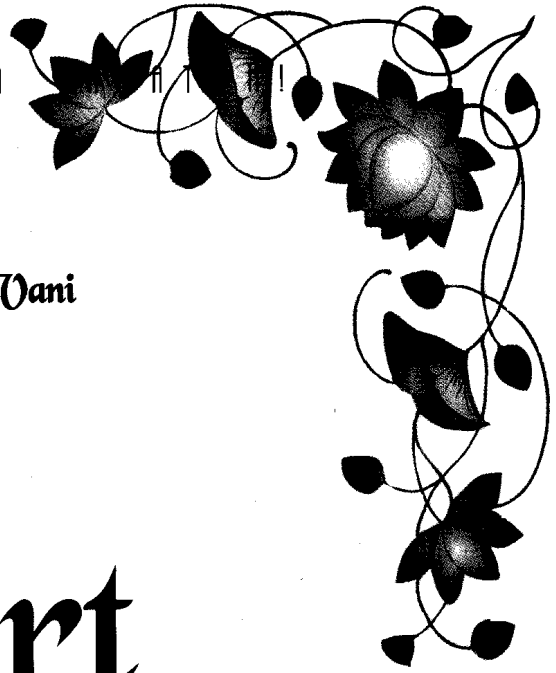


SRI GURU GAURANGA



*Bhakti Siddhanta Vani*

# *The* Heart *of* Krishna

VAISHNAVA APARADHA &  
THE PATH OF SPIRITUAL CAUTION

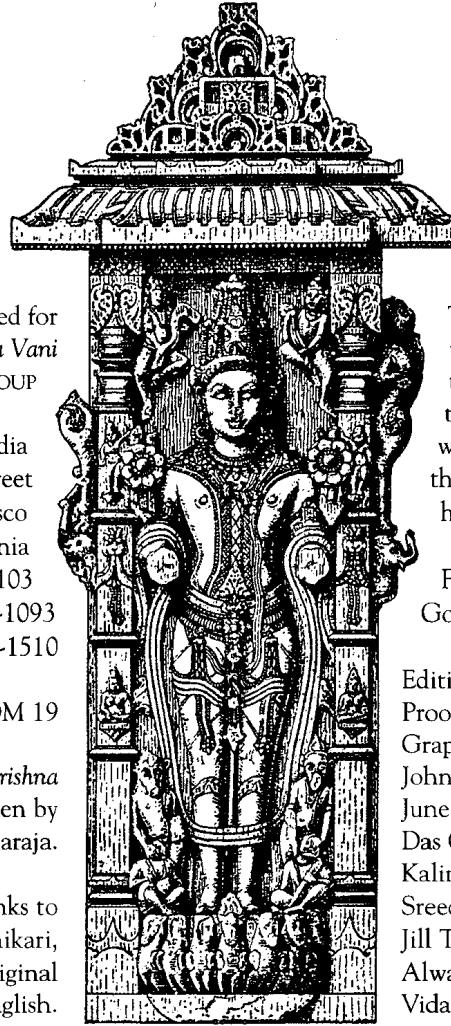
*Om Viṣṇupāda  
Paramahansa Pujapāda  
Vaiṣṇava Sarvabhaumah Śrī*

*Bhakti Promode Puri  
Goswami Maharaja*

M  
M

MANDALA  
MEDIA  
SAN FRANCISCO





Published for  
*Bhaktisiddhanta Vani*  
by the MANDALA MEDIA GROUP

Mandala Media  
1585-A Folsom Street  
San Francisco  
California  
94103  
Tel: 415-626-1093  
Fax: 415-626-1510

Designed by ROOM 19

*The Heart of Krishna*  
is based upon articles written by  
Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaja.

Special thanks to  
Sri Sarvabhavana Das Adhikari,  
who translated the original  
Bengali into English.

The publishers  
would like to express  
their deep gratitude  
to the following persons  
without whose help  
this publication would not  
have been possible:

Financial Contribution:  
Govardhana Das

Editing,  
Proofreading &  
Graphic Design:  
John Daley  
June Eaton  
Das Goravani  
Kalimba Goravani  
Sreed Haran  
Jill Tabler  
Alwarnath Das Vanachari  
Vidagdha Madhava Prabhu

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION WRITE:

SREE GOPINATH GAUDIYA MATH  
ISHODYAN, P.O. SREE MAYAPUR  
DISTRICT NADIA, WEST BENGAL  
INDIA

Copyright © 1995 MANDALA MEDIA  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN HONG KONG  
BY  
PALACE PRESS  
INTERNATIONAL

*The text was set in Godavari,  
A diacritic font based upon Goudy  
Designed by Owen Normand*

SRI GURU GAURANGA GAYATHI  
INTRODUCTION

1

THE VAISHNAVA KING  
AMBARISH MAHARAJA

13

RAMACARYA HARIDAS SHAKUR  
& THE LIBERATION OF THE PROSTITUTE

19

MAHADEVA SHIVA  
& SATI'S SACRIFICE

27

SRI PARADA MUNI  
& THE SONS OF DAKSHA

33

SRI GARUDA  
THE DIVINE CARRIER OF VISHNU

41

SRIVAS PUNDIT  
& THE LIBERATION OF THE CLEPER

45

BOOK BHAGWAT & BHAKTA BHAGWAT  
THE EDUCATION OF DEAVANANDA PUNDIT

49

ADVAITA AVATAR  
SACHI MA & HER PIMAI

57

VAISHNAVA APARADHA  
THE PATH OF SPIRITUAL CAUTION

69

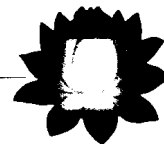
SPIRITUAL SUICIDE  
GURU APARADHA

87

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

96



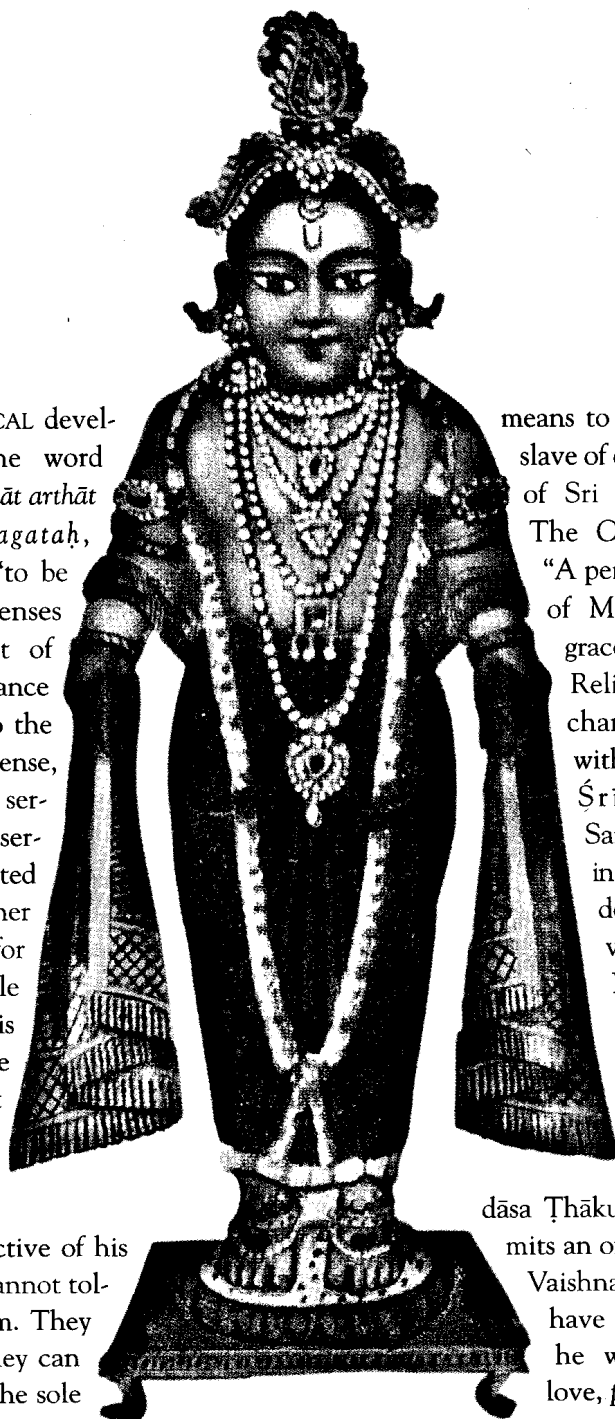


# SRI GURU GAURANGA GAYATAH INTRODUCTION



HE ETYMOLOGICAL development of the word *aparādha* is *rādhāt arthāt ārāadhanat-apagataḥ*, which means "to be distanced from worship." Offenses committed at the lotus feet of Vaishnavas, the Devotees, distance one from devotional service to the Supreme Lord. But in a higher sense, it means to be removed from the service of Śrī Rādhā. All divine service to Krishna is being conducted under her direction. To offend her servitors is to make one unfit for her divine service. The whole aim of Krishna consciousness is *rādha-dāsyam*, the divine service of Śrī Rādhā, and offenses at the lotus feet of Vaishnavas make one unfit for such service.

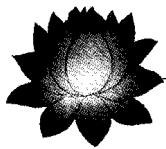
The Lord is overly protective of his devotees (*bhakta-vatsala*). He cannot tolerate any offenses against them. They have *bhakti* (devotion), and they can awaken it within us. *Bhakti* is the sole



means to attract Krishna, who is a slave of devotion. The same is true of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The *Caitanya-Bhāgavata* states: "A person can attain the shelter of Mahāprabhu only by the grace of a higher Vaishnava. Religious practices and even chanting the Holy Name without devotion is useless."

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Prabhupāda writes in his commentary: "Without developing a spirit of service, chanting the Holy Name is vain. Real devotion can only be cultivated when one receives the blessings of an unalloyed devotee." *Bhakti* means devotion. *Vṛndāvana*

*dāsa* Ṭhākura says: "If a person commits an offense at the lotus feet of a Vaishnava, even though he may have received Krishna's mercy, he will never attain divine love, *prema*."



Advaita Acharya



Nityananda Avadhuta



Sri Chaitanya Deva

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “Even if one is a Vaishnava, if he commits offenses to the Holy Name, he becomes unfit to render pure devotion. Although it may appear that he is still being shown favor by the Lord as he continues to make a show of chanting without difficulty, the Lord is actually very displeased with him because of his antagonism toward devotees. Therefore, to give up *nāma-āparādha* we must first give up *sādhu-nindā* or finding fault with devotees.”

Regarding the phrase *kṛṣṇa kṛpā hoileo* (“even though he may receive Krishna’s mercy”), Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākura comments: “People may think that because an offender appears to continue to chant without difficulty, the Lord must still favor him, but they are wrong. The Lord is not even slightly moved by their sham devotion.”

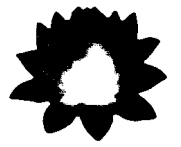
The author of *Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata*, Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, says that these statements are not

his alone; they are the verdict of the Vedas. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswatī Ṭhākura did not tolerate any disrespect towards genuine Vaishnavas. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu also emphatically denounced any insults directed at Vaishnava devotees.

To understand the seriousness of *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*, offending devotees, one must grasp the multi-faceted, multi-dimensional nature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Krishna Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Mahāprabhu is the source of all incarnations in *Kali-yuga* and the savior of all souls. He is Krishna, the son of Mahārāja Nanda, fully enriched with the mood and radiance of Śrī Rādhā.

Śrīla Krishnadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī offers prayers to all of these manifestations in the preface of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

vande gurūn īśa-bhaktān  
īśān īśavatārakān



Gadadhara Pundit



Srivas Thakur

*tat-prakāśāns ca tac-chaktiḥ  
kṛṣṇa-caitanya-samjñakam*

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adī 1.1*

“I offer my obeisances unto all the gurus, the devotees, the Lord’s avatars, his expansions, his śaktis (energies), and the primeval lord himself, Śrī Krishna Chaitanya.”

In the same way that Mahāprabhu is Krishna, he expands as Nityānanda Prabhu (*prakāśa*), who is Balārama. Balārama’s partial expansion is Sadāśiva, Mahā-Vishnu Avatar, whose counterpart in *Chaitanya-līlā* is Advaita Ācārya. What is left of Śrī Rādhikā after Krishna has plundered her emotions and lustre is Śrī Gadādhara Pundit. Śrī Gadādhara and Svarūpa Dāmodara are his śakti (energies). *Bhakta* means Śrīvāsa Thākura who is Śrī Nārada Muni in

Krishna Līlā. *Isā*, Divinity means Mahāprabhu himself. The complete conception of Divinity must include the predominating moiety and the predominated moiety.

The slightest disregard to any one of these is equal to disregrading the Supreme Lord Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu himself.

There are two aspects to the guru principle: the *śikṣā* or instructing guru, and the *dīkṣā* or initiating guru. Both are represented in Śrīvāsa Thākura.

In the beginning of the second chapter of the *Antya-līlā* of the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Krishnadaśa Kavirāja offers the following invocation:

*vande haṁ śrī-guroḥ  
śrī yuta-pada-kamalam  
śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāms ca  
śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātam  
saha-gaṇa-raghunāthānvitam tam sa-jivam  
sādvaitam sāvadhūtam parijana-sahitam  
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-devam  
śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān  
saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānvitāms ca*

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 2.1*

I offer my obeisances unto the lotus feet of my Guru and to all the preceptors on the path of devo-



tion. I offer my obeisances unto all the Vaishnavas and to Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī and his associates Raghunātha dāsa, and Śrī Jīva. I offer my obeisances to Advaita Ācārya, Nityānanda Āvadhuta, Gadādhara Pundit, and to Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu with all his devotees, headed by Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. I then offer my obeisances to the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Krishna, and all the *gopis* headed by Lalitā and Viśākhā.” *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Antya 2.1

In the above invocatory prayers (*maṅgalā-carāṇa*), the Vaishnavas are venerated. Kavirāja Goswāmī writes further:

“Before beginning the narration of the pastimes of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, simply by meditating on Śrī Guru, the Vaishnavas, and Divinity, I invoke their benediction. Such meditation destroys all detriments on the spiritual path, and helps one to fulfill all their desires.”

We must note very carefully that the Vaishnavas have been included within the full conception of Divinity. These writings describe the Vaishnava’s extraordinary qualities, and the spiritual benefit resulting from serving them. There are also several warnings regarding the disastrous effects of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 19.156 states:

“If a devotee commits *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, his offense is like a mad elephant uprooting and trampling his creeper of devotion; afterwards the creeper’s

leaves dry up and become lifeless.”

There are three categories of Vaishnavas: *kaniṣṭha* (neophyte), *madhyama* (intermediate), and *uttama* (advanced) described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Kavirāja Goswāmī states that to gain shelter of a Vaishnava, it is imperative to first receive the mercy of Nityānanda Prabhu:

“O Vaishnava Ṭhakur,  
You are an Ocean of Mercy.  
Please shower your compassion upon me.  
Give me the shade of Your Lotus Feet  
And purify my polluted heart.  
I am following You, begging.  
Krishna is Yours, You have the power  
Give Him to me!”

Sharanagati

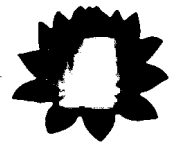


“All of the Vaishnavas who live in Vṛndāvana are absorbed in singing the all-auspicious name of Śrī Krishna. Śrī Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda are their life and soul. They do not know anything but devotion to Śrī Rādhā and Krishna. My shelter at the Vaishnavas’ lotus feet has been granted only by the mercy of Nityānanda Prabhu.”

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda corroborates this fact: “All the Vaishnavas living in the holy *dhāma* of Śrī Vṛndāvana are very fortunate souls. They have taken shelter in the Holy Name of Krishna. Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda are their life and soul. They know nothing but the eternal

service of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Krishna.”

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, a *nitya-siddha* (eternal associate) of the Lord, instructs the devotees to pray to Mahāprabhu. He says that we should seek shelter in the shade of a Vaishnava’s lotus feet, shed tears of remorse with total humility, submitting to him the plight of our material existence, which is the result of turning away from Krishna. The Vaishnava is



an ocean of compassion and feels the pain of others. When he pleads on our behalf to the Lord, Krishna responds and kindly accepts us as the followers of his favorites. Krishna's mercy descends only through the Vaishnavas.

There is Krishna and *kārṣṇa*. Krishna's mercy is embodied in pure devotees, who are known as *kārṣṇa*. The lotus feet of a Vaishnava guru represents the mercy of the Lord. Krishna is the priceless treasure enthroned in the Śrī Guru's heart. The Lord can easily give this treasure to those who are surrendered to his devotees. There is no other way to receive Krishna's grace than to serve and take shelter at the lotus feet of a Vaishnava.

Śrī Kavirāja Goswāmī discusses the importance of honoring the Vaishnava's remnants, using the example of Śrī Kalidāsa, the uncle of Raghunātha Dāsa Goswāmī:

"Taking the food remnants of Vaishnavas is so potent it forced Mahāprabhu to give his mercy to Kalidāsa. Don't hesitate—eat the Vaishnava's remnants, and you will fulfill your heart's desire."

"Food offered to Krishna is called *mahā-prasādam*. After *mahā-prasādam* is taken by a devotee, his remnants are glorified as *mahā-mahā-prasādam*. The dust of a pure devotee's feet, the water of his foot-bath, and his food remnants are three extremely potent spiritual substances. By honoring these three, one will be filled with ecstatic love for Krishna. All the scriptures declare this again and again. My dear devotees, please hear me: believe in these three and honor them in a mood of service, and you will achieve the purpose of your existence—ecstatic love of Krishna. This is the greatest mercy of Krishna, and

Kalidāsa is living proof."

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura writes:

"When will Mahāprabhu shower his mercy upon me so I may have shelter in the shade of the Vaishnava's lotus feet? I will humbly stand before the Vaishnava holding a straw between my teeth, weeping I will tell him of my miserable life, and I shall give

up all self-deception. I will admit that my life is one never-ending misery and beg him to put an end to all of this. The kind Vaishnava will beg Śrī Krishna with all his might, and Krishna, moved by the Vaishnava's sincerity, will shower his divine grace."

(*Kalyāna-Kalpataru*)

Śrīla Bhaktivinode writes: "O Vaishnava, you are an ocean of mercy. Please shower your compassion upon me. Give me the shade of your lotus feet and purify my polluted heart. I am following you, begging—Śrī Krishna is yours—you have the power—give him to me!"

(*Śaraṅāgati*)  
Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

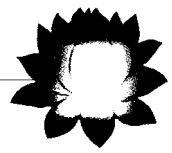


sings a similar song:

"I am so sinful; how can I possibly serve the Lord? I have no love for my guru. I have no love for the devotees and I am constantly deluded. I am so absorbed in material life that I have forgotten who I am. The witch Maya is waiting to hang a noose around my neck. I have no power to resist her on my own. I am helpless without your mercy. I know that you never see the faults of anyone, so I'm begging you—please save me." (*Prārthanā*)

Narottama's songs are filled with wonderful glorification of Vaishnavas. They are treasured by all devotees as priceless instructions for increasing one's



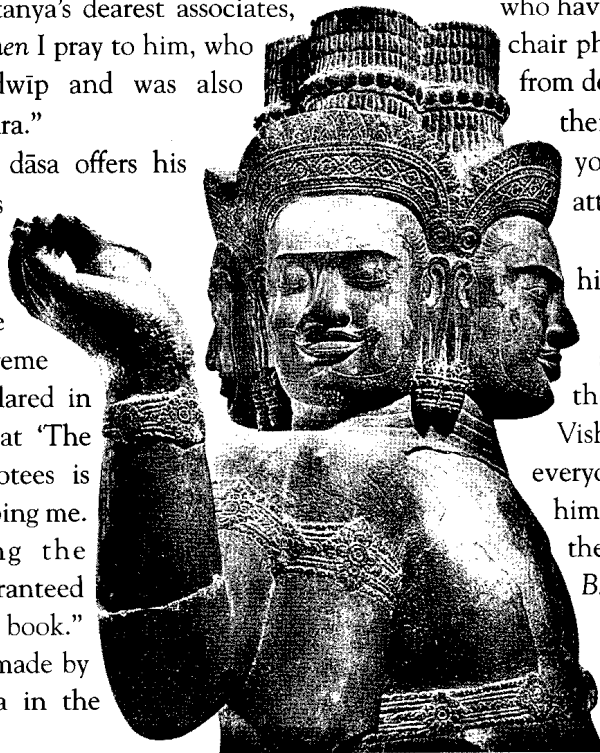


devotion. From his childhood, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Prabhupāda chose Narottama's songbook as his constant companion on the path of devotion.

Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura considered himself to be the last direct servant of Nityānanda Prabhu. He has glorified the Vaishnavas throughout his masterpiece Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata. In his introduction he writes:

"I first offer my unlimited obeisances at the feet of Śrī Krishna Chaitanya's dearest associates, the devotees. And then I pray to him, who appeared in Nabadwīp and was also known as Viśvambhara."

Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa offers his humble obeisances unto Mahāprabhu's devotees, and then to Śrī Mahāprabhu. He explains: "The Supreme Lord has boldly declared in all the scriptures that 'The worship of my devotees is higher than worshipping me. By first glorifying the Vaishnavas, I am guaranteed success in writing my book.' This statement was made by Krishna to Uddhava in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.



The next statement is from the *Itihāsa-Samuccaya*:

"If one wants God's mercy, he must first serve his devotees. Only this will satisfy the Lord; of this there is no doubt."

The following verse, from the *Pauśayana-Śruti*, is quoted in Śrīla Mādhvācārya's commentary on the *Brahmā-Sutra*:

"Worship the devotees, serve them, hear from them, and they will protect you."

The *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* states:

"If you want the real treasure of liberation you must serve the Lord's pure devotee."

In his *Govinda-Bhāṣya* commentary, Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa quotes Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

*jñāne prayāsam-udapāsya namanta eva  
jīvanti sanmukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām  
sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhir  
ye prāyaśo 'jita jito'py asi tais tri-lokyām*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.3

Brahmā prayed to Krishna, "My dear Lord, those who have given up abstract thinking and arm-chair philosophizing, start hearing about you from devotees and begin divine service with their body, mind, and words. Although you are unconquerable and rarely attained, you are conquered by them."

In the *Padma Purāṇa*, Shiva says to his wife Pārvatī:

"O Goddess, higher than the worship of all the gods and goddesses is the worship of the Supreme Lord Vishnu. But higher still is the worship of everyone and everything that is dear to him, including Ganga devī, Tulasī devī, the book *Bhāgavata* and the devotee *Bhāgavata*."

Vṛndāvana dāsa cautions us against seeing Vaishnavas externally. Such superficial vision is condemned:

"In order to teach us the absurdity of judging devotees externally according to race, color, family, or other considerations, the Supreme Lord arranged for Haridāsa Ṭhākura to take birth in the lowest section of society. All the scriptures emphasize that if a pure devotee appears even in the lowest social circumstances, he is still to be worshipped by everyone."

"A Vaishnava may appear in any family or section of society, yet he is still the most elevated person by the decree of the scriptures."

God is the protector of all living entities, and he cannot tolerate insults and disrespect shown to his devotees. Extremely mindful of his dear devotee's well-being, he refuses to accept any worship from those who slight them. The Lord loves his devotees so



much that he not only accepts food and gifts from them, but sometimes he even steals their offerings! Whereas he is repulsed by offerings from a non-devotee.

In one pastime, Krishna was very eager to eat plain chipped rice cooked by Vidura's wife, and ignored a royal feast set by Duryodhana. Similarly the Lord could not resist eating the few morsels of flat rice offered by Sudāmā. He told him:

"O Brahmin! What wonderful things have you brought for me from your home? Even a small offering from a devotee is a grand feast for me, whereas a non-devotee's feast cannot satisfy me in the least. Anything offered to me with love, I accept with love."

Śrīman Mahāprabhu quotes from the *Itihāsa-Samuccaya*, recorded by Śrīla Krishnadāsa Kavirāja:

"A person may learn all the Vedas, but if he has no devotion, how can he be my devotee? Whereas if a person born into the lowest section of society has devotion, he is very dear to me. All respect must be given to such an elevated soul. His offerings must be accepted by all, for he is as much worthy of worship as I am."

Mahāprabhu also quotes *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*:

"A Brahmin's sins are burnt to ashes by the powerful fire of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. Whereas if a Vedic scholar is an atheist, he is derided. Anyone devoid of devotion may take birth in a great family or nation, have extensive knowledge of the scriptures, perform austerities, or chant Vedic mantras, but such things are like ornaments on a dead body. Only fools will be impressed."

When Mahāprabhu went to embrace Haridāsa Thākura, with all humility Haridāsa said to him:

"My dear Lord, please do not touch me. I am most fallen, the lowest of men."

Mahāprabhu replied: "I want to touch you just to purify myself. You are so pure, it is as if at every moment you are bathing in all the sacred rivers, visiting all the holy places of pilgrimage, and performing every sacrifice, austerity, and charity imaginable. You are more exalted than any Brahmin or *sannyāsī*."

The Lord then recited this *śloka* from the *Śrīmad-*

*Bhāgavatam*:

"One who always chants your Holy Name, even though born in the worst circumstances, is a saint. We can understand that he must have performed all austerities and sacrifices, bathed in all the holy rivers, and mastered the Vedas. Therefore he is a true Āryan (one who is pure)."

In the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa*, it is declared:

"When a person is admitted into Vishnu's family, he is called a Vaishnava. It has been said that of all people, the Vaishnava is certainly the most exalted."

The *Dvārakā-Mahātmya* states:

"A person who is devoted to Janārdana, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is a saint even if he is born into a low-class family; whereas if a person is born into an aristocratic family of noble lineage and is not a devotee of the Lord, he is of bad blood."

Any association with non-Vaishnavas or with Brahmins who lack devotion is categorically denounced. The *Padma Purāṇa* states:

"The association of meat-eaters is strictly prohibited because their lifestyle goes against scriptural regulations; in the same manner, contact with a non-Vaishnava Brahmin must be avoided. Whereas a Vaishnava—one who is initiated and who is affectionate to the Lord and his devotees—even if born into a low-class family, is capable of purifying all three worlds."

Vṛndāvana dāsa says that intimate association with non-Vaishnavas, regardless of their parentage, is suicidal.

According to the *Padma Purāṇa*, the characteristics of a Vaishnava are as follows:

"One who is dedicated to worshipping Vishnu, who has received initiation into a *Vishnu-mantra*, is classified as a Vaishnava by spiritual preceptors; all others are non-Vaishnavas." (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 1.55)

Those who are simply born into a Brahmin family but are non-Vaishnavas, and who are inimical towards Vishnu and Vaishnavas, are condemned. Vṛndāvana dāsa cries out against these namesake Brahmins, citing the *Varāha Purāṇa*:

"In *Kali-yuga*, demons will be born in *smārta*



Brahmin families to harass and torture the righteous devotees of the Lord. The demons choose *Kali-yuga* to be born in so they can torment those rare persons who adhere to the path enunciated by the Vedas (*śruti*). They viciously attempt to disrupt the devotee's service to the Supreme Lord."

These Brahmin impostors view Vaishnavas who have a bad background with contempt. They scoff at their spiritual practices, or when they see them receive honor and respect. They vainly try to expose the Vaishnava's background, and other mundane trivialities. The *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Śruti* describes them, saying:

"One who leaves the world fully understanding the Absolute Truth is honored as a Brahmin, but one who does not has wasted his life."

According to Śrī Krishna-dāsa Kavirāja, not only should one not consider the form of God to be mundane, but the same is true of his devotees.

As written by Śrīla Krishna-Dvaipāyana Vyāsadeva, the author of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

"There is no greater blasphemy than to think that the body of Vishnu is material." And Mahāprabhu says: "The Vaishnava's body is never mundane; it is supramundane, and supercharged with ecstasy." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Adi 7.155, *Antya* 4.191)

The use of the term *ātmasama* does not imply

that pure devotees are equal to the Supreme Lord in every respect. The Supreme Lord is the only one who possesses transcendental qualities to an infinite degree. The *jīva* can only possess these qualities to a finite degree.

Mahāprabhu says: "The finite and the Infinite can never be considered equal, just as a tiny spark is never equal to a fire."

The following verse is found in the *Bhāgavat-sandarbhā* and also in Śrīdhara Swāmī's commentary to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

"The Supreme Lord is the embodiment of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Two of his multifarious spiritual energies are: *hlādinī-śakti*, the pleasure-giving potency, and *saṁvit*, perfect knowledge of the self and all other things, while the *jīvas* are cocooned in ignorance, and deeply anchored in suffering." Only by taking complete shelter of Śrī Rādhikā and her serving group, the *hlādinī-śakti*, can we realize our innate spiritual identity and service to the holy lotus feet of Śrī Guru, Gaurāṅga, and Krishna.



Śrīla Krishna-dāsa Kavirāja explains further why a pure Vaishnava's body is *apṛākṛta*, or supramundane: "At the time of *dikṣā* (initiation), the devotee surrenders to Krishna with body and soul. In reciprocation, Krishna accepts him, elevating him, body and soul, to a status equal to his own. The Lord transforms the



Vaishnava's body and makes it a repository of transcendental emotions." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya* 8.192-193)

He then quotes the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: "When people reject materialism and conduct their lives under my direction, they attain immortality. They become eligible to be with me and share spiritual emotions (*rasa*) with me in their spiritual identity." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.29.34)

But what is meant by surrender, Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda writes in his *Anubhāṣya* commentary: "Although one who has completely renounced the world (*akinchana*) and one who is completely sheltered in Krishna (*śaranāgataḥ*) may appear to be the same externally, the devotee who has given up the world has also offered his soul. At the time of initiation, the devotee gives up material conceptions while he begins to understand *sambandha-jñāna*, one's eternal relationship with God and those who are part of the family of God. When the devotee gives up the shelter of *māyā*, he takes shelter of

Krishna and is *Krishnized*. At this stage, the devotee's delusion as enjoyer of material pleasures dissipates, and his real self merges with his new identity as an eternal servant of Krishna. The devotee attains his spiritual body (*sac cid ānanda svarūpa*) and his eternal service to Krishna, serving him in his own transcen-

dental form. The pure devotee's ecstatic service is an elevated stage of devotion which is often misinterpreted and misunderstood by those unacquainted with the science of devotion. For this kind of *aparādha* one is deprived of the shelter of a Vaishnava guru." (*Anubhāṣya*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya* 4.193)

Mahāprabhu taught everyone that a Vaishnava's transcendental body is unlike that of an ordinary person, or even an extraordinary person. The Lord did

not view personalities like Haridāsa Ṭhākura, who took birth in a low-class family, or Sanātana Goswāmī, whose body was diseased, or Vasudeva Vipra, who was suffering from acute leprosy, as social outcasts or disease-ridden beggars. Instead he embraced them, proving that a pure devotee's body is never impure. The pure devotee's body is transcendental, infused with spiritual bliss, and best suited to serve Krishna. As the Lord himself says:

*mad-bhakta-pūjyābhyadhikā  
sarva-bhūteṣu man-matiḥ*



**Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Maharaja**

"The worship of my devotees is the real worship of me. In fact it is higher than worshipping my very self." My dear devotees, please read and listen carefully to the divine stories and instructions that follow, and pray to the Supreme Lord and his devotees—the Vaishnavas—that we may always worship and adore them, and thereby enter *The Heart of Krishna*.

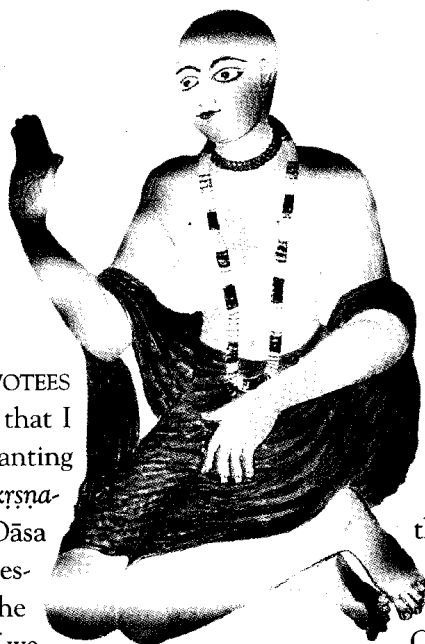


“ The Worship of My Devotees  
is the Real Worship of Me.  
In Fact it is Higher than  
Worshipping My Very Self ”

One can Chant the Holy Name  
Birth after Birth,  
but if one is Chanting with Offenses,  
he will Never Love Krishna  
or Experience a  
Taste for the Holy Name



# THE VAISHNAVA KING AMBARISH MAHARAJA



WE OFTEN HEAR DEVOTEES lament, “Why is it that I have no taste for chanting the Holy Name (*kṛṣṇa-nāma*)? Krishna Dāsa

Kavirāja Goswāmī answers this question in the Eighth Chapter of the *Adi-līlā* of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. If we want to sincerely absorb ourselves in *bhajana*, we must take his instructions seriously, Srila Bhaktivinode Thākura writes in the summary of this chapter:

“The eighth chapter describes the glories of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu. One can chant the Holy Name birth after birth, but if one is chanting with offenses (*nāma-aparādha*), he will never love Krishna. If one exhibits symptoms of ecstasy (*aṣṭa-sāttvika-vikāra*), but is chanting with offenses, those symptoms are phony. However, one who repeats the names of Mahāprabhu, Nityānanda Prabhu, and the *Pañca-tattva* in full surrender will be freed from *aparādhas* by the mercy of the *Pañca-tattva*, and will then experience growing love for the Holy Name and for Krishna.”

Śrīla Krishnadāsa Kavirāja writes: “The vibration of the pundits is like the croaking of frogs.

Without *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* there is no *kṛṣṇa-kṛpā*, mercy. Despite their vast learning and intelligence, because they do not accept Krishna’s divinity they are in illusion. And even if they accept Krishna’s divinity, if they do not accept the divinity of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they are also in ignorance.”

Bhaktivinode Thākura explains in his *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya*: “One who does not recognize the *Pañca-tattva*, although culturing devotion, can never attract Krishna’s mercy.”

Krishna, the embodiment of the *Pañca-tattva*, was overwhelmed by the mood and radiance of Śrī Rādhikā and appeared as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Even God himself wants to be a devotee, and he shows by his example the perfection of devotion.

According to Mahāprabhu’s teachings, only one who is humble, tolerant of others, and treats others respectfully, while expecting nothing in return, can escape the clutches of the Ten Offenses. Their very lives are situated in *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and divine love of God.

To illustrate the gravity of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*,



which is the first of the ten *nāma-aparādhas*, the story of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja and Durvāsā Muni from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata Purāna* is especially helpful.

Approximately halfway in to the life cycle of the universe, according to Vedic time calculation, the seventh *manvantara*, Vaivasvata Śrāddhadeva was the seventh Manu. His son was Nabhaga, and his grandson was called Nābhāga. The exalted pure devotee Ambarīṣa was his son. His purity could ward off even the inescapable curse of a Brahmin.

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja was an extremely fortunate soul. He ruled over the entire Earth, and he was the proprietor of inexhaustible wealth, yet he treated his material possessions with disdain. Having cultivated deep love for the Lord and his devotees, he looked upon the world and all its allurements as trash.

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja completely absorbed his entire being, within and without, in Krishna. The lotus feet of Krishna were ever present within his pure mind. His voice was filled with *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. He cleansed his soul by cleaning the temple. His ears continuously drank the nectar of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, and his eyes were filled with beautiful visions of the Dieties. The only aromas he knew were of Tulasi, incense, and flowers offered to Krishna. He relished food tasted by Krishna; he walked to and from the temple and holy places. Ambarīṣa Mahārāja's entire being was saturated with Krishna consciousness. His only motive was to please Krishna. And anyone who saturates their body, mind, senses, and words in the Lord's service as he did will develop a deep attraction to the Lord and his pure devotees.

The ministers and Brahmins who were the King's well-wishers advised Ambarīṣa Mahārāja on running the affairs of his empire. The emperor did not personally perform any religious rituals, but left them to be done by the exclusive Brahmins. He kept aloof so that he could immerse himself in devotion to the Supreme Lord. Śrī Hari, being extremely pleased with Ambarīṣa's devotion, gave him the protection of his *Sudarśana-cakra*, who is always ready to shield the Lord's devotees from harm. *Sudarśana* was always by Ambarīṣa's side.

To satisfy Krishna, Ambarīṣa Mahārāja and his

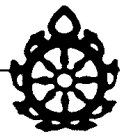
queen observed *Ekādaśī* and *Dvādaśī* vows for one full year in Mathurā, on the banks of the Yamunā. At the end of the *vrata*, in the month of Kārttika, after a three-night fast, Ambarīṣa bathed in the Yamunā and went to Madhuvana in Vṛṇḍāvana to worship Krishna. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes in his commentary:

“Mahārāja Ambarīṣa observed the vow of *Ekādaśī* throughout his life, yet he developed the yearning to observe the same for a year in Mathurā-*dhāma*. At the end of this *vrata*, fasting for three nights is recommended. This means to eat simple *prasādam* (*haviṣyānna*) on the *Daśamī* and *Dvādaśī* once at midday, and to maintain a dry fast throughout the whole of *Ekādaśī*, day and night.”

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja performed the *mahā-abhišekham* bathing ceremony of Krishna on a grand scale according to Vedic rituals, with *pañca-gavya*, *pañcamṛta*, *sarvaśadhi*, *mahaśadhi*, and so on. He decorated the Lord with jewelry and fineries, and gave away silk clothes, cows, and other expensive gifts to the Brahmins. At home, he distributed to the *sādhus* and Brahmins millions of cows whose horns and hooves were gilded with gold and silver, and he held a grand feast for all the Brahmins.

While Ambarīṣa Mahārāja was preparing to break his fast under the directions of the Siddhārthan Brahmins, the mystic Durvāsā Muni arrived at his house. Ambarīṣa respectfully received the exalted sage. He sat at the *muni's* feet and begged him to honor *prasādam* at his home. The sage graciously accepted the invitation saying that he had to first complete his daily ablutions, and thereafter he would be ready to eat. The sage went to bathe in the Yamunā, and after his rituals he went into deep meditation.

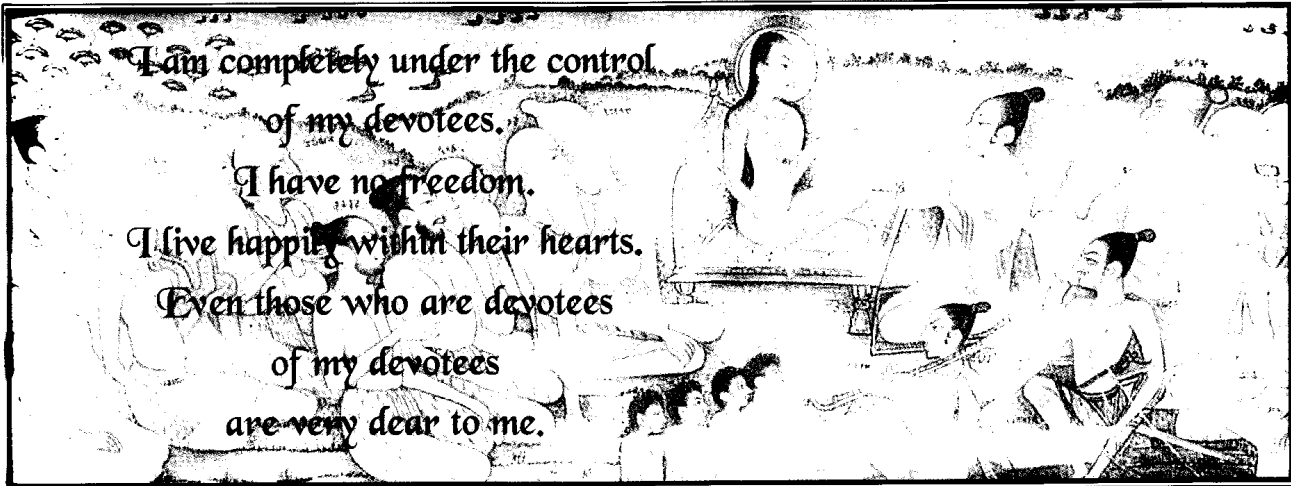
Meanwhile, the auspicious time for Ambarīṣa to break his fast was ending, but for a host to eat before a Brahmin guest is a transgression of proper etiquette. The emperor turned to his advisors. The Brahmins were perplexed and remained silent. Ambarīṣa decided to drink water because the Vedas have declared that *apo'snāti tan naivāśi, tam naivānaśitam iti*: drinking water can either be considered eating or not eat-



ing. The Brahmins consented to this course of action. The king then meditated on the Supreme Lord, drank a little water, and waited for the sage's return.

After Durvāsā Muni had completed his rituals he returned to the palace. Durvāsā had seen with his mystic powers that the emperor had drunk water, and

He went to Brahmā and Shiva begging for shelter, but they refused, knowing that he was an *aparādhi*. Shiva advised him to surrender to the Supreme Lord, Vishnu. Durvāsā Muni left the universe and entered Vaikuṅṭha, the spiritual abode of Śrī Nārāyaṇa, and threw himself at the feet of the Lord, who was relax-



I am completely under the control  
of my devotees.  
I have no freedom.  
I live happily within their hearts.  
Even those who are devotees  
of my devotees  
are very dear to me.

he was outraged. He began to chastise the emperor, who stood before him with folded hands. "Look at this cruel man! Intoxicated with the pride of wealth, you think that you are God, although actually you are not even a devotee. You have transgressed the laws of religion. First you invite me as your guest to eat, but because you have eaten without feeding me, I will punish you."

Durvāsā Muni tore a hair from his head and created a demon. The fearsome fire-demon held a trident in his hand and stomped around, making the entire Earth tremble, but Ambarīṣa remained calm. Then the Supreme Lord's Sudarśana-cakra, already residing with Ambarīṣa on the Lord's order, immediately consumed the demon in flames.

Durvāsā Muni was stunned by the destruction of his demon. He then saw the ominous Sudarśana rushing towards him. He ran in fear of his life, but wherever he ran the Sudarśana disc followed right behind, scalding his back with incinerating heat. Durvāsā sought shelter in the caves of Mount Sumeru, in the sky, on the Earth, in the palaces of kings, and in the ocean; yet everywhere he went he felt the flaming disc bearing down on him.

ing with his consort Śrī Lakṣmīdevī, the goddess of fortune. With his body trembling and constantly feeling the heat of Sudarśana, Durvāsā prayed at the Lord's feet:

"O my Supreme Lord! I have offended one of your favorite devotees. Please forgive me. If even a person living in hell becomes liberated simply by vibrating your name, then nothing is impossible for you. Please save me."

The Lord replied: "I am completely under the control of my devotees. I have no freedom. I live happily within their hearts. Even those who are devotees of my devotees are very dear to me. Without them I am nothing.

*aham bhaktā parādhino  
hy asvatantra iva dvija  
sādhubhir grasta ḥṛ dayo  
bhaktair bhakta jana priyaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.4.63

"My devotees are my life. I am a prisoner of their love. Even their devotees are very dear to me."





“By offending Mahārāja Ambarīṣa you are ruining yourself. When one’s power is used against a devotee, it harms only the one who employs it. It is the subject, not the object, who is harmed.

“For a Brahmin, austerity and learning are certainly good, but for a person who is not qualified they are dangerous. Therefore you should go to him immediately and beg forgiveness.”

Immediately upon receiving the Lord’s instructions, Durvāsā Muni rushed back to Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, fell at his feet, and clasped them tightly. The emperor was extremely embarrassed at having a sage touch his feet, so he prayed to the Sudarśana-cakra, his heart overflowing with sympathy for the sage:

“O protector of the devotees! O destroyer of all weapons, O most powerful Vaishnava, you are an expansion of divine power. You dissipate ignorance and reveal devotion to the Lord. You terminate the *jīva*’s warped vision of being Maya’s master and give

him the beautiful vision of servitorship in the form of *sambandha-jñāna*. You are the most beloved devotee of the Lord. I have forgiven him, you please forgive him too.”

The *Sudarśana-cakra* was pacified and saved Durvāsā Muni from the pain of its scorching heat. Durvāsā Muni repeatedly blessed Ambarīṣa Mahārāja saying:

“My dear king, today I have experienced the greatness of devotees, for although I have committed an offense, you prayed for my good fortune.

“For devotees, nothing is impossible. Simply by hearing the Holy Name, one is purified. You are so merciful that you overlooked my offense and saved my life. I am eternally indebted to you.”

Durvāsā Muni expressed his deep gratitude to Mahārāja Ambarīṣa. The emperor had been waiting all this time for the sage’s return and had not eaten for almost a year. He fell at Durvāsā’s feet and begged him to eat. He fed him sumptuously, and with great

satisfaction the sage requested that the emperor also take *prasādam*:

“My dear king, I am so pleased with you. At first I thought that you were simply an ordinary person. Now I understand that you are an extremely exalted devotee. Therefore simply by seeing you, touching your feet, and talking to you, I feel purified and blessed. May you be glorified in heaven and on Earth until the end of time.”

In this way Ambarīṣa Mahārāja realized the Absolute Truth to be one—Vāsudeva—Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān. Always absorbed in acts of devotion, he considered even the topmost material planet of Brahmāloka with all of its opulence and pleasures to be nothing more than a royal version of hell.

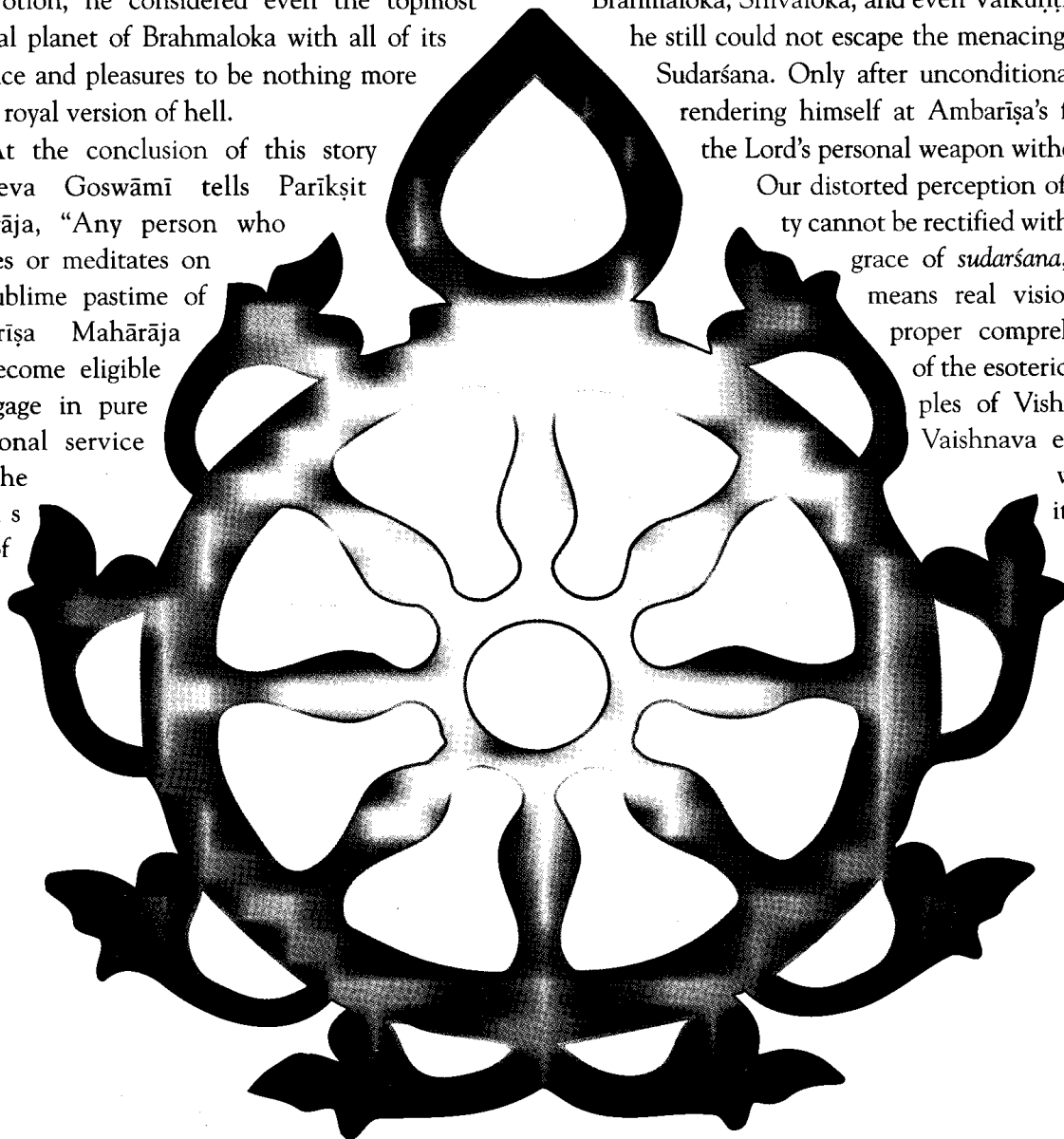
At the conclusion of this story Śukadeva Goswāmī tells Parīkṣit Mahārāja, “Any person who narrates or meditates on this sublime pastime of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja will become eligible to engage in pure devotional service at the lotus feet of

Krishna.”

The point being emphasized in this *līlā* is that if we have committed an offense, we must submissively approach the same devotee whom we have offended and beg his forgiveness. Then the Supreme Lord, who is a slave to his devotee’s love, will accept our prayers. Humbly taking the position of a servant of the Lord’s servant, we will attract the mercy of the Lord. This is the ultimate gift of a pure devotee: only they can give us Krishna.

In the case of Durvāsā Muni, although he possessed mystic power which allowed him to physically enter Brahmāloka, Shivaloka, and even Vaikuṅṭha loka, he still could not escape the menacing rage of Sudarśana. Only after unconditionally surrendering himself at Ambarīṣa’s feet did the Lord’s personal weapon withdraw.

Our distorted perception of divinity cannot be rectified without the grace of *sudarśana*, which means real vision. The proper comprehension of the esoteric principles of Vishnu and Vaishnava elude us without it.



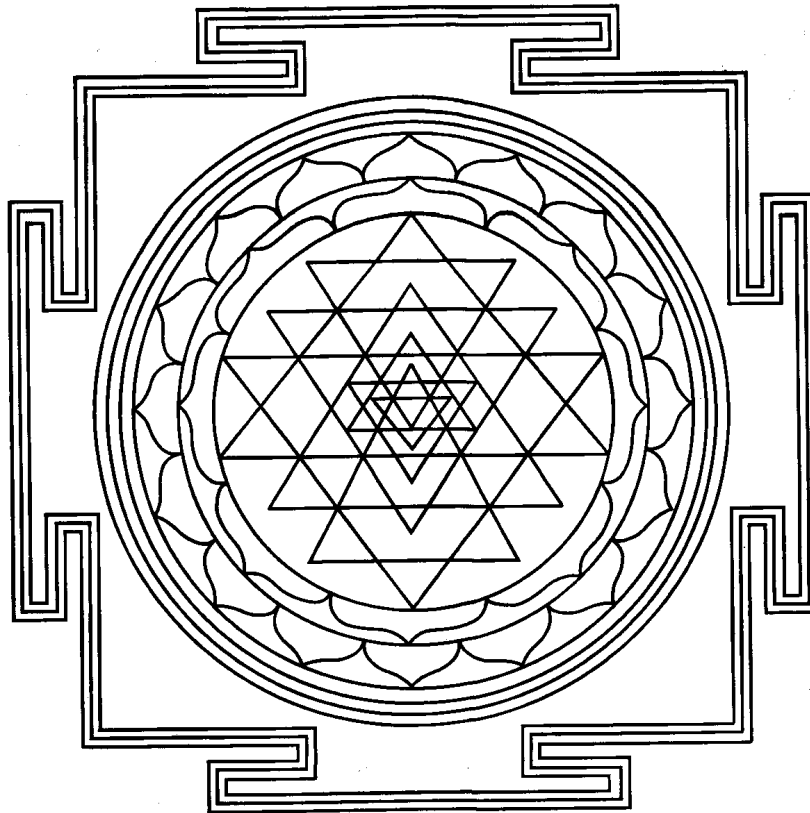


Embellishing himself with the sublime mood and radiance of Śrī Rādhā, Krishna appears as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu with his confidantes Rāmānanda Rāya and Svarūpa Dāmodara Goswāmī, who are the supreme teachers of the science of *rasa*. But the Lord himself says, "If you want to taste this *prema-rasa*, then you will have to be more humble than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, and expect no respect for yourself while offering all respects to others."

By chanting the sixteen names of the thirty-two syllabled Hare Krishna *mahā-mantra*—without com-

mitting the ten kinds of *nāma-aparādha*—one becomes eligible to enter the spiritual abode of Goloka and find the highest treasure, *vraja-prema-rasa*. Otherwise we may chant until our tongues fall out and gain nothing. Prior to the advent of Śrī Chaitanyadeva, this confidential knowledge had never been revealed. He not only revealed it, but distributed it freely. So everyone must avoid the ten kinds of *nāma-aparādhas*, especially the first—to offend a Vaishnava, because a Vaishnava has taken shelter in the Holy Name and is giving his shelter to others. Violation of this principle destroys devotion.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare  
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare



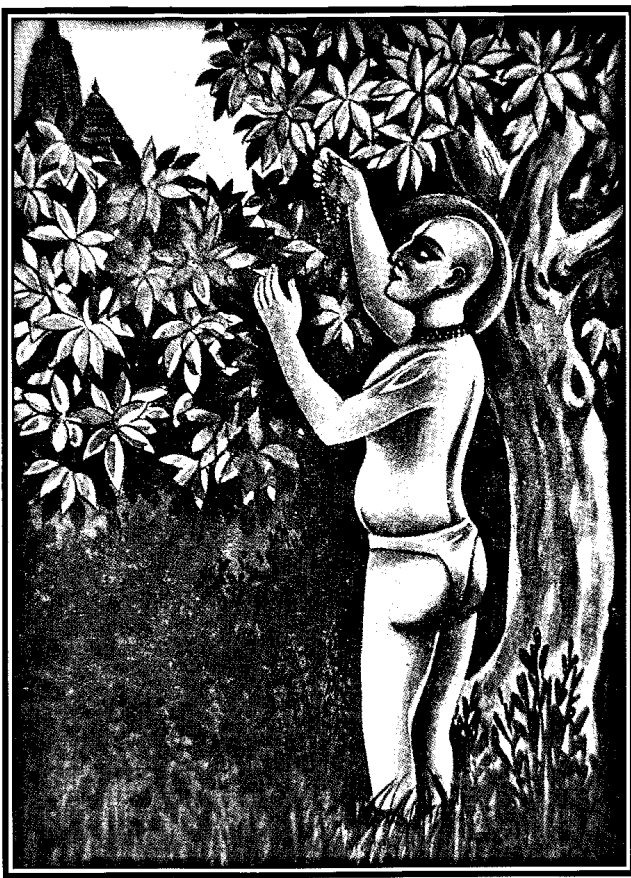


# NAMĀCĀRYA HARIDAS THAKUR

## & THE LIBERATION OF THE PROSTITUTE



ARIDAS  
Ṭhākura, is  
Nāmācārya  
or supreme  
teacher of  
the Holy Name. Śrī  
Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's  
grace multiplies without  
limitation when he  
describes the extraordinary  
qualities of his devotees.  
Haridāsa Ṭhākura is one  
such devotee, and is  
described as follows by  
Chandrabhāgavallabha Goswāmī in the



*līlā* of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta:

“Haridāsa Ṭhākura's greatness is immeasurable. It is impossible to describe even a small aspect of his magnanimous character.”

If we try at all to describe him, it would merely be for our own personal purification. Vṛndāvana dāsa has also tasted the nectar of Haridāsa's sublime persona.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura left his home in Buḍhana village and traveled to Benāpola, which is in West Bengal. He built a small hut in the woods and spent his time serving Tulasī devī and chanting three hundred thousand names of God daily. Like a honey bee, he collected a little food from each righteous Brahmin home to maintain himself. The villagers were impressed with his

devotion and they loved and respected him.

Rāmacandra Khān was the leader of that village. He was an atheist who despised Vaishnavas. He could not bear the villagers love for Haridāsa. Although he was born in a Brahmin family, Rāmacandra Khān was a disgrace, a drunkard and a womanizer.

Wanting to bring dishonor to Haridāsa, he plot-



ted to ruin Haridāsa's reputation. However, Haridāsa could not be easily seduced.

In a final attempt to discredit Haridāsa, Rāmacandra Khān ordered prostitutes be brought to him. He asked them to break Haridāsa's spiritual resolve, thereby tarnishing his character. One beautiful young prostitute said that she required but three days to accomplish the task. Pleased, Rāmacandra Khān promised to compensate her well. He commanded his guard to accompany her to catch Haridāsa with her in a compromised position and then bring him back in chains.

The prostitute suggested that she go alone the first night and then on the second night the guard could escort her. She returned home and waited for nightfall. She dressed seductively and went to Haridāsa's hut. Pretending to be devout she bowed before Haridāsa and Tulasī devī, and then sat down directly in front of him and tried to tempt him with seductive movements and gestures. Haridāsa remained unaffected. Quite desperately, she finally made an indecent proposal to Haridāsa, to which he replied, "I shall accept you without a doubt, but you will have to wait until I have finished chanting my rounds on my beads. Until then, please sit and listen to *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. As soon as I am finished, I shall fulfill your heart's desire."

Haridāsa continuously chanted before the prostitute, who remained sitting by the door. The night ended, and as the eastern sky became roused by dawn, she returned home. Later, she went and reported to Khān that she had visited Haridāsa's hut the previous night and was promised by Haridāsa that he would fulfill her wishes that night. Keeping Khān's hopes alive, she left for Haridāsa's *bhajana-kuṭira*, meditation hut. Seeing her, Haridāsa spoke encouragingly, "Last night you were disappointed. Please excuse my offense. I shall certainly be with you soon. Please sit down and hear Krishna's name. When my designated rounds are finished, your desire will be fulfilled." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya 3.120-121*)

The real meaning of Haridāsa's words could not be fathomed by her because her consciousness was clouded by lust. However, a distinct change was

already visible in her. That night, she offered obeisances to Tulasī Devī and sat down by the door listening to the soft chanting of Haridāsa. Soon she also began to chant, "Hari...Hari..Hari." Once again, night ended and it was dawn. She became restless and Haridāsa said, "I have vowed to chant ten million names this month, and now it is nearing its end. I thought that today I would complete this vow, but in spite of chanting through the whole night, I am still not finished. However, I am sure that tomorrow I will finish, and my vow will be fulfilled. Then it will be possible for me to enjoy you in full freedom."

The prostitute returned to Khān and informed him of what had happened. The next day she went earlier in the evening and stayed with Haridāsa. After offering obeisances to Tulasī and Haridāsa, she sat on the threshold of the room. She heard Haridāsa's incessant chanting, and she also began to chant "Hari, Hari, Hari," the Holy Name of the Lord. Haridāsa told her, "Today I will complete my vow—then I will satisfy all your desires."

The association of a great soul for three nights, and the good fortune to hear the pure name from his lips could never go in vain. The third night passed with Haridāsa's continuous chanting of the Holy Name. But with the coming of the third dawn, a new awakening also dawned in the heart of the young prostitute. The gloom of ignorance shrouding her consciousness lifted, and a fire like the blazing sun burnt up all of the impurities in her heart.

She fell to the ground at Haridāsa's feet. Weeping, she pleaded for her sins to be forgiven. She confessed that Khān had employed her to seduce him. and said, "Because I am a prostitute I have performed many sinful acts. Dear master, please be merciful to me. Deliver my fallen soul."

Haridāsa replied, "I know everything about Khān's conspiracy against me. He is an ignorant fool, but that doesn't bother me. I would have left this place the day Khān began plotting against me, but because you came to me I stayed here for three days just to deliver you."

The prostitute said, "Please be my guru. Tell me what I should do to get relief from material exist-



tence.”

Śrīla Haridāsa replied, “Go home and immediately distribute all your possessions to the Brahmins; then return here and forever be in Krishna consciousness. Always chant the Holy Name of Krishna and serve Tulasī by watering her daily and offering her prayers. Quickly you will find shelter at Śrī Krishna’s lotus feet.”

Haridāsa Thākura left the prostitute after initiating the prostitute with *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Understanding that the guru’s instruction must be executed without hesitation, she gave away all of her belongings. She gave up her home, shaved her head, and lived in her guru’s *bhajana-ghara*. She eagerly engaged in devotional practices, chanting day and night three hundred thousand Holy Names, serving Tulasī devī, eating frugally, and observing the various fast days.

Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* says, “She gradually subdued her senses, and symptoms of divine love manifested in her. She became a celebrated devotee and many



Sri  
Nityananda  
Prabhu

Whose  
Heart  
&  
Soul  
Is  
Sri  
Chaitanya  
Mahaprabhu

Vaishnavas came to visit her. Seeing the sublime transformations in her character everyone was astonished. They glorified the potency of Haridāsa and offered him obeisances.”

By receiving a Vaishnava’s blessings, even a prostitute can become a pure and advanced devotee. Whereas Rāmacandra Khān, a Brahmin by birth, was so fallen that he was malicious to Haridāsa Thākura. For this *aparādha* he had to undergo severe suffering. We must all ponder the seriousness of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

Śrīlā Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Prabhupāda writes: “Although born in a Brahmin family, Rāvaṇa, the son of Viśrava, hated the Supreme Lord, and for this offense Rāvaṇa was called an *āsura*, or demon. Similarly, Rāmacandra Khān, by offending a great devotee, was also known as an *āsura*.” The results of Rāmacandra Khān’s offenses took terrifying shape in him. It so happened that the Lord Nityānanda Prabhu was traveling all over Bengal with a large group of disciples and associates, intent on propagating the Holy Name and subduing demonic forces. One day he arrived at Rāmacandra Khān’s house and sat down in the *caṇḍi-maṇḍapa*, or a covered area for goddess Devī’s worship. Śrīlā Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī writes that wealthy non-Vaishnava families built separate



areas to worship the goddess Durgā, and that this area was used for entertaining guests when it wasn't being used for *pūjā*.

Lord Nityānanda's large party filled up the entire courtyard. As a host, Rāmacandra Khān should have personally come out to welcome him. He should have been filled with gratitude at his immense good fortune that his house was sanctified by the touch of Nityānanda Prabhu's lotus feet. But instead, he sent one of his servants to meet Nityānanda Prabhu, thereby insulting him and his exalted followers. In a curt message to the Lord, the servant informed him that since he was with a large group that could not be properly accommodated, arrangements had been made for all of them to go elsewhere.

What followed is described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: "When Nityānanda Prabhu heard this order from Rāmacandra Khān's servant, he became very angry and came out of the *maṇḍapa* laughing madly and said, 'Rāmacandra Khān is right. This place is unfit for me. It is only fit for cow-killing meat-eaters.'"

Nityānanda Prabhu stormed out of Khān's house. Khān was so demoniac that he ordered his servants to dig up the earth where the Lord had sat, and he had it filled up again after it had been cleansed with water and cow dung. Even the courtyard where the Lord's followers were sitting was cleansed. However, it was not long before the consequences of

offending the Supreme Lord and the Vaishnavas took effect.

It so happened that Khān had been cheating the local magistrate by tax-evasion. Enraged by Khān's dishonesty, the magistrate stormed into his house one day and sat on the *Durgā-maṇḍapa*. He ordered that a cow be slaughtered and that its flesh be cooked on the spot. For three days Khān's family was bound and held

captive. His household and the entire village was pillaged by the magistrate's men. On the fourth day, the magistrate and his men left the village, its properties destroyed and everyone shocked and in agony. Khān was completely ruined and forsaken. Kavirāja Goswāmī writes: "Wherever an advanced devotee is disrespected, for the fault of one man, every-

one in connection with him will suffer."

In spite of hearing about or even experiencing the fatal consequences of offending the Supreme Lord or his devotees, we are so deluded that we still need to be reminded not to commit offenses.

After leaving Benāpola, Haridāsa went to Cāndapura. According to Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura, Cāndapura lay north of Saptagrāma at the Trivenī, and was the home of Hiraṇya and Govardhana Majumadāra, Raghunātha Dāsa Goswāmī's family. Cāndapura was also the residence of Balārama and Yadunandana Ācārya, family priests of the Majumadāras of Saptagrāma.

It is here that Haridāsa lived in Balārama





Ācārya's house, and where Balārama Ācārya was favored by Haridāsa's grace. Balārama Ācārya was a very devout Brahmin and a great devotee. He offered all hospitality to Haridāsa while Haridāsa spent his time chanting three hundred thousand Holy Names in a hut.

Raghunātha Dāsa Goswāmī, the son of Śrī Govardhana Majumadāra, was a schoolboy. He regu-



larly visited and associated with Haridāsa, who showed his blessings upon him. Later, as the ultimate act of mercy he brought Raghunātha Dāsa to the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Raghunātha Dāsa Goswāmī is a *nitya-siddha*, or an eternal confidante of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu who descended into this world as part of Mahāprabhu's entourage. His associating with Mahāprabhu exemplifies that *bhakti* is only attainable by the mercy of an exalted devotee of the Lord.

One day, Balārama Ācārya, after begging Haridāsa to attend a religious assembly at the Majumadāra residence, got his wish. Both the brothers Hiraṇya and Govardhana, received him with

respect. The assembly was attended by many *pundits* and respectable gentry. Everyone in the assembly generously expressed their appreciation of Haridāsa.

They praised Haridāsa for his vow to chant the Holy Name. Someone in the assembly said that chanting the Holy Name absolves all sins. Another observed that the Holy Name bestows liberation. Hearing people speaking of only the external effects of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, Haridāsa pointed out that these were not the principal results of pure *nāma*:

“What you say is not the true result of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. The real effect is that ecstatic love of Krishna awakens.

“Even the Lord loves his own name. As one continues his vow to chant, the Lord becomes more dear to him, and so does his Holy Name. With increased enthusiasm, he becomes deeply attached to Krishna and he loves the name of Krishna so much that he sometimes cries in separation, or even exhibits loving anger. Sometimes the ecstasy is so intense that he chants the name of Krishna and dances like a complete madman, not caring for anyone or anything.”

*evaṁ-vrataḥ sva-priya-nāma-kīrtiyā  
jātānurāgo druta-citta uccaiḥ  
hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty  
unmāda-van nṛtyati loka-bāhyah*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.40

Viśvanātha Cakravartī says that *evaṁ-vrataḥ* means that the vow to chant *kṛṣṇa-nāma* regardless of circumstances, gives *prema-bhakti-yoga*, union in devotional love. The person who upholds such a vow is beyond any of the concerns of this world. He states further that among the nine limbs of devotion, *nāma-kīrtana*, or chanting the Holy Name, is the highest. *Sva-priya-nāma-kīrtiyā*—“Krishna's name is very dear to Krishna”—this Sanskrit phrase refers to any person who through chanting Krishna's name has fallen in love with him. At this stage the heart has become like gold due to the heat from the fire of yearning to see Krishna.





Just as in *Vraja-līlā*, Krishna the butter-thief slips into a *gopī*'s house early in the morning, and Jaratī, an older *gopī* sitting near the door, warns the other *gopīs* that Yaśoda's son has snuck into the storeroom. She cries, "Catch him! Catch him!" The devotees in deep meditation on Krishna's pastimes laugh in joy at the thought of Krishna running away to escape.

The next moment, when the devotee awakens from his 'vision,' he laments: "Oh no! The unlimited ocean of bliss was within reach and now I have lost him!" He cries pathetically in separation from Krishna. He screams, "Where are you? Talk to me!"

When Krishna hears such a devotee's plea, he reassures them: "Here I am—I came running to you as soon as I heard you call." Then the vision is regained, and the devotee resumes praising the Lord. Dancing madly, he shouts, "I am so happy, today my life is perfect."

At this stage, the devotee couldn't care less about praise or criticism. This condition has been described: "Drunk on the wine of *rasa* we become like madmen rolling on the ground, and sometimes dancing wildly. People may think that we are crazy, but who cares?"

The awakening of *kṛṣṇa-prema* is the natural and direct result of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*—not the destruction of sin or achieving liberation. Haridāsa cited the example of a sunrise. The result of sunrise is light; the dissipation of darkness is secondary. He quoted a verse from the *Nāma-kaumudī* of Śrī Lakṣmīdhara Swāmī and asked the scholars to explain it. But they preferred to have Haridāsa enlighten them.

Haridāsa said: "Just before sunrise, before the sun is even visible, it eliminates the darkness of night. With the first glimpse of sunlight, all fears vanish; and when the sun is actually visible, everything is revealed and a new day begins. Similarly, with the

first hint of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, the reactions of sinful life are instantly terminated. And when one chants the Holy Name offenselessly, ecstatic love of Krishna is awakened. Although it is offered by Krishna readily, liberation is nothing to a pure devotee. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated, 'While dying, Ajāmila unintentionally chanted the Holy Name of the Lord by calling for his son Nārāyaṇa and he entered the spiritual world. What, then, can be said of those who chant the Holy Name with deep faith.'"

Krishna says, "My real devotees want nothing from me. They don't want to live where I live, have the same wealth I have, nor have a body like mine—they just want to serve me."

One of the Brahmins present was Gopāla Cakravartī. He was the chief tax-collector and official messenger of the Muslim ruler. He couldn't stand Haridāsa's explanation that even a shadow of the Holy Name could give liberation. He spoke angrily:

"You are all supposed to be pundits and you sit here listening to this fool rave about *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Do you really

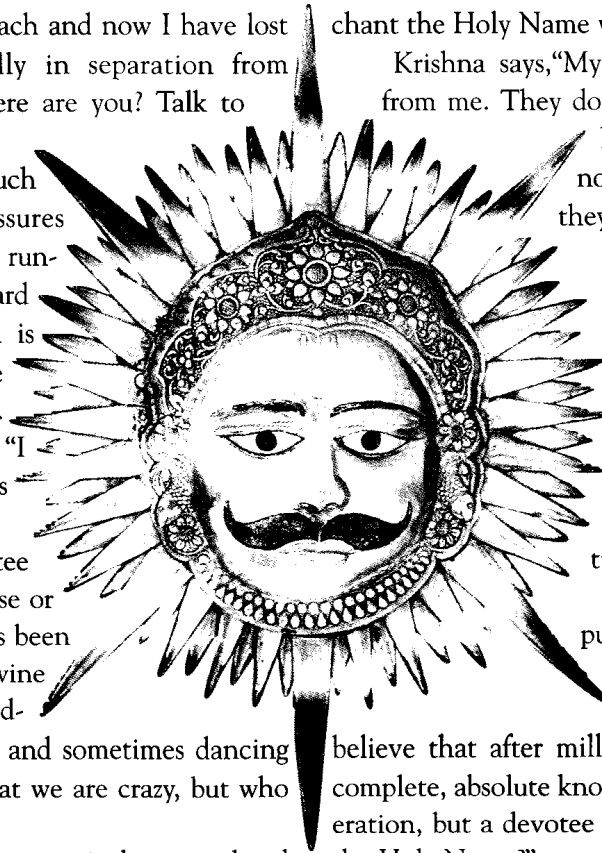
believe that after millions of births one who is in complete, absolute knowledge will still not attain liberation, but a devotee will get it by a mere touch of the Holy Name?"

Haridāsa replied, "Why do you doubt it?" The scriptures say that one can become liberated simply at the first semblance of offenseless chanting.

"My dear Lord, you are so beautiful that I feel like I am drowning in an ocean of nectar just looking at you. Whatever other concepts I had of happiness, are now like puddles of mud." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya* 3.139-199)

The Brahmin said: "If you are lying, I'll cut your nose off."

Haridāsa replied: "If I'm lying, then I'll cut my nose off."





Everyone was shocked. The Majumadāras were outraged, and they began to chastise Gopāla Cakravartī. Balārama Ācārya reprimanded: "You are just caught up in absurd rhetoric; what do you know about the process of devotion? And you have the audacity to insult Haridāsa Ṭhākura? You're committing spiritual suicide!"

Gopāla Cakravartī exposed himself as an offender to the Holy Name. He did not have faith that the Holy Name is omnipotent and supramundane. When he left the assembly, everyone fell at Haridāsa's feet begging forgiveness. But Haridāsa never saw the faults of others and smiled compassionately, saying: "None of you are at fault. Even this ignorant Brahmin is not at fault because he is accustomed to dry speculation and logic. One cannot understand the glories of the Holy Name simply by logic and argument. Therefore that man cannot possibly fathom the glories of the Holy Name. Do not be sorry because I was insulted. Return to your homes, and may Krishna bless you."

The reactions for committing *aparādha* did not take long to manifest. "Within three days the Brahmin was infected with leprosy, and as a result his nose melted and fell off. His toes, limbs, and fingers,

which were as delicate as flower buds, withered into stumps. The people were astonished to see this phenomenon, and they were in awe of Haridāsa's spiritual potency and offered obeisances to him.

"Although Haridāsa did not take the Brahmin's offense seriously, the Supreme Personality of Godhead did, and the Brahmin suffered the consequences. A characteristic of a pure devotee is that he

excuses the offenses of the ignorant, but Krishna never tolerates an offense to the lotus feet of his devotee."

When Haridāsa learned about Gopāla contacting leprosy, he was deeply sorrowful. He left Balārama Ācārya's house and traveled to Śrī Advaita Ācārya's home in Śāntipura. Haridāsa prostrated himself before the Ācārya, and Advaita picked him up and embraced him lovingly. Śrī Advaita built a hut for Haridāsa on the bank of

the Ganga and arranged for him to conduct his meditation and worship there.

Haridāsa continued his daily routine of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, honoring *prasādam* at Advaita's home, and hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Together they drowned in an ocean of bliss discussing Krishna and Mahāprabhu.

Krishna says,  
 "My real devotees  
 want nothing from me.  
 They don't want to live  
 where I live,  
 have the same wealth I have,  
 nor have a body like mine.  
 They just want to serve me."

“Any person who, upon  
hearing blasphemy  
against the Supreme Lord  
or His Devotee,  
does not leave  
that unholy place,  
is implicated in the offense and  
loses all *sukrti*, spiritual merit.”

*Srimad-Bhagavatam*



# MAHADEVA SHIVA & SATI'S SACRIFICE



ING DAKSA  
blasphemed  
the topmost  
V a i s h n a v a  
Shiva by not invit-

ing him to a royal sacrifice. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* tells the story of how Vishnu, the Supreme Godhead, refused to grace Dakṣa's *yajña*. Shiva's devoted wife Sati could not refuse Dakṣa's invitation because he was her father, so she attended despite her husband's disapproval.

At the assembly, her father began to publicly malign her husband. She was deeply pained and thought, "Feeling sentimental I ignored my husband's warning and came to my father's house only to be tormented by hearing blasphemy against an elevated Shnava. Shame on me a thousand times! I don't know what to do. I cannot continue to live in this wretched body of mine, which was conceived by my

blasphemous father. I will abandon it and purify my soul by bathing it in my godly husband's feet-dust.

She then addressed her father Dakṣa, "My Lord Shiva is dear to all living beings; he loves everyone. He has no enemies—to such a godly personality, you alone could behave in such a despicable manner."

A saintly person's nature is to overlook other's faults and only appreciate their good qualities. But an envious person like you sees even the good qualities of others as faults. The *madhyama-adhikārī* Vaishnava properly discriminates between good qualities and bad qualities. The *uttama-adhikārī* discovers everyone's smallest good qualities and praises them as if they are traits of greatness, whereas a fool decries a great personality who possesses all divine qualities.

The nature of fault-finders is to only look for other's faults. They disregard the many good charac-



teristics in others and attempt to portray them as shortcomings. Ants will search for little holes and cracks even in a beautiful gem-studded temple. Such people are like sieves who conveniently overlook their own thousand perforations but ridicule a pin-hole and try to magnify it.

A saintly person is free from fault-finding. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* defines a first-class Vaishnava as:

*uttama hañā vaiṣṇava habe nirabhimāna  
jibe sammāna dibe jāni' kṛṣṇa adhiṣṭhāna.*

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 20.25*

“Although a Vaishnava is the most exalted person, he is prideless and respects everyone, knowing that Krishna is within them.”



OM Bhur Bhuvah Sva  
Tat Savitur Varenyam  
Bhargo Devasya  
Dhimahi Dhiyo Yā Nah  
Prachodayat OM

Anyone who limits his concept of the self to the body, mind, or intellect is deluded. It is not surprising that such fools malign exalted persons. However, elevated souls calmly tolerate all blasphemies hurled against them. They are undisturbed by praise or criticism, honor or dishonor although their followers, who are like particles of pollen clinging to their lotus feet, never tolerate blasphemy. They want to destroy the offenders.

The two syllables forming the name ‘Shiva’ – *śi* and *va* – are so auspicious that by their mere utterance all inauspiciousness and evil is removed. Shiva’s instruction is law, and his pastimes are most holy and glorious. Therefore, only an envious fool could even think of criticizing the best friend of all living beings.”

Dakṣa responded, “You have described the sublime characteristics of saints and warned against finding faults in others, but what about me? I am a Brahmin. Even as a *prajāpati* (progenitor), I am wor-

shipped by everyone. I am your father and should be highly respected by you, my daughter. Do you think criticizing me is not an offense?”

Satī replied, “How can you, an enemy of Shiva, speak of blasphemy? As a party to this heinous offense I should kill you, and by not doing so I am worsening my own offense.”

So dear devotees, please hear the instruction of the scriptures in this regard:

*karṇau pidhāya nirayād yad akalpa īse  
dharmāvitary aṣṛṇibhir nṛbhir asyamāne  
chindyāt prasahya ruṣatīm asatīm prabhuṣ cej  
jihvām asūn api tato visṛjet sa dharmah.*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.4.17*

“Upon hearing blasphemy of the Lord, one should plug their ears and go away if they are unable to punish the blasphemer. But if one is not in a position to enforce corporal punishment, then they should give up their own life.”

In his commentary to this *śloka*, Śrīlā Viśvanātha Cakravartī writes:

“In the ancient times of India, the *kṣatriya-dharma*, or rights and responsibilities of the military class, dictated that a *kṣatriya* was empowered to punish blasphemers. The other classes of Vedic society—Brahmin, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*—were not permitted to mete out physical punishments. So the *vaiśyas* (merchants) and *śūdra* (workers), as a reaction to hearing blasphemy, may give up their lives. It is not right for a Brahmin to give up his life, and so he will cover his ears, chant the name of Vishnu, and leave the company of the blasphemer, feeling deeply saddened.”

Since Vaishnavas are at least equal to the Brahmins, they will follow the Brahmin code. Śrīlā Jīva Goswami writes in his *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, in the context of *sādhu-nindā*, the first of *nāma-āparādhas*:

“To even hear *vaiṣṇava-nindā* is damaging. The *Bhāgavatam* states:

*nindām bhagavataḥ śṛṇvāns,  
tat-parasya janasya vā*



tato nāpaiti yaḥ so'pi yaty,  
yadhah sukṛtāc cyutaḥ

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.74.40

“Any person who, on hearing blasphemy against the Supreme Lord or his devotee, does not leave that unholy place, is implicated in the offense and loses all *sukṛti* (spiritual merit).”

The instruction to leave the place of offense is solely directed at those who are weak. Those who are strong and powerful must retaliate.”

Śrīlā Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda writes in his purport of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.4.17:

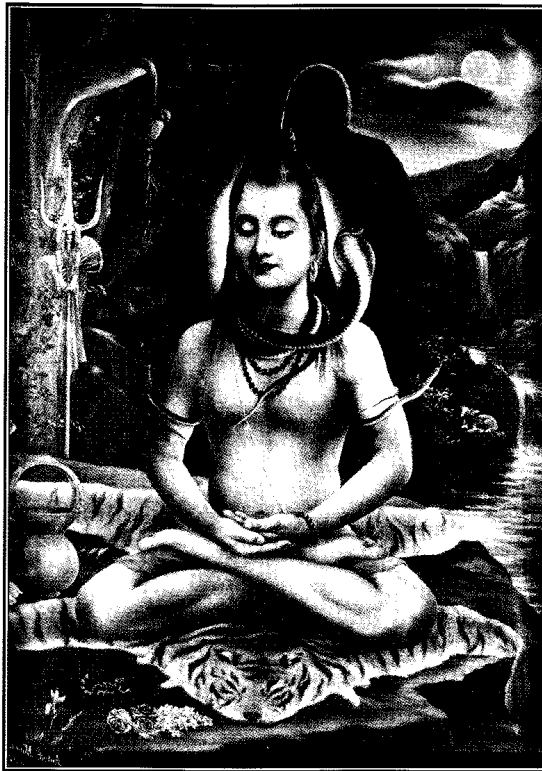
“The Brahmins are the gurus of the entire *varṇāśrama* society. The Brahmin’s guru is the Vaishnava Ācārya, or the spiritual preceptor and protector of Vaishnava theology. At the first sign of blasphemy against an Ācārya, it is one’s duty to leave. If one is not in an appropriate position to enforce corporal punishment, he should give up his body, feeling unbearable distress and shame.”

Śrīlā Bhaktisiddhānta Prabhupāda’s says that not only is the *vaiṣṇava-āparādhī*’s association to be strictly avoided, but also the associates of *vaiṣṇava-aparādhīs*.

Satī, the exalted wife of the greatest Vaishnava, Lord Shiva, continued: “I can’t stand living in this rotten body born from your seed. If one mistakenly drinks poison, doctors recommend vomiting. My poisoned body needs to be rejected and burned. You are vile I am ashamed to be your daughter. My husband addresses me as ‘Dakṣāyaṇī,’ the daughter of Dakṣa. When I think of that and how the name binds

me to you I feel disgusted and my heart breaks. I want to kill myself.”

Satī suddenly went into a deep meditation, and by her mystic power, left her body. Shocked, everyone began to wail while Dakṣa remained silent. Satī’s bodyguards prepared to kill him. The powerful sage Bhṛgu, seeing the attacking guards advancing, chanted a potent mantra and offered oblations into the sacrificial fire. Out of the fire arose hundreds of powerful *Ṛbhus*, (heavenly warriors) armed with magical



Mahadeva Shiva in Meditation

weapons who disseminated the bodyguards. Outnumbered by superior warriors, Satī’s guards fled in all directions.

Meanwhile, Nārada Muni, who was observing the entire incident by mystic vision, went to Lord Shiva and told him everything. Lord Shiva, in a fit of rage, tore a hair from his head and dashed it on the ground. The hair morphed into a monstrous warrior named Vīrabhadra, who bowed in deep reverence to his master and prayed for instructions. Shiva said, “You are my anger—destroy Dakṣa!”

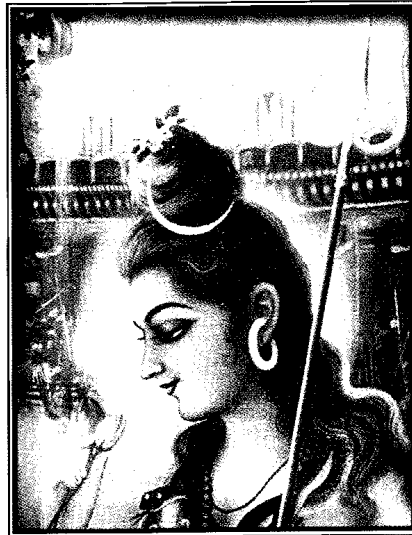
Vīrabhadra immediately raced to the sacrifice and arrested Dakṣa. He tore Bhṛgu Muni’s mustache off of his face, because he had twirled it

while derisively laughing at Lord Shiva. Vīrabhadra slammed Bhagadeva to the ground and ripped his eyes out, because Bhagadeva had encouraged Dakṣa by winking at him while he was insulting Lord Shiva. And because Pūṣā had smiled, baring his teeth while Shiva was being abused, Vīrabhadra knocked his teeth out, just as Balārama had done to Dantavakra.

Then Vīrabhadra sat on Dakṣa’s chest and severed his head. Vīrabhadra threw the bloody head into the sacrificial fire as an oblation and set the whole arena on fire. Then he called for Shiva’s soldiers and



# Vaishnavanam Yatha Shambhu



left for Kailāsa. Any sacrificial ceremony in which there is blasphemy of a pure Vaishnava will face the same destruction.

The sacrificial priest and the attending gods, all severely wounded, reverently approached Brahmā and narrated the gory episode to him. Brahmā and Śrī Nārāyaṇa had stayed away from Dakṣa's sacrifice, knowing beforehand the terrible outcome. Brahmā patiently heard their pleas and advised: "Those who vilify a powerful personality and then desire to live in peace will find their lives extremely inauspicious. You have offended Shiva, who is a recipient god of the sacrificial oblations. You must be sincerely remorseful and throw yourselves at his feet. He is *Āśutoṣa*, very easy to satisfy—so try to please him. When he is angry he is capable of destroying the entire universe. He has been deeply hurt and enraged by the death of his beloved consort. I see no recourse other than sincerely begging forgiveness at his lotus feet."

Brahmā then led Indra and the other gods to Lord Shiva's abode, Kailāsa. They found him sitting

under a tree and meditating on the Supreme. They offered their respectful obeisances to Shiva who reciprocated. Brahmā prayed and begged him to excuse Dakṣa, and to find a way to complete the *yajña*.

He further pleaded with him to forgive the other gods who were a party to the heinous crime, and to heal the maimed and wounded guests.

Shiva was appeased by Brahmā and the gods. By his mystic power he placed a goat's head on Dakṣa and brought him back to life, and the others who were wounded were also healed. Shiva accompanied them to Dakṣa's sacrificial arena, where Dakṣa fell at his feet and begged for mercy. The *yajña* resumed, Nārāyaṇa came to receive oblations, Shiva and Brahmā were worshiped and received the remnants of the sacrificial offerings—Dakṣa's *yajña* was completed. In time, Satī reincarnated as Pārvatī, the daughter of Menakā and Himalaya, and married Shiva again.

By hearing this sacred tale of Shiva, who is the crest jewel among Vaishnavas, we advance on the path of devotion.

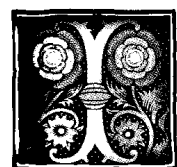
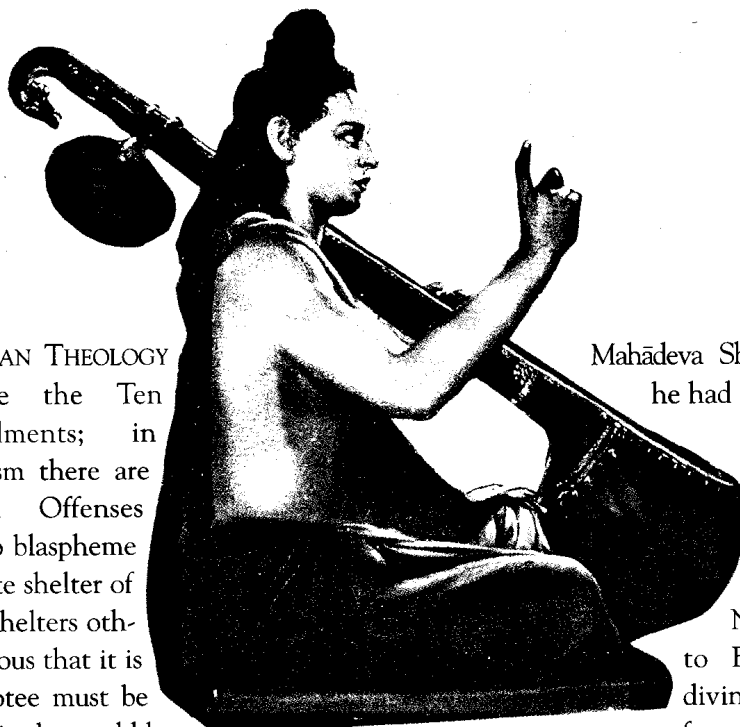
“Any person who, upon  
hearing blasphemy  
against the Supreme Lord  
or His Devotee,  
does not leave  
that unholy place,  
is implicated in the offense and  
loses all *sukrti*, spiritual merit.”

*Srimad-Bhagavatam*





# SRI NARADA MUNI & THE SONS OF DAKSHA



**X**N CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY there are the Ten Commandments; in Vaishnavism there are the Ten Offenses against the Holy Name. To blaspheme one who has taken complete shelter of the Holy Name, and who shelters others in *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, is so serious that it is first and foremost. A devotee must be extremely cautious, otherwise he could be committing spiritual suicide. An offender may chant the Holy Name for millions of lifetimes without receiving the blessings of Nāma Prabhu, the Holy Name himself.

The scriptures inform us that Dakṣa was beheaded because he offended Shiva. Yet after he pleased Shiva with sincere remorse, he was forgiven. *Vaiṣṇava-aparādha* is so insidious that if even a trace of it remains in the heart, there will be remission. Dakṣa, who committed *vaiṣṇava-aparādha* in the time of the Svāyambhuva-*manvantara*, had to suffer its consequences eons later. As the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states:

“Following the order of the creator Brahmā to procreate, all the Pracetās accepted Mārīṣā as their wife. From her womb Dakṣa took another birth. Dakṣa had to take birth again due to his offenses to

Mahādeva Shiva. Consequently he had to die twice.”

Śrīlā Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda gives his opinion, “In Svāyambhuva Manu’s era, Śrī Nārāyaṇa gave birth to Brahmā from the divine lotus that sprouts from his navel. Dakṣa

was Brahmā’s son, yet even so, because of offending Mahādeva Shiva, he had to suffer taking birth again from the womb of Mārīṣā. Dakṣa first died in the hands of Virabhadra, and a second time by natural death.”

The material universe is destroyed at the end of the fifth *manvantara*. Dakṣa was born in the Svāyambhuva-*manvantara*. Desiring immense opulence, he performed austerities for a period of five *manvantaras*. During the sixth *manvantara*, Cākṣuṣa, he achieved his immense wealth. Viśvanātha Cakravartī states that it was by the mercy of Shiva that Dakṣa acquired his fabulous wealth.

In Cākṣuṣa *manvantara*, on the orders of the Supreme Lord Hari, the progenitor Dakṣa accepted Asiknī as his wife and fathered ten thousand sons. He instructed his sons to increase the population. He



advised them to visit the holy place of Śrī Nārāyaṇa-Sarovara, where there have been many saints since the beginning of time. By the purifying influence of the water of the Sarovara, Dakṣa's sons were freed of material desires and became *paramahamsas*.

Remembering their father's instruction to populate the world, they began to undergo a process of self-purification. The great sage Nārada found them performing their penances and examined them by asking them ten esoteric questions. Understanding the import of these questions, they became detached and pursued a life of devotion. They expressed their appreciation to Nārada and began their devotional path.

When Dakṣa heard that his sons had become renunciates he was overcome with lamentation: "Alas! Even good sons can be the cause of great sorrow."

Brahmā managed to console Dakṣa, who fathered another thousand sons. Dakṣa gave them the same instruction to increase the population. Following in the footsteps of their elder brothers, they traveled to the same holy place. Its waters cleansed their hearts of all material contamination, and they also became devotees of the Supreme Lord.

Dakṣa's anxiety increased with several inauspicious omens. When the news reached him that these sons too had taken up the path of renunciation and disappeared, Dakṣa was again overwhelmed with grief. Once more Nārada Muni was the cause, and in great anger Dakṣa cursed him. "You wear the dress of a saintly person, but you are not actually a saint. I may be a family man, but I am a real saint. By showing my sons the path of renunciation, you have ruined my life.

"You have made me lose my sons once, and now you have done it again. You do not know how to treat people properly. So you may continue to travel all over the universe, but I curse you to never have a home anywhere."



It is said that at birth, a Brahmin is indebted to the ṛṣis, to the gods and goddesses, and to his father. According to the scriptures, a Brahmin can be cleared from his debts to the ṛṣis by observing *brahmācārya* (celibacy) until marriage, to the gods by performing *yajña*, and to his father by producing sons. Dakṣa argued that his sons had not yet absolved their debts, and therefore were not eligible for renunciation. Dakṣa felt that Nārada's instruction made his sons apathetic to family life, which disqualified them from receiving benediction

in this life and the next. Further, Dakṣa felt that Nārada confused their immature minds. He told Nārada that his association with the Supreme Lord was a blemish on the Lord's reputation.

Nārada, who is respected by all saintly persons, responded to Dakṣa's curse indifferently, without protest. If one accepts a curse and allows it to take effect, even though he is capable of counteracting it, then such tolerance should be enough to win over the person who cursed him. The truth is that for those who are mired in materialism, Dakṣa's viewpoint has value, whereas Nārada's teachings on pure devotion are outside their grasp. And this leads to *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

Meanwhile Dakṣa, lamenting the loss of his sons, was consoled by Brahmā. Encouraged by Brahmā and afraid that he might remain childless, he fathered sixty daughters who were very devoted to



their father. They all married, and their children and grandchildren populated the universe.

*Vaiṣṇava-aparādha* severely damages one's spiritual progress. When Dakṣa offended Lord Shiva, he asked forgiveness, but half-heartedly. The disease of *aparādha* remained in Dakṣa's heart and resurfaced as an offense to the lotus feet of Śrī Nārada Muni.

Even if one worships the Lord for millions of lifetimes, if he has offended a Vaishnava it will be impossible to gain the Lord's mercy. This is a warning to all devotees.

Śrīlā Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Prabhupāda writes in his *Gaudīya-bhaṣya* commentary:

"The Supreme Lord Krishna manifests himself in the material world in four forms. The Vaishnava, Tulasī, the Ganga, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are four of the Lord's divine expansions (*prakāśa-vigraha*). Although they may not appear to be divine, they are nondifferent from Divinity and are worthy of worship.

"Generally people think that the deity form of the Lord is only worthy of worship after being formally installed (*prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā*). However this does not apply to the Vaishnava, Tulasī devī, Ganga devī, or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. These four constitute Krishna's paraphernalia, and although they are enjoyed by him, he enjoys serving them. These representations of divinity must never be denigrated, otherwise all one's devotional endeavors are useless.

Mahāprabhu himself says: 'Those who worship me directly but neglect my devotees are in illusion and cause me pain. Their offerings feel like a shower of burning cinders on my body. He who criticizes and offends my devotees will be destroyed by chanting my name. Just because one is chanting is no guarantee of success. I destroy anyone who tries to hurt my devotees.'

"Even if a *sannyāsī* offends a pure devotee he falls down. Gaurachandra declared to the world: 'Give up criticizing Vaishnavas and take shelter of *kr̥ṣṇa-nāma*. If one utters Krishna's name even once without offense, I will deliver him immediately.'"

Śrīlā Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura has condemned the offenders of Vishnu, Krishna, and his devotees,

the Vaishnavas. He quotes Nārada Muni in the *Caitanya-Bhāgavata*:

"One who is openly fallen hurts only himself, whereas a phony saint is worse, because he drags all of his followers down with him."

Pretenders usurp the elevated seats of saints and misguide the general populace in the name of religion. They encourage the public to engage in false practices and to criticize the actual representatives of religious principles, Vaishnavas. They destroy themselves as well as their unfortunate followers. Unwary people gather to hear spiritual instructions from these charlatans, but end up hearing insults against actual saintly persons. Believing in such teachings, followers of false gurus pave their path to hell. Vṛndāvana dāsa says: "People eagerly hear spiritual instructions from a man who they think is a saintly person by his external appearance. Instead they hear criticism directed against real saints, and due to this offense they plunge deep into the abyss."

The Vedas unequivocally declare that if anyone hears insults against a Vaishnava he loses all his accumulated piety and is cast into abominable conditions birth after birth.

If one offenselessly chants Krishna's name even once, then Krishna will liberate him from material bondage. However, a person may be well-versed in all the Vedas, but if he still maintains an offensive attitude towards the Vaishnavas, he is eternally doomed. *Gaudīya-Bhaṣya* states with regard to Śrī *Caitanya-Bhāgavata*: "When one stops his offenses against the Vaishnavas and utters Krishna's name even once, he easily receives the Supreme Lord's grace. Criticizing the *sādhu* is the same as criticizing the lotus feet of Śrī Guru, and that is an offense against the Supreme Lord. Gradually degrading to the level of *Bhagavad-nindā*, an offender of the Supreme Lord is not only deprived of receiving *prema*, but due to his *nāma-aparādha* he does not even come anywhere near achieving the benefits of religion, wealth, or material enjoyment."

And this is why we often hear people say "Although I have been chanting for years, I have no taste." Kavirāja Goswami offers an answer: "There are



offenses to be mindful of when approaching *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Offensive chanting never brings about the desired change of heart.

“If by vibrating the Holy Name of Krishna our hairs do not stand on end, our eyes do not flood with tears, and there is not a volcanic eruption of ecstasy in our bodies, our hearts must be covered in steel.”

It is written in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that “Simply vibrating the name of Krishna once destroys all sin and then devotion gradually develops into love, *kṛṣṇa-prema*. When the heart is saturated with *prema*, it pounds, the body sweats and shivers, speech falters, and the eyes are flooded with tears. When we take the name of Krishna in the mood of divine service, so much wealth is gained that the struggle for existence is over without our even trying. However, if one repeatedly takes the name of Krishna and is not moved to tears, it is obvious that *aparādha* is preventing the seed of *kṛṣṇa-nāma* from sprouting.”

Then what is our recourse? Kavirāja Goswami says that in chanting the name of Krishna, there is the consideration of offenses, but in chanting the names of Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu, the most magnanimous manifestations of Divinity, there are no offenses.

“If one chants the names of Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu with even a little faith, he is immediately cleansed of all offenses. Then when he chants *kṛṣṇa-nāma*, he feels ecstasy. Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu is unlimitedly magnanimous. Without worshipping him what hope is there for liberation?”

This does not imply that Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu bestow *prema* in the presence of *aparādha*. They are so magnanimous that whoever

seeks shelter at their lotus feet receives their mercy. Soon the offenses disappear and the offender feels love for Krishna.

Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura says: “If we surrender to Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu, all our previous offenses are instantly absolved. Then the merciful Holy Name showers us with divine love.”

Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura writes: “Krishna and Gaurāṅga are their names, and their names are them. To consider Krishna as subordinate, or inferior to Gaurāṅga is ignorance. But the fact is, Gaurāṅga and Nityānanda are especially helpful to

the fallen souls. The more the *jivas* become fallen, the more merciful becomes the Lord. Gaurāṅga and Nityānanda are the ultimate manifestation of divine kindness.

Access to *kṛṣṇa-līla* is limited to the highest liberated souls. Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu have stolen the *madhura-rasa* of Vṛndāvana and are distributing it freely to the most unqualified souls. The nectarean current flowing from the lotus feet of Gaurāṅga and Nityānanda carries those souls to the sanctuary of Krishna’s lotus feet.”

“Worship of Gaurāṅga does not exclude the worship of Krishna. Neither is it inferior to the worship of Śrī Rādhā and Krishna. That kind of so-called devotion is fictitious, and is devoid of even a drop of the divine nectar of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.”

Mahāprabhu never tolerated *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. Ramachandra Puri, Devānanda Pundit, and others are vivid examples of this truth. Even Mother Śacī had to beg forgiveness from Advaita Ācārya before the Lord would bless her with *prema*. Only when one sincerely approaches the offended Vaishnava and begs forgiveness will he be forgiven. Then offenses





disappear; otherwise the consequences are fatal. As long as the heart is covered by offenses it is impregnable.

Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura sings:

“Offenses have made my heart as hard as steel, and as cruel as thunderbolts. O Lord, even your Holy Name has no effect. I feel hopeless and helpless, so I loudly cry your Holy Name.” He prays to Śrī Gaura and Nitāi, “I am the most fallen, and you are oceans of mercy. Please save me!”

This is the critical difference between *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* and *Chaitanya-līlā*. Śrī Krishnadasa Kavirāja Goswami concludes the *Madhya-līlā* of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta with this secret revelation:

*kṛṣṇa-līlā amṛta-sāra  
tāra śata śata dhāra,  
daśa-dike vahe yāhā haite  
se caitanya-līlā haya,  
sarovara akṣaya  
mano-haṁsa carāha' tāhāte*

*Madhya-līlā, 5.271*

“*Kṛṣṇa-līlā* is the cream of all nectar, only the confidantes of Śrī Rādhā and Krishna and the eternally perfect souls can enter there. So how then should we



conceive of *Chaitanya-līlā*? The pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are an infinite reservoir, from which thousands of streams of the nectar of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* are flowing in all directions, inundating everyone—everywhere. May the swan of my mind swim there eternally, and dive deep into its infinite waves of nectar.

*tad idam ati-rahasyaṁ gaura-līlāmṛtaṁ yat  
khala-samudaya-kolair nāḍṛtaṁ tair alabhyam  
kṣatir iyam iha kā me svāditāṁ yat samantāt  
sahṛdaya-sumanobhir modam eṣāṁ tanoti*

*Madhya-līlā 25.283*

“*Gaura-līlā* is deeply mysterious and confidential. It is the secret to devotion and love of Krishna. Those who are envious of Krishna and his devotees are like animals unable to taste its nectar. But I do not lament having described Mahāprabhu’s *līlā* because nothing is lost. Rather something is gained, because those devotees who are pure of heart expand the *līlā* by tasting and relishing it again and again.”

“If by Vibrating the Holy Name of Krishna  
Our Hairs do not stand on end, our Eyes do not Flood with Tears,  
And there is not a Volcanic Eruption of Ecstasy in our Bodies,  
Our Hearts Must be Covered in Steel.”



“Krishna Lila is the  
Cream of All Nectar,  
Only the Confidantes of  
Sri Radha and Krishna  
And the Eternally Perfect Souls  
Can enter there.

How then should we conceive  
Sri Chaitanya Lila?

The Pastimes of  
Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu  
Are an Infinite Reservoir,  
From which Thousands of Streams  
Of the Nectar of Krishna Lila  
Are Flowing in All Directions,  
Inundating Everyone—Everywhere.  
May the Swan of My Mind  
Swim there Eternally, &  
Dive Deep into its Infinite Waves of Nectar



# SRI GARUDA

## THE DIVINE CARRIER OF VISHNU



VEN A GREAT YOGI becomes lusty and falls down if he offends a Vaishnava. The consequence of offending an elevated Vaishnava is extremely grave. The story of Saubhari Ṛṣi from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* illustrates this point.

Saubhari was practicing severe austerities for many years, sometimes levitating above the Yamunā River and sometimes deeply submerged within it. One day Garuḍa, the winged carrier of Vishnu, was hungry and dived into a lake in the middle of the Yamunā River. He swooped down and plucked a large fish that he thought would be ideal for his lunch. The smaller fish were frightened upon seeing their leader so easily consumed. Saubhari Ṛṣi felt sorry for them and cursed Garuḍa: "If you ever dare to come here again—you'll die!"

The great commentator on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, gives his interpretation: "Unfortunately Saubhari Ṛṣi committed two offenses against the great devotee Garuḍa: giving orders to a superior personality (*ājñāpradāna*), and exhibiting a malicious attitude (*tadīṣṭapṛātikūlya*). Garuḍa on the other hand, could not be indicted for such offenses as disobeying orders (*ājñālaṅghana*), and violence against others (*prāṇi-himsana*), because of his powerful position.

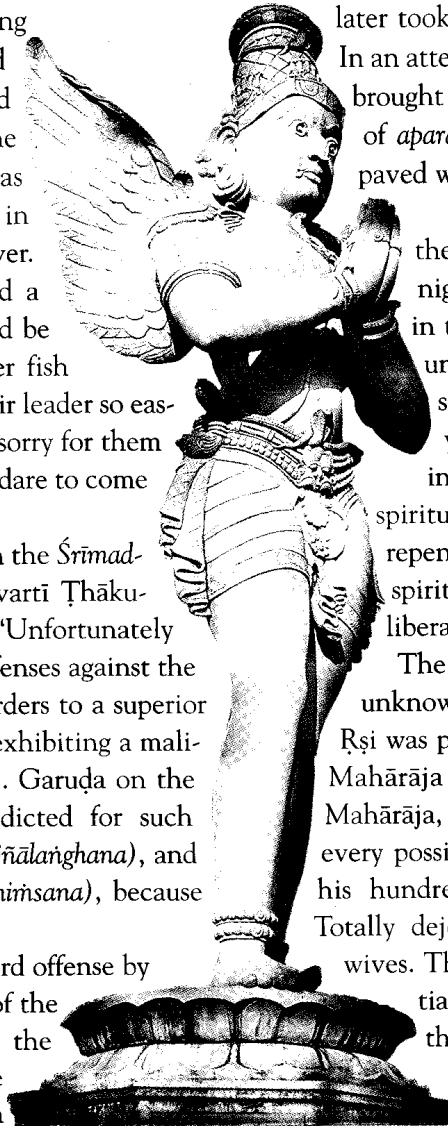
Saubhari committed a third offense by cursing a *pārṣada*, an associate of the Lord. He did this to protect the helpless creatures living in the lake, but his compassion was in

vain because Kāliya's venom poisoned those waters and all the fish died anyway. Saubhari's curse was that if Garuḍa ever came to the lake to eat fish he would die immediately, but the implication was that even if he simply came there and did not eat fish, he would still perish. Knowing that, Garuḍa never ventured near the lake. Kāliya also knew about this curse and later took shelter in that lake to escape Garuḍa.

In an attempt to show mercy to the fish, Saubhari brought upon himself the terrible consequences of *aparādha*. It is said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Saubhari was then deviated from the spiritual path and began a hellish nightmare of sexual exploits culminating in the slavery of family life. He traded the unlimited joy of soul for the fleeting pleasure of the flesh. This dragged on for years. However, because he took shelter in the waters of the Yamunā which are spiritual and purifying, he became deeply repentant and was again able to take up his spiritual practices, which ultimately lead to liberation.

The ways of the infinite are mysterious and unknowable. It so happens that while Saubhari Ṛṣi was performing his austerities, the great king Mahārāja Yuvanāśva, ancestor of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, was trying to produce an heir. He tried every possible means to conceive a child through his hundred wives, but remained unsuccessful. Totally dejected, he entered the forest with his wives. The compassionate sages of the forest initiated the Indra-*yajña* to satisfy Indra so that he would bless the king with a son. They performed the sacrifice with great caution. A chalice filled with water,





meant to be drunk by the king's principal queens in order to fertilize them, was left within the sacrificial arena. One night, the king awoke from his sleep feeling thirsty, found the chalice and drank its contents. The next morning the sages saw the empty chalice and were alarmed. When they discovered that the king had drunk the water they understood that this could only happen by God's intervention. They offered prayers to the Lord condoning his divine act, and glorifying his mysterious ways.

In time, an exquisite son with all the marks of a powerful prince appeared from the lower right side of king Yuvanāśva's abdomen. The baby cried continuously, hungering for breast-milk, and the sages were in a dilemma about how to feed the baby. Just then Lord Indra, who was worshiped in the *yajña*, appeared and comforted the crying baby. He offered his index finger for the baby to suck, saying *mām dhātā*—"You may drink me." Thus the prince became known as Māndhātā.

Although the baby was born from the abdomen of King Yuvanāśva, the king did not die due to the blessings of the sages. He remained in that spot and performed severe austerities, finally achieving yogic perfection.

The baby grew up and ruled the world. He drew strength from Vishnu and ruled the seven islands that comprise the Earth—Jambū, Plakṣa, Śālmali, Kuśa, Krauñca, Śāka, and Puṣkara. Powerful demons like Rāvaṇa were always fearful of him, and hence Indra called him 'Trasaddasyu,' one who scares away rogues.

Emperor Māndhātā gave immense charity and performed *yajñas* to worship Vishnu. He fathered three sons and fifty daughters through his wife Bindumatī, the daughter of Śaśabindu. The sons were

Purukutsa, Ambarīṣa, and the great mystic Mucukunda.

Meanwhile Saubhari Muni was performing austerities under the waters of the river Yamunā. One day his attention was diverted by a pair of fish mating. The Ṛṣi's heart filled with lust. He came up from the river bed and went to Mathurā, where he approached Emperor Māndhātā and requested the hand of one of his daughters in marriage. The emperor said

that any one of them would be free to choose the sage as her husband.

Saubhari Ṛṣi thought to himself: "I am old, wrinkled, and gray because of my austerities, and I am not attractive to a young princess. I

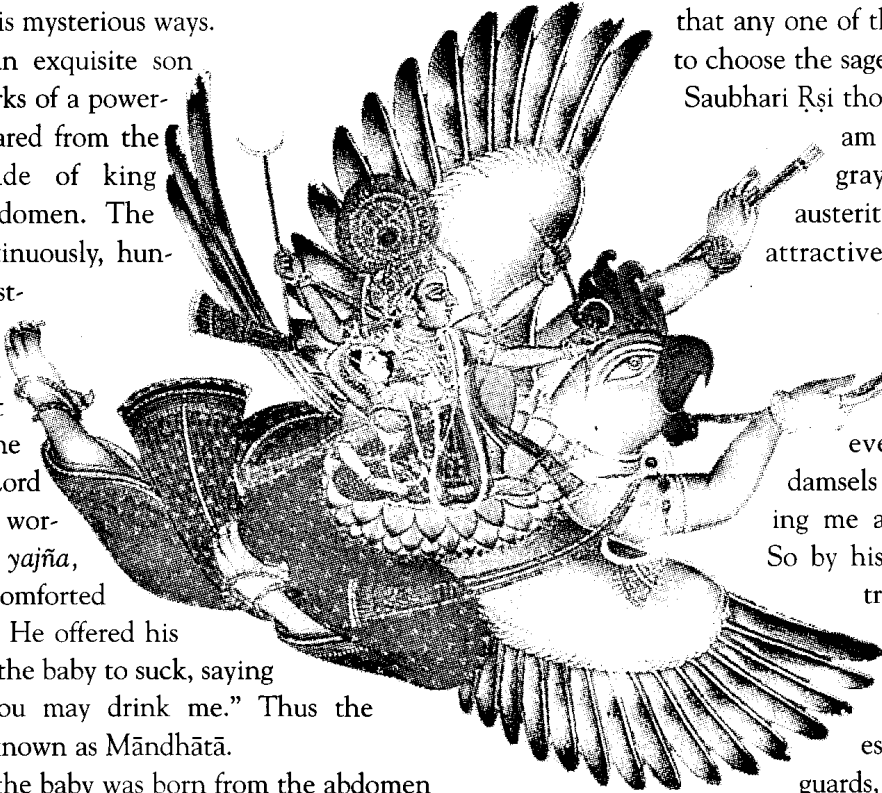
must make myself so handsome that even the heavenly damsels will dream of having me as their husband."

So by his mystic power he transformed himself into a handsome young man.

When he was escorted in by royal guards, all fifty princesses

found him so irresistibly attractive that they quarreled amongst themselves, all wanting to marry him. Saubhari Ṛṣi thus married them all, and built fifty magnificent palaces so full of splendor that the palace of Lord Indra himself paled by comparison. The Emperor Māndhātā was awestruck by Saubhari Ṛṣi's opulence. In comparison to the Ṛṣi's royal lifestyle, he was humbled despite his own huge empire.

Although Saubhari was surrounded by fantastic luxury and enjoyment, he did not feel satisfied or at peace with himself. Just as butter fuels fire, sense gratification increases a man's lusty desires. He began to reflect: "What have I done! Just by seeing fish mate I abandoned the path of self-realization just for sex.







Because of my offense to Garuḍa, I have destroyed myself. Look at me! No one should waste their time dwelling on sense objects. Save your heart and mind for constant meditation on the Supreme Lord. And if you're lonely, associate with saints who have taken complete shelter at the Lord's lotus feet.

"Previously I was in meditation on Hari, but sex desire dragged me into endless family entanglement. I married fifty wives and fathered a hundred sons through each wife. Material nature corrupted my conscience to such an extent that there was no

end to my desires."

Saubhari Ṛṣi passed his days in lamentation. Trying to detach himself from his family entanglement, he retired and entered the forest, followed by his devoted wives. Once again he began to practice austerities. At the time of his death he offered himself totally in the service of the all-pervasive Supersoul, and his wives also attained the same spiritual goal because of their devotion to him.

This incident gives insight into the subtle workings of *vaiṣṇava-aparādhā*. The powerful sage Saubhari



Kaliya Naga, His Devoted Wives, & Sri Krishna



committed an offense at the feet of Garuda in an act of sympathy to a fish. Because of his actions, he not only indirectly orchestrated the mass extinction of every living creature in the Yamunā River, but was also the cause of harassing the exalted residents of Vṛndāvana (Vrajabāsīs) by creating a haven for Kāliya. Thus Saubhari offended even the Vrajabāsīs, who are the most dear to Krishna.

As for his personal life, Saubhari fell from the spiritual path. He degenerated into a lecherous fool for years, caught in an inescapable web of illusion. Ultimately he regained his spiritual status by the

mercy of Vṛndāvana-dhāma and Yamunā devī. But as far as relishing the nectar of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* was concerned, he could not obtain it. Kāliya, on the

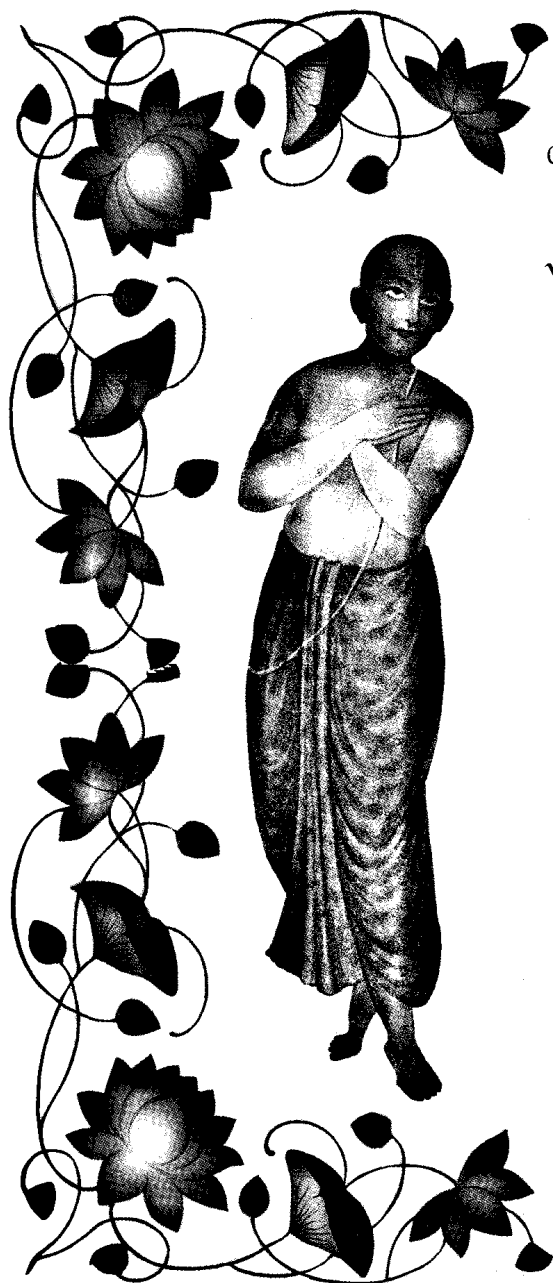
other hand, although envious and capricious, was aided by the good wishes of his devoted wives, who attracted the mercy of Krishna and brought him all auspiciousness.

It is almost impossible to be released from the consequences of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. Without feeling deep remorse, and without surrendering at the feet of the offended devotee, one can never be forgiven. Without such forgiveness, the goal of life is lost.



# SRIVAS PUNDIT

## & THE LIBERATION OF THE LEPER



Even Brahma and the gods sing the glories of Srivas.  
By worshipping him one attains Krishna's lotus feet,  
which are inaccessible to even Shiva or Ananta Sesh.

There is nothing greater than to serve him.

He is more dear to Krishna than Ananta Sesh,

Lakshmi, Brahma, and Shiva,

He is even more dear than

the Lord is to himself.



IN HIS WAY TO MATHURA, Mahāprabhu visited the town of Rāmakeli for a few days. Instead of traveling towards Mathurā, he went south toward the ancient city of Jagannātha Purī. On the way, he stopped at Śrī Advaita Ācārya's home in Śāntipura. There a leper came to visit Mahāprabhu. The leper threw himself before the Lord, crying for mercy.

"My Lord! You are supremely compassionate. You have appeared in this world to save the most unfortunate souls. Your heart is naturally pained to see people suffer. I am a leper. Please tell me how to get free from my excruciating pain."

Mahāprabhu screamed: "Get out of my sight! I'm becoming polluted just looking at you. You have blasphemed a Vaishnava. Whatever you are experiencing in this life is nothing. I can't even think of what is going to happen to you.

"You have insulted a Vaishnava, whose very



name sanctifies the universe. Even Brahmā and the gods sing the glories of Śrīvāsa. By worshipping him one attains Krishna's lotus feet, which are inaccessible to even Shiva or Ananta Śeṣa. There is nothing greater than to serve him. He is more dear to Krishna than Ananta Śeṣa, Lakṣmī, Brahmā, Shiva, and even the Lord himself.

"Krishna says in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to his beloved friend Uddhava: 'Even though Brahmā is my son, Shiva is my other self, Saṅkarṣaṇa is my brother, and Lakṣmī is my wife, they are not as dear to me as you are.'

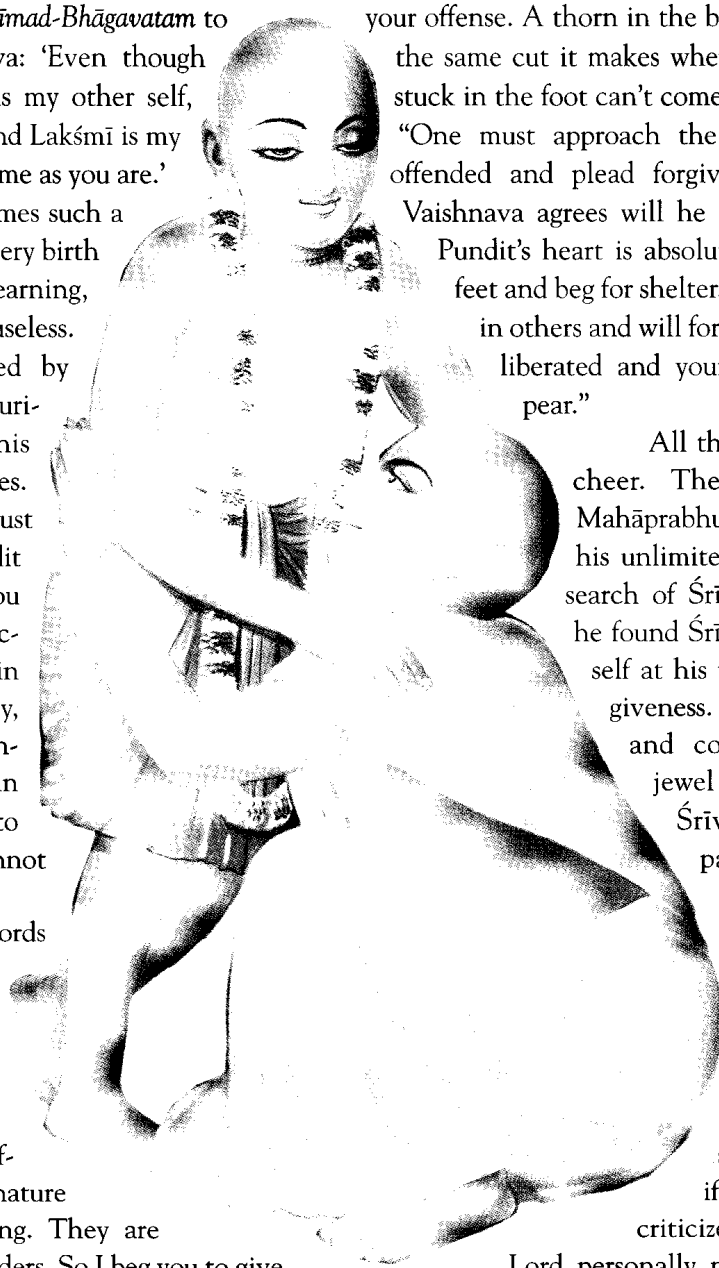
"Anyone who blasphemes such a Vaishnava suffers untold misery birth after birth. The offender's learning, high birth, and religion are useless. All his worship is refused by Krishna. Mother Earth is purified by the touch of this Vaishnava when he dances. He purifies all directions just by his glance. Śrīvāsa Pundit is a *mahā-bhāgavata*, and you criticized his spotless character. Therefore your body is in burning pain from leprosy, but this punishment is nothing compared to what is in store for you. I hate having to even look at you. Even I cannot deliver you."

Śrī Chaitanyadeva's words shocked the leper, who fell down praying:

"I must have been mad to blaspheme a Vaishnava. I didn't realize the seriousness of my actions. Now I am suffering. But I know it is the nature of *sādhus* to relieve suffering. They are compassionate even to offenders. So I beg you to give me shelter. Besides you, who can save me? You know all the remedies and penances for the different offenses, so as the omnipotent universal father, please tell

me what penances I must perform."

Mahāprabhu said: "What you are experiencing is just an immediate reaction for the offense, but the suffering that follows life after life is unimaginable. You have offended Śrīvāsa Pundit, so it is from him that you must beg forgiveness. Go fall at his feet. Only if he excuses you can you become absolved from your offense. A thorn in the body is removed from the same cut it makes when entering. A thorn stuck in the foot can't come out of the shoulder. "One must approach the Vaishnava he has offended and plead forgiveness. Only if the Vaishnava agrees will he be forgiven. Śrīvāsa Pundit's heart is absolutely pure; fall at his feet and beg for shelter. He never sees faults in others and will forgive you. You will be liberated and your misery will disappear."



All the devotees began to cheer. The leper bowed to Mahāprabhu in appreciation of his unlimited mercy and left in search of Śrīvāsa Pundit. When he found Śrīvāsa, he threw himself at his feet and begged forgiveness. That magnanimous and compassionate crest-jewel among Vaishnavas, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur then pardoned him—the leper was liberated.

Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu emphasizes the consequences of blaspheming a Vaishnava. But in spite of his warning, if anyone insults or criticizes a Vaishnava, the Lord personally punishes him. If we witness a quarrel between higher Vaishnavas, it is in our interest not to see it as mundane squabbling but as a vehicle to broadcast and enhance each



other's love for Krishna, much like the verbal fights between Queen Satyabhāmā and Queen Rukmīṇī. The transcendental subject of their fights was always the same—Krishna.

The differences of opinion between Vaishnavas are inspired by Śrī Chaitanya in order to instruct us. If anyone foolishly takes sides in such a debate, he becomes an *aparādhī* by contradicting and criticizing the other Vaishnava, and the results are most harmful to him. It's like someone serving Krishna with one hand and slapping him with the other. When a person understands that Vaishnavas are the different limbs of Krishna's transcendental body, he understands that the Lord and his devotees are inseparable.

If we worship Krishna and his devotees as one, and remain immersed in serving Krishna's lotus feet, then we will become immortal. Any person who sincerely narrates or hears these auspicious instructions will always be protected from committing *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

The point to consider here is that sometimes the dissension between pure Vaishnavas gives pleasure to Krishna because they are fighting over him. But if a devotee is infected by *nāma-aparādha* and is driven to offend a humble Vaishnava, then no sympathy can be extended to him.

There are numerous instances in the scriptures which describe such self-destruction. The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* cites a *śloka* from the *Skanda Purāṇa* which was spoken by Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi to Bhagīratha:

“Those rascals who criticize a Vaishnava not only drag themselves down, but their fathers with them. And anyone who does not feel joy upon seeing a Vaishnava, must live in hell.”

In regard to the necessity of avoiding bad association, the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* quotes the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

“Persons with developed consciousness and high intellect must completely reject bad association and seek the company of devotees, because their instructions alone can end the anxiety caused by desire.”  
*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 10.318

Śrīla Bhaktivinode Ṭhākura says that even a guru who blasphemes Vaishnavas must be rejected. “At

first one may be a qualified guru. But if for some reason he becomes an offender to the Holy Name, he gradually begins to lose his power of discrimination. He then blasphemes a Vaishnava and loses his taste for *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Gradually he sinks into the clutches of materialism, and the exploitation of women.”

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that “bad association” means attachments that drag one down. Śrīla Sanātana Goswami's commentary on *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, *Dig-Darśinī*, states:

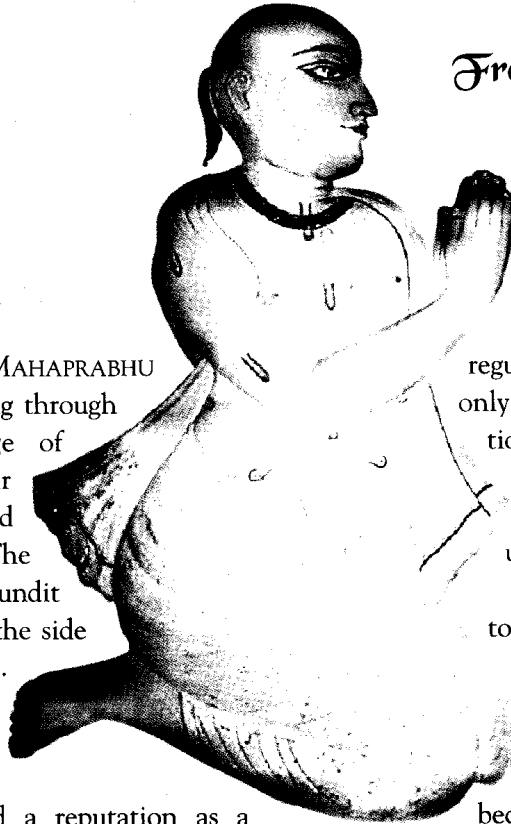
“The term ‘saints’ refers exclusively to the devotees of the Supreme Lord—not to fruitive workers, philosophers, or yogis. Bad association means excessive attachment to family, friends, and home. It also means relationships motivated by exploitation. Only the wisdom of Saints can save us from our tendency to exploit and lead us on the path of spiritual service.”





# BOOK BHAGWAT & BHAKTA BHAGWAT THE EDUCATION OF DEVANANDA PUNDIT

“If You Want to Understand  
Srimad Bhagavatam,  
You Must Hear  
From a Real Vaishnava.”



ONE DAY, MAHAPRABHU was walking through the village of Vidyānagar and arrived at a dike by a rice paddy. The great scholar Devānanda Pundit had built his dwelling by the side of the embankment. Devānanda was a celibate Brahmin who performed austerities and was very scholarly. He had earned a reputation as a teacher of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*. Unfortunately, due to a strong desire for liberation and a lack of devotion, he could not comprehend the real import of the *Bhāgavatam* which is an ocean of liquid love, *bhakti-rasa*. Mahāprabhu’s secretary Svarūpa Dāmodara tried to give him some guidelines:

“If you want to understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, you must hear from a Vaishnava. But you can do this only when you have completely taken shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. So associate

regularly with devotees of Mahāprabhu, for only then will you truly understand devotion. You possess *jñāna*, the ability to understand, but due to *aparādha* you have not realized that Krishna is the ultimate goal.”

The *Gaudīya-bhāṣya* commentary to this verse states: “Every living entity is potentially a Vaishnava. Devānanda Pundit had the ability to know the imports of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but this knowledge was dormant in him because of *aparādha*, and his insight was impeded. Krishna knows everything; the type of *aparādha* which was at the root of Devānanda’s ignorance was known only to Krishna.

Mahāprabhu was passing by just as Devānanda Pundit was delivering a lecture on *Bhāgavatam*. Not hearing a devotional commentary, Mahāprabhu became enraged and spoke out:

“How dare this rascal interpret the *Bhāgavatam*! He is completely ignorant of its essence. On what authority does he speak? The *Bhāgavatam* is the liter-



ary incarnation of Krishna. The ultimate goal is pure devotion. The Vedic scriptures have declared that the *Bhāgavatam* is saturated with devotion. The Vedas are like yogurt. They were churned by Śukadeva Goswami and served to Parīkṣit Mahārāja. Śukadeva is very dear to me, and he is fully conversant with the esoteric truths revealed in the *Bhāgavatam*. The *Bhāgavatam* is full of descriptions about my absolute position and nature. Whoever makes the slightest distinction between me, my pure devotees, and the *Bhāgavatam* is doomed.”

Although the Lord spoke these words in anger, the Vaishnavas were greatly pleased with the instructions. He continued:

“Anyone who does not recite the teachings of the *Bhāgavatam* in the light of *bhakti* is wallowing in ignorance. This rascal is continuously talking without a single mention of *bhakti*; I will shred his book!” The Lord stepped forward to carry out his threat, but the Vaishnavas pleaded with him not to.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is eulogized throughout the Vedas as the most profound and esoteric literature. Poisoned by education and pride, a so-called pundit cannot grasp this truth. One who boasts of fully comprehending the *Bhāgavatam* completely misses its

essence. One who knows that it is nondifferent from the inconceivable Supreme Lord is enlightened about its purport—pure devotion.

Devānanda Pundit was resplendent with all good qualities. Rarely does one meet a personality of

such high stature.

However, those persons who have a false understanding of the *Bhāgavatam*, as well as those who praise such persons, are punished by Yamarāja, the universal judge.

*Gaudīya-bhāṣya* commentary on the above incident states:

“In spite of being a scholar, one may not understand the essence of the *Śrī Bhāgavatam*. When scholars strive for fame and glory, then the universal judge Yamarāja, who judges punishes them.”

If a scholar like Devānanda Pundit misunderstood the purport

of the *Bhāgavatam*, then surely if we pose as learned scholars of that transcendental literature, we will face the same consequences.

The reason for Mahāprabhu’s anger towards Devānanda Pundit had its roots in the past. The Lord remembered that Devānanda had committed offenses against Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, the incarnation of Nārada Muni. This happened before Mahāprabhu’s appear-





ance when the Earth was devoid of devotional ecstasy. At that time there were only a small number of devotees scattered here and there. The scholars of Nabadwīp were engaged in studying the *Gīta*, *Bhāgavatam*, and other literature, but unfortunately none of them were teaching the essence of these scriptures, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. Since these pundits never cultivated a service attitude, they were unable to appreciate the devotional conclusions of these literatures.

Devānanda Pundit was foremost among the scholars who lectured on the *Bhāgavatam*. The public held him in high esteem. Ignorant of the path of pure devotion, he committed *vaiṣṇava-āparādha* at the feet of an exalted pure devotee of the Lord.

One day the great devotee Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur wanted to hear a discussion on the *Bhāgavatam*, so he came to Devānanda Pundit's lecture and sat in the audience. The entire *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is composed of transcendental syllables steeped in devotional relish of love of Godhead. Upon hearing the *Bhāgavatam śloka*s, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur entered a deep state of ecstasy. The eight manifestations of deep spiritual emotion (*aṣṭa-sāttvika-vikāra*) such as shivering, hairs standing on end, weeping, and other symptoms overwhelmed him. The audience felt disturbed by these transformations. Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur exhibited these symptoms oblivious to his surroundings and so the students dragged him outside. Devānanda Pundit raised no objection to this act of malice. Gradually, when Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur regained consciousness, he realized what had happened and went home greatly disturbed.

Śrī Chaitanyadeva, the Supreme Lord residing in everyone's heart, knew of Devānanda's abuse. As he saw Devānanda, he was reminded of the *āparādha* and thought that the disciples of such a guru would eventually become just like him. So he chastised him:

"You there, Devānanda Pundit! One time Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur came to your lecture. He was dragged out of your house by your students while he was deeply absorbed in Krishna's pastimes. What was his offense? Was such manhandling a proper response to someone whose heart is saturated with *bhakti-rasa*? Ganga devī herself is eager for his association. You

may lecture on the *Bhāgavatam*, but you can never fathom its true import. When a person eats to his full satisfaction he loses all hostility. When one tastes the divine nectar of the *Bhāgavatam* he becomes a friend to everyone, what to speak of Vaishnavas. As for you, although you teach others about the *Bhāgavatam*, you yourself cannot taste its nectar."

Devānanda silently listened to the Lord's chastisement, which made him feel ashamed and dejected. Although Devānanda was criticized in this way, he was truly a very fortunate soul because the Lord's chastisement is a rare blessing. Even demons who are slain by the Lord attain the spiritual realm of Vaikuṅṭha. Anyone who faithfully and sincerely accepts the Supreme Lord's warnings or chastisements will soon be blessed with pure devotion to his lotus feet. Others who disregard the Lord's punishment revolve eternally in the material cosmos.

By chastising Devānanda Pundit, Chaitanya Mahāprabhu teaches us a very important lesson: If one commits *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*, then even if he endeavors to serve and surrender to Krishna, he will never attain *prema*, because he is devoid of *vaiṣṇava-kṛpā*, or the Vaishnava's mercy.

On another occasion while touring Nabadwīp, Mahāprabhu went from Vācaspati's home in Vidyānagara to Chakri Caṭṭopādhyāya's house in Kuliyaṅgrāma, which lies on the other side of the Ganga from Śrīdhama Māyāpura. At that time a Brahmin came to meet the Lord. He held the Lord's lotus feet against his breast and pleaded:

"My Lord, kindly hear my plea. I am a notorious sinner. I have criticized Vaishnavas and the chanting of the Holy Name, thinking that there are no real Vaishnavas in *Kali-yuga*, and doubting the power of *kṛṣṇa-nāma*. Now, my soul is burning. You are the most powerful of personalities. Please, tell me what to do."

The Lord was pleased with the Brahmin's confession. Smiling, he said:

"O Brahmin, when nectar, the drink of immortality, is given to one who has been poisoned, the toxicity in his system gradually dissipates, and his body becomes immortal. You have unwittingly drunk poi-





Mahāprabhu and the Maha Sankirtan Party

son by criticizing Vaishnavas. The Holy Name of Krishna and his transcendental attributes are the highest nectar of immortality. Only by constantly relishing this nectar and glorifying Vaishnavas with the same tongue that criticized them will you be forgiven. So glorify the wonderful qualities of Vaishnavas with song, poetry, or any other means, and I will personally absolve you from your offenses and neutralize all of their poisonous effects. For one who unknowingly commits *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, the only recourse is to incessantly glorify the Vaishnavas and the Supreme Lord and simultaneously stop making further offenses. This is the only way to counteract the effects of *aparādha*. Penances and other practices are useless. So return to your home and delight in glorifying the Lord's devotees."

The assembled Vaishnavas were overjoyed to hear the Lord's merciful words, and they responded with resounding cries of "Hari! Hari!" Śrī Gaurāṅga instructs all unwitting Vaishnava-offenders in the same way, and anyone who disregards these instructions and continues to offend and criticize *sādhus* is

drowned in an ocean of sorrows. Those who take his advice, understanding that it is the cream of the Vedas, will easily cross over the vast sea of nescience and enter the eternal spiritual domain:

"When the offender uses the same tongue that blasphemed the Vaishnava to express remorse and glorify the Vaishnava, it becomes auspicious. Poison gradually debilitates one's body functions, but the antidote brings the body back to its natural healthy condition. In the same way, to correct *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, neither avoiding further offenses nor millions of penances will be truly effective. Only honest and humble glorification of Vaishnavas can bring redemption."

"Those who follow Mahāprabhu's instruction, believing it to be the infallible truth, who throw themselves at the Vaishnava's feet to beg forgiveness, reap enormous benefit. They develop unflinching faith in Mahāprabhu and easily cross over the vast ocean of nescience."

Just as Mahāprabhu finished instructing the Brahmin, Devānanda Pundit entered. Devānanda,



despite his noble characteristics, could not develop faith in the Lord or his teachings. In spite of extensive study and teaching of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he was unable to perceive its transcendental message of surrender to the Supreme Godhead. His heart was impaled by the desire for liberation, so he could not taste the sweetness of *bhakti*, nor could he teach *bhakti* to others.

After Mahāprabhu accepted *sannyāsa* and left for Jagannātha Purī, fate arranged for Devānanda to meet Śrīla Vakreśvara Pundit, a great devotee and an eternal associate of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. This was a windfall of good fortune for Devānanda. A pure devotee's association is like touchstone, so Devānanda quickly developed *ruci*, (spiritual taste) and an unassailable faith in Mahāprabhu.

Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākur describes how the highly elevated Vaishnava Vakreśvara Pundit came to Devānanda's hermitage. Devānanda was struck with wonder seeing his wonderful appearance, and his ecstatic singing and dancing with deep emotion. The desire for liberation disappeared from his heart, and he fell at Vakreśvara's feet, smearing the dust all over his body. Reverence for Mahāprabhu blossomed within him, showing the wonderful result of serving a *mahā-bhāgavata* pure devotee.

Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākur writes: "As a direct result of service to a pure Vaishnava, unflinching faith in Mahāprabhu was aroused in the heart of Devānanda Pundit. Vakreśvara's taking up residence in Devānanda's ashram brought immense good fortune to Devānanda. Although Devānanda was a ritualist, he was very learned and self-controlled. His studies of scripture were solely dedicated to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He was aloof from the dictates of his senses, but he lacked faith in Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. However, by Śrīla Vakreśvara Pundit's grace, his misconceptions were eradicated and he developed regard for Mahāprabhu."

Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākur writes: "Service to Vaishnavas is higher than service to the Lord—this is the verdict of the *Bhāgavatam* and all other revealed scriptures. The *Bhāgavatam* states: 'There may be doubts as to whether service to the Supreme Lord will

give perfection or not, but there is absolutely no doubt about obtaining perfection by serving his devotees.' Thus, service to Vaishnavas is the most effective and sure method to reach Krishna for everyone." (*Caitanya-Bhāgavata*, *Antya* 3.485-487)

Devānanda Pundit's *darśana* of Mahāprabhu had a direct correlation to the purifying association of Vakreśvara Pundit. Humility and all other Vaishnava attributes were manifest in Devānanda as he prostrated himself at the Lord's lotus feet. He got up and meekly remained standing in a corner. The Lord was satisfied to see Devānanda, and asked him to come and sit near him. The Lord had forgiven all his previous offenses and spoke to him intimately.

"You have had the great fortune of serving my beloved devotee. Vakreśvara is a full-blown expansion of *kṛṣṇa śakti*, or divine potency. Whoever serves him attains Krishna. His heart is Krishna's favorite place. Wherever he is becomes holy, and that place becomes my abode."

Devānanda folded his palms and began to glorify the Lord: "O merciful Lord! You have appeared in Nabadwīp to liberate everyone. I am miserable and fallen. Unfortunately I could not recognize you, and so I was deprived of the supreme bliss of your association and mercy. But it is your nature to be compassionate to all. I only pray that I may love you. Please tell me what to do. I am a fool. The *Bhāgavatam* is meant only for the most learned, astute scholars, so how can I teach it to others?"

Being pleased with Devānanda, the Lord said: "Do not try to explain the *Bhāgavatam* in any way other than in the light of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. From beginning to end the message of the *Bhāgavatam* is: love Krishna. In the entire material creation *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* is the only Absolute Truth, and at the end of the world only this truth remains."

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the only scripture in which devotion to Krishna is established as the ultimate goal of existence. No other scriptures promote this conception. The *Bhāgavatam* is not a mundane composition; it is a transcendental literature which appears and disappears like the incarnations of God. Recently it has manifest itself by Śrī Krishna's mercy



through Śrīla Vyāsadeva and by the transcendental potency of *bhakti*. Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākur warns that considering that the *Bhāgavatam* is Krishna himself, one must not foolishly think that he knows and fully understands it.

The Lord continued: “Even if an ignorant person submissively approaches the *Bhāgavatam*, its purport is automatically revealed in his heart. Embodying pure spiritual love, it is identical with Krishna. The sublime pastimes of Krishna are living within it. Although Vedavyāsa compiled the four Vedas, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purānas* and other literature, he felt empty and incomplete. But after compiling the *Bhāgavatam*, he felt completely satisfied. Yet there are those unfortunate souls who, even after reading this crest-jewel among the scriptures, are deprived of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.

“Simply emphasize *bhakti* when teaching the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Then you will remain free from *aparādha*, and your heart will fill with bliss. The essence of all scriptures is devotion to Krishna, but the *Bhāgavatam* is unique in that it is saturated with *kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa*. Splash the water from this ocean of nectar upon everyone.”

Devānanda Pundit was overwhelmed by Mahāprabhu’s wonderful instructions. After offering obeisances at Mahāprabhu’s lotus feet he left for his hermitage.

Through Devānanda Pundit, Mahāprabhu broadcast to the world the glories of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The ultimate conclusion of the 18,000 verses of the *Bhāgavatam* is devotion to Krishna. That home which is graced by this auspicious literature is free from misfortune. Worship of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is equal to worship of Krishna. Pure devotion to Krishna is obtained through regular hearing and recitation of this extraordinary book. Teaching any meaning other than *bhakti* is a waste of time, and leads to *aparādha*.

There are two *bhāgavatas*: *grantha-bhāgavata*—

the book form of Divinity, and *bhakta-bhāgavata*—the devotee form of Divinity. Daily hearing, reciting, and worshipping of the *Bhāgavatam* results in realizing the truth about the Lord and his devotees. Śrīla Krishnadāsa Kavirāja writes:

*eka bhāgavata bada-bhāgavata śāstra  
āra bhāgavata-bhakta bhakti-rasa pātra*

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Adi 1.99

“One of the *bhāgavatas* is the great scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the other is the pure devotee who is absorbed in the mellows of loving devotion, *rasa*.”

Devānanda Pundit became enlightened about the exalted position of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur by receiving the mercy of Mahāprabhu and his eternal associate, Vakreśvara Pundit. With heartfelt remorse and utmost humility he repeatedly begged forgiveness at Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur’s lotus feet. Thus he received the blessings of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākur as well as all of Mahāprabhu’s devotees.

The Lord says:

*śabda-brahma param-brahma  
mamobhe śaśvatī tanū*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.16.51

“The Supreme sound vibration and the Supreme Being are one and the same.”

No one is able to attract the mercy of the book *bhāgavata* without first being blessed by the grace of the devotee *bhāgavata*. Without this we remain forever incapable of relishing the nectar of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. The slightest *aparādha* against the *bhakta-bhāgavata* will prevent anyone from achieving the mercy of the *Bhāgavatam*, THE LITERARY INCARNATION OF GOD.

# ADVAITA AVATAR

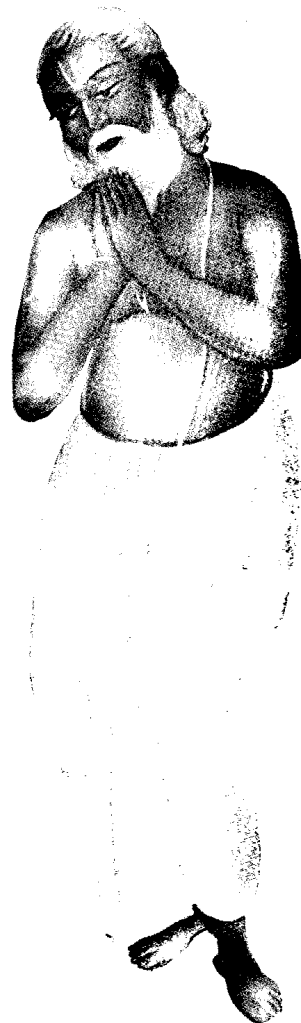
## SACHI MA & HER NAMA

Mother Sachi is the Universal Mother,  
the embodiment of Vishnu Bhakti.  
Her name is so potent that anyone uttering it  
will become free from all fears.  
The Holy Ganges and Mother Sachi  
are nondifferent. Mother Sachi  
is the equal of Yasoda and Devaki.



MAHAPRABHU WILL NOT TOLERATE any offense to his devotees regardless of who the offender is. In fact he was even was once displeased with his own mother, Śacīdevī, because she offended Advaita Ācārya. Mahāprabhu said that until she begged the Ācārya's forgiveness, she would never attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Mahāprabhu used this incident to illustrate the dangers of committing *nāma-aparādha*, especially *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. This is truly an important and unique pastime, for how can the mother of God be denied *kṛṣṇa-prema*? The special mercy of this pastime is that by hearing it faithfully, one develops the understanding to avoid *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. The details of this pastime are recorded in the *Caitanya-Bhāgavata, Madhya* as the *Mahāprakāśa-līla* (The Great Revelation).

One day Mahāprabhu sat on the deity throne and gathered his expansions, and said, "In *Kali-yuga*, I am Krishna, I am Nārāyaṇa, and I am Rāma. One day I was floating on the milk ocean when Advaita Ācārya's thunderous calls awakened me. I then





descended at his request to inundate the world in a flood of *kr̥ṣṇa-prema*.”

Nityānanda, the direct incarnation of Balārama, was in awe of Mahāprabhu’s opulence and his magnanimous mood. He ran to his throne and held an



umbrella above him. Gadādhara Pundit stood to Mahāprabhu’s left and began to prepare *tāmbūla* for the Lord. The other devotees surrounded him. Some began to fan him with *cāmaras*. Like a desire tree, Mahāprabhu began to give devotion to everyone. They begged the Lord for devotion for themselves, for their mothers, their fathers, some for their gurus, for their disciples, and so on. Always ready to fulfill the wishes of his devotees, the Lord smiled and dispensed boons for attaining pure devotion.

Seeing that the Lord was inundating everyone

with a flood of *kr̥ṣṇa-prema*, Śrīvāsa Pundit requested that Mahāprabhu shower *prema-bhakti* on his mother, Śācīdevī. Mahāprabhu replied, “O Śrīvāsa, do not make such a request. I will not offer her the ecstasy of divine love. She has committed *vaiṣṇava-āparādha* and is being denied entry into the realm of divine love.” Śrīvāsa Pundit was shocked and said, “Your words are like knives stabbing our hearts and killing us! Mother Śācī is that divine personality who has given birth to you. She is the devotee’s sustaining life-force, the Universal Mother—and you refuse to give her *prema*? If this is one of your jokes, I think it has gone far enough. Now shower Mother Śācī with *prema*, my Lord. How can she possibly be guilty of *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*? Even if you think that she is guilty, then kindly absolve her from it and give her your mercy.” The Lord replied: “I can advise on how to be forgiven of *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*, but I cannot excuse an *āparādha* personally. The only way to be absolved of *vaiṣṇava-āparādha* is to approach the offended Vaishnava and beg forgiveness, as in the case of the powerful sage Durvāsā Muni, who committed offenses at the feet of the saintly King Ambarīṣa. He was finally exonerated from his offense only when he approached that Vaishnava whom he had offended. So Śācīmātā has committed an offense at the lotus feet of Advaita Ācārya Prabhu, and she has to sprinkle the dust from his feet on her head and beg forgiveness. By his grace she will then receive my blessings in the form of *prema*; not otherwise.”

The point is that even the Supreme Lord himself cannot waive *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*. The Lord’s position is clear: “Although I am absolutely independent, I am dependent on my devotees. I am their captive. They are my heart and soul, and I am their heart and soul. I always protect them, and they are willing to die for me.”

Therefore, how can the Lord forgive an offender of his beloved devotees? The only recourse for the offender is to throw himself at the feet of the Vaishnava who he has offended and beg forgiveness. When the compassionate Vaishnava forgives the offender, then the Lord, who relishes the magnanimity of his devotees, becomes pleased with the offend-



er and blesses him.

As soon as the devotees heard the Lord's instructions, they ran to Advaita Ācārya Prabhu and narrated everything to him. Hearing the Lord's instructions, Advaita Ācārya was astounded. He said to the devotees: "I'm ruined. Are you trying to kill me? Don't you realize Mother Śacī's supramundane position? My beloved Lord has appeared from her womb; she is my mother too. I consider it my great fortune to be a humble recipient of her foot dust. She is the Universal Mother, the embodiment of *vishnu-bhakti*. I am surprised that all of you are unaware of her spiritual potency and talk like this. Her name is so potent that anyone uttering it, even if under the illusion that it is a mundane sound, will become free from all fears. The holy Ganges and Mother Śacī are nondifferent. Mother Śacī is the equal of Yaśodā and Devakī."

While glorifying the divine attributes of Mother Śacī Devi, Śrī Advaita Ācārya became ecstatic and fainted. Mother Śacī came out of hiding and quickly smeared Advaita's foot-dust on her head. Unable to contain her intense rapture, she lost consciousness and fell to the ground.

At that moment Mahāprabhu began to laugh very loudly, extremely satisfied with his mother. He said: "Now I will bless you with devotion to Vishnu; all offenses to Advaita Prabhu are absolved." The devotees were

completely overwhelmed with ecstasy.

In this way, Lord Gaurasundara used his own mother as an example to instruct everyone on the immense gravity and danger of committing *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. Vṛndāvana dāsa focuses our attention on this crucial point: "If someone even as powerful as Lord Shiva offends a Vaishnava, then according to the scriptures he is destroyed. As for those foolish persons who are ignorant of this fact and commit *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, they must suffer untold pains, birth after birth. Even the Supreme Lord Gaurasundara's mother was not spared the reaction for committing *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*."

Śrīla Saraswatī Thākura writes in his purport: "If even the Supreme Lord's mother—most blessed among women—had to face the consequences of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, one can only imagine the outcome for an ordinary soul."

In analyzing Mother Śacī's alleged offense, her deep sorrow caused by separation from her son must be taken into consideration. Obviously, She did not really commit an offense; yet Śrī Mahāprabhu condemned her action as offensive and denied her *prema-bhakti*.

How Mother Śacī offended Śrī Advaita Prabhu must certainly be explained. Her eldest son Viśvarūpa became completely detached from material life and accepted *sannyāsa* under the influence of Advaita



Ācārya. Seeing her younger son Viśvambhara also



“ Mahaprabhu liberated drunkards  
and debauchees, but rejected  
anyone who offended His Devotees.  
Fault-finding can never enhance  
one's Devotion or Spiritual Realization;  
it simply brings severe reactions.  
This is one of the reasons why  
Great Souls avoid criticizing anyone,  
especially Devotees. ”

*Chaitanya-Bhagavata*

becoming aloof from family affairs, Mother Śacī was worried and began to think that Advaita Ācārya was encouraging him to leave home as well.

Viśvarūpa was the elder brother of Mahārabhu, the expansion of Balārama and Nityānanda. He is also Lord Mahā-Saṅkarṣaṇa of Vaikuṅṭha. He was extraordinarily beautiful and effulgent, the embodiment of all scriptural conclusions, and extremely equipoised. Nabadwīp, the seat of scholarship in India at the time, didn't have a single scholar who could fathom either the depth of Viśvarūpa's learning, nor his use of aphorisms. Yet he played like an ordinary boy with his friends.

One day Viśvarūpa's father, Śrī Jagannātha Mishra, took him to an assembly of pundits who were very pleased to see him. His exquisite charm captivated everyone. One pundit asked Viśvarūpa, "My dear son, what are you studying?" Śrī Viśvarūpa replied, "I have extensive knowledge of many scriptures." Considering him to be a mere boy, the pundit deferred from further questioning, but Jagannātha Mishra felt embarrassed. Finishing his work there, he took his son home. On the way his father boxed his ears and reprimanded him. "Why didn't you name the books that you study? Everyone must have thought that you are stupid. You made me a fool out of me." After reaching home, Viśvarūpa slipped out of the house and returned to the assembly. He addressed the pundits and said, "When I was here earlier, you did not ask me any specific questions about my studies, so I gave you a general answer, but my father chastised me for appearing foolish. So now if anyone has any specific question, please ask." One of the pundits inquired, "Please explain in detail what you learned today." Viśvarūpa



began by presenting a thesis, then strongly refuted it with an antithesis, and then established another thesis in favor of the first. The pundits were amazed and praised him profusely.

Though the teachers and pundits regularly studied and lectured on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, their explanations were devoid of *bhakti*. A general lack of devotion among the residents of Nabadwīp caused great distress to the young Viśvarūpa. The sole exception was that there were regular assemblies in Advaita Ācārya's house, where all scriptures were discussed in the light of *kr̥pā-bhakti*.

These assemblies gave immense pleasure to Viśvarūpa, and so he spent long hours listening to the spiritual conclusions discussed there. Often Mother Śacī would send Viśvambhara to call Viśvarūpa home for *prasādam*.

Gradually Viśvarūpa lost interest in family affairs and the world. He left home, took *sannyāsa*, and became Śrīpāda Śaṅkararāyaṇa. Viśvarūpa's absence was a source of constant pain in Śacī Mā's heart. The pain of separation and the thought that Advaita Ācārya was the cause of Viśvarūpa leaving

home constantly occupied her mind. But fearing *vaiṣṇava-aparādha* she kept her feelings inside; she would embrace Viśvambhara and bear the pain of separation.

Then her darling Nimai began to also spend long hours at Advaita Ācārya's house. He began to neglect his beautiful young wife Lakṣmīpriyā. Seeing this, Mother Śacī became extremely apprehensive. He was the youngest and only son left and had also begun to withdraw from the family. In anguish Mother Śacī lamented: "Who says he is Advaita? To me he is *dvaita*, a double-dealer. He has already dri-



ven away my beautiful son with the moon-like face. Now he is not allowing my only son to settle down at home. I feel so alone; no one has any sympathy for me. To the world he may be the famous Advaita, but for me he is *dvaita*, or the creator of separation.”

This was Mother Śacī’s offense, and for this the Supreme Lord Gaurasundara refused to bless her with *prema-bhakti*. The Supreme Lord’s own mother merely thought offensive things and never even expressed them—and consequently was denied *bhakti* by the Lord. Just imagine what happens to an ordinary person who openly offends the *sādhu*, guru, or Vaishnava. Simply thinking about it makes one shudder. Therefore devotees must be extremely cautious. By the Lord’s will, this pastime was enacted to emphasize the severity of committing *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*, and the urgency of having it absolved.

Elsewhere Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākur writes: “Lord Gauracandra, the soul of the universe, delivered Jagāi and Mādhāi, and the merciful Lord saved everyone except the Vaishnava-blasphemers, who are considered the worst. Blasphemy against the Lord’s devotees is a horrendous offense. According to scripture, even if the offender is as powerful as Lord Shiva, the consequences are severe.”

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, King Rahūgaṇa says to Jaḍa Bharata: “I have committed a grievous offense by insulting a great devotee like yourself. Because of this, I, who am as powerful as Lord Shiva, shall be vanquished without delay for offending the lotus feet of a Vaishnava.”

Even if the offender is extremely learned, he will be hurled down to the lowest hell. The Holy Name of Krishna is the most potent of purifying agents, but the Vaishnava-offender cannot be acquitted of his offense even by chanting the Holy Name. Blasphemy or criticism of saintly persons is the most damaging offense a person can commit against the Holy Name. The Holy Name of God is God, the Nāma Prabhu.

The *Padma Purāna* states that to exonerate one’s sins, the purifying power of the Holy Name is far more potent than all the methods of penances recommended in the scriptures. However, if one who chants the Holy Name offends or blasphemes a devo-

tee of the Lord, he cannot even be protected by chanting. When *vaiṣṇava-āparādha* is committed, the offender can not benefit from *nāmabhasa* or from *suddha-nāma* until the *nāma-āparādha* is absolved.

At Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja’s *rājasūya-yajña* (royal sacrifice), the question was brought up as to who in the assembly should be the first to receive worship. The youngest of the Pāṇḍavas, Sahadeva, immediately pointed to Krishna, the Supreme Lord of lords. Krishna’s avowed enemy, Śiśupāla, could not bear to have Krishna receive such glorification, and began a tirade of abuses against him. The entire assembly was shocked. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes how the members of the assembly covered their ears in disgust and marched angrily out of the hall. If upon hearing blasphemy one does not leave immediately, he becomes a party to it, loses all piety, and goes to hell.

Śiśupāla, unfazed by the departure of the followers of Krishna, began insulting them and picked up his sword. Krishna tried to pacify and restrain his followers, but when he saw Śiśupāla rushing toward him with his sword drawn, he released his Sudarśana disc and cut off his head. Śiśupāla’s supporters ran for their lives. As Śiśupāla breathed his last, a brilliant ray of light from Śiśupāla’s body merged into Krishna’s transcendental body, but not a drop of blood was shed, so the sacrifice continued, uncontaminated.

Shortly after this incident, another demon named Dantavakra was slain by Krishna and was liberated. Śiśupāla and Dantavakra were actually the third and final incarnations of Jāya and Vijāya, the eternal associates of Nārāyaṇa. With their deaths they were eligible to return to Vaikuṅṭha. Krishna, the Lord of *yajñas* (Yajñeśvara), stayed and protected the sanctity of the sacrifice until its conclusion.

The *Caitanya-Bhāgavata* describes the famous incident of Jagāi and Mādhāi offending Nityānanda Prabhu and how they were subsequently saved. “Two notorious brothers, Jagāi and Mādhāi, committed every conceivable immoral act, but they had never blasphemed a Vaishnava. Because they were always drunk, they never knew what they were doing and so somehow they avoided offending devotees. Even the most sacred assembly loses its sanctity with the slight-



est criticism of pure devotees. In fact, a party of rogues (dacoits) is far better than such an unholy assembly. At least a rogue still has a chance someday to be excused for his sinful behavior, but an offender is bound for hell."

Bhaktisiddhānta Prabhupāda comments, "If we make the mistake of engaging in fault-finding and

criticizing others, indulging in one's baser instincts,

we drag our souls down. Without being free from envy, no one can climb out of this inauspicious abyss."

"Mahāprabhu liberated drunkards and debauchees, but rejected anyone who offended his devotees. Fault-finding can never enhance one's devotion or spiritual realization; it simply brings severe reactions. This is one of the reasons why great souls avoid criticizing anyone, especially devotees." (*Caitanya-Bhāgavata Madhya 13.311-312*)

"An ignorant fool who first worships a Brahmin's feet and then kicks him on the head paves his way to hell. Similarly, one who worships the deity of Vishnu but does not revere the presence of Vishnu within every living being also goes to hell." (*Nārada Pañcarātra*)

"Setting aside *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, if anyone harasses even an ordinary living being, he must suffer severe consequences. If a person worships the deity of



Vishnu but torments his creation, he does not benefit from his worship and experiences terrible agony. Such a person is ignorant of the truth that Lord Vishnu resides in all living beings. The horrible results of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha* are a thousand times worse than offending a non-Vaishnava.

"A person who worships

the deity but does not respect the Lord's devotees;

or is not compassionate to the fallen people; or worships one aspect of divinity and not others, making mundane distinctions between Krishna and Rāmachandra; or does not revere Balārama, or Shiva, is designated in the scriptures as a third-class devotee." (*Caitanya-Bhāgavata, Madhya 5.140-149*)

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states: "One may give up bad association, take initiation, and worship the deity in the temple, but if he does not worship the devotees he is nothing more than a pseudo-Vaishnava."

"One who has taken initiation in the Vishnu-mantra and is worshipping Vishnu's deity with faith is a Vaishnava; others are non-Vaishnavas." (*Padma Purāṇa 1.55.*)

A devotee of Vishnu is a Vaishnava, and the Supreme Lord, who is the protector of his devotees, will not tolerate any blasphemy against such devotees. If we want to enter the Lord's heart the only passage is through the hearts of his devotees.



# VAISHNAVA APARADHA

## THE PATH OF SPIRITUAL CAUTION



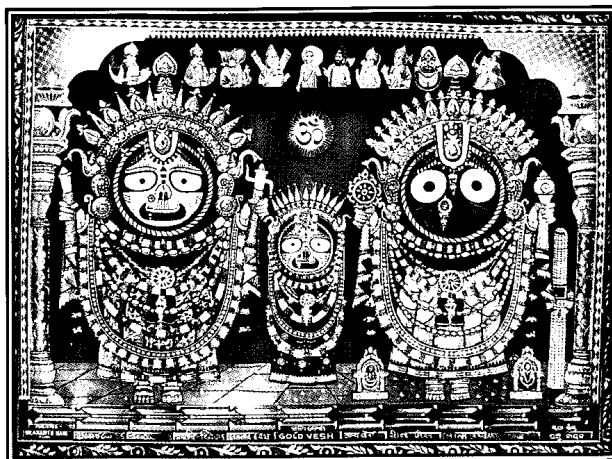
ONCE, A BRAHMIN POET wrote a play about Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. He went to the holy city of Jagannāth Purī to see an old friend and associate of Mahāprabhu, Śrī

Bhagavān Ācārya. The poet wanted him to hear the play, and so he read it aloud to the *acarya* and a gathering of Vaishnavas. They praised the composition, and thought it would be nice for Mahāprabhu to hear it.

But before anything was read to Mahāprabhu it was first presented to his secretary and confidante Svarūpa Dāmodara. This was to ensure that the spiritual exchanges of *rasā* presented in the composition were not distasteful, or that the esoteric principles of devotion were not misinterpreted. If such faulty writing was presented to the Lord, he would become deeply disturbed.

Bhagavān Ācārya approached Svarūpa Dāmodara and requested that he read the composition first and then present it to Mahāprabhu. In

*kṛṣṇa-līlā* Svarūpa Dāmodara is Lalitā-sakhi, the principal confidante of Śrīmatī Rādhārāni and therefore most expert in the science of *rasa*. Knowing that the poet was a pure and simple Vaishnava, Svarūpa Dāmodara gently chastised:



“My dear Bhagavān Ācārya, you are a very liberal Vṛndāvana cowherd boy, and the desire to read any literature presented as scripture sometimes overpowers you. When unqualified poets write about *rasā*, their poetry does not arouse the desired emotion when heard; it is *rasābhāsa*, a mere semblance of *rasā*. Such writing is contrary to

spiritual reality. Anyone who cannot properly identify and mix *rasika* mellows will forever be on the shore of the *bhakti-siddhānta-sindhu*. He is fooling himself and others. And Mahāprabhu’s pastimes are particularly difficult to grasp. So only persons who have enshrined Mahāprabhu’s lotus feet within their hearts as their life and soul are qualified to narrate *kṛṣṇa-līlā* and *gaura-līlā*.”

“Mundane love stories sadden me; but the writ-



ings of an expert devotee steeped in ecstatic love brings great joy. Śrīla Rūpa Goswami has set the standard for writing drama. Simply hearing the introductory passages to his works gives one great spiritual pleasure.”

Despite Svarūpa Dāmodara’s caution, Bhagavān Ācārya repeatedly requested that he read the poem at least once before making a judgment. After repeated entreaties, Svarūpa Dāmodara reluctantly agreed. He assembled all the Vaishnavas and sat down to listen to the drama about Mahāprabhu. The poet read the prologue: “The Supreme Personality of Godhead who radiates a golden complexion has become the soul of the body named Jagannātha. His lotus eyes are in full bloom. He has appeared in Jagannātha Purī and brought dull matter to life. May that Lord, Śrī Krishna Chaitanyadeva, bestow all good fortune upon you.”

After the *nāndī-śloka* (benedictory prologue) was recited, everyone praised the composition. Svarūpa Dāmodara asked the poet the meaning of the *nāndī-śloka*. The Brahmin explained, “Lord Jagannātha’s body is exquisite and beautiful, and Mahāprabhu is the soul of that body. Mahāprabhu has appeared in Nīlācala, Jagannātha Purī, to awaken the spiritual consciousness of the ‘soulless’ material world.”

In spite of the approval of the group, Svarūpa Dāmodara was outraged and said:

“You fool! Are you trying to destroy yourself? Don’t you understand that both of them are Divine? Jagannātha is the embodiment of transcendence and absolute spiritual bliss, yet you described his body as material, dull, and inert. And Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Reality, you describe as an ordinary mortal. He is the ‘Supreme Fire’ from whom

everything emanates, yet you have portrayed him as a mere spark. So you have offended Jagannātha and Mahāprabhu and are doomed. Hell isn’t even good enough for you. Those who are ignorant of the principles of divine love yet dare to comment on them are fools!

“You are in total illusion. You have discriminated between the body and soul of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is a great offense. There is absolutely no distinction between the body and soul of the Supreme Lord. The Lord’s personal identity and his body are one and the same.

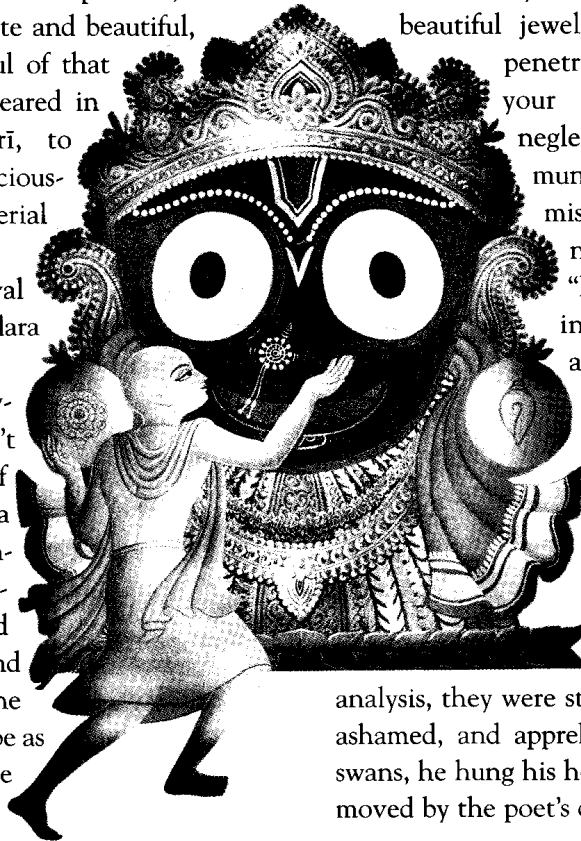
“There is never any difference between the body and soul of the Supreme Godhead. (This *śloka* is from the *Kurma Purāṇa* quoted in the *Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛta* of Sanātana Goswami.)

“I do not see any form superior to your transcendental body full of ecstasy. I surrender unto you because you are the original cause of the cosmic manifestation. And although you have created everything, you are untouched by it. There are those who are fascinated by the radiance emanating from your beautiful jewel-like body, but your devotees penetrate beyond that to approach your beautiful form. Those who neglect your personal form due to mundane perception will live in the misery of separation from you eternally.”

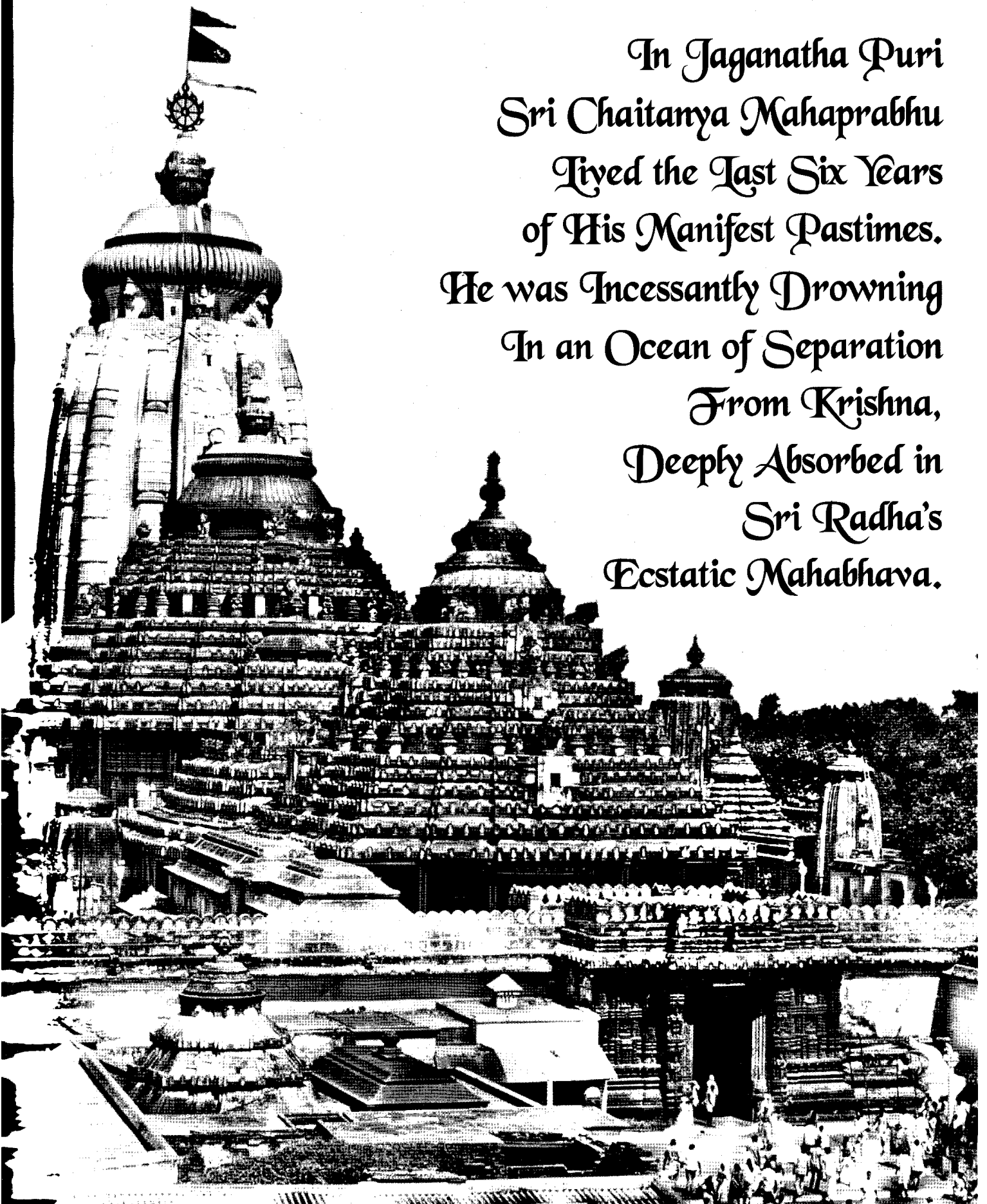
“Krishna is the Lord of the deluding energy *māyā*. He is the absolute embodiment of spiritual opulence and infinite bliss, whereas the living entity is infinitesimal and is always suffering as the slave of *māyā*.”

When the Vaishnavas heard this admonishment from Svarūpa Dāmodara, the master of subtle philosophical

analysis, they were stunned. The poet was extremely ashamed, and apprehensive. Like a buzzard among swans, he hung his head. But Svarūpa Dāmodara was moved by the poet’s dejection and said sweetly:



*In Jagannatha Puri  
Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu  
Lived the Last Six Years  
of His Manifest Pastimes.  
He was Incessantly Drowning  
In an Ocean of Separation  
From Krishna,  
Deeply Absorbed in  
Sri Radha's  
Ecstatic Mahabhava.*





“Go and study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from a Vaishnava, and take complete shelter of Mahāprabhu’s lotus feet. Always seek the association of Mahāprabhu’s devotees; only then will you be able to navigate the waves of the ocean of devotion. Everything will be revealed to you. Then you can be a real pundit and describe *kṛṣṇa-līlā* without fault.”

We should note that Mother Saraswatī, the goddess of learning, transforms the deluded ravings of those who are devoid of proper spiritual understanding into eulogies of her Lord Śrī Krishna. We find in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: “There is no difference between Jagannātha and Krishna, but in Purī, Jagannātha is fixed in one place as the infinite appearing as wood, unmoving. Jagannātha and Mahāprabhu, although appearing separately, are one because they are the same one Krishna in two forms. The desire to deliver the world burns inside their

hearts.

“To save everyone, Krishna descended as Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. By seeing Jagannātha, one is freed from material existence; but not everyone can be admitted into his temple in Jagannātha Purī to see him. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, however, moves from one country to another, personally or through his representatives. In this way he delivers all the people of the world.”

The Brahmin understood his mistakes and with great humility begged for shelter at the feet of all the Vaishnavas. The Vaishnavas were moved and arranged for him to meet Mahāprabhu personally. The poet later took *sannyāsa* and continued to live in Purī. So we see that in order to receive the Lord’s mercy, we must first obtain the mercy of his devotees.

Vishnu and Vaishnavas, or Krishna and *Kārṣṇeya* are beyond mundane scrutiny. Krishna says



in the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*avajānanti mām mūḍhā  
mānuṣīm tanum āśritam  
param bhāvam ajānanto  
mama bhūta-maheśvaram*

*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.11

“Fools think that I am an ordinary human being, or at most that God may have descended in a bag of flesh; but I am transcendental—body and soul—the Supreme Controller of everything.”

It is stated in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: “Although God has innumerable forms and pastimes, his highest pastimes are performed as Krishna, appearing in human form, dressed as an ever-youthful cowherd boy, dancing brilliantly, and playing on his

flute.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 21.101)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the fully independent Lord, and the master of unlimited potencies. As the controller of *māyā* he uses his spiritual illusion (*yogamāyā-sakti*) to assist him in manifesting his pastimes in the world. Although these pastimes appear to be mundane, they are supramundane:

“The transcendental form of Krishna, as revealed by Krishna’s internal spiritual energy, is the secret treasure of the devotees. This form is manifest from Krishna’s eternal pastimes in the spiritual domain.”

To consider the infinite Supreme Lord, on the same level with the finite *jīva* soul, or to distinguish between the Supreme Lord’s body and soul as if he were an ordinary person, is to come under the influence of the warped philosophy *māyāvada*. Krishna condemns the *māyāvadi*’s failure to accept his eternal,



infinite, blissful body.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes:

“What becomes of those who think that the Lord’s body is matter?

*moghāsā mogha-karmāṇo  
mogha-jñāna vicetasah  
rākṣāsim āsurim caiva  
prakṛtim mohinim śrītāḥ*

*Bhagavad-gītā 9.12*

“Those who deny the existence of God seek shelter in the world. But ultimately their hopes and aspirations, their advancement of science and technology, leaves them empty, confused, and lost.

“If these offenders are devotees there is a different meaning. That their hopes and aspirations are crushed means, their thirst for liberation (*sālokya*) is unattainable. If they are *karmīs* (fruitive workers), they are deprived of being elevated to the heavenly planets, (*Svārga-loka*). As for *jñānis* (philosophers), they cannot obtain *mokṣa*, or *sāyujya* (liberation of merging with Brahman). Then what do they actually gain? They acquire a demoniac mentality and nature, and end up hating the Lord and his devotees.”

The *Bhagavad-gītā* states:

*mahātmānas tu mām pārtha  
daivim prakṛtim āśrītāḥ  
bhajanty ananya-manaso  
jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam*

*Bhagavad-gītā 9.13*

“On the other hand, the really great souls of this world are those who have completely taken shelter in me. Under the direction of my superior energy they are constantly absorbed in loving me, knowing that I am the inexhaustible source of everything.”

These great souls realize that although the Supreme Lord appears in human-like form, he is the embodiment of *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda*, and is indestructible and infinite. This *ananya-manas*, or constant absorption in *bhajana*, is the *rāja-guhyam*—the king of all secrets. The following *śloka* from the *Gītā* elaborates on the nature of *bhajana*:

*satatam kīrtayanto mām  
yatantaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ  
namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā  
nitya-yuktā upāsate*

*Bhagavad-gītā 9.14*

“Always absorbed in *kīrtana*, with the greatest sense of purpose, my devotees are bowed before me perpetually worshipping me.”

Generally speaking, the devotees must observe the rules and regulations of devotion. However, the *Vishnu-dharma* states that: “In chanting the Lord’s name there is no

consideration of time and place.”

In the aforementioned *Bhagavad-gītā śloka*, the Lord deliberately hints at *rāgānuga-bhakti*. The behavior of a *rāgā-bhakta* may bewilder those in the lower stages of devotion, so the scriptures warn that such *mahātmās*, or great souls, must never be judged according to mundane considerations:

“A person who considers the deity of the Lord to be a statue, or the guru and Vaishnavas as ordinary people belonging to a particular social class or caste;



*The Goddess Saraswati*





the foot-bath water of Vishnu or the Vaishnavas as dirty water; the all-purifying Holy Name of Vishnu or Krishna as mundane sound; or the Supreme Lord of lords, Hari, as being on the same level as the gods, is a resident of hell." *Padma Purāṇa*

Mahāprabhu has confirmed that eternal service to Krishna is our real occupation:

*jivera swaruṇa hoy kṛṣṇera nitya-das*

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 20.108*

"The *jīva*'s inherent identity is that he is the eternal servant of Krishna."

The deluded *jīva* is in forgetfulness of his real identity. Thus he becomes completely absorbed in family, making money, pursuing mundane education, and physical beauty (*janma, aiśvarya, śrūta, śrī*). These four feed his pride and often precede offensive actions against Vishnu and the Vaishnavas.

Śrī Parankuṣa Muni says that negligence in cultivating the following four qualities in particular, propels the *jīva* towards committing the *aparādha* of *arceya viṣṇau śilādhīr*, or seeing the deity of the Lord as an ordinary sculpture.

The *jīva* must cultivate a positive outlook, and give up bad association while seeking the company of pure devotees. Desire leads to bad association which influences the *jīva* to develop an atheistic mentality. The scriptures implore us to keep good association:

"Deceiving oneself and others is called *kaitava*. Associating with people who are lying to themselves is called *duhsanga* (bad association). Those who think that things other than service to Krishna will satisfy them are also called *duhsanga*."

"A person must reject bad association and keep

the company of genuine devotees. They tell us **how to** cut the knots of attachment to things bad for devotion."

Even if one's guru is inimical towards Vaishnavas, he must be given up. The scriptures instruct that such mundane gurus must be abandoned in favor of a bone fide guru. Bad association of any kind must be avoided like disease. Generally speaking, there are two types of *duhsanga* or *āsāt-sanga*:

"The proper conduct for a Vaishnava is to avoid materialistic company. Persons who are slaves to their senses, who are not devotees, or who do not accept Krishna, are bad association."

According to this statement a sincere soul must avoid *āsāt-sanga* and always seek the association of pure devotees; otherwise devotional endeavors bear no fruit. Bad association results in *aparādha*. *Vaiṣṇava-aparādha* and *guru-avajāñā*, disobeying the guru, are the two most serious offenses. The devotee must strive to remain within the protection of *sādhu-sanga*, or saintly association.

A sincere devotee will carefully abstain from indulging in any disparaging thoughts about a Vaishnava's external qualifications. This is particularly important regarding exalted persons who are the real saviors

of mankind. Even a neophyte who has recently taken shelter of a Vaishnava guru should be respected and must not be judged by mundane standards. Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura writes that even a veteran Vaishnava has to suffer the consequences for disrespecting another Vaishnava.

Even a person born a Brahmin due to previous pious deeds does not have a right to act or speak arrogantly or to harbor disparaging thoughts about a Vaishnava. Such thoughts will cause chaos in his life. He becomes controlled by lust, greed, and anger, and



*Bhakti Rasacarya Rupa Goswami*



madly chases after women, fame and fortune. He becomes totally absorbed in material life, and his attachments so thickly cover his vision that even death cannot open his eyes to the truth of the hell that awaits him.

For example, a powerful yogi like Saubhari Ṛṣi, due to his *aparādha* against Garuḍa, had to succumb to material allurements, and Prajāpati Dakṣa had to suffer untold misery because of his offenses to Shiva. And when Devānanda Pundit and Gopāla Cāpala offended the purest of devotees Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, and



when Rāmachandra Khan and the Brahmin Gopāla Cakravartī offended the most exalted Vaishnava Haridāsa Ṭhākura—all these offenders experienced horrendous miseries. In Mahāprabhu's pastimes there are many incidents of such offenses and their dramatic consequences.

*Vaiṣṇava-aparādha* can be absolved only when the offended Vaishnava chooses to forgive the offender. Serving a different Vaishnava or begging the Supreme Lord for forgiveness will not excuse the

offender. For example, it is well known that the great mystic Durvāsa Muni offended the magnanimous King Ambarīṣa and was harassed by the avowed protector of Vaishnavas, Sudarshana-*chakra*. Even the Supreme Lord could not pardon his offenses; Durvāsa Muni had to return to the Vaishnava he offended, and only after surrendering at King Ambarīṣa's feet were his offenses excused.

An offender may chant and perform acts of devotion, but they are merely play-acting: in a million lifetimes they will not bear the fruit of devotion. What is the use of such *bhajana* and *sādhana* if the only medium through whom Krishna's mercy descends is denigrated? It is impossible to receive the Supreme Lord's grace if the blessings of the guru and the Vaishnava are ignored.

The Supreme Lord is *bhakta-vatsala*, or the guardian of devotees. He does not pay the slightest heed to the offenders. Deprived of the Lord's grace, they become subjected to demoniac and atheistic mentalities which gradually degrade their nature, and they become a burden to the world.

During a discussion between Mahāprabhu and Rāmānanda Rāya, Mahāprabhu inquired: "Of all that is good and beneficial to the *jīva*, what brings him the optimum benefit?"

Rāmānanda Rāya replied: "For the *jīva*, there is no greater benefit than *kṛṣṇa-bhakta-sanga*, or association with Krishna's pure devotees." Mahāprabhu also instructed everyone through Sanātana Goswami: "A person born outside of India is not unfit for devotion to Krishna, nor is one considered fit for devotion simply because he is born in a family of Brahmins. Anyone who takes to devotional service is exalted, whereas a sworn non-devotee is always condemned. Therefore, in devotional service to the Lord, there is no consideration of family status. Krishna is always extremely kind to the meek and humble, whereas the aristocrats and learned scholars are too proud of their material qualifications.

"Among the various acts of devotion, nine-fold *bhakti* (*nava-vidha*) is the best as it bestows ecstatic love for Krishna. Of those nine limbs of *bhakti*, chanting the Lord's Holy Name is foremost. If one chants



without committing the Ten Offenses, he obtains the treasure of love of God.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya līla*)

By birth, Brahmins possess sole rights to perform sacrifices, penance, and austerities. But they also seek elevation to the heavenly planets, which are undesirable to a devotee of Krishna. Among the general population, the Brahmins however, are still considered to be the elite, and so it behooves us remember the Vedic dictum, *bhakta-matrasya-adhikārita*: not only human beings, but every living entity has a God-given right to engage in *bhakti*. Therefore a Vaishnava devotee, even if born in the West, is accepted as the best of Brahmins in a spiritual society. However, if one is a Brahmin by birth and is a non-devotee, then he is considered very degraded:

“If a meat-eater becomes a devotee of the Supreme Lord Hari, he is far superior to a Brahmin, but if a Brahmin has no devotion, he is worse than a meat-eater.”

The most effective religious practice in the present age of *Kali-yuga* is the *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, or singing of the Holy Name of Krishna under the guidance of pure devotees. Anyone who is initiated into this process of *nāma-yajña* is elevated among humankind. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the fully ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge, concludes that only one possessed of superior intellect can grasp that *saṅkīrtana-yajña* is the sole means in *Kali-yuga* to worship the Supreme Lord. Instruction on the process of *saṅkīrtana-yajña* and *nava-vidha bhakti* abound in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*kṛṣṇa-varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam,  
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārśadam  
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair,  
yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.5.32

“In the age of Kali, the most intelligent persons worship Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu and sing the Holy Name of Krishna. Although Mahāprabhu’s complexion is not blackish like Krishna’s, he is

nonetheless Krishna himself. He is accompanied by his associates, servants, weapons, and confidential companions. Real intelligence means to worship Krishna exclusively.”

Below are three *ślokas* which clearly emphasize the efficacy of *śrāvanam*, *kīrtanam*, and *smāranam* or hearing, chanting and remembrance:

*tasmād ekena manasā  
bhagavān sātvatām patih  
śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś ca  
dhyeyaḥ pūjyaś ca nityadā*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.14

“Being completely focused, one should constantly hear about, glorify, remember, and worship Bhagavān Śrī Krishna, who is the guardian of his devotees.”

*tasmāt sarvātmanā rājan  
hariḥ sarvatra sarvadā  
śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś ca  
smartavyo bhagavān nṛṇām*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.36

“It is essential that every human being hear about, glorify, and remember Krishna always and everywhere.”

*tasmād bhārata sarvātmā  
bhagavān īśvaro hariḥ  
śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś ca  
smartavyaś cecchatābhayam*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.5

“One who wants to be free from this miserable existence must hear about, glorify, and remember Krishna, who is the Supersoul, the Supreme Controller, and our savior from all miseries.”

The next *śloka* establishes that *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the best means for success whether one be a *karmī*,



jñāni, or yogi:

etan nirvidyamānānām  
icchatām akuto-bhayam  
yoginām nr̥pa nirṇītaṁ  
harer nāmānukīrtanam

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.1.11

“Whether you are full of desire or completely free from desire, the only way to end all doubt and fear is to take shelter of the Holy Name of Krishna under the guidance of a pure devotee.”

Śrīla Jīva Goswami has profusely glorified the process of *nāma-kīrtana* in describing the Supreme Lord’s name, qualities, beauty, and pastimes. In his *Bhakti-sandarbha* he explains that the highest principle is for one to be completely and irresistibly devoted to Krishna. This alone will completely satisfy the soul (*ātmā-suprasīdati*). He quotes from the *Bhāgavatam* regarding *nāma-saṅkīrtana* as the prime occupation of the *jīva*. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the Mahājana Yamaraja declares that the twelve *mahājanas*, the supreme authorities on religion are unanimous in agreement that devotion to Krishna is the highest religion and that it begins with chanting the Holy Name of Krishna.

etāvān eva loke ‘smin  
puruṣāṁ dharmāḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ  
bhakti-yogo bhagavati  
tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhiḥ

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.22

“The ultimate purpose of existence is to love God—Krishna. The path of devotion begins with chanting his Holy Name.”

According to one’s individual proclivity one is categorized as a *karma-yogi*, *jñāna-yogi*, or *bhakti-yogi*, but without *bhakti*, no one can attain the supreme destination. Thus, the other yoga systems are dependent on *bhakti*, while *bhakti* is dependent on none. It is also stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

na sādhayati mām yogo  
na sāṅkhyāṁ dharmā uddhava  
na svādhyāyas-tapas-tyāgo  
yathā bhaktir-mamorjitā

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.20

“Mystic yoga, philosophy, religion, humanitarianism—none of these can satisfy me. But I am a slave to devotion.”

*Bhakti*, service saturated with love, is most adored by the Lord. He says:

“The fortunate yogi is one whose heart naturally flows towards me and who is united with me in love. Knowledge and renunciation are insufficient means for achieving spiritual perfection.

“Whatever you can obtain in this world by work, austerity, education, renunciation, mystic yoga, altruism, religion, or any other apparently auspicious path, is easily attained by my devotee. He can have whatever he wants—life in the heavenly planets, *brahman* realization, even admittance into Vaikuṅṭha. But since my devotees love me dearly, they even refuse to accept my offer of liberation from the cycle of birth and death.”

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.20.31-35)

Why is *kṛṣṇa-prema* the utmost necessity and the prime human goal? Even the sharpest of pundits, after extensive study of Vedānta, cannot perceive this truth. Thus Krishnadāsa Kavirāja Goswami has written:

“According to our karma we are wandering in the world aimlessly. Only the most fortunate souls find a real guru by the mercy of Krishna. And by the mercy of the guru, the seed of devotion is carefully planted in our hearts. Then, like a vigilant gardener, the devotee cares for it, watering it with Krishna’s name and acts of devotion.

“As the *bhakti-latā-bīja* (the seed of devotion) grows, it gradually becomes a creeper that penetrates the covering of this material universe, extending into the spiritual world. It grows beyond the *brahmajyoti* and enters the *paravyoma*, or spiritual domain. Finally it reaches the highest spiritual realm of Goloka



Vṛndāvana and entwines itself around Krishna’s lotus feet, which fulfill all desires. There it bears the fruit of *prema* love of God. Even though the gardener lives within the world, he continues to nourish the creeper with *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and service.

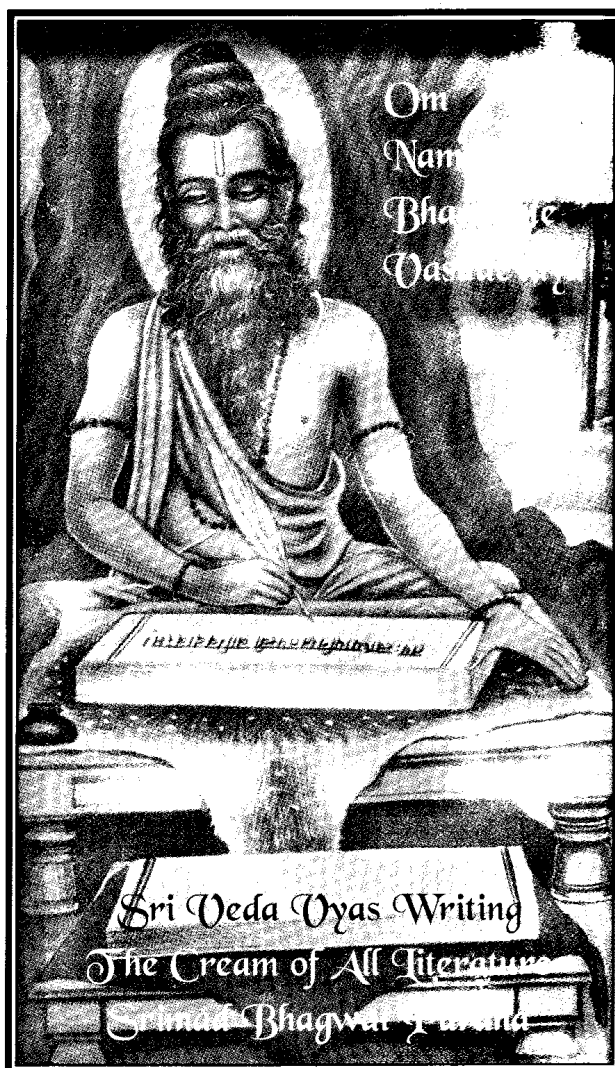
“However, if by chance the devotee commits *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, it is like letting a mad elephant loose in his garden of devotion. This offense will uproot his *bhakti* creeper and destroy it. Therefore, the gardener must build a protective fence around his creeper of devotion and avoid committing *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

“The other threat is weeds choking the creeper. The desires for sense pleasure, liberation and numerous other mundane desires are weeds. Duplicity, violence in the form of meat-eating, and the desire for fame and fortune, are all weeds that will choke the creeper.”

These weeds thrive when they sap the energy spent in nurturing the *bhakti-latā*. Therefore the observant and introspective devotee cuts them down and protects the creeper’s growth until it reaches Vṛndāvana. There the creeper bears the fruits of *prema* and the devotee reaches the lotus feet of Krishna, which are like a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* (desire-fulfilling tree). He becomes totally absorbed in tasting the fruit of *prema* and in serving Krishna’s lotus feet. This fruit is the supreme perfection of human aspiration which makes all other goals appear tiny and insignificant.” (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 19.151-164)

Chaitanya Mahārabhu revealed the esoteric principles of *bhakti* to Rūpa Goswami and those who have realized this are indeed rare and fortunate. What could be more unfair than to persecute such a person on the basis of race, color, or social status? Everyone interested in spiritual progress must avoid *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

Worshipping the Holy Name, *nāma-bhajana*, is certainly the highest form of devotion. One’s level of Vaishnavism is ascertained by the depth of his absorption in *nāma-bhajana*. Whether one is a neophyte, intermediate, or advanced devotee—the fact that he has committed himself to *kṛṣṇa-nāma* puts him in a position worthy of appreciation and respect. He may



come from a bad background, but to judge him on the basis of any material factors is *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.

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

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka, Verse 3

“One who is humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, and ready to offer all respects to others without expecting any in return can be constantly absorbed in *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*.”

Failure to understand this instruction increases one’s arrogance, and his devotional discipline suffers. Service in the association of higher Vaishnavas



should not create pride in an individual, nor cause him consider himself a Vaishnava. This type of pride leads to *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*.

The brilliant example of Nāmācārya Haridāsa Ṭhākura is worthy of emulation. Qualifying as a Vaishnava does not depend on individual strength, wealth, or knowledge. Everyone must keep in mind that Krishna is generous with his mercy to the meek and humble.

If a person witnesses an offense to a pure Vaishnava, he must vehemently protest. If he is unable to do so, with deep regret he must leave the place at once and cut off all connection with the offender. We must never minimize the seriousness of *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*. Neither should we attempt to defend the offender on the basis of mundane considerations, as this will become an act of complicity which will destroy our spiritual progress and even our material well-being. Therefore devotees must always be extremely careful not to become an accomplice to *vaiṣṇava-āparādha*. We must always remember how Lord Shiva's wife Satī went so far as to relinquish her body upon hearing offensive words about her Vaishnava husband.

A person is recognized as a Vaishnava only when he has established himself in Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings. He must live by the following verse which is found in the *Padyāvalī* of Rūpa Goswami. It is so important that it also appears in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

"I am not a Brahmin or a king. I'm not a businessman or a member of the working class. In fact, I don't identify with any class. I'm not a monk; I'm not married. I'm not retired. All I am is an insignificant servant of the servants of Krishna, who resplendent with the highest pleasure, is an endless reservoir of nectar who takes care of his gopis." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 13.80*)

When Vaishnavas born to higher-class families look down upon the Vaishnavas born to lower-class families, then they do not even understand common courtesy, what to speak of proper Vaishnava etiquette. On the other hand, embracing Vaishnavism in order to pass judgement on Brahmins is also forbidden by

the scriptures. The verbal attacks of so-called Vaishnavas towards Brahmins and vice-versa can only degrade societal values. There is nothing spiritual about such conflicts, they only lead to chaos and disruption.

One of the most absurd examples of *āparādha* took place in Krishna's *līlā*: Once, a king named Pauṇḍraka claimed that he was Vāsudeva, Krishna. He sent a messenger to Krishna in Dvārakā that he should step down from his position as God, or he would challenge him in battle. Upon hearing such ravings, Krishna laughed and sent a message that if Pauṇḍraka did not stop this insanity he would have to face the consequences. The Lord followed up on his threat, killing both Pauṇḍraka and his ally, the King of Kāśī. To pretend that one is Krishna is the height of insolence and leads to doom; similarly, posing as a Vaishnava while being intoxicated with pride is disastrous.

The final decree of Mahāprabhu is not just the renunciation of bad association. He says that the renunciate and the surrendered soul have similar characteristics, but the devotee not only gives up the world, but offers himself to the Lord. A devotee takes complete shelter in Krishna with full dedication. This is the culmination of surrender—*ātma-nivedanam*.

If one's renunciation lacks soul-surrender, then gradually it becomes superficial and false. False renunciation (*phalgu-vairagya*) invites the ghost of impersonalism to attack the intellect.

The *Bhagavad-gīta* states:

*viṣayā vinivartante  
nirāhārasya dehinaḥ  
rasa-varjaṁ raso'py asya  
param dṛṣṭvā nivartate*

*Bhagavad-gītā 2.59*

"We may refrain from sense enjoyment, but the taste for it remains. Only by experiencing the higher taste of *bhakti-rasā* do we become fixed in higher consciousness."

This means that as one increases his commit-



ment to Krishna consciousness, automatically his attachment to mundane concepts and identities diminish. At the same time, Vaishnava qualities in a commensurate degree blossom in his character. Such a fortunate soul is embellished with all good qualities. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* says that a devotee of Krishna is decorated with Krishna's qualities. When a devotee develops love for Krishna, he loves everything connected to Krishna (*kārṣṇa*) and surrender to Krishna's lotus feet becomes his only interest.

As the devotee begins to identify himself as the servant of the servants of Krishna, bad association begins to disappear. Pure attraction for Krishna and *kārṣṇa* awakens. Envy and pride do not exist in this state of consciousness. The heart's yearning to seek Krishna intensifies to the degree that the devotee sincerely cries out Krishna's name day and night. Everything else fades into oblivion.

Therefore, pure Vaishnava theology has nothing to do with social position. Mahāprabhu's teachings formulate the pure Vaishnava religion. At its very root is service to Krishna and *kārṣṇa* through the process of complete surrender, and therein lies the true satisfaction of the senses.

If a person from the lower rungs of society desires the respect of a Brahmin and outwardly accepts Vaishnavism as his religion, then his spiritual pursuit is materially motivated. Materialistic motivation does not equate with pure Vaishnavism.

It is a grave offense to treat a Vaishnava as a non-Vaishnava, or to judge him by mundane standards. Equally offensive is to praise a non-Vaishnava and worship him as a Vaishnava, or to glorify a neophyte devotee as an advanced devotee.

Only when one is fixed in the Krishna conception in his inherent spiritual identity, and is devoted to Krishna and *kārṣṇa* under the direction of Sri Guru, can he find relief from the clutches of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. Our predecessor *acaryas* have warned us that our chanting will never become pure if we keep bad association; at best such chanting is only mere shadow of the pure name or *nāmabhasa*, and *nāma-aparādha* is always lurking. Bad association is always a detriment to the path of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. So if one desires

to chant Krishna's name purely he must associate with Vaishnavas. Simultaneously, he must stop craving carnal pleasure, liberation, mystic power, and other material things.

*bhukti-mukti-sṛṣṭha yavat,  
pisaci hṛdi vartate  
tavad-bhakti-sukhasyatra  
katham abhyudayo bhavet*

*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.22.*

"There is no question of experiencing the pleasure of devotion as long as the twin ghosts sense pleasure and liberation haunt us."

According to spiritual authorities, *āsat-sanga* is comprised of non-Vaishnavas. They are *karmīs* (sensualists), *jñānīs* (empiricists), and mystics whose real desire is to achieve power. Advancement in *bhakti* is directly connected to avoiding bad association, and seeking and keeping good association.

The predominant *guṇa* (quality) of a Brahmin is *sattva-guṇa* (the mode of goodness). The *kṣatriyas* (governing class) are under the influence of a strong *rāja-guṇa* (passion), mixed with a weak *sattva-guṇa*. The *vaiśyas* (businessmen) are controlled by a mixture of *rāja* and *tama* (passion and ignorance), while the *sūdras* (working class) are predominantly in the clutches of *tama-guṇa* (ignorance). So the Brahmins are considered to be the highest class in human society because they are endowed with noble qualities like sense control, truthfulness, and the ability to discriminate between matter and spirit. They are the gurus or spiritual guides in the *varṇāśrama* system of social order.

In the ancient Vedic social stratification there are four spiritual orders of life, or ashrams: *brahmacarya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*, or celibate students, householders, the retired, and the renunciates. Of these, *sannyāsa* (renunciation) is pre-eminent because it facilitates freedom from mundane entanglement, thereby making it easier to elevate oneself to the transcendental plane. However, Kavirāja Goswami is quick to warn those who think



that the *sannyāsa* order gives a person special status:

“If the followers of the *varṇāśrama* system simply observe the regulations and responsibilities of their social and religious orders but neglect to worship Krishna, they fall into degraded conditions.”

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that: “The followers of the *varṇāśrama* system who neglect the worship of Lord Vishnu become arrogant and obsessed with their social positions, and fall down.”

The most important quality of a devotee is that he serves Krishna, indifferent to what or whom is superior in this material world. The scriptures state that devotees of Krishna are the most elevated members of society, whereas non-devotees are degraded regardless of their social position. In order to worship and serve Krishna, material qualifications are not necessary; everyone is eligible.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* makes constant reference to the fact that work without devotion is useless. The same principle applies to education, philosophy, yoga, or anything else. Pure devotion is above and beyond devotion mixed with *karma*, *jñāna* or yoga.

Those who understand the true meaning of these statements in the scriptures are beyond any social restriction. However, this cannot be used as an excuse to not follow the rules and regulations of devotion.

“As long as one has not awakened a taste for devotion, one is obliged to adhere to the regulative principles of the Vedic injunctions.”

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 11.20.9)

A faithful devotee is not inspired by any activity other than devotion because his faith has been aroused by hearing Krishna’s wonderful pastimes. According to the degree of his surrender, he will ignore social order (*varṇāśrama*). At the same time he realizes the need for establishing a structure to keep society from falling into a state of anarchy and chaos.

Deviations from the Vedic injunctions are the bane of modern society. Plagued by uncontrolled and irresponsible habits in diet and sex, the ideals and benefits of the *varṇāśrama* system have been for the most part lost, even within India. The erosion of moral standards which reflect all human interaction

should alarm anyone who is concerned with the ultimate good of human society. Vaishnavas cooperate with persons who are like-minded and have similar habits, but they cannot support the present-day society’s capriciousness—and more importantly, its apathy to God consciousness.

In the pursuit of devotion even one’s eating habits are important. It has been said that “You are what you eat.” The *yoga-śāstra* of Patañjali Ṛṣi prohibits the yogi from accepting food cooked by persons with mentalities contrary to their own. Such food causes wavering of resolve in those who desire to elevate themselves in yoga, and may yield a disastrous result. Regulations in every aspect of preparing and taking food directly affects the levels of purity in one’s consciousness. The Vedas say:

*ahār śuddhau sattva-śuddhi,  
sattva-śuddhau dhruvāsmṛtiḥ*

“A pure diet purifies the consciousness, and focuses the mind in constant remembrance of the ultimate goal of life.”

For this reason, strict devotees won’t even accept food cooked by Brahmins if they are non-devotees. In the *Itihāsa-Samuccaya* the Lord says:

“A person who has no devotion is not dear to me even if he is learned in all the Vedas, but if a reformed meat-eater performs devotional service then he is dear to me. Therefore one should give charity to such a person and receive gifts from him, for he is as worshipable as I am.” (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 10.127)

Devotees relish *prasādam*, or food offered to the Supreme Lord, with love and devotion, and never refuse *prasādam* from any Vaishnava regardless of his family background. Such refusal is another form of *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Goswami has shown that Krishna consciousness is not limited to Krishna, but includes where he lives, his family and friends, his devotees, the Brahmins, his Name, our guru, and his better half, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī herself.

“My dear mind, I humbly bow before you. I beg you to please give up all pride and surrender fully to





Śrī Gurudeva, to the spiritual abode of Vraja *dhāma*, to the residents of Vraja, to all the Vaishnava devotees of the Lord, to the *sāttvikā* Brahmins, to the Holy Name of the Supreme Lord, and to the ever youthful Divine Couple of blossoming beauty Śrī Gandharvikā-Giridhārī and in this way quickly develop sublime attachment to them.”

(*Manah-Śikṣā* 1)

Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Goswami addresses his own mind in order to speak to us, and his teachings are indispensable to our spiritual progress. A Vaishnava must remain prideless like Raghunātha Dāsa. Even though he was fully conversant with the

Once the devotee is able to feel himself to be an insignificant servant, then nothing will divert him from the path of *śuddha-bhakti*. His heart will always shine with humility and there will be no room for the darkness of deceit. To feel pride internally while making a show of humility is dishonest and absolutely foreign to a pure devotee.

One who has developed pure love for the Supreme Lord, who is immersed in meditation on the Holy Name, whose heart is constantly searching for Krishna while sincerely crying out to him—such a person is undoubtedly a Vaishnava who can purify the entire world. Under no condition does pride, honor,

*Śrī Parankuṣa Muni says that negligence in cultivating the following four qualities propels the jīva towards committing the aparādha of arcye viṣṇau śilādhīr, or seeing the deity of the Lord as an ordinary sculpture.*

*Saulabhya: The Lord appears on Earth in his deity for all to see, so the jīva must develop the qualification to see him in this form and take shelter.*

*Sauśīlya: To realize that the Supreme Lord is infinite and the jīva is finite thus becoming humbled and seeking the Lord's mercy.*

*Svāmitva: To believe firmly that the Lord will fulfill our every desire.*

*Vātsalya: In spite of noticing faults in others, the ability to overlook them, and offer them shelter, thereby increasing their faith.*

esoteric conclusions of pure devotion, he exemplified proper Vaishnava conduct. Even if a Vaishnava is very elevated, he always thinks of himself as lowly and meek. We must constantly remember Mahāprabhu's instruction of *ṭṇād api sunīcena*, that we should feel humbler than a blade of grass. If one thinks of himself as an elevated Vaishnava then he cannot remain prideless.

The desire for fame and adoration (*pratiṣṭha*) will contaminate his consciousness. If he purposely leaves his food-remnants for others, his consciousness will become weighed down by arrogance. In order to avoid these pitfalls, the Vaishnava must always think of himself as the humble disciple of his spiritual master who is simply accepting worship on his guru's behalf.

or even worship affect him. He is always ready to offer obeisances to everyone because he sees all living beings as part of Krishna. Such an exalted person would never insult even an ordinary *jīva*, what to speak of a Vaishnava. He is the embodiment and the protector of Mahāprabhu's teachings:

*jibe sanman dibe jani kṛṣṇa adhiṣṭhan*

“Offer respect to all living beings knowing that Krishna resides in their hearts.”

If we can emulate such an elevated mood, then by the Vaishnavas' mercy, we can acquire the great fortune of relishing the nectarean ocean of pure devotion.



# SPIRITUAL SUICIDE GURU APARADHA



RILA KAVIRAJA GOSWAMI movingly describes the disappearance of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. At that time one of his disciples, Rāmacandra Purī, saw that his guru was chanting the Holy Name and weeping, crying out “Mathurā painu,” which means “I could not attain Mathurā.” Mādhavendra Purī was actually exhibiting symptoms of *vipralambha bhāva*, or the mood of intense separation.

Rāmacandra Purī was by nature a fault finder, and consequently could not receive Śrī Guru’s grace. Although he was Mādhavendra Purī’s disciple, his vision was warped and he saw his guru as a mundane person. In utter disregard of the transcendental status of his guru, he said: “If you are full of transcendental bliss, what are you crying about? You should be absorbed in meditating on Brahman.”

Mādhavendra Purī was enraged. “Get out you sinful rascal. I don’t want to see your face!” Then he began to lament: “O Krishna, I could not reach you, nor your abode, Mathurā. I am dying in unhappiness, and this rascal comes to give me even more pain. I am dying without your shelter and now this fool comes to instruct me about Brahman.” Rāmacandra Purī was rejected by his guru and material desires gradually appeared in his heart.

Rāmacandra Purī had the audacity to offer instructions to his guru—a *mahābhagavat*—who personified *kṛṣṇa-prema*. He failed to understand that his guru was immersed in *viraha*, or separation from



Mathurā, the transcendental abode of Krishna.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda writes in his commentary: “Realizing that his disciple was a fool, Mādhavendra Purī withdrew his connection and any responsibility towards him.”

Śrīla Bhaktivinode elaborates on the meaning of the word *vāsanā*, or ‘desire’ in his *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya* commentary:

“Here, ‘desire’ indicates attachment to knowledge and analysis, which ultimately leads to *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. The real cause of a *jīva*’s misfortune is his offenses against guru and Vaishnava.”

Rejected by his guru, Rāmacandra Purī went to visit Mahāprabhu in the Gambhīra temple in Purī. While waiting, he saw ants crawling outside Mahāprabhu’s door. Without **thinking**, Rāmacandra Purī said, “Last night there was sugar candy here, and therefore ants are everywhere. This *sannyāsī* is attached to sense gratification.”

After saying this, Rāmacandra Purī got up and left. He made the effort to see the Lord every day, and yet he could not stop finding faults in the Lord’s character. Further, he would publicly broadcast his criticisms. Reports of Rāmacandra’s criticism against the Lord reached him. Nevertheless, because Rāmacandra Purī was a godbrother of his guru, Īśvara Purī, Mahāprabhu always offered him respect. Accepting the criticism of his eating habits, Mahāprabhu changed his diet. He told his servant Govinda: “From now on it will be a rule that I shall



Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur

accept only one-fourth of what I have been eating of Jagannātha's *prasādam*. If you bring any more than this, I will leave."

When Govinda disclosed Mahāprabhu's self-imposed austerities to other intimate followers of the Lord, they felt as if the world had ended. That day a

Brahmin came to offer Jagannātha *prasādam* to Mahāprabhu. Acting on Mahāprabhu's orders, Govinda accepted only one-fourth of a pot of rice and vegetables. Mahāprabhu then took only half of that amount and left the other half for Govinda. The Brahmin was horrified.



Seeing Mahāprabhu eating so little, the devotees were overcome with despair and stopped eating altogether. Mahāprabhu, however, ordered Govinda and Kāśīśvara Pundit to beg food from somewhere else to compensate for their smaller portions of food. This continued for a few days, and finally the news reached Rāmacandra Purī, who rushed to see Mahāprabhu. Mahāprabhu received him with due honor, offering him obeisances and a seat. Rāmacandra Purī laughed and instructed the Lord:

“It is not the business of a *sannyāsī* to gratify his senses. He should fill his belly somehow or other. I heard that you have cut down your eating by one-half. I can see that you are skinny. Such dry renunciation is also not the religion of a real *sannyāsī*. A *sannyāsī* eats only as much as necessary, but he does not try to please the senses.”

Mahāprabhu replied: “I am just an ignorant boy and like your disciple. It is my great fortune that you instruct me.”

Rāmacandra Purī left, and Mahāprabhu learned that the devotees were either fasting completely or had reduced their eating by one-half for many days. Then one day Śrīla Paramānanda Purī, with his disciples, came to meet Mahāprabhu. He humbly said to the Lord:

“My godbrother Rāmacandra Purī is by nature a critic. If you give up eating because of his criticism, what will you gain? He encourages one to eat to his full satisfaction, and then to eat more than necessary. Then, after he has induced one to overeat, he criticizes him saying, ‘You eat too much. How much money do you have? By setting a bad example for other *sannyāsīs*, you ruin their vows. It’s easy to understand why you have not made any spiritual advancement.’

“Rāmacandra Purī always inquires about how others are eating and conducting their daily affairs. The two kinds of activities rejected in the scriptures constitute his daily *sādhana*. It is written in the *Bhāgavatam*: ‘One should see this world as being under the control of Krishna and neither praise nor criticize the characteristics and activities of others. One who praises or criticizes others is trapped in dual-

ity, and soon deviates from the ultimate goal of life.’

“Of these two rules, Rāmacandra Purī obeys the first—he never praises anyone—although he knows that the second is more important, he continues to criticize others.”

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda writes in his *Anubhāṣya* commentary:

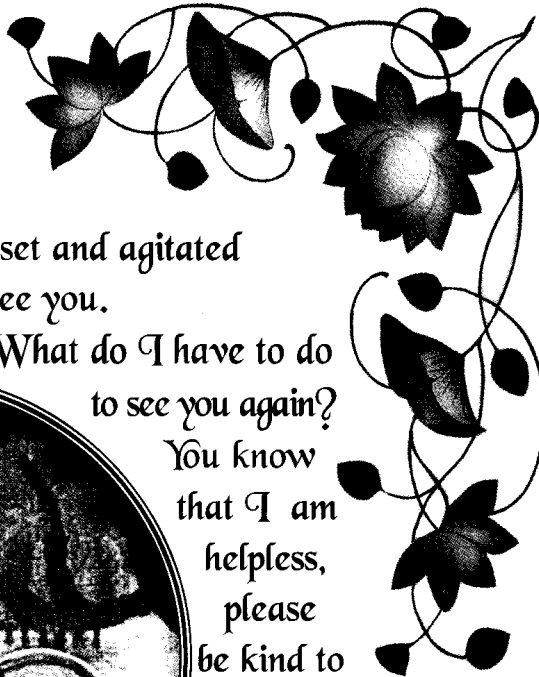
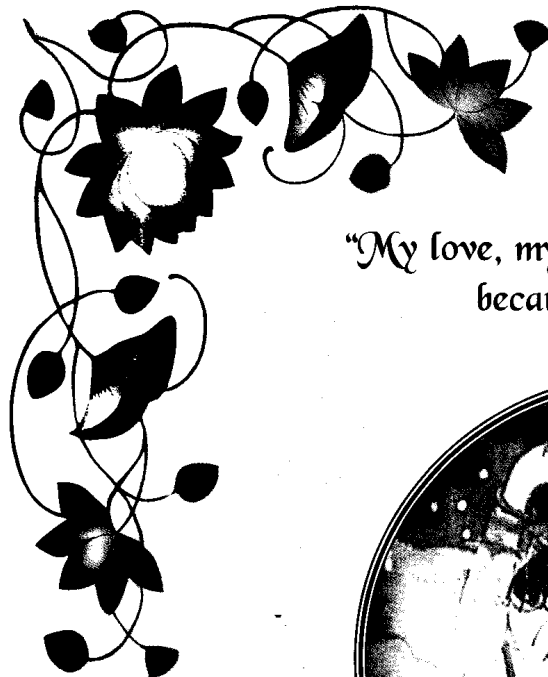
“In the *Bhāgavatam* we find that ‘to not praise’ is the first rule, and ‘to not criticize’ is the second. If the second rule is given prominence over the first, then the conclusion is that it is not so bad to praise, but it is imperative not to criticize. Rāmacandra Purī observed the first rule, but he failed to adhere the second.”

Śrīla Paramānanda Purī continued: “Even where there are hundreds of good qualities, a critic does not consider any of them. Rather, he attempts to cleverly point out faults in those attributes. One should avoid the example of Rāmacandra Purī, but something should be said against him because he is breaking our hearts. Please don’t give up eating on account of this fool.”

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu replied: “Why are all of you angry at Rāmacandra Purī? He is simply stating the standard principles of *sannyāsa* life. Why condemn him? For a *sannyāsī* to over-indulge in pleasures of the tongue a great offense. The duty of a *sannyāsī* is to eat only as much as is needed to keep body and soul together.”

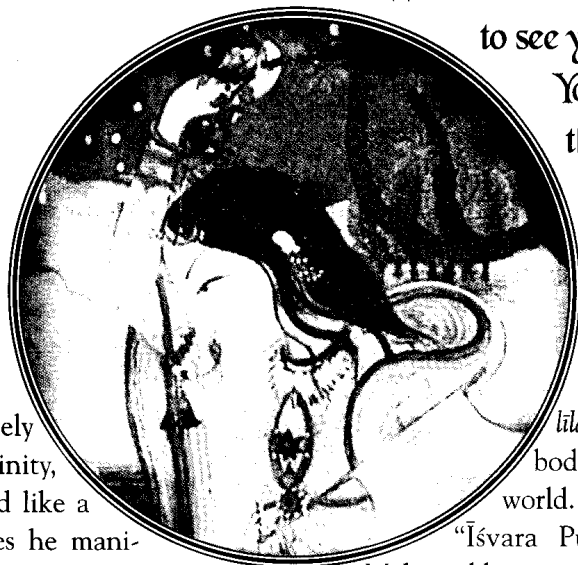
After this, the devotees fervently requested that the Lord resume his normal eating. At first the Lord refused, but later agreed to take only half of his original portion instead of a fourth.

On the days when Gadādhara Pundit, Śrī Bhagavān Ācārya, or Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya invited him to take *prasādam*, the Lord had no choice because he is subjugated by his devotee’s love for him. The Supreme Lord is like a desire-tree; in order to satisfy his devotees he submissively accepted *prasādam* according to the devotee’s desire. The prime reason for the Lord’s descent is to give pleasure to his devotees. The Supreme Lord always acts in ways which he deems appropriate to the time and circumstances. Kavirāja Goswami writes:



“My love, my heart is upset and agitated  
because I can't see you.

What do I have to do  
to see you again?  
You know  
that I am  
helpless,  
please  
be kind to  
me!”



“Because of the absolutely independent position of Divinity, Mahāprabhu sometimes acted like a common man and sometimes he manifested his godly opulence. Sometimes he accepted Rāmacandra Purī as his master and considered himself his servant, and other times the Lord would see him as no more than dirt. Although it may baffle our intelligence, we must remember that God can do anything he likes, and whatever he chooses to do is always irresistibly charming.

Rāmacandra Purī left Nīlācala after a few days for pilgrimage. His departure lifted a heavy burden from the devotees and they were happy and relieved. They resumed enjoying *prasādam* to their full satisfaction. The Lord once again filled himself with the bliss of *kīrtana* and dancing. Kavirāja Goswami concludes:

“If one's guru rejects him, one becomes so fallen that he commits offenses even against the Lord. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu did not take Rāmacandra Purī's offenses personally, for the Lord considered him to be on the level of his guru. However, through his behavior, the Lord taught everyone about the result of offending the guru.”

On the other hand, total devotion to the guru is exemplified in Īśvara Purī. He personally served his guru Mādhavendra Purī, knowing that he was a pure devotee of the Lord and that he was in his *aparakāta*

*līlā*, or the pastime of leaving his body and entering the spiritual world.

“Īśvara Purī, the guru of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, personally waited hand and foot on Mādhavendra Purī, even cleaning his stool and urine with his own hands, while chanting the Holy Name and recounting the pastimes of Krishna for Mādhavendra Purī to relish. In this way he helped his guru to remember Krishna's Holy Name and pastimes at the time of his passing from this world.

“Pleased with Īśvara Purī, Mādhavendra Purī embraced him and gave him the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Īśvara Purī was filled with an ocean of ecstatic love, whereas Rāmacandra Purī dried up and became a critic of everyone. Īśvara Purī received the mercy, whereas Rāmacandra Purī was rebuked. They are living examples of receiving a great personality's benediction and chastisement.”

Mādhavendra Purī revealed to the world the treasure of sublime love of Krishna while relishing divine love in separation (*vipralambha*). While singing the following verse he entered into the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā:

*ayi dīna-dayāndra nātha he  
mathurā-nātha kadāvalokyase  
hṛdayam tvad-aloka-kātarām*



*dayita bhrāmyati kiṁ karomyaham*

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 8.34*

“O Mathurānāth! When will I see you again? You are supposed to be kind to the poor. I am nothing without you. Now my heart is filled with anxiety and I don’t know what to do.”

There are four Vaishnava traditions. Mādhavendra Purī accepted *sannyāsa* in the line of Madhva. From Madhva to Lakṣmīpati (Mādhavendra Purī’s guru) this disciplic line lacked the mood of *śṛṅgāra-rasa* or erotic love. The spiritual mood which was prevalent in the line was revealed in Mahāprabhu’s discussion with the *tattvavādīs* when he was touring South India. Until Mahāprabhu’s time the popular conception of the Absolute Truth was *vishnu-bhakti*, worshipping the Lord in the mood of awe and reverence.

Mādhavendra Purī sowed the seed of *śṛṅgāra-rasa-bhakti* in the spiritual mood expressed in this verse. He was in the mood of Śrī Rādhikā. After Krishna leaves Vṛndāvana for Mathurā, Śrī Rādhikā experiences intense separation from him. To cultivate her feelings is the highest mood of devotion. A devotee immersed in this *rasa* or mood considers himself very poor and humble, and always begs Krishna to be kind to them. Inasmuch as we are separated from Krishna, this mood is the most natural way to feel while performing acts of devotion.

After Krishna departs for Mathurā, Śrī Rādhikā’s heart is trembling with anxiety from not being able to see him. Yearning to behold his beautiful face, she laments:

“My love, my heart is sorrowful and agitated because I can’t see you. What do I have to do to see you again? You know that I am helpless, please be kind to me!”

This is the mood expressed by Mādhavendra Purī. It is the same as Mahāprabhu in the mood of Śrī Rādhā in Vṛndāvana. Our preceptors have said that the root of the tree of *śṛṅgāra-rasa* is Mādhavendra Purī; Īśvara Purī is its sapling, Mahāprabhu is its trunk, and his followers are its branches.

When Mahāprabhu went to Remuṇā to have

*darśana* of the deity of Kṣīra-corā Gopīnātha, he recited this verse. The Lord then entered the highest state of ecstasy. Krishnadāsa Kavirāja comments that aside from Śrī Rādhā, Mahāprabhu, and Mādhavendra Purī, no one else can relish this *rasa*:

“By grinding sandalwood, its aroma increases. By pondering this verse, its meaning deepens. The *kaustubha* gem appeared within the cream of the ocean of milk, and this verse is the cream of all poetry because it expresses the highest concept of *rasa*. These are Rādhārāṇī’s own words, and her mercy was manifest in the words of Mādhavendra Purī. Only Chaitanya Mahāprabhu fully relished it. No one else is even capable of understanding it.”

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that remembrance of Krishna’s lotus feet—meaning the eagerness to serve him—removes all inauspiciousness from our lives. In other words it removes the offensive attitude of not wanting to serve, which is the only means to attract the benediction of the Lord’s grace. It awakens in the *jīva*’s heart the desire to serve the Lord. Through service, he is freed from mundane influences and becomes situated in pure goodness or *viśuddha-sattva*. Unalloyed devotion for the Lord dawns in his heart as he relinquishes his slavery to the material modes. He naturally becomes detached to things unrelated to Krishna and receives the highest grace. But by blaspheming Śrī Guru and Vaishnavas, all is forfeited and destroyed.

By offending a devotee who has taken shelter in the Holy Name, the taste for chanting disappears. One hovers on the material plane of consciousness plagued by desires which bring misfortune and inauspiciousness. The real benediction for everyone has been nicely delineated in Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in the discussion between Mahāprabhu and Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya.

Rāmānanda Rāya says that devotion to Krishna is the ultimate realization in transcendental knowledge. The highest fame anyone can achieve is being a devotee of Krishna. The most precious possession is divine love for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Śrī Krishna, and the greatest suffering is separation from Krishna’s devotees. A lover of Krishna is the most exalted, lib-

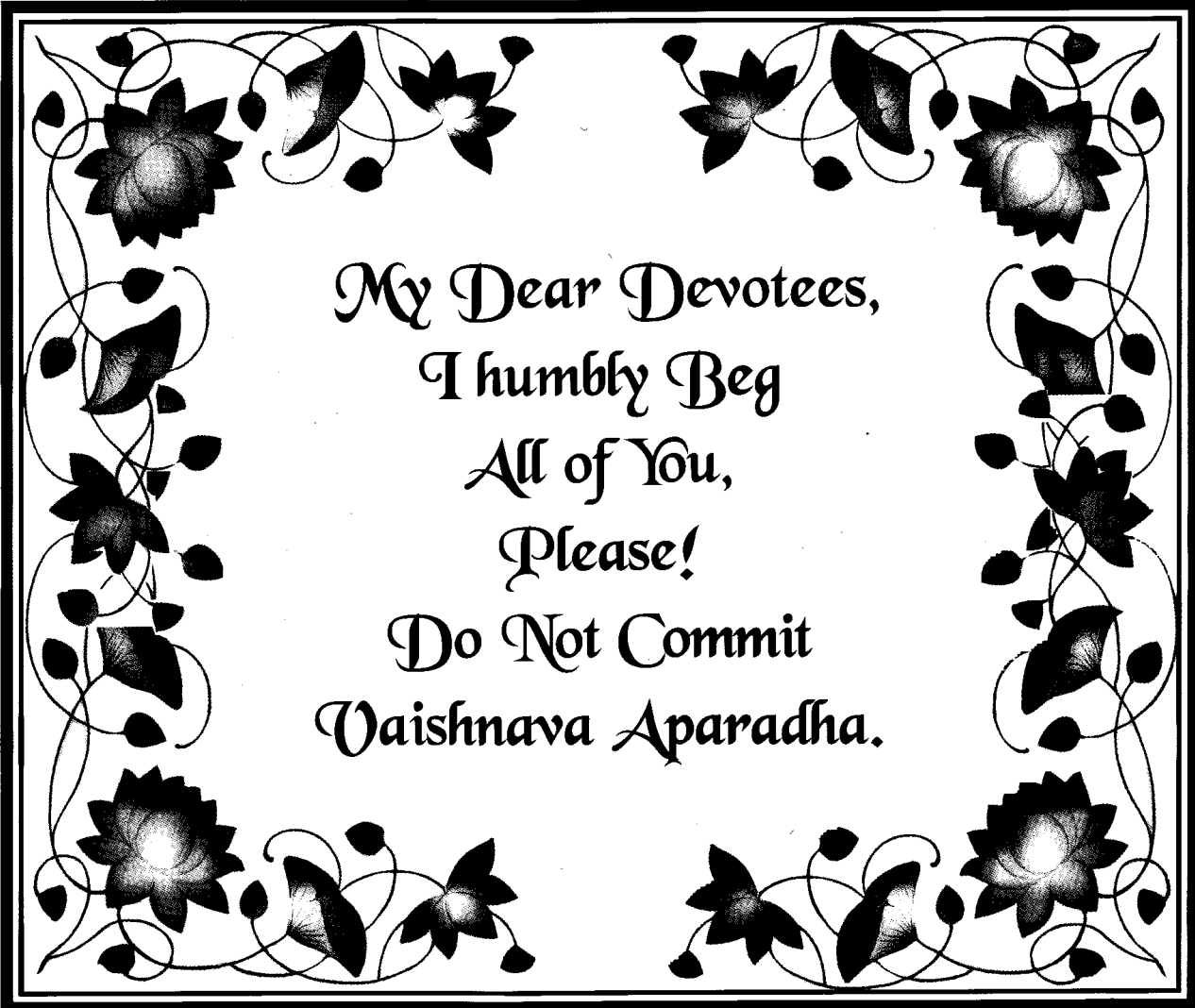


erated person. Ecstatically singing about the sublime pastimes of Rādhā and Krishna is the highest religion. The association of Krishna's devotees is the only real good for everyone. Krishna's transcendental name, qualities, beauty, and pastimes, are the only subjects worthy of constant remembrance, and the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā and Krishna are the only things we should worship and adore. The only place worth living is Vṛndāvana. There Rādhā and Krishna revel in their divine dance of love, the *rasa-līlā*. The eternal pastimes of Rādhā and Krishna are the only topics worth hearing. The singing of the Holy Names of the Divine Couple is the highest form of *kīrtana* and the most exalted form of worship. This is real culture and should be the ultimate goal of human civilization. But if *aparādha* against Hari, guru, and Vaishnava infect

the heart, then we digress from the spiritual path and are dragged onto the miserable path of hedonism.

Bhārata-varṣa, India, is an expansion of the spiritual world, Vaikuṅṭha, where gods and goddesses compete to take birth as humans; a birth that offers the best opportunity for association with Vaishnavas and a service-connection with Krishna. That precious gift is destroyed by *aparādha* and one's life becomes a burden.

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu descended from the innermost quarter of the transcendental abode of Śrī Rādhā and Krishna to remind us of our actual identities as their eternal servitors. But if we allow our innate nature to become diverted from serving Rādhā and Krishna, becoming slaves of illusion, the rare opportunity offered by the human birth is wasted.



My Dear Devotees,  
I humbly Beg  
All of You,  
Please!  
Do Not Commit  
Vaishnava Aparadha.



Devotees, please hear this most secret of all secrets:

The most precious possession is divine love for  
Sri Radha and Krishna,  
and the greatest suffering is the separation  
from Krishna's devotees.

A lover of Krishna  
is the most exalted,  
liberated person.

Ecstatically singing about the sublime pastimes  
of Radha and Krishna is the highest religion.

The association of Krishna's devotees  
is the only real good for everyone.

Krishna's transcendental name, qualities,  
beauty, and pastimes, are the only subjects  
worthy of constant remembrance,  
and the lotus feet of Sri Radha and Krishna  
are the only things we should worship and adore.

The only place worth living is Vrindaban.  
There Radha and Krishna revel in their divine  
dance of love,  
The Rasa Lila.

The eternal pastimes of Radha and Krishna  
are the only topics worth hearing.

The singing of the holy names  
of the divine couple is the highest form of Kirtan  
and the most exalted form of worship.

This is real culture and should be  
the ultimate goal of human civilization.





VAISHNAVA SARVABHAUMA SRI SRILA  
BHAKTI PROMODE PURI  
GOSWAMI MAHARAJA



M VISNUPADA  
*Srila Bhakti Promode Puri*  
*Founder President & Acharya*  
*Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math*

In the village of Ganganandapur, District Jessore (now Bangladesh), Tridandi Swami Srimad Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaja appeared as the son of Sri Tarinicharan Chakraborty and Srimati Ramrangini Devi. Born October 8, 1989, during the auspicious hour of *brahma-muhurta*, he was called Sri Promode Bhusan Chakraborty.

Along with the study of Sanskrit, Promode Bhusan was engaged in worshipping family Deities of Sri Sri Radha Gopinath. His reverent service mood was evident even as a young man. Once he forgot to cover the Lord with a blanket on a winter night. That night he shivered uncontrollably with chills and fever. The Lord appeared in his dream and showed him that he was without his blanket. The young Promode Bhusan woke up and only after he covered the Lord did the fever subside.

Promode Bhusan completed his education in Jessore then went to Calcutta where he attended Bangabasi College, graduating with honors in Chemistry. In 1917, he met his Guru, Prabhupada Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Thakur.

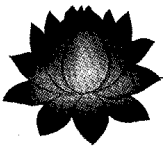
From the first meeting, an eternal bond was made. Sri Promode Bhusan accepted Prabhupada in his heart as his eternal master.

His strong attachment to spiritual life brought him regularly to his Guru's lectures at the Calcutta ashram of Sri Gaudiya Math. In 1923, on the holy occasion of Sri Krishna Janmastami, he surrendered at his Guru's lotus feet and simultaneously took Harinama and Brahmin initiations. He became known as Sri Pranabananda Brahmachary—a full-fledged member of Sri Gaudiya Math.

Sri Pranabananda's service attitude was so exemplary that soon Prabhupada Srila Saraswati Thakur established him as the editor of Gaudiya Math publications. Pranabananda Brahmachary synopsised Srila Saraswati Thakura's lectures, elaborated on them, and with Prabhupada's approval, they were published in various periodicals including the only daily spiritual newspaper, *Dainik Nadia Prakash*.

In recognition of his scholarship, Saraswati Thakur honored him with the title, Sri Pranabananda Brahmachary Mahopadeshak Pratna Vidyalankar.

Srila Puri Maharaja served in close association with his Guru for thirteen years. Srila Prabhupada requested that Sri Pranabananda Brahmachary accept Tridandi *sannyasa*. Humbly considering himself unfit, he declined.



At the time of Prabhupada's *aparakatalila*, Sri Pranabananda Brahmachary held his guru's lotus-feet to his chest so that they might remain forever enthroned in his heart. After Srila Prabhupada's disappearance Sri Pranabananda Brahmachary Mahopadeshak Pratna Vidyalkar began extensive traveling and preaching.

In 1942 Srila Prabhupada Saraswati Thakur appeared in a dream and gave his divine order that Sri Pranabananda accept Tridandi *sannyasa*. *Sannyasa* initiation and the *danda* were given by his Godbrother Srila Bhakti Gourava Vaikhanasa Maharaja in Champahati Sri Sri Gaura-Gadadhara temple.

For more than seven years, Tridandi Swami Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaja served as the head *pujari* and temple president of Sri Sri Yogapith, the birth place of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, discovered by Srila Bhakti Vinode Thakur. During that time, the Deities were internally urging him to take up scriptural research and deeper meditation.

He moved to a humble cottage on the banks of the Ganga in Kalna, living with his beloved Deities Sri Sri Radha Gopinath. During that time, the King of Burdwan (a district of West Bengal) was extremely impressed with his saintly character and on the appearance day of Sri Radhika, 1958, he offered his large temple to Srila Puri Maharaja. He engaged in service at that temple for several years.

Later, his Godbrother, Srila Bhakti Dayita Madhab Goswami Maharaja, requested that Gurumaharaj come to his Math to edit spiritual periodicals and books. Gurumaharaja entrusted the temple in Kalna to his younger brother and went to Calcutta to take up his new service. Additionally, His Holiness Om Visnupada Tridandi Swami Sri Bhakti

Dayita Goswami Maharaja requested that he take full charge of his monthly magazine, *Sri Chaitanya Vani*, as president of the editorial board. He also became editor-in-chief of the monthly magazine *Sri Gaudiya* published from Sri Chaitanya Math, Mayapur. At the age of 97, Srila Puri Maharaja continues to fulfill this role with great care and devotion.

Presently, Gurumaharaja is the senior most living disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. Additionally, he was the lifelong, intimate associate of His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Raksaka Shridara Dev Goswami Maharaja, who he considered the benign guardian of the celestial wealth of Srila Rupa Goswami.

Srila Puri Maharaja was well known as the best *kirtana* leader in the early days of Sri Gaudiya Math and often sang on radio programs. He is well known for his extensive knowledge and meticulous practice of deity worship and instalation. His service to Srila Saravati Thakur installing deities in new temples made him known as Pujapada.

In addition to his high position and qualifications, many are attracted to Tridandi Swami B.P. Puri Goswami Maharaja's divine personality. He emanates sweetness and love. He is seen as our well-wishing guide to the spiritual domain. The opening of the Gopinath Gaudiya Math, during the 1989 Gour Purnima Tithi, provided a doorway to that spiritual domain.

Our humble prayer is that we may always be situated at his holy lotus feet which are our only access to the predecessor Acaryas and their divine teachings. We pray that we may be engaged in the eternal service of Sri Guru and Gauranga and Sri Sri Radha Gopinath under the divine direction of Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Maharaja.