

VIŚUDDHA

CAITANYA VĀNĪ

An anthology of hari-kathā

Vol. I



inspired by the lectures of

ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTI VIJÑĀNA BHĀRATĪ GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Viśuddha Caitanya-vāṇī

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Editorial

Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī has most mercifully manifested today. First and foremost, I offer my heartfelt *praṇāmas* to this most auspicious appearance day of Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī.

Śrī Caitanyadeva appeared in this world as the most auspicious embodiment of the nectarean mellow of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-candra's benevolent pastimes (*audārya-līlā*). Anguished by the miseries of Kali-yuga, He bestowed the incomparable, unprecedented and transcendental gift of *śrī bhagavat-prema-rasa*—the mellow of love for Bhagavān—to the souls of this world. *Jagad-guru* Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmīpada offered Śrī Caitanyadeva his *praṇāmas* as follows:

*namo mahā-vadānyāya
kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 19.53)

I offer *praṇāma* to that greatly munificent Lord who bestows *kṛṣṇa-prema*. He is Kṛṣṇa Himself who has assumed a golden complexion and accepted the name Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.*

In this verse, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpada has given a brief description of the name, form, qualities and pastimes of Śrī Caitanyadeva. For an object belonging to Vaikuṇṭha, the transcendental abode of Bhagavān, there exists no difference between the name of an object and the object itself, because Vaikuṇṭha is free from the presence of ignorance and *māyā*. Therefore, Śrī Caitanyadeva and his transcendental word (*vāṇī*) are non-different subjects. It has been said:

*vācyam vācakam ity udeti
bhavato nāma! svarūpa-dvayam
pūrvasmāt param eva hanta
karunam tatrāpi jānīmahe*

*yas tasmin vihitāparādha-
nivaham prānī samantād bhaved
āsyenedam upāśya so 'pi hi
sadānandāmbudhau majjati*

*Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī
Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭakam (6)*

O Nāma, in the material world You manifest in two forms: as *vācyā*, the Paramātmā inside the heart of each soul; and as *vācaka*, the sound vibration of names such as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. We know Your second form to be more merciful to us than the first, because by chanting [Your names], the first form is worshiped, and even those who have committed offenses to Your first form are plunged into an ocean of bliss.*

This evidence confirms that Bhagavān's transcendental name (*vācaka*) is much more merciful in comparison to His manifest form (*vācyā*). In a similar manner, the *vāṇī* of Śrī Caitanyadeva is extremely benevolent. This divine *caitnaya-vāṇī* has manifested in each and every home of the residents of this world in various different languages and in a form easily comprehensible by one and all, thus resulting in the incomparable advent of the spiritual welfare of the entire world.

Material lust invokes anger, violence and animosity, both individually as well as collectively. This lust is nothing but an attempt by each and every individual of this world, despite caste or creed, to gratify their material senses. Therefore, lust is a cause for igniting anger, violence and other objectionable attributes among individuals, castes and all common persons of this world. *Śrī caitnaya-vāṇī*, on the

other hand, being the most benevolent incarnation of Bhagavān, who is the embodiment of pure transcendental love, thoroughly spreads true auspiciousness among all living entities of the world, irrespective of caste or community.

As *śrī caitanya-vāṇī* enters my ears, it cleanses my heart, where it then seats itself. By completely dispelling all the accumulated filth in my heart, it has provided me with the opportunity to escape the blazing forest fire of material existence.

Śrī caitanya-vāṇī is *sva-svarūpa-udbobhinī*—it awakens one’s true constitutional position; *śrī kṛṣṇa-prabhodinī*—it manifests the transcendental form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in one’s heart; *śrī kṛṣṇa-premamayī*—it is fully saturated with transcendental love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *śrī kṛṣṇa-viraha-unmādanā-pradāyinī*—it leads one to the stage of madness in separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa; and, simultaneously, *viṣaya-trṣṇānāśinī*—it eliminates the desires for sense gratification from one’s heart.

Śrī caitanya-vāṇī is *śrī kṛṣṇa-prema-svarūpinī*, the original form of *śrī kṛṣṇa-prema*. Unrestricted contact with it will demolish the illusory net woven by the three modes of material nature and elevate the conditioned soul to the platform of Vaikuṇṭha. Currently, political policies, social policies, economic policies and even religious policies have become contaminated with immorality by the influence of Kali-yuga. Because of an abundance of the mode of ignorance, human character is being blemished, either openly or secretly, by many events, such as the unrelenting endeavor of untruth to remain dominant and be perceived as the truth; conspiring to fulfill one’s self-interests in the name of patriotism; the propagation of disgraceful and narrow mentalities disguised in the garb of demonstrations of social liberal policy; utter deceitfulness in the name of economic policies, so much so that even food and medicines are adulterated; and the existence of falsehood, treachery and immorality, even in the field of religious policies. At such an ill-fated moment, I very earnestly pray for the unlimited expansion of *śrī caitanya-vāṇī*, the messenger (*vārttā-vāhikā*) of the purest devotion to both Śrī Kṛṣṇa—the topmost truth and embodiment of all the world’s mellows—and Śrī Caitanyadeva—the embodiment of the highest limit of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

Śrī caitanya-vāṇī is the word of love. Only love can establish true happiness and unity between individuals and between communities. I can say with the utmost confidence that besides love, there exists no worldly policy—whether economic, societal, national or religious—that can succeed in establishing peace among the members of a particular family, community or country, what to speak of the whole world. Therefore, on this very auspicious day, I earnestly pray unto the lotus feet of *śrī caitanya-vāṇī*, so that it may sprinkle its mercy throughout the whole world: “O *śrī caitanya-vāṇī*! Mercifully engage me and all the people of this world in Your service and thereby reveal Your unparalleled mercy for everyone.”

All glories to *śrī caitanya-vāṇī*! All glories to its servitors and all gentlemen respectful of its existence! May all the people of this world engage in hearing and speaking *śrī caitanya-vāṇī*, and thereby march forward on the path of true auspiciousness.

Excerpt from *Śrī Caitanya Vāṇī*
(Year 2, Volume 1 and Year 17, Volume 1), written by
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Introduction

Vīśuddha caitanya-vāṇī is the fully blossomed form of *amnāya-vāṇī*, or transcendental teachings received through the supremely pure *guru-paramparā* via the medium of *kīrtana*. Through the process of *śravaṇa* (hearing), it eventually seats itself in the heart of the *sat-siśya* (worthy disciple). The *antaraṅga-parikaras* (intimate associates) of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—devotees like Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātāna Gosvāmī, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and, in the modern era, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda—are the protectors of this *vīśuddha caitanya-vāṇī*. Just as Śrīman Mahāprabhu remains eternally surrounded by these *antaraṅga-parikaras*, His *vāṇī* is intrinsically linked with their *vāṇī*. Therefore, the term *vīśuddha caitanya-vāṇī* is defined as the embodiment of the teachings and conduct of not only Śrīman Mahāprabhu, but of all His associates, as well.

The sole objective of the pure followers of *vīśuddha caitanya-vāṇī* is to attain the unalloyed *kṛṣṇa-prema* present in the hearts of the *vraja-gopīs*, who fearlessly gave their foot dust to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in order to relieve His headache.¹ Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared in this world to distribute this very *prema*, which had not been given in an extremely long time and is without even the slightest tinge of *ātmedriya-prīti-vāñca* (the desire to please one's own senses). This *vīśuddha caitanya-vāṇī* is the wealth of Goloka Vṛndāvana, and its fortunate recipients hanker only to fulfill the innermost heartfelt desires of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, without the slightest concern for consequence. Indeed, for the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they are unafraid of even permanent residence in hell, and they thoroughly reject even the apprehension shown by Śrī Govinda Prabhu, the personal servant of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu who, out of fear of offending Śrīman Mahāprabhu in the pursuit of His service, once laid a cloth over the Lord before stepping over Him.

Due to the influence of Kali-yuga, many sense enjoyers and unqualified individuals who possess a disregard for scriptural evidence have, from time to time, attempted to conceal and distort the true form of *vīśuddha caitanya-vāṇī* for their personal gain. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura states in the *śruti-phala* of *Jaiva-dharma*:

*pr̥thivīte jata kathā dharma-nāme cale
bhāgavata kahe saba paripūrṇa chale*

All the philosophies in this world that are celebrated as *dharma* have been condemned as utterly deceptive by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Because of the prominence of such fraudulent ideologies in the world today, we feel ourselves forced to present this *Vīśuddha Caitanya-vāṇī* at this most opportune time, when many so-called followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are preaching *chala-dharma* in the name of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Our aim is to preserve the true form of *vīśuddha caitanya-vāṇī* to the best of our ability.

.....

If there is any credit to be assigned for the manifestation of the most sublime *vāṇī* contained in this publication, it goes not to me, but to my *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja and our *rūpānuga guru-varga*. The publishers of this anthology have presented only the *vāṇī* of our previous *ācāryas* as I have heard and spoken it, and it is utterly devoid of speculation. The glorification of my contemporaries has been penned in light of the conduct I personally observed in my *guru-vargas* when they glorified their

fellow godbrothers.

Although the articles in this publication have been adapted from lectures I have given at various places, they were not spoken in the form in which they appear before you now. It should be known that they have been written in the style of *bhāva-anuvāda*—that is, they are not word-for-word translations of my Hindi lectures. Rather, editorial discretion has been utilized in order to more closely follow the moods and intended meanings of my words.

Normally, in my lectures, I am less concerned about preserving chronology or sequence than I am about conveying the moods and topics appearing in my heart. Also, because of my advanced age and fading memory, my mind often saunters between various topics, and thus my spoken lectures are perceived by many as disjointed. Therefore, the publishers of this book have gathered the main points of those lectures and presented them in an organized fashion. After compiling an article, they would then read that article to me and include any corrections or additional points I would give at that time. They would then organize both the content and the language. As every article in this book is an independent work in itself, there is no specific sequence in which it should be read; the reader is free to start and stop at any point without loss.

I am deeply appreciative of the devotees involved in this publication for their most ardent efforts and genuine desire to preserve and share this *viśuddha caitanya-vāṇī*. I am bestowing my most heartfelt blessings upon them.

The gravity of this publication will surely be appreciated by the *nirmatsara* (non-envious) Vaiṣṇavas, who possess the ability to easily differentiate between *viśuddha* (pure) *caitanya-vāṇī* and *viddha* (impure) *caitanya-vāṇī*. By the influence of performing *śravaṇa* of this *viśuddha caitanya-vāṇī*, sincere devotees will become *aṇī* (cleared of all debts accumulated in this material world) and *apavāsī* (situated as if in their native land). My firm conviction is that those who read this *Viśuddha Caitanya-vāṇī* with resolute faith will meet with the highest auspiciousness.

O, readers! Because you aspire to become pure, one-pointed devotees of *bhāva-grahī* Janardana, I am certain you will read this publication with *sad-bhāva* (conscientiousness) and expertly extract its essence.

Vaiṣṇava dāsānudāsa,

Bhakti Vijñāna Bhārati

1 A narration of this pastime appears in the article [*The Supreme Lord's Supreme Engagement*](#).

The Process to Obtain the most Cherished Objective of the Soul

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written in his *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 1.20, 21):

guru, vaiṣṇava, bhagavān—tinera smaraṇa

*tinera smaraṇe haya vighna-vināśana
anāyāse haya nija vāñchita-pūraṇa*

By remembering *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān, all difficulties are completely destroyed and one's ultimate desire is very easily fulfilled. *

In these verses, the word *smaraṇa* means ‘to remember,’ but the conception of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is “*kīrtana prabhāve smaraṇa hōibe*—true *smaraṇa* only comes through the effect of *kīrtana*,” and this *kīrtana* should always be performed with a mood of surrender, following in the footsteps (*anugatya*) of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān; *vighna-vināśana* means that all obstacles on the path of *bhakti* are completely destroyed; and *nija-vāñchita* refers to the most cherished objective of the soul, *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

Until a person attains the topmost objective of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, his worldly desires remain unfulfilled, even if he has acquired all the material objects or opulence available in the fourteen planetary systems. If the desires of demigods like Indra, Brahmā and Śiva remain unfulfilled without achieving the supreme goal of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, what can be said of the common living beings of this material world?

When devotees like Vidura, Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa, Śrīdhara Paṇḍita (of *caitanya-līlā*) and others attained *kṛṣṇa-prema*, they had no material desires left in their hearts. Even when Bhagavān Himself desired to offer them something, they humbly refused it. When Mahārāja Citraketu accepted the curse of Pārvatī and became the demon Vṛtrāsura, even in that demoniac form he desired for nothing other than the topmost object, *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

In order to achieve this incredibly rare *kṛṣṇa-prema*, it is absolutely essential to receive the mercy of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān. Unless a person sincerely takes shelter of their lotus feet and follows in their footsteps, all of his efforts to perform *bhakti* will bear no fruit.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

No room for self-interest in honesty

Prior to joining Gauḍīya Maṭha, my *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, worked for an English-owned business that purchased linseeds from farmers, packaged them and sent them to England. Most of the employees worked under Guru Mahārāja. Once, it came to Guru Mahārāja’s notice that some of the workers were adulterating the product by replacing linseeds with sand during the packaging stage. The stolen linseeds were then sold off, and the profits were shared among the thieving workers. When Guru Mahārāja heard this, he approached the owner and said, “Some of our employees are engaged in an extremely disgraceful act. For their petty self-interest, the reputation of the business is being destroyed. I made a huge mistake by blindly trusting them. You should therefore have me arrested. I do not even know for how long they have been engaged in such a dishonorable act. But ignorance cannot be accepted as an excuse. After you have me arrested, you may also have them arrested.”

The English business owner was highly astonished by Guru Mahārāja’s unmatched honesty. He tried to pacify Guru Mahārāja by saying, “This is a delicate issue. Please be assured we will handle it most conscientiously.” Later, the workers were given a stern warning not to continue with their thievery, or else they would be reported to the police.

Wishing only for the welfare of all

When Guru Mahārāja was working in Kolkata before joining the *maṭha*, he once felt pain in his teeth. As a quick remedy to reduce the pain, one of his colleagues gave him a pinch of tobacco to be kept in his gums. Throughout his life, Guru Mahārāja had never even inhaled the scent of intoxicants, and therefore when he put the tobacco in his mouth, he fell unconscious, being unable to tolerate its pungent smell. All his limbs turned bluish. It appeared as if he had been poisoned. His colleague was astonished and unsure about what to do. Guru Mahārāja was admitted to Śambhunātha Paṇḍita Hospital. After receiving treatment, his health recovered somewhat. The doctor and the police officer asked him, “Whom do you suspect might have given you poison?” Guru Mahārāja replied, “The person who gave me the tobacco—not poison—is my friend, and he gave it to me only for my wellbeing. My body simply rejected it. There were no ill intentions.”

After hearing Guru Mahārāja’s reply, the doctor and the police officer left. The person who had offered him the tobacco then told him, “If you would have mentioned my name, not only would I have lost my job, but I would have found myself in prison, as well.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “I do not wish to be the cause of any harm to anyone. I cannot falsely suspect or accuse anyone. I wish only for everyone’s welfare, and nothing else.”

The standard of respecting images of Bhagavān and His devotees

When Guru Mahārāja took shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus feet but had not yet come to reside in the *maṭha*, he stayed in a big rented house in Kolkata. An artist relative from his *purva-āśrama* had given him an oil painting of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as a gift, which he hung in the hall of his rented house. He would sit in front of the painting and perform *kīrtana* with his godbrother Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mukherjee and friend Śrī Haridāsa.

Once, his godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prakāśa Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja visited his home along with Śrīpāda Kīrtana Prabhu during their monthly *bhikṣā* collection. Seeing the portrait of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the hall, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked Guru Mahārāja, “Do you feel happy upon

seeing this very beautiful portrait of Śrīman Mahāprabhu?”

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

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja gravely replied, “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?”

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja then asked Guru Mahārāja, “You have accepted Śrīla Prabhupāda as your spiritual master. What arrangements have you made for 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: “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 even 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 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. Guru Mahārāja felt eternally grateful to him for the rest of his life, and he served Śrīla Mahārāja with great enthusiasm whenever the opportunity arose.

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja often taught that Bhagavān’s name and Deity form—which includes His portrait—are non-different from Bhagavān Himself. Accepting this teaching with firm faith, Guru Mahārāja, through his own conduct, always demonstrated 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 to Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha, where it was kept on the chariot during every *nagara-saṅkīrtana* organized by the *maṭha*.

When Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha was established, Guru Mahārāja installed the paintings of the complete *guru-paramparā* in the *kīrtana* hall. He established the standard of properly respecting such images by daily offering *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* to them.

A new position at a most respectable firm

During Guru Mahārāja’s time at that English-owned business, the superior to whom he reported was an Indian manager. But when the owner of the company observed Guru Mahārāja’s dexterity, competence, his unmatched capacity, his habit of never remaining idle, and his enthusiasm, he would always call for him directly, saying, “Mr. Banerjee! Mr Banerjee!”

When Guru Mahārāja left his job and took complete shelter of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, his first service was, as per the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, to accompany a preaching party to Madras (now Chennai). During that time, he received a letter from one of his previous colleagues, saying, “I presume that you are now working for a firm larger than ours, and that you are earning much more than you received here; otherwise, how would it have been possible for you to leave in such haste without informing any of us, especially when the owner, considering you dear, would always call for you even in

the presence of your superiors?”

In his reply, Guru Mahārāja wrote, “What you have written is absolutely correct. I hold a position with high responsibility at a very large firm. The salary I receive here is unimaginable. I sincerely pray that you bless me, so that my position at this firm may become permanent.”

Bhāgavan is the maintainer of all

Guru Mahārāja had a friend named Śrī Haridāsa who would often visit the rented apartment in which Guru Mahārāja lived prior to joining the *maṭha*. There, they would perform *kīrtana* together. After staying in Kolkata for some time, Guru Mahārāja joined Gauḍīya Maṭha and went to preach in Madras, as per the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. After the Madras programs were completed, Guru Mahārāja returned to Kolkata.

Once, when Śrīla Prabhupāda was scheduled to speak *hari-kathā* at Darbhanga Hall of Kolkata University, Guru Mahārāja requested Śrī Haridāsa to accompany him to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda speak. Śrī Haridāsa replied, “You have no one to cry after you; you are not married, and you have no children. But I have a wife and son, and I must maintain them. If I do not think about their maintenance, then who will? How will they receive a good life? Accompanying you to the program and hearing *hari-kathā* will take time. If I were to instead spend that time earning money for my family, they would be better provided for.” Guru Mahārāja did not say anything to him at that time, but instead left on his own to go hear Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *kathā*.

A few years later, Guru Mahārāja heard from his friend and godbrother Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukherjee that Śrī Haridāsa had died in a car accident.

One day, after Guru Mahārāja had established Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata, Śrī Haridāsa’s son visited the *maṭha* to have *darśana* of Guru Mahārāja. After Guru Mahārāja observed him offering *praṇāmas* with great faith and devotion, he asked him who he was and from where he had come. He replied, “I am the son of your friend Haridāsa.” Guru Mahārāja then inquired about the wellbeing of his family, about his home and about his job, and gave him *prasāda* before he left.

After he left, Guru Mahārāja narrated the above-mentioned incident with Śrī Haridāsa to us and gave us a teaching: “Haridāsa used to ask, ‘Who will maintain my family if not me?’ But just see: his family has been maintained even after his death. The arrangements for one’s maintenance, studies and all other requirements are made by Bhāgavan Himself, and not by anyone else.”

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni
guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā
kartāham iti manyate*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (3.27)

All aspects of material activity are performed by the modes of material nature but a person whose intelligence is bewildered by false ego thinks himself to be the doer.*

Severing the thick knots in my heart

When I accepted shelter at the lotus feet of Guru Mahārāja and joined Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha as a fulltime *brahmacārī*, I still possessed many heart-binding knots in the form of strong impressions I had nurtured due to my birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family. However, Guru Mahārāja systematically cut all such knots by citing evidences from the scriptures, and thereby made me thoroughly realize the meaning of the following verse:

For all these reasons, an intelligent person rejects detrimental association and associates instead with saintly persons. This is because only saintly personalities, with their powerful and virtuous instructions, can cut his unholy, material attachments from the heart.*

In cutting these knots, he demonstrated his limitless compassion, unrelenting tolerance and thorough understanding of the intrinsic meanings of the statements of the scriptures.

In my *purva-aśrama*, I accepted *prāsāda* only if someone born in a *brāhmaṇa* family had cooked it, offered it to Bhagavān and then served it, and not otherwise. I maintained this practice even after six years of associating with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas while staying at home. When I later joined the *maṭha*, Guru Mahārāja, being fully aware of my habits, for the first five years of my stay engaged only the *brāhmaṇa*-born *brahmacārīs* in the services of cooking, Deity worship and serving *prasāda* and *caraṇāmṛta*.

During that time, I accepted *prasāda* alone, away from everyone else. Guru Mahārāja therefore arranged for a *brāhmaṇa*-born *brahmacārī* to daily deliver *prasāda* to my room. I would honor the *prasāda* on my plate without accepting a second serving. I considered that after taking my first bite, the remaining *prasāda* would become *ucchiṣṭa* (remnant), and thus not suitable for consumption. Therefore, in order to keep the contents of the plate pure, I would hold the plate with my left hand and keep *kuśa* grass pressed between my thumb and the plate. Also, I would maintain complete silence while honoring *prasāda*. If someone would call my name during that time, I would immediately stop accepting *prasāda*, because I considered that person to have touched me through sound, thus leaving me in an impure state unsuitable for honoring *prasāda*. Furthermore, I considered it demeaning to even set foot on land belonging to a *telī* (oil merchant), *sāhā* (businessman from the *vaiśya* community) or goldsmith, let alone to accept *prasāda* at such places.

When Guru Mahārāja established Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in 1955 in a rented property at 86A Rāsa-bihārī Avenue in Kolkata, I joined the *maṭha* fulltime. There, Guru Mahārāja indirectly addressed me by saying, “It is true that the Vedas advise one to abstain from useless conversation, maintain complete silence and remember Bhagavān at the time of honoring *prasāda*. The followers of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, however, know that the significance of the following statements are much greater than simply remembering Bhagavān by mind: “*param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*—may *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* be all-victorious,” “*kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*—always perform *kīrtana* of the names of Śrī Hari,” and “*harer nama harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*—the only means of deliverance in the age of Kali is to chant the holy names, chant the holy names, chant the holy names of Śrī Hari; there is no other way, no other way, no other way.” The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas therefore relish singing the glories of both Bhagavān and *mahā-prasāda* at the time of honoring *prasāda*, and thus use that time most suitably.”

After hearing these words from Guru Mahārāja and constantly meditating on them, I concluded that performing *kīrtana* is greatly superior to observing silence while accepting *prasāda*, and from then on, though I still sat alone, I began performing *kīrtana* while accepting *prasāda*.

After some time, by the endless mercy of Guru Mahārāja, the thought manifested in my heart that all the devotees of Śrīman Mahāprabhu used to accept *prasāda* together. I therefore resolved not to deprive myself of the association of the Vaiṣṇavas, and thus began sitting with the devotees while accepting *prasāda*. Through this, my self-imposed restriction of accepting *prasāda* only from the hands of a

brāhmaṇa-born devotee was also removed, and the glories of *mahā-prasāda* began manifesting in my heart more and more. I then accepted for myself whatever initiated devotees would serve to all the Vaiṣṇavas.

One day while honoring *prasāda*, the devotee offering the Vaiṣṇavas a second serving did not understand the gesture of my hand indicating the amount of *prasāda* I required, and, questioning why I did not communicate vocally, served me a somewhat larger quantity of *prasāda* than I desired. Feeling annoyed, I stopped eating and immediately left. Later, I considered that because the Vaiṣṇavas are objects of our service, it is inappropriate not to answer them when questioned. Thus, my habit of not speaking to others while honoring *prasāda* was completely destroyed, as was my practice of honoring only one serving of *prasāda*.

In Jagannātha Purī, I observed that *mahā-prasāda* was never considered to be *ucchiṣṭa*, and therefore my practice of touching *kuśa* grass to my plate while honoring *prasāda* also faded away.

Once during Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, the entire *parikramā* party gathered to hear *hari-kathā* and honor *prasāda* below a large *pīpala* tree that grew on the land of an oil merchant. There, flat rice was soaked, mixed with *guḍa*, tamarind and other ingredients, and was then served to everyone. After everyone finished honoring *prasāda*, the devotees who were engaged in serving *prasāda* then honored *prasāda* themselves. Normally, Śrī Acintya-govinda Prabhu, Śrī Viṣṇu dāsa Prabhu and I would serve, along with a few other devotees, *prasāda* to the *sannyāsīs* and *maṭhavāsīs*. At the time, I considered it highly disgraceful to even step on the land of an oil merchant, but somehow, with a heavy heart, I stepped onto that land while remembering the *kīrtana* by Śrī Narotamma dāsa Ṭhākura, which I had heard from the lotus lips of Guru Mahārāja:

*śrī gauḍa-maṇḍala-bhūmi, jēbā jāne cintāmaṇi,
tā'ra haya vraja-bhūme vāsa*

One who knows the land of Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala to be spiritual touchstone, achieves residence in the land of Vraja.*

I also remembered the statement of Śrī Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja: “It is simply impossible for the even world’s wealthiest man to purchase even one particle of the *dhāma*’s transcendental dust.” Despite the fact that I had overcome my reservation about stepping on the land, I was still hesitant to accept *prasāda* there. Observing my reluctance, Guru Mahārāja said, with me in mind, that our *purva-ācārya* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written:

*śvapaca-grhete, māgiyā khāibô,
pibô sarasvatī-jala
puline puline, gaḍāgaḍi dibô,
kôri'krṣṇa-kolāhala*

Śaraṇāgatī (8.1.2)

I shall eat by begging from the homes of the untouchables and drink water from the Sarasvatī River. I shall roll on the ground on the river’s bank, loudly calling out Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s names.*

Understanding Guru Mahārāja’s heartfelt desire and desiring to please him, I put a couple of grains of that flat rice in my mouth while standing before him.

Once, I accompanied Guru Mahārāja and many other devotees during his preaching in Tejpura, Assam. There, Śrī Bhagavata-prasāda, the owner of Darang Tea Estate, who belonged to a *vaiśya* (*baniyā*) family, invited all the devotees to honor *prasāda* in his home. When asked whether I would be in attendance, I replied, “I am feeling unwell. I will stay here”. No one understood that the real reason I

declined the invitation was because my previous strong impressions and the hard knots binding my heart allowed me only to accept *prasāda* at the house of a *brāhmaṇa*, and not at the house of a *vaiśya*. Guru Mahārāja, however, understood my mood, and, targeting my welfare, quoted a verse from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya-līlā* 20.57):

*kuṣṭhī-viprera ramaṇī, pativratā-śiromaṇi,
pati lāgi' kôilā veśyāra sevā*

The wife of a *brāhmaṇa* suffering from leprosy established herself as the topmost of all chaste women when she served a prostitute in order to please her husband.

Externally, it appeared as if the wife of the leprosy-stricken *brāhmaṇa* served a prostitute. But actually, it was through such activities that she served her husband, who was the only true object of her service.

The purport of Guru Mahārāja's words was that instead of giving prominence to satisfying the *vaiśya* host, I should give more importance to pleasing *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas. Realizing this, I went to the home of Śrī Bhagavata-prasāda and accepted *prasāda* there. Thus, I became completely freed from the last of my self-imposed restrictions. In this way, for my spiritual welfare, Guru Mahārāja most compassionately severed every last knot in my heart, one by one, with great patience.

Do not become an obstacle to one's inclination to serve

When I was a *brahmacārī* staying in the Kolkata *maṭha*, fellow *brahmacārīs* would occasionally approach me and offer to wash my clothes or clean my room. Although I would always forbid them to do so, they would at times forcibly engage in such services. One day, when a *brahmacārī* was forcefully taking the bucket containing my soaking clothes, Guru Mahārāja saw us and said to me, "Give him your clothes for washing. Try not to become an obstacle to his inclination to serve. By serving Vaiṣṇavas more advanced than yourself, you can earn much more than he will earn by washing your clothes."

Guru Mahārāja was implying that although it is true that a person loses a part of his own previously earned *sukṛti* by accepting personal service from another devotee, there is no loss if that person spends the same amount of time and effort in rendering service to a Vaiṣṇava more advanced than himself; he will earn exponentially more *sukṛti* than that taken from him in the course of being served.

The importance of establishing sambandha-jñāna

At Mai Hiran Gate in Jalandhar, an old lady once asked Guru Mahārāja, "I have visited the temple daily since the time I was unmarried, and I have continued this practice even today in my old age, when I have been blessed with grandsons and granddaughters. There was never a time when I neglected this practice. However, even after reaching this advanced age, my mind does not for a moment remember Bhagavān, even if I try to force it to do so. Instead, it remains naturally and constantly absorbed in thinking about the wellbeing and happiness of my grandchildren. Please bless me by clarifying the reasons for the defective state of my mind, and also prescribe the remedy, so that I may meet with spiritual welfare."

After attentively hearing the old lady's inquiry, Guru Mahārāja replied, "Your question is highly appropriate. Everyone should hear this question and its reply. I will therefore give my answer in the assembly tomorrow during *hari-kathā*."

The next day in the assembly, Guru Mahārāja repeated the old lady's question and, for the spiritual welfare of everyone present, delivered his answer: "Mātā-jī, you have been daily visiting the temple for a

long time. But have you once considered the nature of your relationship with the presiding Deity of this temple?”

With a simple heart, the old lady replied, “No, Mahārāja-jī. This thought never occurred to me.”

Śrīla Guru Mahārāja then said, “It is impossible to develop love and affection for someone without first establishing one’s relationship with that person. Only after realizing that mutual relationship can love and affection automatically manifest in the heart according to the nature of the relationship. In the absence of a firmly established relationship, the mind can never become attached to Bhagavān by ritualistically visiting temples.

*matir na kṛṣṇe parataḥ svato vā
mitho ’bhipadyeta gr̥ha-vratānām
adānta-gobhir viśatām tamisram
punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.5.30)

Persons who are addicted to household life due to having uncontrolled senses, are entering into hellish life wherein they repeatedly chew that which has already been chewed. Their consciousness cannot turn towards the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa either by their own understanding, by the instructions of others or by the combination of both.*

“It is seen in this material world that love develops when service is rendered to one’s beloved with care and affection. Without such affectionate service, a mother will not develop love for her own child, whether that child is naturally conceived or adopted, nor will a master develop love for his pet dog.

“Every *jīva* has an eternal servitor relationship with Bhagavān. When the conditioned *jīva* forgets this relationship and thus behaves in opposition to it, the external potency of Bhagavān manifests this material creation and bestows worldly miseries upon him. The soul travels through the 8,400,000 species of life, assuming different bodies according to its past activities. Eventually, it attains this most rare human form. By virtue of his previously accrued *sukṛti* (spiritually pious activities), and by the endless mercy of Bhagavān, the *jīva* gains the direct association of an intimate and dear associate of the Lord. It is only through such association that he learns the eternal truth about who he truly is, who Bhagavān is, and the nature of their mutual relationship. Consequently, the inclination to serve Bhagavān arises in his heart. When he receives the seed of the creeper of *bhakti*—that is, the desire to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa—from *śrī gurudeva* and plants that seed in his heart, he assumes the role of a gardener and provides the seed with water in the form of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*. As the *bhakti* creeper gradually grows, his love and affection for Bhagavān also increases proportionally. His affectionate service to Bhagavān will only bear the fruit of *bhagavat-prema* (transcendental love) after he firmly establishes his relationship with the Lord. If a person continues to simply visit the temple and return home after having *darśana* of the Deity as per his own sweet will, pure love and affection for Bhagavān will never appear in his heart, even after thousands of lifetimes of this practice.”

Offer before accepting

When Guru Mahārāja would go out for preaching, he would always carry drinking water with him. After reaching the venue where he was to deliver *hari-kathā*, he would immediately perform *kīrtana* and speak *hari-kathā*. It was only after performing such services that he would accept water, *prasāda* or any offering from the organizers or hosts. If during the program he felt thirsty before he received the opportunity to perform the services of *kīrtana* and *hari-kathā*, he would drink only the water he had brought with him, and not any water offered by the hosts. His view was, “We are devotees. Our only wealth is Śrī Hari, *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas. If we accept the offerings of our hosts without first offering to

them this wealth through the means of *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana*, then we will become indebted to them. Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught us this important lesson through his own conduct. Once, when he was invited by the king of Kasim Bāzār to speak *hari-kathā*, but did not receive the opportunity to do so for three days, he observed a total fast, accepting only one *tulasī* leaf during these three days. Similarly, in his *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta* (4), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has explained the principle of *dadāti pratigrhṇāti*: one ought first to offer before accepting.”

Encouraging the propensity for sādhu-sevā

I once accompanied Guru Mahārāja to Haridvāra for Kumbha-melā. One morning after I took bath in the Gaṅgā and returned, Guru Mahārāja came out of his room and told me, “I am going to take bath in the Gaṅgā. Can you come along with me?” Without mentioning that I had just returned from bathing, I accompanied him as per his desire. Because all my clothes were soaking in a bucket at that time, I went shirtless, wearing only a *dhotī*.

When we reached the *ghāṭa*, one lady, regarding us as *sādhus*, offered me a new undershirt. I was not inclined to accept it, but Guru Mahārāja said, “Accept the shirt. Whether or not you wear it is up to you, but accept it. Do not become an impediment to her inclination to render service.”

While we were returning to our *paṇḍāla* after taking bath in the Gaṅgā, another lady approached me and offered *halavā* (semolina pudding) in a leaf cup. Because I was unwilling to accept something from a person not yet initiated into our *sampradāya*, I refused to accept it. The lady said, “But this *halavā* is completely pure. With the intention of only serving it to *mahātmās*, I cooked it in pure *ghee* made by my own hands from pure cow’s milk.” Guru Mahārāja then told me to accept it, and I obliged. The lady offered a leaf cup of *halavā* to Guru Mahārāja, also, and he graciously accepted it.

On our way back, my mind was busy reflecting: “Śrī Guru Mahārāja himself has instructed us not to eat anything offered by non-Vaiṣṇavas. However, today he himself ordered me to accept the offering of a non-Vaiṣṇava. What is the reason for this?”

While my mind was occupied with such thoughts, Guru Mahārāja understood my perplexity and said, “That lady is offering her *halavā* only to *mahātmās*, and not to anyone else. Whatever her internal desires may be, her only intention, at least externally, is to serve the *sādhus*. It is our duty to nourish and encourage the propensity to serve *sādhus*, and not to diminish it. Therefore, it is only appropriate to encourage her to serve *sādhus* by accepting her offering. If you desire, you may give it to a faithful person who will be highly pleased to receive something from the hands of a *sādhu*.” Understanding Guru Mahārāja’s message, I followed his instructions and began accepting the offerings of those who possessed a sincere desire to serve *sādhus*.

Perform or perish

The land Guru Mahārāja had acquired in Kolkata for establishing Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha included an old building that needed to be razed in order to construct a new building. During the building’s demolition, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa 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 door and window frames made from top-quality Burmese *sāguna* wood. Yet you are knocking it all down. Are you out of your mind? When Mādhava Mahārāja arrives, please 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 to construct 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.”

Guru Mahārāja’s words filled my heart with great energy and enthusiasm.

Different instructions for different natures

Once, when we were staying in the Kolkata *maṭha*, I went to preach with Śrī Maṅgala Mahārāja, Śrī Giri Mahārāja, Śrī Purī Mahārāja and other godbrothers of mine. During our programs, we were given about eight to ten sets of Vaiṣṇava clothes made out of quality mill cloth in donation. I carefully kept the clothes, and gave them to the *bhaṇḍārī* (storekeeper) when we returned to the *maṭha*.

One day, Guru Mahārāja asked me, “A resident of the *maṭha* needs new clothes. Please purchase a set from the control shop, so that I may give it to him.” (A control shop is a store where simple clothes are sold at government-controlled rates.)

Because I was new in the *maṭha* at that time, I was unaware of the depth and gravity of the Vaiṣṇavas’ insights, and so I immediately told Guru Mahārāja, “We previously brought eight to ten sets of clothes from our preaching tour and gave them to the *bhaṇḍārī*. I will get a set from him and give it to you.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “I am aware you have brought these fine clothes, but for this person, a set of simple clothes from control shop will be most appropriate, because he is from a simple farming community. If he is given good quality, expensive clothes at this point in time, he will become a sense enjoyer. We must remain extremely careful in our dealings with others and consider the effect our actions may have on them. If we are not careful, we may cause neophyte devotees to deviate from the path of *bhakti*.”

Never support the sense enjoyment of others

Once, Guru Mahārāja gave me a very fine piece of cloth that was soft and comfortable. When I put it on, a fellow *brahmacārī* was fascinated by its texture and appreciatively touched it again and again, with the apparent desire to have a similar one for himself. At first, I thought it appropriate to give the cloth to him, but before I did, a thought struck my mind: “Śrīla Gurudeva has given this cloth to me with his very own hands. It is a token of his mercy. I must therefore first receive permission from him before giving it away.”

I then went to Guru Mahārāja and said, “I usually spend most of my time in Māyāpura working in construction with the laborers. There is no need for me to wear such a fine cloth; it would wear very quickly. Therefore, if you were to kindly allow, I could give this cloth to this particular *brahmacārī*, who seemed appreciative of it.”

Guru Mahārāja gravely replied, “No. Do not give this cloth to him. He has a taste for wearing high

quality clothes. Providing him with the object of his desire will only nourish this taste and lead him further down the path of sense gratification. Being his true well-wisher, I cannot act as his enemy and encourage him to go down such a path. It is my duty to protect him from the clutches of *māyā* to the furthest extent possible. If this cloth becomes worn sooner with you, let it be so. But you should never become an instrument in supporting anyone’s desire for sense enjoyment.”

Providing shelter to a godbrother

After the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, one of his disciples, Śrīpāda Ṭhākura dāsa Prabhu, began staying in Śrī Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha’s branch in Mumbai. When he began performing sickness pastimes in his old age, the *maṭha* authorities told him, “We are not in a position to take any further responsibility for you.” Śrīpāda Ṭhākura dāsa Prabhu thus left for Vṛndāvana, where he stayed in a rented room near Śrī Gopeśvara Mahādeva. A devotee from Mumbai used to send a monthly donation to him.

I, too, was in Vṛndāvana in those days, engaged in the service of constructing a branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. One day, a devotee informed me that Śrīpāda Ṭhākura dāsa Prabhu fell down the stairs after experiencing dizziness. I immediately sent my godbrother Śrī Vīrabhadra Prabhu, who had him admitted to Śrī Rāma Kṛṣṇa Mission Hospital. When news of this reached Guru Mahārāja, he sent a letter to me, in which he wrote, “Śrī Ṭhākura dāsa Prabhu has rendered immense service to Śrīla Prabhupāda. As per the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he preached together with Śrī Bhakti Sarvasva Giri Mahārāja. He used to play *mṛdaṅga* and perform very sweet *kīrtana*. Ensure that he receives good care and does not experience any discomfort. Bring him to Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha upon his discharge from the hospital. We will gladly assume the responsibility of serving him for the rest of his life.”

Following Guru Mahārāja’s instructions, I brought Śrī Ṭhākura dāsa Prabhu to our *maṭha* after his discharge from the hospital, and he stayed with us for the rest of his life.

Never pass up the opportunity to serve the Vaiṣṇavas

Guru Mahārāja organized a three-day festival at the Vṛndāvana branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha for the installation of the Deities. On the first day of the festival, a wonderful feast was arranged for all the Vaiṣṇavas from the different *maṭhas* in Vṛndāvana; on the second day was a feast for the Vraja *paṇḍās* and their families; and on the third day was a feast for general people, and the Vaiṣṇavas and *paṇḍās* were again invited.

Guru Mahārāja spent more than twenty thousand rupees on the festival. In those days, one could purchase two-and-a-half kilograms of flour for one rupee. At the time, we did not have a proper kitchen in the *maṭha*. All the cooking was done in a room with a temporary tin shed. Seeing this situation, someone told Guru Mahārāja, “With the amount of money you spent on this festival, you could have built eight rooms in the *maṭha*.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Later, we may find so many people willing to contribute to the construction of rooms that we will run out of space in the *maṭha*. But the opportunity we have received to serve many senior Vaiṣṇavas at one time and in one place will never again present itself.” With this mood, Guru Mahārāja organized great festivals in many places—like Yāśāḍā, Guwāhaṭī, Kolkata, Purī and other locations—and invited all the Vaiṣṇavas.

Acquiring the Divine Appearance Place of Śrīla Prabhupāda

When my *paramārādhya*tama Guru Mahārāja came to know about the possibility of acquiring the divine appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda in Purī, he firstly approached Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa

Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who was the presiding *ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha at that time. Through Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, he requested him, “There is no scarcity of resources at your disposal. Please assume proprietorship of this place, so that we may all gain the fortune of visiting and offering our *praṇāmas* (obeisances) there without restriction.”

Śrīla Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “Śrīla Prabhupāda did not give me any specific instructions regarding the preservation of that place. Rather, he advised me to incessantly engage in the service of Śrī Māyāpura-dhāma alone, and thereby highlight the supremacy of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s teachings and Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s *dhāma*. Moreover, Śrīla Prabhupāda made no endeavors to acquire the appearance place of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.”

Upon receiving Śrīla Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s reply, my Guru Mahārāja, in the company of his godbrother, Śrīpāda Jagamohana Prabhu, took me along with him as his assistant to approach Śrī Bhakti Kevala Auḍulomi Mahārāja, the then presiding *ācārya* of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Bāgbāzār, Kolkata, and requested him to acquire custody of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance place.

Upon hearing Guru Mahārāja’s request, Śrī Auḍulomi Mahārāja replied, “We cannot spend such an amount of money for this. Moreover, you are known as the second-best donation collector of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, and therefore no financial constraints could stop you if you were to take charge of this responsibility.”

After their meeting, when we were returning to our *maṭha* in a taxi, Guru Mahārāja mentioned a Bengali proverb to Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu: “*bhāgera mā gaṅgā pāye nā*—a mother with many sons does not receive the fortune of having her ashes submerged in the Gaṅgā.” The logic behind this is that each of her sons will not bother arranging for their mother’s ashes to be put in the Gaṅgā, because they will assume that the other sons will do it. As a result, her ashes never reach the Gaṅgā.

Contemplating in this way, Guru Mahārāja said, “Everything will be just fine; we will try to the best of our ability to acquire this land.”

Who but ‘Mādhava?’

In those days, the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda would gather at the *maṭha* of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Koladvīpa after completing Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*.

When my Guru Mahārāja met with his godbrothers at that time, he informed them about the opportunity to purchase the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda in Jagannātha Purī, and he suggested they could 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 compared to the amount needed. Feeling perplexed about what to do, Guru Mahārāja said, “We will have to think of another way to collect the required funds.”

At that time, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja mentioned one verse from the *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*:

*mādhavo mādhavo vāci
mādhavo mādhavo hṛdi
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 *paramārādhyatama* 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 undertakings, and that is why anything can be accomplished when Mādhava Mahārāja is there. 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 alone, and so he offered his prostrated *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* to all of them. Thus, he happily accepted the entire responsibility of acquiring Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance place.

Even the devotees of ISKCON, a large and resourceful organization, had lost all hope of acquiring this place after meeting with innumerable hardships and complications. My Guru Mahārāja, however, endured various physical and mental adversities in his service of acquiring this place, and after a long time of consistent effort, he came very close to succeeding in his service.

My Guru Mahārāja sent me to Purī, along with our *pūjyapāda* Yaśodā-jīvana Brahmācārī, *pūjyapāda* Ācārya Mahārāja (whose name was Gaurāṅga-prasāda Brahmācārī at the time) and others to help with acquiring the property of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s birth site. While we were there, we stayed with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja in a small house he had purchased for the purpose of converting it into a *maṭha*. When the time of the Ratha-yātrā festival came, I sent Gaurāṅga-prasāda Prabhu to humbly request Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja to allow us to stay in a nearby *dharmaśālā* during the upcoming festival, since 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 Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja affectionately, yet firmly, replied, “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 have come here to do—purchasing the property of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s birth site—was actually our duty, since we are his disciples. But we have not made the slightest endeavor for that, and 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.”

Determination in the face of adversity

In the meantime, Śrī Bhakti Prajñāna Yati Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, submitted to the authorities of *Dakṣiṇa Pārśva Maṭha*, the owners of the site of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance at that time, a lengthy collection of documents and letters, asserting, “Ours is the original and real Gauḍīya Maṭha. We alone reserve the right to bear the responsibility of managing the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The institution on whose behalf Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja has submitted his application is not the original *maṭha*.”

They also submitted to the High Court a petition requesting a ‘stay order’ on the transfer of rights. Guru Mahārāja was distraught to hear this news. In the beginning, before he made any independent endeavor to acquire the property, he had approached Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja with a proposal. It was due only to Śrīla Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s refusal that Guru Mahārāja began

soliciting his other godbrothers for help, which later lead him to accept sole responsibility for acquiring the property. At that point, after so much endeavor, it was unfeasible for him to relinquish his role in that service.

Although Guru Mahārāja was upset, he was not the slightest bit disheartened. He told me, “In the absence of this obstacle, we might have made only gradual progress in our efforts. But now, in the face of adversity, we will proceed with greater determination and make all necessary efforts to achieve success.” By the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the transfer of the property’s ownership to Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha was completed one day before the High Court was to deliberate on the stay order.

The first vyāsa-pūjā festival of Śrīla Prabhupāda at his appearance place

Under the auspices of my *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a grand festival celebrating the 104th appearance day of Śrīla Prabhupāda was organized to be held at his appearance place on February 28, 1978. A five-day religious conference—from February 26 to March 2—was also organized for the occasion. During the festival, the foundation stone laying ceremony was performed amid tumultuous chants of *śrī nāma-saṅkīrtana*.

Guru Mahārāja himself wrote invitation letters to all his godbrothers, requesting them to attend the festival: “Kindly grace the occasion with your divine presence and shower your mercy upon us.” Upon receiving the invitation from Guru Mahārāja, devotees from all walks of life—*sannyāsīs*, *brahmacārīs*, *vānaprasthīs*, *grhasthas* and many distinguished personalities—came to take part in the occasion. A few foreign devotees were also in attendance.

Other than Guru Mahārāja and his constant companion in rendering completely dedicated service to Śrīla Prabhupāda—Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja—those present at the festival included Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śravaṇa Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, Śrīpāda Jagamohana Prabhu, Śrīpāda Uddharaṇa Prabhu, Śrī Śrīmad Indupati dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and many surrendered disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the most prominent of whom were Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabha Bhaktisāra Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāśa Hṛśikeṣa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saudha Āśrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Rāsa-bihārī dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prapanna Daṇḍī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Suhrda Bodhāyana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prapanna Dāmodara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Suvrata Paramārthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Dr. Śyāmasundara Brahmācārī and Śrīpāda Yatiśekhara dāsa Adhikārī.

During the five-day festival commemorating the *vyāsa-pūjā* of Śrīla Prabhupāda, various Vaiṣṇavas spoke on his teachings, instructions, statements, conduct, character and personality from a multitude of view-points. During that ongoing sequence of heart-touching narrations, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, with great eagerness and a heart filled with joy, said to all those present, “Now that we have been bestowed with the opportunity to construct a Gauḍīya Maṭha at the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda, all his disciples will be extremely pleased to annually gather here at his birthplace in honor of his appearance day festival and at his *samādhi-pīṭha* in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura to honor his disappearance day festival. Of this there is no doubt.”

The distribution centers of unnatojjvāla-rasa

In *Padma Purāṇa*, Śrīla Vyāsadeva has stated *hyutkale puruṣottamāt*. By these words, he

prophesized that the message of *śuddha-bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa, the primeval Supreme Lord, would be distributed to the whole world, and that the epicenter of this distribution would be the land of Puruṣottama, or Śrī Purī-dhāma. This prophecy was fulfilled by the appearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in that Śrī Puruṣottama-dhāma.

Although Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura to distribute *unnatojjvala rasa* (the most sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service, or *madhura-rasa*), it was from Śrī Jagannātha Purī that he actually began distributing it. Having established this topmost treasure of *prema* in Śrī Purī-dhāma, He manifested His disappearance pastime. Some time later, Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared in Śrī Purī-dhāma and collected that divine treasure, which he then distributed to the whole world from Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, the appearance place of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Firm faith beyond external circumstances

Before we acquired the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda, we would stay at various other places while visiting Purī-dhāma with our Guru Mahārāja. At that time, Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and all the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda would offer *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* at this place from beyond the property lines, since entry was prohibited without prior permission. Although the area around the entrance gate was incredibly filthy, the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda would still offer *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas*, totally oblivious to the external cleanliness of the place. Those who witnessed this were struck with great wonder and respect.

Because of the unclean condition of that place, I was hesitant to offer *praṇāmas*. However, upon seeing others offering *praṇāmas*, I would find a less grimy place and offer *pañcāṅga-praṇāma* (obeisances in which five parts of the body touch the ground) and quickly get up. But after repeatedly hearing about the glories of this divine place from the lotus lips of our *guru-vargas*, I gradually began offering *aṣṭāṅga-praṇāma* (prostrated obeisances in which eight parts of the body touch the ground) to that place, just as they did.

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Ignoring hostility, recognizing service rendered

Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇa-prema dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, was the manager of a *maṭha* in Mymensingh (now part of Bangladesh), and he later established an *āśrama* in Māyāpura. Once, when he went to the Medinīpura area for preaching, he somehow slipped and injured his tailbone.

After his injury, he sought help at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha branch in Kolkata on Rāsa-bihārī Avenue, which Guru Mahārāja had established in a rented home. I admitted Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja to Śambhunātha Hospital, where I knew one doctor, Dr. Brahma, who arranged for an X-ray examination of his tailbone. Later, when Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was discharged from the hospital, he spent a few days at Ayurvedic Aṣṭāṅga Hospital, after which he returned back to his *āśrama* in Māyāpura. During his time under our care, we served him to the best of our abilities.

In his Māyāpura *āśrama*, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja would proudly proclaim, “We are the children of the lion Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. We are afraid of no one.” It also came to my attention that he had made critical remarks about Guru Mahārāja.

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja had made a deal with a worker to extract juice from the date trees growing on the property of his *āśrama*. As compensation for his labor, the worker would receive half of the total juice he collected. However, the worker was wicked-hearted and wanted to keep everything for himself. He told Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja, “You are a *bābājī*, a renounced person. Of what use is this juice to you?” When he refused to yield after repeated requests, they had heated arguments and a fierce fight. That

wicked worker struck Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja very hard with a stick and badly injured him. Śrī Gaura dāsa Prabhu, a disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja, sent news to me, saying, “The lion’s child has been hit by a jackal. Please go and help him if you can.”

When I arrived at Śrīla Kṛṣṇa-prema dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja’s *āśrama*, he narrated the entire story to me. Afterward, Śrī Gaura dāsa Prabhu and I went to the police station and brought a police officer to meet Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja and resolve the issue. Later, I wrote a letter to Guru Mahārāja informing him about the incident. In his reply, he wrote, “You should serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa-prema dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja suitably and fulfill all his requirements by using the resources of our *maṭha*.”

I wrote back, “Although we previously served him nicely in Kolkata, he began making derogatory comments against you as soon as he returned to Māyāpura. He often uses bitter language, too. I have thus lost all *śraddhā* (faith) in him and have no inclination to serve him.”

Guru Mahārāja again sent a reply: “I will be highly pleased by your flawless service to Śrī Bābājī Mahārāja.”

I responded, “It is only for your pleasure that I shall continue to serve him and do my very best to satisfy him without making any mistakes. However, it will not be possible for me to serve him with my full heart.”

On the order of Guru Mahārāja, I served Śrīla Kṛṣṇa-prema dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, who eventually recovered from his injuries. Later, he wrote a letter to Guru Mahārāja stating, “Although with a bitter tongue I have spoken disrespectfully to your disciples, they served me very sincerely with full efforts. I wish to handover my Māyāpura *āśrama* to you. I request you to kindly accept it.”

I read Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja’s letter to Guru Mahārāja, who dictated his reply for me to transcribe: “You have written that you wish to offer your Māyāpura *āśrama* to me, but we already have a *maṭha* in Māyāpura. I do not wish to have two establishments at one place. Please offer your *āśrama* to another godbrother of ours who does not have a *maṭha* in Māyāpura. Please know that it was not out of a desire to own your *āśrama* that we served you. Truthfully, I have no interest in taking your *āśrama*. It is only because you possess deep, unflinching faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda that you are an object of our most sincere service.”

As I listened to Guru Mahārāja’s dictation, my hand stopped writing and tears flowed from my eyes. I was reminded of a verse written by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī:

*prabhu kahe—bhaṭṭācārya, karaha vicāra
gurura kiṅkara haya mānya se āmarā*

Śrī Caitanya-caitāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 10.142)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “O Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, consider this: the servant of the *guru* is always respectable for me.”

Upon hearing my *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja glorifying a godbrother who had previously criticized him, I realized that the true meaning of Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī’s words was manifesting in front of me. Although I had previously read this verse many times, I had not experienced its actual meaning until that moment.

Upon remembering this incident, another consideration about Guru Mahārāja’s most exemplary conduct comes to my mind: he never thought it necessary to respond to anyone’s hostile behavior toward him. Instead, he always considered those who nurture deep, sincere devotion to the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda as respectable and worthy of his most sincere service.

Nowadays, however, this type of vision is lacking among many devotees. In fact, the opposite

consideration is mostly seen: “It does not matter how closely and to what extent one may have previously served his *gurudeva* and *guru-vargas*. If presently such a devotee is not favorable toward me or does not support me in spite of my countless faults, then what is the need for me to serve him? Why should I maintain any relationship with him? In fact, he is an offender unworthy of being served.”

Serving his detractors

Śrī Śrīmad Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, used to reside at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura. Once, when Guru Mahārāja was engaged in the service of preaching in Nawab-gaṇja, a small town near Kolkata, Śrīla Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, with concealed intentions, cunningly told all the renunciate disciples of Guru Mahārāja, “Your Guru Mahārāja has sent a message ordering you all to immediately pack your bags and depart for Nawab-gaṇja. He requires the assistance of many devotees to hold a large *nagara-saṅkīrtana* there. After his preaching in Nawab-gaṇja, he will proceed on a long preaching tour to many distant places, and you shall all accompany him.”

Hearing his words, Śrī Bhagavān dāsa (now *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Niketana Turyāśramī Mahārāja), *pūjyapāda* Āśrama Mahārāja and many other renunciant disciples of Guru Mahārāja immediately left Māyāpura for Nawab-gaṇja. Upon their arrival, Guru Mahārāja asked, “Why have you come here? I have not called for you.” After hearing the whole story, he realized the truth behind Śrī Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja’s intentions.

With all the devotees present, the *nagara-saṅkīrtana* was a great success. Later, Guru Mahārāja went to Kolkata on his own and arranged for a rented house. He then called for all the devotees who had come to Nawab-gaṇja, telling them to come and stay with him. There, they were all engaged in service.

Śrī Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja eventually moved to Śrī Puruṣottama Gauḍīya Maṭha, the Purī branch of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, despite the fact that he would often tell people, “I have little faith in the devotees residing in Śrī Caitanya Maṭha.” Because of this lack of trust, he would give all the donations he received to the disciples of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Gabhastinemi Gosvāmī Mahārāja for safekeeping.

Once, Śrīla Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja underwent eye surgery at the District Hospital in Purī. While there, he sent a message through a devotee for Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prapanna Daṇḍī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and me, requesting us to meet him. When we arrived at the hospital, he told me, “I am in need of two devotees to stay and look after me while I am in the hospital—one in the daytime and one in the night. Please arrange this for me.” I thus requested my godbrothers Śrī Lakhana Prabhu and Śrī Yaśodā-jīvana Prabhu to serve Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja during the day and night, respectively.

When I wrote a letter to Guru Mahārāja informing him about this matter, he replied, “I am highly pleased to hear that you are all properly serving him. Because he is connected to Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrī Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja is worthy of our service. Please use the resources of our *maṭha* to see that all his requirements are met during his stay in the hospital. I am fully aware of the dire financial position of the Purī *maṭha*, and will be sending you funds very soon.”

As per the desire of Guru Mahārāja, we arranged for Śrīla Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja’s *prasāda* from our *maṭha*, as well as everything else he required. When Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was released from the hospital, he did not go back to Śrī Puruṣottama Gauḍīya Maṭha, but rather expressed his desire to stay with us in our Purī branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. In the *maṭha*, a new room with an attached bathroom had recently been built for Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja during his attendance of the *śrī vyāsa-pūjā* celebrations of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We arranged for Śrīla Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja to stay in that very room.

After the surgery, Bābājī Mahārāja prescribed black glasses, which made it difficult for him to see.

Once, while honoring *prasāda* in the *maṭha*, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja came across Bhagavān dāsa, but because his black glasses obscured his vision, he could not make out who was in front of him. He asked, “Who are you?”

Bhagavān dāsa replied, “I am the very same Bhagavān dāsa whom you cunningly drove out of Śrīvāsa-aṅgana in Māyāpura.”

Hearing his harsh words, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja turned to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prapanna Daṇḍī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and said, “Just see how bitterly this *brahmacārī* is speaking to me. Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja would never use such words.”

Śrīla Daṇḍī Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “Bābājī Mahārāja, It is certainly true that Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja would never speak in such a manner; he is a pure, realized Vaiṣṇava. But there is gulf of a difference between the positions of Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja and Bhagavān dāsa. Why do you expect there not to be a visible difference in their words, as well? Moreover, Bhagavān dāsa has not said anything untrue.”

The import of this narration is that whenever the opportunity presented itself, Guru Mahārāja eagerly rendered service even to those who were against him. He served such persons not only on his own, but he engaged his disciples in their service, also.

Dancing and singing for the pleasure of Bhagavān alone

Once, Śrī Guru Mahārāja went to preach in Amritsar, where his *hari-kathā* was arranged to take place in a temple situated in Namak Maṇḍī. One day, after speaking *hari-kathā*, Guru Mahārāja took *darśana* of the temple’s very beautiful Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Deities, whose attractive forms acted as *uddīpana*, or stimulus that awakened *kṛṣṇa-prema* in his heart. Absorbed in this *kṛṣṇa-prema*, Guru Mahārāja became completely unaware of his surroundings and began ecstatically dancing and performing *kīrtana* for a long time.

Upon seeing Guru Mahārāja’s divine bodily features—which are found only on the bodies of *mahā-puruṣas* (great personalities)—and gestural dancing, all the devotees and visitors were left spellbound.

The next day, anticipating a repeat performance of Guru Mahārāja’s *kīrtana* and dancing, the organizers arranged special spotlighting and beautiful decorations to be placed before the Deities, where Guru Mahārāja had danced the previous day. When Guru Mahārāja’s *hari-kathā* ended, that area was immediately cordoned off. The temple was overcrowded, because those who were fortunate enough to have witnessed Guru Mahārāja’s *kīrtana* the previous day had brought with them many other people. But on that day, when Guru Mahārāja concluded his *hari-kathā*, he left the temple immediately after reciting the *jaya-dhvani*.

A similar incident happened in Sahāranapura, as well. One day Guru Mahārāja performed an ecstatic *kīrtana* and danced in complete bliss. The next day, the news spread everywhere that his dancing and *kīrtana* were heart-warming, and so everyone was eager to witness them. Many people assembled at the venue the next day. When Guru Mahārāja was told that many people had come simply to witness his dancing and *kīrtana*, and that they would feel blessed if he could begin the programs with that, he said “*Sādhus* and *Vaiṣṇavas* do not engage in dancing and *kīrtana* for the pleasure and entertainment of ordinary people. Rather, they do so purely with the intention of serving Bhagavān. If one performs *kīrtana* to satisfy ordinary people, he may develop affection or attachment for them, but it can never be considered *hari-bhakti*. Dancing or performing *kīrtana* with desire to acquire the recognition and praise of misguided individuals is in fact no better than the stool of hogs, and it is completely unfavorable for *hari-bhakti*. In reality, such dancing and *kīrtana* falls within the category of *traiyātrika*, or the performance of materialistic dance, singing and playing of musical instruments.”

The whole world can be sacrificed for rāma-nāma

Once, Guru Mahārāja preached in Guwahati, Assam, in the company of many other devotees, the most prominent of whom were Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu and Śrīpāda Cintāharana Pātagiri Prabhu, both of whom were Assamese disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda who knew the local language. As per the instruction of Guru Mahārāja, the two met with *deśa-priya* Śrī Gopinātha 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.

During 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 not accepted the principles of *śrī bhāgavata-dharma* as preached in Assam by Śrī Śaṅkara-deva, Śrī Dāmodara-deva and others? Why have you instead accepted the teachings of Śrīman Caitanyadeva from Bengal?”

Śrīpāda Cintāharana Prabhu requested Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu to kindly answer Śrī Bordoloi, and Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu 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 (*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?

“On the other hand, Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma has long been famous as the Oxford of India, and scholars from even Assam have regularly visited Navadvīpa-dhāma for higher education. We therefore fail to understand the inherent fault in our following of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”

Śrī Gopinātha Bordoloi was rendered speechless. Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu and Śrīpāda Cintāharana Pātagiri Prabhu left his office and returned to Guru Mahārāja. When they arrived back at Guru Mahārāja’s quarters, they were greatly surprised to see to Śrī Borodoloi sitting next to Guru Mahārāja. They realized he had come by car while they travelled by rikshaw.

At that time, *kīrtana* was being performed in the hall. After *kīrtana*, Guru Mahārāja spoke *hari-kathā*, which was followed by *mahā-mantra kīrtana*. Later, while speaking with Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Borodoloi said, “Your method of preaching is very similar to that of Mahātmā Gāndhī; he performs *rāma-dhuna* before and after lectures, and you perform *saṅkīrtana* before and after *hari-kathā*.”

Guru Mahārāja immediately replied, “When I read in the Congress mouthpiece *Young India* about Śrī Mahātmā Gāndhī’s statement, ‘I can sacrifice even *rāma-dhuna* for my country,’ I concluded that his conceptions are vertically opposed to those of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, who firmly believe that even the whole world can be sacrificed for *rāma-nāma*, what to speak of one country. Rāma, being the Absolute Truth, is for Himself and by Himself, and every object is meant for His service. Even Western scholars accept that the Absolute is for Itself and by Itself.”

Śrī Gopinātha Borodoloi became highly inspired by the deep-rooted, subtle views of Guru Mahārāja. After this incident, he often visited to hear Guru Mahārāja’s *hari-kathā* and honor *prasāda* with all of us. He also many times expressed his desire to abandon his active social life, accept *sannyāsa* and stay always in the association of Guru Mahārāja. His fellow Congress party members, however, would tell him, “If you accept *sannyāsa*, then our position in Assam will rapidly deteriorate.” After a short time, Śrī Gopinātha Borodoloi left this world.

The recipient of his godbrothers’ trust

Some time after Guru Mahārāja’s disappearance from the vision of this world, Śrīpāda Girendra-

govardhana Prabhu, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, was forced to take shelter in the house of one of his disciples, because he had no personal assistants to serve him. Once, while speaking about Śrī Girendra-govardhana Prabhu, Śrīla Paramāsthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, another disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, sorrowfully and tearfully said, “If Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja had still been physically present in this world, Śrī Girendra-govardhana Prabhu would not have been forced to stay in the house of his disciple, because Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja would have certainly arranged for him to stay in his *maṭha* under the care of his disciples.”

This incident demonstrates the grief Guru Mahārāja’s godbrothers experienced after his departure and the great trust they had for him to look after the wellbeing of their other godbrothers.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Although his forefathers were originally from Orissa, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja's parents used to live in Durmuth, Midnapore District, West Bengal. This was the birthplace of Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. At a very young age, Śrīla Mahārāja, then known as Śrī Sarveśvara Paṇḍā, came in contact with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prasūna Bodhāyana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in Jagannātha Puri. 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 initiation.

The astrologer's prediction

Once, a famous and reputable astrologer read the palms of Śrī Sarveśvara Brahmācārī and another *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. Seeing 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 Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī 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 that if someone is firmly fixed in *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, then whatever is written for him in the book of providence becomes ripped to pieces. 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 *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, had 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 Bhakti Vicāra 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 done in such a way that the Vaiṣṇavas would be able to honor *prasāda* in their respective dwellings.

During that time, a very young devotee who had only recently taken *sannyāsa* spoke *hari-kathā*. Because he was quite learned and scholarly, he delivered his lecture in fluent English and quoted many verses from the *sāstras*. 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 Prabhu were also present in the room. Because I was responsible for providing and serving *prasāda* to them, I was also present.

Hearing this praise, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja immediately interrupted Śrīla Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and heavily chastised him, 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 jādī 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, 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* and Vaiṣṇavas. Therefore, whatever qualities such persons may possess are only material.

Prior to this pastime, I had only witnessed that Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was 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 in the path of *bhakti*. There, he performed activities that caused him to leave the association of the Gauḍīya Maṭha *sādhus*, and he began criticizing everyone.

Affectionate concern for godbrothers

Once, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja went to Kālnā when 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 energy and full time in wholeheartedly serving in only one place.” After accepting his advice, Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja invested his complete energy in 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 *maṭha* became agitated upon seeing there was no rice whatsoever to cook and offer to Ṭhākura-jī. When they brought their concern to Śrīla Mahārāja, he immediately understood the situation and said, “Do not worry.” He then locked the temple’s gate and kept the key with him. He turned to the *brahmacārīs* and told them, “Please speak *hari-kathā* and perform *kīrtana* for the pleasure of Lord. There is no need to worry about anything, especially since you are devotees.” After this, he headed to his room on the second floor of the *maṭha*, and keeping the key of the temple’s gate with him, he began to loudly chant *harināma*.

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 saw 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 asked 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 rikshaw?”

“Yes,” the man replied.

Because Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was completely surrendered to the Lord, the Lord, seeing the pain Śrīla Mahārāja experienced 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 immediately reacted, telling them not to become disturbed, and he began singing *bhajahu re mana, śrī nanda-nandana, abhaya-caraṇāravinda re*.

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

Vaiṣṇava-aparādha and the finger

Once, a devotee consulted with a doctor about an infection resulting from a previous hand injury he had sustained. After examining the devotee, the doctor concluded that the only solution was to amputate one of the devotee’s fingers, and that he could come for the surgery after a couple days.

Before the devotee returned to the doctor to have his finger removed, he visited Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. After offering his *praṇāmas* 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 done 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. When he went to the doctor’s office to have his finger amputated, the doctor did one last examination and became astonished. He asked, “What kind of medicine have you taken, and from where have you found 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 this 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 take *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 *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*:

*mādhavo mādhavo vāci
mādhavo mādhavo hṛdi
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 undertakings, and that is why anything can be accomplished when Mādhava Mahārāja is there. 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, and he paid his prostrated *daṇḍavat-praṇāms* to all of them. Thus, he happily 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 was no reply from Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Guru Mahārāja assumed the invitation had been lost in the mail, and immediately sent him a telegram. As soon as Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja received the telegram, he packed a bag and departed for Jagannātha Purī for the festivities.

What generally happens when a guest arrives at his destination is that he wants to know where he can keep his luggage, where he can take bath and where he will be staying. But Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja 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 immediately offer all his visitors *prasāda* 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 immediately 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 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 whenever he would host a festival or function in our *maṭha*. There, he would give his godbrothers a chance 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 due to another engagement, and thus the *sabhā* (*hari-kathā*) would be finished for the night. Many invited disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda had spoken, but Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja had not yet had the chance to speak. Seeing that the time had finished, Guru Mahārāja requested Śrīla Mahārāja to instead perform *kīrtana*. Abiding his request, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja stood up and performed *kīrtana*.

Guru Mahārāja requested 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 walked together toward his car. But as we were leaving, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja began to sing, *nārada muni bājāya vīṇā rādhikā-rāmaṇa-nāme*. Upon hearing this *kīrtana*, the judge became mesmerized and returned to his seat.

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 purifying, heart-melting *kīrtana*, and 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 about 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 if we prick them? 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 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 some people, the word *jīva* 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 *jīva*, 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 and cooking and Jagannātha prasāda

If Śrīla Mahārāja came to know that a devotee had come from Jagannātha Purī, he would ask them if they had brought any *prasāda* and where it was. He especially liked Jagannātha’s rice and dhal *prasāda*. Knowing this, 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 the tamarind 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. 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 go to 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-sādhu*, 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 *paramārādhyatama* Guru Maharaja’s mercy, I had the opportunity to serve Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. In this service, I was able to have his association, see his conduct and receive his blessings.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, is my *śikṣā-guru*. Since his father, Śrī Vaikuṇṭhanātha Prabhu, was also a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, many devotees would visit their house at different times. Once, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī (Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *brahmācārī* name) visited their home. When Śrī Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī observed that Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja—then Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa—spent the majority of his time sitting peacefully in the temple room, sincerely hearing *hari-kathā* and performing *kīrtana* whenever the opportunity would arise, he told the boy's father, “We would be greatly pleased to have your son stay in our *maṭha*. Will you allow him to come with us?”

His father replied, “If he agrees to your proposal, you may surely take him with you. I do not mind.” The boy agreed, and he accompanied the two visiting Vaiṣṇavas back to the Kolkata Ulṭa Dāṅgā *maṭha*, where he was enrolled in a nearby school. He thus spent his time between his services in the *maṭha* and his studies. By seeing the sincerity of Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa dāsa, Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded him *harīnāma* and *dīkṣā*, and made him Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī.

His astuteness in service

After some time, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī was transferred to Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura, where the daily newspaper *Dainika Nadiya Prakāśa* was printed. 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 Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī was the paper's editor at that time, and he 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 Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī mentioned, “Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī is here, and he will go if you tell him.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda then ordered Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī to go, and the boy immediately left for Kṛṣṇanagara by bicycle. After riding a far distance in the rain, he finally reached his destination. When he collected the paper supply, the devotees at Bhāgavata Press bound it to the back of his bicycle. The knots they made, however, were quite loose, and the entire bundle of paper fell to the 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. Using the *dhotī*, he very nicely bound the paper, secured it to the bike and carefully brought it to Māyāpura. Upon Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's return, Śrīla Prabhupāda was informed about the situation, and he praised the boy, acknowledging that although he was very young, he displayed great astuteness in a difficult situation.

The steamship and the storm

The devotees of Śrī Madhva Gauḍīya Maṭha in Ḍhākā once wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda and requested him to send one *kīrtanīyā* for the *maṭha*. Knowing Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī to be an exceptional *kīrtanīyā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked him if he could make the journey on his own. Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī confidently affirmed that he could, and accepting the order of his *gurudeva*, he departed on his journey for Ḍhākā, which required him to travel first by steamship and then by road.

Being the first passenger to arrive at 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. The passengers 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 a child and, without taking responsibility for looking after him, leave him in the *maṭha*. These children then become 'sādhus' due to 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 after he had moved from the window seat, an announcement came 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, one of the passengers, an old man who had previously complained about Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī, began crying and lamented, "My daughter is to be married, 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 *sādhu*. 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 fulfill any request I may submit. 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 they all 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, and we should therefore never become affected by whatever they may speak. Such people praise and criticize only for their own sense enjoyment.

The deep vision of great personalities

Once, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and my *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, were staying in the Madras Gauḍīya Maṭha as *brahmācārīs*. My Guru Mahārāja was then known as Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī. 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, in order to focus on his reading and chanting. Sensing something suspicious about these activities, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī approached Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī and told him of his concerns. He said, "Prabhu, although this *brahmācārī* is chanting and reading a great deal and avoiding gossip, I feel that something is wrong. Can you please investigate?"

Śrī Hayagrīva Brahamacārī understood the legitimate reason for Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's concern, and afterwards 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 Brahamacārī 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. Sometimes, even if you have to joke and engage in gossip with them, still it is not a problem. 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 if I am challenging you, but Śrīman Mahāprabhu has said not to listen to or speak gossip. But you are asking me to indulge in material talks with *brahmācārīs* if required. This is greatly puzzling."

Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī then explained himself: "Listen properly. Presently, you are residing in this *maṭha* only with your body, and not with your mind. If you will not 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 what I have told."

This instance shows that although Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī 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 outer appearances. Such persons can see clearly 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 Brahmācārī could ascertain that because this *brahmācārī*'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 *brahmācārī* received a letter. But instead of having it sent to the *maṭha*, he had the sender address it to a nearby *grhastha* family. Seeing that a letter had come for a resident of the *maṭha*, that family explained the situation to Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī and handed him the letter. Upon reading it, Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī learned that the *brahmācārī* 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 Brahmācārī had received was the mother's reply, in which she accepted the responsibility and told him to return quickly. Shortly after the letter's arrival, the *brahmācārī* left the *maṭha*.

Although absolutely no indications of his mental unrest were visible when he was staying in the *maṭha*, both Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī and my Guru Mahārāja understood the situation very clearly. Due to *saṁskāras* he had received as a result of staying in the *maṭha*, this *brahmācārī* later accepted the real truth, returned to the *maṭha* around the age of sixty-five, and, remembering the *dūra-darśitā* of Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, eventually accepted *sannyāsa* from him.

"He saved me from great danger"

Śrīla Prabhupāda left this world shortly after the end of Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī's childhood. At that time, 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. Since he was still quite young,

he felt it would be better if he were 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 his desire to his father, Śrī Vaiṣṇānātha 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 Vaiṣṇānātha Prabhu, "You are the disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Even if your son is asking to return home, how can you allow it?"

Śrī Vaiṣṇānātha 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, and I would in fact be pleased by this."

Guru Mahārāja then discussed the matter with Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī, and they left together for the *maṭha* shortly afterward. Although my Guru Mahārāja was not a *sannyāsī* at that time, he requested Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to give *sannyāsa* to Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī. Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja accepted the proposal and gave him *sannyāsa* in 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, including our Guru Mahārāja, until Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja himself spoke about it during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* in Vṛndāvana, as well as in our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Chandigarh. Śrīla Mahārājawould 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, 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 see who will give me shelter and stay over there."

His strictness and gravity

Whether he was attending a meeting, arranging a festival or sitting as chairperson to an assembly, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was always extremely punctual. We have seen that if he was presiding over a function and someone spoke *hari-kathā* beyond the allotted time, Śrīla Mahārāja would immediately interrupt him and terminate his address. If the speaker was junior to Śrīla Mahārāja, he would grab him by the ears and order him to sit down, and to seniors he would politely but firmly request them to stop speaking.

He did not tolerate inattentiveness. If he observed anyone—whether a *bramācārī*, *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 whatever they want? Our time is very precious, and we have no interest in wasting it. Please leave immediately.”

If Śrīla Mahārāja ever saw that a person who had dedicated his life to *brahmacārya* was not following the required rules and regulations, such as shaving on *pūrnimā*, he would chastise him and say, “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-vargas*. Even if you do not understand the purpose of each and every principle, you will be benefitted by following them.”

Śrīla Mahārāja and the māyāvādī

Once, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja hosted a function at his Bihālā *maṭha* in Kolkata and invited many different guests to speak. Among the guests were a number of disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, including Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Bhūdeva Śrautī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s grand-disciples from various *maṭhas*, such as *pūjyapāda* Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and myself. Also invited was an old *brāhmaṇa* university professor from a local college. His face displayed a lack of interest during the assembly, and when it came time for him to deliver his lecture, he spoke *māyāvāda* philosophy. He declared, “*Aham brahmāsmi*—I am *brahma*,” along with other different *māyāvāda* slogans. After the professor finished his speech, he rejoined the other speakers on the 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.”

Then, with one hand gripping his *sannyāsa-daṇḍa* and the other clenched in a fist, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja 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 two more times, and the man recoiled in fear in both instances.

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. With the entire assembly, including the children, very loudly laughing at him, the old professor felt mortified and begged Śrīla Mahārāja for forgiveness.

His guru-niṣṭhā

I have heard Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja speak on his opinion about Śrī Caitanyadeva’s teaching to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda:

jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya—kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 20.108)

He said, “This verse says 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 the form of *guru* in this world, delivers sincere souls out

of the clutches of *māyā*, and brings them to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, where they engage in His 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.”

Vaiṣṇavas like Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and many other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhakṣiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura are *mahān-vibhūtīs*, great personalities. Their lives, their conduct, their thoughts, their vision and everything else about them is such that we become increasingly astonished the more we hear and speak about them.

My service to him was his mercy to me

Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, being very merciful to me, gave me the opportunity to serve him in various ways. Once, my Guru Mahārāja sent me to Purī along with our *pūjyapāda* Yasoda-jīvana Brahmācārī, *pūjyapāda* Ācārya Mahārāja (whose name was Gaurāṅga-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 we were there, we stayed with Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja in a small house he had purchased for the purpose of converting it into a *maṭha*. When the time of the Ratha-yātrā festival came, I sent Gaurāṅga-prasāda Prabhu to humbly request Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja to allow us to stay in a nearby *dharmaśālā* during the upcoming festival, since 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. But we have not made the slightest endeavor for that, and 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 properly done.” After that, I made the plan, inspected everything and oversaw the entire construction process.

Another time, he wanted to organize a large festival for the inauguration of a *maṭha* he had built in Keśīyāḍī, in the district of Vardhamāna, in Bengal. They had invited the king of Purī to be a guest of honor at the festival, but he declined. Knowing that I had a friendly relationship with the king, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja wrote to me, 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 that it is not possible for me to attend.”

I jokingly replied, “From that sentence, just remove the word ‘not,’ and then it will be possible.” The king then told me that although he wanted to attend, he had an engagement elsewhere at 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 time on the way. Hearing this, the king accepted my proposal. I then personally brought the king to Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* for the inauguration festival.

Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja ordered me to speak *hari-kathā* on that same day. I chose to explain about the need for a Gauḍīya Maṭha in Keśīyāḍī, a place known for its abundance of temples. In such a place, it would seem as if there would be no need for such a small *maṭha*, due to its proximity to many different temples. I explained that despite this, there was in fact a dire need for a Gauḍīya Maṭha, because even if people had the opportunity to go to the many temples there, they would never have their hearts changed. But the *maṭha* is a place where people can make their lives successful by smearing all over their bodies the foot dust of pure devotees. Here, a spiritual teacher will be present, and those who want to become real, sincere spiritual students will be welcome to come, learn and practice. The *maṭha* exists for the wellbeing of such persons, and 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.

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 strong, so much so that whenever we stayed in the same place, he never allowed me to take *prasāda* without him or to stay anywhere else but in his room.

During festivals or any other functions where my Guru Mahārāja or his godbrothers were, I always sat on the ground while they sat on the dais, but Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja once asked me to sit on the stage. Being embarrassed to sit on the same level as my *guru-vargas*, 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.

It is our duty to remember Vaiṣṇavas on their appearance and disappearance days. To neglect this rule is certainly an *aparādha*. We should definitely pray to him to continue to bestow his mercy upon us.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja

Bhāgavata Press

Before taking *sannyāsa*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvāṭī Ṭhākura, was known as 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. Hearing of 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's publication in a way that everything was exact and without even a single mistake. Seeing 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 was made, the press would immediately correct it.

Another service Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī used to perform was to acquire properties for the *maṭha*. Because of this service and other services in which he acquired various items for the Gauḍīya Maṭha, he was given the name Kenārāma, which means 'a person who purchases everything.'

Subtle indication, big service

The villagers of Campaka-haṭṭa in Navadvīpa had a deep respect for Śrīla Prabhupāda, and some of them became his initiated disciples. Out of their regard for him, they donated to him the property that encompassed the previous residence of Jayadeva Gosvāmī, which is the present site of Śrī Gaura-Gadādhara Gauḍīya Maṭha. There was one renowned person in that village who had two recently widowed daughters. The daughters' in-laws were unwilling to hand over their respective inheritances, and so the two women were unable to maintain their life.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda learned about the situation these ladies faced, he simply said, "How will they maintain themselves?" Taking his Guru Mahārāja'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 Niśikānta Sanyāla, a professor at Ravensā College in Kaṭaka. Although Mr. Sanyāla 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. Whatever they were in need of—the education and marriages of the children, and everything else—was arranged by him.

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 *guru*; quite the opposite, the *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 Kṣetra-pāla Śiva. Eventually, refugees from Bangladesh occupied that land and refused to leave. Acting as his army, a number of devotees and I drove the refugees from the 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.

After some time, the same situation with Bangladeshi refugees that occurred on Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī’s land also occurred there. Learning of this, I offered to help Śrīla Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja by driving the refugees from his land, but he mentioned, “I have no desire to construct a *maṭha*, because I can always visit the *maṭhas* of my godbrothers. Therefore, there’s no problem if these refugees are staying here; I have no plans to expand.”

I replied, “Mahārāja-jī, this would only take me half an hour. After that, all the refugees will be moved out of your land.” He accepted my proposal, and I was able to serve him in this way, just as I had served Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī.

Acceptance of 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 Kṣīra-corā Gopīnātha. After his disappearance, many devotees wanted that *maṭha* to be given to my *paramārādhyatama* 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 had a discussion and considered that since Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī did not yet have any place, Śrī Vārṣabhānāvī-dayita Gauḍīya Maṭha should be given to him, and that he should take *sannyāsa* from Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He accepted his godbrothers’ proposal, and was thenceforth 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, Śrīpāda 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 Paramahansa Mahārāja was that he was incredibly affectionate and simple. Whenever I would meet with him, I would offer my full *aṣṭāṅga daṇḍavat-praṇāmas*. 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 Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

My *śikṣā-guru*, *parama-pūjyapāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, made his divine appearance in the village of Vānarīpādā, within the district of Variśāla, Bangladesh. He belonged to a family of wealthy landowners. When he was young, his paternal aunts Sarojinī and Priyatamā brought him to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Because Priyatamā left her body early on, we generally hear more about Sarojinī in the narration of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s life story.

A jewel among *sevakas*

In the beginning of his *maṭha* life, he 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*.

When Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī came to Śrīla Prabhupāda, he was given, in addition to many essential responsibilities in the *maṭha*, the service of managing the *maṭha*’s court cases. During this time, Muslims 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 the Gauḍīya 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.

His fearless *guru-sevā*

Śrīla Prabhupāda boldly preached that *varṇa* (caste) is determined by one’s qualities and devotional practice rather than familial lineage, and that to become a *bhāgavata-jīvī* (one who maintain one’s life by charging a fee for speaking *bhāgavata-kathā*), *mantra-jīvī* (one who believes only descendants of *brāhmaṇa* families can award *mantras*), or *vigraha-jīvī* (one who charges a fee for *darśana* of the Deity form of Bhagavān) is very disgraceful. These concepts greatly upset many of the corrupt caste *brāhmaṇas*.

During the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, about five thousand pilgrims, young and old, attended Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*. There were also many horses, and the Deity of Śrīman Mahāprabhu headed the procession riding atop an elephant.

Being greatly antagonistic toward Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, the caste *brāhmaṇas* decided to attack the *parikramā* party with the intention of killing him at Paramatalā, also known as Prauḍhamāyā, the residence of Yogamāyā in Navadvīpa.

With great courage, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī risked his life to protect his *gurudeva*, just like Kureśa, the disciple of Rāmānuja Ācārya. At that time, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī wore white cloth, and he exchanged his white cloth for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s saffron-colored *sannyāsa* garments, requesting Śrīla Prabhupāda to escape and return to Māyāpura in the disguise of a white-clothed *brahmācārī*. Śrīla

Prabhupāda complied and safely evaded the attempt on his life.

In the meantime, to blend in with the local Navadvīpa-vāsīs, Śrī Paramānanda Brahmācārī replaced his *dhotī* with a *gamachā*, grabbed a hookah, and went to report the incident to the police. When the police arrived, the antagonistic crowds dispersed, and this allowed Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī to return safely to Māyāpura.

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī showed firm faith in *guru*, and was always ready to risk his own life in order to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda and the devotees.

The protector of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s vāṇī

By Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī’s preaching, his elder brother came to Śrīla Prabhupāda and joined the *maṭha*. Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered his brother to accept *sannyāsa*, but 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*?” In this way, he inspired his brother to accept *sannyāsa*, and his brother became known as Śrī Bhakti Kevala Auḍulomi Mahārāja.

Some time later, after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja saw that Śrī Auḍulomi Mahārāja and his followers were 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 Auḍulomi Mahārāja, into the *sannyāsa* order, they preached against the *sannyāsa-āśrama*, stating that it is strictly prohibited in Kali-yuga; and (3) although Śrīla Prabhupāda personally established Śrī Navadvīpa *parikramā*, they rejected its performance.

Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja could not tolerate even the slightest deviation from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, and he therefore completely severed his relationships with Śrī Auḍulomi Mahārāja and those who followed him. He would never allow his disciples to go to Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha or to any other place where Auḍulomi Mahārāja and his followers resided. If Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja were to find out that his disciple 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) as his *prāyaścitta* (atonement). He would say, “Why have you gone there? You are now impure; you must purify yourself by performing this atonement.”

Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja filed a case against Śrī Auḍulomi Mahārāja and his followers and boldly announced that because they did not accept many of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, they could not be considered his true disciples, and thus they should not be allowed to reside in his *maṭhas*.

My *paramārādhyatama* 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 announce his final decision, Śrī Auḍulomi Mahārāja and his followers appeared in court wearing saffron-colored clothes. Śrī Auḍulomi Mahārāja had given eight people *sannyāsa* that very day and entered the court with a big procession of people loudly chanting the *mahā-mantra*.

In front of the judge, they said, “We are doing Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, wearing saffron dress, and carrying our *sannyāsa-daṇḍas*. We have started a *maṭha* in the name of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and have also established his *murti* (deity form) in the *maṭha* we are constructing in Godrumadvīpa.” They had not previously planned to have a *maṭha* in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s name, nor did

they plan to keep his *murti* there. But because they felt 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 their activities, the judge awarded the decision in favor of Śrī Auḍulomi Mahārāja and his followers. Externally, it appeared as though Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja had been defeated. I pleaded, “Many of your godbrothers were for a long time involved in building this case. I labored so much in coming to you, transcribing your dictations, going to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja and providing information to the court. Now that you have been defeated, 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 Śrī Auḍulomi 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 Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. This is only a hint of his glories.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja

His non-duplicitous glorification of his junior godbrother

Every year after the Gaura-pūrṇimā festival, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka 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 the time of one such occasion, my *paramārādhya*tama Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī 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 Sarasvata 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 started, “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-duplicitous praise.

On knowing the Unknowable

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka 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 natural humility of Vaiṣṇavas

Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka 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 *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 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 (*vaiṣṇavocita-vyavahāra*), Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja accepted the proposal.

In the mean time, 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 Bhakti Rakṣaka 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 muñi se pāpiṣṭha
purīsera kīta hôite muñi 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 Mādhai 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*

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 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
brtyasya-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.

The messengers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s vāṇī

Once, my *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja (at the time, Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī), went along with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then Śrī Siddha-svarūpa Brahmācārī) and Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka 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 as ‘Bi-bekā-nanda’ (one with no intelligence) and to Rāmākṛṣṇa Paramahansa as ‘Rāma-hansa’ (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 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 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-vargas*—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, Jaminī, 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 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 *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 evaiśyaśi 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 of lime 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.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

When my Parama-gurudeva, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, along with his disciples, inaugurated the widespread preaching of unalloyed *rūpānuga* ideology under the guidance and instruction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates who appeared before Śrīla Prabhupāda, he was met with opposition at every corner. Despite immense opposition, he never deviated even slightly from his righteous objective. Instead, through the media of his disciples and his writings, he completely defeated almost all the heretical ideologies prevalent at the time, and established the *gauḍīya-vicāra-dhārā*, or the current of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism thought.

His humility and tolerance

Śrīla Prabhupāda was the true embodiment of the humility described by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam* (3):

*tṛṇād api sunīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

With the humility of a blade of grass and the tolerance of a tree, a person should, while giving due respect to others without desiring respect himself, constantly chant the names of Hari.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s humility was especially manifested during the Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* of 1925, in which he led a group of five thousand pilgrims, along with one hundred eight *mṛdaṅga* players. In the front of the massive *parikramā* party was the Deity of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, riding magnificently atop an elephant.

During that time, a group of people, including *bābājīs* and *jāti gosāīs* (caste-conscious *brāhmaṇas* born in the Gosvāmī family lineage), had been losing prestige and donations due to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s fearless preaching of the true Gauḍīya doctrine as taught by Śrīman Mahāprabhu, which in many cases contradicted and challenged the tainted philosophies of these antagonists. These persons grew envious of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ever-increasing fame and influence, and they therefore descended upon the *parikramā* procession with the wicked intention of taking his life. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, was unperturbed; he considered the attack merely an attempt to cause him bodily harm.

When police officials arrived on the scene and inquired from Śrīla Prabhupāda about who he suspected was behind this attack, he replied, “No one.” His disciples were apprehensive about his dismissal of the incident, and felt that unless they took action against the assailants, it would be impossible to perform *parikramā* peacefully in the future. In reply, Śrīla Prabhupāda firmly stated, “The incident caused us no harm. Actually, it has proven to be favorable for us; it easily accomplished a great task that otherwise could only have been achieved even after spending millions of rupees. Because the incident was front-page news, countless persons who had never heard of the Gauḍīya Maṭha have now come to know about it. Prominent personalities from distant locations—such as the kings of Tripura, Vārdhamāna, Koch Bihar, and even Jaipura—have inquired about the incident.”

In this way, although Śrīla Prabhupāda, being an eternally perfected associate of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was free of faults and their subsequent reactions, still, through his own conduct he demonstrated the proper application of the following verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.14.8):

tat te ’nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo

*bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam
hṛd-vāg-vapurbbhir vidadhan namas te
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

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.

His reputability

Another time, while preparing for the Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, along with his assistant Śrī Paramānanda Brahmācārī, went to scout an appropriate open space or garden where all the pilgrims attending the *parikramā* could stay. In those days, the pilgrims would sleep in such open-air spaces, and only the kitchen would have a canopy. In Campaka-haṭṭa, they found a large mango orchard with a pond nearby. Finding the space suitable, Śrīla Prabhupāda finalized all the booking arrangements and returned.

That evening, some items were stolen from a residence near the orchard. A First Information Report (FIR) against Śrīla Prabhupāda, which stated he had scouted the area for stealable goods in the morning and returned in the evening to thief them, was lodged at the local police station. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, did not respond to this accusation.

When Śrī Pal Choudhury, a very influential local landowner who owned a tea garden and resided in a very large property that included a helipad used by the British, came to know about the incident, he immediately marched over to the police station. He was a well-respected member of society, recognized by even the British government, and so the police officials listened to him with due attention. He told them he wanted to file an FIR of his own, because his pond had been stolen the previous night. Confused, the attending officer inquired, “Sir, how can a pond be stolen? It is impossible. How can we write a report about a stolen pond?”

Śrī Pal Choudhury replied, “You are correct; it is impossible. But yet more impossible is Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī committing burglary. Are you even slightly aware of his greatness?” On the request of Śrī Pal Choudhury, the FIR against Śrīla Prabhupāda was immediately dropped.

After the complaint was dismissed, the people of Champaka-haṭṭa, having realized their mistake in falsely accusing such a divine personality, felt ashamed. Considering that they had committed a grave offence, they felt the only way to repent was to offer service to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and they therefore donated to the Gauḍīya Maṭha the Śrī Gaura-Gadādhara temple, which was served by Dvija Vaṇīnātha, the younger brother of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita.

His defense and protection of the rūpānugas

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda would silently endure personal attacks against himself, he never for a moment tolerated attacks against either the principles of *rūpānuga* ideology or those who sincerely followed that ideology. He would not allow even the smallest statements opposing the true philosophy of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda to go unanswered, and in issuing his rebuttals, he gave no consideration to the social status of the person he was debating. If required, he would even file lawsuits against his opponents to establish the authenticity and superiority of the Gauḍīya line of thought. It is for this reason that his *praṇāma-mantra* states, “*rūpānuga-viruddhāpasiddhānta-dhvānta-hāriṇe*—you deliver the fallen souls and annihilate the darkness arising from misconceptions (*apasiddhānta*) opposed (*viruddha*) to the precepts enunciated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.”

Simply put, Śrīla Prabhupāda was indifferent to what others said or did in opposition to him; he never took anything personally. He was instead always carefully engaged in both following and establishing the

instructions of our *guru-varga*.

He tirelessly performed many services, such as publishing *bhakti* literature, establishing new temples, performing *arcana*, organizing exhibitions about spiritual knowledge, and sending his disciples across the globe to preach the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. We become filled with great awe and reverence for Śrīla Prabhupāda simply by hearing about his incessant efforts to bring eternal spiritual welfare to the conditioned souls of this world.

The rarity of accepting kṛṣṇa-bhakti

Once, a young boy came to the *maṭha* with the desire to stay there, and declared, “I will not return home. I will only do so if Śrīla Prabhupāda orders me to return.”

When Śrīla Prabhupāda came to know about this from one of his *sevakas*, he said, “Do you think me to be such a stone-hearted person that I will order someone so desirous of residing and serving in the *maṭha* to return home? After roaming around in various universes (*brahmāṇḍas*), countless living entities have gathered here in this world. It is extremely rare for even a few of these living entities to desire to reside in the *maṭha*. Only very rare, highly fortunate souls nurture such a desire. How can I ask such a soul to leave the *maṭha* and return to the service of *māyā*?”

Bhāva is the real value of kīrtana

A few days before Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda manifested his disappearance pastime, he expressed a desire to hear a few special *kīrtanas*. To fulfill his request, his *sevaka* brought a devotee who was well-known for singing in a very melodious voice with perfect pitch and rhythm, whose voice he knew to be pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ears. But upon seeing this *kīrtanīya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “I do not wish to listen to a well-crafted, melodious *kīrtana*, but rather one sung from the core of the heart, sung by one who fully comprehends the *bhāvas* and most transcendental meanings of the *kīrtana* he sings.”

He then ordered Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Navīna-kṛṣṇa Vidyālaṅkāra to sing Śrī *Rūpa-mañjarī-pada* and *Tuhū Dayā-sāgara*, respectively. Through this pastime, Śrīla Prabhupāda established the importance of performing *kīrtana* only after thoroughly understanding and realizing the deep meanings and underlying moods of our *ācāryas*’ *kīrtanas* rather than being concerned merely with melody and rhythm. However, one should not think that the devotee whose *kīrtana* Śrīla Prabhupāda refused to hear was an ordinary person or interested simply in the melodiousness of *kīrtana*. In fact, he was a topmost *kīrtanīya*. Earlier in Purī, Śrīla Prabhupāda had many times listened to his *kīrtana* with great eagerness. Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped him from singing at that time for no other reason than to establish and teach one particular point of view.

Being a *nitya-siddha parikāra* (eternally perfect associate) of Bhagavān, Śrīla Prabhupāda knows everything. Because he knows past, present and the future, he is referred to as *trikāla-jña*, or omniscient. He understood that the mindless conditioned living beings of this world pay no mind to the gravity of the moods and deep meanings of *kīrtana*, and instead, for the sake of earning worldly fame and recognition, become absorbed in meditating on melody, tune and rhythm, thinking such things to be the essence of *kīrtana*. Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda used one of his dear associates to deliver this most significant teaching for the benefit of foolish persons like us.

Only the most intimate and completely surrendered associates of great realized souls can truly understand the important teachings they bestow, and through whom and at which opportune moment they choose to bestow them. Otherwise, after hearing the above-mentioned story, how will one be able to reconcile why Śrīla Prabhupāda himself previously adorned Śrī Mohinī Bābū, the uncle of Śrī Śrīmad

Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, with the title ‘Rāga-bhūṣaṇa’—which means ‘one who is ornamented by melody’—after being extremely satisfied by hearing his highly melodious *kīrtanas* sung in perfect pitch and with flawless rhythm; why he allowed the use of such *vaiṣṇava* musical instruments as *karatālas*, *kānsā* and *mṛdaṅgas* during the daily *kīrtanas* in the *maṭha*; why he ordered the arrangement of a performance by one hundred eight *mṛdaṅga* players when he re-established Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*; or why Śrīla Muni Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, would snatch *karatālas* from the hands of devotees who made even the slightest mistake in playing them properly during *kīrtana*?

Many of our previous *ācāryas*, also, have established the importance of melody and rhythm in *kīrtana*, and how such considerations correlate with the pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. For example, Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has written in *Prārthana* (25):

*suyantre miśāīyā gābô su-madhura tāna
ānande kôribô dūhāra rūpa-guṇa-gāna*

Accompanied by musical instruments, I will sing sweet melodies. In great bliss I shall perform songs that glorify the form and qualities of the Divine Couple.*

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written:

*śrī viśākhā-pade, saṅgīta śikhibô,
kṛṣṇa-līlā rasamaya*

Śrī Śrī Gīta-mālā (5.4.3)

At the lotus feet of Śrī Viśākhā, I shall learn music abounding with the nectar of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.*

*tāthai tāthai’ bājālô khol,
ghana ghana tāhe jhājhera rola*

Gītāvalī (1.1.2)

“*Tāthai, tāthai,*” the *mṛdaṅgas* resounded, and the *karatālas* played in time.*

*nārada muni, bājāya vīṇā,
rādhikā-ramaṇa-nāme*

Gitavali (11.8.1)

Nārada Muni’s fingers played the notes on his *vīṇā*, which chanted ‘Rādhikā-ramaṇa.’

Another *Vaiṣṇava ācārya* has written:

*lalitā bājāiya vīṇā, viśākhā mṛdaṅga,
phula caḍāya nāce sakhī vidyā tuṅga*

Śrī Lalitā Sakhī plays the *vīṇa*, Śrī Viśākhā Sakhī plays the drum, and Śrī Tuṅgavidyā Sakhī dances, strewing flowers all about.

Even Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself—by playing His flute, horn and other instruments—has approved the use of musical instruments through His own conduct. In fact, all the sixty-four arts have been manifested by the Lord simply for His pleasure.

Therefore, upon hearing that Śrīla Prabhupāda once refused to hear a melodious *kīrtana*, we should not conclude that the use of *vaiṣṇava* musical instruments in *kīrtana* is inappropriate, or that devotees

who sing in a sweet, melodious voice are to be discouraged from performing *kīrtana*. The actual message is that real *kīrtana* is performed after one properly understands the underlying moods and deep meanings of that *kīrtana*. However, the aesthetic features of *kīrtana*—such as melody, rhythm and vocal expression—should not be entirely dismissed, but rather seen as being favorable for *bhakti*. In his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.200), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has quoted:

*laukikī vaidikī vāpi yā
kriyā kriyate mune
hari-sevānukūlaiva sā
kāryā bhaktim icchatā*

O, Muni! Whether a devotee desires to act according to the customs of society or the Vedic injunctions, everything he does is favorable for the service of Śrī Hari.

Bhāva-grahī Śrīla Prabhupāda

When Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vaibhava Sāgara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a *sannyāsī* disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, would speak *hari-kathā* during his preaching, only few could understand him, because his expression of speech was largely incomprehensible. Although everyone in the audience would gradually leave one by one during his lectures, he would continue speaking. Seeing the hall empty, a couple *brahmacārīs* accompanying Mahārāja would request him, “Mahārāja, you may stop your speech now; no one is present. We will begin packing up the mats and folding all the rugs in the *kīrtana* hall.”

But Mahārāja would reply, “You are unable to understand. You are aware only of the entities present in their gross bodies who have now left. There are many living entities present here in their subtle bodies, as well as other living beings nearby—like trees, creepers, and insects—and they are all listening. Moreover, I am speaking for my own spiritual welfare. If anyone stays and listens, they will also be benefited. Will I not be spiritually benefitted by speaking *hari-kathā* even if no one is present? Did Śrīla Prabhupāda not instruct us to perform *nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevā*—that is, to perpetually engage in the service of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* through *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*—or did he instruct us to engage in such *bhāgavata-sevā* as a demonstration only to be performed when a certain number of listeners are present?”

A few devotees eventually brought Śrīla Sāgara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s views on these incidents to the attention of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Sāgara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was also not well adept at collecting significant donations. Once, when Śrīla Mahārāja was returning to Kolkata, he did not even have sufficient funds to pay for his train ticket, and so he boarded the train without a ticket, along with the two *brahmacārīs* accompanying him. Upon arriving at the Kolkata railway station, the three were detained for travelling without tickets. News of this quickly reached Śrīla Prabhupāda at the Kolkata *maṭha*. Later, when Śrīla Sāgara Mahārāja reached the Kolkata *maṭha*, Śrīla Prabhupāda sent his disciples to welcome Śrīla Mahārāja with *saṅkīrtana*, and said, “Śrī Sāgara Mahārāja is truly a *jīvan-mukta mahāpuruṣa*—a great, completely liberated personality.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda, the pure servant of *bhāva-grahī* Janardana—that is, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who accepts the mood and intention of one’s service rather than the external paraphernalia used—would acknowledge and appreciate the mood and favorable disposition of those engaged in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas with a pure, sincere heart devoid of duplicity. He was completely aloof from the consideration of such external qualifications as one’s eloquence in delivering *hari-kathā* or one’s ability to collect large donations for the *maṭha*.

Through this pastime, Śrīla Prabhupāda established the standard of complete impartiality and freedom from envy and duplicity. His conduct should be followed by all sincere devotees.

Accepting the substance

My *śikṣā-guru*, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu, who had taken shelter of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, resided in the *maṭha*. His father, Śrī Sarveśvara dāsa Adhikārī, who was not initiated at the time, came to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura during Śrī Gaura-pūrṇimā with the intention of taking his son back home to Assam. However, upon meeting Śrīla Prabhupāda and witnessing his conduct, hearing his *hari-kathā*, and observing his illuminating influence, as well as that of his surrendered disciples, he not only dismissed all thoughts of taking his son back home, but also desired to accept *harināma* initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Seeing the aspiring devotees with shaven heads waiting outside Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *bhajana-kuṭīra* to take *harināma*, he too shaved his head and joined them. At that time, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples came to him and said, “You will not be able to receive *harināma* today, because you have a habit of smoking cigarettes and *bīḍīs* (tobacco rolled in a tobacco leaf).”

He replied, “If this habit of mine is preventing me from being accepted as Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciple, then from this moment onward, I will not even so much as touch cigarettes or *bīḍīs*.”

Having overheard the conversation from inside his *bhajana-kuṭīra*, Śrīla Prabhupāda told his disciple, “Please call for this gentleman at once. I shall award him *harināma* initiation today.”

Because he was a realized soul, Śrīla Prabhupāda could understand the implied meaning of simple-hearted statements; he knew whether a person was determined or sentimentally speaking under the influence of the occasion.

From then on, Śrī Sarveśvara dāsa Adhikārī would remember, “In order to receive *harināma* from a *mahāpuruṣa*, I have taken a vow to never again smoke cigarettes or *bīḍī*.” He thus led a life based on Vaiṣṇava principles and never once touched cigarettes or *bīḍī* again.

Recognizing sincerity

Once, a person with the desire to receive *harināma* approached Śrīla Prabhupāda and said with a simple heart, “Mahārāja, I have lead an abominable life, and have eaten various types of meat, including even pork. I am now taking a vow to renounce all such detestable activities. Will you please accept me as a servant of your lotus feet?”

Although there were many persons who, despite residing in the *maṭha* for some years, were never awarded *harināma* or *dīkṣā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, recognizing the man’s simplicity and sincerity, awarded him *harināma* initiation.

The maṭha is a place for performing mahat-sevā

Because the creation of *maṭhas*, temples and monasteries will eventually lead to their residents engaging in court cases and infighting over external considerations, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura advised not to establish them. Yet, Śrīla Prabhupāda, considering the positive aspects of creating such institutions, established many *maṭhas*. His intention was to provide those who—though possessing a desire to so—were unable to perform *bhajana* on their own due to their uncontrolled senses, an opportunity to receive the association and mercy of great, realized souls. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, “Although Bhagavān makes Himself known through *guru*, *sādhu* and *śāstra*, it is impossible to gain entry into the deeper meanings of the *śāstras* without attaining the mercy of realized devotees. Śrī Jaḍa Bharata, Śrī Prahlāda and Śrī Rṣabhadeva have thus emphasized the importance of *mahat-saṅga* by stating, respectively, ‘*vinā mahat-pāda-rajo-’bhiṣekam*—unless a person smears on his body the dust of the lotus feet of elevated, realized devotees, he cannot realize the Absolute Truth;’ ‘*mahīyasām pāda-rajo-’bhiṣekaṁ niṣkiñcanānām na vṛṇīta yāvat*—it is impossible for those who do not smear themselves

with the foot dust of great devotees who are fully detached from mundane sense objects to touch the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa;’ and ‘*mahat-sevām dvāram āhur vimuktes*—only by rendering service to *mahātmās* can one attain the path of liberation from material bondage.’ ”

Although a place may externally appear to be a *maṭha*, and though it may be advertised as such, it cannot be called a *maṭha* in the truest sense of the word if within its walls there is no arrangement for hearing and speaking *hari-kathā*. All activities performed at such a place are simply *karma*. The fruits of *karma* lead only to destinations within the fourteen planetary systems, and not beyond. As a result of engaging in *mahat-sevā*, however, one can attain even the qualification to serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana, the topmost realm of Vaiṣṇava.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has said, “A person who resides in the *maṭha* without hearing and speaking *hari-kathā* simply performs *karma*.” In other words, if a person proudly claims to be a resident of *maṭha* but neglects to actively participate in hearing and speaking *hari-kathā*, then his *maṭha-vāsa* is purely superficial; he does not truly reside in *maṭha*.

Śrī Navadvīpa-pañjikā and the importance of remembering Vaiṣṇavas

Even in his advanced age, *vaiṣṇava-sārvabhauma* Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, out of his endless compassion, used to visit the *bhajana-kuṭīra* of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura by sitting in a basket carried on the head of his disciple, Śrīla Bihārī dāsa Bābājī.

One time, when Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja came to know of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s proficiency in the field of astrology, he ordered him to initiate the publication of *Śrī Navadvīpa-pañjikā*, a calendar that would include the appearance days of the incarnations of Viṣṇu and the manifestations of His *śakti*, as well as the appearance and disappearance days of great Vaiṣṇavas, as per the Gauḍīya line of thought. Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja said, “It is not possible to attain spiritual welfare without remembering the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas. Moreover, it is an offence not to remember and glorify them, especially on the days of their appearance and disappearance.” Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja then provided Śrīla Prabhupāda with his own personal compilation of important dates and their respective descriptions.

Remembering the words of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, “*guru-mukha-padma-vākya, cittete kōriyā aikya*—make the words emanating from the lotus mouth of *śrī guru* one with your heart,” Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted the instructions of Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja to be of the utmost importance, and thus published *Śrī Navadvīpa-pañjikā*, in which he included all the necessary dates (*tithis*).

It is solely because of Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja’s great benediction, as manifested through Śrīla Prabhupāda, that we have become aware of these important *tithis* and have been given the opportunity to wholeheartedly observe them as they respectively arrive during the course of the year.

Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura has written:

*je vaiṣṇava bhajile acintya kṛṣṇa pāi
se vaiṣṇava-pūjā hōite baḍa āra nāi*

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Antya-khaṇḍa 4.357)

There is nothing greater than worshipping Vaiṣṇavas, because by worshipping them, one can attain the inconceivable Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

One develops affection for Vaiṣṇavas by glorifying them, associating with them, and by rendering service to them. As a result of such activities, our mind—which would otherwise remain completely absorbed in the endless expanse of *māyā*—becomes purified, and we attain spiritual realization

completely beyond the material influence of *māyā*, and thus become completely immersed in transcendental bliss.

Affectionate service is great service

Once, many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda gathered together and, through his personal assistant, Śrī Paramānanda Prabhu, submitted a query to him: “Among the many devotees in the *maṭha* who, having accepted the shelter of your lotus feet, sincerely and incessantly engage in rendering various kinds of services for your divine pleasure both day and night, whose service do you consider to be the topmost?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied to such a profound question with simple words: “The greatness of a person’s service to the Vaiṣṇavas is directly proportional to the amount of love and affection he has developed in his heart for those Vaiṣṇavas; the greater the affection, the greater the service.”

Re-establishing Śrī Dhāma-parikramā

In his life, Śrīla Prabhupāda travelled to nearly all the holy places in India. In reality, because he was a *nitya-siddha parikara* (eternally perfected associate) of the Lord, there was no need for him to do this. Still, in order to establish through his own conduct the importance of the statement of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (9.4.18), “*pādau hareḥ kṣetra-padānusarpaṇe*—one should engage one’s feet in circumambulating the places of Śrī Hari’s pastimes,” he embarked on extensive journeys. However, he has also stated, “Although I went to many holy places with a desire to seek the association of Vaiṣṇavas, I could not find a single pure Vaiṣṇava in all my travels.”

Understanding the futility of laboriously visiting holy places with the aim of attaining *sādhū-saṅga*, Śrīla Prabhupāda re-established the annual performance of *parikramā* in three *dhāmas*—Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala, Śrī Kṣetra-maṇḍala and Śrī Gaura-maṇḍala—in order to provide everyone with the opportunity to hear and speak *hari-kathā* in *mahat-saṅga*, the association of greatly elevated Vaiṣṇavas.

His perspective on jīva-himsā

Ordinarily, the term *jīva-himsā* is understood by people to mean ‘a physical or emotional act of violence against living entities, including oneself.’ If a person commits suicide, it is said that person has committed *ātma-hatyā* (murder of the self). But Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained that this is actually not *ātma-hatyā*, but rather *śarīra-hatyā* (murder of the body).

Therefore, physical or emotional violence against the gross and subtle bodies of the *jīva* is not *jīva-himsā*, because the *jīva* is a spiritual soul distinct from these two bodies. While harming the gross and subtle bodies may be called *jīva-himsā* by people in general, it is in fact not the true meaning of *jīva-himsā*.

The soul is indestructible and cannot be harmed. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has mentioned in *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.23):

*nainam chindanti śastrāṇi
nainam dahati pāvakaḥ
na cainam kledayanty āpo
na śoṣayati mārutaḥ*

*acchedyo ’yam adāhyo ’yam
akledyo ’śoṣya eva ca
nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthāṇur
acalo ’yam sanātanaḥ*

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

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

The question then arises: what is the real meaning of *jīva-himsā*?

Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained that the *jīva* possesses the qualification to attain the highest abode, provided he has undergone the required training and has properly understood the nature of that abode. Actual *jīva-himsā* is of two types: (1) knowingly or unknowingly attempting to divert the *jīva* from the path leading to the highest abode (the path of pure *bhakti*) by instructing him to take up another path leading to a temporary destination, such as the paths of *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga* and so on, and (2) abstaining from helping the *jīva* progress on the path leading to the highest abode. Therefore, real *ahimsā* (nonviolence) is to preach and follow the path of pure *bhakti*, and not the paths of *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga* and so on.

Unless a person has understood the true substance of this matter, his avoidance of performing *jīva-himsā* more or less goes in vain.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has very clearly mentioned in his commentary on *Guṇḍicā-mandira-mārjana-līlā-rahasya* that *jīva-himsā* means to have either *kuṇṭhā* (hesitation) or *kṛpaṇatā* (miserliness) in one's preaching of *śuddha-bhakti*; to give *māyāvādīs*, *karmīs* or *anyābhilāṣīs* an opportunity (*praśraya*) to speak about their philosophies; or to speak solely for the sake of pleasing one's listeners.

Engaging others in service according to their respective qualifications

It is extremely difficult to understand the activities and intentions of *mahā-bhāgavata* Vaiṣṇavas. Although their behavior may externally seem contradictory at times, such contradictions are perfectly harmonized in their one-pointed determination to serve Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Being a servant of the all-knowing Supreme Lord, Śrīla Prabhupāda was able to perceive even the subtlest of intentions in all people, and he thus knew how to interact with each and every individual in a manner that would bring about their spiritual welfare. What follows is an example of how he handled two similar situations in very different ways.

Before Śrīpāda Yadumaṇi Bābū, a resident of Khurdā city in Orissa, took shelter at the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda, he worked for Purī Municipality. Later, he accepted residence at Śrī Puruṣottama Gauḍīya Maṭha, established by Śrīla Prabhupāda, near Caṭaka-parvata in Purī. During his time there, he developed a very beautiful garden with vegetables, fruits and flowers. He even prepared the fertilizer with his own hands. Śrīla Prabhupāda was residing in the Kaṭaka *maṭha* at the time, and when he heard many devotees praising the garden, he sent a letter to the manager of Śrī Puruṣottama Gauḍīya Maṭha, ordering him to send Śrī Yadumaṇi Bābū to Kaṭaka.

Upon reading the letter, the *maṭha*'s manager became very upset and replied to Śrīla Prabhupāda, "If Śrī Yadumaṇi Bābū leaves this place, our garden's maintenance will cease and everything will dry up. There is no one in the *maṭha* capable of serving like him."

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "I can bear to see a withering garden, but I cannot tolerate the withering of Yadumaṇi Bābū's spiritual life. A conditioned soul can never have such a natural inclination to serve; something is definitely wrong there. Please send him to Kaṭaka immediately. By being attached to that garden, his attachment for Bhagavān will gradually decrease until all that remains is his attachment to the garden. It is our duty to be attached to Bhagavān.

*anāsaktasya viṣayān
yathārham upayujjataḥ
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*, which means renunciation through always maintaining a connection with Śrī Kṛṣṇa.*

“Remaining attached to sense objects and not to the principles established by our *ācāryas* is not only unfavorable for *bhakti*, but is completely against it. The true identity of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha is its ideals. Yadumaṇi Bābū’s consciousness is less inclined toward remembering Bhagavān than it is toward remembering that garden. Moreover, he has not reached the stage of firm faith, in which he understands that serving in the garden is equivalent to serving Bhagavān. Unless one develops such unflinching faith, it is essential that one serves under the guidance of senior Vaiṣṇavas. In reality, Yadumaṇi Bābū simply nurtures his tendency to perform *karma*, and identifies himself as the doer. He thinks he is expert in gardening and that he can even teach it to others.”

In contrast to this story, Śrīpāda Rāma dāsa Prabhu, another disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, maintained the garden at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura. But Śrīla Prabhupāda did not have the same opinion of him as he did for Śrīpāda Yadumaṇi Bābū, because Śrī Rāma dāsa Prabhu never identified himself as the doer. He had accepted his gardening service not to impress anyone, but rather because he believed that this service was alone the means to attain his topmost welfare. Thus, he gardened with firm faith that he was serving Bhagavān and His devotees.

Once, when a person who was desirous of studying *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* approached Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Prabhupāda sent him to Śrī Rāmadāsa Prabhu. After meeting with Śrī Rāmadāsa Prabhu, that person observed that he was a simple gardener. When he questioned him about *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Rāmadāsa Prabhu explained that the essence of *Bhāgavatam* is to engage oneself in the service of Bhagavān and His devotees. That person returned to Śrīla Prabhupāda and complained, “Rāmadāsa Prabhu is not qualified to teach the *Bhāgavatam*. He wishes only to engage me in gardening, and he says that this service is the essence of the *Bhāgavatam*.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “Śrī Rāmadāsa Prabhu is a true *bhāgavata*. He has perfected his life by perfectly imbibing the teachings of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.”

*etāvaj janma-sāphalyam
dehinām iha dehiṣu
prāṇair arthair dhiyā vācā
śreya-ācaraṇam sadā*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.22.35

It is the duty of all embodied beings to perform welfare activities for the benefit of others with their life, wealth, intelligence and words.

In another instance that demonstrates his revolutionary perspective, Śrīla Prabhupāda once himself asked a devotee to buy an expensive pair of shoes for Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who out of his natural renunciation never wore footwear during his stay in the *maṭha*. The devotee then sent those shoes—which cost thirty-two rupees, a considerable expense at that time—to Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja with a message stating that Śrīla Prabhupāda had instructed that he appear before him wearing those shoes. When Śrī Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja abided by his instruction and came before him wearing the shoes, Śrīla Prabhupāda stated, “Today your renunciation has achieved perfection, because you have renounced even your renunciation for the service of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.”

On the other hand, when Śrīla Prabhupāda observed one devotee wearing shoes that cost a mere

eighty-five *paisās*, he said, “You are a sense enjoyer. It is extremely shameful for a person to wear such expensive shoes after having accepted the *veśa* (clothes) and vows of a renunciate.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was of the opinion, “Only she who has accepted the role of queen deserves to wear a queen’s clothes.” With this conception in mind, although there was a car available in the *maṭha*, Śrīla Prabhupāda did not allow everyone to use it.

Accepting and distributing in the service of Śrī Hari

Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, “Never in my life have I once accepted anything from anyone belonging to this material world. As a servant of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān, I have openly distributed what belonged to me among all people.”

If we deliberate on the literal meaning of this statement, then Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words may appear to be untrue, because in order to execute various services—such as establishing sixty-four *maṭhas*, arranging for the maintenance of those *maṭhas*, sending preachers all over India and even to foreign countries, publishing a Vaiṣṇava calendar and other spiritual literatures, and organizing Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma and Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramās*—he accepted the offerings of many people. Not only this, but in order to collect donations for such services, he, either himself or through his disciples, often requested donors to make contributions.

However, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s internal mood while accepting offerings for such services was similar to that of the hunter disciple of Śrī Nārada Muni. Śrī Nārada had assured his disciple that he (Śrī Nārada-jī) would arrange for whatever was required to maintain his life. The hunter, having faith in Śrī Nārada Muni’s words, destroyed his bow and arrows, which were his livelihood, and engaged himself in *bhajana*. While doing so, he received many offerings from people who were attracted to his devotion. He firmly believed, “All these things are being sent by *śrī guru*. These people are simply delivering them to me like postmen. Because *śrī guru* has supplied me with such things, it is my duty to use them in the service of Bhagavān as I see fit. If I compassionately distribute them among these postmen or other persons, it will be considered service to *śrī guru* and Bhagavān.”

When Śrī Nārada-jī and Śrī Parvata Muni visited the hunter after a year, Śrī Nārada Muni confirmed his disciple’s understanding. When the hunter said, “Gurudeva! You are sending more than I require for my maintenance. Please do not send so many things,” Śrī Nārada-jī did not reply by saying, “I never sent you anything. I am only now coming to see you after a whole year.” Instead, he said, “Use only what you need, and distribute the rest among others.”

Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who nurtured a deep faith in the words of the scriptures, demonstrated such principles through his own conduct. If we understand and sincerely follow the words of the hunter in our own life, we will not be subjected to material bondage. But if we become attracted to sense objects, and thereby become indebted to the people of this world, we will become bound by sense gratification.

His appreciation of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta

My *parama-gurudeva*, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, once suddenly asked Śrī Rājarṣi Śaradendu Nārāyaṇa Rāya, the head of Philosophy at the University of Lahore in Agastya Villa, Darjeeling, “If you were forced to live without the association of devotees, but could keep just one spiritual text with you, which text would you choose?”

Rājarṣi Śaradendu Rāya immediately replied, “*Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, because it has been stated:”

The divine song sung by Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the topmost scripture among all holy scriptures.

*sarvopaniṣado gāvo
dogdhā gopāla-nandanah
pārtho vatsaḥ su-dhīr bhoktā
dugdham gītāmṛtaṁ mahat*

Gītā-māhātmya (6)

The Upaniṣads are like a cow, and the cowherd boy Śrī Kṛṣṇa milks this cow. The wonderful necterean milk is *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, which is first taken by the calf-like Arjuna, and the remaining milk is drank by the learned scholars and devotees.

*gītā su-gītā kartavyā
kim anyaiḥ śāstra-vistarāyaḥ
yā svayaṁ padmanābhasya
mukha-padmād-viniḥśṛtā*

Gītā-māhātmya (4)

One should attentively and regularly hear and read *Bhagavad-gītā*. What is the need to read any other Vedic literature? This one book will suffice, because it is the essence of all Vedic literatures and has emanated from the lotus mouth of Padmanābha (Śrī Kṛṣṇa).

*mala-nirmocanaṁ puṁsām
jala-snānaṁ dīne dīne
sakṛd gītāmṛta-snānaṁ
saṁsāra-mala-nāśanam*

Gītā-māhātmya (3)

By daily bathing in water, one cleanses oneself of physical dirt only. But bathing even once in the sacred Gaṅgā-like waters of *Bhagavad-gītā* altogether vanquishes the dirt of this gross material existence (*saṁsāra-mala*).

After hearing Śrī Rājarṣi Śaradendu Rāya’s answer, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “*Āge kaha āra*—speak further,” just as Śrīman Mahāprabhu had said to Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya on the banks of Godvārī River. After thinking deeply for a while, Śrī Rājarṣi Śaradendu Rāya answered, “*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,” and cited the following verses:

*dharmah projjhita-kaitavo ’tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām
vedyaṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivadaṁ tāpa-trayonmūlanam
śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kiṁ vā parair īśvaraḥ
sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate ’tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.1.2)

In this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—which has been manifested by Śrī Vyāsadeva, the greatest saint of the primeval times—the true and topmost duty of the living entities (*bhāgavata-dharma*) has been explained. If a person devotedly hears this most sublime scripture and follows the *bhāgavata-dharma* explained within, his threefold miseries will be destroyed, he will meet with all auspiciousness, and he will then realize true knowledge about the Supreme Truth. Thus, he will become able to bind the Supreme Lord within his heart as per his own sweet will. For a person desirous of attaining the above-mentioned symptoms, there is no need to hear or follow any scripture other than *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But an applicant of the university of *bhāgavata-dharma* must have two qualifications. Firstly, he should not engage in *kaitava* (pretentious, cheating activities), and secondly, he should be a *nirmatsāra sādhu*, a person whose heart is full of compassion for all living beings, including himself.

*yasyām vai śrūyamāṇāyām
kṛṣṇe parama-pūruṣe
bhaktir utpadyate puṁsaḥ
śoka-moha-bhayāpahā*

Mere aural reception of this Vedic literature causes *bhakti* to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa to sprout up at once and extinguish the fire of lamentation, illusion and fear.

*nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam
pibata bhāgavatam rasam ālayam
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.1.3)

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the mature, succulent fruit of the wish-fulfilling tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī and, through the disciplic succession of bona fide *gurus*, it has willingly descended upon this earth in its entirety. It is saturated with the supremely pleasing ambrosial nectar of transcendental emotion (*rasa*). Having no skin, hard seed, fibers or other discardable parts, it is fit for drinking because it is completely liquid. O great devotees—you who are *bhāvuka* (well acquainted with the transcendental nectarean emotions of divine love) and *rasika* (expert in relishing all the specific forms of the liquefied, ambrosia of transcendental emotion)—you should repeatedly drink the sweet nectar of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, even in the liberated stage. Indeed, the supremely liberated souls perpetually relish Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

*artho 'yaṁ brahma-sūtrāṇām
bhāratārtha-vinirṇayaḥ
gāyatrī-bhāṣya-rūpo 'sau
vedārtha-paribrñhitah*

Garuda Purāṇa

The meanings of the *Vedānta-sūtra* are present in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, as are the highest philosophical ascertainments of *Mahābhārata*. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the embodiment of the commentary on *brahma-gāyatrī*, and it gives an elaborate explanation of the meanings of the Vedas.*

*sarva-vedānta-sāraṁ hi
śrīmad-bhāgavatam iṣyate
tad-rasāmṛta-tṛptasyā
nānyatra syād ratiḥ kvacit*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (12.13.15)

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is accepted as the essence of all Vedānta. Whoever has been satisfied by the transcendental mellow (*bhakti-rasa*) of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is never attracted to any other literature.*

*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.

Śrī Rājaraṣi Śaraḍendu Nārāyaṇa Rāya then said, “There are many other verses in various scriptures that similarly glorify Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. One can therefore conclude that Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the topmost among all the Vedic scriptures. In my opinion, there is no scripture superior to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda again said, “*Āge kaha āra*—speak further.”

Rājaraṣi Śaraḍendu Nārāyaṇa Rāya replied, “I am unqualified to say anything beyond this.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda then said, “Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta is the most glorious scripture. If I were alive to witness the entire world being submerged in water at the time of its destruction (*mahā-pralaya*), I would preserve no other scripture than Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta; I would protect it by keeping it on my chest

while swimming. The void left by the annihilation of all the Vedic literatures would be filled simply by the existence of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.”

In order to gloriously reveal the extraordinary and divine character of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, the author of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, has described *nityānanda-tattva*, *śrī-guru-tattva*, *kṛṣṇa-tattva*, *rādhā-tattva* and *advaita-tattva*, as well as Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s special manifestation as *pañca-tattva*. In narrating the pastimes of Ratha-yātrā and the cleaning the Guṇḍicā temple (*guṇḍicā-mandira-mārjana*), Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has established the glories of Vraja, the Vrajavāsīs, their surrender and service mood to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the superiority of the *vraja-gopīs* among all the devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Through the narration of *Rāya Rāmānanda Saṁvāda*, he has presented the essence of all the Vedic literatures by way of a comparative and progressive analysis of the significant instructions of all the various scriptures, and has established the most astonishing glories of *parakīya-rasa*.

In *Rūpa-śikṣā* and *Sanātana-śikṣā*, he has provided analyses of the subtlest aspects of *sambandha-*, *abhidheya-* and *prayojana-tattvas*. Through his narration of the pastimes of Nāmācārya Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura and others, he has established the splendid glories of *harināma*.

In describing Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s discussions with Śrī Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and Śrī Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, he has recorded the Lord’s thorough rejection of the principles of *advaitavāda* (non-dualism) and His establishment of the doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* (inconceivable, simultaneous oneness and difference) by citing references from *śāstra*.

Moreover, the way Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has described the multifarious pastimes of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, in which the Lord has imparted teachings through His exemplary behavior and conduct, is extremely beneficial for the living entities in this Kali-yuga.

Abiding by the *sūtra* “*mitam ca saram ca vaco hi vāgmitā*—essential truth spoken concisely is true eloquence,” Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has very concisely explained the essence of all the scriptures in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

It is possibly due to the above-mentioned reasons that Śrīla Prabhupāda made such a strong assertion about the supremacy of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

I used to visit Śrī Rājarṣi Śaradendu Nārāyaṇa Rāya’s home to collect alms (*bhikṣā*) along with Śrī Mādhavānanda Prabhu, who had taken *harināma* from Śrīla Prabhupāda and *dīkṣā* from our *gurudeva*. There, I twice had the opportunity to hear directly from Śrī Rājarṣi Śaradendu Nārāyaṇa Rāya about Śrīla Prabhupāda’s glorification of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Although I developed firm faith in the glories of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* after hearing his account, realization was still missing within me. Even when I later read *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* myself, I did not attain realization of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements.

After hearing discourses on *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* from the many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda over the years, and especially when I began translating *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* from Bengali to Hindi and had to pay attention to the meaning of every single word, I became enlightened with ever-new explanations of the many spiritual subject matters contained within this great scripture. Through this translation work, I came to understand, in a very simple and intuitive way, the detailed meanings of many highly subtle verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I am only now directly experiencing and realizing the import of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta is certainly more merciful and beneficial than even *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the topmost of all Vedic literatures.

In his introduction to *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda has described his complete astonishment that Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, in relating the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, has exhibited an unmatched proficiency in understanding the deep meanings of all the

various scriptures, an extraordinary insight into otherwise unfathomable philosophical subject matters, an unprecedented and thoughtful expertise in using accessible terminology to describe to the common masses even the subtlest of spiritual principles, and a crystal clear understanding of the Kavya, Purāṇas, Itihāsa, Smṛti and Gaṇita (a branch of astrology).

Learned experts predicted that in order to read and follow such an extraordinary transcendental literature, the scholars of the world's many countries would feel inspired to learn Bengali. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī's perfection in rendering sweetly toned poetic compositions (*bhāva-mādhurya-parākāṣṭha*) is cherished by all renowned poets of the world. His solemnity in describing the pastimes of *madhura-rasa* can be assessed only by highly qualified persons, the likes of whom are extremely difficult to find.

The author of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, in this composition of his, has presented an extraordinary compilation of the subtlest pastimes of Śrīman Mahāprabhu in tandem with citations from various scriptures, and has thereby removed from the weak hearts of his readers the materially inspired tendency to speculate.

The life, activities, conduct and character of Śrīman Mahāprabhu (*śrī caitanya-carita*) are all eternal, and the ideals represented in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* therefore destroy the living entities' inclination for sense enjoyment (*bhoga-pravṛtti*) while establishing them in their true constitutional activity: service to the Supreme Lord (*sevā-vṛtti*).

His Meetings with Prominent Personalities

Śrī Madana-mohana Malaviya

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda initiated the publishing of a spiritual daily newspaper named *Dainika Nadīyā Prakāśa*. My *śikṣā-guru*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then known as Śrī Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī) was given the responsibility of editing the newspaper, in which transcendental and ever-fresh essays related to the spiritual world were published. It was from him that I heard about the following pastime of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Once, Śrī Madana-mohana Malaviya, the founder of the world-famous Banaras Hindu University in Vārāṇasī, Uttar Pradesh, while speaking with Śrīla Prabhupāda at Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Bāgbāzār, Kolkata, asked him with astonishment, “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. 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 from now until forever.”

Because a scholar can very easily detect implied meanings, Śrī Madana-mohana Malaviya was extremely pleased to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda's assertion that because the spiritual world is unlimited by nature, the reservoir of transcendental subject matters from which the paper could draw would be similarly unlimited.

Śrī Madana-mohana Malaviya inquired from Śrīla Prabhupāda, “We see in the Gauḍīya Maṭha that people of all *varṇas* and *āśramas* (social and spiritual orders) are being awarded *dīkṣā*. Men born in non-*brāhmaṇa* families are being awarded the *upanayana* thread reserved for *brāhmaṇas*, and all are rendering services to Bhagavān—such as *arcana* (Deity worship), cooking and studying scriptures—that are traditionally performed only by those born in *brāhmaṇa* families. There are also many other unconventional principles adopted here in the *maṭha*. Is this not a violation of *varṇāśrama-dharma* and the scriptural injunctions?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “Just as the soul and the body are related to each other, so too are *bhagavad-prema* (transcendental love for Bhagavān) and *varṇāśrama-dharma* connected. Although it is the soul and not this material body that is the main object of our attention, the body cannot be altogether neglected, especially in the conditioned stage of life. Similarly, although our foremost objective is to attain *bhagavad-prema*, it is not sensible to be completely indifferent toward *varṇāśrama-dharma*, especially while in the conditioned stage.

“It is *daiva* (divine) *varṇāśrama-dharma* that has been established in the scriptures, and not *adaiva* (worldly) *varṇāśrama-dharma*. The latter considers birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family to be the qualification for being a *brāhmaṇa*, irrespective of whether he possesses the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa* or engages in activities befitting one. To the contrary, in *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*, a person’s *varṇa* and *āśrama* are based on the qualities he exhibits and the activities in which he engages. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.11.35) states:

*yasya yal lakṣaṇaṁ proktaṁ
puṁso varṇābhivyañjakam
yad anyatrāpi dṛśyeta
tat tenaiva vinirdiśet*

A person should be considered to belong to the social order for which he possesses characteristics, even if he has appeared in a different caste.

“Also, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (4.13):

*cātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ
guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ*

The fourfold system of social orders was created by Me according to the divisions of *guṇa* (quality) and *karma* (work).

“Both of the above verses endorse only the principles of *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*. It was purely due to their respective qualities and activities that out of Śrī Rṣabhadeva’s one hundred sons, eighty-one sons were known as ritualistic *brāhmaṇas*, nine sons were known as the *kṣatriya* proprietors of the nine islands, nine sons were known as practitioners of *bhakti yoga*, and one son, Śrī Bharata, was known as a *mahā-bhāgavata*, or a great, transcendental personality beyond the realm of the four *varṇas* and *āśramas*.”

After listening to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s deeply insightful views on *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*, Śrī Madana-mohana Malaviya sincerely accepted them in his heart and said, “The viewpoint of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha has opened my eyes. Though I too have studied *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*, I had never been acquainted with the wonderful revelations you have presented just now.”

Before departing, Śrī Madana-mohana Malaviya invited Śrīla Prabhupāda to visit Banaras Hindu University.

When their preaching of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s message brought them to Kāśī (Vārāṇasī), Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples were invited by the Vice Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University for a visit. Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted the invitation, and there he addressed a large gathering comprised of the University’s founder, management committee members, professors and students.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda finished his speech, the Vice Chancellor approached him and said, “I had difficulty following your address, and I am sure others also found your terminology quite perplexing. If you would have expressed your views in simpler language, it would have been easier for everyone to have followed them perfectly.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “It would better if you could advise the University’s students and faculty to elevate their own level of understanding. Why are you requesting me to lower the standard of my address? That we are even hearing about the difficulty the students and faculty of Banaras Hindu University had in comprehending the simplest teachings of the Vedic scriptures is disgraceful.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ideology was so exalted that it was difficult for even the highly learned professors of Banaras Hindu University to properly understand it.

Śrī Rabindranath Tagore

During the time Śrīla Prabhupāda was considering sending a few of his disciples to foreign countries to spread the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, he met with Śrī Rabindranath Tagore, the world-renowned author and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, to inquire about his visit to the West to receive the Nobel Prize. Śrīla Prabhupāda enquired, “In your opinion, to which Western country should our Gauḍīya Maṭha preachers first be sent to spread the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu?”

Śrī Rabindranath Tagore replied, “None. It is unadvisable to send preachers to any western countries at this moment. Many unscrupulous people who earlier visited these places to preach Vedic *dharma* have tarnished the image of Indian saints. As a result, the people of the Western countries have lost faith in *sādhus*.”

After further discussion on the matter, Śrīla Prabhupāda briefly introduced him to the ideology of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, which is the doctrine of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Śrī Rabindranath Tagore, being captivated and moved by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s presentation of Gauḍīya philosophy, said, “It is only if you yourself visit the Western countries that great success in preaching will be assured. Everybody will certainly greet you with honor.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “I will send persons who are just as qualified as me.”

During the conversation, while referring to pseudo Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, Śrīla Prabhupāda used the term *prakṛta-sahajiyā*. Upon hearing this term, Śrī Rabindranath Tagore said, “I have never come across this term in my life; I have not seen this term anywhere in the 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. Examples of such exalted, eternally perfect devotees are the residents of Vraja, like Śrī Nanda, Śrī Yaśodā, Śrī Rādhārāṇī and others. Nowadays, many unqualified conditioned souls try to imitate the moods of these great, liberated personalities by deceitfully imposing such moods on their own character. Therefore, I use this word *prakṛta-sahajiyā* to refer to such persons, because nowadays, the prostitution of words, or the gross misrepresentation or concoction of the true meaning of words, to support one’s vested interests has 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.”

The underlying message in this account is that the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda did not belong to this material world, but rather to the transcendental world. He often used terms that were unknown even to the most famous and admirable scholars of society.

Śrī Subhas Chandra Bose

My *śikṣā-guru*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śaraṇa Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja once related to me the account of when Śrī Subhas Chandra Bose, the famous freedom fighter of India, came to Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha along with many distinguished personalities to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

During their meeting, Śrī Subhas Chandra Bose told Śrīla Prabhupāda, “Having taken a vow to free our motherland from foreign rule, I have declared a slogan throughout the country: ‘Give me your blood and I promise you freedom.’ I have recently come to know that many young men have taken your shelter. Please entrust some of these men to me, so that they may fight for the freedom of this country.”

In reply, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked him, “Have you read *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*?”

Śrī Subhas Chandra Bose replied, “Yes, I have.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda further inquired, “Do you remember this verse:

*yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ
tyajaty ante kalevaram
taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya
sadā tad-bhāva-bhāvitah*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (8.6)

O son of Kuntī, without fail, a person attains the state of being he remembers at the time he gives up the body.

“Yes, certainly.”

“Then you must definitely believe in reincarnation.”

“Of course I do,” Śrī Subhas Chandra Bose answered. “Which Hindu in this world does not believe in reincarnation?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda then asked him, “If incidentally you happen to die today and are born in England in your next life, will you continue to fight for India’s freedom, or will you fight to maintain dominance over India?”

Śrī Subhas Chandra Bose replied, “I understand your point, but we must certainly think about the freedom of our motherland.”

To this, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “You are concerned merely for the temporary, worldly freedom and liberation of a few persons who at the moment happen to possess the material designation of being Indian. I, however, am concerned about the liberation of not only the whole human race, but of every living entity in this world from the bondage of this material world.”

Śrī Subhas Chandra Bose replied, “I have never heard anything like this before. Before meeting you, nobody had ever described to me such meaningful explanations of the teachings of the *Gītā*. But I fear I have come a bit too far in my struggle for freedom to look back.” Saying this, Śrī Subhas Chandra Bose left the *maṭha* without making any further requests for Śrīla Prabhupāda to provide him with men to fight for India’s independence.

Pūjyapāda Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja

His guru-niṣṭhā

When *pūjyapāda* Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja first came to the *maṭha* as a young boy, his mother put him under the care of Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī (later known as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja), and he attended the Bhaktivinoda Institute for schooling. After some time, when Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura disappeared from this world, some disturbances arose in the *maṭha*, and Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī was sent to prison along with many other devotees on the strength of a false accusation. *Pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja (then Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī) had not received *mantra-dīkṣā* from Śrīla Prabhupāda, and so he was unable to cook for Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī and all the other jailed devotees. To remedy this, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī gave *mantra-dīkṣā* to Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī through the bars of the jail cell, and later, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja performed the fire *yajña* for his *dīkṣā* ceremony. Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī was then able to prepare *prasāda* for all the detained devotees.

Although Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī witnessed Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī’s imprisonment, his *niṣṭhā* was such that he never doubted Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī’s qualification to be *guru*. He never for a moment thought, “How can I accept as *guru* a person whose actions have landed him in jail?”

No envy or possessiveness

Although he was a disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī would often accompany my *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, on preaching tours. In those earlier days, there was little distinction between the *maṭhas* of those disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda who closely followed his *vāṇī*. Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī used to visit the vegetable gardens of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Māyāpura, and, without the need of taking any permission, pick whatever vegetables were required for the service of the Vaiṣṇavas residing in Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha. No one ever considered, “This is our land, and these are our vegetables.” He never used a rikshaw in those days, and so he would himself carry all the collected vegetables and walk back to Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha. I developed great faith and respect for him upon seeing his tireless efforts in performing *vaiṣṇava-sevā*.

Such concerns and distinctions between *maṭhas* never arose at that time, even among *ācāryas*. The two foremost godbrothers of *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja—*pūjyapāda* Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja and *pūjyapāda* Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja—joined the *maṭha* as a result of the preaching efforts of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmācārī), a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. When their attraction to *bhakti* was awakened, Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja took them to his godbrother, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. There was no envy or conception that, “Because I have nourished these devotees and brought them to the path of *bhakti*, they are therefore my disciples.” Similarly, my Guru Mahārāja used to bring many devotees to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

His humility

After the disappearance of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Jīvana Janārdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a three-day *viraha mahotsava* was held in his Khaḍgapura *maṭha*. I was invited to be the *sabhā-pati* (chairman) for the first day, and *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja was invited to be the *sabhā-pati* for the third day. *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja had to take a train from Chennai (then Madras) to Khaḍgapura to attend the

assembly. Because his train was late, he was somewhat delayed in his arrival at the program, and so I was asked to accept the responsibilities of the *sabhā-pati*. When *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja arrived and was given the opportunity to speak, he turned to me and asked, “For what amount of time should I speak?”

I replied, “Mahārāja, you are the actual *sabhā-pati* today; time limits do not apply to you.” Although he was ill and his servants kept indicating for him to stop speaking, he continued without any concerns for his physical wellbeing, and thus displayed his strong attachment to glorifying Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

Staying out of trouble

During the festival in Khaḍgapura, I stayed in the room next to *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja. When we talked, we discussed only the teachings and conduct of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He told me, “I have seen three generations of devotees in my life and I am astonished to see how diluted the devotees’ implementation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings and conduct has become. I want to say one thing to you, but please take it as advice rather than an instruction, because I am not so arrogant as to think I am qualified to instruct anyone: ‘*dekhibe, śunibe, bolibe nā*—observe and hear, but do not speak.’ By following this, you will stay out of trouble.” He faultlessly observed this ideal in his own life and maintained perfect *vaiṣṇava-maryādā*, or etiquette befitting a Vaiṣṇava.

I especially noted a particular demonstration of *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja’s conduct. During Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, even when thousands of devotees would assemble to hear him speak, he would, for the sake of teaching his disciples proper conduct, remain silent and request his junior godbrothers—*pūjyapāda* Trivikrama Mahārāja and *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja—to speak *hari-kathā*. He would say with deep humility, “Although they are considered my juniors, in reality, they know much more than me.” Even though he possessed vast knowledge, was fixed in the deep *siddhānta* of our scriptures, and was an expert speaker, he would refrain from speaking and instead allow others to speak.

We do not witness such exemplary conduct in devotees nowadays. Many devotees appear as though they are experiencing *prasava-pīḍā* (labor pains) if they do not receive the chance to speak *hari-kathā*; they cannot tolerate allowing others to speak, even when more qualified devotees are present or the audience is small.

[The following glorification of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja is a bhāva-anuvāda of a lecture spoken on April 8, 2014, the anniversary of his appearance day, by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, Kolkata.]

Pūjyapāda Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja

Today is the appearance day of Śrī Rāma-candra, as well as that of my godbrother and the present ācārya of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, pūjyapāda Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja.

It is extremely important for sincere sādhakas to observe the *tithis* of Bhagavān and Vaiṣṇavas, for it is an opportunity to glorify and remember their lotus feet. To neglect glorifying them on such days is certainly an offense.

Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura has written:

*je vaiṣṇava bhajile acintya kṛṣṇa pāi
se vaiṣṇava-pūjā hōite baḍô āra nāi*

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Antya-khaṇḍa 4.357)

By serving the lotus feet of Vaiṣṇavas, one attains the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is *acintya* (inconceivable); there is no greater *sādhana* than this. It is impossible to approach the transcendental Lord through the means of the material senses. In the conditioned stage in which the *jīva* is bound by many material desires, he cannot think about *acintya* Kṛṣṇa with his mind, nor can he see Him with his eyes. He becomes qualified to attain the inconceivable Lord's mercy only after he takes complete shelter at the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas.

Remembering this instruction, I will today serve pūjyapāda Tīrtha Mahārāja by remembering and glorifying him.

His firm faith in the words of his guru-vargas

Pūjyapāda Tīrtha Mahārāja appeared in Gwalpada, Assam. He was the first member of his family to accept and follow the tenets of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. He used to hear *hari-kathā* very attentively and with great interest. He only performed *kīrtana* of *śrauta-vāṇī*—that is, only what he had heard from our *paramārādhya-tama* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, as well as senior authorities. In his *hari-kathā* and general talks, also, he would only repeat what he had heard from our Guru Mahārāja and *guru-vargas*. This was one of his very special qualities. Because of this, most of our godbrothers would affectionately refer to him as a living tape recorder.

Expert in sevā

Once, pūjyapāda Tīrtha Mahārāja (then Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmācārī), Śrī Kanhāi Brahmācārī, myself (then Narottama Brahmācārī) and Śrīpāda Mādhavānanda Vrajavāsī, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, travelled to Sarbhog, Assam, for preaching. While we were there, it rained heavily, and we could not see the sun for four or five days. We were completely unable to go outside. During that time, pūjyapāda Tīrtha Mahārāja cooked for all of us. He was an expert cook, and everyone was very fond of his cooking. This is one of the qualities of Vaiṣṇavas: they are expert in everything related to the service of the Vaiṣṇavas. For pūjyapāda Tīrtha Mahārāja, cooking was only one of his areas of expertise in *vaiṣṇava-sevā*.

His light-hearted humor

Pūjyapāda Tīrtha Mahārāja was also very *rasika*, which in Bengali means ‘humorous.’

In Sarbhog, there was one young boy who visited us regularly and would always refer to *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja as *peṭa moṭā sādhu*, or a fat-bellied saint. Śrīpāda Mādhavānanda Prabhu was chubbier than *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja, who was in fact not so chubby, and so we were quite surprised to hear the boy use this term for *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja and not Śrīpāda Mādhavānanda Prabhu. We could not understand why this young boy was repeatedly calling him this name, until one day I saw *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja alone with this boy. Mahārāja-jī was breathing in deeply to expand his belly, which he would then show to the boy. We then understood why the boy was calling *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja *peṭa moṭā sādhu*.

Although *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja was usually very grave and busily engaged in attentively hearing *hari-kathā* and serving the Vaiṣṇavas, he also had a sense of humor.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.75) states, “*kṛṣṇa-bhakte kṛṣṇera guṇa sakali sañcāre*—all the qualities of Kṛṣṇa arise in His devotee.” In this way, we can understand that although the Vaiṣṇavas are generally very grave, they also engage in humor, because all the qualities of Kṛṣṇa—who is the source of all transcendental mellows, including humor—are also present in His pure devotees.

His humility and surrender

Pūjyapāda Tīrtha Mahārāja, as well as a number of other devotees including myself, never desired to speak *hari-kathā* in front of our *guru-vargas*, but were instead always eager to hear from them. There were other *brahmacārīs*, however, who were very eager to speak *hari-kathā*. They would approach Guru Mahārāja and other *guru-vargas* to allow them to speak. I observed in my *guru-vargas*—particularly in our Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja—a special quality: if anyone approached them and requested them for permission to speak *hari-kathā*, they would never grant them permission. On the other hand, they would force those who were reluctant to speak publically to speak *hari-kathā*.

Pūjyapāda Tīrtha Mahārāja was quite keen on hearing *hari-kathā*, but was very reluctant to speak it. One day, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja announced, “Today, our Śrīman Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmacārī will speak *hari-kathā*.” Without protesting, *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja spoke *hari-kathā* on the order of his *guru-varga*. I witnessed many examples of how he always remained under the *anugatya* of his *guru-vargas*. His surrender at the lotus feet of *guru-vargas* is unparalleled.

Always seeking the advice of Vaiṣṇavas

Another quality of *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja is that whenever he possessed doubt or question, he would always approach his *guru-vargas* and request the answer from them.

A senior devotee of the *maṭha* once mentioned, “Although I have been staying in the *maṭha* for long time, and though I have performed *parikramā* and many other spiritual activities, nothing has happened; both my mind and life have not changed.”

Hearing this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmacārī and a number of other devotees became a bit disheartened. They questioned, “What is the use of staying in the *maṭha* if such a senior Vaiṣṇava feels he did not receive any benefit as a result of his *maṭha-vāsa*?”

To remedy their puzzlement, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmacārī approached Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who used to stay with our Guru Mahārāja in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, and inquired, “Prabhu, a senior Vaiṣṇava has commented that he feels he has not derived any benefit from his time residing in the *maṭha*. Some of the devotees are bothered to have heard this. Because they are disturbed, I am sincerely asking you for clarification. How can we reconcile such a

statement?”

Seeing his sincerity, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu mentioned, “It is natural for humility to arise in a person in proportion to the amount he has associated with senior Vaiṣṇavas and advanced in *bhakti*. Thus, it is out of humility that a spiritually advanced devotee will express his lack of progress in *bhakti*. In this way, we can reconcile such statements of senior Vaiṣṇavas.” Upon hearing Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu’s answer, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vallabha Brahmācārī understood everything very clearly.

Kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ

As time passed, *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja remained always immersed in speaking *hari-kathā*. Wherever he would go, it was impossible for him to stay without speaking *hari-kathā*.

Our affectionate relationship

Sometimes, *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja would call me or meet with me to ask my advice on various matters. If someone else was present at that time, he would say, “Please excuse us, but we want to speak to each other privately.” In this way, we used to sit together and discuss many different things.

The relationship between us is such that it is not easily understood by many people, but my heart says that our relationship has always been very sweet. From the very first day we met, we visited many different places together for preaching, stayed together, and served our Guru Mahārāja together in many different ways. We have—and have always had—a deeply affectionate relationship, but because many persons observe only external appearances and neglect to consider the true, heartfelt sentiments between us, they are unable to perceive this deep affection. Instead, they come to various mistaken conclusions about our relationship.

Although I wish to continue glorifying my dear godbrother *pūjyapāda* Tīrtha Mahārāja, my health does not allow me to sit or speak for too long. Today, on the auspicious day of his divine appearance in this world, I pray at his lotus feet to forgive me for any offenses I may have committed against him, either knowingly or unknowingly.

[The following glorification of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja is a bhāva-anuvāda of a lecture spoken on January 3, 2016, the anniversary of his disappearance day, by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja at Śrī Madana-mohana Gauḍiya Maṭha, Bangalore.]

Pūjyapāda Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja

First of all, I beg forgiveness from the assembled Vaiṣṇavas. Although I feel my position to be lowly, my physical condition necessitates my sitting in a chair, which forcibly places me at a level higher than that of you all.

Today is a very auspicious occasion, for we are celebrating the disappearance day of *pūjyapāda* Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. It is an offence not to observe the appearance and disappearance days of our *guru-vargas* to our utmost capacity. Glorifying Vaiṣṇavas on these days is our true wealth, because doing so engages us in remembering them.

The result of remembering Vaiṣṇavas

Regarding the glorification of Vaiṣṇavas, *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* (12.12.55) mentions:

*avismṛtiḥ kṛṣṇa-padāravindayoḥ
kṣiṇoty abhadrāṇi ca śam tanoti
sattvasya śuddhiṁ paramātmā-bhaktiṁ
jñānaṁ ca vijñāna-virāga-yuktam*

The remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet—in other words, the remembrance of the dear devotees of the Lord who have taken full shelter at His lotus feet—destroys all inauspiciousness and increases auspiciousness. When one’s heart is purified, *bhakti* to the Supreme Soul is awakened, and one first attains *jñāna* (knowledge) and then *vijñāna* (realization) endowed with renunciation.

Here, *avismṛtiḥ kṛṣṇa-padāravindayoḥ* not only means ‘remembering the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa,’ but also ‘remembering the devotees of Kṛṣṇa.’ It means ‘to deeply contemplate their conduct and teachings.’ By this, *kṣiṇoty abhadrāṇi ca śam tanoti*—inauspiciousness is destroyed and auspiciousness is increased.

It is not worldly or ordinary auspiciousness that is implied here, but rather the auspicious desire for *kṛṣṇa-prema* to be awakened within the heart of the *jīva*. After this auspiciousness is awakened, then *sattvasya śuddhiṁ*—the consciousness is completely purified. This is followed by *paramātmā-bhaktiṁ*—the appearance of a strong desire to serve Bhagavān.

After this, *jñānaṁ ca*—the knowledge about oneself, one’s eternal position, one’s relationship with *guru* and one’s relationship with Bhagavān manifests clearly. This takes place not on the platform of sentiment or emotion, but on that of pure transcendence. When a disciple practices according to the teachings of his *guru*, then *jñāna* transforms into *vijñāna* (realization), and after that, *vairāgya* arises in his heart.

The word *vairāgya* has two meanings. The secondary, common meaning is ‘detachment from the material world.’ Such detachment is but a byproduct of the primary, deeper meaning of the word, which is *viśeṣa-rūpena rāga*, or ‘special attachment.’ Here, ‘special attachment’ indicates an attachment to the lotus feet of Bhagavān.

Although we have somehow come in contact with devotees due to our previous *sukṛti*, we remain ensnared by many different obstacles, of which three are most prominent: *kanaka* (wealth), *kāminī*

(women) and *pratiṣṭhā* (fame and distinction). One can somehow or other escape the desire for *kanaka* and *kāminī* with relative ease, but to become free from the desire for *pratiṣṭhā* is very difficult.

In this connection, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has written the verse beginning with *pratiṣṭhāśā dhṛṣṭā* in his *Manaḥ-śikṣā*. In this verse, he instructs his mind for the sake of teaching us how to instruct our own mind. He has described the desire for *pratiṣṭhā* as a very heinous, low-class prostitute.

The only way to free oneself from the clutches of this desire for *pratiṣṭhā* is “*sadā tvam sevasva prabhu-dayita-sāmantam atulam*—always serve the devotees who are very dear to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, for they are powerful.” How powerful? Incomparably powerful. A comparison of how powerful they are cannot be given.

How can we serve them? By remembering them and by following their words and teachings. It is through this service alone that one can conquer the desire for *pratiṣṭhā*; it is otherwise impossible.

Bhagavān’s devotee is dearer to Him than Himself

The appearance and disappearance of Vaiṣṇavas from the vision of this world are more auspicious than the appearance of Bhagavān Himself. Why is this so? Bhagavān is situated on such a high platform that it is impossible for us to approach and associate with Him in our materially conditioned state. We can, however, approach His devotees, who are His manifestations.

The devotees, due to their unlimited mercy, descend to the platform on which we currently stand, so that we can relate to them, associate with them and purify our consciousness. By this, we may one day directly associate with Bhagavān and serve Him. This is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa has announced in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.19.21):

*ādarah paricaryāyām
sarvāṅgair abhivandanam
mad-bhakta-pūjābhyadhikā
sarva-bhūteṣu man-matiḥ*

Here, Kṛṣṇa says, “Only those who serve My dearest devotees with great love and offer themselves completely through mind, body and words are capable of pleasing me completely. *Mad-bhakta-pūjābhyadhikā*—worshiping (that is, serving) the lotus feet of My devotees is greatly superior to serving Me directly.”

Although it is impossible for us to serve the lotus feet of Bhagavān in our present condition, His devotees are capable of performing such service, and they can therefore engage us in His service by bringing our offerings directly to Him. Furthermore, devotees know well the likes and dislikes of Bhagavān, even more so than Bhagavān Himself. In reality, it is only through the devotees that we can serve the Lord.

But how can we serve the lotus feet of such personalities after their disappearance from the vision of this world? We can serve them by remembering them, by contemplating and adopting their highly exemplary conduct, and by sharing and distributing their teachings to others, so that others, also, may establish a relationship with them.

Bhagavān resides wherever his devotees are glorified

The words of Bhagavān can never be proven untrue; they are always *satya* (true). Kṛṣṇa has said in the *Padma Purāṇa* (*Uttara-khaṇḍa*, 92.21):

*nāhaṁ tiṣṭhāmi vaikuṇṭhe
yoginām hrdayeṣu vā*

Here, Kṛṣṇa is saying, “I do not reside in Vaikuṇṭha, nor in the hearts of *yogīs*, even. Where then do I reside, O Nārada? *Yatra-gāyanti mad-bhaktāḥ*—where My devotees sing My glories, which are inherently connected to My devotees.”

Because Kṛṣṇa is always accompanied by His devotees, His glories are intrinsically linked with them. Thus, *gāyanti* refers to Kṛṣṇa’s glories in connection with His devotees such as Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Nanda Bābā, Yaśodā Mātā, the Vrajavāsīs, *śuddha* Vaiṣṇavas and *śrī guru*. In this verse, Kṛṣṇa is stating that He rushes to that place where the glories of His devotees are sung.

Bhagavān is controlled by the pleas of His devotees

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta describes how during the time of the Ratha-yātrā festival, the *ratha* (chariot) of the supremely independent Śrī Jagannātha moves according to His desire alone. If He does not wish to move, then nobody in the world possesses the power to move Him even an inch.

I myself witnessed such a situation. Although elephants, horses and scores of men were employed in pulling the chariot, it remained immovable. At that time, one devotee, named Sadāśiva Ratha Śarmā, being greatly pained, began singing in a loud voice, “O Lord! How can you be so cruel? Thousands of devotees are feeling pain due to your refusal to move. Why does Your heart not melt upon seeing their profuse crying and their laborious efforts to move You?”

As a result of his singing, which was infused with deep faith, Jagannātha’s *ratha* began to move in such a way that it seemed as if it was flying in the air. That day, I personally witnessed how the Lord’s heart melts upon hearing the earnest pleas of His devotees.

Jagannātha’s special affection for his dearest devotees

Once, the king of Purī, Mahārāja Gajapati, was disregarded by the Orissa government during the the Ratha-yātrā festival, a celebration for which the government assumes the responsibility of managing and supervising. It is an ancient tradition for the king to sweep the road in front of Jagannātha’s chariot before the pulling of the *rathas* begins. This undertaking is quite costly, and the government is expected to bear the expense of all arrangements related to transporting the king and his entire entourage to the temple.

That particular year, the chief minister of Orissa proposed that in order to save money, the government should forego the ritual of inviting the king, and therefore, on the day of Ratha-yātrā, nobody came from Śrī Jagannātha’s temple to pick up the king, who was waiting in his palace fully dressed for the occasion.

At the site of the festival, Baladeva Prabhu, Subhadrā-devī and Sudarśana were brought with ease from the temple onto their respective chariots in the ceremonial procession. But when Jagannātha’s *paṇḍās* tried to bring Him, they found themselves unable to lift Him. The *paṇḍās* of both Baladeva Prabhu and Subhadrā-devī went to help them. In their efforts, a few *paṇḍās* were injured—one broke his leg, another broke his hand, and blood came from the bodies of various other *paṇḍās*.

Finally, Sadaśiva Ratha Śarmā loudly told them, “Hear me! You have offended a devotee of the Lord by not inviting him. Insulting a devotee of the Lord will bring a result like that we now see before us. How is it possible to please the master by insulting the servant? Go, and with great respect bring the king.”

The *paṇḍās* heeded his words and brought the king. When the king arrived, he touched the garments of Śrī Jagannāthadeva and prayed to Him: “O, Maṇimā (incomparable personality)! These people are *ajña* (ignorant). They are like children who lack the vision and maturity necessary to engage in insightful consideration before doing anything. But You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead; You know

everything. Why are You acting in such a way that causes trouble to so many people?”

After this, Jagannātha was easily brought to His chariot, lifted by only a few of His *paṇḍās*.

It is not that Bhagavān simply says, “I am more pleased by one who serves My devotees than by one who serves Me directly,” without action; He also demonstrates it from time to time. Those who are highly fortunate are able to witness this and relate it to others. Such persons are capable of understanding the deep verdicts of the *śāstras*.

Remembrances of pūjyapāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja

Today is the disappearance day of *pūjyapāda* Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. *Nara* means ‘human being,’ and *ayaṇa* means ‘shelter,’ and therefore when the *sāstras* mention the name Nārāyaṇa, it refers to a personality who is the true shelter of all living entities.

Pūjyapāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja was like my *satīrtha* (godbrother). In his early days, when he was staying in Mathurā, we were once sitting together. I told him, “Mahārāja, because you are from North India, you are very proficient in the Hindi language. It would be everyone’s great fortune if you were to go and preach everywhere in Hindi.”

Pūjyapāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja replied, “My health is not good at this time, and so I am unable to travel much.”

I asked him the details of his health, and after I had heard him, I said, “Please come to Kolkata, so that I may take you to a very qualified doctor there. After that, we can discuss preaching.”

Pūjyapāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja agreed, and he came to Kolkata during the time I was there. I personally took him to see the doctor, who had great respect for *sādhus*. The doctor would consider, “*Sādhus* are always engaged in *bhajana*. I do not want them to waste even a single moment waiting for me.” In this way, he would immediately tend to any *sādhu* who would come to him for treatment. After examining *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, he advised him to take only rice and raw banana *sabji*, among other things.

A short time later, *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja fully recovered, and he told me, “I will follow what you advised earlier; I will go everywhere and preach.” It was at that time that he started his preaching efforts.

My affectionate service to him

Another time, *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and I attended a festival for the opening of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vaibhava Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* in Viśākhāpaṭṇām, and we stayed together in the same room. The festival was attended by many senior Vaiṣṇavas.

A number of us had plans to go to Purī after the festival and stay in our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. *Pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja mentioned to me, “I also have a desire to go to Purī, but due to the state of my health, the accommodations at our Nīlacāla Gauḍīya Maṭha would be uncomfortable for me. Though I would like to go with you, I am unable to do so.”

I immediately told him, “There is no need to worry about such things. Please come with us and stay in our *maṭha*. We can arrange for whatever accommodations or facilities your health requires.”

Hearing this, he became pleased and said, “If that is possible, I will definitely go to Purī with all of you after this festival.”

Although my train ticket was reserved and I was set to travel with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and other devotees, I started my journey one day before everyone else. Withholding the details, I told everyone that I had to leave early for some special reason. Then, with an unreserved ticket, I departed for Purī.

Because there were many devotees staying in our Purī *maṭha*, it was difficult to get a separate, private room. I thus removed all the luggage from my own room, cleaned it and then shifted to a room without an attached bathroom, keeping my room reserved for *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja.

I knew that if Mahārāja were to see me clearing out my room for him, he would have been reluctant to stay there, and would have insisted me not to shift. It was to avoid such a situation that I departed a day early and, without his knowledge, prepared my room for his arrival so that he could stay there without worry.

I fondly remember a humorous interaction he had at that time with his *sevāka*, Navīna-kṛṣṇa Brahmācārī (now Śrī Bhaktivedānta Mādhava Mahārāja). *Pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja told Navīna, “Give me one more *roṭī*,” and Navīna replied, “No, no. No more *roṭīs* for you.” *Pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja then jokingly said, “If you refuse to give me another *roṭī*, then it will be *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, because you will have disobeyed the order of a Vaiṣṇava.”

Whenever I see Mādhava Mahārāja, I always ask him, “Do you remember that incident?”

His conduct in service and his respect of Vaiṣṇavas

Pūjyapāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja once invited me to attend a festival at Śrī Keśava-jī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā in observance of the disappearance day of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. After the glories of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja were spoken, all the Vaiṣṇavas sat together to honor *prasāda*, but *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja wanted to wait until everyone had been served to their satisfaction before he himself honored *prasāda*.

He asked me to sit, but I told him, “No. I will wait, so that we can honor *prasāda* together.” After all the assembled Vaiṣṇavas finished honoring their *prasāda* and got up from their seats, we sat down to honor *prasāda* in *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja’s room.

Just as we were about to honor *prasāda*, one disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prapanna Dāmodara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, arrived. Upon seeing Śrīla Dāmodara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja immediately got up from his seat and said, “Mahārāja, please sit for *prasāda*.”

Śrīla Dāmodara Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “I will certainly sit and honor *prasāda*, but only after taking bath. I will return shortly.”

After he left, *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja turned to me and said, “Mahārāja, please honor *prasāda* now. It will be some time before I honor *prasāda*.”

I replied, “No, no. I will also wait for some time so that we may honor *prasāda* together.” In that way, after Śrīla Dāmodara Gosvāmī Mahārāja returned and honored *prasāda*, *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and I honored *prasāda* together.

From that time on, I always kept this exemplary conduct of *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja in my heart. With my own eyes, I observed that the affection he exhibited for the Vaiṣṇavas was extraordinary, and the service attitude he maintained was unparalleled.

His deep desire to study the bhakti-śāstras

About fifty-five years ago, *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja was staying in Govardhana for some months at the site where his Śrī Giridhārī Gauḍīya Maṭha now stands. At that time, he wrote me a letter, in which he said, “I am here in Govardhana, and I desire to dive deeply into the philosophy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. I want to truly understand the gift Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda has given the world. Therefore, I request you to purchase and send *Ujjvala-nilamaṇi* and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* from Kolkata, as they are not available here.”

Acquiring these books in those days was no small feat, as they had both been long since out of print. Somehow or other, I was able to purchase old, secondhand editions of the books, and I sent them to *pūjyapāda* Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja for his study. In his life, he always exhibited a deep interest in the writings of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda.

Kṛṣṇa Listens Only to His Loving Servants

The Supreme Lord is the knower of all languages. He understands very well all languages spoken not only by humans, but also by demigods, animals, birds, insects and all other living entities. But what is important for us to understand is to whose words He pays the sincerest attention, despite knowing all languages and possessing the ability to hear everyone.

When Śrī Advaita Ācārya earnestly prayed and called out for Bhagavān to manifest Himself in this world, Bhagavān appeared in the form of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu in order to fulfill his desire. When Gajendra, praying for rescue during great difficulty, called out to Him, He appeared without delay and delivered him from misery. When Draupadī called out for the help of Śrī Kṛṣṇa because Duḥśāsana was trying to disrobe her in the royal assembly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa at once appeared to save her. When in exile along with the Pāṇḍavas this same Draupadī faced the difficulty of feeding Śrī Durvāsā Muni—a self-realized saint known for his temperament—and his ten thousand disciples when they arrived after noon unannounced, Śrī Kṛṣṇa again saved her. But how is it that our requests and prayers never seem to reach Śrī Kṛṣṇa? Why is that He never seems to listen to our prayers?

We shall try to understand this subject properly through a few examples.

The she-parrot and the sannyāsī

A *sannyāsī* from Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha *maṭha* once went to beg alms at someone’s home. In that home was a she-parrot, and as soon as the *sannyāsī* reached the doorstep, the she-parrot chirped loudly and swooped down close to his head. The *sannyāsī* was unable to take even a single step into the home. Although he tried many times to tell the she-parrot in Bengali that he was a friend of her master, she paid no attention to his statement.

When the bird’s owner saw this, he told her in Bengali from a distance, “What are you doing? Do you not know he is a friend, and not a foe?” He repeated the words, “Friend, friend, friend.” Listening to her master, the she-parrot completely changed her tone and began chirping the words, “Welcome, welcome. Please come inside.”

The multilingual cow

Once, when I was residing at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Hyderabad, there was a cow named Sarasvatī living there. A Bengali devotee used to serve her daily with great love and affection, and she thoroughly followed his instructions. Observing her obedience, a local devotee from Hyderabad asked me with great astonishment, “Mahārāja-jī! How is this cow able to follow whatever instructions are given to her in Bengali? Is she from Bengal?”

I told him, “This cow knows all languages: Bengali, Hindi, English, Tamil, Telugu, and so many others. But she obeys only instructions given to her by those who serve her lovingly. If you were to say something to her, even in Bengali, she would not respond at all, because you have not served her.”

A master controls his dog

Once, I went along with Śrī Mādhavānanda Prabhu, a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, to the home of a well-known musician Mr. K.L. Sehgal. As soon as Mādhavānanda Prabhu touched the door, Mr. Sehgal’s pet dog immediately rushed there and was poised to attack. Mr. Sehgal, who was standing on the balcony, told the dog, “Let them come. There is no cause for worry.” Hearing his master, the dog became extremely calm, began wagging his tail and escorted us inside the home.

The language of bhakti

The same principle that applies to birds and animals applies to all living entities, demigods, as well as to all the incarnations of the Lord, including the Supreme Lord Himself: an individual gives great attention and worth to the words of those who serve him. Thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa responds only to the prayers of those who render loving devotional service to Him, or to those who bear a deep, sincere desire to render such service. He does not hear the prayers of anyone else.

Perhaps this is the reason our *parama-gurudeva*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Śrīla Prabhupāda, used to say that *bhakti* is not preached by language, but by *bhakti* alone. 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.

Nāma-cintāmaṇi

śrī hari-vāsare hari-kīrtana-vidhāna
nṛtya ārambhilā prabhu jagatera prāṇa
puṇyavanta śrīvāsa-aṅgane śubhārambha
uṭhilô kīrtana-dhvani ‘gopāla’ ‘govinda’

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 8.138, 139)

This is the instruction of the scriptures, that one should perform *hari-kīrtana* on Hari-vasāra (Ekādaśī *tithi*), the day accepted by Śrī Hari as His own. To set an example, Śrīman Gaurahari inaugurated the auspicious *saṅkīrtana* movement in Śrīvāsa-aṅgana, the most virtuous courtyard of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, on the day of Ekādaśī. The sounds of the most auspicious names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, such as ‘Gopāla’, ‘Govinda’ and others, reverberated there. Hearing these melodious sounds, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the life and soul of all living beings, began dancing in ecstasy.

The superiority of nāma-saṅkīrtana

There are different types of *hari-kīrtana*, namely *kīrtana* of Hari’s *nāma* (names), *rūpa* (form), *guṇa* (qualities), *līlā* (pastimes), *dhāma* (abode), *parikāras* (associates), and *vaiśiṣṭhya* (special features). Yet, Śrī Gaurahari induced everyone to sing Hari’s *nāma-kīrtana*, chanting ‘Gopāla,’ ‘Govinda,’ and other names.

Why has Śrī Gaurahari chosen to perform only *nāma saṅkīrtana* and not *kīrtana* of any other features of Śrī Hari? The reason has been given by one of his closest associates, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvami:

kṛṣṇasya nānā-vidha-kīrtaneṣu
tan-nāma-saṅkīrtanam eva mukhyam

Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta (2.3.158)

Among the many types of *kīrtana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, His *nāma saṅkīrtana* is foremost.

The reason for this is that *nāma* and *nāmī*, the name and the possessor of that name, are non-different. The following analogy helps us understand this fact.

The limitations of the material sound

This material world is made up of five elements, namely earth, water, fire, air and ether. The qualities of these elements are smell, taste, form, touch and sound, respectively. Sound is the subtlest among these five qualities, and no one can stop it from travelling anywhere within the material world. For example, once during the war between India and Pakistan, a nightly curfew and blackout was imposed across India. I was staying at the Chandigarh branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha at that time, and we were prohibited to light even a candle in an open area. Despite these restrictions on electricity, my godbrother Bhakti Prasāda Purī Maharāja was still able to hear the news of the war on his radio. In this way, sound cannot be stopped nor banned.

In this world, subtle beings or objects lord over and control gross beings or objects. It is for this reason that sound rules over the whole world and controls every object (*vastu*). All transactions—such as sales and purchases of land—and all communications—whether done face to face or from a distance via technology—take place through the medium of sound alone. However, the sound of this world is simply a manifestation of Bhagavān’s external potency (*aparā-śakti*), and it is therefore unable to enter Vaikuṇṭha, the spiritual world. This sound can travel and thereby exercise control only within this material world, or,

at most, within the boundaries of the fourteen planetary systems, but not beyond.

The extraordinary specialties of śabda-brahma

Beyond this material sound, there exists another type of sound called *śabda-brahma*, which is the manifestation of Bhagavān in the form of sound. This *śabda-brahma* is the sound of Vaiṣṇava, and is the subtlest of all the objects in that realm.

The name ‘Kṛṣṇa’ is the subtlest of all transcendental sounds. In *Kaṭhpaniṣad* (1.2.20), Kṛṣṇa is described as being *aṇor anīyān*, or subtler than the subtlest. Kṛṣṇa is the subtlest personality, and the sound of His name is the subtlest transcendental sound. Thus, *kṛṣṇa-nāma* is most powerful and able to control everything.

The ordinary sound of this material world is lifeless, whereas *śabda-brahma* possesses consciousness. Material sound requires a medium, whether personal or mechanical, to be transported from one place to another, but *śabda-brahma* is so powerful that it can travel by its own independent will. Material sound is devoid of form, whereas *śabda-brahma* has an extremely beautiful transcendental form.

Every word of *śabda-brahma* possesses its own independent form. *Kṛṣṇa-nāma* also has a very beautiful form (*svarūpa*); It has ears, a nose, a mouth, eyes, feet, arms, a head and so on. It eats, walks, engages in mutual exchanges, rests, gives pleasure and also tastes happiness, and devotees therefore refer to *kṛṣṇa-nāma* as a personality: Śrī Nāma Prabhu. With this understanding, one of our *guru-vargas*, Śrī Bhagavān dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja of Kālanā, used to serve Śrī Nāma Prabhu as one would a Deity (*vigraha*) by offering *bhoga*, offering *pūjā*, putting Him to sleep and so forth.

These are only some of the many reasons why *kṛṣṇa-nāma* is non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. By hearing these truths, we can understand the superiority of *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and why *śrī kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is foremost among all the forms of *kīrtana*.

Śabda-brahma should be increasingly chanted

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has written in his *Śrī Harināmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa* that one of the objectives of *vyākaraṇa* (grammar) is to reduce the number of *mātrās* (intra-syllabic vowel symbols) without losing the meaning of the sentence. When scholars are able to reduce the number of *mātrās*, they experience a happiness equivalent to that of being blessed with a son. However, such an achievement is praiseworthy only with respect to the sounds of this material world, and not *śabda-brahma*:

vaikuṇṭha-nāma-grahaṇam
aśeṣāgha-haram viduḥ

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (6.2.14)

Here, *grahaṇam*, or ‘accepting’, implies ‘chanting.’ When chanted, the name that originates in Vaiṣṇava (*śabda-brahma*) has the power to free one of unlimited sins. Being part and parcel of Bhagavān, who is the embodiment of bliss (*ānanda*), the constitution of the *jīva* is also that of bliss. Therefore, it is only when this *śabda-brahma* is constantly chanted that all dirt is cleansed from the *citta* (heart) and one experiences the everlasting bliss of being established in knowledge of one’s true self.

With the objective of chanting *vaikuṇṭha-nāma* in ever-increasing quantities, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has identified nouns belonging to the masculine gender (*pul-liṅga*) as *kṛṣṇa* nouns, nouns belonging to the feminine gender (*strī-liṅg*) as *lakṣmī* nouns, and the neutral gender (*kliṅg-liṅg*) as *brahma* nouns. Moreover, vowels, which are completely independent letters, have been referred to as *sarveśvara* (Lord of all Lords), while consonants, which are dependent on the vowels, are referred to as *viṣṇujana*, or

devotees, because devotees are dependent on Viṣṇu.

Only the name ‘Kṛṣṇa’ completely expresses the attributes of the Supreme Lord

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda used to say that although in the worldly thesaurus, names such as Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Balarāma are given as the synonyms of *vaikuṇṭha-nāma*, according to the spiritual thesaurus, the only synonym for the name ‘Kṛṣṇa’ is the word *kṛṣṇa* itself. Only *kṛṣṇa-nāma* correctly and most perfectly expresses the attributes of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa; such expression can never be achieved through any other word.

Śrī Nāma Prabhu is not our slave

Śrī Nāma Prabhu, like the Lord Himself, is supremely independent, unlimitedly merciful, all powerful and offers total fearlessness to anyone who takes shelter of Him. He is the most superior entity, and we are the most fallen. It is impossible to chant the holy name on our own, as Śrī Nāma Prabhu is not under our control. We can only pray to Him, “O, Śrī Nāma Prabhu! We have heard from the *kīrtana* of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura that you appear on the tongue of devotees who chant your name purely:

*nārada muni, bājāya vīṇā
rādhikā-ramaṇa-nāme
nāma amani, udita haya,
bhakata-gīta-sāme*

Gītāvalī, Śrī Nāmāṣṭaka (8.1)

“A deep desire appeared in the heart of Nārada Muni for the name ‘Rādhikā-ramaṇa’ to manifest on his tongue. While he was deeply absorbed in thinking this way, his fingers played the notes on his *vīṇā*, which chanted ‘Rādhikā-ramaṇa.’ By hearing that *vaikuṇṭha-nāma*, Rādhikā-ramaṇa Śrī Kṛṣṇa understood his desire and immediately appeared on his tongue.

“O Śrī Nāma Prabhu! Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda has similarly mentioned in his *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭakam* (8), ‘*sphura me rasane rasena sadā*—please always manifest on my tongue.’ I am praying to you now in the same mood.”

If *śabda-brahma* Śrī Nāma Prabhu, who is totally independent by nature, bestows His causeless mercy and appears on our tongue, then our lives will become blessed, and thus blissful.

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

Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.234)

All the transcendental objects that belong to Vaikuṇṭha, such as Kṛṣṇa’s *nāma*, *rūpa*, *guṇa*, *līlā*, *dhāma*, *parikāras* and *vaiśiṣṭya*, can never be perceived by a conditioned soul through his material senses. However, they naturally become manifest of their own accord to the senses—the tongue, ears, nose, skin, eyes and so forth—of a person who is *sevonmukha*, or, in other words, a person in whom the desire to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees has arisen.

Therefore, the conclusion is that if we truly wish to chant the transcendental *vaikuṇṭha-nāma*, we must first become *sevonmukha*; we must call out for the mercy of Śrī Nāma Prabhu with all humility and sincerity, with a desire to attain the service of Śrī Bhagavān in His transcendental abode. Also, we must give up our *bhogonmukha-vṛtti* (inclination toward material enjoyment). In other words, we must abandon calling out the names of Śrī Bhagavān with the objective to fulfill our desires for material sense gratification. We must give up the wicked conception that Śrī Nāma Prabhu is under our control, and

instead surrender ourselves completely, by which we will gradually increase our inclination to serve Śrī Nāma Prabhu more and more.

The beggar's fortune

There was once a beggar who was unable to eat properly, even after a full day of collecting alms. One day while walking alone through the forest, he saw many pieces of iron lying on the ground unattended. He looked cautiously in all directions and found no one nearby. Without wasting a moment, he enthusiastically collected the iron pieces. He kept some in a tied piece of cloth he carried on his head, filled his shoulder bags to full capacity, carried as many as he could in his bare hands and moved on. Although he was carrying such a heavy load, he did not feel the slightest discomfort. In fact, he considered himself extremely fortunate.

The most natural way of losing attachment for inferior objects is by possessing superior objects

After walking a short distance, the beggar saw many copper pieces on the ground. He immediately discarded all the iron pieces he was carrying, knowing them to be of no significant value in the presence of so much copper. He filled his head cloth and shoulder bags with those copper pieces and, collecting as many pieces as he could in his bare hands, started walking. Further down the road, he then found brass, silver and gold, successively. Being well aware of the comparative values of the materials, he discarded each previous metal and collected the new, more valuable metal.

Bewilderment is the result of a lack of experience

When he walked further still, he saw separate heaps of many different types of precious jewels. These jewels were *sūryakānta-maṇi*, a jewel that brightens up one's home like the rays of the sun; *candrakānta-maṇi*, a jewel that is a source of freshness comparable to the splendid calm of moonlight; *nīlakānta-maṇi*, a jewel that emits shining blue rays and fills the surrounding area with a blue hue that reaches far and wide; *sparsā-maṇi*, a jewel that converts any metal it touches into gold; and *śyāmantaka-maṇi*, a jewel that daily yields kilograms of gold.

The beggar was completely bewildered by seeing these different types of jewels in one place, and he considered he was perhaps dreaming, had stumbled into a foreign country, or had somehow been transported to one of the heavenly planets. Although he had heard about these precious jewels, he was unable to decide whether to keep the gold or throw it all away and pick up the jewels lying in front of him.

One's duty when experiencing bewilderment

The beggar was unsure whether the jewels were real or fake. He considered that if he were to take the jewels and they would turn out to be fake, he would not only have lost the gold, but he would also be left with worthless stones. Although those jewels were highly precious, he doubted their authenticity, because he was unable to assess their values. If a jeweler had been present with him, he could have rightly assessed, beyond a doubt, the true value of all the different jewels, as well as their correct uses and respective market demands.

One must be alert when bewildered

It is worth mentioning here that not all jewelers have the same level of proficiency or character. Due to their varying abilities and intentions, different jewelers may assign drastically different values to the

same jewel. For their own personal gain, some cheating jewelers knowingly assign a lower value to a highly precious gem and then buy that gem at their concocted price, while others assign an inflated value to their own gems and sell those gems to an ignorant client for an exorbitant fee.

Fifty years ago in Hyderabad, an owner of a sweet shop named Āgrā Sweets purchased an old house. During the excavation and renovation of that house, a worker found a diamond in the ground, but because he lacked knowledge about diamonds, he considered it something with which children would play. For this reason, he gave the diamond to the owner of the house and said, “I found this. If you want, you can take it for your children.” The owner gave the worker ten rupees as a reward and took the diamond from him. The worker was very pleased, and praised the owner for his kind-heartedness. The owner took the diamond to a jeweler, who valued it to be worth one *lākha* (one hundred thousand) rupees. The owner of the house was very intelligent; he did not sell the diamond in Hyderabad, but took it to Bangalore to have it appraised during a business trip. The jeweler in Bangalore valued the diamond to be worth three *lākha* rupees. Still, he did not sell it, but instead took it to Mumbai, where it was valued to be worth ten *lākha* rupees.

From the above anecdote, we can clearly see that although the same diamond was assessed by three different professional jewelers, they each gave different appraisals. The first reason for this discrepancy is the difference in their respective proficiencies in assessing the true value of the diamond. The second reason is their greed to make a greater profit by falsely appraising the diamond at a lower price.

A jewel that renders all other jewels worthless

Every single thing in this world and the fourteen planetary systems, including all the above-mentioned jewels, is by nature *jaḍa* (without consciousness). There is, however, one very special, precious jewel in front of which all jewels of the mundane world appear as insignificant and abominable as stool. This special jewel is *kṛṣṇa-nāma-cintāmaṇi*, the wish-fulfilling jewel of the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and it is the very embodiment of conscious, transcendental mellows:

*nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś
caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ*

Padma Purāṇa

The glories of kṛṣṇa-nāma are understood respective to one’s qualification

Only the self-realized, pure devotees, who have completely realized the potency of the transcendental objects of Vaikuṇṭh, can describe the real glories of this most magnificent jewel of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Some very fortunate persons, by virtue of their accumulated *sukṛti* (spiritual merit) from either this lifetime or previous lifetimes, obtain the opportunity to hear the glories of the pure name (*śuddha-nāma*) from the lips of these very dear associates of Bhagavān. Still, it is not certain that such fortunate souls will be able to understand, accept or realize the transcendental significance of this *śuddha-nāma* to the same extent as those self-realized souls. Each practitioner will realize it differently, according to his own qualification, capacity and intelligence.

The realizations of the unqualified

Kṛṣṇa-nāma is the transcendental wish-fulfilling jewel that fulfills every wish upon that wish’s expression; the entirety of one’s desires are fulfilled immediately upon chanting this holy name. Sometimes, people who have successfully realized certain trivial, material results of chanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma* think they have fully realized the true transcendental potency of this most glorious name.

Once, all the wells of a place called Devaghar had dried up due to a severe drought. All the residents

were so desperate for water that they engaged the local priests to perform a fire sacrifice to induce rain, but their attempts went in vain. In desperation, a group of Marwari ladies assembled and performed *kīrtana* of the *mahā-mantra*—*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare, hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*—while playing drums and other instruments. After some time, rain began falling from the sky. Since then, the villagers perform *mahā-mantra kīrtana* whenever there is a lack of precipitation during the rainy season, but they do not feel the need to perform *kīrtana* at other times. Is this the real glory of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*?

At another place, Rāṇāghāṭa, there was a wholesale merchant. Because his customers were delayed in making their due payments, he was unable to pay his creditors, who insisted on immediate payment. The merchant was in a very difficult situation, and seeing no other solution, he organized the performance of *mahā-mantra kīrtana* for eight *prahara* (twenty-four hours). Shortly after the *kīrtana*, his customers made their payments and he was able to pay his creditors on time. This merchant would later narrate this incident repeatedly, claiming very proudly that he had personally witnessed the true glories of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. But this claim is simply illusion. Such trivial results can be obtained by the mere chanting of *nāma-aparādha*, or the chanting of *harināma* while committing offenses, whether knowingly or unknowingly. If such trivial results are considered glorious, what then can be said of the glories of chanting *śuddha-nāma* offenselessly in a mood of complete surrender?

It is not guaranteed that one will realize the true value of an object, however precious it may be, by simply acquiring it. For example, after the death of Hari Singh, the king of Kashmir, his son and daughter-in-law took most of his belongings to their house, except for one old chest that was filled with apparently useless things. They locked the chest and left it at the deceased king's palace. The chest remained untouched for a long time, until the later Chief Minister of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, ordered the lock on the chest opened and all the contents taken out. Among the contents, they found such a unique and precious jewel that no jeweler in India was able to assess its value. A jeweler was brought specially from France, and when he declared the value of the jewel to be around five hundred crore, everyone was taken aback in great disbelief.

The Sikhs claimed that the jewel belonged to their king, Ranjeet Singh; the people of Kashmir said that the jewel belonged to them; and the Indian government asserted that the jewel was a national asset, and therefore they were its rightful owners.

The true value of *kṛṣṇa-nāma* is realized by *sādhū-saṅga*

While this jewel of Kashmir lay in a chest for a long time, all were unaware of its immense value. In the same way, we are completely ignorant of the glories of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Even if great personalities were to inform us of its glories, it would not be enough to inspire us to consider it our very life and soul. We will have to first earn the qualification to consider this *nāma-cintāmaṇi* our most cherished possession. In this regard, Śrīman Mahāprabhu's intimate associate Śrīla Jagadānanda Paṇḍita has written:

*jadi kôribe kṛṣṇa-nāma sādhu-saṅga kara
bhukti-mukti-siddhi-vāñchā dūre parihara*

Prema-vivarta (7.3)

If you desire to chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, remain in association of pure devotees and reject all desires for senses enjoyment, liberation and mystic perfections.

*‘sādhu-saṅge kṛṣṇa-nāme’—ei mātra cāi
saṁsāra jinīte āra kona vastu nāi*

Prema-vivarta (6.13)

Desire only to remain in the association of pure devotees and chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Besides this, there is no other way to conquer the cycle of birth and death in this material world.

Who is Truly Nirmatsara?

In his *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya* commentary to *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has—in reference to the verse in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.2) beginning *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo*—characterized a *nirmatsara* person as an individual whose heart is full of compassion for all living entities.

Good qualities are only good qualities when in relation to Bhagavān

Unless and until one is compassionate to oneself, it is not possible that one can be compassionate to others. If *sambandha-jñāna* (knowledge of one’s relationship with Bhagavān) has not manifested completely, then any externally exhibited quality that resembles compassion cannot be considered real compassion. In such ‘compassion,’ selfishness must necessarily be present. Only when one has realized *sambandha-jñāna* to its fullest extent is one capable of seeing that all living entities are part and parcel of the Lord. At such a time, one will consider “If, as a result of my eligibility to awaken this living entity’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he becomes engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service, then my Prabhu, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, will be pleased with me and reward me with *prema-dhana*. I will therefore look after this particular living entity in order to please my Lord.”

Those persons in whom *sambandha-jñāna* has not properly matured appreciate, follow and teach ideologies that result in the attainment of *dharma* (religiosity), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (sense gratification) and *mokṣa* (liberation). Such persons possess *matsaratā* (spitefulness), are *nirmama* (heartless), and are deceptive and cruel, not only toward their students, but toward themselves as well.

Although such a deceitful instructor’s act of teaching externally appears to be highly auspicious and free of cruelty, it is only through careful deliberation that we can realize the truth of this matter.

Madhusūdana Rāya and the Rāmānandī Sādhu

In my youth, my classmate Madhusūdana Rāya once came across a Rāmānandī *sādhu* (a follower of Śrī Rāmānanda, a Śrī Vaiṣṇava saint of medieval India) travelling atop an elephant with a mahout. Seeing a stream ahead, the mahout asked the boy, “How deep is that water? Can our elephant safely walk through to the other side?” The boy first respectfully offered his obeisances to the Rāmānandī saint, and then, with all politeness, knowingly directed them to a path that passed through a swamp, instead of one with shallow waters.

The Rāmānandī saint, being impressed with the gentlemanly behavior of the boy, immediately trusted him, and thus instructed his mahout to follow the path advised by the boy.

Shortly after, as my friends and I were returning home from school, we heard the news that a Rāmānandī saint, his mahout and their elephant became trapped in a swamp. We went to see the site and found that the situation was quite grave. The more the mahout tried to move the elephant, the deeper they sunk into the swamp. Despite their best efforts, the elephant and the mahout were unable to free themselves. The Rāmānandī saint was in tears. Seeing his pitiful condition, I sent a fellow student to notify the landlord of the village. The landlord was an initiated Vaiṣṇava in the line of Śrī Śyāmānanda. After being informed about the situation, he sent two elephants and a truck to rescue the party. With great difficulty and strenuous efforts, the elephant was eventually pulled out from the swamp.

Externally, Madhusūdana Rāya did not demonstrate any acts of obvious cruelty to the Rāmānandī saint, such as shooting him with a gun, attacking him with a knife or stick, using vulgar language or any other abuse, whether physical or mental. However, although he offered his *praṇāmas* and spoke with polite words, no intelligent person would describe what Madhusūdana Rāya did as an act of

nirmatsaratā (non-maliciousness). Actually, it would have been better if he had not talked to the saint at all, or if he had professed ignorance, saying he was unaware of the right path and that they should inquire from someone else.

Although it appears that the saint was the only victim, will a reaction for such an act of malice not be borne by Madhusūdāna Rāya? As it is said: “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” To treat others with *matsara* (malice) is to be unkind to oneself, because one must taste the fruits of one’s actions.

Only nirmatsara instructions are included in bhāgavata-dharma

After an exceedingly long time—that is, after taking birth countless times among the 8,400,000 species of life—only the most fortunate souls obtain a birth in this extremely rare human form of life. Only humans have the qualification to follow the path of self-realization and attain the transcendental abode of Bhagavān, which is the topmost destination. But the material potency (*māyā*) of Lord is so powerful that only a highly righteous soul who has performed copious amounts of pious deeds can gain freedom from the clutches of *māyā* and obtain the desire to walk on the path of spiritual realization. This is indeed very rare.

If such a person’s *guru*, in whom he has sought shelter, does not guide him to follow the topmost path of *bhakti-yoga*—which would quickly lead him to the supreme transcendental abode—and instead misguides him by encouraging him to follow the path of either *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* or *mokṣa*—all of which will force him to remain wandering in the fourteenfold planetary system of this material world—or advises him to follow any other path headed by the paths of *karma*, *jñāna*, *tapa* and *dāna*—which are long and strenuous routes full of twists and turns that the seeker would not survive—then such improper guidance is to be understood as being possessed of *matsaratā* (maliciousness).

To express this, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written in his *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru* (3.1.4):

*āre mana, ki vipada hōilo āmāra
māyāra durātmya-jvare, vikāra jīvere dhare
tāhā hōite pāite nistāra*

O my dear mind, what a state of calamity I am facing in my life. I was suffering from a high fever in the form of immense misery inflicted upon me by *māyā* (due to my own past sins), which was burning me like fire. I was looking for the means of deliverance from this fever.

*sādhinu advaita mata, jāhe māyā haya hata
viṣa sebi’ vikāra kaṭilō
kintu e durbhāgya mora, vikāra kaṭilō ghora
viṣera jvālāya prāṇa gelō*

In order to relieve myself from the fever of these material miseries, I took to the path of *advaita-vāda* (monistic philosophy), which advises that one ought to abolish one’s own existence (by merging into *brahma*), so that material misery will no longer exist. Drinking this poison, I was relieved of miseries, but what a misfortune has arisen: it is now burning my very life.

*‘āmi brahma ekamatra’, e jvālāya dahe gātra
ihara upāya kiba bhāi?
vikāra je chilō bhālō, ausadha jañjāla hōilo
ausadha-ausadha kothā pāya?*

Now I feel that I was better off with the miseries before, as this so-called medicine of *māyāvāda* philosophy, the idea that ‘I am *brahma*’, has become more troublesome. This flame is burning my whole body. Now please tell me, where shall I find a medicine that will cure the burning effect of this previous ‘medicine?’ Where can I find a *sādhū* who, like a doctor,

can give me the right medicine to relieve me of this fever and also remove the ill-effect of this wrong medicine I have mistakenly taken?

The *jīva* is by constitution a transcendental eternal entity, and its eternal *sva-dharma* (constitutional duty) is to render devotional service to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Spiteful (*matsara*) so-called *gurus* extensively profess that the *sva-dharma* of the *jīva* consists of pious activities (*puṇya*), impious activities (*pāpa*) and the activities performed to attain *mokṣa* (liberation), and therefore it is extremely difficult for simple-hearted persons to differentiate between *sva-dharma* and other activities that appear similar, but are actually *chala-dharma* (cheating religion):

*prthivīte jāta kathā dharma-nāme cale
bhāgavata kahe saba paripūrṇa chale*

Jaiva Dharma (Phala Śruti 1)

Whatever is being performed in this world in the name of *dharma* has been condemned by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as cheating.

The result of such activities is the attainment of a goal opposite of that which one desires. To engage in *karma*, *jñāna* and sense gratification, or to give teachings with the aim of attaining some material object, is only deception. Such endeavors are in the domain of the mode of ignorance (*tamo-dharma*).

Only activities performed with the aim of achieving true knowledge about loving devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and ultimately *kṛṣṇa-prema*, constitute the rightful path (*śreya-mārga*). Teachers who give instructions exclusively on this subject are alone *nirmatsara-sādhus*, or compassionate saints. The directives of such individuals alone—and of no one else—can be truly be free of any trace of deception, for they advise one on how to follow the topmost, eternal *dharma*.

How to Perform Dhāma-parikramā

Obtaining the true benefit of performing parikramā

In his *Prema-bhakti-candrikā* (2.5), Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has written, “*tīrtha-jātrā pariśrama kevala manera bhrama*—the labor of visiting places of pilgrimage is nothing but the mind’s bewilderment.” In other words, “It is purely illusion to think that one attains spiritual merit by visiting places of pilgrimage.” Hearing this statement, one may be inclined to conclude that performing *dhāma-parikramā* serves no purpose. But in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (9.4.20), while glorifying Mahārāja Ambarīṣa and describing how he engaged all of his senses in the service of Bhagavān, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī has said, “*pādaḥ hareḥ kṣetra-padānusarpaṇe*—he engaged both his legs in walking to the places where Śrī Hari had performed His pastimes.” How can we reconcile these seemingly different perspectives about performing *parikramā*?

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has revealed the actual meaning of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura’s aforementioned statement, and in doing so, has verified its harmony with the above verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*gaura āmāra, jē-saba sthāne
karalô bhramaṇa raṅge
se-saba sthāna, heribô āmi
praṇayi-bhakata-saṅge*

Śaraṇāgati (6.3.3)

In the company of *praṇayi-bhaktas*, I will [visit and] behold all the places where my Gaura joyfully visited.

The true aim of performing *parikramā* is to attain progress in *bhakti* and to develop love and attachment for the places where Bhagavān performed His pastimes. This attachment is transmitted from the hearts of *praṇayi-bhaktas* (devotees who possess a deep, transcendental love for the Lord) into the hearts of those who accept shelter at their lotus feet. It is only when *parikramā* is performed in the association and under the guidance of such pure devotees that it yields the highest benefit.

The fire of separation touches those nearby

Once, during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* in 1956, my *paramārādhyatam* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, was singing a Bengali *kīrtana* in front of Śrī Ādikeśavadeva:

*ohe! vrajavāsī torā bole dāo
kothā gele kṛṣṇa pābo*

O Vrajavāsīs! Please tell me where I should go in order to meet with Kṛṣṇa.

Because the majority of the devotees present during that *kīrtana* were from North India, they were unable to understand the meaning of the Bengali *kīrtana*. Still, tears flowed from the eyes of everyone who heard Guru Mahārāja’s heart-melting voice. I had never previously danced in *kīrtanas*, but the power of that particular *kīrtana* was such that my feet started moving and I began dancing without any intention or even the slightest desire to do so; it was as if something was forcing me to dance.

After Guru Mahārāja’s *kīrtana*, one *mātā-jī* from Jagadhari (in Punjab), named Mitrarāṇī, approached Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāśa Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and asked, “Could you please explain the meaning of the *kīrtana* Guru Mahārāja was singing just now?” After Śrīla Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja explained the meaning, she said, “The transcendental bliss we experienced

during that *kīrtana* was indescribable. But even after hearing its meaning, the same type of bliss is not manifesting in my heart. Why is this so?”

At that time, I asked her, “Mātā-jī, if you did not know the meaning of the *kīrtana*, then why were you crying upon hearing it?”

She replied, “Actually, I do not know. Upon hearing the *kīrtana*, tears flowed automatically; it was natural and spontaneous.”

Out of deep love, the *praṇayi-bhaktas* suffer feelings of *viraha* (separation) from Śrī Kṛṣṇa when they feel themselves unable to attain His direct *darśana*. If we sincerely perform *parikramā* in the association and under the guidance of such devotees, then the *viraha-agni* (fire of separation) present in their hearts will certainly touch us, also. However, those who perform *parikramā* with devotees who lack such transcendental love for the Lord can never experience these transcendental pangs of separation.

When a mother loses her young child, the pain and anguish present in her heart can be felt very empathetically by everyone around her. Upon seeing tears pour incessantly from her eyes, others become touched by her grief and begin to cry, also. But if an unmarried woman with no children feigns anguish and shouts, “My child has died!” then although she may weep bitterly, her fraudulent expressions will have no impact on those who know her, and will have a short-lived effect on those who do not know her. Similarly, the true fruits of performing *parikramā*—deep love for and attachment to Śrī Hari and His pastime places—can never be obtained in the association of ordinary devotees. It may be possible, though rare, that one may experience feelings that resemble separation in the association of ordinary devotees, but such sentiments are only fleeting; they are neither transcendental nor eternal.

While watching a film, one may for a moment imbibe the emotions expressed by the film’s actors, but those emotions will fade shortly after the story’s end. In the same way, the sentiments experienced by a person when he performs *parikramā* in the association of devotees who do not possess *praṇaya* (affectionate love) for the Lord and His pastime-places quickly fade. In such *saṅga*, one can only attain *punya* or the cleansing of his past sins, but never *bhakti-unmukhī sukṛti* (spiritual fortune that leads one to the path of *bhakti*), what to speak of *praṇaya*, which is the real fruit of *dhāma-parikramā* and is obtained only in the association of *praṇayi-bhaktas*.

Parikramā without praṇayi-saṅga is not parikramā

I had the good fortune of performing *parikramā* 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 from morning until night in the physical labor of organizing the *parikramā*.

Once, during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* in Govardhana, the *parikramā* party reached Govinda-kuṇḍa later than the scheduled time.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda 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 many other places we must go to. You all must be feeling quite hungry, and I will therefore 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, almost in unison, “Food is plentifully available in our homes, but 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, the glories of Govinda-kuṇḍa, and the pastimes that took place there. He then 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 one 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 devotees can one understand and realize the real benefit of performing *parikramā*.

Kṛṣṇa-bhajana is to be Performed without Cheating

A godbrother of mine from Bangladesh, named Manorañjana dāsa (later known as Madhumaṅgala dāsa after accepting initiation) was by nature very simple and down-to-earth. He had purchased some land in Kṛṣṇanagara, and also owned a shop nearby. Once, when I visited him there in Kṛṣṇanagar, he himself cooked and offered me *prāsada*, being very pleased to see me. I observed that he had no decent clothes, and so I offered him a new piece of cloth from my bag. Although he was not inclined to accept it, I forcibly gave it to him.

After conversing with him for some time, I came to realize that although he owned a shop and quite a bit of land in Kṛṣṇanagara, his simple and naïve nature kept him in a pitiful condition; otherwise there was no reason for him to be in such a destitute state. I eventually learned that his servant deceitfully took advantage of his simplicity. Although the servant always externally appeared to be engaged in hard work, he was causing Madhumaṅgala Prabhu great loss by cheating him. Not only was he stealing goods, but he also had the shop transferred to his own name.

I then tried my best to help Madhumaṅgala Prabhu recover from these circumstances in whatever way was feasible, and thus his situation became somewhat improved. He therefore developed a deep trust in me, and later transferred his land into my name. When I asked him why he had done so, he replied, “My brother, being desirous to acquire this land, continuously disturbs me about giving it to him, and he will not let me live peacefully. I have therefore transferred it to your name. Now I can live the rest of my life in peace, without fear of any disturbance from my brother regarding this matter. I do not care whether my brother takes, keeps or sells the land after my death.”

Madhumaṅgala Prabhu left his body only a few days after transferring the land into my name, and consequently he never advised me as to what he wanted done with the land. After his passing, his brother came to me and said, “Mahārāja, I wish to stay in Kṛṣṇanagar. Because this land belonged to my late brother, I am now its rightful owner. Kindly transfer this land to my name.”

Doing as he asked, I gave him ownership of that land. When the residents of the *maṭha* came to know of this, a few of them inquired from me in a surprised manner, “Mahārāja! Madhumaṅgala Prabhu gave you ownership of his land. Why have you transferred it to his brother’s name? Because his brother is a materialistic person, he will use this property for his sense gratification. Would it not have been better for you to sell the land and use the proceeds in the service of the *maṭha*? Doing this would have brought spiritual welfare for Madhumaṅgala Prabhu.”

I replied, “Will I gain any spiritual welfare by serving the *maṭha* through such inappropriate means? Has cheating been recommended in any scripture as a limb of *bhakti*? How is it possible for Śrī Kṛṣṇa—the master of the six-fold opulences and Śrī Rādhārāṇī, who is *sarva-lakṣmī-mayī* (the source of all good fortune and opulence) and worshipful even by the goddess of fortune—to experience scarcity of any sort, so that something must be unfairly obtained for His service?

“Śrī Madhumaṅgala Prabhu did not advise me to engage his property in the service of the *maṭha*. He transferred it to my name solely for safekeeping, to avoid any future complications or conflicts while he was alive; he did not outright donate the land to me. Should I have become governed by or attached to his material asset simply because he unexpectedly left his body without clarifying his desires for the property?”

Accepting objects according to one’s qualification

I continued, “There is no problem in using an object for service if someone intentionally donates it for the service of the *maṭha*, *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān. But I have not been taught to consider

somebody else’s property to be my own and then use it in the service of the Supreme Lord.

“While imparting instructions to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrīman Mahāprabhu gave a very important teaching:

*eta saba chāḍi’āra varṇāśrama dharma
akiñcana haīyā laya kṛṣṇaika-śaraṇa*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līla 22.93)

By relinquishing all these things [bad association and *kutīnātī*, or duplicity] as well as attachment to the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, one should surrender onto the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, understanding that he has no other shelter or means.

“We cannot attain spiritual welfare without giving up attachment to our worldly perception of gain and loss. I do not consider myself to have gained such a qualification that I may act as I please; I am bound to follow the rules and regulations mentioned in the scriptures. Although qualified individuals may be able to use forcibly acquired objects in the service of the Lord, I am unqualified to do so. If someone engages in an endeavor unbefitting of his qualification, he must later bear the consequences.”

Use in service only what is given willingly

A godsister of mine, Nandarāṇī devī dāsī, once wanted to transfer her house into my name. I declined her offer and suggested that she can instead transfer the ownership of her house into the name of our *maṭha*. She replied that she was not inclined to donate it to the *maṭha*, and wished to transfer it into my name alone. I told her, “Mātā-jī, it would be inappropriate for me to accept the ownership of your house in donation, because I am not qualified to do so. And because you do not willingly wish to donate it for the service of the *maṭha*, my heart does not allow me to accept it now with the intention to later use it in the *maṭha*’s service by selling it. This, too, would be inappropriate.”

Another time, a lady staying close to our Kolkata *maṭha* made me the nominee for all her fixed deposits, bank accounts and other financial affairs. After she left her body, her son frequently came to the *maṭha* to inquire about my whereabouts, but I was away at that time. When I returned to Kolkata, I used part of the lady’s money to arrange for the performance of her *śrāddha* ceremony, which included a wonderful feast for the Vaiṣṇavas, and I invited all her relatives, as per her desire. After the completion of the ceremony, I gave the remaining money to her son.

Many people who observed that ceremony later told me they too wanted to keep their money with me, so that I could arrange a wonderful *śrāddha* ceremony after their deaths. They told me, “One’s own children cannot perform a ceremony as ideal as this one.” It is not that I neglected to use her money for the service of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas; I surely did use it for such a cause, but I did so purely according to her own wishes. As she did not give any further instructions for the use of the remaining money, I returned the balance to her son. I saw no need to risk spoiling my spiritual welfare by becoming attached to her money.

Accepting objects for ourselves carries consequences

Once, a female devotee from Jagadhārī brought blankets for all the devotees in the *maṭha*. She distributed one type of blanket to everyone, but brought a different, more expensive blanket especially for me. I told her, “Mātā-jī, I will only accept such a blanket if you are giving it to me so that I may engage it in the service of the *maṭha*. If you say that it is for my personal use, then I am not in a position to accept it; I am not capable of accepting such an expensive blanket for my own use.”

Hearing this, she did not force me to accept the blanket. Later, one *brahmacārī* approached her and said, “Since you brought this blanket with the intention of donating it, you may give it to me.” The lady

then gave it to the *brahmacārī*, and though I do not know what events transpired afterward, I observed that he permanently left the *maṭha* just a few days after accepting it.

Depend only on Bhagavān

The message is that instead of becoming dependent on the people of this world or on our own ability to acquire things by cheating others, we should always remain dependent only on Bhagavān and His dearest devotees, keeping in mind the instructions of our previous *ācāryas*, as wonderfully summarized by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

*nijera poṣaṇa, kabhu nā bhāvibô,
rahibô bhāvera bhare*

Śaraṇāgati (3.3.5)

I shall never think about my own maintenance; rather, I shall remain absorbed in *bhāva*.*

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-bhajane, anukūla jāhā,
tāhe ha’bô anurāgī
bhajanera jāhā, pratikūla tāhā,
dṛḍha-bhāve teyāgibô*

*Kalyāṇa-Kalpataru,
(Ucchvāsa 2.6.3, 4)*

I shall become attached only to that which is favorable to *bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I shall firmly reject whatever is unfavorable for *bhajana*.*

*jīvana-nirvāhe āne udvega nā dibe
para-upakāre nija-sukha pāsaribe*

Gītāvalī (2.3.4)

In the course of leading your life, do not give anxiety to anyone else. For the benefit of others, forget your own comforts.

Considering everything to be the divine arrangement of the Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, one should respectfully accept one’s present situation, remain highly content, and lovingly engage in *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. By engaging ourselves in this manner, we will acquire the mercy of the Lord and His devotees, and thus attain our topmost goal.

The Most Beloved, Incomparably Compassionate and Extremely Powerful Commanders of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's Army

Part One

In symbolically addressing his own mind in *Manaḥ-śikṣā* (7), Śrīla Raghunātha dāsaGosvāmī has advised us to always render sincere devotional service to the most beloved commanders of the army of Śrīman Mahāprabhu:

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

O mind, how can pure divine love appear in my heart as long as the shameless dog-eating, outcaste woman of the desire for prestige is audaciously dancing there? Therefore, always remember and serve the immeasurably powerful commanders of the army of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the beloved devotees of the Lord. They will at once banish this outcaste woman and initiate the flow of immaculate *vraja-prema* in your heart.*

These intimate associates of Śrīman Mahāprabhu consider the Lord to be extremely dear to their heart, more so than their own lives. The depth of their faith in His words and instructions is such that they live purely according to the principles He practiced and preached. Śrīman Mahāprabhu personally sent these great personalities to this planet specifically for the welfare of the fallen conditioned souls like us.

In Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma, Śrīman Mahāprabhu gave His first marching order to His commanders Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura:

*śunô śunô nityānanda, śunô haridāsa
sarvatra āmāra ājñā karahô prakāśa*

*prati ghare ghare giyā karô ei bhikṣā
'bôlô kṛṣṇa, bhajô kṛṣṇa, karô kṛṣṇa-sikṣā'*

*ihā bai āra nā bôlibā, bôlāi
bādina-avasāne āsi' āmāre kahibā*

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 13.8-10)

The Lord said, “O Nityānanda! O Haridāsa! Listen. Make My command known every-where. Go from house to house and beg from all the residents in the following way: ‘Chant Kṛṣṇa’s name, serve Kṛṣṇa, and learn about Kṛṣṇa!’ ” Here, ‘learn about Kṛṣṇa’ refers to the teachings spoken by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna, Uddhava, the Vrajavāsīs and others, as well as the words spoken about Kṛṣṇa by Śrī Brahmā, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, Jayadeva Gosvāmī and others.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu continued, “Do not speak or cause anyone to speak about anything other than Kṛṣṇa. At the end of the day, return here and report to Me all that happened.”

Just like a king, Śrīman Mahāprabhu wanted to expand His kingdom, and He therefore expressed to His commanders Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura His desire to conquer the empire of *māyā*, or the illusory potency of Bhagavān, and to make its residents naturalized citizens of His own kingdom.

It is the duty of an army commander to defeat the enemy and thereby protect and expand the boundaries of 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 the risk of His own life, He

delivered His Master’s message to even the most sinful persons, like the drunkards Jagāi and Mādhāi. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu was of the opinion that Śrīman Mahāprabhu had instructed Him to preach His order to everyone, and so He wanted to make even the most sinful of souls aware of the divine message. Why should they be left out?

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has referred to these commanders of Śrīman Mahāprabhu as *atulam*, or incomparable. They possess unparalleled powers and can exhibit a supreme might that can transform even the most sinful persons into not only ordinary devotees, but into *mahā-bhāgavatas*, or the topmost self-realized devotees of the Lord, fully capable of rendering the highest welfare to other living entities. It is only by the causeless mercy of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu that Jagāi and Madhāi received the mercy of Śrīman Mahāprabhu:

*brahmāra durlabha āji e dōhāre dibô
e dōhāre jagatera uttama kôribô*

*e dui-paraśe jê kôrilô gaṅgā-snāna
e dōhāre bôlibe se gaṅgāra samāna*

*nityānanda-pratijñā anyathā nāhi haya
nityānanda-icchā ei jānihô niścaya*

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya khaṇḍa 13.232-34)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said to the assembled devotees, “Today I shall reward Jagāi and Mādhāi with a benediction that is rare even for Śrī Brahmā to attain. I shall make them the most honorable devotees in the world. All those who would normally take bath in the Gaṅgā after touching them, will now say that these two men are as pure as the Gaṅgā herself. A promise or vow made by Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu can never go unfulfilled. Please know for certain that all this has happened solely because of Śrī Nityānanda’s desire.”

In connection to Jagāi and Mādhāi, Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has written:

*kāra śakti bujhite caitanya-abhimata
dui dasyu kare dui mahābhāgavata*

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya khaṇḍa 13.243)

Who can understand the mysterious plan of Śrīman Mahāprabhu? He transformed two thieves into *mahā-bhāgavatas*, the topmost devotees of the Lord.

By the mercy of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, a prostitute named Lakṣahīrā was transformed into a highly respected devotee:

*prasiddhā vaiṣṇavī hōilô parama-mahāntī
baḍô baḍô vaiṣṇava tāra darśanete jānti*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līla 3.142)

The prostitute thus became a renowned and highly advanced Vaiṣṇavī. Many prominent Vaiṣṇavas would come see her.

Part Two

In a discussion between Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya about the excellence of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s poetry, Śrīman Mahāprabhu glorified Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and his brother Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in the following way:

prabhu kahe, — prayāge ihāra hōilô milana

ihāra guṇe ihāte āmāra tuṣṭa hōilō mana

*ihāra je jyeṣṭha-bhrātā, nāma — ‘sanātana’
prthivīte vijñā-vara nāhi tāra sama*

*tomāra jaiche viṣaya-tyāga, taiche tāra rīti
dainya-vairāgya-pāṇḍityera tāhātei sthiti*

*ei dui bhāiye āmi pāṭhailū vṛndāvane
śakti diyā bhakti-śāstra kôrite pravartane*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 1.197, 200-202)

“Rūpa met Me at Prayāga. Because of his virtues, My heart became pleased with him. His elder brother, whose name is Sanātana, is a wise and learned scholar unequaled in this planet. Sanātana’s renunciation of material connections is just like yours, Rāmānanda. He is the perfect embodiment of non-duplicious humility, *yukta-vairāgya* (true renunciation) and excellence in learning—he is well-versed in and fully conversant with the *siddhānta* and *rasa* of *prema-bhakti*. I empowered both of these brothers to go to Vṛndāvana to expand the literature of *bhakti*.”

During their meeting in Jagannātha Purī, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu told Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī:

*tomāra śārīra — mora pradhāna ‘sādhana’
e śārīre sādhimu āmi bahu prayojana*

*bhakta-bhakti-kṛṣṇa-prema-tattvera nirdhāra
vaiṣṇavera kṛtya, āra vaiṣṇava-ācāra*

*kṛṣṇa-bhakti, kṛṣṇa-prema-sevā-pravartana
lupta-tīrtha-uddhāra, āra vairāgya-śikṣaṇa*

*nija-priya-sthāna mora — mathurā-vṛndāvana
tāhāṇeta dharma cāhi kôrite pracāraṇa*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.78-81)

“Your body is the means by which I will fulfill many objectives. You will ascertain the truths about the Vaiṣṇavas, *bhakti* and love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa; introduce the tenets of Vaiṣṇava rites and etiquette; establish the truths about *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* and love-laden service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa; uncover lost pastime places; and teach about true renunciation. Mathurā-Vṛndāvana is very dear to me, and it is from there that I want all these things to be preached [through you].”

Thus, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written in his *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 7.164)*:

*mathurāte pāṭhailō rūpa-sanātana
dui senā-pati kôilō bhakti pracāraṇa*

Śrīman Mahāprabhu sent the two commanders, Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs, to Vraja-maṇḍala to preach *bhakti*.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī manifest Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s vraja-līlā

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī composed the following Sanskrit verse to describe how Śrīman Mahāprabhu empowered Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī:

*kālena vṛndāvana-keli-vārtā
lupteti tām khyāpayitum viśiṣya
kṛpāmṛtenābhiṣeṇa devas
tatraiva rūpaṁ ca sanātanaṁ ca*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 19.119)

Due to the progression of time, discussions of the amorous pastimes of Vṛndāvana had practically disappeared. Śrī

Gaurāṅga-deva empowered Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī to clearly express those pastimes by sprinkling upon them the nectar of His mercy.

Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has also described the manner in which these two commanders very diligently followed the orders given by Śrīman Mahāprabhu:

*dui bhāi mili’ vṛndāvane vāsa kôilā
prabhura je ājñā, dūhe saba nirbāhilā*

*nānā-śāstra āni’ lupta-tīrtha uddhārilā
vṛndāvane kṛṣṇa-sevā prakāśa kôrilā*

*sanātana grantha kôilā ‘bhāgavatāmṛte’
bhakta-bhakti-kṛṣṇa-tattva jāni jāhā hôte*

*āra jāta grantha kôilā, tāhā ke kare gaṇana
‘madana-gopāla-govindera sevā’-prakāśana*

*rūpa-gosāi kôilā ‘rasāmṛta-sindhu’ sāra
kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasera jāhā pāiye vistāra*

*‘ujjvala-nīlamanī’-nāma grantha kôilō āra
rādhā-kṛṣṇa-līlā-rasa tāhā pāiye pāra*

*‘vidagdha-mādhava’, ‘lalita-mādhava, — nāṭaka-jūgala
kṛṣṇa-līlā-rasa tāhā pāiye sakala*

*‘dāna-keli-kaumudī’ ādi lakṣa-grantha kôilō
sei saba granthe vrajera rasa vicārila*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.217-219, 222-226)

While residing in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī together executed the will of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They collected many revealed scriptures, and from the evidence in those scriptures excavated all the hidden pastime places of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In Vṛndāvana, they manifested *kṛṣṇa-sevā*. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī compiled *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, a book from which one can understand the truths about the devotees, the process of *bhakti*, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He also compiled many other books. Who can enumerate them?

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī manifested the service of Madana-gopāla (Śrī Madana-mohana) and Śrī Govinda-deva, respectively. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī churned the ocean of nectarean transcendental mellows and presented its essence in the form of the book *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. From that book, one can understand the detail of the mellows of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. Additionally, he composed *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, from which one can understand, to the fullest limits, the loving pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa; two important dramas named *Vidagdha-mādhava* and *Lalita-mādhava*, from which one can understand all the *rasa* present in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*; and *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*. All together, he compiled one hundred thousand verses. In all these scriptures, he elaborately explained *vraja-rasa*, the transcendental mellows of Vraja.

Just as the national army executes every order given by the ruler of the 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. They personally directed many devotees to the path of *bhakti* by providing guidance, and thereby ensured the continued service of Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala. In composing many spiritual literatures describing the various topics of *bhakti*, 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).

The wonderful feats of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī have been appropriately sung in a *vaiṣṇava-bhajana*

written by Śrī Mādhava dāsa:

*yaṅ kali rūpa śarīra na dharata
taṅ vraja-prema, mahānidhi kuṭharīka,
kon kapāṭa ughāḍata*

Had Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī not appeared in this age of Kali, who would have opened the doors to the great treasure-house of *vraja-prema*?*

*nīra-kṣīra-hamsana, pāna-vidhāyana,
kon pṛthak kōri pāyata
ko saba tyaji', bhaji'vṛndāvana,
ko saba grantha viracita*

Who but Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī could have extracted the essence of the scriptures in the same way that a swan separates water from milk? Who could have abandoned everything to perform *bhajana* in Vṛndāvana? Who could have written such scriptures?*

*jab pitu vana-phula, phalata nānā-vidha,
manorāji aravinda
so madhukara binu, pāna kon jānata,
vidyamāna kari bandha*

He was a honey bee amid varieties of blossoming yellow forest flowers and mind-enchancing lotuses. Without that honey bee, who could have known the art of drinking the nectar present yet confined within [those flowers]?*

*ko jānata, mathurā vṛndāvana,
ko jānata vraja-nīta
ko jānata, rādhā-mādhava-rati,
ko jānata soi prīta*

Who could have understood the glories of Mathurā and Vṛndāvana? Who could have fathomed the intricacies of Vraja? Who could have understood the *rati* between Śrī Rādhā and Mādhava? Who could have known that love?*

Soldiers very peacefully tolerate all hardships for the protection of their country. They perform their duties even in the most hostile conditions, such as freezing cold regions covered in snow. Sometimes they lack adequate food supplies and feel separation from their loved ones. In the same manner, the army of Śrīman Mahāprabhu accepts all sorts of difficulties in order to fulfill His most cherished desires and guard the realm of *bhakti* from the attack of envious opponents.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 19.127-131) mentions:

*aniketa dūhe, vane jāta vṛkṣa-gaṇa
eka eka vṛkṣera tale eka eka rātri śayana*

*‘vipra-grhe’ sthūla-bhikṣā, kāhā~mādhukarī
śuṣka ruṭi-cānā cibāya bhoga parihari’*

*karōyā-mātra hāte, kāthā chīḍā, bahirvāsa
kṛṣṇa-kathā, kṛṣṇa-nāma, nartana-ullāsa*

*aṣṭa-prahara kṛṣṇa-bhajana, cāri daṇḍa śayane
nāma-saṅkīrtane seha nahe kona dine*

*kabhu bhakti-rasa-śāstra karōye likhana
caitanya-kathā śune, kare caitanya-cintana*

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī have no fixed residence. They stay in the forests beneath trees—one night under one tree and the next night under another. Giving up all kinds of material enjoyment, they sometimes accept *sthūla-bhikṣā* (full meals) in the house of a *brāhmaṇa*, after which there is no need for them to beg from anyone else on that day. At other times, they survive with whatever they receive from performing *mādhukarī* (begging a little from many householders). Sometimes they receive only dry *roṭīs* to eat, while other times they are given roasted chickpeas to chew. Their only possessions are a water pot, a quilt made from torn clothes, and their torn lower cloth. They always discuss *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and dance in ecstasy. They daily engage almost twenty-four hours in rendering service to the Lord. They usually sleep for only four *daṇḍas* (ninety-six minutes), and on some days, when they are fully immersed in performing *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, they neglect sleep altogether. Sometimes they write transcendental literatures about *bhakti-rasa*, and sometimes they hear about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and spend their time remembering Him.

It is for these reasons that Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written:

*mahāprabhura jata baḍō baḍō bhakta mātra
rūpa-sanātana — sabāra kṛpā-gaurava-pātra*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 19.123)

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī were the recipients of mercy and reverence from all the renowned devotees of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.

These two incomparable stalwart commanders of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s army have been the object of many Vaiṣṇavas’ praises. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, for example, has glorified Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Śrī Vilāpa-kusumāñjali* (6) as follows:

*vairāgya-yug-bhakti-rasaṁ prayatnair
apāyayan mām anabhīpsuṁ andham
kṛpāmbudhir yaḥ para-duḥkha-duḥkhī
sanātanaṁ taṁ prabhum āśrayāmi*

I was unwilling to drink the nectar of *bhakti-rasa* laced with renunciation, but Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, being an ocean of mercy who cannot tolerate the suffering of others, induced me to drink it. Therefore, I take shelter of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī.*

In *Śrī Caitanya-candrodaya* (9.30), Śrīla Kavi Karṇapūra Gosvāmī has described how dear Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda is to Śrīman Mahāprabhu:

*priya-svarūpe dayita-svarūpe
prema-svarūpe saha-jābhīrūpe
nija-nurūpe prabhur eka-rūpe
tatāna rūpe svavilāsa-rūpe*

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is very dear to and adored by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. He is the embodiment of His love, and he very naturally knows His heart. His form resembles that of Śrīman Mahāprabhu; indeed, it is as if their forms are one. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is the very embodiment of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s pastimes, because it was through him that the Lord performed many works.

All the commanders of the army of Śrīman Mahāprabhu coming in the disciplic succession of Śrī Brahmā-Madhva-Gauḍīya Sampradāya have served with complete surrender and dedication to fulfill His most cherished desires. But the accomplishments of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī are beyond what even Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Lord Himself, could ever have conceived.

[The following glorification of Śrī Paraśurāma is a bhāva-anuvāda of a lecture spoken on April 21, 2015, the anniversary of his appearance day, and includes details from other darśanas and hari-kathā by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja]

Paraśurāma Jayantī

Today is Paraśurāma Jayantī, the appearance day of Śrī Paraśurāma-deva. There are three Rāmas: Paraśurāma, Dāśarathi Rāma (Śrī Rāmacandra), and Rādhikā-ramaṇa Rāma, or Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the Rāma referred to in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *maha-mantra*. For us, ‘Hare Rāma’ means ‘Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.’

Following the order of śrī guru without consideration

Paraśurāma’s father’s name was Jamadagni Ṛṣi, and his mother’s name was Reṇukā. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it has been written that Jamadagni Ṛṣi once ordered his sons, who were also his disciples, to decapitate their mother, Reṇukā. Not understanding how it would be possible for them to cut off the head of their own mother, the three eldest sons refused to follow their father’s instruction, but Paraśurāma, his fourth and youngest son, immediately obeyed and cut off her head. Jamadagni Ṛṣi then instructed him to cut off the heads of his three older brothers, and Paraśurāma again complied unhesitatingly.

Being satisfied with his son’s obedience and desiring to grant him a benediction, Jamadagni Ṛṣi said, “Whatever you ask for, I will make it so.”

Paraśurāma replied, “If you truly want to grant me a benediction, then please make my mother and three brothers appear just as they were before I decapitated them. I also want them to forget what was done to them.” Jamadagni Ṛṣi granted his son’s wish, and the family appeared just as it did before.

Regarding this pastime, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā*, 10.145, 146) quotes *Raghu-vamśa* (14.46), “*ājñā gurūṇāṁ hy avicāraṇīyā*—one should follow the order of his *guru* without consideration,” and also *Rāmāyaṇa* (*Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* 22.9), “*nirvicāraṁ guror ājñā mayā kāryā mahātmanaḥ*—we must follow the order of *guru*, an extraordinary personality, without any consideration.”

Whatever order may come from *śrī guru* must be executed at all costs. However, this principle is applicable only to a qualified *guru* capable of completely fulfilling any and all desires of his disciple. Jamadagni Ṛṣi was not only Paraśurāma’s father, but also his *guru*, and he was able to heed his son’s request in full. Thus there was absolutely no fault in Paraśurāma’s action of killing his mother and brothers. *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (2.19) states:

*ya enaṁ vetti hantāraṁ
yaś cainaṁ manyate hatam
ubhau tau na vijānīto
nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate*

One who thinks of the soul to be the killer or the killed is ignorant, for the soul is neither the slayer nor the slain.

The basic requirement for a guru-disciple relationship

If someone realizes that his *guru* is unqualified to fulfill his desire of obtaining the longed-for service of his *īṣṭadeva*, then there is no need to fully follow that *guru*’s orders at all times. In such a case, there can be some consideration as to whether or not an instruction should be carried out. It is mentioned in the *śāstras* that the *guru* and disciple should examine each other prior to accepting a *guru-disciple* relationship.

Śrīla Vṛndāvan dāsa Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has mentioned in his *Caitanya-bhāgavata* (Ādi-khaṇḍa 2.68) that if by some great misfortune a person accepts an unqualified *guru* and does not give up that “*guru*” after realizing he is unqualified, or if a “*guru*” accepts a disciple in the hopes of receiving material benefit, then “*śiṣyā* (or *śrotāra*) *sahite yama-pāse ḍubi’ mare*—such a *guru* (or speaker) suffers in the clutches of Yamarāja with his disciples (or listeners).”

When Sugrīva was asked by Lakṣmaṇa to take shelter at the lotus feet of Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra, who is Himself the Supreme Lord, he replied, “I will never except Rāma’s shelter unless and until I thoroughly examine Him and He proves worthy of my surrender.” He then told Śrī Rāmacandra, “Taking only one arrow, I want You to shoot it with Your bow, and in that one shot pierce seven *tāla* trees. I will only accept You as the Supreme Lord if you can accomplish this.” It was only after Śrī Rāmacandra heeded his request that Sugrīva surrendered at the Lord’s lotus feet, and not before.

The origin of the name Paraśurāma

There was once a powerful king of the Haihayas named Kārtavīrārjuna, who had received a thousand arms by worshipping Śrī Dattātreya. His power was such that he was able to stop the flow of the river Narmadā, and he once arrested the mighty ten-headed Rāvaṇa. Once, Kārtavīrārjuna was travelling with his army during a time of drought and famine. Just as a severe storm broke, Kārtavīrārjuna and his army came upon the *āśrama* of Jamadagni Ṛṣi and requested him to provide them with shelter. Upon meeting these uninvited guests, Jamadagni Ṛṣi felt it his duty to properly host them by seeing to their every need, including those of the elephants and horses that were included in the army’s ranks.

Kārtavīrārjuna was astonished by Jamadagni Ṛṣi’s ability to render considerable service during a time of famine and drought. He could not understand how it was possible for him to provide comfortable accommodations for such a large party, considering the dire situation. He therefore asked Jamadagni Ṛṣi, “How is it that you are able to make all these arrangements in such a wonderful way?”

Jamadagni Ṛṣi replied, “This is the mercy of my mother.”

Confused, Kārtavīrārjuna asked, “How so? Where is your mother?”

“By ‘mother’ I mean ‘mother cow,’ ” Jamadagni Ṛṣi responded. “I have a *kāma-dhenu* (wish-fulfilling cow) in my *āśrama*, and because of her I have been able to properly welcome you and your army. It would not have been possible without her.”

Hearing this, Kārtavīrārjuna said, “Please consider the proper utilization of a *kāma-dhenu*. You live in this *āśrama* with limited necessities, whereas I have millions of subjects in my kingdom. It would be proper for you to give this *kāma-dhenu* to me, as the needs of my kingdom are greater than yours.”

Hearing Kārtavīrārjuna’s proposal, Jamadagni Ṛṣi was unable to decide what to do. Puzzled, he approached his *kāma-dhenu* and prayed, “O mother! Until now you have been very merciful to me. But now this Kārtavīrārjuna is asking me to hand you over to him. Perhaps his fortune is that you wish to bless him at this time. I only wish to serve you and fulfill your desires. Therefore, whatever your wish may be—whether you desire to be with him or to remain here with me—let it be so.” Despite Jamadagni Ṛṣi’s pleas, Kārtavīrārjuna forcefully took the *kāma-dhenu* back to his palace.

When Paraśurāma came to learn about this event, he became extremely angry. He considered that though it is the duty of *kṣatriyas* to respect, serve and give protection to *sādhus* without asking anything from them, Kārtavīrārjuna has forcibly taken the *kāma-dhenu* from his father, Jamadagni Ṛṣi. Due to the degradation of the *kṣatriyas*, he vowed then and there to kill their entire caste. He was previously known only by the name Rāma, but upon making this vow, he took up the *paraśu* weapon (a sickle-like chopper), and was thenceforth known as Paraśurāma. In observance of his vow, he killed the entire *kṣatriya* caste twenty-one times.

Every act of the Lord is like that of a loving father

All the *śāstras* state that Paraśurāma is a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* (empowered incarnation of Bhagavān), but still it is quite astonishing to hear about this pastime. If he were truly a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, why would he kill an entire caste even once, let alone twenty-one times? What is the reason and mystery behind His activities?

It is the duty of a loving father to bring his son under control when he witnesses that son engaging in immoral activities. For the sake of correcting such behavior, a father may be seen to chastise his son with heavy words or even slap him. But the motivation behind these actions is only love. Similarly, in enacting this pastime, Paraśurāma is playing the role of a loving father, who upon seeing the degraded mentality of His *kṣatriya* sons, wanted to rectify their behavior.

The Result of Imitation

Imitation of the devotees of Bhagavān leads only to the deprivation of the Supreme Lord’s mercy, even if done with the intention to attain the Lord’s favor. In order to become qualified to receive His mercy, we must follow (*anusaraṇa*) in the footsteps of His dearest devotees, being always guided by their internal moods (*pravṛtti*) and personal conduct. Mere imitation of their external actions will not suffice.

Let us understand this with a story.

A person maintained his family by cutting and selling dry wood from the jungle. One day, he saw a dry tree on the bank of a river, and began chopping the tree from its trunk. Soon after he started, the axe slipped from his hands and flew into the deep river. With a grave heart he thought, “I am in great trouble. My axe is now lost, and because I have no wood to sell, I will be unable to purchase rice, dhal and other necessities for my family. How can I go home empty-handed?” Being unable to conceive of a solution, he began weeping.

Hearing his pitiful crying, the demigod of water, Śrī Varuṇa-deva, emerged from the river and asked the woodcutter the reason for his tears.

The woodcutter replied, “I was thinking that by felling this large tree and selling its wood, I would be able to comfortably maintain my family members for many days. I was overpowered by greed, and this contaminated thinking led to my great misfortune. As a result, my only wealth—my axe—slipped from my hands and flew into this deep river. Because of its strong current, I am unable to enter its deep waters and retrieve my axe. Now I fear going home, as my children will be crying due to hunger. I see no solution to my misery.”

After hearing his words, Varuṇa-deva entered the water and re-appeared with a golden axe in one hand and silver axe in the other. He asked the woodcutter if either of the two axes were his. The woodcutter replied, “O Deva, neither is mine. How could I afford axes like these? I do not even have enough food at home to feed my children, so how could I ever possess axes made of gold or silver?”

Varuṇa-deva then re-entered the water and appeared with a golden axe in one hand and the woodcutter’s iron axe in the other. He again asked the woodcutter if either of the axes belonged to him. The woodcutter replied, “The iron axe previously belonged to me, but because it is in your hands, it now belongs to you. If you were to mercifully give me back my axe, I would be able to cut and sell some wood and provide my family with the necessities they require.”

Varuṇa-deva, being extremely pleased by the conduct of the woodcutter—who, though poor and needy, remained a truthful and honest follower of the path of *dharma*—gave him all three axes: the golden axe, the silver axe and the iron axe. He told the woodcutter, “Because it is late, there is no need for you to cut and sell wood today. Go to a jeweler, sell some of the gold and silver from these axes, buy rice, dhal, salt and whatever other necessities your family requires, and then quickly take them to your home. But do not tell anyone about what transpired here today.”

After the woodcutter followed Varuṇa-deva’s instructions, he returned home with all the necessary items. His family members were very pleased to see him with so many things. The woodcutter easily maintained his family for about two months by selling just a small bit of those valuable axes.

When the woodcutter’s wife would go to a nearby pond to wash pots, she would meet with the other neighborhood ladies and engage in casual conversation. One day, a neighbor’s wife mentioned to her, “We have seen that your husband no longer goes to the jungle to cut wood, but still your family eats and lives well. It also seems that you are buying many household items. How is this possible? Do you now have some other means of income?”

Although the woodcutter had explicitly told his wife that Varuṇa-deva had instructed him not to

disclose to anyone the secret of his gift, she could not resist telling the neighbor's wife. After disclosing her husband's secret, she told the neighbor's wife not to tell this secret to anyone, because her husband would be furious if he were to know she had ignored his request not to tell anyone. The neighbor's wife, however, was unable to refrain from relating such an extraordinary incident to her husband, who also was a woodcutter.

After hearing about Varuṇa-deva's mercy, the neighbor woodcutter arose very early the next morning and quickly went to the same river with his axe. There, he began acting as if he was trying hard to fell the dry tree, and then purposefully threw his axe in the river, at which time he pretended to loudly cry. Hearing his crying, Varuṇa-deva emerged from the water and inquired about the reason for his weeping. After hearing everything from him, Varuṇa-deva entered the water and came out with silver and iron axes in his hands. He then asked the woodcutter if either of the axes belonged to him. The woodcutter indicated that the silver axe was his.

Varuṇa-deva then re-entered the water and appeared with the iron and golden axes in his hands. He again asked the woodcutter if either of the axes belonged to him. The woodcutter indicated that the golden axe was his. Hearing the woodcutter's deceitful words, Varuṇa-deva disappeared into the water, taking with him the golden axe, the silver axe, and even the woodcutter's iron axe, and never returned again.

The first woodcutter was simple, honest, truthful, non-duplicitous and a sincere follower of the path of *dharma*, and as a result, he received the mercy of Varuṇa-deva, who gave him not only his own iron axe, but also the golden and silver axes. The second woodcutter was a dishonest, duplicitous and untruthful cheat who neglected the path of *dharma*. Although he externally performed the same activities as the first woodcutter, because of his conduct, he was deprived not only of the mercy of Varuṇa-deva, but of his own iron axe—his only wealth—as well.

In the same manner, a person who is non-duplicitous, completely free from the desire to attain *dharma* (religiosity), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (sense gratification) and *mokṣa* (liberation), and wishes only to render pure loving devotional service to Bhagavān, becomes the recipient of His divine mercy, and his life becomes successful. On the other hand, he who externally engages in the same service as the devotees, while remaining duplicitous at heart and internally harboring the desire to attain *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, finds himself deprived of Bhagavān's true mercy.

A person who observes the same limbs of *bhakti*—like *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*—as the pure devotees, but does so only externally without following the inner moods inherent in sincere service, remains deprived of their true benefit; the deep meanings of the scriptures as described by *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, as well as the essence of their divine instructions, do not manifest in his heart. Moreover, he loses the balance of his previously accumulated *sukṛti* (spiritual pious activities). As a result of performing *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana* and the other limbs of *bhakti* with an offensive mentality, he attains only objects of material enjoyment, and thereby makes his life even more miserable than before.

The Subtleties of True Sevā

What is to be understood before serving

*yaḥ śāstra-vidhim utsṛjya
varttate kāma-cārataḥ
na sa siddhim avāpnoti
na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (16.23)

He who discards the injunctions of the scriptures and acts according to his whimsical desires, attains neither perfection, happiness, nor the supreme destination.

A person who renders service in a completely independent mood without accepting any guidance does not render true service to the Vaiṣṇavas or Bhagavān; rather, he endeavors only to gratify his own senses. Such a person is known as *svecchācāri*, or a person who acts only according to his own desires.

Before beginning any service, one must understand the moods and desires of the *sevyā* (object of service). It is only after gaining such an understanding that one's service can truly please the *sevyā* and even be called *sevā*. Otherwise, one's service is simply *svecchācāritā* (an act of independence). It is often seen that a person repeatedly insists that a Vaiṣṇava accepts his service. Although this person's service may not be pleasing to the Vaiṣṇava, the Vaiṣṇava allows him to continue performing it, so that the person can fulfill his desire and the Vaiṣṇava can avoid any further disturbance. The person may gain some feeling of acceptance and the chance to perform his desired activity, but this activity can never be considered true service.

Independent activities lead to great disturbances

*śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-
pañcarātra-vidhiṁ vinā
aikāntikī harer bhaktir
utpātāyaiva kalpate*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.101)

A person creates only disturbances by disregarding the regulations given in the Śruti, Smṛti, Purāṇas and *Nārada-pañcarātra*, even if his service is one-pointed to Śrī Hari.

Ekāntika-bhakti (single-pointed devotion) by definition means to render service in a manner pleasing to one's most worshipful object of service. Therefore, only activities pleasing to the *sevyā* can be designated as service.

One activity, two categories: labor and sevā

Bhagavān Ācārya and Mādhavī-devī are the eternal associates of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Once, on the instructions of Bhagavān Ācārya, Choṭa Haridāsa carried a bag of rice on his head from Purī to the house of Mādhavī devī at Ālālanātha, and in exchange brought rice from her house back to the home of Bhagavān Ācārya, who later cooked that rice and offered it to Śrīman Mahāprabhu. As soon as Śrīman Mahāprabhu took the rice, he inquired about its source. When Bhagavān Ācārya told Him Choṭa Haridāsa had brought it from the house of Mādhavī-devī, He praised the rice and externally appeared untroubled, but internally was highly displeased. Upon returning to His residence, He immediately instructed His personal servant, Govinda Prabhu, to bar Choṭa Haridāsa from visiting Him. That is why Śrī Jagadānanda

Paṇḍita has mentioned in *Prema-vivarta* (8.7), “*gopanete atyācāra gorā dhare curi*—even if you misbehave in secret, Gaura will catch you.” A person may be able to hide his immoral behavior from the whole world, but Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu will surely catch him, because He is omniscient.

At first glance, Choṭa Haridāsa’s carrying rice on his head all the way from Purī to Ālālanātha and back appears to be an act of service. But because this activity was unpleasing to Śrīman Mahāprabhu, it was not even considered *karma*; rather, it was merely physical labor. Had Mahāprabhu been pleased with this activity, it would have been considered *bhakti*.

Displeasing the object of service is the result of mixing service with prohibited activities.

What then was Choṭa Haridāsa’s mistake? Without mentioning any details, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu made it very clear that Choṭa Haridāsa had done something against the prescribed rules and regulations of his *āśrama*:

*prabhu kahe—vairāgī kare prakṛti sambhāṣaṇa
dekhite nā pārō āmi tāhāra vadana*

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “I cannot see the face of a renunciate who [with lust] speaks to women.

*durvāra indriya kare viṣaya-grahaṇa
dāru prakṛti hare munerapi mana*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 2.117-118)

“It is so difficult to check the senses from grasping objects of enjoyment, that a wooden statue of a woman steals the mind of even a saintly person.”

*kṣudra-jīva saba markāṭa-vairāgya kariyā
indriya carāiḥ bule ‘prakṛti’ sambhāṣiyā*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 2.120)

“There are many persons with little in their possession who accept the renounced order of life like monkeys. They go here and there engaging in sense gratification and speaking intimately with women.”

*prabhu kahe,—“mora vaśa nahe mora mana
prakṛti-sambhāṣī vairāgī nā kare darśana*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 2.124)

He further said “My mind is not under My control. It does not like to see anyone in the renounced order who talks intimately with women.”

*‘haridāsa kāhā?’ jādī śrīvāsa puchilā
‘sva-karma-phala-bhuk pumān’—prabhu utara dilā*

When Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita inquired from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, “Where is Choṭa Haridāsa?” The Lord replied, “A person is sure to achieve the results of his *karma*.”

*tabe śrīvāsa tāra vṛttānta kahila
jāiche saṅkalpa, jāiche triveṇī praveśila*

Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita then related the details of Haridāsa’s decision and his entering the waters at the confluence of the Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī.

śuni’prabhu hāsi’kahe suprasanna citta

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu heard these details, He smiled in a pleased mood and said, “If with sensual intentions one looks at women, this is the only process of atonement.”

Although the details have not mentioned by any of our previous *ācāryas*, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—who is an *ācārya* in the true line of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and who is an eternal associate of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, and thereby omniscient like Him—explained in detail why Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu externally rejected Choṭa Haridāsa. Śrīla Prabhupāda showed in his *Sat-śikṣā Pradarśanī* (spiritual education exhibition) that Mādhavī-devī, an elderly devotee advanced in devotional service and one among the three-and-a-half associates of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, had a young maidservant in her home. It was this maidservant with whom Choṭa Haridāsa had glanced upon with lusty eyes, through which he ‘spoke’ intimately.

Restrictions in accepting service

Through this pastime, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has clearly demonstrated how the mere touch of a sense enjoyer effects the *sādhaka*. If even uncooked grains carry the sentiment and consciousness of those who touch them, then what can be said of offerings cooked by a non-devotee or by persons with material desires? It is for this reason that our *ācāryas* have advised us to remain very careful about what we accept from others. In Hindi it is said, “*jaisā khāyoge anna, vaisā banega mana*—one develops the consciousness present in the grains he eats.” Elsewhere, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also mentioned:

*viṣayīra anna khāile malina haya mana
malina mana haile nahe kṛṣṇera smaraṇa*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 6.278)

If eaten, the grains of a materialist contaminate the mind. A contaminated mind cannot remember Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu was so sensitive to these subtle points that He could immediately recognize the mood present in the rice offering. Although an ordinary person may not be so advanced that he can identify the subtle consciousness present in an offering made by a materialistic person, the effect does in fact exist, and one must certainly bear the reactions. Therefore, if we truly wish to remain sincere in our efforts in *bhakti*, we should simply follow the teachings of our *guru-vargas* while recognizing our inability to properly understand the consciousness of those offering us food.

A lesson about the proper consciousness for service

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has mentioned that Choṭa Haridāsa is not to be considered a person with lusty desires. In fact, he is an eternal associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and through him, Śrīman Mahāprabhu imparted several useful teachings to us, as mentioned in the pastime above.

*mahāprabhu—kṛpā-sindhu, ke pāre bujhite?
priya bhakte daṇḍa karena dharma bujhāite*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 2.143)

Śrīman Mahāprabhu is an ocean of mercy. Who can understand Him? In chastising His dear devotees, He establishes *dharma*.

Obtaining the Results of Activities is Dependent upon the Body's Partnership with the Mind

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu desired to visit South India alone, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu respectfully requested and convinced Him to take with Him on His journey the *brāhmaṇa* Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa. Along the way, Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa became charmed by the Bhaṭṭathāris—a group of gypsies that increases its numbers by using women to allure outsiders—and left the association of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, but was quickly rescued by Śrīman Mahāprabhu Himself. The fact that Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa was susceptible to the allurements of the Bhaṭṭathāris shows that although he was in the physical association of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, his mind was elsewhere.

Deriving the highest benefit from any activity is dependent upon one's ability to fully and attentively absorb the mind in that particular activity. Activities performed only by body will mostly prove fruitless, because in such activities, the attentiveness of the mind has been withdrawn. Although a student attending college may have a perfect record of attendance, he will not pass his exams if he has not concentrated in his studies. Likewise, when one drives a car or operates machinery with a wandering mind, accidents are bound to happen.

During the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, there was a *brahmacārī* who was residing in the *maṭh* for two to three years. One day, Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed to that *brahmacārī* and asked the nearby devotees, “Who is that person?”

Confused, His disciples replied, “Śrīla Prabhupāda, you know perfectly well he has been in the *maṭha* for some time. We cannot understand why you are asking this question.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “Truthfully, I have never seen this person in the *maṭha*.” The deep meaning of Śrīla Prabhupāda's words is that although a person may physically reside in the *maṭha* for many years, he is not residing in the *maṭha* in the true sense unless his mind resides there, also.

Another time, a *brahmacārī* was quietly sitting alone, when Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed to him and asked the nearby devotees, “Why does this *brahmacārī* chatter so much? Tell him to remain quiet, if even for a moment.” After hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda's words and witnessing his manifestation of omniscience, the devotees' astonishment knew no bounds. They understood Śrīla Prabhupāda was pointing out that although the *brahmacārī* sat quietly and externally appeared peaceful, his mind was neither quiet nor peaceful.

The conclusion is that a person's real position is determined not by his external activities, but by his consciousness during the performances of those activities.

Although Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī had never physically gone to Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, Śrīman Mahāprabhu is quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 14.217) as stating, “*īho dāmodara-svarūpa-śuddha-vrajavāsī*—This Svarūpa Dāmodara is a pure Vrajavāsī (resident of Vṛndāvana).”

Similarly, although Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatīpāda had never physically gone to Navadvīpa-dhāma, it would be impossible for learned persons to deduce this fact after reading his *Śrī Navadvīpa-ṣaṭaka*, in which he describes the astonishing glories of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma.

There is a proverb in English: “You are where your mind is.” The mind connects the body and soul together, and so performing any activity with the body will not be of much benefit if the mind is absent. Conversely, the results of performing an activity may be achieved by one who performs that activity not by body, but by a fully absorbed mind. For example, although it may not be possible to physically perform *vaiṣṇava-sevā*, *dhāma-parikramā*, or reside in Vraja, a *sādhaka* will obtain astonishing results if he

attentively performs these activities by mind.

In describing the pastimes and daily activities of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has mentioned that he first engaged his mind in remembering the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa before engaging his other faculties—his speech, hands, nose, ears, eyes and so on—in Kṛṣṇa’s service:

*sa vai manah kṛṣṇa-padāravindayor
vacāṁsi vaikunṭha-guṇānuvarṇane
karau harer mandira-mārjanādiṣu
śrutim cakārācyuta-sat-kathodaye*

*mukunda-liṅgālaya-darśane dṛṣau
tad-bhṛtya-gātra-sparśe ‘ṅga-saṅgamam
ghrāṇam ca tat-pāda-saroja-saurabhe
śrīmat-tulasyā rasanām tad-arpite*

*pādau hareḥ kṣetra-padānusarpaṇe
śiro hṛṣīkeśa-padābhivandane
kāmaṁ ca dāsyē na tu kāma-kāmyayā
yathottamaśloka-janāśrayā ratiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.4.18-20)

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja engaged his mind in serving the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his words in describing the qualities of Śrī Bhagavān, his hands in cleaning Śrī Hari’s temple, and his ears in hearing Acyuta’s blissful pastimes. He engaged his eyes in seeing the Deity of Mukunda, different temples, and the holy places; all his bodily limbs in touching the bodies of Kṛṣṇa’s *bhaktas*; his nostrils in smelling the divine smell of *tulasī* offered to Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet; and his tongue in tasting the *prasāda* offered to Bhagavān. His feet were always engaged in walking to Bhagavān’s holy places, and he would pay obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja would offer garlands, sandalwood paste, *bhoga*, and similar paraphernalia in Bhagavān’s service, not with the desire to enjoy himself, but to receive the love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa that is present only in His *śuddha-bhaktas*.*

Because Śrī Ambarīṣa Mahārāja performed these activities in the proper sequence by first engaging his mind, he received their true benefit: loving attachment for Bhagavān, which is the very life of His pure devotees.

Non-duplicity and Compassion

Prerequisites for the Sincere Observance of Bhāgavata-dharma

In the beginning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Vedavyāsa has stated:

*dharmāḥ projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām
vedyaṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivadaṁ tāpa-trayonmūlanam
śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kiṁ vā parair īśvaraḥ
sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.1.2)

“In this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, I will explain *bhāgavata-dharma*, the true and topmost duty of the living entities. If a person devotedly hears this most sublime scripture and follows the *bhāgavata-dharma* explained within, his threefold miseries will be destroyed, he will meet with all auspiciousness and he will then realize true knowledge about the Supreme Truth. Thus, he will become able to bind the Supreme Lord within his heart as per his own sweet will.

“For a person desirous of attaining the above-mentioned symptoms, there is no need to hear or follow any scripture other than *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But an applicant of the university of *bhāgavata-dharma* must have two qualifications. Firstly, he should not engage in *kaitava* (pretentious cheating), and secondly, he should be a *nirmatsara sādhu*, a person whose heart is full of compassion for all living beings, including himself.”

We will firstly discuss the word *kaitava*. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written:

*ajñāna-tamera nāma kahiye 'kaitava'
dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa-vāñchā ādi saba*

*tāra madhye mokṣa-vāñchā kaitava-pradhāna
jāhā hôte kṛṣṇa-bhakti haya antardhāna*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.90, 92)

The superlative degree of ignorance (*ajñāna-tama*) is called *kaitava*, and it refers to activities performed to attain *dharma* (religiosity), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (sense gratification) and *mokṣa* (liberation). Amongst these, the desire for *mokṣa* is foremost, because it results in the disappearance of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.

From this, we can understand that acts performed with the aim of attaining *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* or *mokṣa* are done so due to a superlative degree of ignorance, that is, a sheer lack of knowledge. It is essential for an aspiring *sādhaka* to understand the *svarūpa* (intrinsic nature) of these four things, and we will therefore discuss them at this time.

Dharma:

Here, *dharma* refers to the activities prescribed in the Vedas, such as *varṇāśrama-dharma*, and not *ātma-dharma*. *Varṇāśrama-dharma* means to only perform the duties prescribed for one's *varṇa*, or social order (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *sūdra*), and *āśrama*, or spiritual order (*brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*). Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has stated that although one may be promoted to higher planetary systems by following *varṇāśrama-dharma*, in reality that person falls into a hellish condition of material life if he fails to render service to Kṛṣṇa.

*cāri varṇāśramī jādi kṛṣṇa nāhi bhaje
svakarma kôrite se raurave paḍi' maje*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā, 22.26)

Such a person adhering to the deceptive path of *varṇāśrama-dharma* remains bereft of the eligibility to be promoted to his permanent transcendental residence, which is beyond this material existence.

Therefore, he remains within the fourteen planetary systems, where he suffers the results of his *karma*, whether pious or impious.

For example, if a person is locked in a dark room and is not given anything to eat or drink, he will surely die of starvation or dehydration after some time. Alternatively, if a person is force-fed an abundant amount of eatables and is whipped every moment in which he refrains from eating, he will also surely die. Just as these two methods, starvation and overeating, are opposite but equally effective methods for killing someone, the *jīva* suffers both the punishment and pleasure meted out by Māyā-devī, who gives the *jīvas* residence in both the upper or lower planetary systems according to the their respective *karma*. Despite whether they are given residence in the upper or lower planetary systems, the *jīvas* verily suffer. It is for this reason that Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has envisioned the results of following *varṇāśrama-dharma* as hellish.

Artha:

The word *artha* here refers to worldly material wealth, and not *kṛṣṇa-prema-dhana*, the supreme goal and true wealth of the *jīva*. In one of his *kīrtanas*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written:

*dhane jadi prāṇa dita, dhanī rāja na marita,
dharamara hôte rāvaṇa
dhane nāhi rakhe deha, deha gele nahe keho,
ataeva ki kôribe dhana?*

Śrī Kalyāṇa-kalpataru (1.12.3)

If wealth were to have the power to prolong life, then a rich king would never have to die, and Rāvaṇa, the king of Laṅkā (who had a palace made out of gold), would have become an eternal resident of the Earth planet. By wealth one cannot protect one's body, and if the body goes, one does not have a connection with anyone. Therefore, what will be done with such wealth?

The conclusion is that material wealth does not protect anyone. Instead, we see that in most cases the words of Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī prove true:

*tathāpi viṣayera svabhāva — kare mahā-andha
sei karma karāya, jāte haya bhava-bandha*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 6.199)

The nature of *viṣaya* (material wealth) is to extend complete blindness and force a person to perform such activities by which he becomes trapped in material existence.

Although a person may externally wear Vaiṣṇava dress, *tilaka*, *kaṇṭhi-mālā* and so on, and though he may perform some act of *bhajana-kriyā* and externally take initiation, he is not to be considered a pure Vaiṣṇava until he is *anyā-bhilāṣa śunya*, devoid of all material desires. Wealth, in the form of finances, position and other things, are blinding, and they force one to perform such activities by which one becomes entangled in material affairs. If after hearing and being fully aware of this fact a person willfully engages his time and energy in accumulating the wealth of this material world, then it is purely self-deception.

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has stated:

*prema dhana binā vyartha daridra jīvana
dāsa kôri' vetana more deha prema-dhana*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 20.37)

My unsustainable life is useless without the treasure of love for You, and I therefore pray that You accept Me as Your servant and give Me a wage in the form of *prema*.

The only wealth worthy of our aspiration is *prema-dhana*. It is eternal, full of transcendental bliss, and it completely attracts Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thus, it has the capacity to take us to the spiritual world, our eternal home.

Kāma:

The word *kāma* has been described by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī as follows:

*ātmendriya-prīti-vāñcha - tāre bôli 'kāma'
kṛṣṇendriya-prīti-icchā dhare 'prema' nāma*

*ataeva kāma-preme bahuta antara
kāma-andha-tamaḥ, prema-nirmala bhāskara*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līla 4.165, 171)

The desire to gratify one's own senses is *kāma* (lust), and the desire to please the senses of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *prema* (love). Therefore, lust and love are quite different. Lust is the superlative degree of darkness, whereas love is like the shining sun.

Bhagavān has provided us with eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, hands, legs, a heart, kidneys and many other bodily organs, as well as thousands of other things related to this material world. If we engage these things in His service, the satisfaction of all our senses will be completely ensured. But if we engage these objects, which have been provided to us by Him, in fulfilling our own sense desires or those of other similar-minded individuals, then is it not considered treacherous?

For example, when a qualified person earns a good job, the employer provides him a suitable salary, luxurious accommodations, an air-conditioned office and an air-conditioned car, so that he will be able to engage all his energy and efforts in efficiently executing his job. But if that person uses all the facilities provided by his employer in satisfying his own needs or the needs of his family members, relatives and friends instead of engaging them in his employer's service, then it will be considered cheating. Such cheating will lead to the loss of his job and consequently deprivation of the use of all the facilities previously given by the employer. Similarly, if we do not engage our senses and facilities provided by the Supreme Lord for the satisfaction of His transcendental senses, then we may be deprived of obtaining these senses in our next birth.

Mokṣa:

Here, the word *mokṣa* refers to *sayujyā-mukti*, or becoming one with Śrī Bhagavān by either merging into His body or by merging into His *brahma* effulgence. Any effort made to achieve this kind of *mokṣa* is the topmost act of duplicity. Foolish persons consider that by obtaining *mokṣa*, they will relieve themselves of the miseries of this material world, but such logic is equivalent to a person committing suicide in order to relieve a headache. In truth, the endeavor to attain *mokṣa* completely abolishes the desire to identify oneself as a loving servant of the all-compassionate Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and it is therefore considered as the foremost act of *kaitva*.

Kaitava and pratiṣṭhā

In his *Śrī Manaḥ-sikṣā*, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has stated in the verses beginning *are cetah prodyat-kapaṭa-kuṭināṭī-bhara-khara* and *pratiṣṭhāśā dhrṣṭā śvapaca-ramaṇī me hr̥di naṭet* that *kaitava* (duplicity) is the biggest enemy of the *jīva*, and has referred to it as the embodiment of a donkey

and as the paramour of the shameless dog-eating, outcaste witch named Pratiṣṭhā (the desire for worldly fame and recognition).

Śrīla Dāsa Gosvāmī has expressed his feeling that his mind, while thinking itself to be purified by bathing in the urine of the *kaitava*-donkey, is actually being burned by such a bath. Finally, he requests his mind to cease engaging in this duplicity, and instead bathe in the nectarean ocean of pure love for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala. With these verses of *Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā* in mind, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has expressed in his *kīrtana*, “*pratiṣṭhā lāgiyā, śāṭhya ācaraṇa*—for the pleasure of (the witch named) *pratiṣṭhā*, my mind is inclined toward the performance of duplicitous activities.” Kapaṭa, the paramour of the witch named Pratiṣṭhā, does everything in his power to please his beloved, and even readies himself to perform the most vulgar activities avoided by even animals of the lowest species.

The word *kaitava* used by Śrīla Vedavyāsa has been elaborately explained by our *ācāryas*, who have advised us that in order to rid ourselves of *kaitava*, we must take shelter of the purest devotees of the Lord.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda has written:

*rādhā-dāsyā rahi, chāḍi' bhoga-ahi
pratiṣṭhāśā nahe kīrtana-gaurava*

Vaiṣṇava ke? (16)

Become situated in *rādhā-dāsyā* (the service of Śrīmatī Rādhikā) and give up the serpent of material enjoyment. Know that the desire for respect and adoration is not the glory of *kīrtana*.

*jaḍera pratiṣṭhā, śūkarera biṣṭhā
jāna nā ki tāhā māyāra vaibhava*

*kanaka-kāminī, divāsa-jāminī
bhāviyā ki kāja, anitya se-saba*

*tomāra kanaka, bhogera janaka
kanakera dvāre sevaho mādharma*

Vaiṣṇava ke? (2, 3)

Worldly fame is the excrement of hogs. Do you not know that it is the glory of Māyā? What is the use of fixating day and night on gold and women, when all such things are temporary? Your gold breeds indulgence. With it, serve Mādhava.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has also mentioned that living for millions of lifetimes in the body of an animal, bird or insect is superior to acting with *kaitava* in a human body, and that only honest, non-duplicitous persons achieve the topmost spiritual welfare.

In conclusion

Dharma, artha, kāma and *mokṣa* can only be considered *puruṣārtha*, the goal of life, when they are used to attain *prema*, the topmost *puruṣārtha*; otherwise they are to be understood as sheer foolishness. A person desiring to follow *bhāgavata-dharma* must be well aware of this. These subjects can only be understood after one takes complete and unconditional shelter at the lotus feet of the dearest associates of the Lord, and then follows in their footsteps; otherwise they will be deceived by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The Supreme Lord's Supreme Engagement

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is devoted to His devotees

The devotees of Bhagavān, being devoted solely to Him, are constantly engaged in His service, and they dedicate their lives to preaching His glories both near and far. Similarly, the Lord reciprocally engages Himself in the service of His dearest devotees, arranging for their greatness to be exhibited everywhere. Therefore, the definition of the word *bhakta* is ‘one who has *bhakti* for Bhagavān,’ and the definition of the name Bhagavān is ‘a Personality who has *bhakti* for His *bhaktas*.’

Revealing the glories of the vraja-gopīs

For the purpose of broadcasting the glories of the *vraja-gopīs* to the entire world, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, while in the company of Śrī Nārada in Dvārakā, once performed the pastime of having a headache. Seeing the Lord's distress, Śrī Nārada Muni asked, “My Lord, how may I serve You? Would You like me to bring medicine to relieve Your headache?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, “Yes, but the type of medicine I require is very specific. The only remedy for this headache is to smear the foot dust of My devotee on My forehead. Therefore, please search for a devotee willing to donate his or her foot dust to Me.”

After hearing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's request, the thought to cure the Lord with his own foot dust did not even enter Śrī Nārada's mind, and so he approached Śrī Kṛṣṇa's queens. He not only approached all the other queens of Dvāraka, but also the most prominent among them, Śrī Rukmiṇī-devī. All of them, including Śrī Rukmiṇī, did not agree to give their foot dust.

Śrī Rukmiṇī's seemingly complete surrender to Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Prior to her marriage with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Rukmiṇī-devī had written Him an extremely heart-melting letter, in which she expressed her mood of complete surrender to Him: “Having heard about Your divine glories, I have been conquered and subsequently purchased. Thus, I find myself attracted to no one other than You. Please do not think me to be shameless as a result of this letter; I am left with no other choice. I vow I shall never marry an ordinary man made of flesh and bones. If you refuse to accept Me as your wife, I shall engage in severe penances and give up this body, and I shall continue performing severe austerities for hundreds of lifetimes until the time I am finally able to attain Your mercy.”

Concern for our own suffering can be an obstacle in prema-sevā

Although Śrī Rukmiṇī-devī possessed a deep mood of surrender to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, because of her fear of having to suffer a hellish condition as a result of putting her foot dust on the head of the Supreme Lord, she was unwilling to come forward and offer her foot dust in order to relieve His headache. Her refusal to serve the Lord in this way teaches us that although one may have achieved an elevated stage of devotion and surrender, some trace of *ātmendriya-prīti-vāñchā* (concern for pleasure of one's own senses) may still remain within.

Because Śrī Nārada Muni was unable to find even one devotee in Dvārakā willing to offer his or her foot dust to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he returned to Śrī Kṛṣṇa to notify Him that his attempt was unsuccessful. Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked him, “Did you visit Vraja and ask any of the Vrajavāsīs for their foot dust?”

Śrī Nārada replied, “No, my Lord, I have not gone to Vraja.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa requested him, “Please go there and ask for the foot dust of a Vrajavāsī.

The glories of the gopīs' fearless service

When Śrī Nārada Muni arrived in Vraja, he informed them of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's situation as well of his inability to find any willing devotees in Dvārakā to help Śrī Kṛṣṇa because of their fear of going to hell. Hearing everything, the *vraja-gopīs* replied, “O Nārada! Do you think the fear of hellish consequences will deter us in our service to Kṛṣṇa? We are prepared to eternally reside in hell for the sake of providing Him with even a moment's pleasure. Therefore, please take our foot dust and immediately give it to Kṛṣṇa without any delay.” Saying this, the *vraja-gopīs* collected their foot dust and gave it to Śrī Nārada.

Through the above pastime, Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifested to the whole world the glories of *vraja-gopīs*, their superiority to the queens of Dvārakā, and their supremacy over all His other devotees. Similarly, in order to manifest that Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the topmost among all the *vraja-gopīs*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa left one billion *gopīs* during the *rāsa* dance and went into the forest looking for Her.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the supremely expert examiner

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has many different varieties of devotees, and He has vowed to manifest Himself to them in proportion to the level of devotion they have for Him:

*ye yathā mām prapadyante
tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (4.11)

Ordinary people are unable to determine the true qualification of a devotee, because external appearance is not the basis by which eligibility is ascertained. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, however, is able to fully understand the subtlest, innermost *bhāvas* of his devotees, just as an expert doctor is able to recognize the subtlest of diseases in a seemingly healthy person simply by looking at him, by examining his pulse or by using an X-ray machine, Ultrasound, CT Scan, MRI or any other piece of medical equipment. The Lord, out of loving reciprocation, then reveals the glories of His devotee's *bhāvas* to the entire world in due course of time. This is His supreme engagement.

Only Bhakti can Purify the Mind

Vṛndāvana—the manifestation of Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s heart

In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya-līlā 13.137), Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī quotes the words of Śrī Gaurasundara speaking in the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhikā:

anyera hṛda ya-mana, mora mana-vṛndāvana,
‘mane’ ‘vane’eka kôri’jāni
tāhā~tomāra pada-dvaya, karāha jādī udaya,
tabe tomāra pūrṇa kṛpā māni

Here, Śrī Gaurasundara is saying, “Ordinary worldly people consider the heart, which is always engaged in *saṅkalpa* and *vikalpa* (acceptance and rejection), to be their mind (*mana*). But having given up all desires for both enjoying and renouncing this material world, My heart constantly aspires to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I consider this heart of Mine as non-different from Śrī Vṛndāvana, the land of the divine pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. O Kṛṣṇa! It is My earnest desire that You kindly manifest Your lotus feet in that Vṛndāvana, which is the manifestation of My heart and is decorated with all the suitable ornaments for rendering service unto You. Only then will I know that You are extremely merciful to Me.”

The difference between the mind and the citta

The above statement clearly indicates that when our heart remains constantly immersed in the thoughts of this material world and, being unsteady, performs *saṅkalpa* and *vikalpa*, it is called *mana* (mind). This *mana* is the link between the soul and the gross body, and its sole function is *saṅkalpa* and *vikalpa*.

However, when this *mana* engages in the service of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān, by the positive influence of their association and as a result of their mercy, it gives up the act of *saṅkalpa* and *vikalpa* and becomes fixed in the principle that the eternal constitutional position of the soul is as a servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. At that time, the mind is known as *citta*, or *sattva*. Only such a pure heart, established in its most purified state (*viśuddha-sattva* or *nirguṇa*) and free from the contaminations of *tama*-, *raja*- and *sattva-guṇas* (the material modes of ignorance, passion and goodness), possesses the eligibility to compel Kṛṣṇa to manifest Himself.

You are what you ‘eat’

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.26.2) it is said, “*āhāra-śuddhau sattva-śuddhiḥ*—when one’s food (*āhāra*) is pure, his *sattva* (*mana*) becomes purified.” There is also a saying in Hindi: “*jaisā khāoge anna vaisā banegā mana*—your mind becomes like the food you eat.”

The important thing to note here is that for gross-minded people, the term *āhāra* refers only to that which is taken through the mouth. However, in actuality, we take different types of *āhāra* through all of our five senses—the eyes, nose, tongue, ears and skin. Therefore, simply taking sanctified food through the mouth is not enough to purify the *mana*; the *āhāra* accepted by the other five senses must also be sanctified.

Accepting impure āhāra even through only one sense can cause a fall down

It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that Ajāmila was a man of great virtues, well versed in the scriptures, mannerly, good-tempered, disciplined, truthful and inclined toward serving all types of guests, particularly the elderly. Externally, there was no impurity in whatever food he would eat. However, when he was once returning from the forest after collecting fruits, flowers, firewood and other items on the

order of his father, he saw a half-naked prostitute engaged in improper activities with a lusty, shameless *śūdra*. Through this prostitute, and as a result of impure *āhāra* entering Ajāmila through his eyes, the witch named Lust overpowered his mind. Ajāmila consequently fell down from his adherence of the truthful and proper behavior prescribed in the scriptures, and thus turned away from religious principles.

The only process for cleansing the mind

Despite sincere endeavors to purify ourselves by sanctifying the *āhāra* accepted by the five senses, there remains a doubt as to whether or not we will meet with success. Because our *mana* has not yet been purified completely, the five senses—which can be likened to five tape recorders residing in our body—function automatically, despite efforts on our part to artificially remain aloof from material sense objects. When one ‘recorder’ stops, another automatically plays whatever we have previously recorded through our senses in either this lifetime or in previous lifetimes. Therefore, the previous recordings will not be deleted as long as we refrain from creating new recordings. Unless and until we repeatedly make sincere endeavors to feed to our senses a purified diet by staying exclusively in the association of *sādhus*, whose minds are purified, our previous recordings will not be deleted. We will thus remain unsuccessful, and our *mana* will not become purified.

In order to teach us how to cleanse our *mana*, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā*, 22.29), “*vastutaḥ buddhi ‘śuddha’ nahe kṛṣṇa-bhakti bine*—in reality, it is not possible to purify one’s *mind* without performing *kṛṣṇa-sevā*.”

The *mana* can only be purified by engaging all our senses in the service of Bhagavān under the guidance of pure Vaiṣṇavas; it is not possible by any other means.

Recognizing a Praṇayi-bhakta

The meaning of ‘praṇayi-bhakta’

The term *praṇayi* has been used by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in his *kīrtana*:

*gaura āmāra, jê-saba sthāne
karalô bhramaṇa raṅge
se-saba sthāna, heribô āmi
praṇayi-bhakata-saṅge*

Śaraṇāgati (6.3.3)

In the company of *praṇayi-bhaktas*, I will behold all the places where my Gaura joyfully visited.

Another term for *praṇaya* is ‘deep attachment,’ and so a *praṇayi-bhakta* is one who possesses a deep attachment in his heart for Bhagavān and His devotees. Because of this attachment, the *praṇayi-bhakta* possesses an inclination to glorify everything related to Bhagavān, and he therefore wishes to visit, glorify, and even reside in His pastime places, which have been blessed by His presence and the presence of His devotees:

*kṣāntir avyārtha-kālatvaṁ
viraktir māna-śūnyatā
āśā-bandhaḥ samutkaṇṭhā
nāma-gāne sadā ruciḥ*

*āsaktis tad-guṇākhyāne
prītis tad-vasati-sthale
ity ādayo ’nubhāvāḥ
syur jāta-bhāvāṅkure jane*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.3.25–6)

When *bhāva* arises, the following nine symptoms are observed in a devotee: (1) forbearance, (2) the effective use of one’s time, (3) detachment, (4) an absence of pride, (5) the steadfast hope that Kṛṣṇa will bestow His mercy, (6) an intense longing to obtain one’s goal, (7) a constant taste for chanting the holy name, (8) attachment to describing and hearing about Kṛṣṇa’s qualities and (9) affection for Kṛṣṇa’s pastime places.

Praṇayi-bhaktas are not situated on the material platform in which one misidentifies oneself with the body. Every activity they perform is exemplary, whether they are eating, walking, sitting, or even sleeping. They engage in *sevā* at every moment, and never in mundane, self-gratifying activities.

Praṇayi-bhaktas know well the glories of Bhagavān’s pastime places. The respective glories and pastimes of those places automatically manifest in their hearts by the divine mercy of the Lord. In this connection, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written in his *kīrtana*, “*dhāmera svarūpa, sphuribe nayane*—the transcendental form of the *dhāma* will appear to my vision.” The use of the word *sphūrṭi* here indicates that the pastimes spontaneously manifest in their hearts. As a result, there is no need for them to meditate on what to speak at a particular place; *hari-kathā* relating the glories of that place comes very naturally.

Praṇayi-bhaktas are concerned only with their absorption in the moods of *sevā*

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; other common people were not permitted to enter there. Once, the Gauḍīya Maṭha devotees were performing *kīrtana* in that area

under the guidance of my *paramārādhya*tama Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. The *sevakas* of Lord Jagannātha on the chariot became so ecstatic by hearing the *kīrtana* that they lifted Guru Mahārāja on their shoulders and forcibly brought him onto the Lord’s chariot.

At that same time, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was dancing and singing in front of the chariot, absorbed in the mood experienced by the *vraja-gopīs* when they meet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Kurukṣetra:

*sei ta 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 experienced 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. Most of the devotees were absorbed in the *kīrtana* and did not notice this, but one *brahmacārī*, having witnessed the theft, went forward and caught the pickpocket.

The *brahmacārī*, while restraining the thief, 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 the *brahmacārī*’s words. When the *brahmacārī* tried more insistently, Śrīla Mahārāja 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.”

Who can recognize a *praṇayi-bhakta*?

Of all the people in front of whom Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was singing, who among them could truly understand his 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 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 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 ourselves. By the mercy of those elevated Vaiṣṇavas, we will be granted the vision to clearly understand the true form of their transcendental activities and 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 misconstrue their conduct as improper.

*mahat-kṛpā vinā 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 *praṇaya-bhaktas*.

We have seen that if anyone would give even a single rupee to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda 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 were fully absorbed in *kīrtana* and the divine moods of the Ratha-yātrā festival, and were therefore not at all agitated. The junior, neophyte devotees, however, wanted to apprehend and punish the pickpocket, and so they must have felt unhappy 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-bhūtānāṁ
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 know about it. Inversely, 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 are without 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 in a similar mood expressed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu during Ratha-yātrā. Due to their absorption, they were oblivious to the pickpocket. The neophyte devotees, however, were oblivious to the senior Vaiṣṇavas’ absorption, and so they gave priority to apprehending the pickpocket.

Only a sincere student is qualified to assess the qualification of his teacher

Suppose we come across two individuals: one is a *praṇayi-bhakta*, and the other is only claiming to be a *praṇayi-bhakta*. We may observe that the person pretending to be a *praṇayi-bhakta* is externally exhibiting all the symptoms of a *praṇayi-bhakta* and is forcing us to accept him as such, while the actual *praṇayi-bhakta* makes no endeavor to prove his position to others. If we are unqualified, insincere and not adequately intelligent or well-versed in the *sāstras*, how we will be able to differentiate between the two?

A student in eighth standard was assigned a tutor by his parents. The tutor was highly qualified and

possessed a PhD degree. However, after receiving lessons for some time, the student complained to his parents, “I am unsatisfied with this tutor; he is unable to teach me properly. It would be better if you could arrange for a new tutor.”

Because of the student’s sincerity in his studies, he was easily able to realize that the tutor was not teaching him properly. Similarly, we will only be able to identify a *praṇayi-bhakta* if we too are completely sincere. If we are not sincere at heart, we will simply cheat ourselves, whether we happen to meet with a *praṇayi-bhakta* or a pretender.

The true meaning of sincerity

When used in normal speech, the word ‘sincere’ can have one of two meanings, the first of which indicates truthfulness: “Whatever I say is one hundred percent true.” When composing letters, we present ourselves as trustworthy individuals through the use of such sign-offs as ‘sincerely’ and ‘yours truly.’

The second meaning of the word ‘sincere’ relates to one’s serious and honest efforts to accomplish an assigned or consciously accepted commitment. A Sanskrit synonym for ‘sincere’ is found in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.7.42):

*yeṣāṁ sa eṣa bhagavān dayayed anantaḥ
sarvātmanāśrita-pado yadi nirvyalīkam
te dustarāṁ atitaranti ca deva-māyāṁ
naiṣāṁ mamāham iti dhīḥ śva-śṛgāla-bhakṣye*

Anyone who is specifically favored by Bhagavān due to their sincere surrender—that is, surrender without pretention to the service of Bhagavān— can overcome the insurmountable ocean of illusion and can understand Him. But those who are attached to this body, which is fit to be eaten by dogs and jackals, cannot do so.

Here, the concept of sincerity is indicated by the use of the word *nirvyalīkam*, which refers to a person who never nurtures desires belonging to this material world, and wishes only to remain constantly engaged in *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. It is this second meaning that should be accepted when the word ‘sincere’ is used to describe individuals whose one and only desire is to serve Bhagavān and His devotees. Although temporary material desires may manifest in a devotee due to the presence of *anarthas* that have not yet been fully removed, he should be considered as sincere if he possesses in his heart genuine feelings of remorse and prays for the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas to overcome his *anarthas*.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said to Uddhava:

*tato bhajeta mām prītaḥ
śraddhālur dṛḍha-niścayaḥ
juṣamāṇaś ca tān kāmān
duḥkhodarkāṁś ca garhayan*

*proktena bhakti-yogena
bhajato māsakṛṇ muneḥ
kāmā hṛdayyā naśyanti
sarve mayi hṛdi sthite*

*bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiś
chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ
kṣīyante cāśya karmāṇi
mayi dṛṣṭe ‘khilātmani*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.20.28-30)

A *sādhaka* who has developed faith in narrations about Me and is disgusted with all types of *karma* may still be unable to

give up material enjoyment and the desire for such enjoyment. Knowing that such pleasures are actually sources of misery, he should condemn himself while attempting to enjoy them. Thereafter, in due course of time, he may be able to worship Me with love, faith and fixed determination. When the *sādhaka* constantly worships me by the method of *bhakti-yoga* that I have described, I come and sit in his heart. As soon as I am established there, all material desires and the *saṁskāras* on which his material desires are based are destroyed. When the *sādhaka* directly sees Me as Paramātmā situated in the hearts of all living entities, the knot of the false ego in his heart is pierced, all of his doubts are cut to pieces, and his desire to perform *karma* is completely eradicated.

The use of the word *prītaḥ* here indicates that the *sādhaka* becomes completely engaged, and that the entirety of his efforts, which are full of sincere love and affection, are done solely with the aim to make *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* his life and soul. He does not engage in performing these activities as a matter of duty; rather, he performs them with complete sincerity out of true, intrinsic love, or *prīti*.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has expressed this idea in his *kīrtana* based on the fourth verse of *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam*, in which he prays in the mood of a sincere *sādhaka*:

*tviṣaye je prīti ebe āchaye āmāra
sei mata prīti hauka caraṇe tomāra*

Whatever affection I have for worldly pleasures, may I develop the same affection for your lotus feet.

Similarly, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has prayed:

*yuvatīnām yathā yūni
yunām ca yuvatau yathā
mano 'bhiramate tadvan
mano me ramatām tvayi*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.153)

Just as young women take pleasure in thinking of young men, and young men take pleasure in thinking of young women, kindly let my mind take pleasure in You alone.

In the aforementioned *śloka*s from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that although devotees may possess certain shortcomings in their *sādhana* (such as the inability to control their senses) due to their remaining *anarthas*, He Himself cuts the roots of all the material desires of those who, while lamenting their *anarthas*, worship Him with sincerity—the same type of sincerity expressed by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī—and have full faith and firm conviction in their hearts that they want to perform, at all costs, the *sevā* of Bhagavān and His devotees without concern for the material outcome. By this, the devotees will be free from all material hindrances.

It is merely the desire to become sincere that ensures a devotee's attainment of sincerity. With this sincerity, the devotee becomes eligible to perform the type of *bhakti* that will elevate him to the platform on which he can identify a true *praṇayi-bhakta*.

The Glories of Calling Out the Names of Pure Vaiṣṇavas

Although a person may be unaware of the true qualities and glories of pure Vaiṣṇavas, he will obtain his topmost spiritual welfare by chanting or calling out the names of such personalities in the mood of earnest prayer. Our *purva-ācārya* Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī has written in *Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā* (5):

*asac-ceṣṭā-kaṣṭa-prada-vikaṭa-pāśālibhir iha
prakāmaṁ kāmādi-prakaṭa-pathapāti-vyatikaraiḥ
gale baddhvā hanye 'ham iti bakabhid vartmapa-gaṇe
kuru tvaṁ phutkārān avati sa yathā tvāṁ mana itaḥ*

“Lust, anger and so on are a band of dacoits who assail one suddenly on the open road of material life. They have bound my neck licentiously with the torturous, dreadful ropes of wicked deeds and are thus killing me.” O mind, speaking in this way, you must grievously cry out to the powerful and merciful devotees who are the protectors of the path of devotion leading to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the killer of Bakāsura. Hearing your piteous cry, they will surely protect you from such a condition.*

In his commentary on *Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has given the translation of the above verse in a Bengali poetic composition:

*kāma-krodha-lobha-moha-mada-matsaratā-saha,
jīvera jīvana-pathe bōsi'
asac-ceṣṭā rajju-phāṣe, pathikera dharma nāṣe,
prāṇa la'ye kare kaṣākaṣi*

*mana, tumi dharô vākya mora
ei saba bāṭapāḍa, atīśaya durnivāra,
jakhôna gheriyā kare jora*

*āra kichu nā kôriyā, vaiṣṇavera nāma lôṭiyā,
phukāriyā ḍākô uccarāya
baka-śatru-senāgaṇe, kṛpā kôri' nija-jane,
jā'te kare uddhāra tomāya*

Here, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is saying, “Lust, anger, greed and bewilderment sit along with pride and envy on the living entity’s path of material existence and bind him through the ropes of *asac-ceṣṭā* (wicked deeds), by which they destroy his religiosity (his personal character and noble intention to follow the path of spiritual principles). They continue to further tighten the noose around his neck so as to eventually kill him spiritually.

“Therefore, O mind, listen to my words very carefully. Lust, anger and the rest are like dishonest and insincere liars, cheaters, and tricksters. When they surround a helpless person and manifest their complete power over him, it becomes extremely difficult and immensely painful for him to free or protect himself from their grip.

“O mind! Do nothing else but loudly call out the names of the Vaiṣṇavas. As a result, these commanders of the army of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Bakāsura, affectionately considering you their own, will surely be merciful and deliver you from the clutches of those dacoits.”

Śrī Devakīnandana dāsa has written at the end of his *Vaiṣṇava-vandanā*:

*prabhāte uṭhiyā paḍe vaiṣṇava-vandanā
kona kāle nāhi pāya kona-i jantraṇā*

*devera durlabha sei premabhakti labhe
devakīnandana dāsa kahe ei lobhe*

The meaning is, “Those who after rising in the early morning recite these prayers to the Vaiṣṇavas—especially the prayers addressing all the Vaiṣṇavas by name—never face any distress in their lives. Merely through this means of calling out the names of the Vaiṣṇavas, such persons attain *prema-bhakti*, which is rarely obtained by even the demigods. With the earnest and sole desire to attain this *prema-bhakti*, I, Devakīnandana dāsa, call out the names of the Vaiṣṇavas.”

Kṛṣṇa's Mercy is Dependent on Snehamaya-sevā

Mercy is the result of service

Many people come to me and request, “Mahārāja-jī, please bestow your mercy and extend your blessings to us, so that we may attain *śuddha-bhakti* (pure devotional service) and ultimately attain *prema* for Śrī Bhagavān.” But truly speaking, mercy and blessings are not things for which one ought to ask. Moreover *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān will not bestow their mercy simply because we have asked for it. Although through external vision it is seen at times that *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas extend their blessings and best wishes to others through sweet words or by keeping their hand on one's head, such acts are not to be understood as true blessings. True blessings and mercy appear on their own from the very heart of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān, even without being requested. Although such blessings may not have been expressed externally through words or actions, the effect and the fruits of such true blessings can be directly seen either immediately or in due course of time.

The desire to bestow mercy and blessings does not appear in the heart of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān without reason; the manifestation of such things is solely dependent on whether or not one has performed *snehamaya-sevā*, service imbued with loving affection. For this reason alone, Śrīman Mahāprabhu has said:

*sneha-sevapeksā mātra śrī-kṛṣṇa-kṛpāra
sneha-vaśa hañyā kare svatantra ācāra*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 10.139)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy is dependent only on service performed with the utmost love and affection. Because He is obliged only by affection, He acts independently.

The manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy does not depend on caste, familial lineage or any other material qualifications, but it definitely depends on the loving and affectionate service performed by the seeker of mercy.

Even though Śrī Kṛṣṇa is supremely independent, He becomes controlled by His devotees' *sneha-yukta sevā*, service imbued with love and affection. And in order to fulfill their desires, He engages Himself in performing pastimes, all the while maintaining His complete independence.

The true meaning of loving, affectionate service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is to engage in His service according to His direct advice, moods and innermost desires. No one else can know this subject matter better than His *anukūla-śakti*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. She is the embodiment of pure love for Kṛṣṇa, always absorbed in the mood of serving Him, and She is thus the topmost among all *sādhus*.

Observing rules is not enough

One attracts the divine mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa not by performing service according to the regulations prescribed in the scriptures (*maryādā-sevā*), but rather by performing service with the utmost love and affection, or with a sincere, intense greed to render such affectionate service. Loving, affectionate service means to be engaged in *śrī kṛṣṇānuśīlana* (service favorable to Kṛṣṇa) under the guidance of His *anukūla-śakti*, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the embodiment of *uttamā-bhakti*. No other method is as effective in attracting the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In this regard, Śrīman Mahāprabhu has said:

*maryādā hōite koṭi sukha sneha-ācaraṇe
paramānanda haya jāra nāma-śravaṇe*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 10.140)

In conclusion, affectionate dealings bring happiness millions of times greater than dealings that follow scriptural conduct. Simply by hearing the words ‘affectionate dealings,’ the heart merges in transcendental bliss.

This subject matter has been very clearly demonstrated in the instance of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s bestowing His mercy upon King Pratāparudra, as described in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā, Chapter 12)*.

King Pratāparudra’s desire

Initially, King Pratāparudra wrote a letter to Śrī Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya requesting permission to meet with Śrīman Mahāprabhu. When Śrī Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya wrote back stating that Śrīman Mahāprabhu had not given His consent for such a meeting, the king sent another letter saying, “Please submit a request on my behalf to all the associates of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Being great devotees, they are full of spontaneous compassion for all *jīvas*, and they will thus definitely be merciful to me. Only if they request Śrīman Mahāprabhu to extend His mercy to me will I be able to attain the divine *darśana* of His lotus feet, without which I will give up this kingdom and become a mendicant.”

Śrī Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya showed the king’s letter to Śrīman Nityānanda Prabhu and all the other devotees. When Nityānanda Prabhu put forward the king’s request to Śrīman Mahāprabhu, the Lord replied, “I shall not meet with the king at the request of you all; I will only do so if Dāmodara Paṇḍita recommends it.”

In reply to Mahāprabhu’s statement, Śrī Dāmodara Paṇḍita said, “Who am I to say anything to you in this regard? Still, I can assuredly say You will definitely meet the king, and I shall be a witness to that meeting. If You ask me about my confidence in this, then my reply is:

*rājā tomāre sneha kare, tumi-sneha-vaśa
tāra snehe kôrābe tāre tomāra paraśa*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā, 12.28)

“King Pratāparudra has the utmost love and affection for You. It is Your nature to be easily controlled by the love and affection of Your devotees. By virtue of this affection alone, what to speak of receiving Your *darśana*, the king will also get Your mercy in the form of Your touch.”

A question may arise here about how it can be concluded from the previously mentioned letter alone that King Pratāparudra had great affection for Śrīman Mahāprabhu, and whether there were any other indications of his love. Although Śrī Dāmodara Paṇḍita has said in the above verse, “The king has the utmost love and affection for You,” the actual meaning is, “The king’s heart is filled with the desire to render devotional service unto You with all love and affection.” This is evident by the fact that the king had rendered direct service to the associates of Śrīman Mahāprabhu with all his heart and resources in order to please them.

Śrī Dāmodara Paṇḍita further said to Śrīman Mahāprabhu, “Although You are the supremely independent Lord, it is Your nature to be controlled by the love of Your unalloyed devotees, and You are therefore *prema-paratantra*, dependent on *prema*.”

Here it appears that the Supreme Lord is controlled by devotees who serve Him with deep love and affection. In referring to His devotee King Ambarīṣa, the Lord Himself has said to Śrī Durvāsā Muni:

*aham bhakta-parādhīno
hy asvatantra iva dvija
sādhubhir grasta-hṛdayo
bhaktair bhakta-jana-priyaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.4.63)

I am completely under the control of My devotees. Indeed, I am not at all independent. Because My devotees are completely devoid of material desires, I sit within the cores of only their hearts. What to speak of My devotee, even those who are devotees of My devotee are very dear to Me.

The Lord further stated:

*mayi nirbaddha-hṛdayāḥ
sādhavaḥ sama-darśanāḥ
vaśe kurvanti mām bhaktyā
sat-striyaḥ sat-patīm yathā*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.4.66)

As chaste women bring their gentle husbands under control by service, the pure devotees, who see everyone according to their respective position and are completely attached to Me in the core of the heart, bring Me under their full control.

If such is the Lord’s expression of love for His devotee Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, then we can consider how intense His love for *anukūla-śakti* Śrīmatī Rādhikā must be. In this regard, Kṛṣṇa once assumed the form of Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī and Himself penned the words “*smara garala khaṇḍanam, māmā śirasi maṇḍanam, dehī pada-pallavam udaram*—Rādhike! Offer the fresh buds of Your enchanting feet as an ornament upon My head,” (*Gīta-govinda* 10.8) and thereby expressed His sentiment. For Kṛṣṇa to make such statements or truly feel these sentiments, there is absolutely no loss of His supremely divine independence. He is not controlled by any person, but rather by His own heartfelt desire alone. Therefore, this submission of His is known as *prema-paratantrata*, dependent only on *prema*.

The king’s affectionate service

While Dāmodara Paṇḍita was assuring Śrīman Mahāprabhu that He would certainly meet with King Pratāparudra at some point, Nityānanda Prabhu submitted a suggestion to the Lord. He proposed that if Śrīman Mahāprabhu were to supply the king with a cloth He had personally worn, perhaps the king’s agitation would be pacified to some extent, enabling him to retain his life. Śrīman Mahāprabhu accepted this proposal and had one of His used garments sent to the king. Although the king became overjoyed at receiving the Lord’s *prasāda* in the form of His cloth, he still yearned to attain His direct *darśana*.

Thereafter, King Pratāparudra approached Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya and requested him to convey to the Lord his sincere prayers to receive His divine *darśana*. Agreeing to the king’s request, Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya repeatedly informed the Lord of the king’s desire and petitioned Him to meet with the king. Śrīman Mahāprabhu declined, but mentioned that He would be willing to meet with the king’s son. At their meeting, the Lord embraced the prince, imparted him with *prema*, and even gave him the order to visit Him daily.

Despite the fact that King Pratāparudra had many of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s associates petition the Lord on his behalf, he was still unable to obtain the Lord’s *darśana*. But Śrī Dāmodara Paṇḍita’s prediction that Śrīman Mahāprabhu would meet with him quickly proved true when the Lord witnessed him performing *snehamaya-sevā*.

On the occasion of the Ratha-yātrā festival, King Pratāparudra took a golden broom in his hands and swept the road in front of the chariots. Afterward, he sprinkled the pathway with sandalwood-scented water. Although he was a king, he performed these apparently menial services with great love and affection, realizing fully the significance of service to the Supreme Lord.

*mahāprabhu sukha pāila se-sevā dekhite
mahāprabhura kṛpā hōilō se-sevā hōite*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 13.18)

Śrīman Mahāprabhu became blissful upon seeing King Pratāparudra’s service, and as a result of that service alone, King Pratāparudra saw Śrīman Mahāprabhu dancing in seven groups of devotees simultaneously and performing *saṅkīrtana* during the chariot festival, a scene not witnessed by most of the devotees. Later, the king also received the fortune of reciting *Gopī-gīta* to Mahāprabhu, a song very dear to Him, while engaging in the rarest service of massaging His lotus feet. Upon hearing the verse of *Gopī-gīta* that starts *tava-kathāmṛtaṁ*, Mahāprabhu became so pleased that He not only touched the king, but also embraced him tightly, saying, “You have given Me priceless jewels. I am embracing you because I do not have anything with which to repay you.” Receiving Mahāprabhu’s touch, the king manifested symptoms of *prema*. In this way, Śrīman Mahāprabhu became controlled by the king’s affectionate and loving service, and He thus accepted all his services, as per his desire.

The meaning of *ahaitukī*

Now, a question arises here that if the Lord’s manifesting His mercy is dependent on the loving and affectionate service performed by His devotees, then what is the purport of the term *ahaitukī* quoted in the scriptures with reference to His mercy? Although *ahaitukī* is generally understood to mean ‘that which manifests without any *hetu* (cause),’ there is another meaning. The vowel *a* [in *ahaitukī*] refers to Viṣṇu, and in turn Kṛṣṇa, just as it does in the word *aum* [the combination of *a*, *u* and *m*]. The word *haitukī* means ‘in relation to,’ ‘only for’ and ‘unto’ the person or object in question. When we add these two concepts together, the complete meaning of the word *ahaitukī* becomes ‘with relation to Kṛṣṇa, only for Kṛṣṇa, and unto Kṛṣṇa.’

When it is mentioned in the scriptures that Bhagavān bestows His *ahaitukī* mercy, it means that when He finds a devotee’s heart to be devoid of even a scent of attachment for anyone else except Him, and sees that devotee totally absorbed in His exclusive devotion—*ananyāś cintayanto mām* (*Bhāgavad-gītā* 9.22)—only then does He bestow His mercy upon him.

On the other hand, when a devotee prays to the Lord in a mood similar to that of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *kīrtana* based on the fourth verse of *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam*, “*ahaitukī bhakti hr̥de jāge anukṣane*—may *ahaitukī-bhakti* for the Supreme Lord awaken in my heart,” the true meaning of *ahaitukī* here is that the devotee is praying for the mood of loving and affectionate service related to Kṛṣṇa, directly for Kṛṣṇa, and toward Kṛṣṇa to manifest in his heart. If the other meaning of *ahaitukī* were to be applied here—that is, ‘without any cause or purpose’—then it would indicate *niṣkāma-karma* (selfless activity), and then the word would have no special significance or importance. In such a case, Kṛṣṇa’s bestowal of His mercy to one person and not another without reason would charge Him with committing the fault of discrimination (*pakṣa-pāta*). But Kṛṣṇa Himself has said in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.29):

*samo ’ham sarva-bhūteṣu
na me dveṣyo ’sti na priyaḥ
ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā
mayi te teṣu cāpyaham*

I am equally disposed to all living beings and am neither inimical nor partial to anyone. But as those who serve Me with *bhakti* are attached to Me, I, too, am bound by affection for them.*

Therefore, the word *ahaitukī* does not mean ‘without cause,’ but rather ‘only for Kṛṣṇa’s cause;’ this definition is more appropriate.

The True Meaning of Dhāma-vāsa

Question:

My Guru Mahārāja instructed me that I should reside in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, because there, the mercy of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrīman Nityānanda Prabhu flows freely, without discrimination. Although I obeyed his order and have been staying there for some time, still, my heart is dry and I am unable to focus on performing the limbs of *bhakti*. My mind goes here and there, forcibly downing me in this material world. Moreover, *sādhū-saṅga* is not easily available for me there. I know of one or two other places where I could easily have such association, but I fear that if I were to leave Māyāpura-dhāma, I would be disobeying the order of my Guru Mahārāja. What is my duty in this situation?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

The words and instructions of transcendental personalities have deep meanings that are not easily understood by even great scholars, what to speak of the ignorant. Even in this material world we see that misunderstanding exists everywhere. How, therefore, can we expect to truly grasp the grave purport of a *sādhū*'s instructions?

There was once a man whose father was about to pass away. Before his death, the father gave to his son four instructions in the form of riddles: (1) “Set up a marketplace next to our house,” (2) “Drink water only in the middle of the pond,” (3) “Each and every bite of food you take should include the head of a fish,” and (4) “Whenever you are confused, seek the advice of a man with three heads.”

The father passed away before his son could ask for the meanings of these enigmatic instructions, and so the son carried out their literal meanings. By doing so, he became increasingly poor, weak and fickle-minded. He remembered that his father ordered him to seek the advice of a man with three heads when he was unsure of something, and so he unsuccessfully searched for such a person.

Somehow or other, he came in contact with a wise old man. The man, noticing the son's sorrow, asked him, “What is troubling you?”

The son replied, “It is said that one meets with all auspiciousness by following the orders of senior persons. But after following the instructions of my father, I see that just the opposite is happening to me.” The son then informed the old man of his father's four instructions.

Smiling, the old man said, “ ‘A person who has three heads’ refers to someone who keeps both hands by his head at all times; in other words, a very old, experienced person. As an old man, I can help you properly understand your father's instructions. ‘Setting up a market place outside your home’ does not mean that you should rent your property to others for the sake of constructing shops. Rather, it means that because you are a farmer, you should sell your crops from your own property instead of in some distant market. By doing this, you will meet with financial success. ‘To drink water only in the middle of a pond’ means that you should drink water during meals, not before or after. This will bring good health. ‘Eating a fish head with every bite’ means that you should eat small fish that are eaten whole in one bite, and never big fish.” [According to those who eat fish, small fish are considered healthier than large fish.]

Once the son heard the true meanings of his father's instructions, he began following them and eventually became wealthy and healthy. In the same way, because it is impossible for us to understand the true meanings of the instructions of our *ācāryas* on our own, we must consult with greater authorities who can clearly explain our duty.

In order to understand your Guru Mahārāja's instruction for you to stay in the *dhāma*, you must first understand that mere physical presence does not amount to *dhāma-vāsa*. Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī never once set foot in Vṛndāvana, but still, Śrīman Mahāprabhu has said, “*īho dāmodara-*

svarūpa-śuddha-vrajavāsī—this Svarūpa Dāmodara is a pure Vrajavāsī.” Similarly, although Śrīla Prabhodānanda Sarasvatīpāda never visited Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, learned authorities always accept that he had, due to his extraordinary glorification of that place.

We are all equipped with a gross body, a subtle body and a soul. In this material world, we see that some people give more concern to the mind. If the need arises, such people give up physical comforts for the sake of peace of mind; they choose to endure physical hardship in order to reside in an environment that is more favorable for mental tranquility. There are yet more intelligent people who give precedent to the needs of the soul.

Considering these points, we can conclude that bodily presence is not the barometer by which residence is measured. In truth, it is only when one’s mind is absorbed in thoughts of a place that one can be considered to reside there. In this way, when a *sādhū* instructs one to stay in the *dhāma*, he is actually insinuating that one must always think about the *dhāma*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, His teachings, and how to take full shelter of that place, and that one must remain fixed in the moods of the real *dhāma-vāsīs*.

It has been mentioned in the writings of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “*yathāya vaiṣṇava-gaṇa sei sthāna vṛndāvana*—in whatever place there are Vaiṣṇavas, that place is Vṛndāvana.” In the highest conception, *dhāma-vāsa* refers to staying in the association of and serving those who glorify Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates and discuss their pastimes. Such a place is to be known as Vṛndāvana; there, the dust is considered *vraja-raja*, a mountain or hill is considered Girirāja Govardhana and a river or stream is considered Yamunā-devī. Such is the power of a pure devotee. If we reside in a place where there are no Vaiṣṇavas from whom we can hear *hari-kathā*, then we can never say that we are truly staying in the *dhāma*.

Once, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was ordered by his Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Gaura-kīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, never go to Kolkata, because it is the residence of Kālī. But externally, we see that Kolkata was the very first place Śrīla Prabhupāda established a *maṭha*, and from there he performed so many activities, such as printing books, preaching, arranging festivals and so on. When he was asked about why he disobeyed the order of his *gurupāda-padma* not to go to Kolkata, he replied, “I have never gone to Kolkata. I have only ever visited Vaiṣṇava-dhāma.” Though most people understood Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja’s instruction in an external way, Śrīla Prabhupāda understood its deep import. In saying that he never went to Kolkata, Śrīla Prabhupāda was saying that he never came in contact with the material world, and that he only ever had *darśana* of transcendental objects. Wherever he went, he went only for the service of Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. In actuality, although he appeared to be staying in a distant city, he was always residing at the lotus feet of his *gurudeva*.

Understanding the words of a personality like Śrīla Gaura Kīśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja is not an easy affair. Once, Jagadīśa Bābū—the first disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who later became known as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja—visited Bābājī Mahārāja. Upon arriving at Bābājī Mahārāja’s *bhajana-kuṭīra*, Jagadīśa Bābū offered Bābājī Mahārāja a watermelon. Bābājī Mahārāja accepted, and told him, “It is very good that you have come to the *dhāma*. You should always reside here.”

Jagadīśa Bābū replied, “Bābājī Mahārāja, I cannot stay. I have a return ticket home.”

Bābājī Mahārāja’s eyes became wide with astonishment. He said, “A return ticket? I have never heard it to be possible for someone who has come to the *dhāma* to return back.”

Hearing this, Jagadīśa Bābū was shocked. He considered, “Although I have read the words Śrī Kṛṣṇa has spoken in *Bhagavad-gītā* many times, until now I have not understood His statement, “*yad gatvā na nivartantetaḥ dhāma paramaṁ mama*—whoever comes to My abode does not return.” He immediately offered *praṇāma* to Bābājī Mahārāja and requested, “Please tell me how it would be possible for me to

permanently reside in the *dhāma*, when I have many other obligations and responsibilities.”

Upon seeing Jagadīśa Bābū’s sincerity, Bābājī Mahārāja instructed him that residing in the *dhāma* does not mean to physically reside in a holy place, and that he could become a resident of the *dhāma* only by taking shelter of *dhāma-vāsīs* like Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. He then told him that if he were to take full shelter at the Ṭhākura’s lotus feet, he would be considered a *dhāma-vāsī* no matter where he may be. In this way, he would in truth never leave the *dhāma*, even if he were to return home.

When a person surrenders his complete independence and takes shelter at the lotus feet of an associate of the Lord, he never leaves the *dhāma*, even if sometimes, for the service of his *guru-vargas*, he has to physically go some other place.

The Means to Obtain Eternal Peace and Complete Satisfaction

Performing karma is unsatisfying

In this material world, very few persons are actually engaged in performing *karma*, or activities prescribed by the Vedas. Most persons perform *vikarma*, or activities prohibited by the Vedas, while the remaining few are engaged in *akarma*, or activities neither prescribed nor prohibited by the Vedas. What to speak of those engaged in *vikarma* and *akarma*, even persons who sincerely perform *karma* cannot attain eternal peace and complete satisfaction.

There is no satisfaction even in the higher planetary systems

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.19.18) states that because every activity performed in this material creation is temporary, all the planetary systems, including Brahmaloḥa, contain only inauspiciousness:

*karmaṇām pariṇāmitvād
ā-viriñcyād amaṅgalam*

The happiness found in the material creation is simply the result of *karma*, and so there exists no permanent happiness nor auspiciousness in both this world or the higher planetary systems. Indeed, one cannot attain eternal satisfaction even in the heavenly abodes, because they are also temporary and exist for a finite duration. In addressing this lack of satisfaction, *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (2.12.13, 14) states:

*icchati śatī sahasraṁ
saha śrī lakṣamīhate kartum
lakṣādhipatī rājyaṁ rājāpi
sakalām dharām labdhum*

*cakradharo 'pi suratvaṁ surabhāve
sakalasurapatir-bhavitum
surapatir-ūrdhvagatitvaṁ
tathāpi na nivartate tṛṣṇā*

The possessor of a hundred pieces of silver desires a thousand. The possessor of a thousand desires a hundred thousand. The possessor of a hundred thousand desires a kingdom. The possessor of a kingdom desires the position of emperor. The possessor of the position of emperor desires the position of a demigod, after which he successively desires and attains the positions of Indra, Brahmā, and eventually Śiva. Even after attaining such a post, his thirst for power remains unquenched.

Only by performing bhakti can one attain complete satisfaction and peace

Until one attains the lotus feet of the eternal entity Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the source of all auspiciousness, one can never achieve real peace or complete satisfaction:

*kṛṣṇa-bhakta—niṣkāma, ataeva 'śānta'
bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kāmī—sakali 'aśānta'*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 19.149)

A devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is without desires, and is therefore always peaceful. Those who desire sense enjoyment, liberation and mystic perfections, however, remain agitated.

All living entities of this world wish only to satisfy their senses by providing sweet sounds for the ears, soft objects for the skin, beautiful forms for the eyes, delicious foods for the tongue, and sweet fragrances for the nose. These five elements—sound, form, taste, touch and smell—are found in their

complete, infinite quantities in Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa reveals their true transcendental forms only to His pure devotees. Having experienced the pure forms of these elements, the devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are completely satisfied and become free from all desires to obtain any object other than the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In this way, they attain true peace. Therefore, the attainment of real peace and complete satisfaction is possible only by the performance of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.

Questions & Answers

Our duty in the absence of sādhu-saṅga

Question:

Because we now have the opportunity to associate with Vaiṣṇavas in the *dhāma* and hear their *hari-kathā*, we feel enthusiastic. But soon we must return home to our respective countries, where we do not have such an opportunity. While there, what is the best type of *sādhana* for us to perform, so that we may always remember and serve the Supreme Lord with the same enthusiasm as we now have?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

After associating with Vaiṣṇavas, it is the duty of a *sādhaka* to try his or her level best to practice whatever was seen, heard and recorded in the heart at the time of that association. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has stated in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līla*, 22.69):

*ḥāhāra komala śraddhā, se ‘kaniṣṭha’jana
krame krame tēho bhakta hōibe ‘uttama’*

One whose faith is soft and malleable is called a neophyte, but by gradually following the process he will rise to the platform of a first-class devotee.

If a *sādhaka* follows the teachings and conduct of our *ācāryas* with a sincere heart, then he will eventually become firmly established in proper Vaiṣṇava *sadācāra* (conduct) and *siddhānta* (philosophical principles), even if he has only recently begun performing *sādhana-bhajana*.

The true meaning of ‘śrī kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana’

Question:

I have seen in the *śāstras* that sometimes the word *kīrtana* has been used to refer to the chanting of *harināma*, while other times the word *saṅkīrtana* has been used. What is the significance of the word *saṅkīrtana*?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

In his *Bhakti-sandarbha* (*Annucheda* 269), Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has defined the term *saṅkīrtana* as “*bahubhir militvā kīrtanaṁ saṅkīrtanam ity ucyate*—when many devotees assemble and perform *kīrtana*, it is called *saṅkīrtana*.” Elsewhere, in his *Krama-sandarbha*, he has also described it as “*saṅkīrtanaṁ bahubhir militvā tad-gāna-sukhaṁ śrī-kṛṣṇa-gānam—saṅkīrtana* is when many devotees assemble and with faith chant the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa for His pleasure.”

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja has further explained the word to mean *samyak rasera kīrtana*, or that *kīrtana* in which all *rasas* are included. *Madhura-rasa*, or the conjugal mellow, encompasses all the other *rasas*, namely *śānta* (neutrality), *dāsyā* (servitorship), *sakhya* (friendship) and *vātsalya* (parental). In *saṅkīrtana*, all *rasas* are expressed in relation to *madhura-rasa*.

It is only in Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa that all these five *rasas* exist in complete perfection, and not in His other incarnations such as Śrī Rāmacandra, Nṛsiṃhadeva and so on, or even in Dvārakādīśa Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, *saṅkīrtana* is comprised only of the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and not any of His *avatāras* or expansions.

In the first verse of *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has specifically instructed us to perform *śrī kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*, and not merely *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*. The term *śrī kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

means to perform *kīrtana* of the names of Kṛṣṇa together with those of Śrī. Here, the name ‘Śrī’ refers to *sarva-lakṣmīmayī* Śrī Rādhikā. It is only when Śrīmatī Rādhikā is by the side of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that He can correctly be called ‘Kṛṣṇa.’ Without Her, He is merely ‘Bakāri,’ the killer of the demon Bakāsura. This has been mentioned by our *purva-ācārya* Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī in his *Śrī Vilāpa-kumsumāñjali* (102):

*āśābharair amṛta-sindhumayaḥ kathañcit
kālo mayāti-gamitaḥ kila sāmprataṁ hi
tvaṁ cet kṛpāṁ mayi vidhāsyasi naiva kiṁ me
prāṇair vrajena ca varoru bakāriṇāpi?*

O Śrīmatī Rādhikā! It is only for the hope of obtaining the nectarean ocean of *sevā* to You and having *darśana* of Your pastimes that I have, with great struggle, maintained my life. But if you do not bestow Your mercy upon me even now, what use is this life, the land of Vraja and even Bakāri (the enemy of Bakāsura)?

Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī explains in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 4.13):

*ataeva viṣṇu takhōna kṛṣṇera śārīre
viṣṇu-dvāre kare kṛṣṇa asura-saṁhāre*

Present in the body of Kṛṣṇa is Viṣṇu. It is through this Viṣṇu that Kṛṣṇa kills the demons.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has echoed Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī’s sentiments in his *Gītāvalī* (Śrī Rādhāṣṭaka 8.1, 3):

*rādhā-bhajane jādi mati nāhi bhelā
kṛṣṇa-bhajana tava akāraṇa gelā*

If the desire to worship Śrī Rādhā does not arise in your heart, then your worship of Kṛṣṇa goes in vain.*

*kevala mādharma pūjaye, so ajñānī
rādhā-anādara karōi abhimānī*

One who worships only Mādhava is ignorant and one who disrespects Śrī Rādhā is simply conceited.*

Deep siddhānta and moods are only understood through sādhu-saṅga

Question:

We have heard that the forms of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva and Subhadrā-devī that appear in Jagannātha Purī have manifested as a result of their experiencing *aṣṭa-sāttvika vikāra* (eightfold symptoms of transcendental ecstasy) upon hearing Rohiṇī-Maiyā speak the glories of the Vrajavāsīs. How was Subhadrā-devī, who is a *dvārakā-parikāra* (an associate of the Lord in Dvārakā-dhāma) and not a *vraja-parikāra* (an associate of the Lord in Vraja-dhāma), able to manifest the same symptoms of *vraja-prema* experienced by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

All *vigrahas* (Deity forms) of Bhagavān have manifested in this world to bestow mercy on the living entities. The word *vigraha* is comprised of two smaller words: *vi* and *graha*. The word *vi* stands for *viśeṣa* (special), and *graha* means *grahaṇa* (to accept). Thus, the word *vigraha* means that the Lord accepts offerings in a most special way through His manifestation as the Deity. One cannot understand these topics without the association of devotees.

Although by hearing from Vaiṣṇavas we may be fully convinced that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma’s

forms as Jagannātha and Baladeva in Purī are manifestations of the *prema-vikāra* (bodily transformations arising from love) They experienced upon hearing the glories of the Vrajavāsīs, we are still unable to understand why Śrī Subhadrā-devī, being a *dvārakā-parikara*, was able to experience this *vraja-rasa*. Why is this?

I will give a couple of examples in order to help you understand. Previously 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; no one else was permitted to enter. Once, Gauḍīya Maṭha devotees were performing *kīrtana* in that area under the guidance of my *paramārādhyatama* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. The *sevakas* of Lord Jagannātha on the chariot became so ecstatic by hearing the *kīrtana* that they lifted Guru Mahārāja onto their shoulders and forcibly brought him onto the Lord’s chariot.

At that same time, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja was dancing and singing in front of the chariot, absorbed in the mood experienced by the *vraja-gopīs* when they meet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Kurukṣetra:

*sei ta 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 experienced 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. Most of the devotees were absorbed in the *kīrtana* and did not notice this, but one *brahmacārī*, having witnessed the theft, went forward and caught the pickpocket.

The *brahmacārī*, while restraining the thief, 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 the *brahmacārī*’s words. When the *brahmacārī* tried more insistently, Śrīla Mahārāja 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.”

Another time in 1956, my Guru Mahārāja was singing a Bengali *kīrtana* in front of Ādi-keśavadeva during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*:

*ohe! vrajavāsī torā bole dāo
kothā gele kṛṣṇa pābo*

O Vrajavāsīs! Please tell me where I should go in order to meet with Kṛṣṇa.

Because the majority of the devotees present during that *kīrtana* were not Bengalis, they were unable to understand the meaning of the words. Still, tears flowed from everyone’s eyes. Previously, I had never danced in *kīrtanas*, but the power of this *kīrtana* was such that I began dancing without any plan or even the slightest desire; it was as if something forced me to dance.

After Guru Mahārāja’s *kīrtana*, one *mātā-jī* from Jagadhari (in Punjab) named Mitrarāṇī, approached Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāśa Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and asked, “Could you please explain to me the meaning of the *kīrtana* Guru Mahārāja was singing just now?” After Śrīla Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja explained the meaning to her, she said, “The bliss we all felt during

that *kīrtana* was indescribable. But even after hearing the meaning, the same kind of bliss is not entering my heart. Why is this?”

At that time, I asked her, “Mātā-jī, if you did not know the meaning of the *kīrtana*, then why were you crying upon hearing it?”

She replied, “Actually, I do not know. By hearing the *kīrtana*, tears automatically started coming; it was natural.”

Through these two pastimes, we can understand that when *praṇayi-bhaktas*, such as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and my *paramārādhayatama* Guru Maharaja, feel the bliss of meeting or the pain of separation, devotees around them are also affected.

When an air-conditioner or a large fire is nearby, there is no need to approach it closely in order to feel its effect; its cooling or heating effect can be felt even at some distance. Also, when a mother gives birth to or loses her child, she feels bliss or cries bitterly. At that time, language is not needed for others to understand the bliss or pain she is experiencing; whoever comes close to her becomes affected by her mood and feels her happiness or distress.

The lessons in these examples can be applied to the pastime in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Baladeva were trying to enter the assembly room where Rohiṇī Maiyā was explaining about the loving relations between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Vrajavāsīs. Śrī Subhadrā-devī stood guard at the door, restricting her two Brothers from entering. Although They were forced to remain outside, They could hear a little something of Rohiṇī’s Maiyā’s *kathā*, and so the two of Them pressed Their ears against the door. Hearing this *vraja-līlā-kathā*, the transcendental bodies of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Baladeva began to manifest symptoms of intense *prema*. Simply by being in close proximity to Them, Śrī Subhadrā-devī, also, became surcharged with the symptoms manifested in Their transcendental bodies. In this way, although she was a resident of Dvārakā, because of her proximity to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Baladeva, who were both absorbed in *vraja-rasa*, she became affected by those *bhāvas* and was able to manifest such elevated symptoms of *prema*.

Yukta-vairāgya

Question:

What is the meaning of the term *yukta-vairāgya*?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Out of his natural renunciation, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja never wore footwear for years during his stay in the *maṭha*. Once, his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, wanted to send him abroad to preach the mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked his disciple Śrī Kuṅja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu (later known as Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja after accepting *sannyāsa*) to go to Kolkata and buy the most expensive pair of shoes available for Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Śrī Kuṅja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu purchased a pair for thirty-two rupees—a very expensive amount at that time—from Kolkata and brought them to the *maṭha*. Śrīla Prabhupāda told him, “Give these shoes to Vana Mahārāja and ask him to come see me while wearing them.”

After Śrī Kuṅja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu told Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja about Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja wore the shoes and went before Śrīla Prabhupāda. Upon seeing him wearing the shoes, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Today your *vairāgya* (renunciation) has been perfected, because you renounced even your renunciation for the most superior objective—the service of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.”

To accept everything favorable for the service of Bhagavān and His devotees while rejecting

everything unfavorable for that service is the true definition of *yukta-vairāgya*.

Subhadrā-devī is Yogamāyā

Question:

Why is Subhadrā-devī is often called Yogamāyā?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa possesses a *śakti* known as *yogamāyā*, which means ‘the energy that unites the devotees with the Lord.’ This potency of the Lord, in its external form, separates one from the Lord and is called *māhāmāyā*. In his *Kalyāṇā-kalpataru*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has composed a *kīrtana* in which he has written:

*kuladevī yogamāyā more kṛpā kôri’
āvaraṇa samvaribe kabe viśvodarī*

O Kuladevī Yogamāyā! When will you, being merciful to me, lift the curtain with which you cover the universe in your external form of Mahāmāyā?

This Yogamāyā arranges the Lord’s endless varieties of pastimes; this is her *sevā*. Although she serves strictly according to the desire of the Lord, her arrangements are such that both the devotees and the Lord remain unaware of her influence and consider themselves, as well as each other, to be ordinary human beings. Without the presence of Yogamāyā, the wonderful pastimes of the Lord cannot manifest. Therefore, in order to manifest the confidential pastimes of the Lord in Dvārakā, this *yogamāyā-śakti* manifests as Śrī Subhadrā-devī. Śrī Subhadrā-devī is also known as Bhakti-devī.

Surrender and the superiority of bhakti

Question:

I have heard that *śaraṇāgati* (surrender) is considered the doorway to *bhakti-yoga*, and that without it, we cannot actually perform *bhakti*. Should I practice *bhakti* in my present condition despite being unable to fully surrender, or should I first wait until I am able to fully surrender myself?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja has described the nine limbs of *bhakti* as follows:

*śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ
smaraṇam pāda-sevanam
arcanaṁ vandanaṁ dāsyam
ātma-nivedanam*

*iti puṁsārpitā viṣṇau
bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā
kriyeta bhagavaty addhā
tan manye ’dhītam uttamam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.5.23-24)

The *bhakti* of Bhagavān Viṣṇu has nine limbs: (1) hearing and (2) chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu; (3) remembering them; (4) serving His lotus feet; (5) offering the Lord respectful worship; (6) offering prayers to the Lord; (7) becoming His servant; (8) becoming His friend and (9) surrendering everything unto Him. If one performs these nine limbs of devotion with a mood of surrender, then we should know this to be the topmost knowledge of the scriptures. His cultivation of the scriptures is successful*

In these verses, the words *ātma-nivedanam* and *arpitā* both mean ‘to offer,’ or ‘to surrender,’ but the word *arpitā* refers to initial, preliminary surrender, whereas *ātma-nivedana* refers to the total dedication of oneself. *Ātma-nivedana* is the result of following the other limbs of *bhakti* with preliminary surrender (*arpitā*).

In his commentary to the above verses, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda has stated that the *sādhaka* attains total surrender (*ātma-nivedana*) only after he first preliminarily surrenders (*arpitā*) himself to the Supreme Lord and then engages in the other above-mentioned eight limbs of *bhakti*. It is only from this stage of *arpitā* that one begins performing actual *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana* and so on, by which he can attain pure *bhakti*. In other words, the nine limbs of *bhakti* bear fruit only when one performs them with total dedication to the lotus feet of Bhagavān.

It is seen that the scriptures often prescribe paths other than *bhakti*, such as *karma-yoga*, the performance of duties prescribed in the Vedas; *jñāna-yoga*, the cultivation of empirical knowledge; *tapasya*, the performance of penances; and other paths. By perfecting the practice of *karma-yoga*, one comes to the stage of *jñāna-yoga*, and by perfecting *jñāna-yoga*, one is brought to the path of *bhakti*. All such paths are in fact steps that progressively lead to the path of one-pointed *bhakti*, which is the only path leading to the lotus feet of Bhagavān.

The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has Himself minimized all the other paths and firmly established *bhakti* as the most superior means to attain Him. During a conversation with His dear devotee Uddhava, He gave this message for the benefit all living beings:

*na sādhayati mām yogo
na sāṅkhyam dharma uddhava
na svādhyāyas tapas tyāgo
yathā bhaktir mamorjitā*

Śrīmad Bhagavatam (11.14.20)

My dear Uddhava, I cannot be controlled by those who study Sāṅkhya philosophy or *śāstra*, or who perform mystic yoga, pious acts, austerity or renunciation. I am controlled only by that powerful *bhakti* rendered to Me by My pure-hearted devotees.*

The address of Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Question:

Where does Kṛṣṇa reside?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Our *purva-ācārya* (previous preceptor) Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written in one of his *kīrtanas*:

*je-dina gr̥he, bhajana dekhi
gr̥hete goloka bhāya*

Śaraṇāgati (6.3.6)

This means, “The day I see *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, in the form of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, being performed in my residence under the guidance of pure devotees is the day it appears as if Goloka, the topmost abode of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, has manifested there.”

Should we consider that the residence of a devotee is actually transformed into Goloka by the performance of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, or is such a statement merely mental speculation or exaggeration? No; this is the actual truth, and has been confirmed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself:

nāhaṁ vasāmi vaikunṭhe
na yoginām-hṛdayeṣu vā
mad-bhaktā yatra gāyanti
tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada

Padma Purāṇa (Uttara-khaṇḍa 92.21–22)

O Nārada, I do not reside in Vaikunṭha, nor in the heart of the *yogīs*. I reside wherever My pure devotees sing about Me.

The conclusion is that Śrī Kṛṣṇa resides where His names are chanted by His pure devotees. Because the word ‘Goloka’ simply means ‘the place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa resides,’ such places are transformed into Goloka by His presence during the performance of pure *harināma-saṅkīrtana*.

The significance of Śyāma-varṇa Rādhā

Question:

We see that the deities of Kṛṣṇa at different temples are either *śyāma-varṇa* (dark-complexioned) or *gaura-varṇa* (molten-gold-complexioned). However, only at a couple of places, that is, at Ṭoṭā-gopinātha in Purī and at Māna-sarovara in Vṛndāvana, do we see that the deity of Śrī Rādhā is of *śyāma-varṇa*. Is there a special purpose behind this?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

When Śrīmatī Rādhikā, out of acute feelings of separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, becomes completely absorbed in *cintana* (constant remembrance) of His name, form, qualities and pastimes, Her meditation sometimes intensifies to the point that She assumes His dark complexion. With great appreciation and reverence for this special mood of Hers, some devotees have established Her deity as *śyāma-varṇa*. In the same way, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes absorbed in remembrance of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, He assumes Her molten-gold complexion.

With a similar idea in mind, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja installed a *gaura-varṇa*, molten-gold-complexioned Kṛṣṇa in all of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti *maṭhas*. To explain the *siddhānta* in this regard, Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja composed an *aṣṭaka* entitled *Śrī Rādhā-vinoda-vihāri-tattvāṣṭakam*, in which he has written in the first verse, *rādhā-cintā-niveśena*, which means “I worship the lotus feet of that form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who, due to being thoroughly immersed in separation from Śrīmatī Rādhikā, has lost His dark complexion and has assumed Her bright, molten-gold luster.”

In this way, the *gaura-varṇa* form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *śyāma-varṇa* form of Śrīmatī Rādhikā both reveal the intensity of Their moods of separation from each other.

The position of guru

Question:

What is the nature of *śrī guru* and his instructions?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

When Hiraṇyakaśipu asked his son Śrī Prahlāda to describe the essence of the teachings he received from his *guru*, Prahlāda did not say a word about the lessons in politics taught to him by his *gurukula* teachers, Ṣaṇḍa and Amarka, but instead narrated the essence of the teachings he received from Śrī Nārada Muni about *navadhā-bhakti*, or the nine limbs of *viṣṇu-bhakti*.

Through his description of these teachings, Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja, who is a renowned devotee of Śrī Hari, established that one who instructs about *bhagavad-bhakti* is alone worthy of being called *guru*, and

not one who gives instructions regarding material subjects of this world. In this way, Śrī Prahlāda gave prominence to such a *guru* who instructs about the performance of *hari-bhakti*.

The meaning of ‘sevā’

Question:

We have heard that the practice of *bhakti* consists of *sevā*, or service. To whom should this service be directed? What is the difference between serving man and serving God?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

According to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (*Purva-khaṇḍa* 231.3), “*bhaja-dhātu sevāyām*—the real meaning of *bhajana* is *sevā*, or devotional service.”

Sevā, in the true sense of the term, is rendered only to the *sevyā-vastu*, or a person worthy of receiving service, and not to a person who is in a state of misery.

To feel sympathy for a person in a pitiable state who prays sincerely for something is called ‘compassion,’ and to satisfy his desire by bestowing upon him the objective of his prayers is called ‘charity.’ When we see such desperate persons, feelings of compassion may arise in our heart that inspire us to give to them in charity.

These feelings and inspirations are absent, however, when we stand before a person who does not know scarcity, who does not wish to receive anything, and for whom many persons anxiously await an opportunity to serve. At that time, for our own welfare, we eagerly wait for the fortunate moment when that person will mercifully accept our humble offerings. Such offerings are called *sevā*.

A *sevaka* (servitor) considers himself subordinate to the object of his service, whom he considers far superior to himself. The act of giving in charity begets false pride and leads to the enjoyment of material objects within the fourteen planetary systems, whereas selfless service to Bhagavān and His devotees begets humility and leads to the attainment of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, the topmost attainment for the conditioned souls. Because *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān already possess everything, they are never the recipients of charity. With this in mind, one should render *sevā* to these personalities and obtain their mercy.

Pleasing śrī guru

Question:

How can I understand if *śrī guru* is pleased by my service?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

If by your service to *śrī gurudeva* your desire to serve increases, and if you observe within yourself feelings of great fulfillment and satisfaction by performing such service, then you can understand that *śrī guru* is truly pleased.

Developing śāstra-niṣṭhā

Question:

How can we cultivate a deep faith in the *śāstras*?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

By serving *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, one develops *sukṛti*, and by this *sukṛti*, one is granted a chance to associate with *sādhus*. This association is alone the cause of developing firm faith in the *śāstras*.

When a child first starts his schooling, his teacher will instruct, “This is *A*, this is *B* and this is *C*.” Although the child may not understand why each letter has its particular name, he invests his faith in the words of his teacher. After years of schooling, he finally graduates and starts a business, although he still may not understand the logical reason why *A* is called *A* and *B* is called *B*. Similarly, when a person has the opportunity to hear from *sādhus* and sincerely invests his faith in them, he becomes able to understand the nature of both the material and transcendental worlds. Although he may not fully understand the reason why *śāstra* has mentioned something in a particular way, he will firmly consider, “Whatever has been stated in the *śāstras* is perfectly correct. Although I am unable to reconcile various issues, the time will surely come when I will be able to very clearly realize and reconcile everything.”

The necessity of taking shelter of a living *sādhū*

Question:

Will it be possible for me to attain the highest perfection solely by taking shelter of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda and reading his books, or is it necessary for me to take shelter of a living, advanced Vaiṣṇava?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Firstly, it is not possible to understand the true essence of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja’s or any Vaiṣṇava’s teachings simply by reading his books. Who will confirm that you have understood and realized the pinnacle of his *siddhānta*? Although a child in the six or seventh grade may be able to read and pronounce the words written in books of a Ph.D. candidate, it is impossible for him to comprehend anything. Without admitting himself into higher education and accepting the guidance of an advanced teacher, he will be unable to recognize his own misconceptions. Reading is easy, but on our own, grasping the deep meanings of the *śāstras* will be impossible. Without the guidance of a personally present *sādhū*, we will be unable to comprehend the true essence of the teachings of our *guru-vargas* who have concluded their pastimes in this world.

Once, when Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja came to our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Hyderabad, he told us during a conversation, “I have tried my level best to teach my disciples how to follow *vaiṣṇava-sadācāra*. There are many more things I want to teach them, but they are not qualified to receive everything at this time. In the future, they will again meet with pure *sādhus* and progress according to the proper sequence, moving forward step-by-step.

My godbrother Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī (now Śrīpāda Bhikṣu Mahārāja) was once waiting outside the room of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja, hoping to have his *darśana*. At that time, he saw a very new Western devotee sitting nearby, about to apply *tilaka*. The devotee had a ball of *gopī-candana* in his hand, but had no *ācamana* cup or any water at all, and so he spat into his hand and started rubbing the ball of *gopī-candana* in it. Śrī Anaṅga-mohana Brahmācārī was shocked to see this, and 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*.”

In this story, 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.

In conclusion, it is impossible for you to understand on your own which teachings of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja are relative and which teachings are absolute. Therefore, if you desire to follow Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja, it will be essential for you to accept the shelter of a qualified Vaiṣṇava who understands the true intentions and moods of Śrīla Svāmī Mahārāja.

Association in separation

Question:

Although our desire to associate with *sādhus* is constantly increasing, we are often unable to travel and be with them. Is it possible for us to associate with them when the circumstances are such that we are physically separated?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

It is always possible to associate with *sādhus*, even if we are not able to physically be with them. If we take into our heart whatever we have heard from a *sādhu* and sincerely follow it, then we will be considered to be associating with the *sādhu*, no matter where we may be physically.

In his prayers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.14.3), Brahmā-jī prayed, “*sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatāṁ tanu-vān-manobhir*—a person should reside in a place where he can hear from pure *sādhus*.” Although it is not always possible to physically stay with *sādhus*, one should always hanker to do so. Whenever association is available to us, we should go there. We should not become lazy and think that because we are remembering Vaiṣṇavas and following their instructions there is no need to be with them physically; we must certainly go to them. However, when the circumstances do not allow us to be with *sādhus*, then ‘associating’ means to take their teachings into the heart and sincerely follow them.

The sun is known as *padma-bandhu* (friend of the lotus), because the lotus immediately blossoms upon seeing his friend the sun, and does not blossom for anyone else. Although they are physically separated by many millions of miles, due to their heart-to-heart relationship, it is considered they are together. Similarly, when a person, by the will of providence, is unable to attain the physical association of a *sādhu*, he will always be considered to be in his association if he sincerely follows his teachings.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī used to reside in Vṛndāvana, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu used to reside in Jagannātha Purī. Despite the fact that they were only in each other’s physical presence for a very short time, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda is honored by the prayer “*śrī caitanya mano-‘bhiṣṭam sthāpitaṁ yena bhūtale*—he understood the inner-heart’s desire of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and established it in this world.” Although we should always hanker for the physical presence of *sādhus*, this physical presence is not the true criterion of association.

The meaning of ‘sincerity’

Question:

What does it mean to be sincere in our practices of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Sincerity means to not have any deceit in the heart. If one wants to become a sincere follower of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, one must completely give up all kinds of hypocrisy. One should feel, “I am what I am.”

Bhagavān, in His form of Vāmanadeva, manifested pastimes as the younger brother of Indra. Externally, Indra seemed to serve the Lord in so many ways, but in his heart, he thought, “By serving like this, my position as the king of heaven will be made permanent. I will be able to enjoy more and more, and I shall never again go wanting.” This is an example of insincerity. A sincere person has no desire

other than the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. Although a person may follow all the limbs of *bhakti* and ceaselessly hear *hari-kathā*, he cannot be considered to be sincere until he is free from all selfish desires and contaminations.

Dharma, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* are all known as *ajñānatama*. *Ajñāna* means ‘ignorance,’ and *ajñānatama* means ‘the superlative degree of ignorance.’ Everything existing in the fourteen planetary systems is temporary and inauspicious. Anyone who desires such things can never be considered sincere. The term ‘sincere’ is reserved only for those who hanker only for the transcendental world and the service of Bhagavān.

Praying in the words of our guru-vargas

Question:

When praying, mediating or writing about the pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, can we do so according to our own desires, or should we follow only what our *guru-vargas* have given?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Although one can pray in whatever way one wants, it is always preferable to pray according to the examples set by our *guru-vargas*, such as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda. However, if there is by chance some yearning in our heart that has not been described in the prayers of our *ācāryas*, then it is acceptable to pray according to that mood; otherwise preference should always be given to the words of our *ācāryas*.

When a person has taken shelter at the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas, he develops *niṣṭhā* that the words used by those Vaiṣṇavas carry immense potency. Considering his own words to lack the ability to yield any desirable result, he then resolves to exclusively use the words of the Vaiṣṇavas when submitting prayers to Bhagavān. Therefore, one who is *śaraṇāgata* (surrendered) will always express one’s devotional sentiments to the Lord using only the prayers written by our *ācāryas*. To neglect this principle may be seen as a sign that one is not yet fully surrendered.

Kṛṣṇa-līlā cannot be understood by material intelligence

Question:

Although *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* clearly describes how Śrī Kṛṣṇa was taken to Mathurā by Akrūra, our Gosvāmīs have stated that Kṛṣṇa never leaves Vṛndāvana. How are we to reconcile this apparent contradiction?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

It is impossible for us to conceive with our material intelligence how such conflicting statements can both be true, yet they are certainly harmonious. Our Gosvāmīs are completely free from the four defects of *bhrama* (mistake), *pramāda* (bewilderment), *virpalipsā* (cheating) and *karaṇāpāṭava* (imperfect senses), and thus they are able to present and explain the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When Akrūra was taking Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to Mathurā and the two Brothers were taking bath, he observed that they were simultaneously playing in the water and sitting in the chariot. Akrūra became bewildered and thought, “What am I seeing?” Here, our Gosvāmīs have explained that the Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma playing in the water were Yaśodā-nandana Kṛṣṇa and Rohiṇī-nandana Balarāma, who did not continue on to Mathurā, but rather remained in Vraja, while Devakī-nandana Kṛṣṇa and Devakī-nandana Balarāma continued on to Mathurā in the chariot with Akrūra. This cannot be understood by material intelligence, because the Lord’s pastimes are beyond this material realm.

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has stated, “*janma karma ca me divyam*—My appearance and activities are transcendental.” Despite how His pastimes may appear to mundane vision, they remain transcendental. For example, although it externally appears as if Vasudeva Mahārāja brought his son Kṛṣṇa to Gokula, actually, that son, Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, never left Mathurā. When they reached the border between Mathurā and Gokula, Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa merged into Svayaṁ Bhagavān Nanda-nandana Kṛṣṇa. This took place unseen to Vasudeva Mahārāja, because it was the will of the Lord for this activity to remain hidden. Something is only seen if Kṛṣṇa desires it to be seen; otherwise it is certainly concealed.

The viraha of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa

Question:

If Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa never enters Vṛndāvana, how is it possible for Him to feel separation from the Vrajavāsīs, especially the *gopīs*?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Viraha (separation) is a *rasa*, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa desires that both He and His devotees should taste the *ānanda* (bliss) present in that *rasa*. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants to experience *viraha-rasa*, Yogamāyā, by the will of the Lord, arranges for His pastimes to appear in such a way that the Vrajavāsīs feel He is no longer present among them, although in actuality He never takes so much as a step outside of Vraja. At the same time, Yogamāyā arranges for the Lord’s devotees in Dvāraka or Mathurā to feel as if He is present with them. At that time, Devakī-nandana Kṛṣṇa, by the independent desire of Svayaṁ Bhagavān Yaśodā-nandana Kṛṣṇa, who is the cause of all causes, tastes *viraha-rasa* in order to nourish Yaśodā-nandana Kṛṣṇa’s *vraja-līlā*. Such incomprehensible pastimes are made possible by the Lord’s *acintya-śakti* (inconceivable potency), which acts according to His will.

Sewing the seed of devotion

Question:

Although we have heard that *śrī guru* gives the seed of *bhakti* at the time of *dīkṣa*, we have also heard that the *jīva* is *nitya-kṛṣṇa-dāsa*, an eternal servant of the Lord. Is the seed actually given by *guru*, or is it already present within the *jīva*?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

While it is correct to say that *śrī gurudeva* gives the seed of *bhakti*, the true purport of this statement is that the seed is already present, but it has been kept in a place where it can never grow. For example, if we keep a bag of seeds in a cupboard, can we expect them to grow? Certainly not. But if someone reminds us about the seeds, we can take them out from the cupboard, place them in earth, provide them with sunlight and water, and they will eventually turn into enormous trees and bear fruit.

Similarly, *śrī guru* reminds us that we have the wonderful seed of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* in our hearts, and he teaches us how to nourish it by engaging our entire body in *sevā*; he instructs us to hear *hari-kathā* with our ears, to clean the Lord’s temple with our hands, to speak the Lord’s glories with our tongue, and so on. By properly and sincerely following the process given by *śrī guru*, the seed of *bhakti* will sprout, grow, strengthen and eventually bear the most wonderful, sweet fruit of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

Firm faith in Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s teachings assures our perfection

Question:

In Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta*, Gopa-kumāra had to undergo an extremely difficult

process in order to attain the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana, going from one planet to another, both in this world and in Vaikuṇṭha. Do we also have to go through such a process, or are we able to practice the limbs of *bhakti* from where we are?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

We will only have to undergo a journey similar to Gopa-kumāra’s if we do not have firm conviction that what Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has taught is the pure, topmost directive that it leads to the highest destination.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda has prayed to Śrīman Mahāprabhu:

*anarpita-carīm cirāt
karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-
rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam*

Vidagdha-mādhava (1.2)

May the son of Śrīmatī Śacī-devī, Śrī Gaurahari, forever manifest within the innermost core of your heart. Adorned with the radiant splendor of molten gold, He has descended in the Age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow upon the world that which has not been given for a long time—the beauty of His own brilliantly radiant *ujjvala-prema-rasa bhakti*—service in the highest mellow of amorous love.*

In this verse, he has mentioned that Śrīman Mahāprabhu has appeared in this world to give something that has not been given in a long time: *unnatojjvala-rasa*, which is the property of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and the *vraja-gopīs*. This is a very high object.

Bhagavān does not accept vacuous praise

Question:

Although Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was actually Bhagavān Himself, He would cover his ears and become disturbed when people would address Him as ‘Nārāyaṇa.’ Why, then, did he accept it when Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī referred to Him as ‘Kṛṣṇa?’

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda has prayed to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by saying:

*namo mahā-vadānyāya
kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

Upon seeing a *sannyāsī*, the followers of Śaṅkarācārya say *namo nārāyaṇa*. The import is, “All *jīvas* are Nārāyaṇa, and because you have taken *sannyāsa*, you are the topmost, direct manifestation of Nārāyaṇa. I therefore offer my *praṇāma* to you.” When ordinary people would address Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by saying *namo nārāyaṇa*, He would cover His ears and instruct them that saying this to a human being is improper. But when Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda prayed “*kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya namine*—You are directly Kṛṣṇa and have descended with the name Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya,” Śrīman Mahāprabhu did not cover His ears, but rather accepted it. This seems perplexing: one on hand, the Lord rejected when people referred to Him as Nārāyaṇa, but on the other hand, He accepted when Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda called Him ‘Kṛṣṇa.’ Why is this?

In Hindi, the activities of those with blind faith are said to be *bheḍa-cāla*, or sheep-like. Just as a

heard of sheep may follow one sheep without any reason, many such people with blind faith utter “*Namo nārāyaṇa*,” without any consideration of its true meaning; they adopt the saying solely because they have heard it from others. But Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda, being fully realized, understood the gravity and import of his statement, and this is why Śrīman Mahāprabhu accepted his words.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu is more munificent than Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Question:

Why has Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī described Śrīman Mahāprabhu as being more munificent than Śrī Kṛṣṇa, when our *ācāryas* have stated that They are one and the same?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

In *Sanātana-śikṣā* (Śrī *Caitanya-caitāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā* 23.73), Śrīman Mahāprabhu has described Kṛṣṇa as *vadānya*, or munificent. But Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda has described Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as *mahā-vadānya*, or greatly mu-nificent. Alone, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is simply *vadānya*. It is only when He is with *hlādinī-śakti* Śrīmatī Rādhikā that He is known as *mahā-vadānya*. Because Śrīman Mahāprabhu is the combined form of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and because He distributed *kṛṣṇa-prema*, which had not been given for an extremely long time, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has therefore addressed Him in this way.

Cleaning the dirt of the heart

Question:

What is the significance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s pastime of cleaning the Guṇḍicā Mandira the day before the Ratha-yātrā festival?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

Prior to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, devotees never performed Guṇḍicā Mandira-*marjana*; it was the responsibility of the servants of the king to prepare the temple for Śrī Jagannāthadeva, and it never occurred to anyone that this service was actually the duty of the devotees. But Śrīman Mahāprabhu considered, “As devotees of the Lord, it is our responsibility to prepare the temple for His arrival.”

On the day before the beginning of the Ratha-yātrā festival, when everyone was assembled in the Gambhīrā, Śrīman Mahāprabhu informed His *antaraṅga-parikaras*—not ordinary people, but rather only those advanced devotees close to His heart—that they would all shortly leave with Him to clean the Guṇḍicā temple. The act of cleaning is generally quite a dirty affair, and so it is noteworthy that Śrīman Mahāprabhu never instructed these devotees to change into old clothes. Instead, everyone wore new clothes. Their mentality was, “Because cleaning the Lord’s temple is very special *sevā*, we should all wear new clothes. How could we possibly perform such an important service in old, ragged clothes?”

Before departing, Śrīman Mahāprabhu personally gave garlands and *candana* to each devotee present, because He considered as worshipful anyone in whom the desire to serve the Lord has manifested. After this, Śrīman Mahāprabhu lead the devotees to Guṇḍicā Mandira, where they cleaned the temple as if they were cleaning their own heart. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has used two words to describe the state of the temple after they finished cleaning: *śītala* and *nirmala*. *Nirmala*, means ‘spotless’ or ‘clear,’ and *śītala* means ‘cool’ or ‘soothing.’ The weather in Purī is rather hot at the time of Ratha-yātrā, and so they not only cleaned the temple, but prepared it in such a way that the Lord would feel cool and refreshed while staying there.

In his commentary on the description of *guṇḍicā-mandira-marjana-līlā* found in the twelfth chapter of Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*’s *Madhya-līlā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has

revealed the hidden, deep meanings of this pastime. There, he has described the various types of ‘dirt’ found within the heart of a *sādhaka*, as well as the process of purification a *sādhaka* must follow if, being inspired by the association of *sādhus*, he desires to invite the Lord to sit in his heart.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has written that the real ‘dirt’ in a *sādhaka*’s heart is the desire to obtain *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*, and that it must be thoroughly cleaned before the Lord can be seated there. Those who falsely teach that one can become purified by pursuing these objectives and by following *yoga-mārga*, *jñāna-mārga*, *tapa-mārga*, *siddhi-mārga* or any other path, do so with the utmost *matsaratā* (hostility). This *matsaratā* is directed not only toward others, but toward themselves, as well. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has very clearly explained that the heart is cleansed only through *bhakti*, or performing loving devotional service to Bhagavān and His devotees. There is no other way.

Once, Śrīla Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja accompanied the devotees of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in their observance of Guṇḍicā Mandira-*marjana*. He was leading a group of devotees to the Guṇḍicā temple, when he saw a number of devotees cleaning the temple with small brooms. He immediately chastised them: “What are you doing? For what purpose have you come here? Do you think it possible for you, in truth, to clean even the smallest of areas in this temple, or that you will derive any benefit from simply taking a broom in your hand and moving dirt here and there? What is your real intention? This is not a place for people who do not possess even an inkling of a service attitude. It would be better for you to return home instead of staying here and performing useless endeavors. True devotees are disturbed to see such empty displays of sentiment and emotion. Even if you are unable to perform any service, you should help those who actually are serving by behaving properly.”

How to properly observe Śrī Jagannātha Ratha-yātrā

Question:

For what purpose and with what mood do the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas observe Śrī Jagannātha Ratha-yātrā?

Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja:

During Ratha-yātrā, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His many eternal associates would dance in front of Śrī Jagannāthadeva’s chariot. They never thought to themselves “I have to pull the cart,” “I have to touch the rope,” or “I have to shout ‘Jaya Jagannātha,’ just as everyone else is doing.”

These days, those who attend Ratha-yātrā bring with them many emotions and sentiments. They say things like, “I pulled the chariot for a whole minute,” and, “I was able to see Jagannātha very clearly.” In reality, acts such as pulling the *ratha* rope will never change the hearts of those who are sincere in their attempts to follow the path of *bhakti*, even if they could somehow maintain their grip on it for hundreds of thousands of lifetimes. Granted, these types of activities may yield some type of *sukṛti* for common persons, but for serious *sādhakas*, sentimental activities of this nature yield no practical results. Such empty gestures have been completely rejected by Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His associates, who observed Śrī Jagannāthadeva’s Ratha-yātrā with only one mood: “*kṛṣṇa laṅa vraje yāi e-bhāva antara*—complete internal absorption in the idea that ‘I am taking Kṛṣṇa to Vraja.’ ”

Unless during our observance of Ratha-yātrā we meet with *sādhus*, hear from them and stay under their guidance, we will derive no benefit by attending this festival; we will be unable to understand its deep meanings and truths.

About Śrīla Mahārāja

Śrīla 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-jī 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 with 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 Sarasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community for his contribution in the *sampradāyika-sevā* of translating, from Bengali to Hindi, Śrīla Vṇḍāvana 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, stalwart Vaiṣṇava, his instructions and guidance are sought after 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 into their hearts the impressions of associating with a genuine *sādhū*.