

— Śrī Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya —

Sampradāya Prakāśa

Selected Essays on
Origins & Continuity of the
Śrī Caitanya-Sārasvata Paramparā



— · Śrī Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya · —

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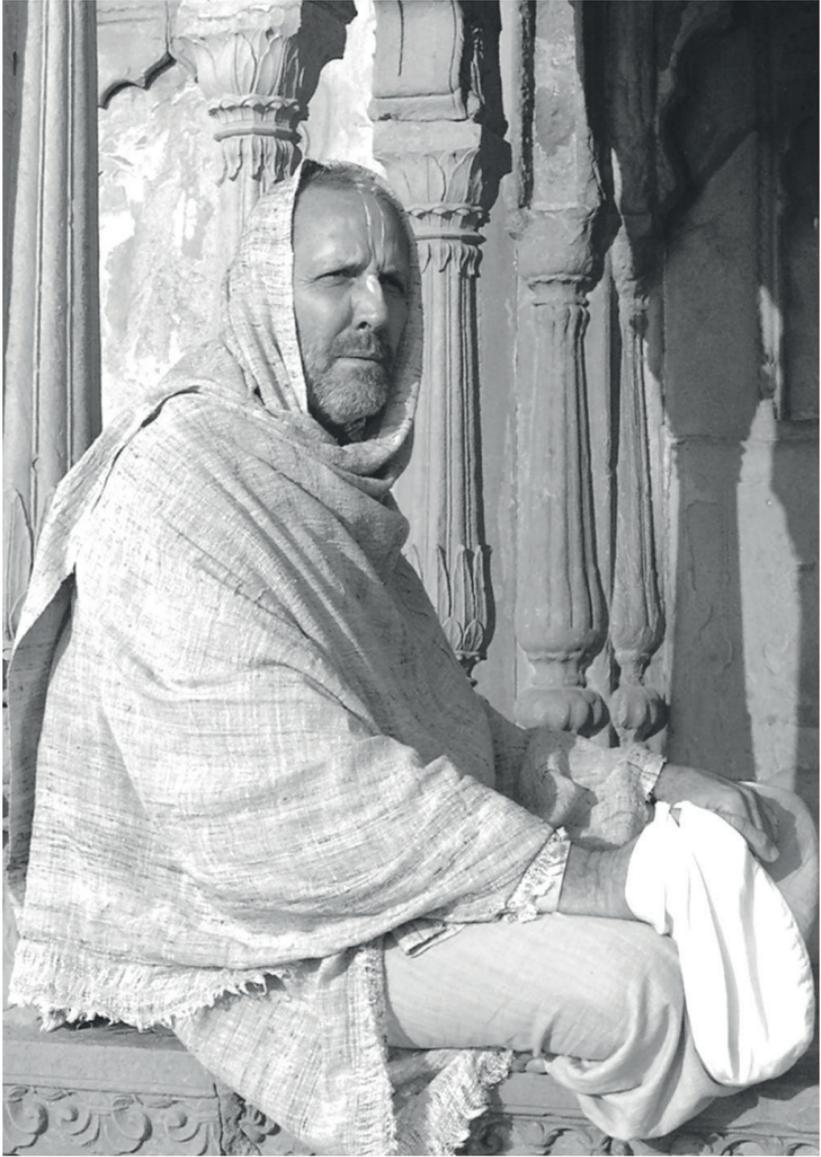
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Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiᅅha Mahārāja



Dedication

*To our most worshipable spiritual master,
Om Viṣṇupāda Paramahansa 108
Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅha Mahārāja
a brilliant beacon of pure devotional conclusions,
who cut assunder the darkness of ignorance,
with uncompromising adherence to the path
laid out by the previous ācāryas*





1. Śrī Kṛṣṇa
2. Brahmā
3. Nārada
4. Vyāsa
5. Madhvācārya
6. Padmanābha Tīrtha
7. Narahari Tīrtha
8. Mādhava Tīrtha
9. Akṣobhya Tīrtha
10. Jaya Tīrtha
11. Jñāna-sindhu Tīrtha
12. Dayānidhi Tīrtha
13. Vidyānidhi Tīrtha
14. Rājendra Tīrtha
15. Jayadharmā Tīrtha
16. Puruṣottama Tīrtha
17. Brahmaṇya Tīrtha
18. Vyāsa Tīrtha
19. Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha
20. Mādhavendra Purī
21. Īśvara Purī
22. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
23. Rūpa Gosvāmī (Sanātana Gosvāmī, Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī)
24. Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja
25. Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura
26. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura
27. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa
28. Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī
29. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
30. Gaura-kīśora Dāsa Bābājī
31. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
32. A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda (Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Gosvāmī, Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī)
33. Swāmī Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅha



Śrī Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya Sampradāya

Śrī Guru Paramparā

(Śrī Narasiṅgha Caitanya Maṭha)

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-brahma-devarṣi-bādarāyaṇa-saṃjñakān
śrī-madhva-śrī-padmanābha-śrīman-nṛhari-mādhavān
akṣobhya-jayatīrtha-śrī-jñāna-sindhu-dayānidhīn
śrī-vidyānidhī-rājendra-jayadharmān kramād dvayam
puruṣottama-brahmaṇya-vyāsātīrthānś ca saṃstumah
tato lakṣmīpatiṃ śrīman-mādhavendraṃ ca bhaktitaḥ
tac-chiṣyān śrī-īśvarādvaita-nityānandān jagad-gurūn
devam īśvara-śiṣyaṃ śrī-caitanyaṃ ca bhajāmahe
śrī-kṛṣṇa-prema-dānena yena nistāritaṃ jagat*

With great devotion we glorify the spiritual masters in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava disciplic succession: Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead; Brahmā; Nārada; Vyāsa; Madhvācārya; Padmanābha; Nṛhari; Mādhava; Akṣobhya; Jayatīrtha; Jñānasindhu; Dayānidhi; Vidyānidhi; Rājendra; Jayadharmā; Puruṣottama; Brahmaṇya; Vyāsātīrtha; Lakṣmīpati; Mādhavendra Purī; and Īśvara Purī, Advaita Prabhu, and Nityānanda Prabhu (all disciples of Mādhavendra Purī). We worship Īśvara Purī's disciple, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who delivered the entire universe by granting the gift of *kṛṣṇa-prema* (pure love of Kṛṣṇa).

*kali-kaluṣa-santaptaṃ karuṇā-sindhunā svayam
mahāprabhu-svarūpa-śrī-dāmodaraḥ priyaṅkaraḥ
rūpa-sanātanau dvau ca gosvāmī pravaraau prabhu
śrī-jīvo-raghunāthaś ca rūpa-priyo mahā-matiḥ
tat-priyaḥ kavirāja-śrī-kṛṣṇadāsa prabhur mataḥ
tasya priyottamaḥ śrīlaḥ sevāparo narottamaḥ
tad-anugata-bhaktaḥ śrī-viśvanāthaḥ sad-uttamaḥ
tad-āsaktaś ca gauḍīya-vedāntācārya-bhūṣaṇam
vidyā-bhūṣaṇa-pāda śrī-baladeva sadāśrayaḥ
vaiṣṇava-sārvabhauma śrī-jagannātha-prabhus tathā*

*śrī-māyāpura-dhāmnas tu nirdeṣṭa sajjana-priyaḥ
śuddha-bhakti-pracārasya mūli-bhūta ihottamaḥ
śrī-bhaktivinodo devas tat-priyatvena viśrutaḥ
tad-abhinna suhr̥d-varyo mahā-bhāgavatottamaḥ
śrī-gaura-kīśoraḥ sākṣād-vairāgyam vighrahāśritam*

Svarūpa Dāmodara was Mahāprabhu's dear servant, as were the two best of the Gosvāmīs, Rūpa and Sanātana. Dear to Rūpa were Śrī Jīva and the wise Śrī Raghunātha. Very dear to him was Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, and most dear to him was Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, so devoted in service. The great saint Śrīla Viśvanātha was devoted to him, and the great *ācārya* of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, was attached to Viśvanātha. The emperor of the Vaiṣṇavas, Śrī Jagannātha Prabhu, followed him; he pointed out the birthplace of the Lord in Māyāpura and thus became dear to all the saintly people. Foremost as the very root of the propagation of pure devotion stands Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, known as most dear to Śrī Jagannātha Prabhu. His inseparable intimate associate, the topmost *mahā-bhāgavata*, was Śrī Gaura-kīśora, the very embodiment of renunciation.

*māyāvādi-ku-siddhānta-dhvānta-rāśi-nirāsakaḥ
viśuddha-bhakti-siddhāntaiḥ svānta-padma-vikāśakaḥ
devo 'sau paramahaṁso mattaḥ śrī-gaura-kīrtane
pracārācārya-kāryeṣu nirantaram-mahotsukaḥ
hari-priya-janair gamya om viṣṇupāda-pūrvakaḥ
śrī-pādo bhakti-siddhānta sarasvatī mahodayaḥ*

His disciple, Om Viṣṇupāda Śrīpāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, beloved of the Vaiṣṇavas, dispelled the false doctrine of *māyāvāda* and firmly established *śuddha-bhakti*. As a paramahaṁsa, he tirelessly spread *gaura-kīrtana*, teaching and exemplifying proper Vaiṣṇava *ācāra*.

*kṛṣṇa-bhakti jagad-vyāpī sthāpitaḥ sindhu-pāraḡaḥ
svāmī śrī-bhaktivedāntaḥ suprasiddhaḥ sārāsvataḥ
gauḍīya śāstra-nipuṇo bhakti-rasa pāraṅgataḥ*

*sārasvatas tu devaḥ śrī-bhaktirakṣaka śrīdharaḥ
mahā-bhāgavato vṛddho nāma-rasa-parāyaṇaḥ
śrī-bhakti-pramoda purīḥ sārasvatas tathaiva ca*

Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda, is a renowned disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who crossed the oceans to plant *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* across the world. Alongside him stands Śrīla Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī, a master of Gauḍīya *śāstra* and connoisseur of *bhakti-rasa*, who is also a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Goswāmī, a highly advanced *mahā-bhāgavata* always immersed in the nectar of the Holy Name, is also a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

*viśuddha-bhakti niṣpāde sūkṣma-darśīś ca jāgṛtaḥ
apasiddhānta-haro siṃhaḥ sārasvata-jana-priyaḥ
bhaktivedānta-śiṣyaś ca rūpānuga sevonmukhaḥ
jagad-guru svāmī śrī-bhakti-gaurava nṛsiṃhakaḥ*

Awake and keen-sighted in executing pure devotion; a lion who dispels deviant conclusions; dear to the disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī; a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī, always inclined to the service of the Rūpānuga line, thus is Jagadguru Svāmī Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅha.

*sarve te gaura-vaṃśyaś ca paramahaṃsa-vigrahāḥ
vayaṃ ca praṇatā dāsās tad-ucchiṣṭa-grahāgrahāḥ*

All of these great personalities are *paramahaṃsas* belonging to Śrī Gaurāṅga's lineage, and we, as humble servants, are eager to accept their remnants.





INTRODUCTION

Sampradāya Rahasya

by Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāja

(Adapted from a talk recorded on 28th August 1981, Navadwīpa)

People guided by their own *saṁskāras* and mental imagination, do not understand what is real spiritual truth. For them the physical continuation itself is the *guru-parampara*. But those that have got their spiritual eyes awakened, they will observe, for example, what was there in the first *ācārya*, is not to be found in the second or the third. Then again the same standard of purity is found in the fourth *ācārya*.

It is blind tenacity to stick to the physical, to make much of the physical thing, the material thing. We must make ourselves free from material contamination and try to understand the value of spiritual truth. To truly understand a spiritual lineage we must give up the material consideration.

In the Bhāgavatam we find that different philosophies, including atheistic philosophies, emerge due to variegatedness of material nature (*prakṛti vaicitryāt*), and the same is passed down through tradition (*pāramparyeṇa*). Therefore, it should be acknowledged that the material flow will always tamper with the spiritual current, disturbing its purity. The Lord also says in the Bhagavad Gītā (4.2), *sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa*, “With the passage of time, the teaching has nearly been lost.”

To counteract such interruptions, attempts are always made to keep up the purity of the current. It is a living thing, not a dead thing. The vigilant eye is always there. Whenever necessary,

help comes from above, to keep the current pure and in good flow. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa has to come Himself, and sometimes He sends His devotee, to reinstate the current to its former pure state. In the Bhagavad Gita 4.7, Kṛṣṇa says—

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam śrjāmy aham*

O Bhārata, whenever there is a decline of religion and an uprising of irreligion, I personally appear.

Physical continuation is not a safe proposal. It is admitted that all may not come to the same standard, and therefore some will have to be rejected. But if the standard is found elsewhere substantially, that may be taken in. Moreover, the spiritual line may not always be a continuous bodily succession, and sometimes there can even be a gap of several generations.

We see such interruptions even in physical lines. Prāhlāda is a devotee, whereas his son, Virocana, was a demon, but his grandson, Bali, was again a devotee. Even in the history of scientific research, we find that what Galileo began was later developed by Newton, and much later still, Einstein pushed that understanding even further. An expert will notice and mark the development of the research in an interrupted line of these personalities. In a spiritual line also we can see such interruptions due to the influence of *māyā*.

We are to trace only the spiritual current of knowledge. Wherever Kṛṣṇa appears I must run towards that side. My interest is with Him. Not that, “Why did Kṛṣṇa appear here and why not there?” If I have got real appreciation and a capacity to appreciate the real thing, I must go wherever Kṛṣṇa appears. Wherever I feel the presence of my Lord in an intense way I should be attracted to that side. If I am blind that is another case. Then I must suffer for my inability. But any person who has the ability to understand these things, and has got the proper insight, will run towards wherever he can get some help.

There is a Bengali proverb, “Which is more useful — the nose or the breath?” The intelligent section will say that the breath is more useful than the nose. We want the substance, not the form.

Once a *brāhmaṇa* was given a choice between Ganges water in an earthen pot and ordinary water in a golden pot. The *brāhmaṇa* in the story chooses the Ganges water in the earthen pot. Not the container, but the substance contained should be given real importance. I am not this physical body. My own identification should be challenged if I am much addicted to the physical *guru-parampara*. Who am I? Am I this physical body? I am spiritual, therefore I shall have to see with spiritual eyes.

Persons thirsty for spiritual truth will accept the pure line wherever it may appear. Even if it appears in the Rāmānuja *sampradāya*, or Madhva *sampradāya*, or Nimbārka *sampradāya*—we will accept it for our own interest. We find that Rāmānuja has made substantial contributions to Vaiṣṇavism, Madhvācārya has given sufficient contribution to Vaiṣṇavism, Nimbārka has also done so. As much help as we can get from them substantially, we will accept that, and we may even reject persons in our own *sampradāya* if they have deviated from the real teachings.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa was very akin to Madhva *sampradāya*, but when he came in connection with Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura, he showed much interest towards Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. He has also written commentaries on the Bhāgavatam, Jīva Gosvāmi’s Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā, and many others. His enlightened thought is a valuable contribution to our *sampradāya*. We cannot dismiss him, and he is our guru.

Whereas, the *sahajiyas* and the so-called physical current-keepers are in the line of Mahāprabhu in a physical sense. But they are tampering, mutilating and enveloping the real

teachings of Mahāprabhu. They are not considered even though in a physical sense they are in the line of Mahāprabhu, Rūpa, Sanātana and others. When we go to judge the very spirit of the thing, we see that they are nowhere; they are only a line of physical imitation.

First we must understand who is a guru and then the question of *guru-parampara*. Is guru a body? Is guru just a renunciate? Is guru a formal thief, a hypocrite appearing like a *sādhu* but doing something else within? The first question of importance is who is a *guru*, and then a chain of them coming down, the light coming down, the knowledge coming down in support of divine love. Wherever I find support for that, I must bow my head to those places and make progress. I'm not a formalist, or a materialist, but a substantialist. Not a fashionist, or imitationist, but a realist. That should be our temperament. The guide who has exclusive devotion to Kṛṣṇa, to Mahāprabhu, he is my *guru*; whatever he may be externally.

*kiba vipra, kiba nyasi sudra kene naya
yei krsna-tattva vetta sei guru haya*

Whether a person is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsi*, or a *śudra*, if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa, he is to be accepted as *guru*. (Caitanya-caritamṛta Madhya-līlā, 8.127)

I must be thankful to those that are helping my spiritual understanding in the real sense, not just in a formal way. Sometimes it is possible that my uncle may be my guardian instead of my father. The line of interest, that is to be considered. That has got the most importance.

Śāstra-guru, śikṣa-guru, dikṣa-guru, nāma-guru—wherever any contribution to the line, by the will of Kṛṣṇa, has been found, taking them all together, a real line has been given to us in keeping with the flow of the real truth of the highest type in this world.

Particularly, wherever there is devotion and the correct consideration about Mahāprabhu, our guru is to be traced there. The *guru* is not in the physical form. The *guru* is the embodiment of the pure thought and understanding that Mahāprabhu has imparted to save us.

A *śikṣa-guru parampara* has thus been given in this way by our Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. This is, of course, the main line, and it should be accepted in a general way. But, in reality, all genuine Vaiṣṇavas are more or less our *śikṣa-gurus*.

Mahāprabhu told Rāmānanda Rāya, “By the grace of Kṛṣṇa you have acquired that spiritual wealth; therefore, show it to Me. You are the true capitalist of this divine treasure, and I have come to reveal to the world your wealth. Do not hesitate—come forward and show it.” Rāmānanda replied humbly, “It is Your wealth, and You are compelling me to bring it forth. I am only an instrument in Your hands. Whatever You desire me to say, I shall say.” In this way, the dialogue between Mahāprabhu and Rāmānanda continued.

Rāmānanda is not in the *guru-parampara*, but still we are so much indebted to him in one sense. He is more than many others who are in the *parampara*. Rādhārāṇī is also not in the *guru-parampara*. Should we dismiss Her? Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hare Kṛṣṇa! Gaura-Haribol! Gaura-Haribol! Nitai! Nitai!





Sampradāya Praṇālī

by Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Goswāmī Mahārāja

(First published in *Caitanya Vāñī* 19.5, pp. 84–89.)

The *sampradāya* institution has existed in this holy land of Bhārata since time immemorial. The word *sampradāya* is a passive nominal formation from the Sanskrit verb root, *sam-pra-dā* ('to hand down'). Lexicographers define it as 'the instruction that is passed down in a line of spiritual masters.' This is also called disciplic succession or *guru-paramparā*, and implies that such instruction in spiritual truth is passed down personally from teacher to disciple in a direct chain (*śrauta-paramparā*).

Other synonyms for this concept include *āmnāya*, *nigama*, and the *Veda*. The great sage, *Vyāsadeva*, uses the term *āmnāya* in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*bhārata-vyapadeśena
āmnāyārthaḥ pradarśitaḥ*

'By means of the *Mahābhārata*, I revealed the ancient knowledge of the *Vedas* as I received it through disciplic succession.' (SB 1.4.29)

The word *āmnāya* is derived from the verb root *mnā* combined with the prefix *ā*. Two definitions are given for this term: 'that by which religious instruction is given' or 'that by which religious teachings are repeated over and over again.'

The same word is sometimes found preceded by the *sam-*prefix (*samāmnāya*).* Our most worshipable Śrīla Prabhupāda

* *āmnāyate samyag abhyasyate athavā āmnāyate upadiśyate dharmo'neneti āmnāyah*

has explained this term in his Gauḍīya-bhāṣya to Caitanya-bhāgavata (2.1.255):*

‘Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī explains the word *samāmnāya* in his commentary to the Bhāgavatam (10.47.33) as meaning the Veda. The most perfect teaching is the one that directs us to the supreme abode of Viṣṇu. It is that which the sages have repeated over and over again, and that by which the supreme religious teaching is given.’

Viśvanātha Cakravartī has defined *samāmnāya* as complete knowledge (*sampūrṇo vedaḥ*). The word veda is defined as that scripture which gives us knowledge of God and religion. It is explained as follows in the Vedānta: ‘that divine instruction or word of God that brings knowledge of *dharma* and Brahman into human society is called Veda.’† Something similar is stated in the Purāṇas: ‘The Veda is the scripture that was spoken by Lord Brahmā and explains *dharma*.’‡

The root meaning of the word *nigama* is ‘emanation’ because the four Vedas emanated from Lord Brahmā’s four mouths. Another definition breaks the word down into two parts: the prefix *ni* meaning *nitarām* or ‘forever’ and *gama* meaning ‘explain’ (from the causative form of the verb ‘to go’); thus the scripture that forever explains the supreme truth of Brahman is called *nigama* or Veda.

The following verse is found in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad:

*brahmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva
viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā*

* *kṛṣṇera bhajana kāhi samyag āmnāya, ādi-madhya-ante kṛṣṇa-bhajana-bujhāya*, ‘The most perfect strands of the Vedic literature as passed down in disciplic succession direct us to worship Kṛṣṇa. From beginning to middle to end, they explain only the worship of Kṛṣṇa.’

† *dharma-brahma-pratipādaka-pauruṣeya-vākyam vedaḥ*.

‡ *brahma-mukha-nirgata-dharma-jñāpaka-śāstram vedaḥ*.

*sa brahma-vidyāṁ sarva-vidyā-pratiṣṭhāṁ
atharvāya jyeṣṭha-putrāya prāha*

‘Brahmā appeared as the first of all the gods. He created the universe and continues to protect the earth. He taught the knowledge of Brahman [that he had received from the Lord], which is the basis of all learning, to his oldest son Atharva.’ (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.1.1)

Then, further on in the same Upaniṣad, this statement is found:

*tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak
praśānta-cittāya śamānvitāya
yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyam
provāca tām tattvato brahma-vidyām*

‘The learned spiritual master who has realized Kṛṣṇa should properly instruct the peaceful and self-controlled disciple in the knowledge of Brahman, i.e., knowledge combined with love for Kṛṣṇa, by which he can be attained.’ (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.13)

The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the essence of all the Veda and Vedānta. There, Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava,

*kālena naṣṭā pralaye vāñīyam veda-samjñitā
mayādau brahmaṇe proktā dharmo yasyām mad-ātmakaḥ
tena proktā sva-putrāya manave pūrvajāya sa
tato bhṛgv-ādāyo gṛhṇan sapta-brahma maharṣayaḥ*

‘In the course of time, the Vedic message was lost in the great flood of universal destruction. Then I once again spoke this religious knowledge about myself to Brahmā, who told it to his oldest son Manu. Then Bhṛgu and the seven great sages received it from him.’ (SB 11.14.3–4)

This topmost religion related to the Lord himself has been kept intact to the present day through the institution of disciplic succession, the holy chain of the *sampradāya*. Outside of the

sampradāya, it is difficult if not impossible to come into contact with these pure teachings. That is why the Padma Purāṇa states:

*sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ
ataḥ kalau bhaviṣyanti catvāraḥ sampradāyinaḥ
śrī-brahmā-rudra-śanakāḥ vaiṣṇavāḥ kṣiti-pāvanāḥ
catvāras te kalau bhavyā hy utkale puruṣottamat*

‘Any *mantra* that does not come in disciplic succession is considered to be fruitless. Therefore, four divine individuals will appear in the age of Kali to found disciplic schools. The founders of these four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* are Lakṣmī or Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra and Sanaka Ṛṣi, and the *ācāryas* of the Kali Age who follow their lines will appear in the holy city of Puruṣottama in Orissa.’

The great Gauḍīya *ācārya*, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa quotes these two verses in his book, *Prameya-ratnāvalī*, citing the Padma Purāṇa as their source. In the 1927 edition of the *Prameya-ratnāvalī*, two commentaries were published: *Kāntimālā* by Kṛṣṇadeva Vedānta-vāgiśa and *Prabhā* by Akṣaya Kumāra Śāstrī.* Both these commentaries confirm that they come from the Padma Purāṇa. Narahari Cakravartī (also known as Ghanaśyāma Dāsa), the son of Jagannātha Cakravartī, a disciple of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, also quoted these two verses in his *Bhakti-ratnākara* (5.2111–2) and attributed them to the Padma Purāṇa.

Finally, there is the testimony of Kavi Karṇapūra, also known as Purī Dāsa,† the youngest son of Mahāprabhu’s

* Calcutta (Shyam Bazar): Sanskrit Sahitya Parishad, 1927.

† Śivānanda Sena had three sons, Caitanya Dāsa, Śrī Rāma Dāsa, and Śrī Purī Dāsa. Purī Dāsa was given the name Kavi Karṇapūra by Lord Caitanya himself, when at the age of seven years, he recited a Sanskrit poem he had written himself (CC 3.16.65–75). It is said that this extraordinary ability came as the result of sucking Mahāprabhu’s toes as a baby (CC 3.12.50). Karṇapūra’s guru was Śrīnātha Cakravartī.

intimate associate Śivānanda Sena, who paid his obeisances to Mahāprabhu, calling him the ‘the family’s worshipable Deity’ (*kulādhidaivata**). In his Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā (21–22), Karṇapūra both quotes a part of these verses and attributes it to the Padma Purāṇa:

*prādurbhūtāḥ kali-yuge catvāraḥ sampradāyikāḥ
śrī-brahmā-rudra-sanaka-hvayāḥ padme yathā smṛtāḥ
ataḥ kalau bhaviṣyanti catvāraḥ sampradāyinaḥ
śrī-brahmā-rudra-sanakā vaiṣṇavāḥ kṣiti-pāvanāḥ*

‘The founders of four sampradāyas appeared in the Kali-yuga. According to the Padma Purāṇa, they were Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra and Sanaka Ṛṣi. There it is said, ‘Therefore the Vaiṣṇavas, Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra and Sanaka Ṛṣi, will appear in the Age of Kali to purify the world by establishing the four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*.’

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī, an associate of Mahāprabhu and disciple of Vakrēśvara Paṇḍita, also accepted this concept of the disciplic line and the principle of four distinct Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*.

In his translation and commentary on the Prameya-ratnāvalī, our most worshipable Śrīla Prabhupāda had this to say about these verses:

‘The four Vaiṣṇava disciplic lines trace their origins to these original spiritual masters: Lakṣmī, Brahmā, Rudra and the four Kumāras: Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana, and Sanat Kumāra. In the Age of Kali, four great founder-ācāryas

Karṇapūra wrote ten books including Caitanya-carita-mahā-kāvya, Caitanya-candrodaya, Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū, Alaṅkāra-kaustubha, Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā, Bṛhad-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā, Āryā-śataka, Caitanya-sahasra-nāma, Śrī-keśavāṣṭaka and a commentary on the Tenth Canto of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

* *devo naḥ kula-daivataṁ vijayatām caitanya-kṛṣṇo hariḥ*. Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū 1.3.

aligned themselves with these original spiritual preceptors and spread their teachings. Each of them began their preaching mission out of Puruṣottama-kṣetra in Orissa. Maṭhas representing each of the four sampradāyas had a strong presence in Purī as recently as a century ago. At certain times, one or the other of them becomes stronger and takes the lead in performing spiritual welfare work for the conditioned souls of this world.’

*rāmānujam śrīḥ svīcakre madhvācāryaṁ caturmukhaḥ
śrī-viṣṇu-svāminam rudro nimbādiyaṁ catuḥsanaḥ*

‘Lakṣmī accepted Rāmānujācārya as her representative; Brahmā selected Madhvācārya. Śiva chose Viṣṇu Svāmin and the four Kumāras, Nimbārkācārya.’ (Prameya-ratnāvalī 1.7)

Our worshipable predecessor, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, also wrote on this subject in Jaiva-Dharma (Chapter 13). There, in response to the question, ‘Why is there a disciplic succession?’ he writes:

‘In this world, many people are contaminated by the impersonalist doctrine and thus fall into a life of sin. If there were no disciplic succession, or institution of devotees free of this contamination, then it would be very difficult for ordinary people to find saintly association. This is why the Padma Purāṇa tells us, ‘Any *mantra* that does not come in disciplic succession is considered to be fruitless. Therefore, four divine individuals will appear in the age of Kali to establish disciplic schools.’ Of these four schools, the oldest is the Brahmā-sampradāya. This disciplic succession has existed since the time of Lord Brahmā and is still strong. Whatever scriptures—whether Veda, Vedānta or other—are taught in a particular school maintain their original form; no interpolations are possible in these texts. Thus there can be no doubt about the mantras that are found

in the books of these ancient schools. Thus a disciplic succession of saintly persons is an absolute necessity for human society and that is why the institution has existed since the earliest times.’

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura continues his discussion of the subject by asking the question, ‘Is the list of names of spiritual masters in the disciplic succession given without any breaks?’ His answer: ‘From time to time, only the more important spiritual masters’ names are included in these lists [1, p. 213-214].’

Every disciple has the duty to remember the names of the spiritual masters in his disciplic succession as a part of his daily meditation. This is confirmed by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his Prameya-ratnāvalī (1.4):

*bhavati vicintya viduṣāṁ niravakārā guru-paramparā nityam
ekāntitvaṁ siddhyati yayodayati yena hari-toṣaḥ*

‘The learned disciple should daily remember the entire flawless disciplic succession. From them comes single-minded devotion, and from such devotion, the pleasure of Lord Hari.’

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

‘The disciple purifies his own character by hearing and discussing the exemplary lives of the previous spiritual masters. As his character is purified, he identifies himself as a servant of the pure devotees. He thus receives the blessings of the Lord to engage in bhajana without distractions. Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura says that Nityānanda’s lotus feet are eternal, and the servant of Lord Nityānanda is also eternal. When the living being abandons his materialistic way of thinking and takes shelter of the transcendental lotus feet of the spiritual master, he attains the eternal spiritual world and his greatest good.’ (Gauḍīya-bhāṣya)

Baladeva gives the list of names of spiritual masters (*prāṇālī*) in his disciplic succession in the Prameya-ratnāvalī:

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-brahmā-devarṣi-bādarāyaṇa-saṁjñakān
śrī-madhva-śrī-padmanābha-śrīman-narahari-mādhavan
akṣobhya-jayatīrtha śrī-jñānasindhu-dayānidhin
śrī-vidyānidhi-rājendra-jayadharmam kramād vayam
puruṣottama-brahmaṇya-vyāsātīrthāś ca saṁstumah
tato lakṣmīpatiṁ śrīman-mādhavendraṁ ca bhaktitaḥ
tac-chiṣyān śrīśvara-dvaita-nityānandan jagad-gurūn
devaṁ īśvara-śiṣyaṁ śrī-caitanyaṁ ca bhajāmahe
śrī-kṛṣṇa-prema-dānena yena nistāritam jagat*

‘I praise Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Brahmā, Devarṣi Nārada and Vyāsa; Madhvācārya Padmanābhācārya, Narahari, Mādhava, Akṣobhya, Jayatīrtha, Jñānasindhu, Dayānidhi, Vidyānidhi, Rājendra, Jayadharmā, Puruṣottama, Brahmaṇya, and Vyāsātīrtha. Then I worship with devotion Lakṣmīpati and Mādhavendra, whose disciples were Īśvara Purī, Advaita Ācārya, and Nityānanda, who acted as spiritual masters to the universe. I worship Lord Caitanya, who became the disciple of Īśvara Purī and saved the world with the gift of love for Kṛṣṇa.’ (Prameya-ratnāvalī 1.7)

And Kavi Karṇapūra described the same Brahmā-sampradāya in a slightly different way in the Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā:

*paravyomeśvarasyāsīt śiṣyo brahmā jagat-patiḥ
tasya śiṣyo nārado’bhūt vyāsaś tasyāpa śiṣyatām
śuko vyāsasya śiṣyatvaṁ prāpto jñāna-vabodhanāt
vyāsāl labdha-kṛṣṇa-dīkṣo madhvācāryo mahā-yaśaḥ
tasya śiṣyo’bhavat padmanābhācāryo mahāśayaḥ
tasya śiṣyo naraharis tac-chiṣyo mādhava-dvijaḥ
akṣobhyas tasya śiṣyo’bhūt tac-chiṣyo jayatīrthakaḥ
tasya śiṣyo jñāna-sindhus tasya śiṣyo mahānidhiḥ
vidyānidhis tasya śiṣyo rājendras tasya sevakaḥ
jayadharmā munis tasya śiṣyo yad-gaṇa-madhyatāḥ*

*śrīmad-viṣṇu-purī yas tu bhakti-ratnāvalī-kṛtiḥ
jayadharmasya śiṣyo'bhūd brahmaṇyaḥ puruṣottamaḥ
vyāsatīrthas tasya śiṣyo yaś cakre viṣṇu-saṁhitām
śrīman lakṣmīpatis tasya śiṣyo bhakti-rasa-āśrayaḥ
tasya śiṣyo mādhavendro yad-dharmaḥ ayam pravartitaḥ
tasya śiṣyo'bhavat śrīman īśvarākhyā-purī-yatīḥ
kalāyāmāsa śṛṅgāraṁ yaḥ śṛṅgāra-phalātmakaḥ
advaitaṁ kalāyāmāsa dāsya-sakhye phale ubhe
īśvarākhyā-purīm gaura urarīkṛtya gaurave
jagad āplāvayāmāsa prakṛtā-prakṛtātmakam*

‘Brahmā, the master of this universe, was the disciple of the lord of the spiritual world. His disciple was Nārada and Vyāsa became the disciple of Nārada. Śuka became the disciple of Vyāsa through the awakening of spiritual knowledge from him. Madhvācārya took initiation in the Kṛṣṇa mantra from Vyāsa. His disciple was Padmanābhācārya, whose disciple was Narahari, who was followed by Mādhava Dvija. Akṣobhya was his disciple, then Jayatīrtha, Jñānasindhu, Mahānidhi, Vidyānidhi and Rājendra followed. Jayadharmā Muni was one of Rājendra’s many disciples and Viṣṇu Purī, the author of Bhakti-ratnāvalī and Brahmaṇya Puruṣottama, became his disciples. Vyāsatīrtha, the author of Viṣṇu-saṁhitā was the disciple of Puruṣottama. Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha, a reservoir of devotion, was the disciple of Vyāsatīrtha. Mādhavendra Purī was the disciple of Lakṣmīpati, and it is by him that this religion was founded. His disciple, the sannyāsī Īśvara Purī, took up the mood of conjugal devotion, while Advaita Ācārya [also the disciple of Mādhavendra] took up the moods of servitude and friendship. Gaura accepted Īśvara Purī as his guru, and then flooded the material and spiritual worlds [with love].’(Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā 23–32)*

* These verses are also quoted in Bhakti-ratnākara 5.2149–2162.

Though there are some slight differences, one can see that these two accounts of the disciplic succession through Madhvācārya to Caitanya Mahāprabhu are substantially the same.* Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī accepted the same disciplic succession. Therefore, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote in his Mahāprabhura Śikṣā,

[In the Tattva-sandarbhā,] Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī first established the authenticity of received knowledge, and then that the Purāṇas fall into this category of authoritative sources of knowledge. After that, he showed that the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was the most authoritative of all the Purāṇas. In order to prove the superiority of the Bhāgavatam, he cited statements by Brahmā, Nārada, Vyāsa and Śukadeva, as well as texts written by Vijayadharmā, Brahmaṇya Tīrtha, and Jagad-guru Madhvācārya. From all these statements, it is evident that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu belonged to the Brahmā-sampradāya, as it descends through Madhvācārya. Kavi Karṇapūra confirmed this line of disciplic succession in his Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā, and the writer of the commentary on the Vedānta, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, did so again in his Prameya-ratnāvalī. Is there any doubt that those who do not accept this line of disciplic succession

* Nava-ratna, an even older text by Mādhavendra Purī's disciple Harirām Vyāsa, who lived in Vṛndāvana and was a contemporary of the Gosvāmīs, also contains a list of *ācāryas* in the Brahmā-sampradāya. It is given as a citation from Śrī-guru-prāṇalikoddeśa:

*śrī-kṛṣṇo bhagavān brahmā nārada bādarāyaṇaḥ
śrī-madhvaḥ padmanābhas ca nṛharir mādhas ca saḥ
akṣobhyo jayatīrthas ca jñānasindhur dayānidhiḥ
vidyānidhis ca rājendro jayadharmā-munis tathā
puruṣottamo brahmaṇyo vyāsatīrthas ca tasya hi
lakṣmīpatis tataḥ śrīman mādhavendra-yatiśvaraḥ
īśvaras tasya mādhaso rādhā-kṛṣṇa-priyo bhavāt
tasyāham karuṇā-pātram hari-rāmābhido bhavam*

This list corresponds in every detail with that of Baladeva. Nava-ratnam 1.5–8.

are the principal enemies of the followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu?’

In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava world today, there are a few short-sighted individuals who wish to disavow any connection to the Brahmā-Madhva *sampradāya* and consider the Gauḍīya disciplic succession to have come into being with Mahāprabhu himself. But we have to ask the question why Mahāprabhu accepted Mādhavendra Purī into his spiritual lineage? Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura took up this question in his Mahāprabhura Śikṣā as well:

‘Nimbārka Ācārya’s doctrine of ‘difference and non-difference’ (*bhedābheda*) was inadequate. With the advent of Lord Caitanya and his teachings, the Vaiṣṇava world finally received this doctrine in its complete form. Madhvācārya accepted the idea of the Lord’s eternal form of consciousness and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*) and because this is the basis of the *acintya-bhedābheda* concept, Mahāprabhu accepted the disciplic line that came from Madhva.

‘Previously, the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* had some technical points of difference in their teachings and this resulted in the establishment of different religious schools. Only with the advent of the Supreme Truth himself in the form of Lord Caitanya, could the lacunae in these various doctrines be corrected as a result of his omniscience. Mahāprabhu combined Nimbārka’s ‘oneness in difference’ with the concept of the *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha* of the Supreme Lord found in Madhva’s teachings, Rāmānuja’s concept of the Lord’s energy (*śakti*), Viṣṇu Svāmin’s idea of purified non-dualism (*śuddhādvaita*) and the dedication of the Lord to His own devotees (*tādīya-sarvasvata*). By this most scientific doctrine, which he named *acintya-bhedābheda*, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu showered his mercy on the entire universe.

‘In a very short time, there will exist only one school of Vaiṣṇava teaching, which will be named the Brahmā-sampradāya. All other Vaiṣṇava schools will come into the fold of that one disciplic succession.’

Some modern researchers have not been able to find the verses attributed to the Padma Purāṇa that have been quoted above and so conclude that they are interpolations. No doubt motivated by envy of the Vaiṣṇava religion, they thus minimize the necessity for a disciplic succession instructed in these verses. But this understanding is completely illogical.

Our beloved spiritual master, who has now entered the eternal pastimes of the Lord, accepted the disciplic line given by Baladeva and the concept of the Bhāgavata-paramparā. This is the disciplic succession that we meditate on every single day. Some people do not wish to admit that Mādhavendra Purī was ever a member of the Madhva *sampradāya*. On this matter, Śrīla Prabhupāda had the following to say:

‘The disciplic succession of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is the one given by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. The spiritual masters of the Madhva line are *sannyāsīs* in the single-staff (*eka-daṇḍī*) tradition, most of whom take the title ‘Tīrtha.’ They are generally given the name Śrī Madhva, followed by their *sannyāsa* name, and then the title, Tīrtha. Mādhavendra Purī was a *sannyāsī*, but his title was ‘Purī.’ However, this does not mean that he could not have taken *sannyāsa* in the Purī line of *sannyāsīs* and still have received *pāñcarātrika dīkṣā* in the Madhva line.

‘According to the Bhakti-ratnākara (5.2271–2332), Nityānanda Prabhu was a disciple of Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha. All the *ācāryas* of the main maṭha of the Tattvavādīs of the Madhva *sampradāya* in Uttarāḍī (Uḍupī) have the Tīrtha title. Thus some of the leaders of the Sahajiyās doubt the connection of the Gauḍīyas to the Madhva line. But their doubts are

a result of their own ignorance. For the most part, the descriptions of the disciplic succession found in Gaura-ṅoddeśa-dīpikā, in the works of Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī, in the Bhakti-ratnākara and the Prameya-ratnāvalī are in agreement with each other.’ (Gauḍīya-bhāṣya to Prameya-ratnāvalī)

Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha was the thirteenth guru in descendance from Madhva, otherwise known as Ānanda Tīrtha. In the Bhakti-ratnākara, Nityānanda Prabhu is said to have been his disciple, whereas the Prameya-ratnāvalī says that he took initiation from Mādhavendra Purī. The one or two other discrepancies in these guru lists are of this type.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s lineage is further given as it follows on after Nityānanda Prabhu: One of Nityānanda Prabhu’s followers was Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita of Kālnā, who in Kṛṣṇa-līlā was one of the twelve Gopas, Subala Sakhā. Gaurīdāsa had a disciple named Hṛdaya Caitanya, who in turn initiated Dukhi Kṛṣṇa Dāsa or Śyāmānanda Dāsa, who was given instruction by Jīva Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana. Śyāmānanda’s disciple was Rasikānanda Murāri, whose grandson and disciple was Nāyānānanda Deva Gosvāmī. His disciple was Rādhā-Dāmodara, a great scholar born in Kanyākubja (Kanauj) who wrote the well-reputed text, Vedānta-śyāmantaka [2]. Baladeva, who won renown as the Bhāṣyakāra for his elaborate exposition of the Vedānta-sūtra according to the Gauḍīya understanding, was initiated by Rādhā-Dāmodara Gosvāmī.

Śrīla Prabhupāda adds,

‘Śrī Uddhava Dāsa or Uddhāra Dāsa was the follower of the author of the Govinda-bhāṣya, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. Uddhava Dāsa, Madhusūdana Dāsa and Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, all of whom adopted the lifestyle of the *paramahansa*, followed him in preaching the path of pure devotion through their example. In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava

sampradāya, these saints are the objects of the greatest faith and reverence.’

This Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, who was known widely as *vaiṣṇava-sarvabhauma* or ‘universal monarch of the Vaiṣṇavas,’ is our predecessor ācārya, who gave direction to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu recognized the Bhāgavatam to be the genuine commentary on the Vedānta and thus considered it unnecessary to write a separate explanation of the Brahma-sūtras. The Garuḍa-purāṇa in particular states that the Bhāgavatam is the explanation of the Vedānta-sūtra, the Mahābhārata and other historical epics; it gives the meaning of the Gāyatrī mantra and all the Vedic literature. However, there came a time when, by the wish of the Lord, the *ācāryas* of the Rāmānuja sampradāya in the Galtā village of Jaipur created a lot of trouble by denying the validity of the Gauḍīya school, which managed the service to the Govindajī deity in Jaipur, saying that it had no historical basis. They accused the Gauḍīyas of not having a tie to any one of the four Vaiṣṇava disciplic successions.

Though the King of Jaipur was a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava, he was troubled by their arguments. Word came to Viśvanātha Cakravartī in Vṛndāvana, who was the most prominent ācārya of the Gauḍīya school at the time. Due to his advanced age, however, Viśvanātha was unable to defend the *sampradāya*’s reputation, but sent his dear student, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and a disciple, Kṛṣṇadeva Sarvabhauma, in his place.

When the king saw these two poverty-stricken monks, he had his doubts that they would be able to debate with the learned scholars of the Rāmānuja sampradāya. However, his anxiety was soon dispelled when he witnessed the profound scholarship of the two ascetics. Nevertheless, it was decided that until the Gauḍīya school had a commentary of its own on the Vedānta, based on the three reliable sources (*prasthāna-*

traya) of scripture—the *śruti*, the *smṛti* and the *sūtras*, it would not be accepted as a legitimate *sampradāya*.

Baladeva asked the accusers for some time—seven days according to some, three months according to others—to write a Gauḍīya commentary on the Vedānta. He then went to the Govindajī temple and prayed earnestly to the Lord, ‘O Lord, O Govindajī! I am a follower of your dear companions, Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rūpa Gosvāmī. Please preserve their spiritual descendants and the honor of their line.’

On the first two nights, Baladeva received only minimal directions from the Lord and was not satisfied with what he had heard. On the third night, however, the Supreme Lord gave him his full mercy and reassured him that he would be able to achieve his goal. In a very short time, Baladeva completed writing his commentaries on the Upaniṣads, Vedānta-sūtra, Bhagavad-gītā and the Bhāgavatam. He named his exposition of the Vedānta-sūtra, Govinda-bhāṣya. This seems indeed appropriate, for it was by Lord Govindajī’s blessings and inspiration that Baladeva was able to accomplish this task.

The scholars of the other *sampradāyas* were astonished by the quality of Baladeva’s commentary and were mollified by it. As a result, all opposition to accepting the Gauḍīyas as a separate school or *sampradāya* stopped. This was the playful Lord Hari’s tricky way of bringing into existence a commentary on the Vedānta-sūtras that would give joy to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. It is said that whenever the Lord does anything, he accomplishes many purposes by it.*

We believe that Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, who was so blessed and dear to Lord Govinda, is sufficient authority to make an official statement on the disciplic succession and that his word should satisfy any honest and intelligent person that the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* is genuine.

* *eka līlāyā kareṇa prabhu kāryya pañca-śata* (CC 3.2.169).

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“Gaps” in the Paramparā

by Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅgha Mahārāja

Question: I have heard it said that there are some gaps in the list of names in the Gauḍīya paramparā and that some of the names given there are actually fictitious names of personalities that never really existed. Do you think this could be true?

Answer: In “Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā” Śrīla Kavi Karṇapūra lists the paramparā of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas from Lord Brahmā up to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as follows:

*tatra mādhvī sampradāyaḥ prastāvād atra likhyate
paravyomeśvarasyāsīt śiṣyo brahmā jagat-patīḥ
tasya śiṣyo nārado’bhūd vyāsaś tasyāpa śiṣyatām
śuko vyāsasya śiṣyatvaṁ prāpto jñāna-vabodhanāt
vyāsāl labdha-kṛṣṇa-dīkṣo madhvācārya mahā-yaśaḥ
tasya śiṣyo’bhavat padmanābhācārya mahāśayaḥ
tasya śiṣyo naraharis tac-chiṣyo mādharma-dvijāḥ
akṣobhyaś tasya śiṣyo’bhūt tac-chiṣyo jayatīrthakaḥ
tasya śiṣyo jñāna-sindhus tasya śiṣyo mahānidhiḥ
vidyānidhis tasya śiṣyo rājendras tasya sevakaḥ
jayadharmā munis tasya śiṣyo yad-gaṇa-madhyatāḥ
śrīmad-viṣṇu-purī yas tu bhakti-ratnāvalī-kṛtīḥ
jayadharmasya śiṣyo’bhūd brahmaṇyaḥ puruṣottamaḥ
vyāsātīrthas tasya śiṣyo yaś cakre viṣṇu-saṁhitām
śrīman lakṣmīpatis tasya śiṣyo bhakti-rasa-āśrayaḥ
tasya śiṣyo mādhavendro yad-dharmaḥ ayam pravartitaḥ
tasya śiṣyo’bhavat śrīman īśvarākhyā-purī-yatīḥ
kalāyāmāsa śṛṅgāraṁ yaḥ śṛṅgāra-phalātmakaḥ
advaitaṁ kalāyāmāsa dāsya-sakhye phale ubhe
īśvarākhyā-purīm gaura urarīkṛtya gaurave
jagad āplāvayāmāsa prakṛtā-prakṛtātmakam*

“I shall now begin this book by describing the disciplic succession descended from Śrīpāda Madhvācārya. Lord Brahmā, the creator of the universe became the disciple of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Nārāyaṇa. Brahmā’s disciple was Nārada. Nārada’s disciple was Vyāsa. Vyāsa then transmitted transcendental knowledge to his disciple Śukadeva. Śukadeva taught the same knowledge to his many disciples and grand-disciples in this world. The famous Madhvācārya received initiation from Vyāsa personally. Madhvācārya carefully studied all the Vedas from Vyāsa, and later wrote his book *Māyāvāda-śata-duṣaṇī*, where he proved that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Person, full of all transcendental qualities, and not the quality-less impersonal Brahman. Madhvācārya’s disciple was the exalted Padmanābhācārya. Padmanābhācārya’s disciple was Narahari. Narahari’s disciple was Mādhava-dvija. Mādhava-dvija’s disciple was Akṣobhya. Akṣobhya’s disciple was Jaya Tīrtha. Jaya Tīrtha’s disciple was Jñānasindhu. Jñānasindhu’s disciple was Mahānidhi. Mahānidhi’s disciple was Vidyānidhi. Vidyānidhi’s disciple was Rājendra. Rājendra’s disciple was Jayadharma Muni. Among Jayadharma Muni’s disciples was Śrīmān Viṣṇupurī, the famous author of the *Bhakti-ratnāvalī*. Another disciple of Jayadharma was Brāhmaṇa Puruṣottama. Puruṣottama’s disciple was Vyāsa Tīrtha, who wrote the famous book *Śrī Viṣṇu-saṁhitā*. Vyāsa Tīrtha’s disciple was Śrīmān Lakṣmīpati, who was like a great reservoir of the nectar of devotional service. Lakṣmīpati’s disciple was Mādhavendra Purī, a great preacher of devotional service. Mādhavendra Purī was the incarnation of a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* tree in the abode of Vraja. This tree bears as its fruits the mellows of servitude to Lord Kṛṣṇa, friendship with Lord Kṛṣṇa, parental love for Lord Kṛṣṇa, and conjugal love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. Mādhavendra Purī’s disciple was Śrīmān Īśvara Purī Svāmī. Īśvara Purī carefully understood the mellows of

conjugal love for Lord Kṛṣṇa, and was able to distribute that fruit to others. Śrī Advaita Ācārya displayed the sentiments of servitorship and friendship for the Lord, and Śrīmān Raṅga Purī manifested the sentiment of parental love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya accepted Śrīmān Īśvara Purī as His spiritual master. The Lord proceeded to flood the entire world with spontaneous transcendental love for Kṛṣṇa.” (Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā 22–25)

The above-mentioned disciplic succession given by Kavi Karṇapūra has been accepted by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and this is evident from the following statement:

Ei samasta vākyadvārā spaṣṭa pratīta haya ye, Śrī brahmā-sampradāyāi Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya-dāsādigānera guru-prāṇālī. Śrī Kavi Karṇapūra Gosvāmī ei anusāre dr̥ḍha kariyā svīya-kr̥ta ‘Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā’-yā guru-prāṇālier krama likhiyāchena. Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣyakāra Śrī Vidyābhūṣaṇa u sei prāṇālike sthira rakhiyāchena. Yāhāra ei prāṇālike asvikāra karena, tāhārā ye Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya-caraṇānucara-gaṇera pradhāna śatru, ihāte āra sandeha kī? “It is evident that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu belonged to the Brahmā-sampradāya, as it descends through Madhvācārya. Kavi Karṇapūra confirmed this line of disciplic succession in his Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā, and the writer of the commentary of the Vedānta, Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, did so again (in his Prameya-ratnāvalī). Is there any doubt that those who do not accept this line of disciplic succession are the principle enemies of the followers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya?” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura – Śrī Mahāprabhura-śikṣā, Ch. 2)

Bhaktivinoda further states in Chapter Two of Śrī Mahāprabhura-śikṣā that anyone who does not accept these statements is an atheist:

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya-sampradāya svikāra karata gopane guru-paramparā siddha-prāṇālī svikāra karena na, tāhārā kalira guptācāra. Ihāte sandeha ki? “Anyone who refuses to accept such statements is a promoter of atheism. Those who accept the authority of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya but secretly do not accept this disciplic succession of spiritual preceptors are actually agents of Kali. Can there be any doubt about this?” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura – Śrī Mahāprabhura-śikṣā, Ch. 2)

Considering the position of Śrīla Kavi Karṇapūra, it is highly unlikely he would have simply fabricated a list of names to make up the *paramparā* of Śrī Caitanya. Kavi Karṇapūra was the son of Śivānanda Sena and he was thus always associated with pure devotees and with the eternal associates of the Supreme Lord. The information that Kavi Karṇapūra gives us about the identities of Mahāprabhu’s associates in *Gaura-līlā* and their corresponding identities in *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* is extensive. It is therefore quite unlikely that having access to such confidential information as regards the eternal associates of the Lord that he would at the same time fabricate a fictitious *paramparā*.

As Kavi Karṇapūra has heard from senior devotees about the identities of Mahāprabhu’s associates, he similarly heard from them regarding the *paramparā*. In fact, although it may not be mentioned in any particular book, it is widely accepted that Śrī Caitanya heard about the *paramparā* of Mādhavendra Purī at the time of his initiation from Īśvara Purī, the disciple of Mādhavendra.

If what Kavi Karṇapūra had written in *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* regarding the Gauḍīya-sampradāya *paramparā* was indeed false—then the senior Vaiṣṇavas present on the planet at that time would indeed have objected to those statements. Yet such objections were never raised. On the contrary, the community of Vaiṣṇavas and pure devotees of Śrī Caitanya accepted the writings of Kavi Karṇapūra as bona fide transcendental literature.

Just as we have heard from our spiritual master about the lineage of our *paramparā*, so it has always been the tradition among Vaiṣṇavas that a spiritual master informs and enlightens his disciple regarding their *paramparā*.

The fact that there are also sometimes gaps in the *paramparā* list of names, does not mean that there is an actual break in the *paramparā*. This topic has been briefly explained by Bhaktivinoda in *Jaiva-dharma* as follows:

*sampradāya-prāṇālī ki sampūrṇa-rūpa rākha
haiyāche? madhye madhye ye sakala pradhāna ācārya
haiyāchena, tāhādera nāmā-sakala sampradāya-prāṇālīte
āchche.* “Is there a list of names of spiritual masters in the
paramparā given without any breaks? From time to time,
only the more important spiritual masters’ names are
included in these lists.” (*Jaiva-dharma* – Ch. 13)

Although envious persons or persons with a poor fund of knowledge are sometimes quick to criticize the Gauḍīya-sampradāya for such apparent breaks in their *paramparā*, the fact is that there are also apparent breaks in other recognized and established *sampradāyas* such as the Madhva-sampradāya and the Rāmānuja-sampradāya.

These apparent breaks are also acknowledged as existing by Madhva and Rāmānuja followers, but these apparent breaks are not considered as defects in their respective *sampradāyas*.

In the books *Sampradāya Paddhati* and *Maṇi-mañjarī* written by Hṛṣīkeśa Tīrtha and Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitācārya respectively (both direct disciples of Madhvācārya) the *paramparā* of the Madhva-sampradāya is given as follows:

Haṁsāvātāra, Brahmā, Catuḥsana, Durvāsā, Jñānasindhu Tīrtha, Garuḍavāhana Tīrtha, Kaivalya Tīrtha, Jñānīśa Tīrtha, Pāra Tīrtha, Satya-prājña Tīrtha, Prājña Tīrtha, Acyuta Prekṣa, and Madhvācārya.

The gap between Acyuta Prekṣa (the guru of Madhva) and Prājña Tīrtha (the previous *ācārya*) is approximately 400 years. The reason for this gap is explained that, during this time the Vaiṣṇavas in that area were being terrorized by the Nāgā Bābās, and other militant followers of Śaṅkarācārya. They had gone completely ‘underground’ as a result of it. After the time of Madhvācārya the social climate changed and the Vaiṣṇavas were able to resume their normal behavior and lived openly in society, establishing Maṭhas, keeping *paramparā* records, etc.

A similar gap, but this time of approximately 3,000 years, is found in the Rāmānuja-sampradāya. The recognized *paramparā* of the Rāmānuja-sampradāya from Viṣṇu up to Rāmānuja is as follows:

Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Viśvaksena, Āḷvārs, Nāthamuni,
Puṇḍarīkākṣa, Rāma Miśra, Yāmunācārya, and
Rāmānujācārya.

From the Āḷvārs (4000 BC to 2700 BC) to Nāthamuni (584 AD) there is a gap of more than 3,000 years. Despite this apparent gap the Rāmānuja *paramparā* is accepted by all Vaiṣṇava scholars as a *bona fide* sampradāya. Also, it has been noted that during the period of the Āḷvārs, only Nammāḷvār and Madhurakavi were connected as guru and disciple respectively. All the other ten Āḷvārs were independent of each other. In other words they were not related in any way as guru and disciple.

The point of contention wherein some persons try to establish that one must be in a disciplic succession that can produce a list of names of its *paramparā* (guru to disciple) from the present day back to its very origin and prove the validity of those names by producing old texts where such names are mentioned is not actually necessary, nor is such a method accepted by other *sampradāyas* as the ultimate *pramāṇa* (proof). If it were so, then it would not be possible to factually prove an unbroken chain of disciplic succession in any *sampradāya* in

the world today. Even those so-called *sampradāyas* of Bābājīs in Vṛndāvana and Māyāpura who claim to have an unbroken disciplic succession, can only prove such by creating imaginary literature and fabricating lies in support of their fallacious claims.

Actually the evidence supporting the validity of any *sampradāya* via old books, historical records and all such related materials are for the most part empirical evidence and this is considered secondary to the most important type of evidence known as *śrauta-pantha* or having heard from previous *ācāryas*.

The mind and intelligence being material elements of this mundane world are prone to rational thought and want proof of everything by the process of empirical knowledge. Ultimately empirical knowledge is defective because it is gathered by the imperfect senses. The process of *śrauta-pantha* however is the process by which realized knowledge of the Absolute Truth is passed down from guru to disciple without any loss. This process depends not on empirical evidence to prove its validity, but the process of *śrauta-pantha* depends solely on hearing with faith.

The empirical philosopher cannot accept the reality of faith because he or she has no experience of faith. Such less spiritually advanced persons do not know that faith (*śraddhā*) is a spiritual substance more real than all the empirical knowledge of the mundane world combined.

Faith allows the descending eternal knowledge (*śabda-brahman*) to flow through the realized spiritual master to the heart of a qualified disciple completely unobstructed by any material defect. The knowledge of the empiricist however is always wrought with troubles and defects because it is an ascending process and depends solely on the material mind, intelligence, and senses, which are imperfect.

Those faithful devotees who have accepted the authority

of the *paramparā* mentioned by Kavi Karṇapūra in “Gaura-ḡaṇoddeśa-dīpikā” are factually the persons responsible for fulfilling the prediction of Śrī Caitanya of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. This is indeed another valid proof (*pramāṇa*) of the validity of their *paramparā*, for as Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states in Caitanya-caritāmṛta—only those who are empowered by Kṛṣṇa can spread the holy name of Kṛṣṇa:

*tāhā pravartāila tumi,—ei tā ‘pramāṇa’
kṛṣṇa-śakti dhara tumi,—ithe nāhi āna*

On the other hand those who doubt the integrity of Kavi Karṇapūra and his followers such as Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura are to be compared to a thorn in the leg of the Supreme Lord and the association of such unfortunate persons should be rejected.



A Word to our Mādhva Brethren

by the editors of the Harmonist Magazine

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There is a fundamental justification in seeking to approach the past history of a sect, especially in this country, on the basis of the prima-facie authenticity of the *guru-paramparā* as preserved in the sect. We would be more scientifically employed if we turn our attention to obtaining greater information by comparative study of the different records instead of resorting to gratuitous assumptions against the validity of the preceptorial lists.

For this very cogent reason we must accept as historically valid the existing preceptorial list of the Madhva–Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sect till its authenticity in any particular is conclusively impugned by specific historical evidence. We have had no cause up till now to suspect the truth of any portion of this list.

This list discloses the fact that the Supreme Lord Śrī Caitanya accepted Śrī Īśvara Purī as His preceptor. Śrī Īśvara Purī was a disciple of Śrī Mādhavendra Purī.

Śrī Mādhavendra Purī is one of the most renowned Vaiṣṇavas. He is, in fact, the great founder of the society of transcendental lovers who adhere strictly to their all-absorbing passion for the amorous transcendental hero, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This constitutes a great development of the original doctrine of Śrī Madhvācārya. In spite of this peculiarity of the teaching of Śrī Mādhavendra Purī, the list of the former *gurus* shows that Śrī Mādhavendra is descended from the line of Ānanda Tīrtha in the ascetic order of the Mādhva

Vaiṣṇavas. There is really nothing against the genuineness of the list of the gurus of the line of the Mādhva Vaiṣṇavas.

Some misguided critic may try to rashly propose to disconnect Śrī Mādhvendra from the line of the gurus of the Mādhva Vaiṣṇavas, by asserting that the Mādhva *sannyāsins* are known as Tīrthas and that no Purī *sannyāsin* can have admittance into their ecclesiastical order. But the solution of this apparent difficulty is offered by an incident in the authentic career of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. He is stated to have embraced the order of the Bhāratī *sannyāsins*. But He was also stated to be a disciple of Śrī Īśvara Purī. This irregularity is to be ascribed to the practice of attaching their surnames by the older associations. The different *guru-paramparās* show the same line. So we cannot discredit those records by basing our arguments on assumptions and ordinary argument from current practices.

Moreover, whenever there is any congregational gathering of the different schools of Vaiṣṇavas, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, as a class, introduce themselves as belonging to the line of Śrī Madhvācārya. These are hard and indisputable facts and cannot be lightly explained away by inferences based solely on certain practices of either sect.

If, however, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas actually preferred to brand themselves as Mādhva Gauḍīyas as a matter of history, enquirers would naturally be anxious to know whether the servants of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas subscribe in toto to the professions and practices of the Mādhvas or whether they differ from the older school in some other points. In case they have a distinctive reference, enquiry should naturally start to make a list of the differences between the two schools. This comparison should necessarily be made in regard to their practical activity, social procedure, philosophy, theology and different performances due to all these,—or, in other words, the examination should embrace both their exoteric and esoteric differences.

If we take up the practical activities of the Mādhva and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas for the purpose of such comparison, we find that the former put themselves under a severe reserve in their propagatory methods, whereas the latter are vigorously proselytizing. The Mādhvas keep up the old habits and ideas, whereas the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas have advanced towards and utilized everything facilitating the true cause of devotion. The former are very fond of *arcana* according to the *pāñcarātri*ka system; whereas the latter, though not different to adopt *arcana*, yet in addition to that, they perform *bhajana* like the Dāsakūṭa section of the Mādhva community. The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas give more stress to *bhajana* than to *arcana* of the Vyāsakūṭa section of the latter community. The habits and customs of the Southern Indian Vaiṣṇavas are different from those of Northern Indian Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, though both of them have a common base and origin as their guiding principle.

Turning to their respective social procedures we find that there is one great point of resemblance. *Brāhmaṇas* are alone considered to be eligible for the service of God by the Mādhva community. *Brāhmaṇas* are accordingly in sole charge of the religious institutions of the sect. They alone conduct all public and private worship. This is also the practice of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. But in this matter also there is an important distinction between the two (see Appendix B). The point has already been referred to in connection with propaganda and proselytization. The Mādhvas are not prepared to go outside the pale of the *caste-brāhmaṇas* for imparting initiation for worship. In this they are in one sense too narrow in comparison with the method of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Śrī Caitanya accepted all who possessed the real inclination for leading the exclusive spiritual life and bestowed on them even the position and function of the *ācārya*. Ṭhākura Haridāsa, the great *ācārya* of the Gauḍīya sect, was a Mohammedan by parentage. Most of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Gosvāmīs were not *caste-brāhmaṇas*.

In another respect, however, the Mādhva practice is more lax than the practice of the Gauḍīya society. No person is entitled in the Gauḍīya community to *mantra-dīkṣā* unless he or she is prepared to submit unconditionally to follow the instructions of the *ācārya* in every particular of actual conduct. By this test *caste-brāhmaṇas* are also liable to be ineligible for the service of God in the Gauḍīya community, if they are not prepared to give up their unscriptural mode of life by submitting to the autocratic rule of the *ācārya*.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas claim to follow the real principle of the scriptural *varṇāśrama* institution in the organization of their spiritual society. Whereas the Mādhvas follow the hereditary principle which is seldom applicable in the present age when few persons possess either the habit or the inclination to follow the spirit of the *śāstric* regulation.

Judged by the test of loyalty to the spirit of the *śāstric* regulation, the Gauḍīya community may justly claim to be far more conservative in their social practices than the Mādhvas.



The Pontifical Position of Mādhavendra Purī

by Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāja

(This article was first published in *The Harmonist* magazine in 1936)

Śrī Mādhavendra Purī is the sprout of the great tree of devotional love represented in the world by Śrī Caitanya Deva. Śrī Mādhavendra Purī comes from the line of Śrī Madhva, the *ācārya* of the pure Dvaita (dualistic) philosophy. It is well known to a student of religious literature that pure dualism is one of the four theistic Vaiṣṇava schools of ancient India. As Brahmā, the creator himself, is the pioneer of the faith, the school is also known as the Brahmā-sampradāya.

The description of the line of succession of the *ācāryas* from Brahmā to Madhva varies. Some count it as Brahmā, Sanaka, Durvāsā, Acyutaprekṣa, Madhva; while a sober section hold the line to be Brahmā, Nārada, Vyāsa, Madhva. Although Śrī Madhva took his ascetic order formally from Acyutaprekṣa, he was in severe opposition to the professed creed of his formal guru both before and after accepting the ascetic order. Besides, Madhva's propaganda before he met Śrī Vyāsa was clearly limited to a destructive line of vanquishing *māyāvāda*, and it is only after he came under the divine feet of Vyāsadeva, the great world teacher of theism, that he took up the constructive side of regular preaching, and made converts and commentaries as an authorized *ācārya*. Acyutaprekṣa, his former *guru*, then submitted to him and was converted fully to transcendental dualism from the *māyāvāda* of Śāṅkara. Therefore, the opinion that Śrī Madhva, as an *ācārya* preaching the positive principle of transcendental dualism, comes in the line of Śrī Vyāsa is considered more valid and is accepted by the wiser section.

Śrīpāda Mādhavendra Purī was an *ācārya* of the Madhva school and is the connecting link between the Madhva and Gauḍīya *sampradāyas*. This is accepted both by the Madhva *sampradāya* as well as by the Madhva–Gauḍīya *sampradāya*. Kavi Karṇapūra, Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and others have left authentic records to that effect. But some suspicion may arise in a modern empirical mind as to how “Purī” can possibly come of the Madhva *sampradāya* where the *sannyāsins* go by the general title of “Tīrtha.”

In answer to that, a section in the Madhva community wants to say that though “Tīrtha,” having its sacred association with “Ānanda Tīrtha”—Madhva himself, found special favor in the school and got prominence as a general title of the *sannyāsins* of the community, “Purī” and other titles were not absent altogether. The Madhvas assert that Śrī Madhva himself, as well as his successors, converted many *sannyāsins* of the Śāṅkara school and allowed them to retain their former titles to demonstrate their victories over *māyāvāda*, and thus Mādhavendra Purī must either be a disciple of such a convert or a direct convert. But as this section cannot show any authentic record sufficient to prove their statement, we do not find any reason to accept mere ascertain.

The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava section, however, holds that Śrīpāda Mādhavendra Purī, as a guru of the doctrine of transcendental love, must have accepted his *dīkṣā* (divine initiation) from the bona fide line of transcendental dualism of Madhvācārya, though he might have taken his *sannyāsa* (formal ascetic order) from another community. This section attaches the real importance to *dīkṣā* and points out the remarkable difference with which a Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* treats the formal taking of an ascetic order as opposed to *dīkṣā*. This party draws our attention to Madhvācārya himself who took his *sannyāsa* from Acyutaprekṣa of the *māyāvāda* school only to refute the professed faith of his very guru.

The fact that the Vaiṣṇava school does not attach much importance to this external formality of ascetic order, but considers it merely an ostentatious advantage for propaganda work, is also maintained by Śrī Rāmānuja's example of going through the order himself without the help of a guru of any sect whatsoever. On the other hand, the same Rāmānujācārya was seen perseveringly trying for grace (in the form of *mantra-dīkṣā*) from a Vaiṣṇava guru, times without number. Later on, Śrī Caitanya too, showing his anxiety for *sannyāsa*, took it at once from the immediately available Keśava Bhāratī of the Śāṅkara school after giving him necessary instructions for the same. Śrī Caitanya has mentioned in modest sportive expression at times this *māyāvāda* connection, which an adventurous and interested critic often misreads and very prudently gives his decree to count Śrī Caitanya as one in the *māyāvāda* fold.

So it is not definitely known whether Śrīpāda Mādhavendra Purī accepted the ascetic order from Madhva *sampradāya*. But it is sure that he was an *ācārya* of that *sampradāya*. It is also sure that he was not a mere convert from any other sect. This is so because his faith and love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his service was far too sublime and soaring to keep him even within the bounds of Madhva school itself, what to speak of *māyāvāda* theory, which propounds God, soul, and service all as illusion. In fact, Mādhavendra Purī was not *sādhana-siddha*, that is, he did not have to realize his goal in this life, but he was *nitya-siddha*, eternally self-realized.

Trouble, however, arises again as to the adjustment of several names in the pontifical list from Madhva to Mādhavendra Purī. Empirical inquiry, ignorant of the real nature and object of spiritual lineage, finds itself in a blind lane while meddling with matter beyond its scope trying to break through the walls with animal wrath. Therefore, the correct reading of pontifical line depends on our sound knowledge of *sampradāya-rahasya* (esoteric techniques of spiritual society). When really blessed

with such light alone, we can find that sometimes names of remarkable contemporaries are retained and sometimes names that are not very prominent are omitted from the pontifical list.

The greatness and importance of Śrī Mādhavendra Purī, however, does not rely so much in his being a mere bona fide member of the Madhva community as in his being the pioneer of the faith of transcendental love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which the Great Lord Śrī Caitanya Deva descended on earth to proclaim. The first effective start of *mādhurya-rasa upāsanā*, or consort-service to the youthful Kṛṣṇa, was really given by Śrī Mādhavendra Purī. Although the services to Kṛṣṇa as the *gopīs* rendered them in Vṛndāvana were not unknown in Madhva Maṭhas, the object of their service was Bāla Gopāla, and thus their mood of service could naturally only be in *vātsalya-rasa*, or parental affection.

The famous poems of Śrīpāda Mādhavendra Gosvāmī beginning with “*ayi dīna-dayārdra-nātha*,” “*kaṁ prati kathaitum eṣe*,” and “*śyāmaṁ eva paraṁ rūpam*,” not only indicate the highest achievement of the author but prove that even men of high religious culture of the time were quite strangers to the sublime thought of deep consort-love to ever-youthful Kṛṣṇa, Reality the Beautiful. There is also a hint in his poem of the advent of a great apostle who would inaugurate extensive and organized propagation of this blossoming doctrine of sweet consort-service to the youthful and beautiful supreme person Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is not difficult to see that this has happened with the appearance of the great Lord Caitanya Deva and his overflowing distribution of the nectarine treasure of loving service to the Supreme Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Nityānanda, Śrī Advaitācārya, Śrī Īśvara Purī, Śrī Raṅga Purī, Raghupati Upādhyāya, and many other towering personalities of great religious and social importance of the time expressed their high reverence and spiritual indebtedness to this great saint and savior of mankind.

The Harmony of Mahāprabhu's Philosophy

by Swāmī Bhakti Vallabha Yati Mahārāja

The Padma-purāṇa verse *sampradāya vihīna ye...* mentions four authentic Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* active in Kali yuga — Śrī, Brahma, Rūdra, and Sanakādi. Śrī *sampradāya* is headed by Rāmānujācārya, Brahma *sampradāya* by Madhvācārya, Rūdra *sampradāya* by Viṣṇu Svāmi, and Sanakādi *sampradāya* by Nimbārkaācārya. The Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* are all auspicious simply by their unambiguous acceptance of the transcendental form and attributes of the supreme person Viṣṇu as real, and their relentless opposition to *vivartavāda* (theory of illusion) of Śaṅkarācārya, that reduces it to mere illusion. Still, each of these *sampradāya* slightly differ in their philosophy from each other, otherwise there wouldn't be a need to differentiate them at all. However, the fact that all of them are regarded as authentic, suggests the plurality of valid perspectives that articulate in different ways, the philosophical truths concerning the Supreme Lord (*īśvara*), the innumerable living entities (*jīvas*), and the cosmos (*jagat*).

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in his Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā mentions that all the four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* are auspicious and have no actual disagreements—

Question: How many *sampradāyas* do the Vaiṣṇavas have?

Answer: There are four principal Vaiṣṇava doctrines: 1) Dvaita, 2) Viśiṣṭa-advaita, 3) Dvaita-advaita, 4) Śuddha-dvaita

Question: Are there any ontological disagreements among their views?

Answer: There is no actual disagreement between their doctrines, for they are all *saviśeṣa-vādīs* (believers in eternal distinction). None of them tolerate the philosophy of *kevala-abheda* (only oneness). All of these four Vaiṣṇava groups have affection for the Lord, and thus they accept the true principles of the Lord's energy (*bhagavat-śakti*). Those of the *dvaita* school (*dvaita-vādīs*) say that those of the exclusively *advaita* school are totally blind. This is because the *dvaita-vādīs* can see the eternality of the *dvaita-vāda* (doctrine of duality). This is the opinion of Sri Madhvacharya. The *viśiṣṭa-advaita-vādīs* say that all things are endowed with attributes, and therefore can never be *advaita* or non-dual. The *dvaita-advaita-vādīs* are very outspoken in their views, which clearly denounce the impersonal philosophy of *advaita*. The doctrine of *śuddha-advaita* also condemns the *advaita* philosophy and establishes its own conclusion by emphasizing the pure form of eternal attributes. By seeing and thoroughly understanding an overview of these four schools of Vaiṣṇava doctrine, it is obvious that there is no disagreement among them.

In around 1503 AD, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted *dīkṣa* from Śrī Īśvara Purī in Gaya, and thus graced the Madhva *sampradāya*. In this regard, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura mentions the following in his *Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta-mālā* —

The special characteristic of Madhvācārya's doctrine is that it very clearly defeats the faulty mistakes of the *advaita* philosophy. By maintaining this forceful position, the distress caused by the impersonal philosophy is cast very far away. Therefore, in order to bring about safe and sure benefit for the unfortunate conditioned souls who are weakened from the onslaughts of Kali-Yuga, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted the doctrine of Śrī Madhvācārya. But by doing so He did not minimize the importance of the other three Vaiṣṇava doctrines

whatsoever. Whichever type of *saviśeṣa-vada* (philosophy of eternal distinction) one accepts is just fine, for it will certainly bring eternal auspiciousness.

The Gauḍīyas accept Śrī Caitanya as none other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself who appears in the mood of His supreme devotee (See Appendix A). In Śrī Jīva Goswāmī's words, Śrī Caitanya is *svabhajana vibhajana prayojana avatārī*, which means, the *avatārī* (the source of all *avatāras*) who descended with the specific purpose (*prayojana*) of distributing (*vibhajana*) the highest form of *bhajana* (loving worship) that He Himself (*sva*) performs, specifically *prema-bhakti* towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The wide-ranging philosophical, theological and cultural developments introduced by Mahāprabhu and His followers within a branch of the Madhva *sampradāya* naturally raised questions regarding the precise identity of Mahāprabhu's own line. The orthodox Madhva line is unable to fully appreciate these disruptive developments that variously diverge from their long held philosophy and tradition. Whereas, for some dubious reasons, certain deviant groups within the Gauḍīya line claim that Mahāprabhu instituted a new *sampradāya* altogether. [1, p. xxi] The sober section, however, would perceive a continuity and harmonious culmination of all four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* within the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

During His manifest pastimes spanning forty-eight years, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not known to have personally written any literature, apart from the eight verses of the Śikṣāṣṭakam. His philosophical and theological conclusions are gleaned primarily from His instructions to Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs, His esoteric conversation with Rāmānanda Rāya, and His two debates against the impersonalists, namely, Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī of Vāraṇāsī and Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya of Purī.

Mahāprabhu's biographies, mainly Caitanya Caritāmṛta and Caitanya Bhāgavata, that record these exchanges, are monumental

treatises that not only establish His philosophy but also demonstrate the ideal standards of Vaiṣṇava *sadācāra* within the dealings between the Lord and His dear devotees. Mahāprabhu and His entourage enacted the precepts of pure devotion for the benefit of everyone. Even a cursory study of the biographies will at-once make one understand the profound nature of devotion, and how the devotees of Mahāprabhu are epitomes of humility and surrender in the truest sense of the terms.

The activities and mood of Mahāprabhu do not give the impression that He was attempting to establish or propagate a new philosophical system. Mahāprabhu's travels to the holy places in South India, and Vṛndāvana, post His *sannyāsa*, were not particularly meant to spread a philosophy, but rather to awaken *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* among the masses through the extension of the *saṅkīrtana* movement that He had inaugurated at Māyāpur, Bengal. Other than that, Mahāprabhu was keen to taste the devotional attitudes of different groups of devotees He met, guide them where necessary, and bless them by accepting their services. During His South-India tour, Mahāprabhu's discussion regarding the position of Śrī Lakṣmidevī with Venkaṭa Bhaṭṭa at Śrī Rangam, the discovery of the fifth chapter of the Brahma-Saṁhita at Adi Keśava temple in Tamil Nadu, His meeting with the Tattvavādi *ācārya* at Uḍupī, and His deep conversation with Rāmānanda Rāya near the Godāvāri river, are philosophically prominent.

Mahāprabhu's mild rebuke of Śrī Raghuvārya Tīrtha in Uḍupī during a short discussion on the supremacy of *bhakti* over *karma* and *jñāna*, is erroneously considered by some as a rejection of Madhva *sampradāya*. Madhvācārya's position on *bhakti* being beyond *karma*, *jñāna*, and *mokṣa* is well established from his writings—*bhaktiyā jñānam tato bhaktis tato dṛṣṭis tataś ca sā, ato muktis tato bhaktiḥ saiva syāt sukha-rūpiṇī*, “From devotion comes knowledge; from that, further devotion; from that, direct realization; and from that,

liberation. Beyond liberation, devotion alone remains — and she is of the very form of supreme bliss.” (Anu-vyākhyāna iii 4.232). Therefore when Mahāprabhu says *tomāra sampradāya*,* He is addressing a particular group within the Mādhvas and not the whole *sampradāya*.

Mahāprabhu did not write a separate commentary on the Brahma Sūtras like the *ācāryas* of other *sampradāyas* have done, nor did He ask any of His immediate followers to do so. However, He personally instructed and directed Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmīs in separate meetings, to systematically present the principles of *śuddha-bhakti*. Inspired and guided by Mahāprabhu, the brothers made unparalleled contributions through works like Śrī Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu, Śrī Bṛhat-Bhāgavatāmṛta, and many others. Their works reveal the finest domain of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the stages of progress of *śuddha-bhakti* from *śraddha* to the highest attainment of *prema*, never before articulated with such depth, clarity, and *śāstric* authority.

Mahāprabhu Himself was the abode of perfect philosophical conclusions as expounded in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, which is considered the natural commentary to the Vedānta Sūtra (*artho' yam brahma-sūtrānām*). It is also known that Mahāprabhu revered Śrīdhara Svāmī's Bhāvārtha-dīpikā commentary on the Bhāgavatam more than anyone else's. Regarding this Śrīla B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja says,

Madhvācārya, in his conception of how one should see the *ācārya*—the spiritual master, could not harmonize Brahma's bewilderment (*Brahma-vimohana-līla*). After all, he is the *sampradāya guru*, the foremost *guru* of the tradition, the Brahma-Madhva *sampradāya*. So Madhvācārya omitted these two chapters on the illusion of Brahma from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. But Mahāprabhu did not. He

* *sabe, eka guṇa dekhi tomāra sampradāye, satya-vigraha kari' īsvare karaha niścaye.* (CC Madhya 9.277)

accepted Śrīdhara Svāmī's edition, which is in accordance with the *śuddha-advaita* philosophy of Viṣṇusvāmī. The Viṣṇusvāmī *sampradāya* follows *rāga-mārga*—spontaneous devotion. Śrīdhara Svāmī included those two chapters with his commentary, and Mahāprabhu accepted that, and it is corroborated in Caitanya-caritāmṛta. [2, p. 54]

It was not until the composition of the Ṣaṭ-sandarbhas by Śrī Jīva Goswāmī that Śrīmad Bhagavatam was interpreted in strict alignment with Mahāprabhu's conclusions. Śrī Jīva Goswāmī is one of the Ṣaḍ-goswāmī's of Vṛndāvana, an intimate associate and disciple of Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātana Goswāmīs. In the Ṣaḍ-sandarbhas, six treatises written in Sanskrit, along with the Krama Sandarbha, Jīva Goswāmī lays out all aspects of the Bhāgavata philosophy profusely quoting from the *sāstras* to support each conclusion. Jīva Goswāmī's Ṣaṭ-sandarbhas may be regarded as the definitive core philosophical work of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Śrīla B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja makes further observation regarding Mahāprabhu's philosophical position with respect to Śrīdhara Svāmī's —

Mahāprabhu mainly supported Śrīdhara Svāmī because he saved the devotees from the interpretation of Śaṅkarācārya in the Gītā and the Bhāgavatam. Śrīdhara Svāmī has admitted and proved God as a Person, but there are elements of impersonalism also. Śrīdhara Svāmī is mainly a Vaiṣṇava who followed *viśuddha-advaita* philosophy of Viṣṇu Svāmī, whereas Mahāprabhu's creed was *acintya-bhedābheda*. So Jīva Goswāmī, who was a strict follower of Mahāprabhu Śrī Caitanyadeva, slightly differed from him in the interpretation of the Bhāgavatam. [3]

Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa comments the following in his Tattva-dīpikā commentary to Jīva Goswāmī's Tattva-Sandarbha, anuccheda 27—

śrīdhara-svāmīno vaiṣṇavā eva, taṭṭikāsu bhagavad vighraha guṇa vibhūti dhāmnām tat-pārṣada-tanūnām ca nityatvokteḥ, bhagavad-bhakteḥ sarvotkr̥ṣṭa-mokṣānuvṛtṭyor ukteś ca. tathāpi kacit kacin māyāvādollekhastadvādinō bhagavad-bhaktāu praveśayitu baḍiśāmiśārpaṇa-nyāyenaiveti viditam iti. śuddha-vaiṣṇava iti — yathā sāṅkhyādi-śāstrāṇām aviruddhāṁśaḥ sarvaiḥ svikṛtas tadvat idaṁ bodhyam, “Śrīdhara Svāmī was indeed a Vaiṣṇava, because in his commentaries he affirms the eternal nature of the Lord’s form, qualities, powers, abodes, and the forms of His attendants. He also states that devotion to the Lord is the supreme form of liberation. Even so, it is known that certain references which appear to echo Māyāvāda were adopted only to draw followers of that doctrine towards devotion, just as bait is placed on a fish-hook. Therefore, just as pure Vaiṣṇava philosophy accepts the non-contradictory portions of Sāṅkhya and other such systems, similarly parts of Śrīdhara Svāmī’s writings that follow pure Vaiṣṇava concepts are quoted.”

The circumstances for the composition of a Gauḍīya commentary to the Brahma-sūtras were created in the 18th century, after the arrival of the deity of Śrī Govindadevī in Jaipur during the rule of Sawai Jai Singh II. Perceiving Sawai Jai Singh’s sympathy towards the Gauḍīyas and affinity towards Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship, the Rāmānandi sect fearing loss of influence began questioning the legitimacy of Gauḍīya traditions and philosophy. Since the Gauḍīyas, although descending from the Madhva *sampradāya*, did not align with their traditions, the Rāmānandi’s countered all *śāstric* evidences and the claim of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s primacy, by stating, *saṁpradāyaś catvāraḥ pañcamo naiva vidyate, pādmokta vacanenaiva nirṇītaṁ paṇḍitaiḥ kila* [4, p. 66], “There are four *sampradāyas*; a fifth does not exist. This has been determined by learned scholars on the basis of the statements found in the Padma Purāṇa.”

When the word reached Vṛndāvana about the predicament, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī, who was in his advanced age, dispatched Baladeva Vidyābhuṣaṇa along with his (Viśvanātha's) disciple Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma to resolve the matter. Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhuṣaṇa was trained in the Madhva philosophy before he fully accepted the Gauḍīya philosophy and *dīkṣa* from Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara Goswāmī of the Śyāmānanda-parivāra. He studied the Ṣaṭ-Sandarbhās under Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and became thoroughly acquainted with all aspects of Mahāprabhu's philosophy. He was therefore the most qualified candidate to present Mahāprabhu's philosophy on the basis of the Madhva philosophy.

After a brief discussion with the opposition, Śrī Baladeva requested time from the King to compose a Gauḍīya commentary to the Brahma Sūtras, which the King readily granted. By the grace of Śrī Govindadevjī, Baladeva could produce a masterly commentary within a very short period of time, that he duly named the “Govinda-bhaṣya”. The Govinda-Bhaṣya is based on Madhva's commentary, but carries all the hallmarks of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's philosophy—*acintya-bhedābheda*. On the unquestionable strength of this commentary, the Rāmānandī's withdrew their opposition, and the position of the Gauḍīyās was thereby preserved.

The fact that the Gauḍīya philosophy is based upon the Madhva philosophy is specifically clear from the work Prameya-ratnāvalī wherein Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhuṣaṇa rephrases the *prameya-śloka* of Śrī Vyāsa Tīrtha in the following way—

śrī-madhvaḥ prāha —

*viṣṇuḥ paratamam-akhilamāmnāya-vedhyaṁ ca viśvaṁ
satyaṁ bhedaṁ ca jīvān hari-caraṇa-juṣas taratamyāṁ ca teṣāṁ
mokṣaṁ viṣṇv-aṅghri-lābhaṁ tad-amala-bhajanāṁ
tasya hetuṁ pramāṇaṁ
pratyakṣādy-trayaṁ cety upadiśati hariḥ kṛṣṇa caitanya-candraḥ*

Śrī Madhva declares that 1) Lord Viṣṇu is Supreme; 2) He is to be known from all sacred scriptures; 3) the world is real; 4) difference is real; 5) the living entities are servants of Lord Hari's lotus feet; 6) there is gradation amongst them; 7) liberation is the attainment of Lord Hari's lotus feet; 8) pure devotion towards Him is the cause of liberation; and 9) direct perception, inference, and verbal testimony are the three kinds of evidence. These truths are also taught by Lord Hari Himself in His appearance as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya-candra. (Prameya-ratnāvalī, verse 8)

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī was the first to associate the term *acintya-bhedābheda* to Mahāprabhu's conceptions, in his Sarva-samvādinī commentary to Paramātmā-sandarbhā (77-78).^{*} But it was not until the modern revival of the Saṅkīrtana movement by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and his successors that the term gained prominence in identifying Mahāprabhu's philosophy. The substance of the doctrine, however, entirely permeates the writings of all Gauḍīya *ācāryas*, just as they understood from none other than Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself.

There is a theory that Jīva Gosvāmī originally found *acintya-bhedābheda* conception in Madhvācārya's Bhāgavata-tātparyanirṇaya (II.7.51), where he quotes a non-extant *tantra-śāstra* called Brahmataṛka, known only from the writings of Madhvācārya [5, p. 96]. Although Jīva Gosvāmī explicitly

* *tatra bādara-paurāṇika-śaivānām mate bhedābhedaḥ, bhāskara-mate ca; māyāvādinām tatra bhedāśo vyāvahārika eva prāṭitiko vā; gautama-kaṇāda-jaimini-kapila-patañjali-mate tu bheda eva; śrī-rāmānuja-madhvācārya-mate cety api sārvaṭrikī prasiddhiḥ; sva-mate tu acintya-bhedābhedaḥ evācintya-śaktimayatvād iti.* "The Bādaras, the Paurāṇikas and the Śaivites accept difference and non-difference. Bhāskara also accepts it. Māyāvādis accept the difference portion as conventional (*vyāvahārika*) or an appearance only. Gautama, Kaṇāda, Jaimini, Kapila and Patañjali accept difference. The views of Rāmānuja and Madhva are well known. We accept *acintya-bhedābheda* because the Lord has inconceivable *śaktis*."

lists Brahmatarka in his *Tattva-sandarbhā* (anu. 28) as one of the works that he accepts solely based on the credibility of Madhvācārya, he does not quote the verse in question (*avayavyavayavānām ca guṇānām guṇinastathā...*) anywhere in his works as one would expect, nor does the verse lend itself fully to support *acintya-bhedābheda*. Therefore, the theory is, at best, speculative.

Similarly, it is pointless to claim Madhva's support of the *bhedābheda* conception by reading meanings into his statement about the relation between *jīva* and *īśvara*, when he says *ataścāṁśatvam uddiṣṭam bhedābhedau na mukhyataḥ* (*Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya* ii 3.43). There is no confusion in the position of Madhva that essentially there can only be difference (*bheda*) between *jīva* and *īśvara*. He designates *jīvas* as *vibhinnāṁśas* of *īśvara*, where he defines *āṁśatva* in the sense of belonging (*tat-sambandhitvam*), having dependence (*tadadhīnasattā*), and similarity (*tatsadrśyam*) but not as *part and parcel*. The similarity and dependence gives a sense of non-difference (*abheda*) between *jīva* and *īśvara*, but in essence (*svarūpa*) Madhva only accepts difference (*bheda*). Madhva's statement—*bhedābhedau na mukhyataḥ*, means that in this case both *bheda* and *abheda* cannot be accepted as primary. Only *bheda* is taken as primary, while *abheda* is understood figuratively [6, p. 120-121]. Madhvācārya defines this kind of relation to reconcile conflicts between *bheda* and *abheda* scriptures.

The complete expression of *acintya-bhedābheda* philosophy is first seen in the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In *Caitanya Caritamṛta*, we find that Mahāprabhu enumerates Kṛṣṇa's *śaktis* and their inconceivable nature in the following way, quoting the Viṣṇu-purāṇa —

*sūryāṁśa-kiraṇa, yaiche agni-jvālā-caya
svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra 'śakti' haya*

Just as the rays of the sun and the multitude of flames from fire, so too Kṛṣṇa naturally possesses three kinds of energies. (CC Madhya 20.109)

*eka-deśa-sthitasyāgner jyotsnā vistāriṇī yathā
parasya brahmaṇaḥ śaktis tathedam akhilaṁ jagat*

Just as the illumination of a fire, which is situated in one place, is spread all over, the energies of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Parabrahman, are spread all over this universe. (Viṣṇu-purāṇa 1.22.53 quoted in CC Madhya 20.110)

*kṛṣṇera svābhāvika tina-śakti-pariṇati
cit-chakti, jīva-śakti, āra māyā-śakti*

Lord Kṛṣṇa naturally has three energetic transformations (*śakti-pariṇati*), and these are known as the spiritual potency (*cit-śakti*), the living entity potency (*jīva-śakti*) and the illusory potency (*māyā-śakti*). (CC Madhya 20.111)

*viṣṇu-śaktiḥ parā proktā kṣetrajñākhyā tathā parā
avidyā-karma-samjñān yā tr̥tīyā śaktir iṣyate*

Viṣṇu-śakti (*cit-śakti*) is spiritual, and so is *jīva-śakti* (called *kṣetrajñā*) also spiritual. The third energy, called *avidyā* and *karma*, is accepted as an inferior potency (*māyā-śakti*). (Viṣṇu-purāṇa 6.7.61 quoted in CC Madhya 20.112)

*śaktayaḥ sarva-bhāvānām acintya-jñāna-gocarāḥ
yato 'to brahmaṇas tās tu sargādyā bhāva-śaktayaḥ
bhavanti tapatām śreṣṭha pāvakasya yathoṣṇatā*

In general, the energies (*śaktis*) of all entities are beyond the grasp of conceivable knowledge (*acintya*). Therefore, O best of the sages, the creative and other such powers are indeed the energies of Brahman, just as heat belongs to fire. (Viṣṇu-purāṇa 1.3.2 quoted in CC Madhya 20.113)

In the Bhāgavata-sandarbha (Anu. 14), Śrīla Jīva Goswāmī quotes Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary to the above verse,

where he says,

yad vā, acintyā bhinnābhinnatvādi-vikalpais cintayitum aśakyāḥ, kevalam arthāpatti-jñāna-gocarāḥ santi. yad evam, ato brahmaṇo 'pi tās tathāvidhāḥ śaktayaḥ sargādi-hetubhūtāḥ bhāva-śaktayaḥ svabhāva-siddhāḥ śaktayaḥ santy eva. pāvakasya dāhakatvādi-śaktivat. ato guṇādi-hīnasya 'py acintya-śaktimattvād brahmaṇaḥ sargādi-karṭṛtvaṃ ghaṭata ity arthaḥ, “Or else, these energies cannot be conceived (*acintya*) through contrasting truths such as being simultaneously different (*bhinna*) and non-different (*abhinna*) from brahman; they fall only within the scope of knowledge derived from *arthāpatti* (postulation). If this is so, then Brahman possesses such inherent energies that serve as the causes of creation and so forth, just as fire possesses the power of burning. Therefore, even though Brahman is devoid of material qualities, creation and related functions are possible for Him due to His inconceivable energies (*acintya-śakti*).”

Mahāprabhu classifies the *śaktis* of the Lord as internal, marginal, and external potencies.

antaraṅgā--cic-chakti, taṭasthā--jīva-śakti
bahiraṅgā--māyā,--tine kare prema-bhakti

The spiritual potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead also appears in three phases — internal (*cit-śakti*), marginal (*jīva-śakti*) and external (*māyā*). These are all engaged in His devotional service in love. (CC Madhya 6.160)

Here, the *jīva* is classified as marginal potency (*taṭastha śakti*) and *māyā* as external potency (*bahiraṅga śakti*). In this way, the creation and the living entities are part and parcel of the Lord, inconceivably one and different.

Mahāprabhu describes *jīva*'s position in relation to *īśvara* in the following way—

jīvera 'svarūpa' haya--kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'taṭasthā-śakti' 'bhedābheda-prakāśa'

It is the living entity's constitutional position to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa because he is the marginal energy of Kṛṣṇa and a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord. (CC Madhya 20.108)

Mahāprabhu does not characterize the *jīvas* as *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, or *tāmasika*, by *svarūpa*, nor does He consider *varṇāśrama* of any significance in relation to pure devotion. Rather, He describes all the *jīvas* as originally (*svārūpataḥ*) and eternally (*nityataḥ*), servants of Kṛṣṇa. The *amśatva* of the *jīva* in relation to *īśvara* is taken in its primary meaning as a manifestation simultaneously one and different from the Lord (*bhedābheda-prakāśa*). Mahāprabhu says, '*māyādhīśa' 'māyā-vaśa'--īśvare-jīve bheda*. The *jīva* is infinitesimal unit of consciousness (*aṇu-caitanya*) susceptible to the influence of *māyā*, whereas *īśvara* is infinite consciousness (*vibhu-caitanya*) and the master of *māyā*.

The position of the *jīva* is classified as *taṭastha* (marginal) where *brahmajyoti* is considered the source of innumerable *taṭastha jīvas* in an unmanifest state. *Taṭastha* implies an innate free-will to embrace or move away from the service of Kṛṣṇa. The possibility of moving away from Kṛṣṇa is more so by design than by defect of the *jīva*, for there will be no meaning to free-will otherwise. The initial impetus for the *jīva*'s material bondage is thus to be traced within the *jīva* itself, and not in Kṛṣṇa or *māyā*.

Reality is *Kṛṣṇamaya*, where all consciousness is irresistibly drawn towards Kṛṣṇa, the source of every variety of transcendental happiness. Consequently, the formidable *māyā-śakti* of Kṛṣṇa presents the material world as an artificial reality to divert the *jīvas*, sustaining their independent self-interests (*dvitīyābhīniveśaḥ*) in a state of forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa (*īśādapetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ*).

Just as a person unaware of their true wealth toils to earn a livelihood, so too the *jīva*, forgetful of its transcendental relationship with Kṛṣṇa, engages in *karma* in pursuit of artificial happiness of the material world. However, whether in *bhū-loka*, *svarga-loka*, *brahma-loka*, or any other realm among the fourteen planetary systems of the *brahmāṇḍa*, true satisfaction continues to elude the *jīvas*. Only when the *jīva* is restored to its original nature (*svarūpa*) as a loving servant of Kṛṣṇa does it experience the fulfillment of its very existence—*muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ svarūpeṇa vyavasthitih*. Once restored, the fully manifest loving relation with the Lord is eternal—*yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama*.

Beyond serving as the abode of the *jīvas*, the material world also becomes the stage for the wondrous pastimes of the heroic Supreme Lord, celebrated in the Vedic literatures as the deliverer of the fallen souls (*patita-pāvana*), the champion of the *sādhūs*, the affectionate guardian of His devotees (*bhakta-vatsala*), and in many other exalted ways.

Concerning the origin of matter, Mahāprabhu supports *brahma-pariṇāma-vāda* wherein *īśvara* Himself is both the efficient (*nimitta*) and the material cause (*upadāna*) of the world through His inconceivable potencies (*śakti-pariṇāma*), while He Himself remains untouched and unaffected by it—

*‘pariṇāma-vāda’-vyāsa-sūtrera sammata
acintya-śakti īśvara jagad-rūpe pariṇata
maṇi yaiche avikṛte prasabe hema-bhāra
jagad-rūpa haya īśvara, tabu avikāra*

“The Vedānta-sūtra aims at establishing that the cosmic manifestation has come into being by the transformation of the inconceivable potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The touchstone, after touching iron, produces volumes of gold without being changed. Similarly, the Supreme Personality of Godhead manifests Himself as the

cosmic manifestation (*jagad-rūpa haya īsvara, tabu avikāra*) by His inconceivable potency, yet He remains unchanged in His eternal, transcendental form.” (CC Madhya 6.170)

In the Vedāntic traditions, Brahman is understood as an eternal sentient reality characterized by *sat* (existence), *cit* (knowledge), and *ānanda* (bliss). It is spoken of in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad verse (6.2.1) in the following way—*sadeva somyedamagra āsīt, ekam evādvitīyam, tadaikṣata bahusyāma prajāyeya*, “O gentle one (Śvetaketu), in the beginning, there was only *sat* (Brahman), one without a second. He thought, ‘May I be many, may I grow forth.’” However, the experience of insentient matter (*jaḍa*), which is marked by transience and devoid of any expression of knowledge or bliss, presents a philosophical problem regarding its origin.

The Chāndogya verse quoted before primarily suggests *brahmopādānatva*, wherein Brahman is the material cause (*upādāna*) of insentient matter and subsequently the world itself as we experience it. Even so, it remains practically incomprehensible how a sentient entity made of pure intelligence (*cit*) produces or transforms itself into something base and lifeless (*acit*) as matter.

Advaita Vedānta sidesteps the question by relegating matter (*jaḍa*) to the category of the unreal (*asat*), calling it mere illusion. Whereas, Madhvācārya simply denies *brahmopādānatva* and instead tows the Sāṅkhya line in this regard, accepting *prakṛti* as a co-existent eternal entity separate from Brahman, that acts as the point of origin of *jaḍa*. He says, *Na cetana vikāraḥ syāt yatra kvāpi hy acetanaṁ, nācetana vikāro’pi cetanaḥ syāt kadācana*, “A sentient (*cetana*) entity can never undergo transformation into something insentient (*acetana*); nor can an insentient entity ever transform into something sentient” (Anu Vyākhyāna i 4.11).

In this regard, Mahāprabhu says that the impossibility of

untransformable sentient Brahman transforming as the insentient material world is made possible by His *acintya-śakti* (inconceivable potency). He follows the line of Vedānta philosophy and accepts *brahmopādānatva* purely based on the statements of the Upaniṣads, knowing well that the subject is beyond intellectual reasoning (*acintya*), therefore approachable only through scriptures (*śāstraika-gamyah*).

In the Govinda-bhāṣya, Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa comments—

evam apumartha-vikārā brahma-śakti-dharmāḥ śakti-gatāḥ syur na tu brahmaṇi śuddhe prasajjēran iti, “Thus all those modifications belonging to matter and antagonistic to the highest end of man, appertain to the energies of brahman, and are attributes of His energies (*śaktis*) and remain in His *śaktis* and do not pervade the pure Brahman.” (Govinda Bhāṣya to Brahma Sūtra 2.1.9 — *na tu dr̥ṣṭānta bhāvād*).

Further, he says,

Puruṣa-dhī-vaividhyāt tarkā naṣṭa-pratiṣṭhā mitho vihanyamānā vilokyante, ato’ pi tāt anādṛṭyaupaniṣadī brahmopādānatā svikāryā — “Owing to the differences in the intellectual capacities of men, their reasoning powers are also different. There is no finality about reasoning. A position established by reason of one man, is found to be demolished the next day by the stronger intellect of another man. Therefore, showing no regard to reasoning, we must believe Brahman to be the material cause of the world, because the Upaniṣad teaches so.” (Govinda Bhāṣya to Brahma Sūtra 2.1.11 — *tarkāpratiṣṭhānād api...*).

The Acintya-bhedābheda philosophy of Mahāprabhu perfectly harmonizes all contradictory doctrines by introducing and fully integrating *acintyatva* (inconceivability) as the pivotal aspect of our understanding of the Absolute Truth.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja says,

Acintya-bhedābheda: some points equal, some points different. Always this is applicable—*bhedābheda*—and that is beyond our conception. How much common and how much different is beyond your calculation. That is in the hand of that autocrat—not under law, but His sweet will. So it is *acintya*—not within the law. It is in the free hand of the Supreme Lord, the autocrat: *bhedābheda*. *Līlā* means “above law,” yet sweet. Though above law, still harmony is there—consistency. *Viruddha-sāmānyam tasmin na citram*. Always harmonizing the discordant element—that is its peculiar nature [6].

Acintyatva protects us from futile intellectual arguments, and instead, helps our *śraddha* in the *śāstras*, encourages our mood of surrender (*śaraṇāgati*), and therefore our devotion (*bhakti*) to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

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Sarasvatī Prabhupāda Paramparā — Part I

By Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅgha Mahārāja

*A brief look into the history and essential meaning of
the ISKCON and Gauḍīya Maṭha paramparā.*

It so happens that from time to time over the centuries the movement of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has come under strong criticism and ridicule by those who are either uninformed about the actual practice of pure devotional service or by those who are overtly envious of the Supreme Lord and His pure devotees—the anti-party.

During the 1920s and 30s, as well as as recently as 1998, the anti-party has revived a certain propaganda that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is not in the *paramparā* of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. It is the suggestion of the anti-party that Sarasvatī Ṭhākura had no *guru* connection with Bhaktivinoda whatsoever. Since Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja was the *dīkṣā-guru* (one who gives *guru-mantra*, *gopāla-mantra* and *kāma-gāyatrī*) of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, his *paramparā*, they say, should be traced to the Advaita-parivāra (disciplic succession in the family of Advaita) and not to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, whom they say is in the Nityānanda-parivāra. It is also their thinking that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did not regard Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī as his substantial *guru* (*śikṣā-guru*).

Furthermore it is the contention of the anti-party that since Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did not receive *siddha-praṇālī* from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura he should not be considered his true follower, and one who does not receive *siddha-praṇālī*, they say, cannot attain *vraja-bhakti*. The anti-party is so strong on this point that they even go so far as to say that Bhaktivinoda

Ṭhākura was not pleased with Sarasvatī Ṭhākura due to Sarasvatī Ṭhākura having wholesale rejected Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī (the *dīkṣā-mantra* / *pāñcarātrika-mantra-guru*) of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Therefore, they say, Bhaktivinoda did not give *siddha-praṇālī* to him, as if rejecting Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

It is a fact that Bhaktivinoda sent Sarasvatī Ṭhākura to Gaura-kiśora *dāsa* Bābājī for initiation and it is universally accepted that Bābājī was a *siddha-mahātma*. The fact that Bhaktivinoda did send Sarasvatī to Gaura-kiśora is proof that he saw in the Bābājī a higher conception than he found in his own *dīkṣā-guru*—otherwise he could easily have corrected Sarasvatī and sent him to Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī. But he didn't.

The anti-party draws their line of disciplic succession from Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, to Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura (the brother of Bhaktisiddhānta) to Gadādhara-prāṇa and a few others.

The word “anti-party” has been chosen by Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and his disciples to best describe the so-called disciplic succession going under the name of *siddha-praṇālī* because of their actually being in direct opposition to the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. There is such a thing as *siddha-praṇālī* and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has described *siddha-praṇālī* in his commentary to Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta. He says that both *siddha-praṇālī* and chanting the holy name are bona fide, but Kavirāja concludes by saying that of the two—the process of taking the name of Kṛṣṇa is superior. One becomes pure by chanting the name without offense and the holy name itself reveals the *aṣṭa-kāliya-līlā* (eight-fold pastimes), being non-different from Kṛṣṇa and His *līlās*. (This reference available at Caitanya Research Institute, Calcutta.)

The first doubt raised by the anti-party is that the actual *guru* of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī and not Jagannātha *dāsa* Bābājī. They say that to consider Jagannātha

dāsa Bābājī as the *guru* of Bhaktivinoda is an offense. They consider this so because Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura accepted *dīkṣā* from Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī in 1881 and he never received any such initiation from Jagannātha *dāsa* Bābājī. Thus the anti-party wishes to discredit the *paramparā* line as shown by Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in his song “Guru-paramparā” and simultaneously they wish to establish their own line as the true *paramparā* of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura went on pilgrimage to Vṛndāvana in 1881 at which time he met Jagannātha *dāsa* Bābājī. The Ṭhākura received many spiritual instructions from Bābājī Mahārāja and the Ṭhākura accepted him as his substantial *guru* (*śikṣā-guru*). Bhaktivinoda has referred to Jagannātha *dāsa* Bābājī as *vaiṣṇava-sarvabhauma*, the most revered and worshipable Vaiṣṇava:

*gaurāvirbhāva-bhūmes tvam, nirdeṣṭā saj-jana-priyaḥ
vaiṣṇava-sarvabhauma, śrī-jagannāthāya namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisance to Jagannātha *dāsa* Bābājī Mahārāja who is respected and worshipped by the entire Vaiṣṇava community and who discovered the birthplace where Śrī Caitanyadeva appeared.”

This raises another interesting point: With the help of Jagannātha *dāsa* Bābājī, Bhaktivinoda was able to discover the place of Mahāprabhu’s appearance. Simultaneously it was declared that the so-called Yoga-pīṭha at Navadvīpa on the other side of the Gaṅgā was false. Many caste Gosvāmīs objected to the site at Māyāpura being the original site. Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī at that time rejected Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura for preaching an untruth (*mithyā-pracāra*) and he even published his rejection of Bhaktivinoda’s preaching in a small newspaper of his own called Gaurāṅga-sevaka Patrikā in 1919. One could say at this point—at least that they did not see eye to eye, or that their feelings for placing distance in their relationship

with each other was mutual—indeed a difficult relationship to maintain between “guru and disciple.” (The *Gaurāṅga-sevaka Patrikā* and article available at Caitanya Research Institute, Calcutta)

Therefore Bhaktivinoda turned over the Yogapīṭha at Māyāpura to Sarasvatī and nobody else because he knew that only he had the strength, realization and *śāstric pramāṇa* (evidence) to hold the sacred ground against the *sahajiyā* and *brāhmaṇa* community. It is also interesting to note that although Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī rejected the idea that Yogapīṭha was in Māyāpura—the modern-day followers of Lalita Prasāda, nonetheless, accept Yogapīṭha in Māyāpura and not the so-called Yogapīṭha in Navadvīpa.

For many years Sarasvatī Ṭhākura saw the exchanges between Jagannātha *dāsa* Bābājī and Bhaktivinoda at times when the two lived together at Svananda-sukhada-*kuñja* in Nādīyā for many years. We do not find any association of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura with Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī except for a short time in the village of Narail, East Bengal, and this does not include any reference to the latter instructing Bhaktivinoda in the matter of pure devotional service.

It is true, as the anti-party says, Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did not have very high regard for Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī—he certainly did not consider him to be the Guru of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, as a small child (7 years old), was present when Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura received *dikṣā mantras* from Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī and from the outset Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was critical of the Gosvāmī. When Bhaktivinoda offered his obeisances to the Gosvāmī—the Gosvāmī attempted to place his foot on the head of the Ṭhākura—the child remarked, “Do you think that you have such spiritual power that you can put your foot on the head of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda?”

There is another short story: Once a celebrated *sahajiyā* came to see Bhaktivinoda at his residence. The *sahajiyā* was a gentleman but nonetheless a *sahajiyā*. Sarasvatī was a young boy at the time. When he saw his father (Bhaktivinoda) talking with that gentleman he simply offered obeisances at a distance and got up and went away. Seeing this the gentleman inquired, “Was that your son—why does he offer obeisances and go away?” Bhaktivinoda replied in a happy style, “He has taken a vow not to come within one hundred metres of a *sahajiyā*.”

We must mention here that both Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Sarasvatī Ṭhākura have been accepted by many great devotees and scholars as liberated souls who appeared in this world by the divine arrangement of Kṛṣṇa. They were not a pair (father and son) of this world as the mundane *bhaktas* (*prakṛta-sahajiyās*) think—rather they were eternal residents from Goloka Vṛndāvana; namely Kamala-mañjarī and Nayana-mañi-mañjarī respectively. Therefore from the beginning of their lives they both showed exceptional qualities and characteristics which are to be attributed only to pure devotees and liberated souls.

For example Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was preaching the process of pure devotion; writing and printing books such as Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā and Kalyāṇa-Kalpataru (both revered devotional works) before he even met his so-called Guru, Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī—something which is highly unusual, even unheard of—unless, that is, one is already a liberated soul. Similarly Sarasvatī Ṭhākura manifested himself as a pure Vaiṣṇava from his earliest childhood. He was quick to catch the essence of the scripture and he especially showed a keen ability to distinguish between real *bhajana* and that of the *sahajiyās* (imitationists). We will not go into greater detail regarding their many transcendental pastimes, for many biographies have been written on this subject—it will suffice to say that both Bhaktivinoda and Sarasvatī Ṭhākura were liberated souls

who came down to this world from Kṛṣṇa’s personal entourage to establish the essence of pure devotional service.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did for some time show formal respect to Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī, but when the Gosvāmī disrespected Raghunātha *dāsa* Gosvāmī, the Ṭhākura distanced himself even more from Bipin Bihārī. In essence the details of this incident show that like many caste Gosvāmīs in Orissa, Bengal, Vṛndāvana and Rādhā-kunḍa—Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī also thought that he could give blessings to Raghunātha *dāsa* Gosvāmī, the *prayojana-ācārya*, because *Dāsa* Gosvāmī was from a “lower caste,” or so he mistakenly thought. It appears that Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura overlooked the stressful relation that had evolved between Bhaktivinoda and Bipin Bihārī over the issue of Yogapīṭha being at Māyāpura and also that of Raghunātha *dāsa* Gosvāmī in favor of the formal arrangement of *dīkṣā*. It does not appear, in spite of his vast learning, that he was able to catch the essence of the teachings of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

It is also known that Bipin Bihārī mixed very freely with the degraded sections of Bengal society and associated with anti-Vedic philosophers like the Brahma Samāja. Even after his return to Vaiṣṇavism he continued bad habits like smoking, etc.—thus Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who was himself very strict in principles, saw this as a sign of lower Vaiṣṇava *adhikāra* (*kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*), although Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura remained somewhat unspoken on the issue.

In 1911 there was an assembly of scholars held in Medinīpur (Bengal) wherein the topic of debate was to be “Brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas.” Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī was present at that assembly and, as already known, he would side with the *brāhmaṇa* community on the platform that *brāhmaṇa* Vaiṣṇavas were automatically superior to non-*brāhmaṇa* Vaiṣṇavas, due to a *brāhmaṇa* being born in a higher caste. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was also invited to attend that assembly. The conflict between he and Bipin Bihārī was destined. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura—not

wanting to take the position of confronting and attempting to defeat his “*dīkṣā-guru*” in a public forum—declined to attend the meeting on the plea of bad health. In his place he sent Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (age 37) to represent pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta in the line of Śrī Rūpa and Raghunātha *dāsa* Gosvāmī as per the teachings of Mahāprabhu.

Prabhupāda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in that assembly prevailed in the debate and established, to the satisfaction of the majority of that assembly, that a pure Vaiṣṇava, regardless of his birth, was the topmost human being due to his unalloyed love for Godhead. The news of this was very pleasing to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. The lecture (*Brāhmaṇa o Vaiṣṇavera Tārātamyā Viṣayaka Siddhānta*—“The Conclusion Concerning the Comparison of Brāhmaṇas and the Vaiṣṇavas”) was published in a book in English called “Brahmins and Vaishnavism.” (Also available at Caitanya Research Institute, Calcutta.)

One might ask why Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura took initiation from Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī in the first place, for the question naturally arises whether or not the Gosvāmī was actually a pure devotee (perfected soul)?

During those days in India all the “recognized Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas” were initiated into one of the main *parivāras* such as Advaita and Nityānanda *parivāras*. Everyone was expected to wear *tilaka* and neck beads corresponding to his particular *parivāra*. Since he had not taken initiation in any such *parivāra*, Bhaktivinoda did not wear the external markings of a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava. It so happened that some persons who had no real eyes to see him would sometimes consider Bhaktivinoda to be a materialist and so forth and thus commit *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*. Seeing this situation Bhaktivinoda considered accepting the external markings of a Vaiṣṇava which he must receive from a *guru*. He longed to meet a bona fide *guru* who could inspire him but, as Bhaktivinoda later wrote, “But I did not obtain

one.” Later, in a dream, the Ṭhākura got some direction from Mahāprabhu and he accepted Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī.

The followers of Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura contend that this is proof that Bipin Bihārī was a perfected soul, otherwise Mahāprabhu would not have given direction to Bhaktivinoda to accept him as *guru*. At this point the anti-party suggests that “could Mahāprabhu have made a mistake?”—thus they wish to indicate that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura received a *siddha-guru* (*sat-guru*) by the arrangement of Mahāprabhu Himself and not simply a formal connection for decorum’s sake. We couldn’t disagree more.

Mahāprabhu Himself took *sannyāsa* in the *māyāvādī sampradāya* for the same reason—for decorum’s sake only. And after that the Lord continued His preaching mission of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. The situation of Bhaktivinoda was similar—his mission was to preach—he had come down to this world with that purpose.

At the time of his initiation Bhaktivinoda received the *pāñcarātrika* mantras: *guru-mantras*, *gopāla-mantra*, and *kāma-gāyatrī*. It is interesting to note here that Bhaktivinoda received those mantras, which are offered as a *saṁskāra* in place of the Vedic *dīkṣā-saṁskāra* and which are primarily meant for Deity worship following the system of *pañca-saṁskāra* (*tāpa*, *puṇḍra*, *nāma*, *mantra*, and *yāga*). It is clear also in studying the life of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura through his writings that he did not imbibe any of the conceptions of Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī. Factually the two, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Bipin Bihārī, were distanced from each other from the very beginning—although it can be said that Bhaktivinoda did continue to show the Gosvāmī formal respect. Of course the anti-party says that Bhaktivinoda received *siddha-praṇālī* (*ekādaśa-bhāva*) from Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī. Nonetheless, this does not establish the anti-party’s procedure of giving *siddha-praṇālī* to the unqualified.

Such respect for the Gosvāmī was not so visible in Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. In fact, in later years Sarasvatī Ṭhākura re-initiated (*harināma*, *mantra-dīkṣā*, and *sannyāsa*) a prominent disciple of Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī, who became known as Bhaktiviveka Bhāratī Mahārāja. There is no hiding the truth—Sarasvatī Ṭhākura totally rejected the idea that Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī was a spiritual preceptor of Bhaktivinoda, and we are also accepting the same conclusion. The brother of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura), however, accepted just the opposite.

After the disappearance of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura started a mission together in Calcutta called Bhaktivinoda Āsana at Ultadanga St. In a very short time their difference in conception/vision about Bhaktivinoda arose and they parted ways. Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used to say, “My brother sees Bhaktivinoda as Bābu (father) but I see him as the delegation of Rādhā.” This statement reveals that Sarasvatī Ṭhākura obviously considered that Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura placed more importance on form than on substance and that he also had no proper conception of the eternal divinity of Bhaktivinoda.

The disciples of Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura have said that their *guru* has written extensively on the differences between he and Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but none of those manuscripts have ever been printed. On the other hand Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wrote long and printed his manuscripts to spread the glories of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world. This reflects a seemingly distinct character difference between the two brothers—one was prone to fault the other, while the other dedicated his life solely for the service of Mahāprabhu.

Although Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did receive *mantra-dīkṣā* from Gaura-kīśora *dāsa* Bābājī Mahārāja (1900) he also accepted Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura as his substantial *guru*. It should be mentioned here also that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gave

mantras for worshipping the Deity in 1881 and *harināma-dīkṣā* to Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in 1886. The following is a letter (1910) from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura to Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wherein Bhaktivinoda gives Sarasvatī essential spiritual instructions, thus demonstrating that he was indeed his substantial (*śikṣā*) *guru*.

Sarasvatī! People of this world who are proud of their own aristocratic birth cannot attain real aristocracy. Therefore they attack the pure Vaiṣṇava, saying, “They have taken birth in low-class families because of their sins.” Thus they commit offenses. The solution to the problem is to establish the order of *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*—something you have started doing; you should know that to be the real service to the Vaiṣṇava. Because pure devotional conclusions are not being preached, all kinds of superstitions and bad concepts are being called devotion by such pseudo *sampradāyas* as *sahajiyā* and *ativādī*. Please always crush these anti-devotional concepts by preaching pure devotional conclusions and by setting an example through your personal conduct. Please make great effort so you can start *parikramā* of Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa as soon as possible. It is by those actions that everyone in this world will receive Kṛṣṇa-bhakti. Please try very hard to make sure that the service to Śrī Māyāpura will become a permanent thing and will become brighter and brighter every day. The real service to Śrī Māyāpura can be done by acquiring printing presses, distributing devotional books, and *saṅkīrtana* preaching. Please do not neglect to serve Śrī Māyāpura or to preach for the sake of your own reclusive *bhajana*. When I am not present any more, please take care to serve Śrī Māyāpura-dhāma which is so dear to you. This is my special instruction to you. People who are like animals can never attain devotion; therefore never take their suggestions. But do not let them know

this directly or indirectly. I had a special desire to preach the significance of such books as Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā, and Vedānta-darśana. You have to accept that responsibility. Śrī Māyāpura will prosper if you establish an educational institution there. Never make any effort to collect knowledge or money for your own enjoyment. Only to serve the Lord will you collect these things. Never engage in bad association, either for money or for some self-interest. — signed Kedāranātha Datta Bhaktivinoda

This letter shows that the innovator was Bhaktivinoda and the implementer was Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Although the anti-party offers prostrate obeisances to Bhaktivinoda they are nonetheless dead against the *sannyāsa* order introduced by Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. From the above letter it is clear that Bhaktivinoda introduced the *daiva-varṇāśrama*. Bhaktivinoda licensed Bhaktisiddhānta to implement *sannyāsa*—such that persons could actually attain the *rāga-mārga adhikāra* and tread the path.

Although the alleged story is that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did give “*siddha-praṇālī*” to Lalita Prasāda, it is also a known fact that Bhaktivinoda advised Lalita Prasāda Ṭhākura to chant Kṛṣṇa-nāma. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura himself gives a warning in Bhajana-rahasya that to attempt meditation on *gopī-svarūpa* without proper *adhikāra* will be detrimental:

*adhikāra na lābhiyā siddha-deha bhāve
viparyaya-buddhi janme śaktira abhāve*

“If one thinks of his *siddha-deha (siddha-praṇālī)* without achieving the *adhikāra* his intellect gets bewildered.”

In time it came to pass that *siddha-praṇālī* was being given out by imitationists to unqualified persons, therefore Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also wrote one hundred verses called Prākṛta-rasa Śata-duṣinī giving warning to the followers of the imitation *siddha-praṇālī* system.

Some verses from Prākṛta-rasa Śata-duṣinī follow:

*sevāyā unmukha ha'le jaḍa-kathā haya na
natuva cin-maya kathā kabhu śruta haya na*

“When one is enthusiastic for constantly rendering unalloyed devotional service, there is never any possibility for becoming distracted by idle talks related to the mundane world. Otherwise, if one is not enthusiastic, then confidential topics about the all-conscious spiritual world should never be heard.”

The warning here is that only those who are enthusiastic should enter into talks and so forth on higher topics (such as *siddha-deha*). The characteristic of enthusiasm he says is that one should not be interested in any mundane talk. This of course includes mundane activities and also such things as illicit sex, etc. If one still has attraction for this level of existence then he does not have the proper *adhikāra* for *siddha-praṇālī*.

*samagrera amilane sthāyī-bhāva haya na
sthāyī-bhāva-vyatireke rase sthiti haya na*

“In the absence of the necessary constituent elements of the *bhakti* process (such as *anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, etc.) one can never become fixed in their own eternal *sthāyī-bhāva* (one of five principal mellows). In the absence of *sthāyī-bhāva* and its necessary elements, one can never become situated in their eternal *rasa* (*siddha-deha*).”

*rati āge śraddhā pāche rūpānuga bole na
krama-patha chāḍī' siddhi rūpānuga bole na*

“The followers of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī never preach that transcendental attachment is reached before one develops pure *śraddhā*. The *rūpānugas* never teach that the perfection of devotion (*siddhi*) can be reached by abandoning the consecutive order of developmental stages on the path.”

*anartha thākāra kāle līlā-gāna kore na
anartha-nivṛtti-kāle nāma jaḍa bole na*

“While still contaminated with *anarthas*, one should never sing songs about the Lord’s confidential pastimes. After these impediments are purified (*anartha-nivṛtti*), one never speaks of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa as if it were a mundane sound vibration.”

*anarthake ‘ārtha’ boli’ ku-pathete laya na
prākṛta-sahaja-mata aprākṛta bole na*

“One should never mistakenly call material obstacles ‘useful for devotional service,’ thereby following the wrong path. One should never say that the mundane opinions of the *prākṛta-sahajiyās* (cheap materialistic impostors) are *aprākṛta* (transcendental).”

*āsakta komala-śraddhe rasa-kathā bole na
anadhikārīre rase adhikāra deya na*

“A devotee should never speak on the topics of devotional mellows to one who has weak, pliable faith. A devotee should never attempt to bestow the qualification for *rasa* upon one who is unqualified to receive it.”

Siddha-praṇālī (revelation of one’s eternal perfected spiritual form, *siddha-deha*) is actually effected by the grace of the *guru* for one who purely chants the holy name of Kṛṣṇa without offense. The grace of *sad-guru* is required and also that of *harināma*, which appears when one purely chants the name in a deep penetrating mood of divine love.

The so-called *siddha-praṇālī* meditation of the anti-party amounts to mental speculation at best. Siddha-praṇālī cannot be effected in the mind of a conditioned soul, because such a mind is actually one of the eight material elements. One is required to transcend the mundane mind and come to the platform of *śuddha-sattva*—then, from the subjective plane

of reality, the revelation of one's *siddha-deha* can be realized—otherwise not.

Yes, we are saying that there is such a process as *siddha-praṇālī*, but that the imitation process is being offered by the anti-party—not the authentic *siddha-praṇālī*. The line of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is bona fide and authentic because it recognizes both the *ajāta-rati-rāgānugā-sādhana* (rāgānugā before *bhāva*) and the *jāta-rati-rāgānugā-sādhana* (rāgānugā after *bhāva*). The anti-party wants to meditate on their so-called *gopī-deha* with dress, activities and residence (*ekādaśa-bhāva*) etc. while still conditioned with *anarthas*. They do not favor preaching, *saṅkīrtana*, distribution of Bhāgavata literature and so forth—thinking that these things are not *ajāta-rati-rāgānugā-sādhana* but of a lower conception—that is their mistake. These services are non-different from *ajāta-rati-rāgānugā-sādhana* and will contribute to the purification of one's heart, enabling one to fix the mind on the lotus feet of Rūpa Gosvāmī and gradually come to the stage of *bhāva* and thus *jāta-rati-rāgānugā-sādhana*, wherein one will glimpse the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī.

The anti-party wants to say, “let us meditate on *gopī-svarūpa* as the activity of the *ajāta-rati-rāgānugā-sādhana*,” but we strongly disagree—and so have our many *ācāryas*. Otherwise what is the use of the Gītā, Bhāgavatam, Ṣaṭ-sandarbhā, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-*sindhu* and a host of other essential literature for all *sādhakas* desiring pure devotional service?

The anti-party contends that the giving of *ekādaśa-bhāva* (*siddha-praṇālī*) at the time of *dīkṣā* is supported in Bhakti-sandarbhā by Jīva Gosvāmī in the following verse:

divyaṁ jñānam hy atra śrī-mantrē bhagavata-svarūpa-jñānam tēna bhagavata-sambandha-viśeṣa-jñānāṁ ca. “The term ‘divine knowledge’ here refers to the knowledge of the specific form of the Lord contained in the holy syllables of the mantra and knowledge of a specific relationship with the Lord.” (*Bhakti-sandarbhā*, 283)

The anti-party then jumps to the conclusion that “*divyam jñānam*” (divine knowledge) means *ekādaśa-bhāva* (*siddha-praṇālī*), the knowledge of one’s form as a *gopī*, dress, residence, etc. However, this divine knowledge revealed by the *guru* at the time of giving *dīkṣā* (as stated in *Bhakti-sandarbha*) is actually a reference to receiving proper understanding of the mantras for worship such as *upanayana-saṁskāra* (*brahma-gāyatrī*), *guru-mantra* and *gāyatrī*, *gaura-mantra* and *gāyatrī*, *gopāla-mantra*, and *kāma-gāyatrī*. There is no suitable support for *ekādaśa-bhāva* found in the above quoted verse. For a thorough understanding of this subject (revealing the meaning of the *mantra*—receiving *divyam jñānam*) one should read the book *Śrī Gāyatrī-mantrārtha Dīpikā* published by Gosai Publishers.

It is in one sense ironic that the anti-party dares to even show their face in the Vaiṣṇava world of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s movement to preach their misconceptions. The persons who are doing this mischief were once all devotees of ISKCON, who—leaving our Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda, in the 1970s to go for *siddha-praṇālī* initiation—eventually fell down and were unable to even maintain the four basic regulative principles, what to speak of the meditation on their eternal form and relationship with Kṛṣṇa. In this way these men became reject disciples. Of course at least one of them feels himself qualified to give *siddha-praṇālī* initiation and has misled a number of newcomers. In an attempt to rationalize their existence, these ex-ISKCON devotees have taken to the study of many books, became scholars and, after acquiring some theoretical knowledge of *rāgānuṣāṅga-bhakti* and *siddha-praṇālī*, they have tried to establish themselves as the actual followers of Mahāprabhu and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura—while at the same time they try to discredit the authority and qualifications of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Other than that, since the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in 1914, they have done nothing

to spread the cause of Mahāprabhu's mission to the world. Their only work is to try to disprove the *paramparā* of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. In Bengal the anti-party is no match for the Gauḍīya Maṭha who are highly learned in all these matters historically and according to *śāstra*. The anti-party is only able to spread their misconception to a few less fortunate devotees from the West who are of weaker faith and beginner's knowledge.

It is important to know that the *paramparā* which Sarasvatī Ṭhākura mentioned in his *paramparā* song is a *śikṣā-sampradāya* and not a *dīkṣā-sampradāya*. That is also to say that it is the Bhāgavata-paramparā, which does not rely on any formality whatsoever but which draws completely on substance over form. The line shown by Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is not the line of a bodily succession but the recognition of where (in which great Vaiṣṇavas) the conception of pure devotion was manifest. The line of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is not at all concerned with the so-called "pedigree" *dīkṣā-paramparā* of the so-called "unbroken" succession.

The anti-party claims that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura never made any reference to *śikṣā-guru-paramparā* in his writing and therefore, how could there be a *śikṣā-paramparā*? Unfortunately the anti-party only produces "evidence of convenience" and not the truth. They have thus conveniently overlooked the following *śloka*s from Kalyāṇa-kalpataru:

*dīkṣā-guru-kṛpā kori mantra-upadeśa
koriyā dekhan kṛṣṇa-tattva nirdeśa*

*śikṣā-guru-bṛnda kṛpā koriyā apāra
sādhake śikhān sādhaner aṅga-sāra*

*śikṣā-guru-gaṇa-pade koriya praṇati
upadeśa-māla boli nija manaḥ-prati*

"The initiating spiritual master (*dīkṣā-guru*) shows his causeless mercy by giving his disciples instructions in chanting the *mantra*. By so doing, he points the disciples

in the direction of the truths pertaining to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I consider the numerous instructing spiritual masters (*śikṣā-gurus*) to be more important, for they show more mercy by training the *sādhakas* in all the essential aspects of *sādhana-bhakti*. Therefore, offering my prostrated obeisances unto the lotus feet of all instructing spiritual masters, I will now narrate this garland of different types of spiritual advice, which will all be directed towards my own mind.”

A classic example of how the anti-party is lost in their “pedigree” conception of *dīkṣā-guru* becomes apparent in their disregard of Raghunātha *dāsa* Gosvāmī, going so far as to say that, “there is no *dīkṣā* connection from Dāsa Gosvāmī to Bhaktivinoda.” Does the anti-party wish to suggest that Bhaktivinoda is not in the line/*paramparā* of Dāsa Gosvāmī simply because the *dīkṣā-guru* of the Ṭhākura was not in a *dīkṣā-paramparā* from Dāsa Gosvāmī? Yes, that is exactly what they want to say. We find such a mentality to be mundane, strictly form-oriented, undernourished, and blind to revealed truth.

Full-fledged theism is not always manifest—it sometimes goes underground like a stream and again reappears. When it is underground in the unmanifest quarter we are not concerned with the *paramparā* which simply upholds the formal tradition, the bodily succession. Rather, Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has demonstrated that we should be solely concerned with the substance and always seek out pure devotion wherever it appears and accept that on our heads. For that he taught a high measure of discrimination and caution.

The following is a quote from the Guardian of Devotion, Śrīla Śrīdhara Deva Gosvāmī, supporting the above statements on accepting the essence and not simply the form:

“The very gist of the *guru-paramparā*, the disciplic succession, is *śikṣā*, the spiritual teaching, and wherever it is

to be traced, there is *guru*. One who has the transcendental eye, the divine eye, will recognize the *guru* wherever he appears. One who possesses knowledge of absolute divine love in purity—he is *guru*. Otherwise the *guru-paramparā* is only a body *paramparā*: a succession of bodies. Then the caste *brāhmaṇas*, the caste Gosvāmīs, will continue with their trade, because body after body, they are getting the *mantra*. But their *mantra* is dead. We are after a living *mantra*, and wherever we can trace the living tendency for a higher type of devotional service, we shall find that there is our *guru*. One who has that sort of vision awakened will be able to recognize the *guru* wherever he may appear.” (Śrī *Guru and His Grace*, p. 22)

The highest fulfillment of life (*aprākṛta-gopī-deha*), the perfected form of an eternal maidservant of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, is not a cheap achievement. The reality is that few are willing to pay the price; nonetheless Sarasvatī Ṭhākura preferred not to lower the price; rather he showed by his own ardent example that the goal of life can be achieved by those honest seekers of truth who will not indulge in self-deception (the imitation process of *siddha-praṇālī*).



Sarasvatī Prabhupāda Paramparā — Part II

By Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅgha Mahārāja

*A brief look into the history and essential meaning of
the ISKCON and Gauḍīya Maṭha paramparā.*

In the first part of this article we have shown—

1. The *paramparā* of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is indeed drawn from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, not Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī.
2. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura took *dikṣā*, for decorum's sake only, from Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī.
3. Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī did in fact reject Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (printed in *Gaurāṅgasevaka Patrikā* in 1919) for the reason that the Ṭhākura had preached what the Gosvāmī considered an untruth regarding the birth site of Mahāprabhu being at Māyāpura and not at Navadvīpa.
4. Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī offended Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī by considering him as born in a lower caste.
5. Sarasvatī Ṭhākura defeated Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī in the debate at Midinpur on Brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas;
6. Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī had the character of the lower *vaiṣṇava-adhikārī*.
7. Sarasvatī Ṭhākura re-initiated a leading disciple of Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī thus showing his complete disregard for the idea that the Gosvāmī was the *guru* of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

8. Bhaktivinoda was very pleased with the preaching of Saraswatī Ṭhākura and gave him his full blessings to defeat all types of philosophical misconception, to establish the birth site of Mahāprabhu at Māyāpura and to establish the divine teachings of pure devotional service throughout the world (*daiva-varṇāśrama*).
9. *Ekādaśa-bhāva* as practiced by the followers of Lālita Prasāda Ṭhākura is mental speculation.
10. *Hari-nāma* is a superior process to *ekādaśa-bhāva* as explained by Kavirāja Gosvāmī in his commentary to *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*.
11. *Śikṣā-paramparā* is the *sat-guru-paramparā* and not simply the line of bodily succession (*dīkṣā-paramparā*).
12. One receives entrance into the process of *rāgānuṣāṅga-bhakti* at the time of initiation into the *paramparā* of Saraswatī Ṭhākura.

All these points were substantially made in our first article but the anti-party has failed to refute even one of them properly. Rather they have simply resorted to jumbling a few words here and there with the hope of saving face. Of course it is a hard lump for the anti-party to swallow but they have accepted an illusory *paramparā* of bodies and dead *mantras*.

We would like to give further explanation to some additional points regarding the misconceptions of the anti-party about the *paramparā* of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda, Saraswatī Ṭhākura, and the bona fide process to attain perfection in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

It is the opinion of the anti-party that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was a conditioned soul (*nitya-baddha*), who was thus bewildered by the three modes of material nature and subject to the reactions of sinful activities in the beginning of his life. The anti-party states as their main source of reference on this point a short autobiography called *Svalikhita-Jīvanī* wherein Bhaktivinoda describes in brief the events of his life in

chronological order up to his retirement. In that book scarcely anything is mentioned regarding pure devotional service. The book was originally a letter written by Bhaktivinoda to his son Lālita Prasāda when the boy was just 15 years old. Much is given to describe the Ṭhākura's previous life-style and habits before fully manifesting his mission and reason for descent. There Bhaktivinoda describes his old habits of eating non-vegetarian food, his having been a *māyāvādī*, etc. This the anti-party claims is evidence that the Ṭhākura was a conditioned soul prior to meeting Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī.

The anti-party continues their line of thought and concludes that it was by the mercy of Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī that the Ṭhākura became a liberated soul—one qualified to receive *Vraja-bhakti*. This point they further try to prove by quoting the *Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga* wherein Anaṅga Mañjarī takes Bhaktivinoda (Kamalā Mañjarī) and introduces him to Rūpa Mañjarī as a *nava-dāsī* (a newcomer).

*sri-rūpa-mañjarī-praśne īsvarī āmāra
bolibe e nava-dāsī sakhī lalitārā
kamalā-mañjarī-nāma gaurāṅgaika-gati
kṛpā kari' deho ebe rāga-mārge gati*

“Being questioned by Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, my mistress Anaṅga Mañjarī will reply, “This new *dāsī* will be engaged in Lalitā Sakhī's service. Her name is Kamalā Mañjarī, and she is very devoted to Śrī Gaurāṅga. Please be merciful now and give her entrance into the flow of spontaneous devotional service to our Lordships.”

The anti-party say that this verse proves that Bhaktivinoda was not a *nitya-siddha* (eternally liberated) soul, otherwise he would not have referred to himself as a *nava-dāsī*. They further conclude that the Ṭhākura having been introduced to Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī by Anaṅga Mañjarī further demonstrates that the *paramparā* of Bhaktivinoda is coming in the line

of the Nityānanda-parivāra—from Jāhnavī Devī to Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī in an unbroken *dīkṣā-paramparā*. Jāhnavī Devī is Ananga Mañjarī in Kṛṣṇa-līlā and thus they say this demonstrates that it was by the grace of Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī that the Ṭhākura got entrance into the eternal pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa via Ananga Mañjarī.

The conception of Saraswatī Ṭhākura however is diametrically opposed to that of the followers of Lālita Prasāda Ṭhākura. Saraswatī Ṭhākura considered Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura as *nitya-siddha*, eternally liberated. He never for a moment considered Bhaktivinoda as father—what to speak of considering Bhaktivinoda a conditioned soul. Saraswatī Ṭhākura always considered Bhaktivinoda as *guru* (*sat-guru*—eternal *guru*). In fact he always saw and spoke of Bhaktivinoda as being in the highest plane of *guru-tattva*—as the delegation or representative of Śrī Rādhikā.

As already mentioned in our first article Lālita Prasāda Ṭhākura thought of Bhaktivinoda as “Bābu” (father). The fact that Lālita Prasāda Ṭhākura saw Bhaktivinoda as “Bābu” is evident at the beginning of *Svalikhita-Jīvanī* where he writes:

“My honorable father ordered me not to misuse whatever was written to me by him. Such was his instruction to me. That is the reason that I cannot give this book to ordinary persons. Only one who has complete love and faith in my father can read this work. If anyone reads this volume and makes his own commentary that is against my father then he alone is responsible, not I.”

Saraswatī Ṭhākura on the other hand did not consider Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura as “father”—he only saw him as *guru*. Nor did he see any so-called mundane thing about the life of Bhaktivinoda to be an indication that the Ṭhākura was ever a conditioned soul. Thus Saraswatī Ṭhākura gave no importance whatsoever to the book *Svalikhita-Jīvanī*.

The quotation from *Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga* wherein Ananga Mañjarī takes Bhaktivinoda (Kamalā Mañjarī) and introduces him to Rūpa Mañjarī as a *nava-dāsī* (a newcomer) does show however that Bhaktivinoda has an intimate friendly relationship with Ananga Mañjarī in eternal pastimes (*aprakṛta-līlā*). His being referred to as a *nava-dāsī* does not prove that he was previously a conditioned soul but rather the description of his being a *nava-dāsī* is given in the mood of showing us how a member of our *sampradāya* in the stage of perfection (*svarūpa-siddhi*) will be introduced into the divine pastimes of the Lord. The anti-party has no entrance into this understanding because they are victims of a faulty process and they are averse to the practices of pure devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*).

In any chronology of an author's works we would naturally expect that the latter works would reflect the author's deepest thought and development. In this regard we reference the last book written by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in 1907, namely *Sva-Niyama-Dvādaśakam* (twelve verses of my self-imposed regulative principles). In the first verse Bhaktivinoda makes especial reference to the line of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (Rūpa Mañjarī) and the devotees of his disciplic succession. There he says:

*gurau śrī-gauraṅge tad-udita-śubhakti-prakaraṇe
śacī-sunoḥ līlā-vikāsita-sutīrthe nija-manau
harer nāmni preṣṭhe hari-tithiṣu rūpānuga-jane
śuka-prokte śāstre prati-jani mamāstām khalu ratiḥ*

The third line: *harer nāmni preṣṭhe hari-tithiṣu rūpānuga-jane* makes special reference to the line of Rūpa Gosvāmī and his followers by the words *rūpānuga-jane*. Bhaktivinoda prays in his mood of natural humility that whenever and wherever he may happen to take birth he simply desires that his loving affection and attachment will remain unshaken for the line of Rūpa Gosvāmī and his followers.

The anti-party however does not give serious consideration to the position of Rūpa Gosvāmī in the disciplic succession of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Rūpa Gosvāmī simply does not figure predominately in their thinking or understanding of the process of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. The anti-party jumps over 269 verses of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and tries to immediately enter into the internal *sādhana* of *rāgānugā*, leaving the necessary practice of *vaidhi-bhakti* behind. This amounts to a spiritual dead end.

From the reading of the anti-party's literature one cannot glean even a particle of the proper conception necessary for *rāgānugā-bhakti*. One could read such books as "Why Did Caitanya Mahāprabhu Come and What Did He Come to Give" and "Navadvīpa Vraja Mādhurī" from cover to cover without ever realizing that the life of divine love which Śrī Caitanya came to give is based on sacrifice! Enjoying the *līlās* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa "NOW" while one is still at the stage of *bhajana-kriyā* (practice) and without proper qualification (*anartha-nivṛtti*, *niṣṭhā*, and *ruci*) is the odor that the anti-party reeks of. Before one can enter the plane of higher topics one must first embrace a life of divine slavery—that was the conception of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. The real *ekādaśa-bhāva* (*siddha-deha*) is revealed in proportion to one's conversion from the disease of the enjoying spirit to that of a healthy serving disposition. Our actual initiation into *rāgānugā-bhakti* is initiation into the conception of divine slavery.

One must always keep the higher conception above and worship that from a little distance:

pūjala rāga-paṭha gaurava-bhaṅge
mattala sādhu-jana viṣaya-raṅge

This *śloka* was composed by Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and it describes the particular type of posing which should be adopted by

all *sādhakas* (devotees at the stage of practice). From a little distance and below we should offer our highest regard to the highest quarter. An imitative show of the higher sentiments of divine love will only bring about a negative result in the practicing life of a devotee. Imitation is always to be avoided. The *ekādaśa-bhāva* practiced by the anti-party certainly falls into the category of imitation.*

To support their misconception of receiving *ekādaśa-bhāva* at initiation the anti-party quotes the following verse from Bhakti-sandarbhā, Anuccheda 283, Text 20: *divyaṁ jñānam hy atra śrīmati mantre bhagavat-svarūpa-jñānam, tena bhagavata-sambandha-viśeṣa-jñānam ca*. The words “*divyaṁ jñānam*” (transcendental knowledge) here refers to the descriptions of the Lord’s transcendental form in sacred *mantras*. Chanting those *mantras* establishes a relationship with the Supreme Lord. The term “*viśeṣa-jñānam*” here refers to specific knowledge of a specific relationship with that Lord. The anti-party interprets this however to mean receiving *ekādaśa-bhāva*. How from *tena bhagavata-sambandha-viśeṣa-jñānam ca* is the *ekādaśa-bhāva* construed? It is only the stretch of their imagination. *Ekādaśa-bhāva* actually belongs to the *prayojana-tattva* (the highest stage of realization). The anti-party wants to cut off the word *sambandha* (the beginning stage of knowledge—fundamental knowledge) and establish their own interpretation thus making *ekādaśa-bhāva* a part of *sambandha-jñāna*. They want to take up *prayojana* at the stage of *vaidhi-bhakti* leaving aside the *abhidheya* or means of attainment rather than undergo the real process of purification.

* The imaginary *ekādaśa-bhāva* process practiced by the anti-party consists of receiving the following eleven points of information about one’s so-called eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa from a so-called *guru*; *sambandha*—relationship, *vayasa*—age, *nāma*—name, *rūpa*—form, *yūtha*—group, *veśa*—dress, *ājñā*—orders, *vāsa-sthāna*—residence, *seva*—service, *parākaṣṭhā*—highest aspiration, and *pālya-dāsi-bhāva*—the mood of a protected maidservant.

The followers of Saraswatī Ṭhākura are certainly not without *divyaṃ jñānam* or *viśeṣa-jñānam*. A significant proof of this fact is that the followers of Saraswatī Ṭhākura have penetrated into the meaning of the *mantras*, referred to by the above verse, such as *brahma-gāyatrī*, *guru-gāyatrī*, *gaura-gāyatrī*, *gopāla-mantra*, *kāma-gāyatrī*, and *sannyāsa-gāyatrī* (the *rāga-mārga* mantra) to such depths that have never been revealed before. In the commentaries to these *mantras* the followers of Saraswatī Ṭhākura, by his grace, have established the acme of divine truths regarding the worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Thus they have demonstrated that their lineage is the divine succession of *Vraja-prema* in the *paramparā* of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. To satisfy our readers regarding this bold statement we invite you to read the book *Śrī Gāyatrī-mantrārtha-Dīpikā* published by Mandala Publishers.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught *sambandha-jñāna* to Sanātana Gosvāmī (Rati Mañjarī) and *abhidheya-jñāna* to Rūpa Gosvāmī (Rūpa Mañjarī) but we do not find in either case that Mahāprabhu gave *ekādaśa-bhāva* to either of them while imparting His general and specific instructions as it is assumed by the followers of Lālita Prasāda Ṭhākura. Yet if one follows sincerely the instructions given to both Sanātana Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī one will no doubt gradually come to the stage of *prayojana* (perfection) wherein *ekādaśa-bhāva* will be revealed.

Another interesting point to note here is that the verse quoted above from *Bhakti-sandarbhā* appears in the section on Deity worship. There Deity worship is being recommended for householders and a reference is given there to the *Padma-purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa* wherein it is recommended that for wealthy householders the path of Deity worship is most important.

While discussing the defects of imitating *ekādaśa-bhāva* it should also be noted here that the anti-party frequently

recommends the practice of *sādhāraṇī-karaṇa* as a stimulus to *ekādaśa-bhāva*. This *sādhāraṇī-karaṇa* is the process of attending drama performances known as *rāsa-līlās*. Here the anti-party enthusiastically recommends that by watching such *līlā-dramas* one's eternal loving sentiments (*bhāvas*) for Kṛṣṇa in *mādhurya-rasa* are aroused. This they say is achieved by identifying one's self with one of the actors and thus experiencing the sentiments being portrayed. Thus they sometimes make a show of shedding tears and manifesting other bodily symptoms of *bhāva*.

We point out here the obvious—the *sādhāraṇī-karaṇa* process is imitation. One may ask, “What is the harm if neophytes watch *rāsa-līlā* dramas?” The answer is that unless one is established in transcendence (*niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, or *āśakti*) the viewing of *rāsa-līlās* will only arouse one's mundane sentiments of love which are sentiments of *prema* (divine love) covered by lust. When this happens the whole thing is spoiled and one may lose his highest prospect forever.

What to speak of losing our highest prospect—those who are the eternal residents of the Divine World will themselves block our entrance there due to our having committed offenses. When there is imitation, only offenses will be created. Those offenses will be recorded in that circle of the examiners of the upper quarter, and they will give a stamp of disqualification that we are criminal and unfit. This will go against us and hamper our future progress.

Our Guru Mahārāja Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda once commented to us in Vṛndāvana about this *sādhāraṇī-karaṇa* process wherein he said,

“One who has already realized *rāsa-līlā*, he can go to see such performances—otherwise not.”

It is also a known fact that such *līlā-dramas* must be performed by pure devotees in order for the actual sentiments (*bhāvas*) to

manifest. This point the anti-party also overlooks and eagerly goes to attend the *līlā-dramas* performed by conditioned souls. Thus from start to finish it is a cheating process—a process of self-deception.

Some devotees in ISKCON are willing to concede that there are two branches from the *paramparā* of Bhaktivinoda. One being *hari-nāma* and *daiva-varṇāśrama* as represented by the line of Saraswatī Ṭhākura and the other being *ekādaśa-bhāva* (*siddha-praṇālī*) as represented by Lālita Prasāda Ṭhākura. These devotees for want of proper understanding sometimes conclude that these are two parallel paths—one coming from Bhaktivinoda’s *dīkṣā* connection (Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī) and one coming from his *śikṣā* connection (Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī). This idea, however, is completely rejected by the Gauḍīya Maṭha. The *siddha-praṇālī* mentioned by Kavirāja Gosvāmī in his commentary of Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta is not the same as the *siddha-praṇālī* practiced by the followers of Lālita Prasāda Ṭhākura and thus the path of the anti-party is a rejected one. The Gauḍīya Maṭha does not consider the path shown by Lālita Prasāda Ṭhākura to be bona fide, thus the conclusion of the followers of Saraswatī Ṭhākura should be that there is only one authentic line coming down from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and that is the line of Saraswatī Ṭhākura. This is the opinion of all the disciples of Saraswatī Ṭhākura; our Guru Mahārāja A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda, Śrīla B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Daitya Mādhava Mahārāja, and Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja—just to name a few. Thus the disciples and followers of the above-mentioned disciples of Saraswatī Ṭhākura should strictly follow the line of Saraswatī Ṭhākura and not be deviated by the flowery words of the anti-party and the short cut to “nectar.”

The devotees should know that the anti-party, despite their sometimes quoting the books of the Six Gosvāmīs to support

their conception, is not in the *rūpānuṅga-paramparā*, the disciplic succession of Rūpa Gosvāmī (Rūpa Mañjarī). The anti-party starts their *paramparā* from Nityānanda Prabhu to Jāhnavī Devī down to Bīpin Bihārī Gosvāmī. The Six Gosvāmīs are not included in their *paramparā*.

It is sometimes expressed by the anti-party that Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was a *mahā-bhāgavata*, a great devotee. This they say for convenience sake when trying to work themselves out of a corner. What they really think of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is evident in the statement by Premānanda dāsa quoted at the beginning of this article.

When the anti-party seemingly shows respect to Sarasvatī Ṭhākura by saying that he is a *mahā-bhāgavata*—it is actually a hidden criticism. The real meaning of what they say is that they only consider him a preacher of the *yuga-dharma* (*hari-nāma*) and a devotee of the Nārāyaṇa aspect of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—not a member of the Vraja camp. In the conception of the anti-party, *hari-nāma* is something different from *rāgānuṅgā-bhakti* and thus they insinuate that Sarasvatī Ṭhākura cannot give the proper conception of *Vraja-bhakti* although he did preach *yuga-dharma* very nicely. Thus, they say, his followers can only attain *Vaikuṅṭha-prema* but not *Kṛṣṇa-prema* in Vraja. The anti-party stresses here that since Sarasvatī Ṭhākura did not receive *ekādaśa-bhāva* from Bhaktivinoda that he was given entrance only to *Vaikuṅṭha*.

By saying that Sarasvatī Ṭhākura can only give *Vaikuṅṭha-prema* the anti-party indirectly insinuates that Gaura Kīśora dāsa Bābājī, a *siddha-puruṣa* and eternal resident of Vraja, Guṇa Mañjarī, did not bestow the conception of *Vraja-bhakti* upon his disciple Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. It is here that the anti-party makes one of their biggest mistakes.

There is also a nice story in this connection regarding Sarasvatī Ṭhākura being a *Vaikuṅṭha Man* and a man of Vraja as well:

“Once a *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava spent some time at Māyāpura in the association of Saraswatī Ṭhākura. After some days this man went to Navadvīpa to be in the association of Gaura Kiśora dāsa Bābājī. Hearing that this man had come from Māyāpura, Bābājī was very happy and he inquired about Māyāpura. The man replied that he would not go to Māyāpura any more, because Saraswatī and others there are Vaikuṅṭha men. They are only interested in *aiśvarya* mood—they are not in the Vraja mood. Hearing these words Bābājī Mahārāja was quite disgusted and he scolded that man for his foolishness and offense at the lotus feet of a pure Vaiṣṇava. Bābājī said, ‘It is ridiculous for a sparrow to attempt to cross the ocean. If you are serious about living in Vraja, then give up your criticism of pure devotees. Do you think that you will get information about Vaikuṅṭha from hell? Saraswatī is in Vaikuṅṭha and he is in Vṛndāvana as well. You are presently in the lap of the witch Māyā. How will you know the Saraswatī of Vraja? You do not possess the eyes to see how Bhaktivinoda and Saraswatī Prabhu have exemplified the performance of *hari-bhajana* with pure ecstatic emotion.’”

The highest *ekādaśa-bhāva* that one can achieve is that of a *mañjarī* maidservant in the camp of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī. This was actually the *bhāva* of Saraswatī Ṭhākura. There is a short anecdote in this connection which shows that Saraswatī Ṭhākura (Nayana-maṇi Mañjarī) was indeed in *mañjarī-bhāva*:

“In Navadvīpa there lived a very famous and revered Vaiṣṇava saint named Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja. Vaṁśīdāsa was accepted by all the Vaiṣṇavas as a *siddha-puruṣa* (perfected soul). Vaṁśīdāsa had a special affectionate relationship with Saraswatī Ṭhākura. Saraswatī Ṭhākura sometimes visited Vaṁśīdāsa at his place of *bhajana* in Navadvīpa—seeing Saraswatī approaching Vaṁśīdāsa would shout in a very loud voice, ‘Oh, a Mañjarī (Nayana-maṇi Mañjarī)

has come! Will Rādhā come also? She will come, she will come!”

The anti-party considers both Bhaktivinoda and Sarasvatī Ṭhākura to have been conditioned souls. Both these conclusions are thoroughly rejected by Gauḍīya Maṭha and ISKCON. The words of Vaiśṇīdāsa alone are sufficient to verify the position of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in *mañjarī-bhāva*—provided that is—that one has faith in the words of great saintly persons:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir, yathā-deve tathā gurau
tasyai te kathitā hy arthāḥ, prakāśante mahātmanāḥ*

“Only unto those great souls who have faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.”

Our Guru Mahārāja A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda used to say that Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was “A Vaikuṅṭha Man.” The meaning of this statement is that Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was beyond all mundane calculations and designations. He descended to this world at Śrī Kṣetra Jagannātha Purī to dispel the ignorance which covered the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and reveal the pastimes of the Supreme Lord. That is the meaning of the name which his father gave him, Bimala Prasāda. Bimala Devī is the *Yogamāyā* potency of Lord Jagannātha and it is Bimala Devī who reveals the pastimes of Jagannātha. Thus Bimala Prasāda means one who has descended by the arrangement of the internal potency (*antaraṅga-śakti*). Due to a poor fund of knowledge the anti-party cannot see this truth.

The greatest defect of the anti-party is that they do not have complete faith that the holy name of Kṛṣṇa can reveal one’s *siddha-svarūpa* (eternally perfected form). The anti-party actually lacks faith in the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Furthermore they consider that the attainment of divine consciousness is an ascending process—By practice alone one cannot attain divine

consciousness. Divine consciousness is the super-subjective plane of reality and He reserves the right to reveal Himself to His devotee. It is a descending process. The real knowledge of *ekādaśa-bhāva* is not the so-called knowledge of relationship, *rūpa*, *nāma*, etc., imparted to a conditioned soul by a so-called *guru* but the actual attainment of *ekādaśa-bhāva* is effected by the descent of the holy name—when one chants the name in pure unalloyed love and devotion without even the slightest trace of desire for *kāma* (enjoyment) or *mokṣa* (liberation). This is the method of perfection recommended by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Śikṣāṣṭakam—*param-vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has himself chastised the mind of those who want to jump to the higher plane—neglecting the auspicious process of chanting the holy name. We find the following verse in Kalyāṇa Kalpa-taru, Song 18, Verse 4:

*na mānile su-bhajana, sādhu-saṅge saṅkīrtana
an korile nirjane smaraṇa
na uṭhiya vṛkṣopari, tāna-tāni phala dhori
duṣṭa-phala korile ārjana*

“But your idea, dear mind, is to neglect the best and most auspicious process for worshipping Kṛṣṇa, namely the congregational chanting of His holy names in the association of purified devotees. And you don’t even bother to try to remember Him in a lonely place. Your attitude is just like trying to pick fruits forcibly from a tree by jumping at them from the ground. Instead of climbing the tree to properly pick the sweet, ripened fruits from the top of the tree, you will simply get the sour, unripe fruits by such a jumping process.”

We can write hundreds of articles defeating the anti-party and *sahajiyā* conceptions as Saraswatī Ṭhākura has given us the

inspiration and courage to do so. He himself wrote hundreds of verses and gave thousands of lectures defeating all types of misconception so that sincere souls could traverse the path of pure devotional service. This however the anti-party considered a lower platform of service to the Supreme Lord. Unfortunately it is they who are the losers—as Gaura Kiśora dāsa Bābājī said,

“They do not possess the eyes to see how Bhaktivinoda and Sarasvatī Prabhu have exemplified the performance of *hari-bhajana* with pure ecstatic emotion.”

“They do not possess the eyes to see” means that the anti-party is blind to self-manifest spiritual truths.

The real divine life of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is described in the following two verses:

*namas te gaura-vāṇī-śrī-mūrtaye dīna-tāriṇe
rūpānuga-viruddhāpasiddhānta-dhvānta-hāriṇe*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto you, who are the personified teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You are the deliverer of the fallen souls. You do not tolerate any statement which is against the *siddhānta* enunciated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.”

*nikhila-bhuvana-māyā-chinna-vichinna-kartrī
vibudha-bahula-mṛgya-mukti-mohānta-dhātrī
śīthilīta-vidhi-rāga-rādhyā-rādheśa-dhānī
vilasatu ḥṛdi nityam bhaktisiddhānta-vāṇī*

“With his first step, He cut to pieces the whole plane of exploitation, and with his second, he crushed the speculation of scholars of salvation and liberation. With his third, he softened *vaidhi-bhakti* with a touch of divine love (*rāga-mārga*). Taking us beyond Vaikuṅṭha, he has introduced us to the highest worship of Śrī Rādhā and Govinda.

“With the softness of Vṛndāvana within, and the hardness of a devastator without, he created havoc in the world—fighting with one and all. Single-handedly fighting against the whole world, and cutting everything to pieces—that was his external attitude. And his second attitude was to stop the boasting research of the scholars and doctors of different schools of thought; and third, to minimize and slacken the grandeur of the worship of Nārāyaṇa, and establish the service of Rādhā-Govinda as the highest attainment. He caused the domain of love to descend into this plane, with the service of Rādhā-Govinda, establishing the flow of divine love from the heart as all in all.

“That was his history—the real existence of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. May his teachings dance eternally within the core of our hearts.”



The Line of Śrī Rūpa

by Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāja

A Chapter from the book “Śrī Guru and his Grace”

The impersonalist transcendentalists say that once we are independent of the flesh connection, the consciousness of the human soul is the highest thing and that no finer, higher thing can exist. But the scriptures say that the Supersoul, or Paramātmā, is superior in existence to the individual soul, and that the Bhagavān conception, the personal conception of God, is even higher. This begins with the Vāsudeva conception: Kṛṣṇa alone. The Nārāyaṇa conception is again higher, and the Kṛṣṇa conception is the highest. And even in the Kṛṣṇa conception there are divisions: Dvārakā, Mathurā, and Vṛndāvan. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam assert that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead: *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*.

The Vṛndāvana conception of Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Entity is the highest because beauty is above all. Beauty is above all grandeur and power. Neither physical, mental, or intellectual power, nor any other power, but beauty and love is the ultimate controlling power. Absolute good is absolute beauty, and that is the absolute controller. Mercy is above justice.

Generally, we cannot conceive that anything could be greater than justice; we think that justice must be the highest principle. But we are told that mercy is above justice. And who can show mercy? Not an ordinary person, but only a king. One who can compensate for the loss in justice can give mercy. And the highest court is able to compensate everything. Such a realm exists. And there, the Lord is engaged in Pastimes with His paraphernalia of equal quality. There is such a law, a provision beyond the sense of justice in our puppy brain.

Uddhava is recognised as the principal devotee of the Lord, and his statement about mercy is found in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.2.23):

*aho bakī yaṁ stana-kāla-kūṭarṁ
jighāmsayāpāyayad apy asādhvī
lebhe gatim dhātry-ucitām tato 'nyam
kaṁ vā dayāluṁ śaraṇaṁ vrajema*

He says, “Where else should I surrender? How can I surrender to anyone more merciful than Kṛṣṇa, when I find that the demoness Pūtānā in the garb of maternal affection went to kill Kṛṣṇa, but instead received such a wonderful benediction that she was given a higher post as one of Kṛṣṇa’s mothers? My Lord is so kind, so benevolent. Where else should I surrender? Her poisoned breast was put into the mouth of the infant child Kṛṣṇa, and she was blessed with such a high and affectionate post! So, how can we measure His grace, His infinite mercy? His ways and mercy are beyond all expectations.” Rather than treating her with justice, we find just the opposite. He showed magnanimous behaviour towards His greatest enemy. So, beyond justice there is mercy, and such a high degree of mercy, such a quality and intensity of mercy that it cannot be measured. Uddhava prays, “Where should I find such a standard of grace as this? I must fall flat at the divine feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Why should any man of intelligence not run to fall flat at the feet of such a magnanimous personality as Kṛṣṇa? His nature is that of the highest love.”

Department of mercy

We, the finite, should approach the infinite with this spirit: “If justice is applied, I have no hope. I omit that department. I have come only to seek my fortune in the department of mercy, where there is no calculation of right or wrong, of merit or demerit. I have come to that department, my Lord, because I do

not know what is within me. When I analyse and study my own heart, I find that I am unknown to my own self. I am so helpless and wretched that I don't even know my self. How then should I venture to appeal to a department where something will be granted only after a calculation of my merits and demerits? I don't want that. I don't want any decision based on justice.

“I surrender. You may do whatever you like with me. I am the worst of sinners. What to do with me now is in your hands. You, Saviour, I have come to You. If there is any possibility—save me. This is my open appeal, my one-sided appeal.” This sort of self-abnegation will automatically cleanse our hearts. By this attitude of *śaraṇāgati*, or surrender, we invite the greatest attention from above. *Śaraṇāgati*, surrender, is the only way to be reinstated in our lost prospect.

At present, we are disconnected from the prospect of divine love which we cherish in the innermost quarter of our hearts. If we want to have that privilege very easily and very quickly, we must approach the Lord with plain speaking, and with a naked body and mind, with everything exposed. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.152) has written:

*mat-tulyo nāsti pāpātmā nāparādhī ca kaścana
parihāre 'pi lajjā me kiṁ bruve puruṣottama*

“My Lord, I feel ashamed. How shall I offer You so many pure things like flowers? Generally, pure things are offered to You, but what about me? I have come with the most filthy thing to offer to You. I feel ashamed. I have come to You, with only my shame, to beg for Your mercy. There is no parallel to my sinful life, criminal life. Everything that can be conceived of as bad is found in me. It is very difficult even to speak about the characteristics of my heinous sins and crimes. Still, Your nature, existence, fame, and benevolence cannot but attract me. You can save me. You can purify me. Hoping against hope, I have come to You.

And I have only one solace, that I am the real object of Your mercy. Your tendency is to purify the meanest. Those who are the most needy have some claim to Your mercy. I am the worst of the needy and the meanest of the mean. This is my only qualification, my only hope to attract Your attention and appeal to Your magnanimity.”

Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six gosvāmīs, wrote,

“O Śrī Rādhe, You are the Queen of the heart of Govinda. Please engage me in Your service.”

Rūpa Gosvāmī says in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.151) that still there is some sort of subconscious element within him:

*yuvatīnām yathā yūni yūnaṁ ca yuvatau yathā
mano 'bhiramate tadvan mano 'bhiramatām tvayi*

“Just as a young boy feels attraction for a young girl, I want that sort of attraction towards You. I want to be engrossed in You, forgetting all material paraphernalia.” And by sincere surrender, at once our progress begins. And the development of that kind of attraction takes us to the topmost rank. “I want that intimate connection with You, my Lord. I am the neediest of the needy, but at the same time I have this ambition. I am so disgusted with the world outside that I want the most intense and comprehensive relationship with You.” With this attitude the surrendering process begins and rises step by step. “I want that standard of divine love, of intimacy with You. I want to dive deep within You.”

Appearing and disappearing scriptures

*govinda-vallabhe rādhe prārthaye tvām ahaṁ sadā
tvādīyam iti jānātu govindo mām tvayā saha*

This prayer is found in the *Arcana-paddhati*, which comes from Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī's edition of the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.

From there it has sprung through him. It is there in the *śāstra*, which is an eternal flow of a particular current of knowledge. Everything is eternal in Vaikuṅṭha and Goloka. Just as the sun comes up and goes down, appears and disappears, the thought is eternal and sometimes appears and disappears.

In this verse, *Govinda-vallabhe Rādhe*, there is a sudden turn. Kṛṣṇa says to His devotee, “Oh, do you want an intimate relationship with Me? It is not to be found within My department. You will have to go to another department. Go then to the department of Rādhikā.” Then at once the devotee’s thought is transferred towards that side. All his energy is monopolised there. It is Her monopoly. “Your inner quest is not to be found within My department”, Kṛṣṇa says. “You’ll have to go elsewhere and file a petition there.”

And, with this inspiration, at once the devotee puts his petition to Rādhārānī. “*Govinda-vallabhe Rādhe*: O Śrī Rādhe, Your master and sustainer is Govinda. He is the Lord of Your heart.” Govinda means, “He who can give fulfilment to all our senses.” With our senses we can feel perception as well as knowledge. Govinda is the master who gives fulfilment to all our channels of perception. “Govinda is Your Lord. But just the opposite is also true. You are the Mistress of the heart of Govinda, the Supreme Master. Is it not? You are the Queen of the heart of Govinda. I have been directed to come to You with my petition. Please enlist my name in Your department and admit me as a servitor in Your group.”

Flowing river of nectar

*rādhe vṛndāvanādhīse karuṇāmṛta-vāhini
krpayā nija-pādābja dāsyam mahyam pradīyatām*

“O Rādhe, O Queen of Vṛndāvan, You are like a flowing river filled with the nectar of mercy. Please be kind upon me, and bestow upon me some small service at Your lotus feet.”

You are the Queen of the whole management of ecstasy (*rasotsava*). *Rasa* means ecstasy. That is an unlimited flow of ecstasy. That is the speciality of Vṛndāvan: *ādi-rasa*, the original *rasa*, *mādhura-rasa*, conjugal mellow. All *rasas* are branches of that *rasa*, in its peculiar developing character. If analysed, all *rasas* will be found within *mādhura-rasa*. And *mādhura-rasa* has been recognised as the highest mellow of devotion.

In his conversation with Rāmānanda Rāya, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu rejected devotion contaminated with reason. He said, “*Eho bāhya, āge kaha āra*: this is superficial; go further.” Mahāprabhu accepted that real *bhakti* begins from the stage of pure devotion, unmixed with reason. When Rāmānanda suggested *dāsyā-rasa*, Mahāprabhu said, “This is good, but go further.” Then Rāmānanda mentioned *sakhya-rasa*: Mahāprabhu said, “This is also good, but go further.” Then he came to *vātsalya-rasa*, the sonhood of Godhead. “This is very good”, Mahāprabhu said, “But go further.” Then he came to *mādhura-rasa*. “Yes”, Mahāprabhu said, “this is best.” At that stage in the development of *rasa*, Vṛndāvan is the most suitable place.

Mādhura-rasa is found most extensively in Vṛndāvan. So, it is said, “*Rādhe Vṛndāvanādhīṣe*: You are the Queen of that sort of *līlā* which is found in Vṛndāvan. There, the highest type of nectar is flowing. You are like a flowing river of nectar.”

Distributing ecstasy

The very nature of Kṛṣṇa has been described as “Ecstasy Himself.” He is tasting the innate ecstasy of Himself. He knows His ecstasy and He feels it, but to distribute that innate ecstasy outside, a particular potency is indispensable, and that is known as *hlādinī*. The gist of *hlādinī-śakti*, or Kṛṣṇa’s internal ecstasy potency, is Rādhikā, who is drawing the innermost *rasa*, the ecstasy of the highest order, extracting it from within and distributing it outside.

So, it is said, “*Karuṇāmṛta-vāhini*: ecstasy mixed with magnanimity is flowing from that great fountain, and just as a river flowing from the mountains may carry with its current many valuable minerals to the outside world, the *hlādinī* potency carries *rasa* out from the abode of the *rasa-svarūpa*, Kṛṣṇa Himself, ecstasy personified.” The flow of that river of nectar carries ecstasy and *rasa*, the flow of sweetness and magnanimity, to distribute to others.

Then, another categorical change is effected within the mind of a devotee. In the meantime, in the course of his progress, he realises, “Oh! Kṛṣṇa is of secondary concern to me. I find my primary connection with You, Śrī Rādhē. I want Your direct service and not the direct service of Kṛṣṇa.” This awakening of the heart, intimate adherence and obligation to the next nearest agent, develops in a surrendered soul. At this stage the devotee thinks, “I shall derive more benefit by giving my closest attention to the nearest agent, my Gurudeva. I shall thrive thereby.” And it is his concern to sanction the upper connections. Of course, our intentions should be pure and genuine, and the business of that agent is to give us a favourable, normal connection with the hierarchy of service.

All our attention should be concentrated in the service of our Guru. This should be the idea. Our first tendency is to approach Kṛṣṇa. In that stage, the first thing to understand is that we are helpless. Of course, all things must be sincere. First there is the stage of helplessness, then we want the shelter of Kṛṣṇa, sweetness personified, then we are attracted to sweetness of a particular type, and to approach that department. There, we pray for the final, closest connection or permanent membership as a servitor there. This has been taught by Śrīla Raghunāth Dās Gosvāmī as the highest achievement of the living being.

Dās Gosvāmī lived for sixteen years continuously in the association of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Svarūp

Dāmodar. After they disappeared from this world, Raghunāth Dās, disgusted with his future prospect, went to Vṛndāvan to finish his life. But when he met Rūpa and Sanātan there, he saw another vision, a dream of a new life. Then he found, “Although Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Svarūp Dāmodar have disappeared from my physical eyes, they are living here in Rūpa and Sanātan, within their activities, in their preaching tendency. Mahāprabhu is here, as living as anything.” He had to reject the idea of finishing his life, and with new vigour he began to serve in Vṛndāvan.

And Dās Gosvāmī has given us the understanding of our highest aspiration. He says, “O, Rādhikā, I want Your service. If You are not satisfied with me, I do not want Kṛṣṇa, nor His land, Vraja.” This is his prayer, and he is admitted as the Prayojan-ācārya, the Guru who has shown us what is the highest aim of our life, *prayojana-tattva*, the ultimate destination. And this *śloka* proves his position as the giver of our destination.

An ocean of nectar

*āśā-bharair amṛta-sindhu-mayaiḥ kathañcit
kālo mayāti-gamitaḥ kila sāmprataraḥ hi
tvan cet kṛpāḥ mayi vidhāsyasi naiva kiṁ me
prāṇair vraje na ca varoru bakārināpi?*

This *śloka* is a direct prayer to Rādhārānī. It expresses a particular type of hope which is so sweet and reassuring that it is compared with an unlimited ocean of nectar. He says, “With that hope I am somehow passing my days, flagging my days, dragging my life through these tedious times only for that hope. That hope is sustaining me, the nectarean ocean of hope is attracting me and sustaining me. Somehow I am dragging my days to my only safety.

“Otherwise, I have lost the direct association of Mahāprabhu, Svarūp Dāmodar, and so many other great souls, and still I am living. Why? I have a particular ray of hope. And the prospect

and quality of my hope is very great and high. But my patience has reached its end. I can't endure it any longer. I can't wait. I am finished; I can't wait anymore. At this moment if You do not show Your grace to me, I am finished. I shall lose the chance forever. I shall have no desire to continue my life. It will all be useless.

“Without Your grace, I can't stand to live another moment. And Vṛndāvan, which is even dearer to me than my life itself—I am disgusted with it. It is painful; it is always pinching me. What to speak of anything else, I am even disgusted with Kṛṣṇa. It is shameful to utter such words, but I can have no love even for Kṛṣṇa, until and unless You take me up within Your confidential camp of service. Such charm I have come for. I have seen the clue of such charm within the service of Your camp. Without that, everything is tasteless to me. And I can't maintain my existence even in Vṛndāvan. And even Kṛṣṇa, what to speak of others, has no charm for me.” This is the prayer of Raghunāth Dās Gosvāmī.

Service of Rādhārānī

So, Rādhā-dāsyam, the servitorship of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī, is said to be the highest attainment of the living being by the school established by Mahāprabhu. It is the gist of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. It is Kṛṣṇa's own version. He says in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.14.15):

*na tathā me priyatama ātma-yonir na śaṅkaraḥ
na ca śaṅkarṣano na śrīr naivātmā ca yathā bhavān*

“O Uddhava! Neither Brahmā, nor Śiva, nor Baladeva, nor Lakṣmī, nor even My own self are as dear to Me as you are.”

And that Uddhava glorifies Vṛndāvan, the Vraja-gopīs, and Rādhārānī in this way in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.61):

*āsām aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣām ahaṁ syām
vṛndāvane kim api gulma-latauśadhīnām*

*yā dustyajam̐ sva-janam̐ ārya-patham̐ ca hitvā
bhejur mukunda-padavīm̐ śrutibhir vimṛgyām̐*

“The gopīs of Vṛndāvan have given up the association of their husbands, sons, and other family members, who are very difficult to renounce, and they have sacrificed even their religious principles to take shelter of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, which are sought after even by the Vedas. Oh! Grant me the fortune to be born as a blade of grass in Vṛndāvan, so that I may take the dust of those great souls upon my head.”

The search for Śrī Rādhā

Uddhava has shown us the high position of the gopīs. And between all the gopīs and Rādhārānī there is also a categorical difference. That was proved in the *rāsa-līlā*. When Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs openly displayed their transaction of heart, with that divine *rasa* flowing and inundating all directions, Rādhārānī was also there. She gave the highest contribution to the common *rasa-vilāsa* display of the *parakīya-mādhura-rasa*, paramour mellow. Then, suddenly, dissatisfaction came in Rādhārānī’s heart. She began to think, “Am I also counted in the common flow of *rasa*?” Some reaction came within Her mind and suddenly She left. After displaying Her peculiar type of superexcellent dancing and singing, introducing a flow of a new type there, suddenly She departed. She left the circle of the Rāsa dance. And Kṛṣṇa suddenly found, “Rādhārānī is not here. It is tasteless.” The flow of *rasa* was there, but the gist, the quality, is a little down. He felt, “Why is it not so satisfactory to My inner heart?” He felt some ebb in the tide. And then by inspection He found that Rādhārānī was absent. Disappointed, He left the circle of the Rāsa dance and went to search after Her.

Although the *parakīya-mādhura-rasa*, the highest mellow of conjugal love, Vṛndāvan, and the gopīs were all there, still

there is a categorical difference in quality between the other gopīs and the particular camp of Rādhārānī. In every way there is a categorical difference, both in quality and quantity. Jayadeva Gosvāmī, in his Gīta-govinda (3.1) has described how Kṛṣṇa left the circle of the Rāsa dance:

*kaṁsārīr api saṁsāra-vāsanābaddha-śṛṅkhalām
rādhām ādhāya hṛdaye tatyāja vraja-sundarīḥ*

“Lord Kṛṣṇa took Śrīmatī Rādhārānī within His heart, for He wanted to dance with Her. In this way, He left the arena of the Rāsa dance and the company of all the other beautiful damsels of Vraja.”

Jayadeva has described in this way that Kṛṣṇa left the circle of the Rāsa dance, taking Rādhā within His heart. Kṛṣṇa departed in search of Rādhārānī. Her position is so exalted. It is said, “Lord Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental desires for loving exchanges could not be satisfied even in the midst of billions of gopīs. Thus He went searching after Śrīmatī Rādhārānī. Just imagine how transcendently qualified She is! (*śata-koṭi-gopīte nahe kāma-nirvāpaṇa*).”

The other gopīs numbered so many, but in quality they were a little less. Their total combination could not satisfy Kṛṣṇa. The qualitative difference was there. That is found.

The Rūpānuga *sampradāya*, the followers of the line of Śrī Rūpa, are those who have the unique taste of service in the camp of Rādhārānī. In that plane, there is no entrance of any mundane exploitation or renunciation, and not even legalised *śāstric* devotion. The highest kind of devotion is not controlled by any law. It is spontaneous and automatic. Sacrifice to the highest degree is only possible in that camp. The highest kind of divine sentiment is distributed from the camp of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī, and that can never be compared with any attainment hitherto known even in the eternal factor of time and space.

Then, there is another stage for which we should be prepared. Why should we try to enter into the camp of Rādhārānī? Should we think that there, in that better atmosphere, we shall have Kṛṣṇa's presence more confidentially? Should we think, "I will have contact with Kṛṣṇa very intimately?" Should we want to enter into that camp? No—we want to avoid the connection of Kṛṣṇa, but concentrate on the service of Rādhārānī. Why? What more benefit is possible there in the service of Rādhārānī? If we approach Kṛṣṇa directly to give service to Him, we shall be losers. Rādhārānī's service to Kṛṣṇa is of the highest order in every way. If we devote our energy to help Rādhārānī, our energy will be utilised in Her service. In this way She will serve Kṛṣṇa with Her service more enhanced. Then the reciprocation will pass to us through Her as our reward. That will be devotion of the highest type, *mahābhāva*.

So, the general inclination of the *sakhīs*, the confidential maidservants of Rādhārānī, is not to come in direct connection with Kṛṣṇa. They avoid that. But still, it is the benevolent and generous nature of Rādhārānī to connect them with Kṛṣṇa on some plea at some time or other. But their innate nature is always to avoid Kṛṣṇa and concentrate on the service of Rādhārānī. This is confirmed in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā, 8.208):

rādhāra svarūpa—kṛṣṇa-prema kalpalatā
sakhī-gaṇa haya tāra pallava-puṣpa-pātā

“By nature, Śrīmatī Rādhārānī is just like a creeper of love of Godhead, and the gopīs are the twigs, flowers, and leaves of that creeper.”

Eternally the twigs, flowers, and leaves sprout from the creeper of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī. She is the trunk, and they are the branches. This is their relationship.

Yet still, there is another, higher thing. We are known as Rūpānugas, or the followers of Śrī Rūpa. Why? The service

of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī eliminates everything, even Nārāyaṇa, to go to Kṛṣṇa. There is the Kṛṣṇa of Dvārakā, the Kṛṣṇa of Mathurā, and the Kṛṣṇa of Vṛndāvan. Then again in Vṛndāvan, where there is free mixing without hesitation in other camps, Rādhārānī's camp is the highest. Eliminating all other camps, direct service to Rādhārānī is considered to be the highest. Still, there is another point.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī—Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī

Who is Rūpa? Rūpa Mañjarī. Generally the hierarchy in the spiritual world is eternal. New recruits can occupy a particular rank of *mañjarī*, assistant, in *mādhura-rasa*. And the leader of the *mañjarīs* is Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī. What is the special feature in the *mañjarī* camp which is not found among the *sakhīs*, girlfriends of Kṛṣṇa? First there is Rādhārānī, then the camp of Her right-hand personal attendant, Lalitā. Then, under Lalitā, there is Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī. What is the unique position of the followers of Śrī Rūpa? The new recruits can attain to that status. Now, the privilege of this *mañjarī* class we are to conceive most respectfully and attentively.

When Rādhā and Govinda are in secrecy, in a private place, the *sakhīs*, who are well-versed in the art of that kind of play because they are a little grown-up, do not like to approach there to disturb Their confidential mixing. If the more grown-up *sakhīs* enter there, both Rādhā and Govinda will feel shy. So their presence may create some disturbance. But the younger girls can enter there, and then Rādhā and Govinda have no hesitation in free mixing. So in that highest stage of the mixing of Rādhā-Govinda, the free play of Rādhā-Govinda, these *mañjarīs*, the younger girls, can have admission. But the grown-up *sakhīs* cannot have admission there.

New recruits may come up to the *mañjarī* class. And the *mañjarīs* have that sort of special advantage under the leadership of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī. So, they get the best advantage there; the most

sacred type of pure service, which is not open even to the *sakhīs*, is open to the *mañjarīs*. That is found in Rādhārānī's camp. So, the position of the Rūpānuga, the followers of Śrī Rūpa, is the most profitable position. That has been given out by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. That has been shown by Him, and that is fixed as the highest limit of our fortune in Kṛṣṇa's concern. This is unexpectable, undesignable, and beyond hope, but our prospect lies there in that subtle camp of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, Rūpa Gosvāmī.

So, the camp, the *sampradāya* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, is known as the Rūpānuga *sampradāya*. There our fate and our fortune are located. Now we have to conduct ourselves in such a way that naturally we can connect with that highest, purest spiritual conception from here. We must not allow ourselves to be satisfied with anything less than this highest ideal. That should be the highest goal of our life. And we must adjust our approach from our present position.

Spiritual inheritance

We are minors. Our father has left us with so many important documents about the properties we are to inherit. As minors, we should try to find out what properties belong to us in those documents. When we come of age, then we shall take possession of our rightful inheritance. The *rāgānuṣa-sāstra*, the scriptures of spontaneous devotional love, has been given to us, left to us, by our Guru, our guardian, our father. And as we grow more and more in the spiritual line, we will have to detect what is our prospect, what is our real wealth. We must recover that. We must have that. It is there in the document. It is ours. This is our position. We are minors, but we must become majors and demand the service meant for us by our Guardians.

Devotee: We are putting in our claim with you. We think that in the absence of our father, the court has appointed

a guardian, in order to keep us out of mischief and also to regulate our inheritance.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj: This is not mine. This is the property of my Gurudev. And Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda gave you a clue. He has distributed the key widely and given a clue: “With the key come and open the iron chest and find out what valuable ornaments and gems are within the chest.” Of course, no one will understand us when we say such things. Who will come to appreciate? They’ll say, “Oh, this is all the product of a disorganised brain. These people are trying to take electricity from the sky, leaving aside this concrete earth. They are like the *chātaka* bird.” Rūpa Gosvāmī says that there is a class of bird known as *chātaka*, who never take a drop of water from the earth. Their nature is that whenever they want a drop of water, they always cast their eyes to the clouds. “One drop of pure water!”—that is their cry. And so they wait, with their beaks towards the sky, towards the clouds. And they never use any water from the earth. So, our line is like that. The spirit of that bird is described in the following way by Rūpa Gosvāmī:

A drop of Your grace

*viracaya mayi daṇḍam dīnabandho dayām
vā gatir iha na bhavattaḥ kācid anyā mamāsti
nipatatu śata-koṭir nirbharam vā navāmbhas
tad api kila payodaḥ stūyate chātakena*

“You may punish me, O cloud, You may punish me. If a thunderbolt comes, I’ll be nowhere. You can throw down thunder, or You can give me water. But how much can I drink with my small beak? A flood of rain may come. O Lord of the poor, Lord of the helpless, You can give me a drop of Your devotion, or You may punish me like anything.”

He is always praying for water. The cloud may satisfy him immediately or, by sending a thunderbolt, it may finish him and efface him from the earth. The bird has no other

alternative by nature. So he says, “My position is also like that bird. O Kṛṣṇa, You may finish me, destroy me, efface me from the world, or You may save me by only a drop of Your grace. I won’t search after my satisfaction in the mud. That is finished. I will never go back to search for my fortune in the earth, in the mundane. I am already fixed to do or die. Either I must receive a drop of Your grace, or You may finish me.” In this way, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī prays that Kṛṣṇa’s mercy will descend like rain from the clouds, and not only quench his thirst, but bathe him, satisfy his utmost hankering, and fulfil his innermost necessity.

So, we should never search for our fortune in the mud. We must always look to the high sky and pray for Śrī Guru and his grace.



Our Unique Identity

by Tridaṇḍi Gosvāmī Bhakti Bhāvana Viṣṇu Mahārāja

*A transcendental confluence of guidance & shelter
under our affectionate guardians—*

*Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda,
Śrīla B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, and Śrīla B. P. Purī Mahārāja.*

The grand preaching movement outside India spread from the determination of (Our great-grandfather *guru*) Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s prayers to the Lord for help in spreading this message and saving the fallen population from their degraded, wasted lives, as he perceived the climate at that time. This was answered with the birth of his divinely inspired son, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura — proclaimed a “Rāy of Viṣṇu,” who founded the Gauḍīya Maṭha Mission and trained and sent some of his disciples outside India to preach.

The world knows of Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda’s success, but there were other less successful disciples of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura sent to England and Germany prior to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s successful preaching in North America. Amongst his stalwart god-brothers, it was recognized that Kṛṣṇa specifically chose to empower Śrīla Prabhupāda to spread His message far and wide.

Mission history

Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda miraculously spread the *bhakti-yoga* culture, more commonly known as the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement, all over the world. In the days after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1977, his society suffered a vacuum of uncertainty without his leadership.

The GBC (Governing Body Commission) of ISKCON regularly sent a devotee (Dhīra Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja) to Śrīdhara Mahārāja

to ask many questions, looking for guidance as they newly accepted their position as successive *gurus* in ISKCON.

Many regular devotees also sought *śikṣā* (spiritual advice) from Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja — answers to important questions of every nature relating to their spiritual lives. Although initiated by the GBC as instructed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, this *śikṣā* was later stopped. All of this history is carefully documented in the book *Our Affectionate Guardians*.*

In late 1986, the two of us (Nārasiṅha Mahārāja and the author) formally left ISKCON and joined the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Society of three *sannyāsī* godbrothers. For Gaura Pūrṇimā 1987, our five *sannyāsīs* and members journeyed together to meet with Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja in Navadvīpa, formally recognizing him as our principal *śikṣā-guru*.

We were all captivated by Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja's narration of the divine description of the process of journeying to the highest limits of our devotion, entering into our final destination in life — the spiritual realm of Goloka Vṛndāvana. This greatly impressed and inspired all of us to seek further guidance from Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja. His scriptural teachings became a major contributing factor to the activities and goals in our mission.

It was named the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Society — its purpose aligned with those of Śrīla Prabhupāda and tempered by the realizations of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja. We were no longer members of Prabhupāda's formal society — which we had all served faithfully for many years. Now we were still serving our *guru* under a different banner with the same ideals.

Our frequent visits to India usually included visiting Vṛndāvana, the holy center of Kṛṣṇa's earthly activities, finally purchasing our own building there and opening a branch of our Society. Our International Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava

* *Our Affectionate Guardians* — <https://gosai.com/writings/our-affectionate-guardians-unabridged>

Society mission formally started in 1990 with the purchase of Rūpānuga Bhajana Āśrama and the initiation of disciples by Narasiṅha Mahārāja. During Śrīla Prabhupāda's talk after giving Narasiṅha Mahārāja *sannyāsa* along with other devotees, he instructed them to become *gurus* and spread Śrī Caitanya's message.

Narasiṅha Mahārāja was always fixed on executing his service as Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed. All the members of our mission continuously heard from him the most important standards and instructions Prabhupāda taught with his every breath.

We traveled continuously, always visiting the places of the Lords' pastimes, and establishing *āśramas* in places deemed auspicious for preaching activities, such as Tiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), Kerala and Mulki, Karnataka in South India; Vṛndāvana in North India; Vermont in the USA; Italy. We ultimately closed the Rūpānuga Bhajana Vṛndāvana Āśrama and consolidated our members in Govindajī Gardens in Srirangapatna, near Mysore on the holy River Kaveri, so we could all work together fulfilling Mahāprabhu's instructions.

Our Gurus

Śrīla Prabhupāda established an international structure, an institutionalization of the process of *bhakti-yoga* and spread it all over the world — an unprecedented and incredible accomplishment. Others had come from India to the West but their impact was minimal in comparison to the arrival of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his overwhelming success. This author owes an eternal debt of service in submission to Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Prabhupāda (my initiating spiritual master and principal *guru*) — a debt which we embrace wholeheartedly as our life and soul.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja established his own mission, the Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Maṭha, after the passing of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. At the behest of his

godbrothers (both members and non-members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha) he provided much-needed guidance and spiritual leadership to his *guru*'s Gauḍīya Maṭha mission during critical times. At this time he lived next to Śrīla Prabhupāda at Sita-kaanta Banerjee Lane in Calcutta.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja later provided much-needed shelter and guidance to Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples in times of necessity. In this regard, he stated in essence,

“You all have come here and forcibly you are dragging down from above, through me, so many answers to many religious and philosophical questions of endless variety.”

His most valuable and profound contribution was his clarification of and deep realizations of the Gauḍīya *siddhānta*. His thorough explanations to all inquiring devotees in virtually every aspect of Vaiṣṇava behavior and the detailed practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, enlightened and encouraged countless devotees in their practical execution and advancement in devotional service.

Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Puri Mahārāja provided further shelter and guidance to the world's devotees with his extensive practical knowledge of the devotional process and his spotless example of a devoted lifelong practitioner. His entire life stands testament to the line of true and pure devotion — inspiring thousands of devotees and non-practitioners alike.

Our mission's founder and *guru*, Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅha Mahārāja's instructions still continue to shape our mission's ideals and activities. He coordinated everything, overseeing the mission's expansion to centers in Vermont in USA; Como in Italy; Huejutla, Chical, and Guanajuato in Mexico; Vṛndāvana, Tiruvananthapuram, Mulki, and Srirangapatna in India. The latter, Śrī Narasiṅha Caitanya Maṭha (Govindajī Gardens), is considered the center of all the mission's activities, where Narasiṅha Mahārāja resided when

not traveling to the other centers. He passed away peacefully there, amid *kīrtana* of the Holy Name, in 2020.

Narasiṅha Mahārāja was the life and soul of his dear disciples, who enthusiastically and selflessly served his mission, enthused by his everyday inspiration from constant enthralling narrations and inspiring explanations of our Gauḍīya *siddhānta*. He fulfilled the role of *bhakti-rākṣaka*, following in the footsteps of his *śikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, tirelessly producing videos, writing articles and publishing books for the single-minded purpose of exposing the anti-party wrongdoings, false narratives, *apasiddhānta*, *sahajiyās*, distortions of Gauḍīya history and any other opposing narratives.*

From the very first he epitomized the instructions of his beloved Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda — who set the tone of never tolerating the nonsense narratives of anyone opposed to the pure *saṅkīrtana* mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, just as his *guru* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta did.

Each of these great souls has contributed unparalleled instructions, unlimitedly and indescribably, with great benefit to all members of our mission. Each has unique spiritual qualities and abilities, all enhancing our capabilities for better executing our devotional service and *sādhana-bhakti*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda

For most devotees, coming into contact with the ISKCON movement of devotees and the compelling words of Śrīla Prabhupāda for the first time was undoubtedly the most significant moment of their lives. Entering one of the ISKCON temples of worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa enveloped one

* He also printed and distributed Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's book, *Prākṛta Rasa Śata Duṣaṇi*, a hundred [airtight] condemnations of material *rasa* — soundly refuting the *sahajiya* practices

in what felt like an alternate universe, for it was indeed another reality — the local representation of a spiritual domain and our goal.

This provided an awareness that one was indeed experiencing something entirely different than anything previously encountered in their entire life. Prabhupāda's temples and *āśramas* are alternative spiritual realities where visitors can immerse themselves in the unending and unlimited qualities of the spiritual realm of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* — eternity, full knowledge and bliss.

The divine words of Śrīla Prabhupāda's devotional literatures provide a complete and significant moment in one's existence. They provide a paradigm shift, a lift in consciousness, an entrance into the unlimitedly dynamic spiritual arena of great significance, truly blessing and changing our lives forever.

Walking into a temple of Lord Kṛṣṇa deeply influences one's life in the best way imaginable. That doorway is a portal into another domain — a spiritual dimension — a land of infinite hope and possibilities. For many, it represents the Lord's response to their hopeless cries — prayers for answers to life's mysteries and the ultimate purpose of their lives.

And this is the result of one man's fixed determination to implement the simple, yet profound, instructions of his Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda — establishing the preaching mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu worldwide.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's first meeting with his *guru*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, took place in 1922. Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's first words to Śrīla Prabhupāda were instructions to preach the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the Western world.

“You are all educated young men. Why don’t you take up Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s cult and preach all over the English-knowing public? Why don’t you take up this matter?”

Bhaktivedānta Prabhupāda eventually started the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in the Western countries and spread Mahāprabhu’s message all over the world, with branches in every major city and an infrastructure that fully facilitated the multifaceted requirements of such a massive endeavor.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s extensive library of published works (books, conversations, letters, videos and articles) provided further explanations of this process to his disciples. To this strong structure he continuously provided support in his daily lectures and conversations. He simply didn’t have more time to give every detail as he spread the movement of practicing devotees to every corner of the world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s English translations of the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, the extensive *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the Kṛṣṇa book, the seventeen volumes of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* detailing the life, pastimes and teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, A summary study of Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu titled 'Nectar of Devotion', along with several other works became monumental contributions to humanity. He translated, printed and distributed the Vedic literatures on a massive scale from his Bhaktivedānta Book Trust in Los Angeles, inspiring thousands of his disciples to enthusiastically sell his books and gift them to libraries worldwide.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also dedicated extensive effort to revealing the misleading and false scientific perceptions entrenched in modern science and research — from his Bhaktivedānta Institute — founded with his PhD and experienced disciples. Across the board he wrote and preached against the many falsehoods and *apasiddhānta* (misdirected *sāstric* interpretations) permeating every aspect of society. This was

done on an institutional level for the entire world, reaching into even the remotest areas.*

Such was Prabhupāda's literary proficiency that the *Encyclopædia Britannica* Book of the Year in 1976 noted,

“[Bhaktivedānta Swāmī] astonished academic and literary communities worldwide by writing and publishing fifty-two books on the ancient Vedic culture in the period from October 1968 to November 1975.”

During this same time period, A. L. Basham wrote for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* that A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī stunned scholars worldwide by transplanting an entire religious culture from India to the West. CNN deemed Bhaktivedānta Swami as one of the ten most successful people in the world who launched their careers after 50.

His accomplishment was so impossibly successful that his godbrothers Yājvara Mahārāja and Śrīdhara Mahārāja declared that he was directly empowered by Lord Nityānanda Prabhu — that Prabhupāda was *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*. They stated that otherwise such an accomplishment would be impossible to achieve in such a short period of time — merely twelve years.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja sagely stated that:

“So our Swāmī Mahārāja has done a miracle! (Laughingly) What Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda conceived and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura began to translate this conception into action. And we find that through Swāmī Mahārāja, in his last days, these revelations have been fulfilled to such a great extent. We are happy, we are glad, we are proud of Swāmī Mahārāja!” (Room Conversation in Prabhupāda's rooms in Māyāpura, March 17, 1973).

Emptying himself of all other desires save the spreading of these messages of Mahāprabhu as instructed by his

* Śrīla Prabhupāda stated that, “Everything I have to say is in my books.”

Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, dedicating all his comprehensive capabilities to the single mission of spreading the words of the Divine Lord throughout the world — Prabhupāda could not but be successful, as the Lord Himself declares that He is obligated to fulfill the desires of His devoted servant:

*aham bhakta-parādhīno hy asvatantra iva dvija
sādhubhir grasta-hṛdayo bhaktaiḥ bhakta-jana-priyaḥ*

“O brāhmaṇa, I am completely under the control of My devotees. Indeed, I am not at all independent. My heart is controlled by the pure devotees, and I am dear not only to My devotees but also to the devotees of My devotees.”
(*Bhāg.* 9.4.63)

The legacy of Śrīla Prabhupāda was to fulfill Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s prophecy that His name would be chanted all over the world (*pr̥thivīte āche naḡarādi grāma*) and that everyone should be engaged in this endeavor wholeheartedly:

*yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa
āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra’ ei deśa*

“Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In this way become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in this land.” (*Cc. Madhya* 7.128)

Those who were fortunate to come into contact with this expanding spirituality found themselves profoundly affected by Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers, engulfing them in an aura of elevated spiritual consciousness. This forcefully awakened a higher reality and realizations of the factual truth of this spiritual dimension as viable, desirable and truly achievable.

Speaking from personal experience, it was so much more than I could have ever imagined achieving only months before, as I wandered about in this crazy mundane world in ignorance

of such divine prospects—*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva*. Yet, Mahāprabhu’s divine mercy has been expressed so wonderfully through His pure agent, Śrīla Prabhupāda — and many eagerly joined and thereby benefited.

Such was the power of the pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda, that through his life’s work he established a pure spiritual mission— opening a path to life’s highest truths and to a life of devotion and service to God: *param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta praised his dear disciple, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, as fit and qualified to carry on his conceptions and words in the future after his departure.* The very name of Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Gosvāmī Mahārāja — *Bhakti-rakṣaka* — literally means ‘guardian of devotion,’ a name given by his Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in recognition of his purity in the line of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

Senior godbrothers were of the opinion that, when listening to Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s nectarean *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, it was as if they were listening to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Regularly they requested Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja to explain Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s lectures.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja explains,

“I explained and they were satisfied. Prabhupāda’s discourses were very deep. The general public could not understand. It was deep philosophy, so I was requested to repeat his message by the elevated servants of our Guru Mahārāja. I could repeat this at least to their satisfaction.”

* Srila Prabhupada testifies to his having heard Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura mark the high qualifications of Srila Sridhar Maharaja, whom he first chose to go to the West. . . He can’t be converted — OAG, Ch I, He Can’t Be Converted — from 1977 Room Conversation Srila Prabhupada & Srila Sridhar Maharaja.

A few days before the departure of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja was personally asked to sing the esoteric Śrī Rūpa Mañjari-pada by Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura. Although Śrīdhara Mahārāja was not known to be that much of a singer, at that time Bhaktisiddhānta remarked that he did not care for the tune but only for the conception. Senior godbrothers who witnessed this exchange [notably Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja] have described it as a “mystic transmission” in which Śrīdhara Mahārāja was given admittance into the eternal entourage of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī. Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s humble vision, however, is that he was posted as the gatekeeper, the guardian of devotion (*bhakti-rakṣaka*), to protect the storehouse of conclusive truths about the full-fledged theistic conception of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Later, recalling this incident, he remarked further that ‘he was not letting just anyone in.’

Our Śrīla Prabhupāda appreciated Śrīdhara Mahārāja so much that he considered him to be his *śikṣā-guru*. He says—

“So, if you are actually serious to take instructions from a *śikṣā-guru*, I can refer you to the one who is the most highly competent of all my godbrothers. This is B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, whom I consider to be even my *śikṣā-guru*, so what to speak of the benefit that you can have by his association. So, if you are serious about the advancement of your spiritual life, I will advise you to go to Śrīdhara Mahārāja. It will be very good for your spiritual benefit, and I will feel that you are safe. When I was in India with the others, we lived with Śrīdhara Mahārāja.” [*Prabhupāda’s Letter to Hṛṣīkeśa, January 31, 1969*]*

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja and Śrīla Prabhupāda lived side by side for many years after the passing of Śrīla

* Our Affectionate Guardians — <https://gosai.com/writings/our-affectionate-guardians-unabridged>

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. During this time they shared many spiritual realizations during long philosophical discussions, becoming intimate friends. Over the years of serving in the Gauḍīya Maṭha they often preached together in different Indian cities and had complete trust in each other. [Lilāmṛta]

A detailed accounting of the long-time close relationship between Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja is recorded in the book *Our Affectionate Guardians*.* †

During the lifetime of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja once composed a ten-stanza poem describing the ontological position of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and the line of disciplic succession stemming from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was so pleased with the poem's ontological depth and its happy style that he remarked to his *sannyāsa* disciple Gosvāmī Mahārāja,

“Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written this through him. Now I am satisfied that after me what I came to say — that will stay, that will remain. I find in these *śloka*s the *siddhānta*.”

And in appreciation of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja's writings, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura informed the editors of the Gauḍīya Maṭha's periodicals,

“If you include articles written by Śrīdhara Mahārāja, the quality of your publications will be greatly improved.”

* *ibid.* Srila Prabhupada brought his disciples to Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja's Maṭha in Navadvīpa for Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's Vyāsa Pūja observance and when Akiñcana Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja started chanting “Jaya Prabhupāda, Jaya Prabhupāda...” Prabhupāda's disciples liked it very much so started doing this in their temples. Śrīla Prabhupāda just accepted it and this continued.

† *ibid.* Envious nonmembers caused problems with his disciples, even at Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja's Maṭha, Prabhupāda advised caution and warned his disciples of this in the Rūpānuga Letter.

Further confirming Śrīdhara Mahārāja's profound erudition in the *śāstras*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura gave the title *Śāstra-nipūṇa* (one who has very deep knowledge of the scriptures) to Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja.

Among other original compositions of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja are the ten-stanza *Śrīla Prabhupāda Padapadma Stāvaka*, a poem glorifying Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura — which was requested by our Śrīla Prabhupāda to be sung regularly in all his temples. He also authored the sublimely beautiful 72-stanza *Prema-dhāma-deva-stotra*, divinely presenting the full-fledged theistic conception of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's blessed *līlā*. About this offering the late Niṣkiñcana Kṛṣṇa dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja said he found the presence of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, the very leader of our *sampradāya*, within it.

His highly scholarly literary accomplishments are amongst the greatest Vaiṣṇava jewels and are too numerous to mention all of them here. Some of his more noteworthy original writings include:

— *Śrī Śrī Prapanna-jīvanāmṛtam* (*Life-Nectar of the Surrendered Souls—Positive & Progressive Immortality*), a compendium of supporting verses from various Vaiṣṇava scriptures such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which includes excerpts from the works of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. It is divided according to the six divisions of surrender.*

— *Śrī Gāyatrī-nigūḍhārtha*, an unprecedented deep explanation of the Brahma Gāyatrī-mantra, providing an essential esoteric explanation, revealing the true inner profound essence of the *mantra*, leading us to the highest limit of devotional activities, that of service to Śrī Rādhā (*Rādhā-dāsyam*).

— *Bhagavad-gītā* commentaries where Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja surprised devotees and scholars everywhere with

* Śrīla Prabhupāda helped finance the printing of *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛta* — *Lilāmṛta* Vol. 1, p103

his revelations of *mādhurya-rasa* in its “nutshell” verses. His alternative translations of several verses, differing from those of Śrīla Prabhupāda, showed that new, profound hidden meanings could be seen which greatly enhanced the devotees’ overall understanding and appreciation for the wisdom of the timeless *Bhagavad-gītā*. Hence his *Gītā* was named *The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*.*

Many additional books were published that continue to nourish his admiring followers—books that present the deep realizations of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, recorded from his daily discussions.

Just prior to his departure from this mortal world, our Śrīla Prabhupāda advised his senior disciples that in his absence, when the necessity arose to consult higher authority for clarification of certain philosophical points, they should consult Śrīdhara Mahārāja. †

After the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1977, many of his disciples sought answers to deeply important philosophical questions. Fortunately, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s godbrother and long-time intimate friend, Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, responded to the many profound and significant questions of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples, providing answers to critical unanswered questions in the vacuum left after Śrīla Prabhupāda. This invaluable service continued over many years, during the almost daily open *darśanas*, where

* Srila Prabhupada’s literal translation of *Bhagavad-gita As It is*, follows Baladeva Visyabhusana’s siddhantic style and Srila Sridhara Maharaja follows the style of Visvanatha’s rasik interpretations. This lead to opposing translations of *Bhagavad-gita Verse 1.10*. Srila Prabhupada wrote his commentary while having deep discourses with Srila Sridhar Maharaja. [OAG: Doubts, Contradictions: Real & Apparent]

† From the section *Divine Qualities*, of chapter *A Transcendental Friendship*, of the book *Our Affectionate Guardians*.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja often spoke for many hours on endless topics and provided detailed answers to any and all devotees' questions.

The initial talks with concerned devotees and the ISKCON Governing Body Commission (GBC) formed the basis of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja's important work, *Śrī Guru and His Grace* — a pivotal dissertation illuminating all aspects of the Guru-Disciple relationship. Its influence on the society of devotees was monumental, providing much-needed inspiration and guidance in a time of great necessity amongst the ISKCON devotees.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja expertly detailed the essence of Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* and explained the complex philosophy to the unfamiliar in an easily understood manner. The intense searching and questioning of the devotees at that time drew down such mercy that even disciples of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja of forty years said that they were hearing things from Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja that they had never heard before.

It is recognized that many instructions were given by Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Prabhupāda in seed form, and devotees not having the *adhikāra* to figure it out on their own found that many times they needed the help of a more highly situated Vaiṣṇava's explanations. It should be noted that they were not satisfied with the explanations given by their societal authorities, including in many instances their own *gurus*, so sought *śikṣā* elsewhere, outside the society.

Innumerable quotes by Śrīla Prabhupāda and *śāstra* overwhelmingly support the conviction of obtaining higher association. Such *śikṣā* instruction is the underlying and prominent principle of the *guru-paramparā*, a foundational element of Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja served his *guru* flawlessly for many decades. He was instrumental in establishing the Chennai

Gauḍīya Maṭha temple, raising the funds himself with great difficulty, and helped establish other Gauḍīya Maṭha temples in India as well as assisting many preaching initiatives. Only in his later years did he found his own mission, the Śrī Caitanya Sārasvata Maṭha in Navadvīpa-dhāma — an epicenter for Śrī Caitanya’s life, pastimes and preaching movement.

Importantly, later after the departure of his *guru*, Bhaktisiddhānta Prabhupāda, and also Bhaktivedānta Prabhupāda, his deep realizations and careful illuminations of difficult-to-grasp aspects of *sādhana-bhakti* regularly provided a multitude of devotees with essential guidance during the many struggles every devotee faces.

He helped expand their limited conceptions of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and broadened their realizations. His innumerable abilities and constant interest in sharing his realizations tirelessly with each and every Vaiṣṇava who sought his *darśana*, endeared him to devotees everywhere. His erudite conceptualizations and careful explanations of such a broad range of the foundational teachings expounded by our *ācāryas* revealed that Śrīdhara Mahārāja was truly a genius amongst the most erudite of scholars.

Many ISKCON devotees follow the societal rules of complete chastity to Śrīla Prabhupāda — that one can only have one guru — to hear *śikṣā* instructions from another is wrong — unchaste. Such restrictions may be necessary in a large institution. However, the greater picture, according to our gurus, recommends accepting useful advice from more than one qualified *śikṣā* guru — these GBC rules of ISKCON accentuated the difference of the ISKCON society from our small society. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself states that devotees may have many *śikṣā* gurus but only one *dīkṣā* guru.

In Gaura Pūrṇimā 1987, our group of five sannyāsīs traveled to Navadvīpa to meet Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja and formally

accept him as our principal *śikṣā-guru*. During introductions he paused over my ISKCON *sannyāsa* name, “Bhavānanda Rāya Swāmī,” given by my *sannyāsa guru* Narasiṅgha Mahārāja, signaling that a gr̥hastha’s name may not be proper for a *sannyāsi*. He then spoke with luminous clarity about the devotee’s ascent to Goloka Vṛndāvana and service at Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet—an exposition that became foundational to our mission’s aims.

Sensing that Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s time in this world was short, Narasiṅgha Mahārāja returned later and, through Govinda Mahārāja, requested a proper *sannyāsa* name for me. The reply came: “Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅgha Mahārāja” for him which descended unsolicited, and “Bhakti Bhāvana Viṣṇu Mahārāja” for me. These names were bestowed in the format set by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, yet preserving the inner import of our prior names. We accepted our names as the merciful gifts of a higher Vaiṣṇava.

Our *sannyāsa* name changes caused endless queries from godbrothers who wondered why we changed our names or why we had gotten re-initiated. Of course, neither was the case at all. We just received special mercy from an extremely advanced Vaiṣṇava — a priceless and truly blessed benediction.

In our small society, we relish our history with these great Vaiṣṇava *gurus*, the subtle distinctions between them, the nuances in *siddhānta*, the opportunity to serve them, and their transcendental conceptions, as a very strong and substantial advantage, enhancing the depth of our realizations and understanding. We feel strongly that they greatly facilitated our advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja

From first sight, Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja exuded the primary quality of a truly advanced Vaiṣṇava — genuine humility — *titikṣavaḥ kāruṇikāḥ*. He was seen stuffed into a

tempo, a crude transportation, amidst perhaps thirty villagers. His gentle humility, friendly warmth and careful presentation of our *siddhānta* attracted us soon after meeting him. Puri Mahārāja was especially known for his expertise in all aspects of deity worship, installation and associated practices.

Narasīᅅgha Mahārāja was fortunate to be given the *seva* of obtaining a deity of Lakᅅmī-Nᅅsimha for Śrīla Puri Mahārāja. Through our connections at the Śilpī Stone Carving School in Mahābalipuram, via Dhᅅᅇa Dāsa and a renowned *sthapati*, Narasīᅅgha Mahārāja arranged for him to make this Deity for Śrīla Puri Mahārāja. Upon completion, Mahārāja delivered it to Śrīla Puri Mahārāja in his Gopinātha Gauᅇīya Maᅇha at Māyāpura, West Bengal.

Śrīla Puri Mahārāja was extremely pleased to receive this Deity and graced Narasīᅅgha Mahārāja enthusiastically again and again. Narasīᅅgha Mahārāja was further fortunate to receive another opportunity for service to Śrīla Puri Mahārāja.

One of Śrīla Puri Mahārāja’s *sannyāsī* disciples, born of a high-caste family, tried to coerce Puri Mahārāja into choosing him as his successor in place of Bodhāyān Mahārāja, and was harassing Śrīla Puri Mahārāja. Narasīᅅgha Mahārāja came to his rescue and chased off this offending devotee. Afterwards, Śrīla Puri Mahārāja again graced Narasīᅅgha Mahārāja with heartfelt, profuse emotion for the act.

Puri Mahārāja provided shelter and guidance to many devotees with his extensive practical knowledge of the devotional process and his spotless example as a lifelong practitioner. His entire life stands testament to the line of true and pure devotion — described by Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja — as “The Line of Śrī Rūpa.” His godbrother Śrīdhara Mahārāja was one of Puri Mahārāja’s closest friends.

Once, when offering our respects and obeisances before a *darśana*, as we rose from the floor, Śrīla Puri Mahārāja looked

directly at us and asked, “Please give me your blessings.” Usually this would be asked by the lower Vaiṣṇava of the higher to give his blessings. But Śrīla Puri Mahārāja, exhibiting extreme humility, requested a much lower Vaiṣṇava for their blessings, further illustrating his humility.

His guidance to the devotees fulfilled a great necessity in the greater Vaiṣṇava community. His statement that a wave of “sahajiyā-”ism was soon to sweep the West was highly prophetic. Fortunately, his continuous spiritual association helped many devotees remain steadfast in their service and tread the devotional path faithfully. Upon his disappearance, Narasiṅha Mahārāja, in one of his online videos, declared that now these *sahajiyās* would come out and become prominent.

This warning of the wave of ‘sahajiyā-’ism inspired our members to produce videos, publish many articles and consolidate our refutations into published books — countering these threats to our mission’s core spiritual beliefs. History shows that the same anti-party propaganda of the *sahajiyās*, impersonalist *advaita-vedāntins*, atheists, and other non-Vaiṣṇavas surfaces again and again over the years. In the 1930s, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta dealt with the same issues we find ourselves facing again in modern times. Many of the identical arguments from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Mahārāja’s group, translated from the Bengali *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* and *Gauḍīya* magazines almost a hundred years prior, are just as effective today.

Puri Mahārāja’s published works contain many essential truths regarding the path of *bhakti*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is the definitive manual for the everyday practices of *sādhana-bhakti* and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *Nectar of Devotion*, a summary study of the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, contains its essence in a readable, easily digestible format, especially formulated for newer devotees unfamiliar with the subjects therein. Many devotees rely on it for devotional advice in many aspects of *sādhana-bhakti*. Similarly, Śrīla Puri

Mahārāja's *Art of Sādhana*, a guide to daily devotion, provides an in-depth textbook for these essential devotional practices for the devotees' everyday activities.

Puri Mahārāja perceived an unfortunate tendency, increasingly becoming more prominent amongst devotees — that is, they publicly criticize and speak badly about other devotees, especially senior devotees and leaders. His timely publication, *The Heart of Kṛṣṇa, Vaiṣṇava Aparādha & The Path of Spiritual Caution*, addressed the topic of *Vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, offenses against a Vaiṣṇava devotee — citing the instances of offenses committed by well-known devotees, demigods and famous personalities and the devastating repercussions they experienced as a result. *The Heart of Kṛṣṇa* thoroughly covers this topic.

Another notable publication of Śrīla Puri Mahārāja: *Of Love and Separation, Meditations on My Divine Master*, is a treatise on Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Prabhupāda. Of particular note are the devotional offerings of his disciples to their guru. Many of his distinguished disciples came from a highly educated, high-class body of individuals of great accomplishment. Some were high-court judges, magistrates like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. They all offered unlimited, sincere glorification of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta — the depth of their love for their guru is deeply touching and an inspiration for every devotee.

Śrīla Puri Mahārāja exhibited the highest qualities of a Vaiṣṇava in his eloquent praise of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja's Brahmā-Gāyatrī commentary: *Gāyatrī Nigūḍhārtha: Exalted Glorification of Parama-Pūjyapāda Śrīla Śrīdhara Deva*. In his glorification, Śrīla Puri Mahārāja exhibited the true Vaiṣṇava quality of recognizing and praising another devotee for their wonderful accomplishment.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda (Bhaktisiddhānta) was always glad to see the presence of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja in any

conference or sophisticated debating assembly. Śrīla Prabhupāda highly praised the quality and poetic beauty of his many invaluable compositions. I am bereft of the proper language to elucidate the profound meaning of Śrī Gāyatrī as expressed by Pūjyapāda Mahārāja in the depth of realization, which is that of exclusive devotional service to Śrīmatī Rādhārānī. Śrīla Prabhupāda has directly defined Pūjyapāda Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja as Śrī Rūpānuga Bhakti-Rakṣaka — The Guardian of Pure Devotion in the line of Śrī Rūpa and thus also the Guardian of the pure devotional line of Śrīla Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda.”

Throughout his life as a devotee, Śrīla Puri Mahārāja regularly wrote articles and contributed to the mission’s publications and preaching, always active. He wrote over one hundred published articles in Bengali during his long service in the Gauḍīya Maṭha.

Śrīla Puri Mahārāja often recounted that as soon as he saw Śrīla Prabhupāda (Bhaktisiddhānta) and paid his obeisances to him for the first time, he knew in his heart that this was his spiritual master. Some years later, on the auspicious day of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī in 1923, he accepted both Harināma and mantra-*dīkṣā* from Śrīla Prabhupāda and was given the name Prāṇavānanda Brahmācārī.

The key to success in devotion is to perfectly hear the holy words spoken by one’s spiritual preceptor. Śrīla Prabhupāda would often say, “All that is required of you is that you lend me your ears.” Śrīla Puri Mahārāja was fully committed to this maxim. He had the great good fortune to associate closely with Śrīla Prabhupāda for thirteen years, and during that time he served him personally by recording his lectures and conversations, which were later published. The greater part of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s spoken words we are left with today come from the transcriptions of these notes. At the same time, Śrīla Puri Mahārāja cultivated a deep knowledge of the

Vaiṣṇava scriptures, with the result that he became a veritable storehouse of the wealth of the preceptorial line coming from Śrī Caitanya and His followers. This led him to become one of the most prolific writers and influential teachers in all of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava history.

He was initially inspired and directed by Śrīla Prabhupāda to start writing and contributing articles to the *Gauḍīya* magazine, the backbone of the Gauḍīya Maṭha's missionary work. For seven years he served as a proofreader and as one of its primary editors. In 1926 he was charged with running the world's only daily Vaiṣṇava newspaper, *Dainika Nadia Prakāśa*. His service and learning did not pass unnoticed by Śrīla Prabhupāda, who awarded him the titles of *mahā-mahopadeśaka* (great instructor) and *pratna-vidyālanakāra* (keeper of the wisdom of the ancient scriptural lore).

In all, Śrīla Puri Mahārāja's wisdom is embodied in over sixty years of writings on Vaiṣṇava philosophy and theology. He penned a rich variety of texts, bringing the *Bhāgavata-dharma* to life through hundreds of poems, essays, narratives, diaries, editorials and personal letters, thus creating a storehouse of the wealth of pure devotion for his disciples and the world at large. At the behest of his godbrother Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja he served for seven years as chief *pūjārī* for the Yoga-Piṭha temple, the birthplace of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

In 1946 he accepted *tridaṇḍi* sannyāsa from his godbrother, Bhakti Gaurava Vaikānasa Mahārāja. He founded the Śrī Gopinātha Gauḍīya Maṭha in 1989 at age 91 and later other Maṭhas in Jagannātha Purī, Vṛndāvana, Calcutta and Midnapore.

Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Puri Mahārāja had outstanding love for his godbrothers and was always inspired in his glorification of others. He so embodied pure devotion and service to his spiritual master that one of his disciples once remarked that he was able to “silently lay down Śrīla Prabhupāda's entire *siddhānta*.”

Śrīla Puri Mahārāja departed this world for the eternal abode on October 21, 1999, one day before the Rāsa Pūrṇimā.

With his fellow godbrothers, he shared an indomitable faith in the service of his Guru and the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This service was the sole purpose and highest aspiration of his being. This conviction led him to spend his entire life in the pursuit of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Mahāprabhu’s pleasure and the fulfillment of their desires. If we examine his life in this setting, we will see more than just numbers, dates, places and names. We will see how he embodied the very life-current that his spiritual preceptors came to give the world. Śrīla Puri Mahārāja taught through his very action. He excelled in all aspects of devotional practice and there was perhaps no area in which he did not exhibit utmost expertise, diligence and foresight. This ranged from his encyclopedic knowledge of scripture, to maintaining the printing-press, to his beautiful singing of *kīrtana*. He was especially recognized for his sensitivity and attention to detail in the performance of Deity worship and devotional rites and was thus widely called upon to be the head priest in most of the Gauḍīya Maṭha’s Deity installations and ceremonial functions. (*Śrī Caitanya: His Life & Associates*, Swāmī B. B. Tīrtha — “Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Puri Goswāmī Mahārāja,” pp. 293–294)

Once when asked if he chanted the Holy Names of Kṛṣṇa purely, he remarked that he was still trying to chant purely. However, these words were expressed with great feeling and difficulty as he clearly exhibited many overwhelming emotional feelings — interpreted by the senior devotees present as true spiritual ecstasy — a result of pure chanting. His eyes were filled with tears as he very emotionally was barely able to respond.

Our society’s devotees often journeyed to Navadvīpa or Jagannātha Purī to Śrīla Puri Mahārāja’s mission for his good association during his annual Vyāsa-pūjā observance.

Narasīᅅha Mahārāja enthusiastically brought as many of his disciples and devotees as he could for Puri Mahārāja's *darśana*. He was especially interested for his disciples to hear from this exalted pure Vaiᅅᅇava.

Conclusion

Our mission, founded by Narasīᅅha Mahārāja, has the unique characteristic which distinguishes us from all other missions — we are an amalgamation of all our gurus and their individual mission ideals. Narasīᅅha Mahārāja used to say that to join our group it is not enough to have appreciation just for Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Prabhupāda, but one must also have sincere appreciation in particular for Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, apart from Śrīla Purī Mahārāja, and himself. In my humble estimation, these four exalted personalities are the direct guardians of our mission.

Our senior members are disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the rest are disciples of Narasīᅅha Mahārāja, yet every one of us constantly feels the divine mercy of all four of our gurus every day, every minute, and we count our blessings for such a divine dispensation. They may sometimes speak different words or advocate different approaches to devotional service — yet they are all saying the same thing. They are all dedicated to the same ultimate goal, that of serving and pleasing the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛᅅᅇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In the words of Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja, who sometimes used this expression, “We thank our lucky stars.” However, it is surely just the blessings of so many kind overseers.



SUPPLEMENTARY
TEXTS



Śrī Guru Paramparā

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

(1)

*kṛṣṇa haite catur-mukha, haya kṛṣṇa-sevonmukha
brahmā haite nāradera mati
nārada haite vyāsa, mādharma kahe vyāsa-dāsa
pūrṇa-prajña padmanābha gati*

(2)

*nṛhari mādharma-varṣe, akṣobhya paramahamse
śiṣya bali' aṅgikāra kare
akṣobhyera śiṣya jaya-tīrtha nāme paricaya
tā'ra dāsye jñāna-sindhu tare*

(3)

*tāhāra haite dayānidhi, tā'ra dāsa vidyānidhi
rājendra hailo tāhā haite
tāhāra kṛkara jaya-dharma nāme paricaya
paramparā jāno bhālo mate*

(4)

*jayadharmā-dāsye khyāti, śrī puruṣottama-yati
tā'hāte brahmaṇya-tīrtha sūri
vyāsa-tīrtha tā'ra dāsa, lakṣmī-pati vyāsa-dāsa
tā'hā haite mādharmaendra purī*

(5)

*mādharmaendra purī-vara, śiṣya-vara śrī-īśvara
nityānanda śrī advaita vibhu
īśvara-purīke dhanya karilena śrī-caitanya
jagad-guru gaura mahāprabhu*

(6)

*mahāprabhu śrī-caitanya, rādhā-kṛṣṇa nahe anya
rūpānuga janera jīvana
viśvambhara priyaṅkara, śrī svarūpa-dāmodara
śrī gosvāmi rūpa-sanātana*

(7)

*rūpa-priya mahājana, jīva-raghunātha hana
tā'ra priya kavi kṛṣṇa-dāsa
kṛṣṇa-dāsa-priyavara, narottama sevā-para
yā'ra pada viśvanātha-āśā*

(8)

*viśvanātha-bhakta-sātha, baladeva jagannātha
tā'ra priya śrī-bhaktivinoda
mahā-bhāgavata-vara, śrī gaura-kiśora-vara
hari-bhajanete yā'ra moda*

(9)

*tad-anuga-mahājana, śrī-kṛṣṇa-kīrtana-dhara
yebā dilā purī-jaga kāma
śrī varṣabhānavī-vara, sadā sevya sevā-parā
tāhāra dayita-dāsa nāma*

(10)

*(added by the followers of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī
Prabhupāda and Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅgha Mahārāja)*

*tā'ra priya manobhiṣṭa, sthāpane sadā saceṣṭa
śrī-bhaktivedānta svāmī nāma
tā'ra pradhāna śiṣya-jana, svāmī nṛsiṅgha-nāma
patita-janete dayā-dhāma*

(1) In the beginning of creation, the science of devotional service was received by the four-headed Brahmā from the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Devarṣi Nārada's understanding of this divine science was obtained from Brahmā. The great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, who was empowered to compile the Vedic literatures, became a disciple of Devarṣi Nārada. Śrīpāda Madhvācārya, the founder of the Dvaita school of Vedānta philosophy, who visited Vyāsadeva at Badarikāśrama in the thirteenth century to learn from Him Vedānta, calls himself a servant of Vyāsa. Pūrṇa-prajña Tīrtha (Madhva) is the guru and sole refuge of Padmanābha Tīrtha.

(2) The two other principal disciples of Madhva are Nṛhari Tīrtha and Mādhava Tīrtha. Mādhava Tīrtha accepted the great *paramahansa* Akṣobhya Tīrtha as a disciple. The principal disciple of Akṣobhya Tīrtha was known as Jaya Tīrtha. Jaya Tīrtha's service was for his disciple Jñānasindhu.

(3) Dayānidhi received the science of devotional service from Jñānasindhu, and the servant of Dayānidhi was Vidyānidhi (Vidyādhirāja Tīrtha). Rājendra Tīrtha became the disciple of Vidyānidhi Tīrtha. Rājendra Tīrtha's servant was known as Jayadharmā or Vijayadhvajā Tīrtha. In this way you should properly understand the disciplic succession.

(4) The great *sannyāsī* Śrī Puruṣottama Tīrtha received his knowledge in the service of his guru Vijayadhvajā Tīrtha (Jayadharmā). The principal disciple of Puruṣottama Tīrtha was Subrahmaṇya Tīrtha. His servant was the great Vyāsa Tīrtha (Vyāsa Rāya). Vyāsa Tīrtha's servant was Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha, whose disciple was Mādhavendra Purī.

(5) The chief disciple of Mādhavendra Purī was Īśvara Purī, and two of his other disciples were the renowned incarnations of Godhead, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Advaita Ācārya. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the spiritual preceptor of all the worlds, made Īśvara Purī greatly fortunate by accepting him as His spiritual master.

(6) Mahāprabhu Śrī Caitanya is non-different from Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and is the very life of those Vaiṣṇavas who follow Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmi. Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmi, Rūpa Gosvāmi and Sanātana Gosvāmi were the givers of great happiness to Viśvambhara (Śrī Caitanya).

(7) The great souls Jīva Gosvāmi and Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmi became very dear to Rūpa Gosvāmi. Jīva Gosvāmi was a disciple of Rūpa Gosvāmi, and Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmi, a disciple of Advaita Ācārya's disciple Yadunandana Ācārya, was accepted by Rūpa and Sanātana as their third brother. Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmi's beloved student was Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmi. Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja was an intimate friend of Lokanātha Gosvāmi. They lived together in Vṛndāvana and always discussed the topics of Kṛṣṇa with one another. Lokanātha Gosvāmi, a disciple of Gadādhara Paṇḍita, had only one disciple, whose name was Narottama Dāsa. Narottama Dāsa was always engaged in the service of his guru, and he also engaged himself in the service of his guru's intimate friend. Thus he became very dear to Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmi. To serve the feet of Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura was the only desire of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, who was the fourth *ācārya* in disciplic succession from Narottama Dāsa.

(8) Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura was the *śikṣā-guru* (instructing spiritual master) of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, to whom he taught the precepts of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī was a very prominent *ācārya* after Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and was the beloved *śikṣā-guru* of Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's intimate friend and associate was the eminent *mahā-bhāgavata* Śrī Gaura-kiśora Dāsa Bābājī, whose sole joy was found in *hari-bhajana*.

(9) The followers of Śrīla Gaura-kiśora fill up the world with the wealth of *Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. He who is always serving Kṛṣṇa, the dearest lover of Rādhārānī, is Śrī Vāṛṣabhānavī Dayita Dāsa.

(10) His very dear disciple who has established his divine conceptions and fulfills his innermost desires is Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī. Śrīla Jagadguru Svāmī Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅha Mahārāja is Bhaktivedānta Svāmī's dearmost disciple and a reservoir of compassion for all fallen entities.





Ṛtvik Defeated!

by Śrīla Bhakti Gaurava Narasiṅgha Mahārāja

*From a talk with god-brothers in
Mysore, South India, on March 20th, 1995*

When I accepted *sannyāsa* in 1976, Śrīla Prabhupāda said in the class, “You become guru.” He said it five times during this lecture. Some people will say, “That means *śikṣā-guru*.” However, in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s essay, *In Search of the Ultimate Goal of Life*, he writes that there are some people who say that ‘become guru’ means only becoming *śikṣā-guru*, and he says that such persons are foolish and do not understand the *paramparā*:

Some foolish students have accepted the statements of Lord Caitanya conditionally. According to them, the spiritual master who is fully conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa, yet not born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, can be an instructing spiritual master, but not an initiating spiritual master. They do not know that there is hardly any difference between the two classes of spiritual masters. According to them, a caste initiator or caste Gosvāmī, by dint of his hereditary blood lineage, becomes the real spiritual master, while a person knowing all about Śrī Kṛṣṇa can only become an instructor. They foolishly think that the position of the initiating spiritual master is greater than that of the instructing spiritual master. However, the matter is very clearly and conclusively discussed in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 1.47):

*śikṣā-guruke ta’ jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa
antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha – ei dui rūpa*

One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee of the Lord.

Prabhupāda says, “You become guru” not only in my *sannyāsa* initiation lecture, but hundreds of times in other places – but there is no reference anywhere of *ṛtvik*. In the *Nectar of Devotion*, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that *sannyāsīs* can accept disciples:

Therefore, in the line of Lord Caitanya, even the *sannyāsīs* can speak about Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere, and if someone is seriously inclined to become a disciple, the *sannyāsī* always accepts him. (*Nectar of Devotion* Ch.7)

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, where *guru-tattva* is described, Prabhupāda says that without being initiated by a bona-fide spiritual master, one cannot go back to Godhead:

One should always remember that a person who is reluctant to accept a spiritual master and be initiated is sure to be baffled in his endeavour to go back to Godhead. One who is not properly initiated may present himself as a great devotee, but in fact he is sure to encounter many stumbling blocks on his path of progress toward spiritual realisation, with the result that he must continue his term of material existence without relief. (Cc Ādi-līlā 1.35)

He doesn't say, “Without being initiated by a bona-fide spiritual master (although he's left the world) through *ṛtvik* initiation, one cannot go back to Godhead.”

There is no example of *ṛtvik* initiation anywhere, except sometimes during the living presence of the spiritual master. The *ṛtvik* acts as a priest because the guru cannot be physically present. That's quite common. There are different functions of the *ṛtvik* at different times, in different places. I was also a *ṛtvik*. At the Hyderabad farm in 1976 there were three people taking first initiation and right in front of the devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked me to chant on the beads because he was tired. Then he gave them the beads and the names. So many times Prabhupāda wrote to the *sannyāsīs* and temple presidents, “You can chant on their beads and these are their

names –”. That is the *ṛtvik* function. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was ill, he set up a system that in different areas senior men would initiate on his behalf, yet he didn’t say that they would be anything but *ṛtviks*! So according to some devotees, because there is no proof that this was ever changed, the *ṛtvik* system must continue until Śrīla Prabhupāda returns and indicates otherwise! But the otherwise had already been indicated during his 12 years of preaching. There is no example of a *ṛtvik ācārya* in any bona-fide *sampradāya* in the whole history of this universe, and there are hundreds of stories in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* about gurus and disciples. There was never any *ṛtvik* initiation during the Vedic period, what to speak of during the time of Caitanya Mahāprabhu or when Śrīla Prabhupāda was present. There is only the example of the *paramparā*.

We are members of a living *sampradāya*. We are not Sikhs. That is the conception started by Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Nanak was the founder of the Sikh *dharma* and Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth guru. The ninth guru was killed and his son, Guru Gobind Singh ascended the seat of his father. He wasn’t much of a preacher – he wanted to make an army, but nonetheless, he was the guru. So he used his post as guru to make an army in the Punjab to fight the Moghuls. Before he died, he declared that there would be no more gurus after him. The Sikhs are very strict about this. Some years ago, when I was preaching in Chandigarh, there was a Sikh in Delhi claiming to be the next guru. An assassin stood up during a programme and blew him away right in front of 10,000 people.* Guru Gobind Singh also stated that the eleventh guru would be the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred book of the Sikhs, and that one could reach God just by reading that. It’s similar to how some devotees say, “All we need are Prabhupāda’s books!”

* The name of the Sikh leader was Gurbachan Singh who was assassinated on April 24th, 1980.

Ours is a living conception. Once, one *sannyāsī* told Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja, “There are those who say that one should not accept disciples and they favour the *ṛtvik* conception.” Śrīla Purī Mahārāja said two things – first, that the *ṛtvik* idea was very dangerous, and also that it is the death of the *paramparā* – a dead man’s philosophy! Then Śrīla Purī Mahārāja said, “Whatever you have received, you try to give that with all your sincerity, with all your earnestness, to the best of your ability and try to march forward.” That is the standard of the *paramparā*.

The *ṛtvik* idea is a dead conception. Where is the life? Life means I must become pure, I must surrender, I must embrace a life of unalloyed devotion and I must preach. But the *ṛtviks* are pointing to the so-called disqualifications of others and claiming that no one is qualified to hold the post of guru. They see only disqualifications in everyone. They are like Duryodhana.

There is a story in the *Mahābhārata** that once, Droṇācārya called for Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira. He asked Duryodhana to go out into the kingdom and bring back a person more qualified than himself. Then Droṇa requested Yudhiṣṭhira to go out and find a person less qualified than himself. After some time both men returned alone. Droṇa then inquired from each why they had returned empty handed. Duryodhana said, “I could not find anyone more qualified than myself” and Yudhiṣṭhira said, “I could not find anyone less qualified than myself.”

The *ṛtviks* have the mentality of Duryodhana – they cannot see the good qualities of others. What they are trying to say is that they alone are qualified, at least to judge the qualifications of other. This kind of thinking is *avaaiṣṇava* and it is against the devotional line. The *ṛtviks* say that no one is qualified, but they

* Mahābhārata, Ādi-parva Ch.8

have not seen everyone, so how do they know for sure? A man says that he has not met anyone who has seen God, therefore he concludes that no one has. But how does he know? He has not met everyone. Even if he did meet someone who has seen God, would he believe him? Probably not.

We must give respect to the post of guru. Of course, the guru should have the necessary qualifications of *guru-niṣṭhā* and *niṣkiñcana-bhakti* – firm faith in the order of the spiritual master and freedom from the desire for power, profit, adoration and distinction. One should have these qualifications before accepting the post of *guru* and accepting disciples. But it will be very difficult to say from an objective point of view who is or who isn't a *paramahansa*. Someone says the *guru* must be *paramahansa*, but actually the post is *paramahansa*.

How do you know for sure if a god-brother is a qualified *paramahansa* or not? First you must surrender – become a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa and your spiritual master, then you will know who is who. It takes one to know one. If I ask my god-brothers, “Was Śrīla Prabhupāda a pure devotee?” obviously they will all say yes. But what is your proof that he was a pure devotee? They may say, “Well, Śrīla Prabhupāda came to America alone, spread the movement, preached to the public and published many books on the topic of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda did that and much, much more – but that is all external! Do you mean to say that if an old man simply comes to America and publishes some books on Kṛṣṇa then we should consider him a *paramahansa*?” No. So what is the actual

* An example of this is the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava monk, Bābā Premānanda Bhāratī, who came to America in 1902 and established a centre in New York City (the Krishna Samaj). While there, he wrote a book called *Shri Krishna: The Lord of Love*, a retelling of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. He travelled around the United States giving lectures in St. Louis, Boston and Los Angeles. He returned to India in 1911 and passed away in 1913. Despite having stayed nine years in America, Premānanda Bhāratī didn't make any spiritual impact there.

proof? A god-brother may then say, “I have my faith – I know it in my heart that Śrīla Prabhupāda is a pure devotee.” Yes! That is your only proof! Your faith is your proof. Faith allows us to understand and to measure the standard. That is our only real proof. Śrīla Prabhupāda also said that. Once he asked the devotees, “How do you know Kṛṣṇa is God?” First they were giving evidence from *śāstra*, but Prabhupāda said, “The Bible says something else, Koran says something else. How do you know?” Then they quoted the *ācāryas* and Prabhupāda said, “The Christians are also saying.” He was playing the devil’s advocate. Finally one devotee said, “Well, I know in my heart” Prabhupāda said, “Yes! That is your proof!”

You can seek help from the *śāstras* to understand some of the necessary qualifications of guru, but ultimately we must hear from our heart. It is a subjective experience. The *ṛtviks* don’t even have a conception of objective and subjective planes of consciousness. It is a matter of knowing from the inner flow of the heart. Knowledge of the position of the guru descends from above – Kṛṣṇa Himself reveals the guru to a prospective candidate. Kṛṣṇa chooses who will be guru and for whom. It is not a matter of voting a man to the post of guru, nor is the position of guru understandable by those who have no faith. The qualification to understand the position of guru depends upon *śraddhā*, our faith.

*yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā-deve tathā gurau
tasyaitē kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanāḥ*

Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master is the import of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed. (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.38)

If we have proper faith then the truth is revealed in our heart, and there is no greater proof than that. We may judge the position of so many persons in this world by their various qualifications and disqualifications, but if we try to understand *guru-tattva* in the same way, we will be baffled.

The *ṛtviks* claim that the self-effulgent *ācārya* manifests – but who will say that he has manifested? Is it the disciple who recognises him? Is it the god-brother that recognises him? Is it the non-devotee in the street that recognises him? Who recognises him? Who recognised Śrīla Prabhupāda? First we would say that we did! Yes, first he appears to the disciple – who else? Some would say, “Well, Prabhupāda’s god-brothers didn’t recognise him!” That is not true. Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja fully recognised him, and so did Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja.* Actually, before Śrīla Prabhupāda passed away, Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja, Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja, Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja and other god-brothers recognised him and his work. So is the self-effulgent *ācārya* only recognised by the disciples that he comes to deliver, or by other senior Vaiṣṇavas also? What the *ṛtviks* are saying is that, “We will recognise the self-effulgent *ācārya* when he comes!” But they can’t recognise a self-effulgent *ācārya* because they’re not even looking! What is their idea of self-effulgent? I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda say that once, in reference to how one can recognise a pure devotee. He said, “It takes one to know one” or it takes some good fortune.

The *ṛtviks* will state that the guru must be pure and perfect. Yes, but what is your conception of purity or perfection? In which way shall we consider that he is perfect or not? How shall we understand his purity? By Vedic standards the *gopīs* are impure – they are unchaste from the material point of view, but what is their standard of spiritual purity? They are actually the purest of the pure because they simply want to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. They have no separate desire other than to please Kṛṣṇa. Why is it that the wives of the *yajñika-brāhmaṇas* in *kṛṣṇa-līlā* were purer than their husbands? Because they simply tried to satisfy Kṛṣṇa and His friends.

Rāmānanda Rāya was a śūdra, a government servant, therefore he was impure by Vedic standards and thus a *sannyāsī* should

never touch such a person. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu rejected such measures of purity and embraced him. Not only that, He also accepted Rāmānanda Rāya as His *rasa-guru*.

We cannot understand what spiritual purity is when we measure it by material standards. One may follow perfectly the four regulative principles for many, many lifetimes but remain impure. On the other hand, one may not fully observe the regulative principles, yet he may be a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Now someone might say, “What? That’s impossible! Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us to strictly follow the regulative principles otherwise we cannot go back to Godhead.” Yes, we may strictly follow the regulative principles, but without surrender to *guru* and Kṛṣṇa where is our purity? Without surrender it will remain as material purity. There are many *brāhmaṇas* and *sannyāsīs* in India who strictly follow the four regulative principles, yet they are great oppressors and offenders of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission. Similarly, there are examples of many devotees who were not so strict about the regulative principles, yet they were pure devotees nonetheless.

Everyone knows that Śrīla Prabhupāda dedicated his *Kṛṣṇa Book* to his father, Gaura-mohana De – “a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.” Do the *ṛtviks* accept that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s father was a pure devotee? If so, then let them explain why Prabhupāda’s father gave hashish and marijuana to the *sādhus* that came to his house. He also had a *hookah* in his house that he would offer to his guests. If you did such things nowadays, your god-brothers would drive you away with a stick. You would be an outcast in the modern Vaiṣṇava society. What is the criterion that makes Gaura-mohana pure devotee? By what criterion do the *ṛtviks* know he was a pure devotee? I don’t think they can answer that question. By their estimation, Prabhupāda’s father was not fit because he didn’t strictly follow the principles. So in which way was he a pure devotee? His purity was that he simply desired that his son would become a pure devotee of

Śrīmatī Rādhārānī and he prayed to all the saintly persons whom he entertained to please give this blessing. That was his purity.

We have to judge purity from the inner plane, not from external circumstances. There is also the example of Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. When he came to Navadvīpa, he was sitting in his luxurious house smoking a *hookah*, wearing costly clothing and perfume. From his external appearance and habits he looked like a materialist, but then he heard a verse from the *Bhāgavatam* recited by Mukunda Datta:

*aho baki yaṁ stana-kāla-kūṭam
jighāṁsayā pāyayad apy asādhvī
lebhe gatiṁ dhātry-ucitāṁ tato 'nyam
kaṁ vā dayāluṁ śaraṇaṁ vrajema*

O how amazing it is! The sister of Bakāsura (Pūtanā) desiring to kill Śrī Kṛṣṇa, smeared poison on her breasts and forced Kṛṣṇa to drink her milk. Even so, Lord Kṛṣṇa accepted her as His nursemaid and thus she reached the destination suitable for Kṛṣṇa's mother. Of whom should I take shelter but the most merciful Kṛṣṇa? (*Bhāg.* 3.2.23)

When Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi heard this verse he became mad with love of Kṛṣṇa. He began shivering, shedding tears, and rolling on the floor in ecstasy and crying, “Of whom should I take shelter but the most magnanimous Lord? Where should I take refuge without such a Lord?” Internally Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi had great devotion for Kṛṣṇa, but outwardly he appeared to be an ordinary materialist.

The *ṛtviks* think a pure devotee means somebody who is materially pure. No one is materially pure – everyone is more or less materially contaminated. They don't know what spiritual purity is. They have some idea of what material purity is, but even on that level many of them fail. They fail on both

accounts and because they are unqualified, they conclude that no one else is qualified.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had at least five thousand disciples, and many of them are still carrying on Kṛṣṇa consciousness even to this day. The *ṛtviks* claim that nobody amongst them is qualified to be guru. If that is true, then why would anyone want to become Prabhupāda's disciple? If, after following his teachings for 25–30 years, not one person is qualified, then why should I follow Prabhupāda's teachings? What is the advantage? It must mean that his teachings have no potency, and that is what the *ṛtviks* are actually saying – that Prabhupāda's teachings have no potency. They don't know what it means to become qualified. The spiritual master can qualify somebody, even though they may have a defect in their habits or in their practice. *Ṛtvik* is a sinful philosophy because it is offensive to those devotees who actually do follow their guru.

If we want to learn Karate and go to a school and inquire, “In the national competition, how many students of this karate teacher took first or second place?” If we hear, “Oh, no, no – they get beaten every year” – then why would you want to become his student? But on the other hand, if someone tells us, “There's another teacher – his students win every time,” then immediately we will want to enrol in that school where the students are successful – not where the students are all failures! You don't want a teacher whose students fail. If you look for a teacher, you will seek out someone whose students pass the exams with flying colours. Similarly, if you look for a guru, you seek spiritual master who has qualified disciples. The *ṛtviks* discredit Śrīla Prabhupāda by saying that no one is qualified. They are actually condemning him. Why? Because their glorification of him is mundane – it is not really transcendental. When it is put under the magnifying glass, it is no glorification of him at all. It is a vilification! Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say that one knows a spiritual master by

the position of his disciples. So that is what we can understand about Śrīla Prabhupāda according to them – that there is no use in following his teachings because they don't work!

They may say that nobody is qualified, but for the dignity of Śrīla Prabhupāda I would say, "I don't have the same opinion. I see others who are qualified, who have the mercy, who know the philosophy and who know the practice." I can't agree with the *ṛtviks*. Just like Śrīla Prabhupāda once said, "You say you haven't seen God but I say I have, so sit down and be quiet." Ultimately, I have to take the same stand. It is an embarrassment for them to keep saying that no one who has been following Śrīla Prabhupāda for so many years is qualified. I would have to say, "I am, I can, I will, I do – and all by the grace of Śrīla Prabhupāda – nothing by my own endeavour." But they say just the opposite – they say that his grace may come to me, but it amounts to nothing. That is their ideology. "We can continue glorifying Śrīla Prabhupāda throughout the world and continue his lineage without becoming pure to do it. We can continue to be screw-ups for the rest of our lives!" No! You will be a failure! You can only continue to glorify the spiritual master by becoming pure yourself.

It is a poor excuse to say that, "No one is qualified, therefore I don't have to become qualified either – we will just initiate everyone as Prabhupāda's disciple." Again and again we heard from Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja about this – he gave no credence to the *ṛtviks*. When the gurus started to fall down, he said, "My guru has left – now I will become a Prabhupāda disciple! This is foolishness!" It was unacceptable. That's how this *ṛtvik* ideology began. The *ṛtvik* philosophy is a philosophy of frustration stemming from the inability to follow the teachings of the *guru*, as well as not properly studying and understanding the *siddhānta*.

There is also another point – a new person doesn't come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and decide that they want to become

Prabhupāda's disciple. It is mainly our *ṛtvik* god-brothers who decide that for them. According to the association we accept, our faith develops. If a new person meets a *ṛtvik*, he is told, "Nobody is qualified to be guru. You just do this and that – we will initiate you and you will become a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda." However, you may find in due course that the candidate may say, "I don't want to be Prabhupāda's disciple, I want to be your disciple. I don't know Prabhupāda. I've read his books, but I am inspired by what you tell me." This actually happened during the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda – some man wanted to be initiated by Brahmānanda. There is a letter wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda said that in the living presence of the spiritual master, generally a certain etiquette is followed.* In the living presence of one's guru, all new candidates are transferred to him. After the disappearance of the guru, the same *ṛtvik* who initiated on behalf of his guru as a priest, can accept full charge of taking disciples back to Godhead. All he does is take them to his guru while he's living – after that, he has to take full responsibility. Back in 1975, somebody was clamouring that a certain *sannyāsī* was qualified to be a guru. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a letter to that devotee and gave some clarification. He said that during the living presence of one's spiritual master, generally one should not make disciples, but after the disappearance of the spiritual master, one can accept disciples without limitation.†

* "So far as your taking initiation from Brahmānanda Mahārāja, I have no objection, but it is the etiquette that in the presence of one's Spiritual Master, one does not accept disciples. In this connection, Swāmī Brahmānanda may write me and I will instruct him." (Letter to John Milne, March 24th, 1971)

† "But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession." (Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, February 12th, 1975)

Is this just a custom that one shouldn't make disciples while the guru is living? If it's just a rule to stop the disciple from doing that, then Vaiṣṇavism is not very deep. It must have some deeper meaning. The true disciple knows that the result of his preaching has the support of his guru. It is actually only his guru's potency that allows him to preach and draw people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So in his guru's living presence, it is a natural practice for the disciple to transfer those people he attracts and bring them to his guru. He wants everyone he enlists to be initiated by his own guru. The disciple is just a medium – he transfers their faith. But after the disappearance of the guru, the same principle is at work if he is surrendered to that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is a *ṛtvik*, Bhaktisiddhānta is a *ṛtvik*, Rūpa Gosvāmī is also a *ṛtvik* – a *ṛtvik* means a representative. Didn't we learn at the beginning of our devotional journey that guru means representative of Kṛṣṇa and the *paramparā*? If you're not a *ṛtvik*, you're not a guru. But the modern *ṛtviks* want to avoid the responsibility of being a guru – they are not real *ṛtviks*.





Brahma's Illusion

by Śrīla B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja

A chapter from the book "Loving Search for the Lost Servant"

In many places in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, we find Lord Brahmā, the creator of the universe, being tested by Kṛṣṇa. And still, Brahmā is our gurudeva. He is the original guru of our line. That he could become bewildered is so perplexing and difficult to understand that Madhvācārya eliminated that section from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He could not accept those two chapters of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam where Brahmā was under illusion, where he had some misunderstanding about Kṛṣṇa. But Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted everything in toto.

This is a very peculiar thing. How can the original guru of our *sampradāya* become bewildered about Kṛṣṇa? It is, inconceivable. Still, everything is intelligible through the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, "inconceivable oneness and difference." How can we accommodate that our original guru becomes perplexed, not only once, but twice? That is *līlā*, a divine pastime. An example of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* is found in the way Kṛṣṇa deals with his devotees. Kṛṣṇa himself is independent of everything. Still, sometimes he shows himself to be completely subordinate to his servants and must do whatever they want him to. Then again, sometimes he completely ignores them. These are the spontaneous pastimes of the Sweet Absolute. Sometimes He shows absolute submission to Śrīmatī Rādhārānī, and again, sometimes he ignores her. This is the very nature of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*.

God works wonders. His ways are filled with miracles. We should be prepared for that. We should be prepared that all the knowledge of this world, all our experience, will prove to be

wrong. So it is said, *jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva*: Be clear of your past experiences, what you have drawn from the world of the senses, empirical knowledge (*pratyakṣa-jñāna*). Your tendency will always be to try to push your way into the transcendental world on the strength of mundane knowledge. But this verse is saying, “You fallen people, your capital is the experience of this world, of the senses. But it won’t do, it won’t have any value in that higher plane. What is found there is a new thing, so approach that world with an open mind; understand that everything is possible with the infinite. All your expectations, your past experience, has no value. Why don’t you give up trying to dodge this point?”

The transcendental world is something quite new to us. It is very difficult to get out of this superstition of so-called “truth” here. But still it is necessary that we accept that anything and everything is possible with God. He is the master of impossibilities. Possibility and impossibility are found only in our dictionary, yet even Napoleon wanted to remove the word “impossible.” He said, “‘impossible’ is a word in a fool’s dictionary.”

How are we to understand that the original guru of our *sampradāya* becomes bewildered? It is “impossible.” We must suspend our “knowledge” (*jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva*). We may take it that Kṛṣṇa is playing hide and seek, perhaps, with Brahmā, our gurudeva. It is like a game of hide and seek. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa is defeating others and sometimes he is defeated.

So for this reason, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not hesitate to give a description of the bewilderment of Brahmā (*brahma-vimohana-līlā*). Brahmā was bewildered in Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* in Vṛndāvana, and again when Brahmā went to have an interview with Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā, we find the same condition. The boundary of the sweet will of the infinite is such that anything can be accommodated there, and even Lord Brahmā, the creator of the universe, can be perplexed by Kṛṣṇa.

All these pastimes are like so many lighthouses showing us which way to go. Brahmā is our guru, but he was bewildered by Kṛṣṇa. And Vedavyāsa, the universal guru, was also chastised by Nārada. Nārada was put to the test many times. All these examples are showing us the way, they are pointing out the direction. It is said, *śrutibhir vimrgyam*: The authentic books about the revealed truth are only showing the way. They say: “Go in this direction. Where? We do not exactly know, but you may go in this direction.” All the *śrutis*, the guidance given by the scholars of revealed truth, give some direction: “Go this way, in this direction, and perhaps you may find it.”

Madhvācārya, in his conception of how one should see the *ācārya*, the spiritual master, could not harmonize Brahmā's bewilderment. After all, he is the *sampradāya* guru, the foremost guru of the tradition, the Brahmā-Madhva *sampradāya*. So Madhvācārya omitted these two chapters on the illusion of Brahmā from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. But Mahāprabhu did not. He accepted Śrīdhara Svāmī's edition, which is in accordance with the *suddhādvaita* philosophy of Viṣṇusvāmī. The Viṣṇusvāmī *sampradāya* follows *rāga-mārga*, spontaneous devotion. Śrīdhara Svāmī included those two chapters with his commentary, and Mahāprabhu accepted that, and it is corroborated in Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Madhvācārya could not accommodate the idea that guru may be seduced. He could not tolerate that guru may not know everything, may not be omniscient, but Mahāprabhu could.





The Position of the Bhāgavata amongst Religious Scriptures

*A Bengali lecture given by Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja at the
Sārasvata Śravaṇa Sadan, at 7:00 pm on 6th June, 1937*

The scriptural texts are present in this world in order to discipline us. Observing that our non-devotional sense-perception and mental state are extremely difficult to suppress, the *śāstra* keeps them regulated and properly disciplined, without which we will never attain auspiciousness. From this perspective, the *śāstra* is most qualified—the process of disciplining has been termed as ‘*śāstra*’.

Within this world, these *śāstras* are principally followed in two ways. The first kind of *śāstra* appears from the imagination of great men—these can help us attain some momentary auspiciousness. The second kind of *śāstra* is called *śrauta-śāstra*. They have descended on this earth through the *śrauta-paramparā* (the disciplic succession of hearing) as the pure transcendental flow of knowledge for bestowing auspiciousness to the world at large.

The books born out of the imagination of men that have established themselves as *śāstra* are based on the path of the *āroha-mārga* (“ascending” knowledge), or the realm of worldly experience—this deals with *dharma*, or the performance of good deeds to earn pious credits; *artha*, or the perfect attainment of false self-interests; *kāma*, or the total fulfillment of all material desires; and *mokṣa*, or self-destruction as a result of pseudo-renunciation stemming from developing distaste for the above-mentioned types of gratification. Whatever is conceived and established based on the aforementioned self-interests are thus categorised as the *āroha-mārga* and are based upon mutual convenience and inconvenience. They provide some information on temporary relief and conveniences

in this world or the next, but they cannot bestow supreme benefit or true auspiciousness. Disciplinary statements born out of the ordinary experiences of the limited senses that are characteristically filled with anxieties pertaining to this finite world are subject to the fourfold defects of *bhrama*, *pramāda*, *vipralipsā* and *karaṇa-pāṭava*, and can never benefit the *ātma*. How is it possible to bring about eternal benefit to the *ātma* when one is afflicted by non-spiritual or material thinking?

Yet the second kind of *śāstra* has descended through the medium of *śravaṇa* (hearing) in the disciplic succession of *mahājanas* from the infinite, infallible *Vaikunṭha-loka* as the sermons of *Bhagavān*, and is devoid of the fourfold defects discussed previously. Since it is coming from *Bhagavān*, who is *pūrṇa-satya-svarūpa* (the personification of complete truth), *jñāna-svarūpa* (the personification of transcendental knowledge) and *ānanda-svarūpa* (the personification of bliss) through the disciplic succession of His dear unalloyed devotees, it is capable of revealing the true path of auspiciousness to the *jīvas* who are constitutionally the Lord's eternal servants. But this *śrauta-śāstra* has not manifested in equal proportion in all parts of the world. Depending on time, place, circumstances, mentality etc. they have appeared differently, or due to various understandings of their meaning. The fact that *Bhārata-varṣa* is the forerunner and teacher on spiritual topics is a universal truth. For this reason the extent to which the complete truth manifests and reveals itself in *Bhārata* is not possible anywhere else. There is no trace of any self-promotion in this declaration. This is now accepted by all.

Just as all categories of worldly elements can be scientifically evaluated, similarly in the world of *dharma*, the most qualified of people can evaluate differences in the *śāstra*. Perhaps ordinary people can distinguish between glass and diamonds, but apart from a jeweller no one can understand the qualities found amongst different gradations of elements within

diamonds. Similarly, men who are most experienced in the world of *dharma* can evaluate the gradations of the *śāstra* by comparing them with proper standards of evaluation.

Although there are more than a thousand philosophies and ideologies known as ‘*dharma*’ that are present in this world, they are not all of equal value. Hence the saying, *yāta mata tāta patha* (“All paths lead to the same goal”) is worth nothing. Again, there is no rule in the world of supreme transcendence that the religion followed by the majority of the population must be considered the best. There was a time when the Buddhist religion was very influential in the world and was practiced by a large number of people—but it cannot be said to be the best system of *dharma*. Our understanding of *dharma* cannot be based upon the strength of public opinion. One must properly understand the symptoms of genuine *dharma* and accordingly learn to perceive what is not *dharma*. One needs to analyse all the constituents, the lack of which leads to *adharmā* and the addition of which leads to the preservation of *dharma*. Naming everything as equal and classifying them as the same is merely a symptom of ignorance. One should minutely judge the unique characteristics of everything.

Of the numerous ideologies present in the world that go by the name of *dharma*, some of them are steps towards *bhāgavata-dharma*, while some are merely perverted thoughts. When we are lazy or we lack faith in proper analysis and discrimination, then we become negligent and declare, “Whatever’s there is all fine! There is no necessity to create any disturbance.”

Even for ordinary things like politics etc. that are fleeting in nature and give momentary pleasure, we are unable to simply accept them blindly without spending so much of our energy going through various types of analysis. But when it comes to *dharma* we hastily come to a conclusion without thinking and deliberating upon it! Religious people never compromise in this manner. When even worldly affairs cannot be properly

understood without minutely analysing them, then how can it be proper that a spiritual path can be accepted without discrimination?

The *śrauta-śāstras* neglect worldly experiences and, by frustrating such temporary endeavors, they descend from above out of their mercy for the *jīvas*. When we come under the influence of selfishness we develop a perception of worldly objects. It is possible that different types of people with different levels of intellectual capacity can have various understandings of religious scriptures based upon their individual selfish propensities. Like us, it is natural even for tiny creatures like insects, flies etc. to have self-fulfilling ideas on material objects. Therefore it is not entirely unnatural even for *śrauta-śāstras* to have different meanings based on individual selfishness.

Only those things that explain the complete truth are capable of fully satisfying our real or eternal necessity. That truth descends through the medium of *śruti* from a realm beyond our senses and spiritually penetrates our aural reception, and through this process it nullifies all sensory defects. The senses, being overwhelmed by false perceptions, were in a state of anxiety, but now those false perceptions are eradicated and are substituted with real knowledge. Frustrating the perception developed from worldly experience gathered by people, this knowledge descends on earth through the medium of aural disciplic succession. The Vedas have descended on earth in the form of sermons of the Supreme Lord. The power of our material senses is defeated by a place beyond their reach—the Vedas have descended from that arena. Therefore the proof of the Vedas is self-evident. The best of men within this world that belong to the society of Āryans accept the Vedas. Yet in several places there is criticism of the Vedas, such as when *Bhagavān* said:

*yam imaṃ puṣpitām vācaṃ pravadyantya-avipaścitaḥ
veda-vāda-ratāḥ pārtha nānyad astīti vādinaḥ*

“O Pārtha, those with small intelligence misinterpret the Vedas and claim there is no divine principle in creation. Thus they glorify those statements that are pleasing to their senses.” (Gītā 2.42)

*kāmātmānaḥ svarga-parā janma-karma-phala-pradām
kriyā-viśeṣa-bāhulām bhogaiśvarya-gatiṁ prati*

“Because their hearts are filled with selfish desires and their goal is the higher planets, they prescribe many rituals that award higher birth, wealth and power and lead to enjoyment and opulence.” (Gītā 2.43)

traī-guṇyā-viśayā vedā nīstrai-guṇyo bhavāṛjuna

“The Vedas deal with subjects in the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes.” (Gītā 2.45)

In all these places the Vedas have been accepted. The Vedas are like a *kalpataru* (desire tree) or a *kāma-dhenu* (wish-fulfilling cow). Therefore they can be interpreted from different directions such as *karma* (fruitive activity), *jñāna* (speculative knowledge) or *upāsana* (devotional worship). In *karma-kāṇḍa* it is said:

rocānārtha phala-śrutiḥ

“For the purpose of giving encouragement, the Vedas promise material results.” (Bhāg. II.3.46)

Thus, they instruct their followers not to restrict themselves to *karma* only. Again it is said:

na buddhi-bhedaṁ janayed ajñānāṁ karma-saṅginām

“The wise should not disturb the minds of the ignorant who are attached to their selfish activities.” (Gītā 3.26)

Here it is forbidden to withdraw the intelligence of *karmīs* from *karma*. In this way, while looking for the real meaning

of mutually conflicting references, in most cases they become trapped in impersonalism. The Vedas have been manifested for a very long time. Scholars understand the Vedas by means of following *vyākaraṇa* (grammatical rules), *nirukta* (etymological interpretations) etc. This is the practice followed in the world at present. If help is taken to understand the Vedas through this method, danger is inevitable. But there is no possibility of any danger if one is dedicated to the path of *āmnāya-paramparā* or *guru-paramparā*.

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

“Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.” (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23)

In all the statements of the *śruti*, following the flow of the *āmnāya-paramparā* has been universally recognised. Otherwise the strength of our feelings based upon our intuitive knowledge will lead us to an impersonal conclusion.

The meaning of the Vedas is fulfilled with the help of the *Dharma-śāstras*, or *Saṁhitās* and *Purāṇas*. The very concise *Ṛks* or *mantras* in the Vedas that are left unexplained are explained in detail with proper examples in the *Purāṇas*.

itihāsa-purāṇābhyām vedarṁ samupabṛṁhayet

“Knowledge of the *Itihāsa* and the *Purāṇas* is essential to understand the Vedas.” (Mahābhārata, Ādi-parva 1.267)

The *Purāṇas* are not concocted stories. The aim of the *Purāṇas* is to clearly explain in detail the meaning of the Vedas by citing practical examples. Whatever *tattvas* in the Vedas that have the probability of being interpreted in multiple ways have been given complete explanations through the examples found in the *Purāṇas* and their proper significance has been explained.

For the people in general it is especially convenient to grasp the meaning from the *Purāṇas* as compared to the original Vedas.

Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa himself has divided the Vedas and revealed them as the eighteen *Purāṇas*. Although some *Purāṇas* are named after sages like Mārkaṇḍeya, those specific sages have not revealed those particular *Purāṇas*. On the basis of their questions and answers, the Vedas have revealed themselves based on differences in qualification. In ancient times there were one hundred crores of *ślokas* in these eighteen *Purāṇas*, but those have disappeared with time and only four lakhs of *ślokas* are still existing. The *Mādhyandina Śruti* and the *Kaumudī* branch of *Sāma-veda* have declared the *Purāṇas* as the Fifth Veda. Women, *sūdras* and fallen *brāhmaṇas* have no eligibility to read the Vedas, but the *Purāṇas* are accessible to all. They are more merciful due to the predominance of the Holy Name within them and therefore they bestow eligibility to all. Therefore the *Purāṇas* should not be considered inferior to the Vedas; rather they are more adorable to us.

These eighteen *Purāṇas* are divided into three categories—goodness, passion and ignorance. In the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* it is mentioned that *Viṣṇu*, *Nārada*, *Garuḍa*, *Varāha*, *Padma* and *Bhāgavata* are *Purāṇas* in the mode of goodness; *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Brahma-vaivarta*, *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Bhaviṣya*, *Vāmana* and *Brahma* are *Purāṇas* in the mode of passion; *Matsya*, *Kūrma*, *Liṅga*, *Śiva*, *Skanda* and *Agni Purāṇa* are famous as being in the mode of ignorance. In the *Purāṇas* that are in the mode of goodness, the greatness of Śrī Hari has been primarily described. It has been discussed the most. If one wants to understand the real meaning of *śrauta-kathā* it is absolutely necessary to take shelter of those *Purāṇas* in the mode of goodness. Again, out of the six *Purāṇas* in the mode of goodness, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is the best to be followed. Vyāsa has conserved the essence of the Vedas as *sūtras* in his text on Vedānta. He did this again by composing the *Bhāgavata* explanation which is

considered the essence of all the *Purāṇas*. Therefore, from this consideration, it can safely be accepted to be the purport of the Vedas. According to Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī all the characteristics of a *Purāṇa* are fully present within the *Bhāgavata*. The true purport of the Vedas is fully preserved in it. It has neither creation nor destruction. Sometimes it unmanifests due to our misfortune. Initially, even though this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* manifested from the Supreme Lord in a minute form within the heart of Brahmā, by the mercy of Nārada it blossomed into its present form in the heart of Vyāsa. In other *Purāṇas* such as the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* it is said that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is the purport of the *Brahma-sūtras*, it is the commentary on the *Gāyatrī-mantra*, it is the purport of the *Mahābhārata* and it is decorated with the meanings of all the Vedas. Some people have tried to include the *Devī-Bhāgavata* within the eighteen *Purāṇas* and prove that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* was written by some modern author. Dayānanda Sarasvatī, Wilson etc. tell us that it was written by Vopadeva. Vopadeva belonged to the thirteenth century. He composed books like *Hari-līlā* etc. based on the conclusions of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. For this reason he has been erroneously concluded as the author of the *Bhāgavata*. But in his book *Mukta-carita* he has mentioned the name of Ācārya Śrīdhara, the commentator on the *Bhāgavata*. Again Madhvācārya in the eleventh century has utilised it as an infallible proof in the book *Bhāgavata-tatparya*. The *Stavāvalī* collection of Śaṅkarācārya can be understood to be written on the basis of the language and topics of the *Bhāgavata*.

The *Bhāgavata* has given its own introduction:

*kṛṣṇe sva-dhāmopagate dharma-jñānādibhiḥ saha
kalau naṣṭa-dr̥śām eṣa purāṇārko 'dhunoditaḥ*

“After Kṛṣṇa returned to His abode along with religious principles, divine knowledge etc., this sun-like *Purāṇa* has appeared to enlighten those who have no spiritual vision in the age of Kali.” (Bhāg. 1.3.46)

The non-dual Absolute Vrajendra-nandana has Himself manifested as the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*.

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

“O *rasikas*, relish the mature fruit of the *Bhāgavatam*, the desire tree of the Vedas which emanated from the lips of Śuka. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its ambrosial nectar was already relishable for all, including liberated souls.” (Bhāg. 1.1.3)

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is the matured fruit of the desire tree of the Vedas—it is naturally the real purport of the Vedas. If one studies the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* along with *Vedānta-sūtra*, one will see that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is the natural commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. In Vedānta the necessity of *brahma-jijñāsā* (inquiry into Brahman) has been ascertained, and in the first *sūtra* the Vedānta has been further explained with, *janmādy asya yataḥ* and it finally concludes with, *anāvṛtṭiḥ śabdāt, anāvṛtṭiḥ śabdāt*. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* begins with the verse, *janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñāḥ svarāḥ...* and ends with the *śloka*, *nāma-saṅkīrtanam yasya...* In this way the explanation of each and every *sūtra* of the Vedānta can be harmonized with proper examples and *ślokas* from the *Bhāgavata* and they can be elaborately understood. Within them we can observe the amazing confluence of the Vedas, *kāvya* (poetry) and the *Purāṇas*.

sarva-vedetiḥāsānām sārāṁ sārāṁ samuddhṛtam

“It is the extraction of the quintessence of all the Vedas and the *Itihāsa*.” (Bhāg. 1.3.41)

Within this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, the complete essence of all the Vedas and *Itihāsa* has been preserved.

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

“The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is accepted as the essence of all the Vedānta. One who is satiated by the *rasa* of this book is never attracted to anything else.” (Bhāg. 12.13.5)

If one gets even a slight taste for the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* one will not have attraction for anything else. In the *Bhāgavata*, the words *projjhita-kaitava* mean that it completely rejects any form of deception based on the four categories of selfish interests (*dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa*) etc. and it manifests the real object of truth.

*pr̥thivīte yāta kathā dharma-nāme
cale bhāgavata kahe tāhā paripūrṇa chale*

“Whatever is going on in the world in the name of religion, the *Bhāgavata* states that it is all cheating.” (*Jaiva-dharma*)

The *Bhāgavata* makes such a great claim! It requires men of strong character to listen to its non-envious truth. The potencies of all truthful elements are surrendered unto it. The endeavours of all of our material senses fail in competing with it. Again, with its very help, the Lord, who is supremely independent of all things, becomes captured within a heart laden with a service mentality. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* says that when one understands the supremely independent Lord, all the various material activities of humans become useless. Only He can reveal Himself; otherwise it is not possible to know anything simply by our personal endeavours.

na cānye eko 'pi ciram vicinvan

“They can never understand Him, even after studying for a great length of time.” (Bhāg. 10.14.29)

Without surrendering to Him, even if we search for a very long time, the attempt to know about Him will be totally futile.

*tasmād idam jagad aśeṣam asat-svarūpaṁ
svapnābhāsam asta-diśānam puru-duḥkha-duḥkham
tvayy eva nitya-sukha-bodha-tanāv anante
māyāta udyad api yat sad ivābhāti*

“My Lord, this temporary material world, which is like a dream and thus we are suffering the miseries of material existence, trying to enjoy this dream. It has such potency because it has emanated from You, who are the source of everything. It is all Your divine energy, though when we are bewildered, we see it as something separate.” (Bhāg. 10.14.22)

He is the root cause comprised of *sat-cit-ānanda* (eternity, knowledge and bliss). The material world born through *Māyā* cannot even touch Him. The material world is not an essential part of the Lord. In spite of the *jīva* being spiritual by nature, it suffers various inconveniences when it is under the shelter of *Māyā*.

*sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaitukī apratihata yayātmā suprasīdati*

“The supreme *dharma* for all humanity is that by which man can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be causeless and uninterrupted, to completely satisfy the self.” (Bhāg. 1.2.6)

Here the path of *abhidheya* is being shown. He is beyond all the material senses. If a human being has unalloyed, natural and unbiased *bhakti* towards Him, all of his *anarthas* are completely eliminated. The *ātma* is then situated at its most convenient position.

*śreyāḥ-sṛtiṁ bhaktim udasya te vibho
kliśyanti ye kevala-bodha-labdhave
teṣām asau kleśāla eva śiṣyate
nānyad yathā sthūla-tuṣāvaghātīnām*

“O Lord, those who want to have a clear conception of You through their intellect find their attempts useless. Their endeavors end only in frustration, like those who try to beat rice from an empty husk.” (Bhāg. 10.14.4)

The path of *bhakti* is the best for the human being to attain the highest and ultimate type of auspiciousness. From *bhakti* the fourfold perfections (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa*) and *jñāna* etc. come automatically—there is no need for any separate endeavor. Whoever rejects *bhakti* and endeavours only to attain *jñāna* finds that all their efforts end in failure. If one rejects the grain but uses the chaff, he will never get any rice. The end result only gives pain and exhaustion. This *bhakti* can only be obtained by *sādhu-saṅga*. This is not anyone’s personal whim.

*satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ
taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati*

“In the association of devotees, discussion of My pastimes and activities is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.” (Bhāg. 3.25.25)

When one truly associates with a *sādhu* and continues to hear about all the qualities of the Lord, very soon respect, attachment and *bhakti* steadily develop within him. Sometimes when one attempts to search for non-differentiated Brahman, his gross and subtle bodies are seen to be annihilated, but if one is devoid of devotion then the position one obtains is temporary and one does not gain anything permanent. Needless to say, if the results of one’s activities are not offered to the Lord, then one will not gain

anything. The only necessity is love for *Bhagavān*. If one performs pious works he can earn some fame for a few days in this world. After, one can attain some enjoyment in the perishable celestial planets, but what does one gain staying far away from ultimate auspiciousness? The satisfaction of the sense organs such as the eyes etc. is called *kāma*. When one comes to realise that these senses simply give pain, then one tries to attain liberation. The term *mukti* (liberation) does not mean self-annihilation.

muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ svarūpeṇa vyavasthitiḥ

“Liberation is the permanent position of the living being when he attains his constitutional form.” (Bhāg. 2.10.6)

It is the awakening of the true identity of the *jīva*—to be rid of all other coverings.

*harir hi nirguṇaḥ sāksāt puruṣaḥ prakṛteḥ paraḥ
sa sarva-dṛg upadraṣṭā taṁ bhajan nirguṇo bhavet*

“Lord Hari is *nirguṇa* (beyond the modes of material nature), the Supreme Person, transcendental to material nature, the all-cognizant witness. By worshipping Him, one similarly becomes *nirguṇa*.” (Bhāg. 10.88.5)

The *jīva* also gets liberated from the modes of material nature such as goodness etc. and attains the *nirguṇa* plane when he performs *bhajana* of Hari, who is beyond material nature and who is Himself *nirguṇa* and the Supreme Person. Then one becomes established in his natural occupation of rendering service. It does not end merely by becoming liberated.

*muktānām api siddhānām nārāyaṇa-parāyaṇaḥ
sudurlabhaḥ praśāntātmā koṭiṣv api mahā-mune*

“O great sage, amongst millions of liberated and perfected persons, a devotee of Nārāyaṇa who is most completely satisfied is very rare.” (Bhāg. 6.14.5)

It is rare to find one devotee amongst a *koṭi* of liberated souls. Mere liberation is not the ultimate aim.

*sālokya-sārṣṭi-sāmīpya-sārūpyaikatvam apy uta
dīyamānam na gr̥hṇanti vinā mat-sevanam janāḥ*

“My devotees do not accept *sālokya* (living on the same spiritual planet), *sārṣṭi* (having the same opulence), *sārūpya* (having the same spiritual form), *sāmīpya* (to be a close associate), or *sayujya* (oneness with me)—even if I offer these liberations—in preference to serving Me.” (Bhāg. 3.29.13)

“Those who have a taste of the happiness of My service, spit at the prospect of *mukti*.” Only the *Bhāgavata* explains how one cannot even be attracted to the position of *Parameṣṭhī Brahmā*, the position of Indra etc., in order to establish oneself in *seva-rasa* (the transcendental mellows of devotional service). When one regularly reads, hears and studies the *Bhāgavata*, then service to the Lord becomes easily attainable. Service without any personal motivation (*ahaitukī-seva*), the process of serving the *Bhāgavata* in various *rasas* such as *śānta*, *dāsyā* etc. is described in the *Bhāgavata* in the purest way. Amongst the various religious scriptures the position of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is unparalleled and topmost. The most intimate relationship with *Bhagavān*, who is *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti* (the emporium of *rasa*), is described there. Mahāprabhu has personally revealed the greatness of the *Bhāgavata* and with the help of His own personal associates, who received Mahāprabhu’s mercy, He preached it. Now only Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha is trying to preach the message of the *Bhāgavata*. Where is the recipient for such great charity? *Nitya-lilā-praviṣṭa Om Viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura* has endeavoured to preach it on a grand scale. The charity of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* is the greatest gift. The one who distributes its message is *bhūridā* (the giver of the greatest wealth). Therefore in the world of scriptures, no book is of the same stature as the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*.

APPENDIX A

Verses from various scriptures supporting the divinity of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

*itotham kṛta-sannyāso 'vatariṣyāmi sa-guṇo nirvedo
niṣkāmo bhu-girvāṇas tīra-atho 'lakānandāyaḥ kalau
catuḥ-sāhasrābdhopari pañca-sāhasrābhyantare
gaura-varṇo dīrghāṅgaḥ sarva-lakṣaṇa-yukta īśvara-
prārthito nija-rasāsvādo bhakta-rūpo miśrākhyo
vidita-yogaḥ syām*

I will descend on the earth after the passage of four thousand years in the Kali-Age, and before the passage of five thousand years. I will come on the earth on the bank of the Gaṅgā. I will be a tall and saintly *brāhmaṇa* devotee. I will have all the auspicious symptoms of an exalted person. I will exhibit renunciation. I will have all auspicious signs. I will be a devotee, practicing *bhakti-yoga*. I will taste the *rasa* of My own devotional service. (Atharva Veda)

*tathāham kṛta-sannyāso bhu-girvāṇo 'vatariṣye
tīre 'lakānandāyaḥ punaḥ punaḥ īśvara-prārthitaḥ sa-
parivāro nirālambo nirdhūteḥ kali-kalmaṣa-kavalita-
janāvalambanāya*

I shall come to the earth, accompanied by My associates, in a place by the bank of the Gaṅgā. I will advent to save the people who are afflicted and devoured by the sins of the age of Kali. I will manifest as an avadhuta *brāhmaṇa sannyāsī*. (Sāma Veda)

*saptame gaura-varṇa-viṣṇor ity asena sva-śaktyā
caikyam etya prātaḥ avatīrya saha svaiḥ sva-manuḥ śikṣayati*

In the seventh manvantara, in the beginning of the Kali-yuga, the Supreme Personality of Godhead will,

accompanied by His own associates, descend in a golden form to the earth. He will teach the chanting of His own names. (Atharva-Veda Puruṣa-Bodhinī-Upaniṣad 8)

*mahān prabhuḥ vai puruṣaḥ sattvasyaīṣa pravartakaḥ
su-nirmalam imām prāptim īśāno jyotir avyayah*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is Mahāprabhu, who disseminates transcendental enlightenment. Just to be in touch with Him is to be in contact with the indestructible *brahmajyoti*. (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.12)

*yadā paśyaḥ paśyate rukma-varṇam
kartāram īśam puruṣam brahma-yonim*

One who sees that golden-colored Personality of Godhead, the Supreme Lord, the supreme actor, who is the source of the Supreme Brahma., is liberated. (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.1.3)

*āsan varṇās trayo hy asya grhṇato ’nuyugaṁ tanuḥ
śuklo raktas tathā pīta idānīm kṛṣṇatām gataḥ*

“This boy Kṛṣṇa, has three other colors: white, red and yellow as He appears in different ages. Now, in this Dvāpara-yuga, He has appeared in a transcendental blackish color.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 10.8.13)

*dhyeyaṁ sadā paribhava-ghnam abhiṣṭa-doham
tīrthāspadam śiva-viriñci-nutam śaraṇyam
bhṛtyārti-ham praṇata-pāla bhavābdhi-potam
vande mahā-puruṣa te caraṇāravindam*

We offer our respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of Him, the Lord, upon whom one should always meditate. He destroys insults to His devotees. He removes the distresses of His devotees and satisfies their desires. He, the abode of all holy places and the shelter of all sages, is worshipable by Lord Śiva and Lord Brahma. He is the boat

of the demigods for crossing the ocean of birth and death.
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.5.33)

*tyaktvā su-dustyaja-surepsita-rājya-lakṣmīn
dharmiṣṭha ārya-vacasā yad agād araṇyam
māyā-mṛgaṁ dayitayepsitaṁ anvadhāvad
vande mahā-puruṣa te caraṇāravindam*

“We offer our respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of the Lord, upon whom one should always meditate. He left His householder life, leaving aside His eternal consort, whom even the denizens of heaven adore. He went into the forest to deliver the fallen souls, who are put into illusion by material energy.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.5.34)

*kṛṣṇa varṇaṁ tviṣā kṛṣṇaṁ saṅgopāṅgāstra-pārśadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtanaṁ-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ*

“In the age of Kali, Kṛṣṇa appears in a golden form, chanting the two syllables Kṛṣ-ṇa. He descends along with His weapons, śaktis, limbs, and eternal confidential associates. Those with intelligence worship Him with the saṅkīrtana yajña. (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.5.32)

*itthaṁ nṛ-tiryag-ṛṣi-deva-jhaṣāvātārair
lokān vibhāvayasi haṁsi jagat-pratipān
dharmaṁ mahā-puruṣa pāsi yugānuvṛttaṁ
channaḥ kalau yad abhavas tri-yugo 'tha sa tvam*

“My Lord, You kill all the enemies of the world in Your multifarious incarnations in the families of men, animals, demigods, ṛṣis, aquatics and so on. Thus You illuminate the worlds with transcendental knowledge. In the Age of Kali, O Mahāpuruṣa, You sometimes appear in a covered incarnation. Therefore You are known as Tri-yuga (one who appears in only three yugas).” (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.9.38)

*ahaṁ eva dvija-śreṣṭha nityaṁ pracchanna-vigrahaḥ
bhagavad-bhakta-rūpeṇa lokān rakṣāmi sarvadā*

“O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, My disguised form is eternal. In this way, with My own form hidden from ordinary sight I take the form of a devotee and appear among the people in general in order to establish and protect religious principles.” (Adi Purāṇa)

*ahaṁ eva kvacid brāhmaṇaṁ sannyāsa āśramam āśritaḥ
hari-bhaktiṁ grahāyāmi kalau pāpa-hatān narān*

‘O Brāhmaṇa, I occasionally take the *sannyāsa āśrama* in an attempt to bring the fallen people of Kali-yuga to take up the path of *bhakti* or devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. (Upa-purāṇa)

*kalinā dahyamānaṁ uddharārāya tanu-bhṛtām
janma prathama-sandhyāyām bhaviṣyati dvijālaya*

The Supreme Person will appear in the first part of the age of Kali. He will appear in the home of a *brāhmaṇa* to save the embodied conditioned souls burning in the troubles of Kali-yuga. (Kūrma-Purāṇa)

*kalinā ḍakyamānānām paritrāṇāya tanu-bhṛtām
janma prathama-sandhyāyām kariṣyāmi dvijātiṣu*

*ahaṁ pūrṇo bhaviṣyāmi yuga-sandhyau viśeṣataḥ
māyāpure navadvīpe bhaviṣyāmi śacī sutaḥ*

*kaleḥ prathama-sandhyāyām lakṣmī- kānto bhaviṣyati
dāru-brahma-samīpa-sthāḥ sannyāsī gaura-vigrahaḥ*

In the first part of the age of Kali, I will come among the *brāhmaṇas* to save the fallen souls, who are being burned by the troubles of the age of Kali.

I will take birth as the son of Śacī, in Navadvīpa-Māyāpura.. I will come in my complete spiritual form in the first part of Kali-yuga.

In the first part of Kali-yuga, the Supreme Personality of Godhead will come in a gold-like form. First He will

become the husband of Lakṣmī (Śrīmatī Lakṣmī Devī, Lord Caitanya's first wife). Then He will become a *sannyāsī*, near Lord Jagannātha who will appear in a divine wooden form. (Garuḍa-Purāṇa)

*satye daitya-kulādhi-nāsa-samaye śimhordhva-martyākṛtiḥ
tretāyām daśa-kandharaṁ paribhavan rāmeti nāmākṛtiḥ
gopālān paripālayan vraja-pure bhāraṁ haran dvāpare
gaurāṅgaḥ priya-kīrtanaḥ kali-yuge caitanya-nāma prabhuḥ*

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead who in the Satya-yuga appeared as a half-man, half-lion to cure a terrible disease that had ravaged the daityas, and who in the Treta-yuga appeared as a person named Rāma (Lord Rāmacandra), a person who defeated the ten-headed Demon Rāvaṇa, and who in the Dvāpara-yuga removed the earth's burden, and protected the Gopa (cowherd men) people of Vraja-pura, will appear again in the Kali-yuga. His form will be golden, He will delight in chanting the Lord's holy names, and His name will be Caitanya.” (Nṛsiṁha-Purāṇa)

*yatrāyogeśvaraḥ sākṣād yogī-cintyo janārdanaḥ
caitanya vapur āste vai sandrānandātmakaḥ*

*kaleḥ prathama-sandhyāyām gaurāṅgotham mahī-tale
bhāgīrathi-tate ramye bhaviṣyāmi śacī-sutaḥ*

“The Supreme Personality, Janārdana, who is the object of the yogis' meditation, who saves the devotees from various sufferings, and who is the master of all yogic practices, who is always full of divine transcendental ecstasy and bliss, will advent in His own divine form of Śrī Caitanya.

“I shall appear on this earth in the first part of Kali-yuga in a beautiful place on the bank of the Bhāgīrathī. I shall have a golden form, and I shall take birth as the son of Śacī.” (Padma-Purāṇa)

*aham eva kalau vipra nityam prachanna-vigrahaḥ
bhagavad-bhakta-rūpeṇa lokān rakṣāmi sarvadā*

*divijā bhuvi jayadhvam jayadhvam bhakta rūpiṇaḥ
kalau saṅkīrtana rām bhe bhaviṣyāmi śacī-sutaḥ*

*aham eva dvija-śreṣṭho nityam pracchanna-vigrahaḥ
bhagavad-bhakta-rūpeṇa lokam rakṣāmi sarvadā*

O Vipra, in the age of Kali, I will come disguised as a devotee and I will save all the worlds.

O Divijā (demigods), please come and advent as devotees on this earth in the age of Kali-yuga. I will incarnate as the son of Śacī to inaugurate the congregational chanting of the name of Kṛṣṇa.

I shall advent in the form of a *brāhmaṇa* devotee and I shall hide my factual identity. I shall deliver all the worlds. (Nārada-Purāṇa)

*kaleḥ prathama sandhyāyām gaurāṅgotham mahī-tale
bhāgīrathi-tīre bhūmni bhaviṣyāmi śacī-sutaḥ*

I will reveal my eternal golden form in the first part of Kali-yuga. I will advent on the earth on the bank of the Bhāgīrathī. (Brahmā-Purāṇa)

*ānandaśru-kalā-roma harṣa-pūrṇam tapo-dhana
sarve mama eva draṅkṣyanti kalau sanniyāsa-rūpiṇam*

O austere sage, you should know that in the age of Kali, everyone will see my transcendental form as a *sanniyāsī*. I will be exhibiting symptoms of ecstasy like shedding tears of bliss and hairs standing in ecstasy. (Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa)

praśāntātmā lamba-kaṅṭhas gaurāṅgaś ca surāvṛtaḥ

The Supreme Personality of Godhead will come in a golden form, full of peace, and a beautiful long neck. He will be surrounded by many saintly devotees. (Agni-Purāṇa)

*muṅḍo gauraḥ su-dīrghāṅgaḥ tri-srotas-tīra-sambhavaḥ
dayāluḥ kīrtana-grāhī bhaviṣyāmi kalau-yuge*

In the age of Kali, I shall advent where the three rivers meet. I shall have a shaven head. I shall have a golden complexion. I will be very kind and always chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. (Matsya-Purāṇa)

*golokaṁ ca parityajya lokānām trāṇa-kāraṇāt
kalau gaurāṅga-rūpeṇa līlā-lāvaṇya-vigrahaḥ*

In the Kali-yuga, I will leave Goloka and, to save the people of the world, I will become the handsome and playful Lord Gaurāṅga. (Markaṇḍeya-Purāṇa)

*ahaṁ eva dvija-śreṣṭho līlā-prācūrya-vigrahaḥ
bhagavad-bhakta-rūpeṇa lokān rakṣāmi sarvadā*

I shall come as the best of the *brāhmaṇas*. I will exhibit many pastimes in the form of a devotee. I shall deliver the people of the world. (Varāha-Purāṇa)

*kali-ghora-tamas-channāt sarvān ācāra varjitān
śacīgarbhe ca sambhūya tārayiṣyāmi nārada*

O Nārada Muni, I will take birth in the womb of Śacī. I shall save the people, who will give up all proper good conduct, from the terrible darkness of the age of Kali-yuga. (Vāmana-Purāṇa)

*paurṇamāsyām phālgunasya phālgunī-ṛkṣa-yogataḥ
bhaviṣye gaura-rūpeṇa śacī-garbhe purandarat*

*suvarṇādi-tīram āsthāya navadvīpe janāśraye
tatra dvija-kulam prāpto bhaviṣyāmi janālaya*

*bhakti-yoga-pradānāya lokasyānugrahāya ca
sannyāsa-rūpam āsthāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāma-dhṛk*

*tena lokasya nistāras tat kurudhvam mamājñayā
dharitri bhavitā cābhir mayāiva dvija-dehina*

I shall advent in the month of Phālguna, when the star Phālguni is conjoined with the full moon. I shall incarnate in a golden complexion in the womb of Śacī and Purandara Miśra.

I will be born in the city of Navadvīpa, on the Gaṅgā' shore, in a Brāhmaṇa's family. I shall take the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*) and show kindness to the people in general and engage them in *bhakti*. I will be known as Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

All of you should follow My order and deliver the people of the world. I shall appear as a *Brāhmaṇa*. I shall make this earth fearless. (Vāyu-Purāṇa)

*śuddho gaurah-su-dīrghāṅgo gaṅgā-tīra-samudbhavaḥ
dayāluḥ-kīrtana-grāhī bhaviṣyāmi kalau yuge*

In the age of Kali-yuga, I shall come in a place on the bank of the Gaṅgā. I will be very pure, have a fair complexion, and be very tall and chant the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. (Vāyu-Purāṇa)

kalau saṅkīrtanārambhe bhaviṣyāmi śacī-sutaḥ

In the Age of Kali when the *saṅkīrtana* movement is inaugurated, I shall descend as the son of Śacīdevī. (Vāyu-Purāṇa)

suvarṇa-varṇo hemaṅgo varāṅgaś-candanāṅgadī

“He appears in a golden form, His limbs are the complexion of molten gold. His body is extremely beautiful and decorated with sandalwood pulp.” (Mahābhārata, Viṣṇu Sahasranāma)

sannyāsa-kṛcchamaḥ śānto niṣṭhā śānti-parāyaṇaḥ

“He accepts *sannyāsa* and shows equanimity. He is peaceful. His mind is always fixed and He performs chanting.” (Mahābhārata, Viṣṇu Sahasranāma)

*suvarṇādi-tīram āsṛitya navadvīpe dvijālaye
 saṁpradātuṁ bhakti-yogaṁ lokasyānugrahāya ca
 sa eva bhagavān kṛmo rādhikā-prāṇa-vallabhaḥ
 sṛṣṭy-ātau sa jagannātho gaura āsīn maheśvari
 avatīrṇo bhaviṣyāmi kalau-nija-ganaiḥ saha
 śacī-garbhe navadvīpe swardhuni-parivārite
 aprakāśyam idaṁ guhyaṁ na prakāśyam bahir mukhe
 bhaktāvatāraṁ bhaktākhyam bhaktaṁ bhakti-pradaṁ svayam
 man-mayā-mohitāḥ kecin na jñāsyanto bahir-mokhāḥ
 jñāsyanti mad-bhakti-yuktāḥ sādhaso-nyāsinotmalāḥ
 krmāvatāra-kāle-yaḥ striyo ye puruṣaḥ priyāḥ
 kalau te 'vatariṣyanti śrīdāma-subalādayaḥ
 catuḥ-śaṣṭi-mahāntas te gopā dvādaśa bālakāḥ
 dharmā-saṁsthāpanārthāya vihariṣyāmi tair aham
 kāle naṣṭaṁ bhakti-pathaṁ sthāpayiṣyāmy ahaṁ punaḥ
 gacchantu bhuvī te putrāḥ jayantaṁ bhakta-rūpiṇaḥ
 dharmā-saṁsthāpanaṁ kāle kurvantu te mamājñayā
 kṛṣṇas caitanya-gaurango gauracandraḥ śacī-sutaḥ
 prabhur gauro gaura-harir nāmāni-bhakti-dāni me*

To show mercy to the people and give them devotional service, the Supreme Personality of Godhead will appear in a Brāhmaṇa's home in Navadvīpa by the Gaṅgā's shore. The Supreme Person, Sri Kṛṣṇa Himself, who is the life of Srimati Rādhārānī, and is the Lord of the universe in creation, maintenance, and annihilation, appears as Gaura, O Maheśvarī.

In Kali-yuga, I will descend to the earth with My associates. In Navadvīpa, which is surrounded by the Gaṅgā, I will take birth in Śacī-devi's womb.

They who are bewildered by My illusory potency will not understand the great secret of the appearance in this world

of Me in My personal form, in My form as the incarnation of devotion, in My form as the incarnation of a devotee, in My form bearing the name of a devotee, in My form as a devotee, and in My form as the giver of devotional service.

This secret is not to be revealed to them. Only the saintly, pure, renounced devotees, diligently engaged in My devotional service, will be able to understand Me in these five forms.

My dear male and female associates, headed by Śrīdāma and Subala, who came to this world at the time of My advent as Lord Kṛṣṇa, will come again during the Kali-yuga.

The Gopas will become the sixty-four mahantas and the twelve gopālas. To establish the truth of religion, I will enjoy many pastimes with them.

In this way I will again reveal the path of devotional service, which has been destroyed in the course of time. My sons should also descend to the earth, assume the forms of devotees, and, by My order, also work to re-establish the principles of true religion.

At this time My names will be: Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Gaurāṅga, Gauracandra, Sacīsuta, Mahāprabhu, Gaura and Gaurahari. Chanting these names will bring devotion to Me. (Ananta-Saṁhitā)

puṇya-kṣetre navadvīpe bhaviṣyāmi śacī-sutaḥ.

“I shall appear in the holy land of Navadvīpa as the son of Sacīdevi.” (Kṛṣṇa-yāmala-tantra)

*atha vāhaṁ dharā-dhāme bhūtvā mad-bhakta-rūpa-dhṛk
māyāyām ca bhaviṣyāmi kalau saṅkīrtanāgame*

“Sometimes I personally appear on the surface of the world in the garb of a devotee. Specifically, I appear as the son of Śacī in Kali-yuga to start the *saṅkīrtana* movement.” (Brahma-yāmala tantra)

APPENDIX B

Brāhmaṇa Identity, Varṇa Determination, and Vaiṣṇavism

This appendix presents key scriptural citations and traditional arguments about *brāhmaṇa* status (by birth, qualities, and initiation), *varṇa* determination, and the relationship between Brāhmiṇism and Vaiṣṇavism.

A frequently cited birth-based definition

A commonly cited *dharmā-sāstra* statement is used to support the view that *brāhmaṇatva* is by birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family—

*yajña-siddhy-artham anaghaṅ brāhmaṇān mukhato 'srjat
brāhmaṇyām brāhmaṇenaivam utpanno brāhmaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ*

"From the mouth (of the Lord) sinless *brāhmaṇas* were created for the purpose of performing sacrifices. The child born of a *brāhmaṇa* in the womb of a *brāhmaṇa* wife is known as a *brāhmaṇa*." (Harita Smṛti 1.12.15)

However, there are factors mentioned in the *sāstra* that are not only far more significant than just birth, but also overrule its precedence in identifying a *brāhmaṇa*.

Qualities of a *brāhmaṇa* stated in the *sāstras*

Many texts describe *brāhmaṇa*-hood primarily through *lakṣaṇas* (characteristics).

According to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Bhagavad-gītā (18.42), the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa* are as follows —

*śamo damas tapaḥ śaucaṁ kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca
jñānam vijñānam āstikyam brahma-karma svabhāva-jam*

"Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness — these are the natural qualities by which the *brāhmaṇas* work."

In the Mahābhārata it is stated:

*dharmas ca satyam ca damas tapas ca
amātsaryam hrīs titikṣaṅāsūya
yajñas ca dānam ca dhṛtiḥ śrutam ca
vratāni vai dvādaśa brāhmaṇasya*

"A *brāhmaṇa* must be perfectly religious. He must be truthful, and he must be able to control his senses. He must execute severe austerities, and he must be detached, humble and tolerant. He must not envy anyone, and he must be expert in performing sacrifices and giving whatever he has in charity. He must be fixed in devotional service and expert in the knowledge of the Vedas. These are the twelve qualifications for a *brāhmaṇa*."

Elsewhere in the Mahābhārata (Vana Parva Chapter 180) Yudhiṣṭhira explains —

*satyam dānam kṣamā-śīlam ānṛśamsyam tapo ghrṇā
dṛśyante yatra nāgendra sa brāhmaṇa iti smṛtaḥ*

"A person who possesses truthfulness, charity, forgiveness, sobriety, gentleness, austerity and lack of hatred is called a *brāhmaṇa*."

In the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (7.11.21) Śrī Nārada Muni states -

*śamo damas tapaḥ śaucam santoṣaḥ kṣāntir ārjavam
jñānam dayācyutātmatvam satyam ca brahma-lakṣaṇam*

"The symptoms of a *brāhmaṇa* are control of the mind, control of the senses, austerity and penance, cleanliness, satisfaction, forgiveness, simplicity, knowledge, mercy, truthfulness, and complete surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Birth and *saṁskāra*

Having established the *lakṣaṇas* of a *brāhmaṇa*, traditional discussions often ask how these *lakṣaṇas* relate to birth,

family line, and purificatory rites (*saṁskāras*). The Harita statement quoted above is generally taken as applicable where both parents exhibit *brāhmiṇical* qualities and perform *garbhadāna-saṁskāra* correctly; and where lineage and *saṁskāra* continuity can be established. Such a child can be termed a seminal *brāhmaṇa*. Such a child born to them may display *brāhmiṇical* tendencies but is not considered a *brāhmaṇa* in the true sense of the word until he is purified by *saṁskāras*.

Therefore the *śāstras* enjoin –

*janmanā jāyate śūdraḥ saṁskārād bhaved dvijaḥ
veda-pāṭhād bhaved vipro brahma jānātīti brāhmaṇaḥ*

"By birth one is a *śūdra*, by the purificatory process one becomes a *dvija*, by study of the Vedas one becomes a *vipro*, and one who knows Brahman is a *brāhmaṇa*."

***Dīkṣā* and *dvijatva*: a second line of citation**

Other citations present the possibility of *dvijatva* arising through *dīkṣā-saṁskāra*, particularly when *brāhmiṇical* qualities are present.

*yathā kāñcanatām yāti kāmsyam rasa-vidhānataḥ
tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena dvijatvam jāyate nṛṇām*

"Just as bell-metal is transformed into gold by alchemy, a common man is transformed into a twice-born *brāhmaṇa* by *dīkṣā* from a bona-fide preceptor." (Tattva Sāgara 2.12)

So, by *dīkṣā-saṁskāra* a person who was not born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, but who exhibits *brāhmiṇical* qualities, may become a twice-born (*dvija*). Again, quoting Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira in Mahābhārata (Vana Parva) -

*śūdre tu yad bhavel-lakṣma dvije tac ca na vidyate
na vai śūdro bhavec chūdro brāhmaṇo na ca brāhmaṇaḥ*

"If such symptoms are found in a *śūdra*, he should never be called a *śūdra*, just as a *brāhmaṇa* is not a *brāhmaṇa* if he lacks these characteristics."

Similarly, Lord Śiva tells Umā in the Mahābhārata (Anuśāsana Parva 163.8, 26, 46) —

*sthito brāhmaṇa-dharmeṇa brāhmaṇyam upajīvati
kṣatriyo vātha vaiśyo vā brahma-bhūyaḥ sa gacchati*

*ebhis tu karmabhir devi śubhair ācaritais tathā
śūdro brāhmaṇatām yāti vaiśyaḥ kṣatriyatām vrajet*

*etaiḥ karma-phalair devi śuddhātmā vijitendriyaḥ
śūdro 'pi dvija-vat sevya iti brahmābravīt svayam*

*sarvo 'yaṁ brāhmaṇo loka vṛttena tu vidhīyate
vṛtte sthitas tu śūdro 'pi brāhmaṇatvam niyacchati*

"If *kṣatriyas* or *vaiśyas* become situated in the behavior of *brāhmaṇas* and spend their lives in the occupation of *brāhmaṇas*, then such persons attain the position of *brāhmaṇas*.

O Goddess, by the same process, a *śūdra* can become a *brāhmaṇa* and a *vaiśya* can become a *kṣatriya*.

O Goddess, by the results of these activities and by following the agamas, then even a low-born *śūdra* also becomes a *brāhmaṇa*.

A person in this world is born a *brāhmaṇa* simply as a result of his nature. A *śūdra* situated in the profession of a *brāhmaṇa* also becomes a *brāhmaṇa*."

*na yonir nāpi saṁskāro na śrutam na ca santatiḥ
kāraṇāni dvijatvasya vṛttam eva tu kāraṇam*

"Neither birth, purificatory ceremonies, nor learning, nor progeny are qualifications for *brāhmaṇical* status. Only *brāhmaṇical* conduct is the basis for *brāhmaṇical* status." (Mahābhārata, Anuśāsana Parva 143.50)

Furthermore, Śrī Kṛṣṇa states in Bhagavad-gītā (4.13)

*cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ
tasya kartāram api mām viddhy akartāram avyayam*

"According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me. And although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable."

None of the above scriptural statements mention birth as a *brāhmaṇical* qualification. This is also confirmed by the *śruti* in the Vajrasūcikā Upaniṣad of the Sāma Veda.

Varṇa based on guṇa & karma

A further concern raised is the claim that birth itself depends on *guṇa* and *karma*, and that without knowledge of a *jīva's karma* of previous life, it is erroneous to determine *varṇa* based on *guṇa/karma* observed in this life.

In response, traditional sources are often cited to show that *varṇa* was, at least in principle, determined rationally by observed qualities (*svabhāva*), rather than only by seminal criteria. A standard example is Satyakāma Jābāla from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (4.4.1-5) —

*satyakāmo ha jābālo jābālāṃ mātaram āmantrayāṃ cakre
brahmacaryaṃ bhavati vivatsyāmi kiṃgotro nvahamasmīti (1)*

*sā hainamuvāca nāhametadveda tāta yadgotrastvamasi
bahvahaṃ carantī paricārīṇī yauvane tvāmalabhe sāhametanna
veda yadgotrastvamasi jābālā tu nāmāhamasmi satyakāmo nāma
tvamasi sa satyakāma eva jābālo bravīthā iti (2)*

*sa ha hāridrumataṃ gautamametyovāca
brahmacaryaṃ bhagavati vatsyāmyupeyāṃ bhagavantamiti (3)*

*taṃ hovāca kiṃgotro nu somyāsīti
sa hovāca nāhametadveda bho yadgotro'hamasmyapṛcchaṃ*

*mātaraṃ sā mā pratyabravīdbahvaḥ carantī paricariṇī
yauvane tvāmalabhe sāhametanna veda yadgotrastvamasi jabāla
tu nāmāhamasmi satyakāmo nāma tvamasīti so'haṃ satyakāmo
jābālo'smi bho iti (4)*

*taṃ hovāca naitadabrāhmaṇo vivaktumarhati samidhaṃ
somyāharopa tvā neṣye na satyādaḡā iti... (5)*

"Once, Satyakāma, the son of Jabāla, asked his mother, 'I want to live as a *brahmacāri*. Which dynasty (*gotra*) do I belong to?' Jabāla answered, 'My son, I do not know which dynasty you belong to; in my youth I served as a midservant in various places and at that time begot you as my son. Therefore I don't know which *gotra* you belong to. My name is Jabāla and your name is Satyakāma. Therefore you should say that your name is Satyakāma Jābāla.' Thereafter Satyakāma Jābāla approached Hāridrumata Gautama and said, 'I wish to live with you as a *brahmacāri*.' Gautama replied, 'O gentle one, which dynasty do you belong to?' Satyakāma replied, 'I do not know which dynasty I belong to. I asked my mother and she said, 'I begot you as my son when I was wandering in my youth as a maidservant. Therefore I do not know which dynasty you belong to. My name is Jābāla and your name is Satyakāma. So I am called Satyakāma Jābāla.' Gautama then said to him, 'My dear son, no one other than a *brāhmaṇa* can speak such truth that you have spoken. Therefore you are a *brāhmaṇa*, and I accept you. O gentle one, go and bring wood for sacrifice.'

In his commentary to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Śrī Madhvācārya says —

*ārjavam brāhmaṇe sāksāt śūdro 'nārjava-lakṣaṇaḥ
gautamas tv iti vijñāya satyakāmam upānayat*

"A *brāhmaṇa* possesses the quality of simplicity, and a *śūdra* possesses the quality of crookedness. Knowing this fact, Gautama gave *upanayanam* to Satyakāma."

Although there was no evidence that Satyakāma was born from a *brāhmaṇa* family, Hārīdrumata Gautama accepted him as a *brāhmaṇa* simply on the strength of his *brāhmaṇical* character.

Additional examples of *varṇa* determination based on *guṇa/karma*

The son of Mahārāja Gādhi, Viśvāmitra, became a *brāhmaṇa* by the strength of his austerities —

tapatā sarvān dīptaujaḥ brāhmaṇatvam avāptavān

"That effulgent one (Viśvāmitra) performed all kinds of austerities and attained the position of a *brāhmaṇa*." (Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 174)

Also in the Mahābhārata (Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 30) we find the example of Mahārāja Vītahavya who also became a *brāhmaṇa* —

*tasya gr̥tsamadoḥ putro rūpendra ivāparaḥ
sa brahmacārī viprar̥ṣiḥ śrīmān gr̥tsamado 'bhavat
putro gr̥tsamadasyāpi suceto 'bhavad dvijaḥ
vacaḥ sucetasah putro vihavyas tasya cātmajaḥ
vihavyasya tu putras tu vitatyas tasya cātmajaḥ
vitatasya sutaḥ satyaḥ śāntaḥ satyasya cātmajaḥ
śravas tasya sutas car̥ṣiḥ śravasaś cābhavat tamaḥ
tamasas ca prakāśo 'bhūt tanayo dvija-sattamaḥ
prakāśasya ca vāg indro babhuva jayatām varaḥ
tasyātmajas ca pramātir veda-vedāṅga-pāragaḥ
ghṛtācyām tasya putras tu ruru-nāmodapadyata
pramadvarāyām tu ruṛoḥ putraḥ samudapadyata
śunako nāma viprar̥ṣir yasya putro 'tha śaunakaḥ
evam vipratvam agamad vītahavyo narādhipaḥ
bhṛgoḥ prasādād rājendra kṣatriyaḥ kṣatriyaḥ*

"This is how Maharaja Vītahavya attained the status of a *brāhmaṇa*: O best of the ksatriyas, although Vītahavya was a *kṣatriya* by birth, by the mercy of Bhṛgu he became

a *brāhmaṇa*. His son was Gṛtsamada who was as beautiful as Indra. He became a brahmacari and a *brāhmaṇa* sage. Suceta, the son of Gṛtsamada, also became a *brāhmaṇa*. The son of Suceta was Varca, and his son was Satya. The son of Satya was Śānta, whose son was Ṛṣivara. The son of Rṣivara was Tama and his son, Prakāśa, was the best of the *brāhmaṇas*. The son of Prakāśa was Vāgindra, whose son Pramati, was learned in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas. Pramati begot Ruru in the womb of Ghṛtāci. In his wife, Ruru begot a son named Śunaka, who became a *viprarṣi*. The son of Śunaka was Śaunaka Ṛṣi."

The Hari-varṇśa (29.7-8) explains that in the dynasty of Gṛtsamada, there were *brāhmaṇas* headed by Śaunaka, as well as *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *sūdras* —

*putro gṛtsamadasyāpi śunako yasya śaunakaḥ
brāhmaṇaḥ kṣatriyāś caiva vaiśyāḥ sūdrās tathaiva ca*

In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (9.2.16-17) we find that the dynasty of Mahārāja Dhṛṣṭa also became *brāhmaṇas* —

dhṛṣṭād dhārṣṭam abhūt kṣatram brahma-bhūyam gatam kṣitau

"From Dhṛṣṭa came the dynasty called Dhārṣṭa, whose members achieved the position of *brāhmaṇas* in this world."

Also in the Bhāgavatam (9.2.22) we see the example of Mahārāja Agniveśya, the son of Devadatta, who began a race of *brāhmaṇas* —

tato brahma-kulam jātam agniveśyāyanam nrpa

"O King, from Agniveśya came a *brāhmiṇical* dynasty known as Agniveśyāyana."

Other examples are Jāhnu Muni, who was born as the son of Hotra in the Lunar Dynasty (SB 9.15.1-4); in the dynasty of Mahārāja Pūru, Kaṇva Ṛṣi was born and from him the sage Medhātithi who began the Praskanna *brāhmaṇa* line (SB

9.20.1-7); Gārgya, the son of King Śini, began a generation of *brāhmaṇas*; Trayyāruṇi, Kavi and Puṣkarāruṇi, the three sons of Mahārāja Duritakṣaya, became *brāhmaṇas*; the descendants of Ajāmīḍha headed by Priyamedha all achieved the position of *brāhmaṇas*, and in their family the great sage Mudgala of the Maudgalya *brāhmaṇas* was born: of the hundred sons of Ṛṣabhadeva, eighty-one of them became *brāhmaṇas* (SB 5.4.13); Nābhāga and the son of Diṣṭa, although born as *vaiśyas*, became *brāhmaṇas**; Mahārāja Bali begot five *kṣatriya* sons, and also had sons who founded *brāhmaṇa* dynasties (Hari-varṇśa 31.33-35). Other great personalities such as Vasiṣṭha, Gautama, Agastya, and Ṛṣyaśṛṅga were not *brāhmaṇas* by ordinary standards, yet who will doubt their qualification and that of their descendants?

Another supporting evidence is found in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (7.11.35) -

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

"If one shows the symptoms of being a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or *śūdra*, as described above, even if he has appeared in a different class, he should be accepted according to those symptoms of classification." (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.11.35)

Vaiṣṇava is above *varṇāśrama*

Śrī Lomāśa Ṛṣi in the Itihāsa Samuccaya states -

*śūdraṁ vā bhagavad-bhaktam niṣādam śvapacaram tathā
vikṣate jāti-sāmānyāt sa yāti narakam dhruvam*

"A Vaiṣṇava, even if he is born in a *śūdra*, dogeater or even lower class family than that, if somebody sees such a devotee in bad behavior (due to being born in that kind of family), he is certainly said to be going to hell." (Itihāsa Samuccaya)

* *nābhāga-diṣṭaputro dvau vaiśyau brāhmaṇatām gatau* (Hari-varṇśa 11.9)

*na me bhaktāś caturvedī mad-bhaktaḥ śvapacaḥ priyaḥ
tasmai deyaṁ tato grāhyaṁ sa ca pūjyo yathā hy aham*

"A *brāhmaṇa* who is expert at chanting the four Vedas is not dear to me, but a devotee who comes from a family of dog-eaters is dear to me. Whatever he touches becomes pure. That devotee, although born in a family of outcastes is as worshippable as I am." (Itihāsa Samuccaya)

In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (7.9.10) we find—

*viprād dvi-ṣaḍ-guṇa-yutād aravinda-nābha-
pādāravinda-vimukhāt śvapacaṁ variṣṭham
manye tad-arpita-mano-vacanehitārtha-
prāṇaṁ punāti sa kulaṁ na tu bhūrimānaḥ*

If a *brāhmaṇa* has all twelve of the *brāhmiṇical* qualifications [as they are stated in the book called Sanat-sujāta] but is not a devotee and is averse to the lotus feet of the Lord, he is certainly lower than a devotee who is a dog-eater (*caṇḍāla*) but who has dedicated everything—mind, words, activities, wealth and life—to the Supreme Lord. Such a devotee is better than such a *brāhmaṇa* because the devotee can purify his whole family, whereas the so-called *brāhmaṇa* in a position of false prestige cannot purify even himself.

In Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (3.33.6) it is said—

*yan-nāmadheya-śravaṇānukīrtanād
yat-prahvaṇād yat-smaraṇād api kvacit
śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate
kutaḥ punas te bhagavan nu darśanāt*

To say nothing of the spiritual advancement of persons who see the Supreme Person face to face, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately becomes eligible to perform Vedic sacrifices if he once utters the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or chants about Him, hears about His pastimes, offers Him obeisances or even remembers Him.

In the Padma Purāṇa -

*na śūdrā bhagavad-bhaktās te tu bhāgavatā matāḥ
sarva-varṇeṣu te śūdrā ye na bhaktā janārdane*

"A devotee should never be considered a *śūdra*. All the devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead should be recognized as *bhāgavatas*. If one is not a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, however, even if born of a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya* family, he should be considered a *śūdra*." (Padma Purāṇa)

*śva-pākam iva nekṣeta loke vipram avaiṣṇavam
vaiṣṇavo varṇa-bāhyo 'pi punāti bhuvana-trayam*

"If a person born in a *brāhmaṇa* family is a non-devotee, one should not see his face, exactly as one should not look upon the face of a dog-eater. However, a Vaiṣṇava found in *varṇas* other than *brāhmaṇa* can purify all the three worlds." (Padma Purāṇa)

*śūdrām vā bhagavad-bhaktam niṣādam śva-pacam tathā
vikṣate jāti-sāmānyāt sa yāti narakam dhruvam*

"One who considers a devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead who was born in a family of *śūdras*, *niṣādas* or *caṇḍālas* to belong to that particular caste certainly goes to hell." (Padma Purāṇa)

"Brāhmaṇism" and "Vaiṣṇavism" are two different things, with Vaiṣṇavism as the higher fruition. Brāhmaṇism is a stage or qualification of a Vaiṣṇava and Vaiṣṇavism is the fruit of Brāhmaṇism. Therefore it is said -

*brāhmaṇānām sahasrebhyaḥ satrayājī viśiṣyate
satrayājī-sahasrebhyaḥ sarva-vedānta-pāragāḥ
sarva-vedānta-vit-koṭyā viṣṇu-bhaktō viśiṣyate*

"Out of thousands of *brāhmaṇas*, one is qualified to perform sacrifices, and out of many thousands of such qualified

brāhmaṇas expert in sacrifices, one learned *brāhmaṇa* may have passed beyond all Vedic knowledge. Among many such *brāhmaṇas*, one who is a devotee of Viṣṇu is the best." (Garuḍa Purāṇa)

Through numerous scriptural quotations, it has been shown that Vaiṣṇavas born in families lower than *brāhmaṇas* are equal to *brāhmaṇas* (and superior to them if such a *brāhmaṇa* is not a Vaiṣṇava). This is because *brāhmiṇical* qualities are automatically present in a Vaiṣṇava, hence the word '*viprasāmya*' is used in describing them.

Although they follow *brāhmiṇical* culture, such Vaiṣṇavas are actually beyond *varṇāśrama-dharma* as they have no interest in this material world and its ephemeral social regulations. The *brāhmiṇical* culture is adopted as it elevates one to the platform of *sattva* (goodness) which is only a step away from the transcendental platform of pure goodness (*śuddha-sattva*).

However, even if one only follows *brāhmiṇical* culture perfectly, one does not attain the *śuddha-sattva* platform since the mode of *sattva* is also a material mode of nature. One can only attain the *śuddha-sattva* level of consciousness by associating and serving higher Vaiṣṇavas — this is pure goodness, or Vaiṣṇavism.

Although a Vaiṣṇava's activities may appear to be similar to those following the system of *varṇāśrama*, in reality it is totally different since whatever actions a Vaiṣṇava performs are only for the pleasure of the Lord and His devotees.

Further Reading:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. *Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava*. Vrindavan: Vrajraj Press, 1999

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