, then the day will surely come when you will attain your prime objective.

*“You will one day obtain what you seek. If you heed the previous four instructions, then in this fifth stage, you will surely attain the rarely attained and eternally revered Divinity, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. You will leave behind this temporary, inferior earthly realm and reach Śrī Goloka Vṛndāvana, where all abide in a perpetual, blissful spring. Then, your life will be a success. You will be happy, peaceful, immortal and forever liberated, eternally full of sweetness and laughter.”*

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

## The messengers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's vāṇī

Once, Guru Mahārāja (then known as Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī), Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then Śrī Siddha-svarūpa Brahmācārī) and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja were invited to preach at a three-day spiritual function in Sylhet, East Bengal (now Bangladesh). On the first day, in his address, Śrī Siddha-svarūpa Brahmācārī made use of very straightforward but harsh and immoderate words while establishing the superiority of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu over the popular *māyāvāda* philosophies prevalent at that time. He referred to Vivekānanda, whose name means ‘one whose takes bliss in having intelligence’ as ‘Vi-vekānanda,’ or ‘one who takes bliss in being ignorant,’ and to Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa as ‘Rāma-hansa,’ or ‘a large but worthless swan.’ Upon hearing these epithets, many residents of Sylhet became irritated. That night, leaflets were published and distributed all over town denouncing the Gauḍīya Maṭha and demanding the cancellation of the function.

The event faced such great opposition that the next day, Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī met with the convener, the district judge, who expressed his concerns about safety and advised us to cancel the remaining two days of the function, just to rule out the possibility of any undesirable incident. Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī assured the judge that the speaker who had used incendiary words the previous night would most definitely not be speaking again, and that only he and Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja would address the audience. The judge replied, “It is on your assurance alone that I will allow the function to continue. I will make all the necessary arrangements for providing increased security, but please be mindful of the content of your *hari-kathā*.”

The next evening, the venue was filled with antagonistic objectors. Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī was the first to address the crowd, and he began by praising the hospitality of the Sylhet people. After he finished his speech and established his objective, he conceded the podium to Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. During his presentation, Śrīla Mahārāja said, “Our *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, has taught us that in our preaching, we are delivering the message of Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Caitanya

Mahāprabhu Himself. Our only purpose in coming here is to deliver, through fearless yet fair speech, the *vāṇī* (teachings) that incessantly flow from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the natural commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*, as it has been presented by Śrīman Mahāprabhu and our line of *guru-varga*—such as Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and others—who make up our *bhāgavata-paramparā*. We are not here to preach with the apprehension and shyness of a lady hiding her face behind a veil.

“What to speak of the philosophical doctrines of personalities like Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, Jaimini, Patañjali, Kaṇāda and so on, the ideology manifested by Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu is unparalleled and vastly superior to the ideologies established by even the previous four Vaiṣṇava *ācāryās*—Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrīla Madhvācārya, Śrī Nimbāditya and Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī. Through His teachings, He has highlighted the shortcomings of such doctrines and has conclusively defeated all erroneously fabricated philosophies. Therefore, in our presentation of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s ideology, how is it possible that the ideologies of persons like Vivekānanda, Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa and Bhandarkar will not be contested?

“Moreover, we are simply messengers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; our duty is merely to deliver His teachings. If anyone in this assembly has any objections, he may kindly address them to Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Vedavyāsa or Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Although we have unflinching faith in their *vicāra-dhārā* (line of ideology), we will undoubtedly surrender to any person who can present an ideology superior to that presented by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. But if such a person is not present in this world, what intelligent being would be unwilling to follow or feel uninspired by such a highly auspicious spiritual path as the one described by Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His followers?

“*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has clearly described Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Svayam Bhagavān:

*ete cāmśa kalāḥ puṁsaḥ  
kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.28)

All these *avatāras* are either plenary portions or portions of plenary portions of the Supreme Person, but Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.

“Furthermore, Kṛṣṇa Himself has stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that He is the ultimate object of surrender in such verses as:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya  
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja  
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo  
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (18.66)*

Completely abandoning all *dharma*, take shelter of Me alone. I will free you from the reactions of your sins. Do not lament.

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto  
mad-yājī mām namaskuru  
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te  
pratijāne priyo 'si me*

*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (18.65)*

Offer your mind to Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer *praṇāma* to Me. By this, you shall attain Me. I swear this truth to you because you are dear to Me.

*ananyāś cintayanto mām  
ye janāḥ paryupāsate  
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānām  
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*

*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (9.22)*

For those who are devoid of other desires, who are always absorbed in contemplation of Me and who always worship Me, I personally carry their necessities and preserve what they presently have.

“Therefore, what benefit is there in accepting the ideology of Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa, who advocates the worship of *devatās* (demigods)? Such worship is averse to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.31.14), which has firmly established:

*yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena  
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaśākhāḥ  
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām  
tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*

Just as pouring water on the root of a tree nourishes its trunk, branches, leaves and sprigs, and as giving food to the stomach nourishes all the senses and bodily limbs, all the demigods are automatically worshiped when one worships Śrī Acyuta (Bhagavān).

“The philosophy of Vivekānanda is ‘*jīve prema kare jei jana sei jana seviche īśvara*—one who has love for living entities actually serves the Supreme Lord.’ However, we see that his followers kill and eat animals, and



we must therefore conclude that in this slogan, the word *jīva*, as used by Vivekānanda, refers only to human beings. But the true meaning of the word *jīva* refers to all living entities.

You should all deeply consider these points. There is no need for us to say anything further. You are all free to make complaints against any imperfections in our methods of delivery, but you must know for certain that the philosophy we have presented remains immaculately pure at all times, without the slightest trace of contamination.”

After Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja concluded his speech, the audience responded with thunderous applause. Indeed, they were truly pleased, and they requested that the organizers extend the function for an additional fifteen days. In this way, the preaching of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s *vāṇī* in the city of Sylhet was a great success. As Sylhet was a city renowned for its good-quality lime, the residents, in their appreciation, arranged for a wagonload to be used in the service of whitewashing the walls of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, the temples at Yogapīṭha and other buildings in Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s Śrīdhāma Māyāpura.

Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was accustomed to speaking in a forthright manner that some may have found unpalatable, but he never presented anything other than *śrauta-vāṇī*, the teachings descending through the *bhāgavata-paramparā*. This was appreciated by the authoritative personality Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, his senior godbrother who defended the content of his junior godbrother’s speech that day in Sylhet.

### **Proclaiming the truth**

Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was considerably bold and straightforward in his lectures. He would never hold back when refuting others’ mistaken philosophies, nor would he attempt to avoid confrontation by speaking indirectly. Because of his impartial nature, he spoke in the same manner publically as he did privately.

Once, while preaching with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Viveka Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Mahārāja (then Śrī Siddha-svarūpa Brahmācārī) very forthrightly and unambiguously established the supremacy of pure *bhakti* over any and all pseudo-devotional religions included within the proverb “*ĵata mata tata patha*—there are as many paths to attain God as there are ways to see Him,” and that this popular slogan amounts merely to *miśrita-bhakti*, or mixed devotion. Needless to say, a number of people were greatly perturbed by this assertion, and they began to oppose the Gauḍīya Maṭha.

When Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu, the secretary of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, related this event to Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “While the scriptures affirm that Siddha-svarūpa Prabhu has spoken the truth, the harsh language he used should never come from our mouths. Be that as it may, his words have spread our message to such a large group of people that it would have cost us one lakh rupees otherwise. For this service, I will award him a Śrī Gaura Āśīrvāda certificate

<sup>1</sup>  
and grant him the special title ‘Vidyā-vāgīśa,’ which means ‘the best orator of true knowledge.’ Write that down, ‘Vidyā-vāgīśa,’ and reserve it for him.”

### **His appreciation of my determination**

Once, due to the carelessness of railway baggage handlers, the hand of one of the uninstalled deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa I had sent by train to be installed in a *maṭha* in Kṛṣṇanagara was damaged. Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was present when I received this news, and he asked me, “What will you do now?”

“I will first seek compensation from Indian Railways,” I replied. “After that, I will decide how to further proceed.”

He advised, “You should give up any hope of receiving compensation. It is very difficult.” Then, as he spread his arms wide open, he said, “Trying to get money from Indian Railways is like trying to fish it out of a hole as deep as seven times the distance between my palms right now. It would be better to solicit a devotee for funds and have another deity made quickly.”

Ultimately, I decided I must at least make some effort to collect our rightful compensation. After investing a great deal of energy into the matter, I eventually managed to pressurize Indian Railways to reimburse us for the cost of the uninstalled deities, and after some time we received the payment. When I notified Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja of this success, he said, “You have made it back from the house of Yamarāja, Death himself. Only a determined devotee like you is able to protect the wealth meant for the service of Bhagavān.”

### **Gifting me a *nṛsimha-kavaca***

One day, during the time I was dealing with a lawsuit to remove the tenants illegally occupying the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda in Purī, Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja approached me with concern for my wellbeing. With the affection of a guardian, he said, “I will have a *nṛsimha-kavaca* made

for your protection. You must wear it at all times. You have no idea what harm these people might do to you.” Sure enough, some days later he brought me a *nṛsimha-kavaca* prepared by his godbrother, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī. When he gave it to me, he showed me his arm, which bore a *nṛsimha-kavaca*, and said, “Look, I too wear one.”

Although I accepted the *nṛsimha-kavaca* he gave me, I faced an internal dilemma about whether I should wear it. I thought it over and concluded that if I were truly surrendered and if all my efforts were intended purely for the service of Bhagavān, then indeed, no one would be able to cause me the least bit of harm or even so much as bruise me as long as He wishes to accept my service. Furthermore, since Bhagavān is the one accepting my service, the responsibility of my protection lies with Him alone. Why should I independently endeavor to protect myself? For these reasons, I was unenthusiastic about wearing the *nṛsimha-kavaca*. However, since it was affectionately given to me by Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, I always kept it with me. To this day, it is stored safely in my closet.

When we eventually won the law-suit, Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja told me, “You have snatched this meal right out of the tiger’s mouth.”

“Mahārāja,” I replied, “what capacity do I possess to snatch a meal from the jaws of a tiger? It is by the power of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples such as yourself—by your good wishes and mercy—that we have become instruments in fulfilling our *gurupāda-padma*’s desire.”

Śrīla Mahārāja then said, “Maintaining this kind of submissiveness is the key to gain rightful and eternal entry into *vaiṣṇava-dharma*.”

Under the guidance of Guru Mahārāja, a huge festival was organized at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance place in 1978 to commemorate his *vyāsa-pūjā*. At that time, Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the first to donate toward the construction of a *maṭha* there. As he handed me one thousand rupees, he expressed his happiness and bestowed many instructive blessings upon me.

### **His appreciation of Śiva as the greatest of Vaiṣṇavas**

I had the good fortune of accompanying Guru Mahārāja a number of times to festivals at Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s various *maṭhas*. Instead of inviting a great number of devotees all at once for a function, Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja preferred instead to invite a few devotees at a time. The *prasāda* he served during those small events always consisted of the best ingredients.

Once, while showing Guru Mahārāja the deity of Śiva-jī he had installed in his *maṭha* in Śrī Jagannātha Purī, Śrīla Mahārāja explained, “Although my name was previously Śiva Śaṅkara De, I always disapproved of the worship of Śiva, deeming him to be a demigod in the mode of ignorance. But now, by the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have realized that it is impossible for one to obtain the grace of Viṣṇu without first obtaining the mercy of Vaiṣṇavas. That is why I have built this temple for Śiva, the topmost among all Vaiṣṇavas.”

### **Perform or perish**

The land Guru Mahārāja had acquired in Kolkata for establishing Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha included an old one-story building that needed to be razed in order to construct a new building. During the building’s demolition, Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja visited the site. After observing us in our work, he asked me, “Have you people gone crazy? This place has been beautifully built with the most exquisite materials, like Italian mosaic flooring, Belgian glass windows, and even the door and window frames are made from top-quality Burmese teak wood. Yet, you are knocking it all down. Are you out of your mind? Why don’t you simply construct levels on top of the already-existing building? When Mādhava Mahārāja arrives, tell him that Siddhāntī Mahārāja visited this site and has advised against demolishing the building.”

I personally conveyed Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s message to Guru Mahārāja, who asked me, “If your goal is to throw a stone at this nearby door, how will you do it?” In response, I mimicked softly tossing a stone with very little force.

Guru Mahārāja then asked, “Now, if you intend to throw the stone somewhere far, how will you do it?” I then mimicked throwing a stone with much greater force.

Guru Mahārāja concluded, “Similarly, the higher we aim, the better our efforts to achieve our goal will be. Upon reaching a country he wanted to attack and conquer, Napoleon would either burn his ship or intentionally sink it, boldly signifying to his soldiers that their only option was to perform or perish. When he ordered his army to cross over the Alps mountain range, most of the soldiers were dumbfounded, and said, ‘It is impossible!’ Napoleon replied, ‘The word *impossible* exists only in a fool’s dictionary.’

“When a person is left with no other option but to act, he makes his best efforts to accomplish his goal. But if given the slightest leeway, he thinks endlessly without acting. It has been rightly said, ‘Necessity is the mother of

invention.’ Therefore, demolish that building, so that we may be compelled to act and construct for ourselves a place to stay. Moreover, we need a much bigger hall for *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana*, even if it is only a tin shed without opulent decorations.”

While Guru Mahārāja’s words filled my heart with great energy and enthusiasm, I also understood Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s concern for the protection and preservation of something beautiful that could be used in *kṛṣṇa-sevā*. Although these two godbrothers held different views, I was able to grasp the depth of their relationship, and I knew in my heart that Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja did not feel the least bit offended that Guru Mahārāja did not adhere to his advice.

After the construction of the Kolkata branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha was completed, Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja attended the inauguration festivities. When he inspected the *kīrtana* hall and the quality of its construction, he appreciatively noted, “You have done a great job. This is fantastic. I only mentioned you should not demolish the previous building because I thought you did not have enough funds to create something as beautiful as this.”

### **Publishing Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scriptures**

Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja published an unprecedented edition of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* with the *Rasika-rañjana* commentary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the *Gītā-bhūṣaṇa* commentary of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and his own *Anubhūṣaṇa* commentary. He also published a few Upaniṣads like the *Īśa*, *Kaṭha*, *Māṇḍukya*, and *Gopāla-tāpanī* Upaniṣads with his *Tattva-kaṇā* commentaries, as well as the three books *Śrī Ujjvala-nīlamanī-kiraṇa*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu* and *Bhāgavatāmṛta-kaṇā*.

He also rendered tremendous service to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* by publishing *Vedānta-sūtra* in Bengali with Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s *Govinda-bhāṣya* commentary and brief commentary thereon, along with an assisting explanation of his own called *Siddhānta-kaṇā*, which he fortified with references from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja endeavored tirelessly to publish this particular book, and his godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Bhūdeva Śrautī Gosvāmī Mahārāja offered extensive assistance in proofreading.

Whenever a new book was released, Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja would hold a festival and say, “Just as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is verily the divine

form of Bhagavān, the literatures that have been written in the light of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and further endorse the doctrines presented therein are non-different from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and are therefore just as worshipful as Bhagavān Himself. It is only fitting to commemorate the divine appearance of such literatures in the world by organizing a festival.”

### **Spreading the teachings of Bhagavān’s pastimes through dioramas**

Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura engaged his disciples in performing *kīrtana* of *viśuddha caitanya-vāṇī*, the immaculate message of Śrī Caitanya, by publishing and distributing countless spiritual books, newsletters and magazines, as well as by sending *niṣkiñcana*

<sup>2</sup> preachers to various locations. Although most people could grasp the concepts these publications and Vaiṣṇava preachers presented, there were still many who could not.

Concerned for the welfare of such persons, Śrīla Prabhupāda, whose heart was always full of compassion, granted them the wonderful opportunity to understand the pristine message of Śrī Caitanya-deva by organizing *Sat-śikṣā Pradarśinīs*, exhibitions that involved beautiful dioramas and displays along with appointed representatives to explain the various spiritual teachings they depicted. These exhibitions were organized and led by such stalwart Vaiṣṇavas as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Guru Mahārāja. In addition to the exhibitions, silent ‘magic lantern’ films produced by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prasūna Bodhāyana Gosvāmī Mahārāja were also presented.

Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave this conceptual legacy of Śrīla Prabhupāda a permanent form of expression when he unveiled in his *maṭhas* many sculpted dioramas of instructive pastimes from *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, *rāma-līlā* and *gaura-līlā*. These dioramas were highly beneficial, as they simultaneously communicated profound concepts to the general public and brought numerous pastimes of the Lord to the minds of well-informed devotees.

### **His samādhi pastime**

A few of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *sannyāsa* disciples, namely Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Viveka Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Suhṛt Paramārthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prāpaṇa Daṇḍī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, were not interred with *samādhi* burials. Instead, for whatever reasons, they instructed their disciples to cremate their

divine bodies. Some time after Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's body was cremated, his disciples established his *puṣpa-samādhi* at his *maṭha* in Śrī Jagannātha Purī.

After deeply deliberating on the subject, one will come to the conclusion that there is no difference between a Vaiṣṇava's *mūla-samādhi* and *puṣpa-samādhi*, because the body of a Vaiṣṇava and the articles related to him are non-different, purely transcendental, and equally worshipful.

On behalf of King Pratāparudra, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu repeatedly requested Śrīman Mahāprabhu to award His *darśana* to the king, but the Lord firmly refused. However, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu convinced Him to at least bestow a set of His used clothes upon the king as an alternative. Upon receiving those garments, King Pratāparudra treated them as non-different from Śrīman Mahāprabhu and accorded them the greatest honor and respect.

Just as Śrīman Mahāprabhu's clothes are non-different from Himself, the divine bodies of His realized devotees and the items they used are similarly non-different from those devotees themselves. Such objects remain equally worshipful and worthy of respect even after they enter *nitya-līlā*.

### **The actions of our guru-varga are not to be questioned**

Once, after the disappearance of Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, I attended a festival at his establishment in Purī, Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Maṭha and Āsana. There, Śrī Mukunda Paṇḍita, a disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, was closely inspecting the deity of Śrī Vṛndā-devī that had been installed there. Pointing to her nose ring and the other ornaments with which she was adorned, he asked one of Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's disciples, "Who had this deity of Vṛndā-devī made?"

"It was our *gurudeva*," the devotee replied.

Śrī Mukunda Paṇḍita further inquired, "Has she been manifested in accordance with the specifications of scripture, or simply by some sort of fanciful imagination?"

The disciple innocently responded, "Our *gurudeva* would have been able to better explain; I do not know."

Although I generally never commented on anything unless requested, I considered that in this case, to remain silent would have put me at risk of committing an offense, for Śrī Mukunda Paṇḍita had voiced doubt about a deity installed by my *guru-varga* Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Therefore, interrupting the conversation, I asked him, "Paṇḍita-jī, is it proper

to harbor doubt even after learning it was a recognized, authentic Vaiṣṇava who installed this deity? Could such an authoritative personality like Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja ever do anything unauthorized? The truth is, Śrīla Mahārāja has manifested this deity according to the descriptions found in *Śrī Vṛndā-devyāṣṭakam*, composed by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura:

*bimbādhara-ditvara-manda-hāsyā-  
nāsāgra-muktā-dyuti-dīpitāsyē!  
vicitra-ratnābharaṇa-śriyāḍhye!  
vṛnde! numas te caraṇāravindam*

O Vṛndā! Your countenance is especially radiant, illuminated by the gentle smile rising on your *bimba*-red lips and the pearl on your nose. Your beauty is enhanced by various jeweled ornaments. O Vṛndā, we offer *praṇāma* to your lotus feet. \*

I concluded, “It appears you have never read this *aṣṭaka* attentively.”

Śrī Mukunda Paṇḍita fell silent and I felt satisfied for having rendered some service to Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

## **Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Mahārāja**

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

### **An effulgent gem**

Almost all of our godbrothers are, one by one, making their grand departure to join our *śrī gurupāda-padma*, who has long since entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord. Each and every one of these godbrothers embodied extraordinary and divine specialties. It is impossible to find anyone who can fill the void they have left. Thus, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community has gradually become thoroughly deprived of its precious jewels, and our worshipful Siddhāntī Mahārāja was one such effulgent gem.

### **His great service to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community**

The most worshipful Prabhupāda had a special desire to publish and circulate Gauḍīya Vedāntācārya Śrīmad Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇapāda’s *Śrī Govinda-Bhāṣya* commentary on Vedānta, as well as the *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Praśna*, *Māṇḍukya*, *Aitareya*, *Taittirīya*, *Chāndogya*, *Bṛhad-āranyaka*, *Śvetāśvatara*, and *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣads*, complete with *anvaya* (word-for-word translations that follow the sentence structure). *Pūjyapāda* Siddhāntī



Mahārāja dedicated himself to fulfilling this cherished desire of our most worshipful Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda, and thus, by accomplishing this great service for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community, he became a recipient of Prabhupāda’s profuse mercy.

### **Accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s shelter**

*Pūjyapāda* Mahārāja appeared in an aristocratic devotee family in the Barishāl district of East Bengal on 22 October 1906, on the fifth day of the waxing moon during the holy month of Kārtika. He first came to the lotus feet of the most worshipful Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda in Kolkata in January 1924. In March of that same year, on the auspicious occasion of Śrī Gaura-pūrṇimā, he received *mahā-mantra* and *mantra-dīkṣa* initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda and was given the name Śrī Siddha-svarūpa dāsa.

### **A life of dedication**

Being completely captivated with Kṛṣṇa, he joined the *maṭha* at a very young age, when he was still in school. However, according to the desire of his parents and elderly family members, he was ordered to return to his home and finish his studies. After quickly completing his schooling, he returned to the *maṭha* sometime around February of 1928 and, to the utmost degree, dedicated his life to the service of his *śrī gurupāda-padma*.

### **A distinguished speaker**

Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Vaiṣṇavas under Śrīla Prabhupāda’s guidance were immensely pleased by Śrī Siddha-svarūpa dāsa’s sincere service efforts. As tokens of *śrī gurupāda-padma*’s pleasure, he was awarded the Śrī Gaura Aśīrvāda titles ‘Upadeśaka’ (instructor), ‘Mahopadeśaka’ (great instructor), and ‘Vidyā-vāgīśa’ (master of knowledge and speech) by the Navadvīpa Pracārānī Sabhā. As a *brahmacārī*, he accompanied expert, senior *tridaṇḍi-sannyāsīs*—like *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja, *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Viveka Bhāratī Mahārāja, *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja and *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja—to various places in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madras, Andhra Pradesh and West India. He also preached in many places with *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa parama-pūjyapāda tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja, who, during the manifest time of Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda, was known as ‘Vāgmi-pravara’ Śrīpāda Hayagrīva Brahmacārī Prabhu. Gradually, by the grace of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, he emerged as a distinguished speaker.

Those members of the aristocracy who were earnest and appreciative became deeply attracted to his fearless and potent expositions of the proper verdicts of scripture. Although he was severely opposed by several narrow-minded atheists who interpreted his words as an attack on their interests, he never hesitated to expound the truth, which dispels the ghoul of illusion, in accordance with the ancient tradition of those who have heard it from an authoritative source. For this reason, he became the recipient of the most worshipful Prabhupāda's profuse mercy.

### **Presenting the essence of the scriptural teachings**

In 1941, *pūjyapāda* Siddha-svarūpa Brahmācārī Prabhu accepted *sannyāsa* from our godbrother Śrī Bhakti Vijñāna Āśrama Mahārāja and adopted the name *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Mahārāja.

In each of his three *maṭhas*, the *pūjārī* devotees worship unprecedentedly beautiful deities of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Govinda-jīu. Additionally, the walls are adorned with striking depictions of *śrī gaura-līlā*, *śrī kṛṣṇa-līlā* and *śrī rāma-līlā* that capture the essence of the scriptural teachings. Simply by viewing these depictions, earnest viewers receive the fortune of accumulating much knowledge of the proper verdicts of the scriptures. These depictions remain on display even today, but since *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja is no longer to be seen, viewing them simply causes our hearts to drown in anguish.

*kṛpā kôri' kṛṣṇa more diyāchila saṅga  
svatantra kṛṣṇera icchā hōilô saṅga-bhaṅga*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 11.94)*

Mercifully, Kṛṣṇa gave me his association. By Kṛṣṇa's independent will, our exchange has ended.

Excerpts from articles published in  
*Śrī Caitanya-Vāṇī* (Year 25, Volume 11)

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[1](#) A certificate conferring the blessings of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu.

[2](#) One who accepts Śrī Kṛṣṇa as one's only possession.

# Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja

## **Serving both grantha-bhāgavata and bhakta-bhāgavata**

Prior to accepting *sannyāsa*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja was known as Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī. While Śrīla Prabhupāda was still present in this world, Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī managed Bhāgavata Press in Kṛṣṇanagara, which was dedicated to printing Śrīla Prabhupāda's editions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Actually, the title 'manager' does not befit devotees, because a devotee understands his position is always that of a servant. But as Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī's duties were exactly like those of a manager, we are referring to him as such. He arranged everything for the in-house printing of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other publications of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

For the service of these publications, Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī employed a stenographer and a typist. Once, the king of Nadīyā was in need of printing a publication, but had no one in his service capable of typing or taking dictation. In response to the king's need, Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī offered the services of Bhāgavata Press's stenographer and typist, and even offered to print the publication, as Bhāgavata Press often took outside clients.

They presented the king with a flawless publication; not even a single mistake was made. Impressed by the high quality of his publication and the care with which the devotees of Bhāgavata Press produced it, the king decided that he would no longer send his future publications to Kolkata for printing, but would instead use Bhāgavata Press exclusively. In this way, the press eventually gained a favorable reputation due in part to the efforts of Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī. Everyone in the area knew they could put their full trust in the abilities of the devotees of Bhāgavata Press, and if by chance some mistake were made, the press would immediately rectify it.

Another service Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī used to perform was to acquire properties for the *maṭha*. Because his services generally required him to collect various items for the Gauḍīya Maṭha, he was given the title 'Kenārāma,' which means 'a person who purchases everything.' In this case, the title applies to one who purchases everything not for one's own enjoyment, but for the service of *bhakta-bhāgavata*, Bhagavān's devotee.

## **Subtle indication, big service**

The villagers of Campaka-haṭṭa in Navadvīpa possessed a deep sense of

reverence for Śrīla Prabhupāda, and some of them even became his initiated disciples. Out of their regard for him, they donated him the property that encompassed the previous residence of Jayadeva Gosvāmī. This is the present site of Śrī Gaura-Gadādhara Gauḍīya Maṭha. There was one esteemed local in that village who had two recently widowed daughters. Unfortunately, the daughters' in-laws were unwilling to hand over their respective inheritances, and so the two women were unable to maintain their lives.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda learned about the predicament these women faced, he simply said, “How will they maintain themselves?” Taking his *gurudeva*'s seemingly light inquiry as an order, Mahānanda Brahmācārī visited the local courts in Rāṇāghaṭa and filed a court case against the ladies' in-laws, and eventually managed to secure their respective inheritances for them.

### **Intelligent service**

Śrīla Prabhupāda had a disciple named Śrī Niśikānta Sanyāla, a professor at Ravensā College in Kaṭaka. Although Śrī Niśikānta Sanyāl had an entire family to maintain, he would offer all his salary to Śrīla Prabhupāda, even after Śrīla Prabhupāda had told him, “If you keep donating your salary to me, then how will your family survive? It would be better if you were to keep something for their maintenance.”

Out of concern for the family, Śrīla Prabhupāda told Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī, “Because Niśikānta Sanyāla is donating his entire earnings to us, it is our responsibility to take care of his family. I want you to arrange for their complete maintenance.” On this order, Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī took care of the family's necessities for many years. He arranged whatever they were in need of—the education and marriages of their children, and everything else.

Externally, it seems as though such an arrangement would be improper; a renounced person generally has no business seeing to the needs of a *grhastha* family, and should instead be engaged in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. However, there are two considerations in this situation. Firstly, Śrīla Prabhupāda had given him the direct order to maintain the family, and there is never any fault in carrying out the instructions of *śrī guru*; quite the opposite, *śrī guru*'s order is the disciple's duty. Secondly, Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī intelligently arranged everything in such a way that he was never required to be physically present for these services. Through delegating responsibilities to various people, he never had to visit the family even once.

### **My service to him**

Sometime after Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure, Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī acquired some land a short walk from Gaṅgā-ghāṭa in Māyāpura, near Kṣetrapāla Śiva. Eventually, refugees from Bangladesh began to occupy that land and refused to leave. Acting as his army, a number of devotees and I drove the refugees from that land.

Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī's godbrother Śrīla Bhakti Saurabha Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja eventually came to Māyāpura and desired to have some place to stay, and so Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī gave him half of his land.

### **Accepting sannyāsa**

Another disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Bhakti Svarūpa Parvata Gosvāmī Mahārāja, originally from Svarūpa Gaṅj, had a *maṭha* called Vārṣabhānāvī-dayita Gauḍīya Maṭha in Udālā, Orissa, near the Kṣīra-corā Gopīnātha temple. After his disappearance, many devotees wanted that *maṭha* to be given to my Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and come under the banner of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha.

At that time, Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples deliberated and decided that since Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī did not yet have any place of his own, Śrī Vārṣabhānāvī-dayita Gauḍīya Maṭha should be given to him, and that he should take *sannyāsa* from Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He accepted his godbrothers' proposal, and was henceforth known as Śrī Bhaktyāloka Paramahansa Mahārāja, the *ācārya* of Vārṣabhānāvī-dayita Gauḍīya Maṭha in Udālā.

### **His service attitude**

When Guru Mahārāja accepted the responsibility of acquiring Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance place in Purī, many of the required documents were in the Oriya language. At that time, there was an Oriya devotee, Śrī Bhakti Sundara Sāgara Mahārāja, residing in Śrī Vārṣabhānāvī-dayita Gauḍīya Maṭha. Guru Mahārāja asked Śrīla Paramahansa Mahārāja, "Mahārāja if it is not a problem for you, we would like to request that Sāgara Mahārāja can stay with us for some time and help us in acquiring Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance place."

Paramahansa Mahārāja replied, "I am not so selfish as to hinder this important service. I will certainly send Śrī Sāgara Mahārāja with you, even at the cost of my own inconvenience. It would be a matter of great happiness and

honor to perform even the most menial of services for Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

We have personally experienced that the specialty of Śrīla Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja was that he was incredibly affectionate and simple. Whenever I would meet with him, I would offer full *aṣṭāṅga daṇḍavat-praṇāma*. But even though I was like his disciple, he would always embrace me. His nature was that he never considered anyone his junior, but rather respected all devotees simply because they were on the path of *bhakti*.

## Śrī Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja Enters Nitya-līlā

Composed under the editorship of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

### His appearance

*Puḡyapāda* Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja appeared in 1893 on Śukla Pratipadā (the first day of the waxing moon) in the month of Vaiśākha, a Sunday, under the constellation of Aśvinī. In other words, he appeared during the first constellation in the first month of the year on the first solar day of the week and during the first lunar day of the month.

### The earth’s invaluable jewel

Mahārāja was a Vaiṣṇava always absorbed in *nāma-bhajana*. He embodied all Vaiṣṇava qualities. All Vaiṣṇavas are truly the Earth’s invaluable jewels, because each one is capable of delivering the entire universe. “*Tāhā binā ratna-śunyā hōilō medinī*—Medinī (the Earth) has become bereft of jewels without him.”

### Illuminated by the effulgence of devotion

Prior to accepting the shelter of the most worshipful Śrī Śrīla Prabhupāda, Mahārāja’s name was ‘Mahendra.’ Once he received *dīkṣa*, he became known as ‘Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī.’ Later, Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded him the devotional title ‘Bhaktyāloka,’ which means ‘illuminated by the effulgence of devotion.’ After the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he accepted *sannyāsa* from Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and his *sannyāsa* name became Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja.

### A recipient of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s profuse mercy

When Mahārāja was a *brahmācārī*, the supremely worshipful Prabhupāda

entrusted him with looking after Bhāgavata Press in Kṛṣṇanagara, and later, with managing Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. By accomplishing all of these services with great expertise, he became the special recipient of Śrīla Prabhupāda's profuse mercy. It is impossible to fill the void created by the absence of such an exemplary Vaiṣṇava dedicated to pure *bhajana*.

### **His induction as an ācārya**

After the disappearance of Śrī ŚrīlaBhakti Svarūpa Parvata Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the founder of Śrī Vārṣabhānavī-dayita Gauḍīya Maṭha in the suburban Udala development of the Mayura-Bhañja district in Orissa, Śrīmad Mahānanda Brahmācārī was inducted as the *ācārya* of that *maṭha* at the proposal of *pūjyapāda tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Mahārāja and in the presence of *ṣpūjyapāda tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja, *pūjyapāda tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja and other godbrothers, all of whom expressed their approval, as well as Śrīla Bhakti Svarūpa Parvata Gosvāmī Mahārāja's disciples and patrons. The next year, 1958, he accepted *sannyāsa* and became known as *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmat Paramahansa Mahārāja.

### **His last words**

The night before Śrīla Mahārāja left his body and entered *nitya-līlā*, he frequently and loudly called out the names of *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja—the Founder-*ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha—and Śrī Mādhāva Mahārāja's disciple and current President-*ācārya*, Śrīmad Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja. Their names were often heard from his lotus mouth earlier, also, for he nurtured profound affection for them both.

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# Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī

## Hereditary determination

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī told me the following story about how he came to reside in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura and how his father, Śrī Dīpa-rāma dāsa Gāubūḍā, tried to bring him back home.

“When I was about eleven years old and in the seventh grade, I went with a group of people from my village to have *darśana* of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma. During our visit, I met Śrīla Prabhupāda. I was so enamored with him that I refused to return home. Instead, I decided to stay in Māyāpura and join the *maṭha*. Despite my young age, Śrīla Prabhupāda granted me *harināma* and *mantra-dīkṣā*.

“I was my father’s youngest child—his tenth. When word reached my village that I had stayed behind in Māyāpura, my father immediately departed for the *dhāma* to retrieve me. At the time, Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* was under way, with thousands of pilgrims in attendance. When the in-charge of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha was informed that my father had arrived, he treated him very respectfully and arranged a place for him to stay in the *maṭha*.

“While at the *maṭha*, my father received *darśana* of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was amazed by the behavior and bold *hari-kathā* of the *sannyāsīs* and *brahmācārīs*, and he was especially impressed by the fact that such erudite individuals born of elite families were firmly established in the principle of offering respect to others while expecting none in return. He told me, ‘I would never have imagined that a place like this exists, where everyone discusses only matters of the spiritual world, and never those of this material world; where no one harbors a desire for mundane indulgence, but rather cultivates the desire to serve; where people have renounced material pleasures to live according to a simple yet elevated philosophy; and where the mysterious truths of the soul are revealed one after another.’

“His heart swelled with gratitude. He said, ‘Keśava, my son! You have blessed me by showing me this place. What to speak of accepting it, I had never even heard that this human form of life is meant for worshiping Bhagavān. Now that I have come to know this in my old age, I will perform *bhajana* for the remainder of my life. I, too, will take shelter of your *gurudeva*’s lotus feet and, when he will mercifully agree to it, accept *mantra-dīkṣā* from him. Please convey my intentions to him.’

“I then told him, ‘You eat meat and fish, and you smoke tobacco. Beyond

giving up these, one must give up even onions and garlic before accepting *dīkṣā* and *harināma*.’

“ ‘I will give them up this very instant,’ he replied. ‘These are small things to leave aside for the sake of something so exalted.’

“ ‘Are you sure?’ I asked. ‘It will be a grave offense if you accept *mantra-dīkṣā* simply out of excitement and again consume these things because of habit.’

“My father assured me, ‘I fully comprehend the gravity of making a vow to an exalted personality. Trust me when I say I am of sound mind and that I am not being emotional. I have thought this over carefully.’

“While I was waiting for the right time to supplicate at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus feet on behalf of my father, explain his background and attest to his state of mind, my father saw a group of devotees who had shaved their heads and were waiting to receive *mantra-dīkṣā*. He immediately went to have his head shaved, after which he sat down with the prospective initiates. When a servant informed Śrīla Prabhupāda of the situation, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, ‘Determination is the most important attribute needed for receiving *dīkṣā*. I will certainly grant him his wish.’

“And so it happened that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave my father *mantra-dīkṣā* that very day. When my father left Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, he told me, ‘Keśava, although I came to bring you back, the opposite has happened—I have offered myself here. My body may go, but I will forever remain here by heart.’

“Amazingly, from that day forward, my father never consumed any of those forbidden substances. Instead, he spent the rest of his life chanting *harināma*, his *dīkṣā-mantras*, various prayers and hymns, and engaging himself in activities favorable to *bhakti*.”

The streak of determination his father embodied was visible in Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī’s life, as well.

### **Attention is the key to success in service**

Immediately after Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī received *harināma* and *dīkṣā* from Śrīla Prabhupāda, he began performing various services in the *maṭha*. He was particularly avid in assisting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s cook by cutting and preparing vegetables, shopping for ingredients, scrubbing pots and cleaning the kitchen.

Once, while Śrīla Prabhupāda and his preaching party, which included his cook, were en route from Mumbai to Kolkata, his cook became worried he

would be unable to punctually provide Śrīla Prabhupāda with *prasāda* upon their arrival.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda and his entourage reached the *maṭha*, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī had his meal cooked and ready to be served. When the cook saw all the items Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu had prepared, he was surprised beyond belief; they were nearly identical to those he usually prepared. After Śrīla Prabhupāda honored *prasāda*, his cook told him that Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī had prepared his meal that day. “Really?” Śrīla Prabhupāda asked. “I could not tell the difference. Did you teach him how to cook?”

“No,” the servant replied. “I never taught him to cook. But he does help me in the kitchen whenever he is around.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda summoned Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī and asked him, “From where did you learn to cook?”

“By carefully watching Prabhu cook every day,” he replied.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “You are sure to be successful in whatever you dedicate your full attention to or wish to learn. You should go on like this, learning the key principles of *bhajana*. By this, you will surely obtain auspiciousness.”

After this incident, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī would cook for Śrīla Prabhupāda from time to time, and would lovingly bestow Śrīla Prabhupāda’s remnants to whoever would ask for them. He used to say, “Śrīla Prabhupāda always ate very little. I noticed whenever I served him his meals, there always seemed to be the same amount left on his plate as I had brought him.”

### **Guru Mahārāja’s right-hand man**

When the excessive disturbance that followed Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance caused the Gauḍīya Maṭha mission to split into two factions, Guru Mahārāja took possession of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha on behalf of Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu. Many of his godbrothers insistently requested him to take *sannyāsa* and start accepting disciples, but he deferred their numerous pleas.

It was largely Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī who influenced Guru Mahārāja to finally agree to his godbrothers’ proposal. “Śrīla Prabhupāda has left behind such a massive mission,” he told Guru Mahārāja. “How will its services continue on properly if a qualified person like you refuses to accept disciples? If you begin awarding initiations, I will accept the responsibility of

bringing prospective disciples to you.” Having received his dear godbrother’s support, Guru Mahārāja agreed to accept disciples.

Sometime later, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī took Guru Mahārāja to Āssām, where, by his tireless efforts, Guru Mahārāja’s preaching met with great success. Being attracted and inspired by Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī’s explanations of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s immaculate teachings, many people took shelter of Guru Mahārāja’s lotus feet. A good many of those new devotees became renounced and joined the *maṭha*, and later on, Guru Mahārāja even awarded some of them *sannyāsa*.

Guru Mahārāja regarded Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī as his right-hand man, and he had particular affection for him. Devotees who have taken shelter of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha shall remain forever indebted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī.

### **A fitting response to criticism**

Once, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa TīrthaGosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Sundara-gopāla Prabhu, Śrīpāda Atulānanda Brahmācārī and other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda were at the Sealdah station in Kolkata. Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, who was then residing at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, was also present at the same station, but was situated a little further away. Some of them called for Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī to come close to them, and asked “Keśava! How are you?”

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī replied, “I am very well.”

They again asked, “Keśava! How are you?”

“I am extremely well,” he replied.

A number of his godbrothers then audibly said among themselves, “Just see! Although he has left the *maṭha* established by Śrīla Prabhupāda, his own *gurudeva*, he says that he is very well.”

Hearing their words, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī calmly said, “Had I continued to stay with you, I would have only ever heard that you alone are engaged in *bhajana*, and no one else is capable of properly serving. I would have been compelled to label all others as non-devotees, and would have become expert in *vaiṣṇava-nindā*, criticizing devotees.

“Fortunately,” he continued, “I have been saved from all such wretchedness by staying with Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja. With him, I remain immersed in practicing the principle of considering everyone else as honorable and myself as worthless. So, to reaffirm, yes, I am extremely well. What have you to say

about that?”

Someone said, “Listen! Śrīla Prabhupāda blessed Śrī Tīrtha Mahārāja by saying, ‘May you attain abundant auspiciousness.’ Did he ever give such a blessing to Mādhava Mahārāja?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī replied, “No one blesses a recipient of a Master of Arts degree by saying, ‘I bless you to acquire a Master of Arts degree.’ Such blessings are for those who have not yet attained some particular qualification. Therefore, the reason Śrīla Prabhupāda did not bestow the blessing to achieve abundant auspiciousness upon Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja is because he had already achieved abundant auspiciousness. By sincerely reflecting on the situation of the ‘blessed,’ one can easily understand why Śrīla Prabhupāda would have felt it necessary to bless them in this way.”

### **An incomplete point is a misunderstood point**

At Guru Mahārāja’s invitation, many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda gathered to attend the annual festival at the Kolkata branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. One day, at the very end of the assembly, Guru Mahārāja asked Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī to speak. In his address, he said, “According to the philosophy the Vaiṣṇava speakers have expounded today, I can say that no one here, whether sitting on the dais or the ground, has attained Bhagavān. The scriptures state:

*jaḍi haya saṁyoga tabe nā haya viyoga  
jaḍi haya viyoga tabe nā thāke prāṇa*

If there is meeting, there cannot be separation. If there is separation, then one cannot remain alive.

“Therefore, the fact that everyone assembled here today is showing signs of life is proof they have never met Bhagavān. If they had truly met Him, they would be unable to maintain their life in separation from Him.”

After *prasāda* that night, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāsa Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, admonished Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī in front of their godbrothers. He said, “It was improper to question whether the persons seated on the dais have attained Bhagavān. We all accept disciples now. It was unwise to proclaim such ideas in front of our followers.”

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī replied, “This happened only because I was allocated as much time as it takes you to recite the invocations before your lecture. I had presented only one aspect of this multifaceted subject when the

*karatālas* chimed and indicated I should conclude. I had not finished explaining. If I am given sufficient time tomorrow, I will explain the rest.”

The next day, when Guru Mahārāja asked Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī to speak, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī narrated a story: “Once, a painter was told to paint a sign on a wall that read ‘*ekhāne peśāba kôribena nā*—do not pass urine here.’ He had painted the first three words, ‘*ekhāne peśāba kôribena*—pass urine here,’ before night fell and forced him to stop painting. Naturally, people started urinating there the next morning, thinking they had express permission. The employer chastised the painter, who replied, ‘Sir, this was not my fault. It got dark before I could finish. Do not worry. Now that the sun has risen, I will immediately paint the last word *nā* and complete the sign.’

“A similar incident occurred when I spoke yesterday, so I will now conclude my unfinished point. The devotees seated on the dais before you today are like modest wealthy persons who claim they have no money. Although they say, ‘*na prema gandho ’sti*—I have not a scent of *prema*,’ do not think they have not obtained *bhagavat-prema*. Conversely, we should understand a poor man’s claims of poverty to be not an expression of humility, but the truth, and we should sincerely try to help him. The people sitting on the dais today have certainly met Bhagavān. It is solely through the Lord’s inconceivable potency that they are able to survive such fatal, unbearable separation from Him. Bhagavān personally maintains their lives so that they may continue bringing Him endless pleasure by serving Him in this world. This principle, that living is evidence of an absence of *bhagavat-prema*, cannot be applied to realized personalities; it is meant only for conditioned souls like us.”

### **The passing away of his pure devotee father**

In 1956, a year after I took shelter of my Guru Mahārāja and joined Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, Guru Mahārāja took me to Vraja for Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*. There, I heard from Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī that his father had passed away and that his brother had sent him fifty rupees to serve the Vaiṣṇavas in their father’s memory. With that money, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī ordered and distributed forty kilograms of *rabaḍī*, a sweet made from condensed milk.

That day, I witnessed devotees who normally snubbed anything served in remembrance of the deceased happily eating that *rabaḍī* with great relish,

saying, “Eating something served in honor of a non-devotee’s passing implicates one in the sins of the departed. However, according to the blessings Śrīman Mahāprabhu bestowed on the occasion of Śrīla Haridāsa Thākura’s disappearance festival, one incurs offense by not accepting the *prasāda* distributed in honor of a pure devotee’s passing. In fact, one’s devotion is increased by eagerly accepting such *prasāda*.”

The way I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *brahmacārī* and *sannyāsī* disciples lovingly honor the *rabaḍī-prasāda* that day confirmed that they indeed recognized Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmacārī’s biological father as a pure devotee of Bhagavān.

### **Relieving the doubts of a new maṭhavāsī**

When my godbrother *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja and two of his schoolmates took shelter of Guru Mahārāja’s lotus feet and began living in the *maṭha*, they overheard Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja express, “Even though I have associated with *sādhus*, resided in the *dhāma*, performed *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, surrendered myself at the lotus feet of my *guru*, preached all over and performed countless other activities that are favorable for *bhakti*, I have gained no benefit.”

*Pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja (then known as Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmacārī) and his two schoolmates became very disheartened by this statement. They debated amongst themselves the need to reside in the *maṭha* if a senior Vaiṣṇava like Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja achieved nothing, despite having invested so much energy in spiritual practices and preaching all over the world. In the end, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmacārī’s two discouraged friends packed their belongings and left the *maṭha*. He, however, retained faith that there must be something more to Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s troubling words.

In order to reconcile Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s puzzling statement, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmacārī approached Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmacārī, who then graciously explained everything to him: “A rich man will never disclose the fact that he is wealthy, even when asked. Instead, he will try to conceal this to the best of his ability. Similarly, Vaiṣṇavas who possess the wealth of *prema* often hide their fortune by claiming to be without any devotion. Besides, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja is extremely intelligent. If he actually believed he gained nothing from practicing *bhakti*, would he not direct his energy elsewhere?

“Listen,” he continued. “You are new to the *maṭha*. The more you associate with exalted Vaiṣṇavas, the more you will be able to navigate the current of emotions that flows in their hearts. It is only after you first learn, comprehend and realize the intricacies of their moods that you can grasp the mystery behind many of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s statements, such as:

*na prema-gandho ’sti darāpi me harau  
krandāmi saubhāgya-bharaṁ prakāśitum  
vaṁśī-vilāsy-ānana-lokanaṁ vinā  
bibharmi yat prāṇa-pataṅgakān vṛthā*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 2.45)

I have not even a scent of love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I am crying simply to flaunt whatever fortune I once obtained. If I truly loved Him, how could I endure this useless, insect-like life, bereft of the sight of His lotus face as He sports with His flute?

*prabhu kahena “kṛṣṇa-kathā āmi nāhi jāni  
sabe rāmānanda jāne tāra mukhe śuni”*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 5.7)

Śrīman Mahāprabhu said, “I know nothing of Kṛṣṇa, but Rāmānanda knows it all. Go hear from him.”

*āmi tō ’sannyāsī āpanāre virakta kōri ’māni  
darśana rahu dūre ’prakṛtira ’nāma jadi śuni*

*tabahī vikāra pāya mora tanu-mana  
prakṛti-darśane sthira haya kon jana?*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 5.35, 36)

[Śrīman Mahāprabhu said,] “Although I am a *sannyāsī* and I consider myself to be renounced, my body and mind become agitated by merely hearing the word ‘woman,’ not to speak of actually seeing one. Who can remain unaffected by the sight of a woman?”

“Many of Śrīmad Mahāprabhu’s eternal associates have expressed their humility in similar ways:

*ādhāro ’py aparādhānām  
aviveka-hato ’py aham  
tvat-kāruṇya-pratīkṣo ’smi  
prasīda mayi mādharma*

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī  
Stavamālā (1.12.14)



Although I am a mine of offenses, and although I cannot tell right from wrong, I still hope for Your mercy. O Mādhava, please be merciful to me.

*jagāi mādhai hôte muñi se pāpiṣṭha  
purīṣera kīṭa hôte muñi se laghiṣṭha*

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī  
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 5.205)

I am more sinful than Jagāi and Mādhāi, and I am lower than the worms in stool.

“Additionally, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has said, ‘*tumi tō’ ṭhākura, tomāra kukura, bōliyā jānahô more*—You are my Lord. Please accept me as Your dog.’ Even Śrīla Prabhupāda has similarly expressed his humility. Although he is *jagad-guru*, the spiritual master of the entire world, he referred to his disciples as *vipada-uddhāraka bandhu*, friends who deliver him from misfortune.”

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī concluded, “I therefore ask you not to follow the actions and reasoning of your schoolmates, but to instead follow the example of exalted Vaiṣṇavas. You have done well by asking me to alleviate your doubts today. This technique of seeking the council of senior Vaiṣṇavas has been approved and demonstrated by our exalted predecessors for those who wish to enter spiritual life.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmācārī staunchly accepted Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī’s advice and followed it throughout his life. In his lectures, he would often look back on this incident and say, “It is only by Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī’s mercy that I continued to stay in the *maṭha*. When I later shared his insight with my schoolmates, they found it agreeable. From time to time, they would visit the Kolkata *maṭha* and participate in festivals, but they never again fully gave themselves to the *maṭha*.”

I remember that one of *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja’s schoolmates was a *brāhmaṇa* boy, and the other was the youngest son of a gentleman named Śrī Kāmākhyā Sena. I used to know their names, but now I am unable to recall them.

### **The satisfaction of remaining under guidance**

When Guru Mahārāja would go on preaching missions, there would often be several events scheduled concurrently, and so the preaching party would split into different groups to honor all the invitations. I noticed that Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī would travel only with Guru Mahārāja and remain

under his guidance; he never preached with anyone else. He used to say, “I consider it a matter of great fortune to carry out my life under the guidance of an exalted personality while remaining insignificant. In that alone, I find joy, contentment and satisfaction. I never want to go anywhere I may be forced to act superior to others.”

### **Hearing means following**

Once, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu and his senior *sannyāsī* godbrothers were preaching at a university, where highly intellectual professors and students had assembled to hear about the philosophy of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Yet, each time the *sannyāsīs* delivered their speeches, several professors and students would insist, “You are reiterating ancient ideas. We have heard these concepts many times before.” Although, the various *sannyāsīs* tried to help them understand the specialty of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, the objectors maintained their philosophy was simply old wine in a new bottle.

Finally, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī asked Guru Mahārāja for a chance to speak. When Guru Mahārāja consented, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī stood up and said, “I am not an intellectual like you learned academics. I concluded my efforts to accrue worldly knowledge when I came to the Gauḍīya Maṭha in the seventh grade. Today, I will speak a few points before you all, based on what I have learned from my spiritual teachers. Although my presentation may contain errors, you will be able to infer the essence if you listen patiently.

“You yourselves have readily admitted you have already heard, understood and memorized well the views my godbrothers discussed before you here today. You have asked us many questions in response, but I request you to please ask yourselves this one question: ‘Do I live my life according to these teachings?’ If the answer is yes, then very well. Otherwise, your knowledge of those teachings will be of no true benefit. Merely memorizing them will do you no lasting good. Although your education allows you to read, understand and memorize a doctor’s prescription, your illness will not be cured unless you follow the prescription’s instructions to take a particular medicine. On the other hand, an illiterate person will be cured if he, after taking that prescription to a qualified, educated person who can explain its contents, consumes the medicine prescribed therein. This is the specialty of the Gauḍīya Maṭha: we practice what we preach, and what we preach is ‘*uṭho re, uṭho re bhāi, āra to’ samaya nāi*—get up, get up, brother! There is no time left.’ ”

The professors unanimously conceded. “You have spoken the truth,” they said. “The trouble with society nowadays is that despite having vast knowledge, people seldom follow any of what they know.”

### **The great impact of a simple explanation**

Once, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī and an entourage of devotees accompanied Guru Mahārāja on a preaching mission to Guwahati, Assam. Being Assamese, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī and my godbrother, Śrī Cintāharaṇa Pāṭagiri Prabhu, knew the local language. As per the instruction of Guru Mahārāja, the two met with *deśa-priya* Śrī Gopīnātha Bordoloi, the then Chief Minister of Assam who was an object of affection for the country’s citizens, to invite him to hear *bhāgavata-kathā* at Guru Mahārāja’s program.

At the meeting, Śrī Bordoloi first asked them to introduce themselves, their organization and the reason for their visit. After their introduction, he asked, “You are both Assamese. Why then have you not accepted the principles of *śrī bhagavata-dharma* as preached in Assam by Śrī Śaṅkara-deva, Śrī Dāmodara-deva and other renowned Assamese *bhaktas*? Why have you instead accepted the teachings of Śrīman Caitanyadeva, a Bengali?”

Śrīpāda Cintāharaṇa Prabhu requested Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī to kindly answer Śrī Bordoloi, and Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī obliged: “Respected Mr. Bordoloi, if I may, I would like to preface my reply to your question with a brief question of my own. You, too, are Assamese, and you belong to a *brāhmaṇa* family. Why, then, did you consider it appropriate to attend Oxford University in England, accept Englishmen as your teachers, your *gurus*, and follow their teachings, when they use paper to clean themselves after passing stool instead of following the proper practice of using water? What more should I speak about their lack of etiquette?

“Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma has long been famous as the Oxford of India, and scholars from even Assam have regularly gone there for higher education. We therefore fail to understand the inherent fault in our following Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”

Śrī Gopīnātha Bordoloi was rendered speechless. Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī and Śrīpāda Cintāharaṇa Pāṭagiri Prabhu left his office and returned to Guru Mahārāja. When they arrived back at Guru Mahārāja’s quarters, they were greatly surprised to see Śrī Bordoloi sitting next to Guru Mahārāja. They realized he had come by car while they travelled by *rikśaw*.

This pastime illustrates the convincing effect Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava

Brahmacārī's simple explanations had on not only Śrī Gopinātha Bordoloi, but many people around the world.

### **His sister's tenacity**

Once, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmacārī brought Guru Mahārāja and a preaching party to his sister Śrī Saheśvarī devī's home in Sārabhoga, Assam. At that time, the people of Sārabhoga were not cordial with the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Not long before, an ignorant *maṭhavāsī*, a newcomer, killed Śrī Erāma Pāṭhaka, the benefactor who had donated the land for the Sārabhoga *maṭha*, by striking him on the head with a hammer.

When the people of the village heard that the Gauḍīya Maṭha *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* had come to preach, they fervently objected. "We refuse to let them preach here!" they exclaimed. "We will not make their stay in this village easy."

Śrī Saheśvarī devī replied to the villagers, "Should the actions of just one unscrupulous member spoil the reputation of the entire Gauḍīya Maṭha institution? What misfortune has befallen us that we will reject a *sādhū* coming to our home? Have our parents taught us to behave like this? If you want to criticize these *sādhūs*, you must first spend time with them, listen to their sermons, hear their *kīrtanas* and talk to them. Otherwise, I will not listen to a word of what you say. It would be nice if you maintain your ties with our family, but I will not be the least bit concerned if you sever them."

The villagers fell silent. Later, Guru Mahārāja told Śrī Saheśvarī devī, "We are like birds; if we cannot nest here, we can easily do so elsewhere. But since you live here, it would be wise to maintain good rapport with your neighbors."

When Śrī Saheśvarī devī heard Guru Mahārāja say the words "we can easily go elsewhere," she began to weep bitterly. "If you leave, I will fast until death," she promised.

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmacārī told Guru Mahārāja, "She is Keśava's sister and her father's daughter. You must trust her resolve. Please stay here a few days and perform *kathā* and *kīrtana*."

Guru Mahārāja heeded Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmacārī's advice and stayed for a few days, during which, an amazing thing happened: Śrī Kamalākānta, the person who had instigated the opposition, took initiation from Guru Mahārāja along with his two wives.

During their future visits to Sārabhoga after Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, Guru Mahārāja and his preaching party did not stay in the

branch of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha there, as the management had unfavorably changed. Instead, they stayed in the home of Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī's family, and Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī's mother, a staunchly service-inclined devotee, happily prepared delicious *prasāda* for all the devotees during their visits.

### **Pleasure and nourishment: two aspects of service**

I once cooked under Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī's guidance at the Śrī Ananta-vāsudeva temple in Kālnā. At that time, the temple was under the care of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. In the course of cooking, I had forgotten whether I had added salt to one of the vegetable preparations. When I told Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī about this, he said, "I can tell from the steam rising from the pot whether or not you have added salt." Sure enough, when he saw the steam from a distance, he said, "No, you haven't added salt yet."

He then gave me the following cooking advise: "If you ever happen to add too much turmeric, put a few pumpkin or gourd leaves into the pot and they will soak up the excess turmeric. And if you happen to add too much salt, a ball of dough will absorb it." He went on to tell me many more things about cooking, including how to cook large quantities in only a short time.

During our conversation, he said, "Cooking is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's service, and She always presents new dishes to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Although Śrī Durvāsā Ṛṣi gave Her a boon by which everything She cooked would be like nectar, She still fully absorbs Herself in cooking, as She does with whatever other services She may perform. Moreover, She reflects on what is best for Kṛṣṇa. She considers not only whether Kṛṣṇa will find a dish tasty, but also whether it will nourish Him. It was with a similar mood that Śrī Rāghava Paṇḍita's sister, Śrī Damayantī, would send medicinal preparations to Purī for Śrīman Mahāprabhu, so that He could find relief from any acidity or stomach pain He may have experienced.

"In our conditioned state, we do not know Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Śrīman Mahāprabhu's tastes, nor have we any idea which dishes nourish Them. Still, we have heard that Bhagavān accepts food through the mouths of His devotees. Keeping this in mind, we should be especially careful to consider what is most beneficial for them when preparing their meals. When cooking for them, we must dedicate our full attention to that service."

## **Worrying for the welfare of others**

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī once chastised a person he had inspired to join the *maṭha*. That person responded by saying, “If you weren’t such an old man, I would have grabbed you and forcibly thrown you out of the *maṭha*.” Śrīpāda Keśava Prabhu made no rebuttal, but rather remained silent.

After I repeatedly asked him about the incident, he finally said, “There is a difference of heaven and earth between the era we live in today and that of bygone times. Previously, people felt forever indebted to those who helped them even slightly. But nowadays, not to speak of a scent of gratitude, people feel no shame in arguing with and falsely accusing those who have helped them. Their only motivation for such quarrels is to receive recognition and fulfill their selfish desires. There was a time when, what to speak of those in positions of authority, everyone in the *maṭha* desired to increase the *maṭha*’s number of *sevakas*. But now we see that many of those holding high posts do not object to expelling devotees from the *maṭha*.

“This reminds me of an old story,” he continued. “Once, a man put what he thought was a turtle egg in a pond, because turtles help protect water by eating many polluting entities. But when the egg hatched, he discovered it was actually a crocodile egg. He now had a pond with a crocodile that wanted to eat him, the same person who had put the egg in the pond.”

I told Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, “You have served both Śrīla Prabhupāda and Guru Mahārāja so much. You should never have to endure any sort of inconvenience. When government employees retire, they receive a pension. Bhagavān’s is the biggest government. How could those who have served Him not possibly receive a pension? In this world, a pensioner must go to the bank and prove his identity before he receives any funds. But Bhagavān’s devotees receive their pension automatically, without having to go anywhere. You have never collected any money for yourself; you have lived your whole life as a totally renounced Vaiṣṇava. Although they have never met you, devotees both here and abroad joyfully exclaim ‘All glories to Prabhupāda’s cook!’ whenever they hear about you. There are plenty of people who would happily donate to serve you. Do not concern yourself with the actions or words of others. You have nothing to worry about.”

“I know all this very well,” he told me. “I am not worried for my maintenance. I worry only for those who, though residing with *sādhus*, are unable to take full advantage of their association. These persons are unable to realize that they must taste the fruits of their actions. Where, then, must they go

to experience a change of heart? Anyway, I can only pray for Bhagavān to bring them auspiciousness. May Śrīla Prabhupāda rest his auspicious gaze on all of us.”

### **Avoiding duplicity**

Various godbrothers of Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī would repeatedly ask him to accept *sannyāsa*, but he would always say, “It is duplicitous for a person to superficially accept someone as his *dīkṣā*-, *śikṣā*- or *sannyāsa-guru*. Even a *sannyāsa* disciple must readily accept his *sannyāsa-guru*’s instructions, including chastisement, with great pleasure and eagerness, for the scriptures declare it improper to not regard one’s *gurus* as being on the same level. Śrīla Prabhupāda is my *dīkṣā-guru*, and I simply cannot put anyone else on the same seat he occupies in my heart. He has taught that it is better to live as an animal, bird, worm, insect or any other of the millions of species than to resort to duplicity, so how could I accept *sannyāsa* if I am unable to give my heart to anyone else but him?

“Śrīla Prabhupāda has also taught that the servants of *paramahansa* Vaiṣṇavas are simple-hearted. I therefore pray that you may encourage and help me in cultivating simplicity, so that I may become a true disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda in this lifetime and thereby become satisfied. This would be an expression of your true mercy upon me.”

### **Protecting his godbrothers’ and godsisters’ japa-mālās**

When Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī’s godbrothers or godsisters would leave this material world, he would acquire and carefully store the *japa-mālā* (chanting beads) Śrīla Prabhupāda had given them. Whenever any of his fellow godbrothers or godsisters happened to lose or misplace their *japa-mālā*, he would provide them one of the *mālās* he had saved. Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī was so pleased after the construction of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha’s branch at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance place in Purī that he blessed the person who funded the *maṭha*’s construction, Śrī Banavārī Lāla Simhāniyā, by giving him one of the *mālās* on which Śrīla Prabhupāda chanted.

### **Reading for the pleasure of Bhagavān and His devotees**

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī would study Bengali translations of many books. I noted he especially liked reading the Bengali versions of various Purāṇas. He always avoided using his reading light at night, instead opting to read by candlelight, so as not to inconvenience the other devotees

sleeping in his room.

He used to say, “I read only to please Bhagavān and His devotees. If my reading light disturbs a devotee of Bhagavān, then of what benefit will my reading be?”

### **Wasted time is a wasted opportunity to serve**

Someone once notified Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, “There is a person from our village who, after living in the Himalayas for ten years, claims to have gained the mystic ability to walk on water. Today, he is returning to our village to show his extraordinary new ability. I can arrange for you to come and see if you would like.”

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī told that person, “I am not a fool. I will not waste my invaluable time to see a crazy person who spent ten years of his life just to attain the ability to walk on water. You can take a boat for a couple *paisā*, and an airplane ticket to the furthest possible country costs at most a month’s salary. What, then, is the need to spend ten years mastering such a pointless feat? Those who pursue such attainments simply crave mundane prestige, and nothing more. An intelligent person should understand the true value of his time. Knowing that one’s time should be used to pursue that which cannot be attained by money, affluence, knowledge or ritual practice, what intelligent person would ever endeavor for material prestige?”

### **Essence over externalities**

Once, an initiated devotee petitioned Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, saying, “Prabhu, I have not been chanting my *gāyatrī-mantras* for quite some time. I have heard that the *mantras* are rendered ineffective after three days of neglect. I am unable to hear them again from my *dīkṣā-guru*, for he has left this world to join Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s eternal pastimes. I implore you to mercifully recite the *gāyatrī-mantras* to me.”

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī asked the devotee, “Do you still remember the *mantras* your *gurudeva* gave you?”

“Yes,” he said. “I remember all the *mantras*.”

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī told him, “Then you need not hear *mantras* from anyone else. It is true that neglecting to chant the *mantras* given by *śrī guru* is a form of *gurur-avajāna*, disobeying one’s spiritual master. Nevertheless, you must beg forgiveness at the lotus feet of your *gurudeva* and again start chanting your *mantras* according to the proper regulations.



Everything will be rectified by his mercy.”

The devotee then raised another question: “I have heard that I should at least change my *upavīta* (sacred thread) before beginning to chant my *mantras* again. Is this true?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī replied, “If that were the case, then wouldn’t ladies, who are never given a sacred thread, be doomed? Do not invest your attention and energy only in external activities. Instead, always seek and give greater value to the essence. When travelling, retaining your ticket is the most important concern. Stations, co-passengers and conductors may come and go with little or no consequence. In the same way, your ticket to Goloka Vṛndāvana is the *mahā-mantra*, and to some extent, your *gāyatrī-mantras*, which indirectly assist the *mahā-mantra*. Concern yourself with nothing else. No obstacle can harm you if you take full shelter of *śrī harināma* and your *gāyatrī-mantras* under proper guidance.”

### **The transcendental clerk**

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu lived in Śrī Jagannātha Purī for approximately ten years before leaving this world. Whenever I would visit Purī, he would open up his trunk, place it in front of me and say, “Count how much money is there.” After I would count the money and tell him the amount, he would often say, “I must definitely provide Jagannātha *prasāda* to the residents of the *maṭha*. Also, I want you to invite as many *paṇḍās* from Śrī Jagannātha Mandira as we can host so that they may partake as well.”

Accordingly, I would procure Jagannātha *prasāda* and invite the *paṇḍās*. Seeing this, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu would become very pleased and say, “*Bhakata sevā parama siddhi prema-latikāra mūla*—Serving devotees is the greatest perfection and the root of the creeper of divine love.”

He would also explain, “When devotees offer me donations, they do so with the intention of serving Vaiṣṇavas. If I properly fulfill my responsibility to utilize their donations in service, I will become a recipient of Bhagavān’s mercy, and the donors will be spiritually benefited. I am a like bank teller or a railway enquiry clerk who deals with the public’s money, but does not receive a direct payment from them. It is the bank or railway management that pays his salary for fulfilling his responsibility of providing customers with the convenience of depositing or withdrawing their money or inquiring about train timings.”

## Preparing for his disappearance pastime

In the year leading up to his disappearance, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī would continually cry out the following verses at the top of his voice:

*labdhvā sudurlabham idaṁ bahu-sambhavānte  
mānuṣyam arthadam anityam apīha dhīraḥ  
tūrṇaṁ yateta na pated anumṛtyu yāvan  
niḥśreyasāya viṣayaḥ khalu sarvataḥ syāt*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.9.29)*

We have attained this rare human life after countless births, and though it is temporary, it affords one purpose in this world. Therefore, as long as he has not dropped dead, a wise person must swiftly strive to attain ultimate liberation, for pleasures can always be had in all forms of life.

*kṛṣṇa tvadīya-pada-paṅkaja-pañjarāntam  
adyaiva me viśatu mānasa-rāja-haṁsaḥ  
prāṇa-prayāṇa-samaye kapha-vāta-pittaiḥ  
kaṇṭhāvarodhana-vidhau smaraṇaṁ kutas te*

*Mukunda-mālā-stotra (33)*

O Kṛṣṇa, may the royal swan that is my mind submerge itself this instant at the stems of Your lotus-flower-like feet. How else will I be able to remember You during my last breath, when my throat is constricted by air, bile and phlegm?

## An ācārya in the truest sense

Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī lead such a simple and modest life that the only items he left behind after his disappearance were a few books, two sets of clothes and a trivial amount of money, all of which were kept in one small box, the only box he owned. Although he never externally accepted the role of ācārya nor gave *mantra-dīkṣā*, he abided by the following words of the scriptures, and thereby fortified many devotees to do the same:

*ācinoti yaḥ śāstrārthaṁ  
ācare sthāpayatya 'pi  
svayaṁ ācarati yasmad  
ācāryas tena kīrtitaḥ*

*Vāyu Purāṇa*

A person who grasps the import of the scriptures and, through his words and conduct, establishes others in such standards gains renown as an ācārya.

Although he never accumulated anything for himself, he never lacked

anything in his service. When he disappeared from this world on the day of Yoginī Ekādaśī, many devotees gave me donations to organize his *viraha-mahotsava*. Just as it had satisfied him so much to feed Jagannātha-deva's *prasāda* to the *maṭhavāsīs* and the *paṇḍās* in the past, I invited all the Gauḍīya Maṭha devotees in Śrī Jagannātha Purī and numerous *paṇḍās* on the day of his *viraha-mahotsava* and distributed Jagannātha *prasāda* to them.

## Śrī Jagad-bandhu Bhakti Rañjana

### Neither a thief nor a donor

Śreṣṭhārya Śrī Jagad-bandhu Bhakti Rañjana, a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, paid for the entire construction of Śrī Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata. His contribution included the land, the temple area, the *kīrtana* hall and the rooms for Śrīla Prabhupāda and his devotees. Following the completion of the *maṭha*, the deities were brought on a chariot in a grand procession from the house Śrīla Prabhupāda rented at 1 Ultadāngā Road. A one-month festival of *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana*, which Śrī Jagad-bandhu Prabhu also sponsored in full, was held to celebrate the *maṭha*'s inauguration. Each evening, various dignitaries were invited to speak.

One evening during the festival, the invited speaker, a judge, mentioned in his address, “Śrī Jagad-bandhu Bābū is a generous donor.”

The quite uneducated and illiterate Śrī Jagad-bandhu Prabhu, who had never addressed an assembly before and who at first had no intention of doing so that day, requested Śrīla Prabhupāda, the chairman of the assembly, for permission to speak. After Śrīla Prabhupāda consented, Śrī Jagad-bandhu Prabhu declared, “The respected judge is most certainly incapable of speaking untruths. Still, what he has said about me is incorrect and improper. I can only assume that his actual motive behind praising me was to encourage me in my service to Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. In reality, I can never be a donor. A donor is one who gives that which one owns to another. But what do I possess that I can give to others? Who am I to give anything in reality? I brought nothing with me when I came into this world, and I cannot take anything with me when I leave it.

“The only true donor in this world is Bhagavān. He has given me everything I have—not only wealth and property, but also this body, which includes eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth and so on. Whatever Bhagavān gives, He gives so it can be utilized in His service. Those who neglect to engage everything they have in the service of Bhagavān and instead use it for their own enjoyment are thieves.

“All I can say for myself is that I am not a thief; I am not a *namaka-haramī*.

<sup>1</sup>

But at the same time, I am not a donor. I simply engage the wealth I have in the service of He who has given me that wealth.”

As a result of his association with elevated Vaiṣṇavas who possessed a

service-centric disposition, Śrī Jagad-bandhu Prabhu, who was otherwise completely uneducated, received the intelligence and conviction that everything belongs to Bhagavān and should be used only in His service. I, too, hope to one day possess such intelligence.

### **Śrīla Prabhupāda’s great Vaiṣṇava**

Śrīla Prabhupāda was greatly pleased with Śrī Jagad-bandhu Prabhu’s service, and he therefore bestowed his mercy on him by awarding him the title ‘Śreṣṭhārya.’ The word *śreṣṭha* means ‘best,’ and the word *ārya* refers to a simple-hearted *brāhmaṇa* who uses his simplicity in the service of Bhagavān. Therefore, the title ‘Śreṣṭhārya’ is a special designation, signifying ‘the best of the *brāhmaṇas* who serve Bhagavān.’ Śrīla Prabhupāda has written, “Simplicity is Vaiṣṇavism.” Because a person cannot be a Vaiṣṇava without being simple-hearted, the title ‘Śreṣṭhārya’ indirectly refers to a great Vaiṣṇava. This was the title bestowed upon Śrī Jagad-bandhu Prabhu by Śrīla Prabhupāda, his *gurupāda-padma*, who was profoundly pleased with him.

### **His disappearance**

During the entire month-long inauguration festival of Śrī Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha, a ghee lamp remained lit in a glass lantern atop the temple spire. At the end of the festival, the glass lantern broke, extinguishing the flame. When Śrīla Prabhupāda saw this, he ordered the *brahmacārīs* to check on Śrī Jagad-bandhu Prabhu in his home. When they reached there, they found that Śrī Jagad-bandhu Prabhu had left his body. They returned to the *maṭha* and reported back to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who explained, “Jagad-bandhu Prabhu was supposed to leave his body one month ago, but I kept him here until the completion of the festival.”

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1 A person who is disloyal to those who maintain him.

# Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha

## Assimilating the order of śrī guru

Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha originally resided in the Peḍo village of Kānpūra, located in the Howrah district of West Bengal, but often travelled to the 24 Parganas district for the sake of his business. It was there that he received the fortune of meeting Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vaibhava Sāgara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. It was from him that Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha heard about Śrīla Prabhupāda's glories. In recounting that time, he would often say, "My heart shuddered with joy when I first heard about Śrīla Prabhupāda's countless glories. It was as if someone started a generator that shook the earth."

He took shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda sometime in 1936. At the time he was awarded *śrī harināma*, Śrīla Prabhupāda told him, "You should accept as your meals only food that has been cooked by devotees who have received at least *harināma*, if not *mantra-dīkṣā*. Although the effect may be too subtle for us to perceive, the natures and proclivities of those who prepare the food we eat certainly influences our consciousness. This principle is corroborated by the scriptures."

*svargāpagā-hema-mṛṇālinīnām  
nānā-mṛṇālāgra-bhujo bhajāmaḥ  
annānurūpām tanu-rūpa-rddhiṁ  
kāryaṁ nidānād dhi guṇān adhīte*

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 1.92)*

[A royal swan said,] "We, the residents of the heavenly planets, consume the stems of the golden lotus flowers that grow in the River Gaṅgā, which flows in our abode. As a result of this diet, we are exceedingly beautiful, because one certainly obtains the effect and qualities of one's actions."

Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha very strictly followed his *gurupāda-padma*'s instruction. For approximately thirty-five years, he honored the *prasāda* he personally cooked and offered to the Lord, and never once accepted a meal prepared by his uninitiated wife. It was only after his wife was initiated during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* in 1966 by my Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, that Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha began accepting food and water from her hands. In this way, he exemplified the direction Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has given in his book *Prema-bhakti-*

*candrikā* (1.2):

*guru-mukha-padma-vākya, cittete kôriyā aikya  
āra nā kôrihō mane āsā*

Make the words emanating from the lotus mouth of *śrī guru* one with your heart and do not aspire for anything else. \*

### **Unwavering faith in the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda**

Śrīla Prabhupāda disappeared from the mortal realm before he could award Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha with *mantra-dīkṣā*. Thus, Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha accepted only *harināma* from his spiritual master. When devotees would advise him to accept *dīkṣā-mantras* from any one of his senior godbrothers, he would always say, “*Harināma* alone brings all perfection. I do not consider it necessary to accept *mantra-dīkṣā*. What is the need to make a bond with a new *guru* through such a process when I am wholly satisfied with what I have received from Śrīla Prabhupāda in accordance with my eligibility?

“Additionally, when Śrīla Prabhupāda granted me *harināma*, another new *harināma* initiate asked him for *mantra-dīkṣā* right before me. Śrīla Prabhupāda told him, ‘By giving you *harināma*, I have given you Śrī Hari Himself. What more is left to be given?’ It is through these words that Śrīla Prabhupāda forever affords me his divine association. He never leaves me, and I too cannot separate myself from his lotus feet for a single moment.”

### **Avoiding mundane ventures**

Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha had many daughters, yet he never made any efforts to find suitable marital candidates for them. His wife would often tell him, “You must make at least some endeavor to arrange your daughters’ marriages, otherwise what will become of them?”

He would reply, “I will not utilize my energy in any mundane venture whatsoever. I will most respectfully accept as my destiny whatever outcome manifests by the will of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Bhagavān.”

As fate would have it, a family visited Śrī Madan-mohana Seṭha to scout his eldest daughter as a prospective bride for their son. However, when they were not notified of the family’s decision after that meeting, his wife urged him to visit that family and inquire about their decision.

Initially, Śrī Madan-mohana Seṭha decided to honor his wife’s request. He packed his bag and prepared to leave, when he stopped suddenly, turned to his wife and said, “Śrīla Prabhupāda forbade me from approaching anyone in such



a manner.” Saying this, he stayed put. Very soon, by the desire of the Lord, a number of people approached him, and one by one, all of his daughters’ marriages were effortlessly arranged.

### **His affinity for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s transcendental literature**

When Śrī Madana Mohana Seṭha was unable to perform any physical activity in his advanced age, he spent most of his time reading the weekly *Gauḍīya* magazine, the daily spiritual newspaper *Dainika Nadiyā Prakāśa*, and other publications printed during Śrīla Prabhupāda’s manifest presence. With great enthusiasm, he amassed a comprehensive collection of such publications by personally visiting various devotees, even those who resided quite far away, and requesting them to gift their publications to his library. In this way, he collected almost every issue of *Gauḍīya* printed during Śrīla Prabhupāda’s time in this world.

Sometime after establishing ISKCON, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāja asked Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha to send him various issues of *Gauḍīya*, which Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha happily provided for his pleasure and service.

Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha would often say, “I do not have even the slightest desire to read and follow any literature that has not been published or approved by Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

### **Disregarding social customs in the pursuit of service**

Śrī Madan-mohana Seṭha would request almost all his visitors to donate something for the service of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, and he often asked members of his own family, as well. His sons once told him, “While we do not object to you requesting others to donate for the service of the *maṭha*, we sincerely request you not to seek anything from your sons-in-law

<sup>1</sup>

. It is a matter of principle that one ought not to ask anything from one’s sons-in-law, but rather make offerings to them.”

Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha replied, “I have heard from the Vaiṣṇavas a very profound, wonderful, unambiguous and detailed explanation of the verse beginning *etāvaj janma-sāphalyam* from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.22.35). They explain that the life of an embodied soul will meet with perfection once he completely dedicates his entire life to following the activities of *śreyācāraṇa*, activities that may not be initially pleasing to him, but will ultimately yield auspicious results. If he is unable to do that, he should then utilize his wealth in

spiritual service. If he does not possess much wealth, he should then utilize his intelligence. If he lacks proper intelligence, then he should employ his speech in encouraging others to take up the path of *śreya*, or ultimate spiritual benefit.

“Now that I find myself unable to render physical service in my advanced age or offer much money due to financial difficulties, I must at the very least serve through my intelligence and words. Why are you restricting the already limited scope of my service? Do you think I am asking others to donate toward my own personal gain? Have I ever used any money or anything else I received from others to fulfill my own self-interests? My only concern in asking for donations is to help others attain the topmost auspiciousness by engaging their offerings in the service of Bhagavān and the Vaiṣṇavas. Do you wish to prohibit me from being an instrument in rendering such service? To do so would cause my sons-in-laws’ inauspiciousness, for they would not receive the opportunity to offer their wealth in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, where it rightly belongs.

“Your words will never make me deviate from my duty. I do not wish my relations with others to be based simply on some bodily conception, and so the fact that my sons-in-law are considered my relatives will not prevent me from giving them the same opportunity to serve the *maṭha* that I do to others.”

It was only very recently, in April, 2017, when I visited Hamīrapura, Himachal Pradesh, that Śrī Madan-mohana Seṭha’s grandson, Śrīpāda Bhakti Vibuddha Bodhāyana Mahārāja, told me that his grandfather would ask not only his sons-in-law to donate toward the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, but also his grandsons, the sons of his sons-in-law, including Śrīpāda Bodhāyana Mahārāja himself when Mahārāja, then known as Asīm, resided in his family’s home.

### **His dedication to pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda**

Despite always remaining as a householder, Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha was well acquainted with the transcendental conceptions, the ideal conduct, and the most cherished desires of his *gurupāda-padma*. This can be attributed to the fact that he very sincerely followed Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *hari-kathā* and the various books, scriptural commentaries, articles and letters he composed, but principally because he associated with devotees who had completely offered their lives to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

He constantly chanted *harināma*, spoke *hari-kathā* and read, especially from the issues of the weekly *Gauḍīya* magazine that were published during

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s time. During his advanced age, when his diminishing eyesight prevented him from reading, he would ask other devotees to read to him.

He always remained extremely careful not only in services to Śrīla Prabhupāda that seemed externally significant, but also in those that appeared trivial. For example, he would fund and carefully arrange for *luchī*

<sup>2</sup>  
—a preparation for which Śrīla Prabhupāda had a particular relish—to be cooked daily at various places, including Śrī Yogapīṭha, Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance place at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Purī, and the Vṛndāvana branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. In this way, Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha exemplified the principle that every activity of a surrendered devotee is meant for the pleasure of his spiritual master.

### **Not allowing others to misuse the instruments of service**

During Śrīla Prabhupāda’s manifest presence, Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha dedicated an entire garden of bananas to the service of the *maṭha*. He made a rule that none of his family members, relatives or workers could take a single banana from that garden for their own use. If anyone wished to eat a banana, they could request Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha for money and purchase bananas from the market. He once punished one of his sons after learning he had eaten a banana from that garden.

### **Offering his wealth in service**

Śrī Madan-mohan Seṭha very earnestly engaged his wealth in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas from the time he accepted *harinama* from Śrīla Prabhupāda. After the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he continued this service by offering financial assistance to many of his godbrothers, especially my *gurupāda-padma*. After the disappearance of Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha regularly sent money to the *maṭha* of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja to aid in construction and other services. He often visited Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja to personally offer contributions to him with great devotion.

Throughout his life, he stayed in a small clay-built room. Once, his sons arranged to construct a proper room for him. When they had all the necessary items delivered—like bricks, cement and rebar—Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha humbly told them, “It will not be possible to construct Śrī Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* if we spend so much money constructing a room for me.”

With this, he had the building materials sent back to the supplier.

Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha would often extend invitations to me to stay at his home for some time. Because I viewed him as a senior devotee who was completely dedicated to the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I honored his request as an instruction and once visited his home for three days.

### **Beyond considerations of āśrama**

Śrīla Prabhupāda would refer to both Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Vinod-bihārī Brahmācārī, who later became Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, as *prakṛta-sannyāsīs*, or true renunciants, while they were still *brahmācārīs*. Observing the ideal conduct and pure character of Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha, I realized deep within my heart that Śrīla Prabhupāda would have surely referred to him, too, as a *prakṛta-sannyāsī*, even though he was living as a householder.

The scriptures state “*vaiṣṇavānam āśramābhāvat*—Vaiṣṇavas do not belong to a particular *āśrama*.” In other words, although a Vaiṣṇava may choose to accept whatever *āśrama* he deems favorable for performing his *sādhana-bhajana*, he is to be recognized not by that *āśrama*, but by his exemplary conduct and transcendental ideology. It is for this reason that Śrīla Narotama dāsa Ṭhākura has written:

*gṛhe vā vanete thāke, ‘hā gaurāṅga’ bô’le ḍāke  
narottama māge tā’ra saṅga*

*Prārthanā (15.1.4)*

Whether a person lives in his home as a householder or in the forest as a renunciant, if he exclaims, “*Hā Gaurāṅga!*” Narottama dāsa begs for his association. \*

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thakura has echoed this teaching in his *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru (Upalabdhi 3.4.5)*:

*jadi sumāṅgala cāo, sadā kṛṣṇa-nāma gāo  
gṛhe thākô vane thākô ithe tarka akāraṇa*

If you desire true auspiciousness, then always chant the name of Kṛṣṇa, whether you stay at home or in the forest. Any reasoning regarding this is fruitless.

### **Considering the lotus feet of śrī guru to be his only wealth**

When the State Bank of India opened its first branch in his hometown of Peḍo, a local resident repeatedly insisted that Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha open

an account. Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha eventually relented and unwillingly opened an account in which he deposited five rupees. However, he never made any further deposits or withdrawals from that bank. He would always say, “The lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda are my only bank, my only wealth. This wealth increases eternally, thus bestowing upon me supreme bliss and unlimited satisfaction.”

### **Refusing to waste time and money on material distractions**

For as long as Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha was physically present in this world, he never allowed a television to be brought into his home. He would say, “Śrīman Mahāprabhu instructed Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, ‘*Grāmya-kathā nā śunibe*—Do not hear mundane talks of this material world’ (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 6.236). To the best of our ability, we should try to follow this instruction in our own lives. Additionally, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has mentioned in one of his articles that television offers very little benefit, and instead causes great harm.

“Viewing or hearing mundane topics that do not directly benefit us spiritually is an unnecessary disturbance to our consciousness, and it eventually causes obstacles to our *bhajana* in the form of distraction. Is it wise for a person to spend his money and time on something that causes such a dreadful disturbance?”

### **Taking a vow**

Once in Māyāpura, after Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha arrived by bullock cart from Gaṅgā-ghāṭa (Māyāpura-ghāṭa) to Śrī Caitanya Matha, his godbrother Śrī Nīśikānta Sanyāla Bhakti Sudhākara Prabhu asked, “How have you come here?”

Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha replied, “Prabhu, I travelled from Sealdah to Kṛṣṇanagara by train. From there, I went to Svarūpa-gaṅj, crossed the river to Gaṅgā-ghāṭa, and then came here to Śrī Caitanya Matha by bullock cart, which cost me four *paisā*.”

Śrī Nīśikānta Sanyāla said, “It would have been better if you had spent those four *paisā* in the service of Mahāprabhu by purchasing some *laṅgaḍa* mangoes

<sup>3</sup>  
.”

Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha took a vow that very day to never again hire a bullock cart. He declared, “I will save as much money as I can and use it

exclusively in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīman Mahāprabhu.”

### **His divine influence on family and friends**

By the mercy of Śrī Madana-mohana Seṭha, who was a pure devotee, all his family members and friends became firm followers of the principles of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. All those who came in his contact and association were undoubtedly affected by his greatly influential personality. Even those who maintained a close, intimate relationship with him accepted him as belonging to the spiritual realm.

His *puṣpa-samādhī* is situated in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura next to that of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Puri Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the Founder-*ācārya* of Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Matha. His grandson Śrīpada Bhakti Vibuddha Bodhāyana Mahārāja told me that his grandfather used to refer me as a *mukta-mahāpuruṣa*, a great liberated personality. I humbly consider this his kind blessing upon me, and I sincerely pray for his mercy, so that these words of his may some day prove true.

*ohe! vaiṣṇava ṭhākura, dayāra sāgara  
e dāse karuṇā kôri'  
diyā pada-chāyā, śodhō he āmāre  
tomāra caraṇa dhôri*

O Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura, you are an ocean of mercy. Being compassionate upon this servant, purify me by giving me the shade of your lotus feet, of which I take hold. \*

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[1](#) As per the traditional custom in India, a bride is considered to be offered as charity to the groom and his family. It is thought of as improper for the bride's family to accept anything from the groom's family, for they are considered recipients of charity.

[2](#) Deep-fried flatbread made of wheat flour similar in size and shape to *pūris*.

[3](#) A famous and highly delectable variety of mango.

## About Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja made his divine appearance in this world in a Bharadvāja *gotra* Cakravartī *brāhmaṇa* family on the auspicious day of Śayana Ekādaśī, 21 July 1926, in the Sītā-Rāmapura village of Bankurā, West Bengal. The disciples of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja who resided in Śrī Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha, Medinīpura, often visited his childhood home during their regular collection of alms. Encouraged by these devotees, Śrīla Mahārāja regularly visited the *maṭha* for *darśana* of Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara-jui and to hear discourses on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It was there that he met Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, one of the foremost disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, during one of Śrīla Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's many visits to Śrī Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha.

After developing a close, affectionate relationship with Śrīla Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja over the course of many years, Śrīla Mahārāja left his home in 1955 and, fully surrendering to the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, came to reside at the newly established Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata. That very same year, Śrīla Mahārāja was awarded *harīnāma* and *dīkṣā* on Śayana Ekādaśī, and was given the name Śrī Narottama dāsa.

During his residence in the *maṭha*, Śrī Narottama Prabhu was given the opportunity to intimately serve many godbrothers of his Guru Maharaja. As a result of this service, he received their affection and profuse blessings to realize the deep truths of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*. Seeing Śrī Narottama Prabhu's unyielding dedication to the service of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān, Śrīla Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja awarded him entry into the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*) in 1969, at which time he gave him the name Śrī Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Mahārāja.

Having profound confidence in Śrīla Mahārāja's abilities, Śrīla Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja entrusted him with many important tasks—such as the managing the *maṭha*'s Vraja-maṇḍala and Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramās*, escorting pilgrims to North and South India, arranging for *pradarśanīs* (exhibitions) at various places, preaching throughout many parts of India and overseeing the construction of most of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha's branches—appointed him Assistant Secretary of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha and awarded him the title 'Sevā-vigraha,' along with a certificate that described



him as *anālasya* (never lazy) and *sadā-satarka* (always alert). After the disappearance of his *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja from the vision of this world, Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja untiringly served in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha as the Secretary for approximately twenty-five years.

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja is renowned among the Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community for his contribution in the *sampradāyika-sevā* of translating, from Bengali to Hindi, Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura's *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* with the commentary of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, as well as Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī's *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* with the commentaries of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Through the example of his flawless conduct, Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja has taught all those who have been blessed with his association that non-sectarianism and glorifying and serving the Vaiṣṇavas are the greatest assets for those who wish to advance in spiritual life, and that serving and glorifying the Vaiṣṇavas is more important than serving and glorifying the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is especially known for his encyclopedic knowledge of Gauḍīya Maṭha history and his firm faith in *vaiṣṇava-sevā*. Being a well-respected and stalwart Vaiṣṇava, his instructions and guidance are sought by not only ordinary practitioners of *bhakti-yoga*, but also senior Vaiṣṇavas.

Even at such an advanced age, Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja continues to travel and preach *viśuddha caitanya-vāṇī*—the supremely pure teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—without any concern or complaint regarding hardship, physical or otherwise. Out of his endless compassion, Śrīla Mahārāja blesses all sincere practitioners who seek his association by imprinting upon their hearts the impressions of associating with a genuine *sādhū*.