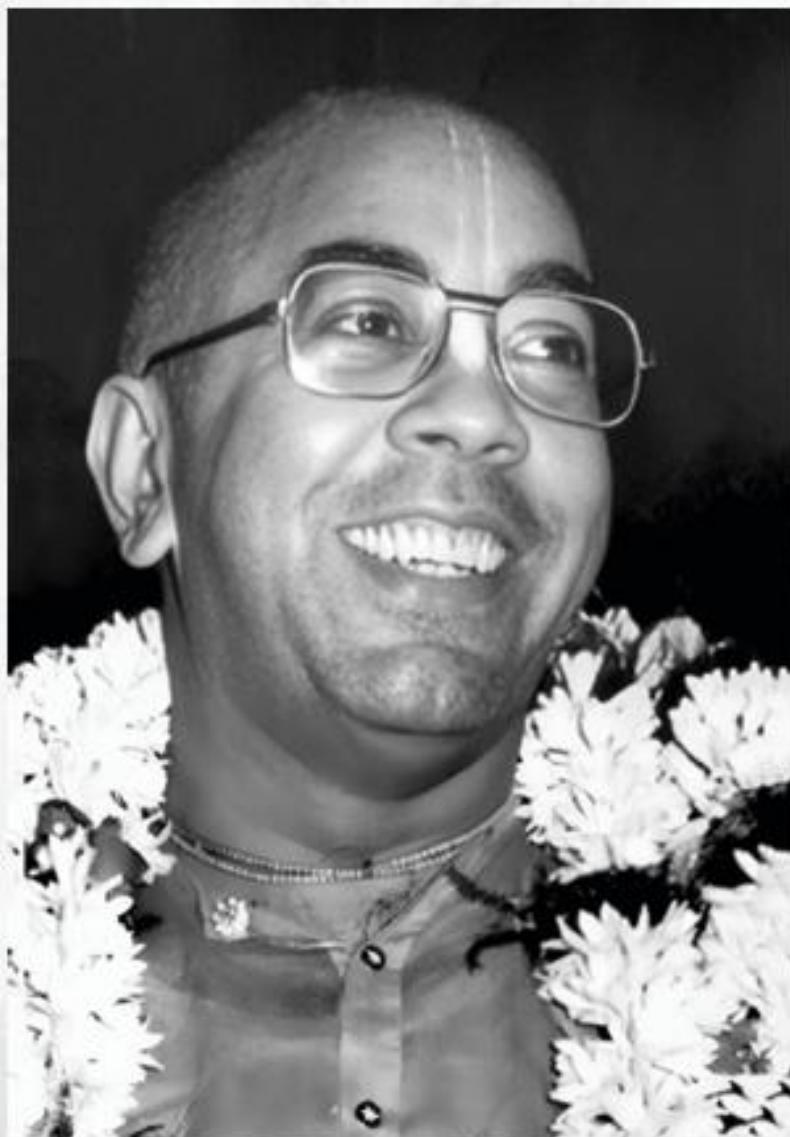


Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha Leela Katha Madhuri



By Gaurdasi

Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha Leela Katha Madhuri

(Stories of Sweet Pastimes)

By Gaurdasi

Publisher

Sri Chaitanya Institute of Vaishnавic Culture
7 Sahid Nagar
Maharishi College Road
Bhubaneshwar 751 007
Odisha – India

www.scivc.org

www.srigaurangashram.in

1st Edition in Bengali published in 2009
1st Edition in English published in 2025

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Dedicated unto the lotus hands of
Kis Divine Grace Om Vishnupad 108 Tridandi Swami
Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha Goswami Maharaj

मूकं करोति वाचालं पङ्गुं लङ्घयते गिरिं ।
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे श्री कृष्ण चैतन्य ईश्वरम ॥

*Mookam karoti vaachalam panggum langghayate girum
Yat kripa tamaham vande
Sri Krishna Chaitanya Ishwaram*

The mute can talk and the lame can cross mountains
With the grace of Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya

বঁধু তোমার গৱবে গৱবিনী আমি ক্লপসী তোমারই ক্লপে।

*Bondhu tomar gorobe gaurobini ami
ruposhi tomar rupe - Smt. Radharani
(Gyanananda Das)*

Friend, your honour makes me honoured
and your effulgence makes me beautiful
- Srimati Radharani

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About the Author



Gaurdasi

The following information about the author Gaurdasi has been obtained from her daughters.

Smt Hashirani Dattagupta (pen name Gaurdasi) was born in 1927 on the no moon day in July in the village of Dharmagarh, district Srihatta in undivided Bengal in a Kayastha family. She could study only up to class 3 due to the absence of a middle school in her village. However as she was very fond of reading, she studied the scriptures and read short stories and novels.

In the year 1941 at the age of 14, she was married to a much older gentleman in a trading family (it was his second marriage). Although initially prosperous, later due to the vagaries of business, the family fell upon difficult times. They sustained themselves hand-to-mouth, moving residences frequently and often going hungry. Even during such trying times, Gaurdasi remained stoic, all the

while holding her Guru's *padukas* close to her heart. Gaurdasi was an initiated disciple of Sri Srimat Durga Prasanna Paramhamsa Dev.

Later in 1968, the family moved to Badkulla village in Nadia district of Bengal. There Gaurdasi got a job as a teacher in the local primary school and moved into quarters provided by the school.

As a result of prolonged mental agony due to poverty and deprivation and also the death of her brother and one of her children, Gaurdasi lost her mental balance and went into depression. Even then she continued with her family and job obligations to the best of her ability. Most of the time she remained silent like a stone statue, not talking to anybody.

One day she learnt from a friend Harimati that a new *sannyasi* had come to Tarapad Babu's house in Badkulla and gave discourses every evening. So one evening she alongwith her daughter and Harimati Devi went to Tarapad Babu's house. On the terrace of the house she beheld a young *sannyasi* sitting surrounded by devotees and giving a discourse. After finishing his discourse, the *sannyasi*, whom everyone addressed as Maharaj, led all the devotees in singing *Harinaam sankirtan*. After the programme was over, taking some prasad Gaurdasi felt supremely peaceful and happy.

Thus began her long association with Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha Maharaj.

Meeting Maharaj every evening, hearing *Harikatha* and regularly taking *prasad*, helped to slowly assuage her depressed state of mind and she became mentally more stable.

Wherever Maharaj went to give discourses, such as Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Kharagpur or Navadwip, she would also go there and have his darshan. Due to the grace of Maharaj there was a significant improvement in her emotional and mental state. His discourses left a deep impression on her mind. By and by she started writing down the discourses, as well as her experiences with Maharaj.

While she did not record the year and date in her writings very consistently, nevertheless her memoirs will help the reader and devotees of Maharaj in the present times, to imagine and capture a vivid and living image of him in that bygone era. Her faithful recording of his discourses and anecdotes present a fascinating snapshot of Maharaj's earlier life.

On 1st January 2014, Gaurdasi passed away in Krishnanagar due to heart related complications. She is survived by her three daughters, three sons and grandchildren.

Foreword

One spring evening on the 16th of March 1969, I first met with Maharaj in the house of Tarapad Sadhu in Badkulla, on the terrace of his house. The detailed description of this first meeting was published in the 2001 Harmonist magazine brought out by Sri Gauranga Ashram.

In Badkulla, Maharaj lived in the house of his well-known disciple Balai Karmakar (Balai da) and in the adjacent town of Anjangarh across the river Anjana, he stayed in the house of another disciple, Rani di.

It is simply impossible for me to describe in words the blissful days and nights spent in Anjangarh hearing his discourses, *kirtan* and humorous anecdotes. If I can say it in one sentence, it was as if the divine Golok Vrindavan had descended on earth.

Maharaj sought familial affection from his devotees. One day, he said to Vishakha di (Balai da's wife), "Why do you keep me far off? If I was your own son what would you do?" He also told her "One day these wonderful pastimes of mine in your house - they will all be written down". Did I have an inkling at the time that this insignificant devotee (the author), would be the person to pen down his *leelas*?

I would very attentively hear every word of his and all his discourses and also meditate on his words. In the beginning I had written something of his days in Anjangarh. One day I told Maharaj that I was writing about him. He said "Is it enough just to write?" That day I couldn't understand what he meant. After spending a few days with him I couldn't write anything anymore as I was overwhelmed by my feelings for him. Then I started writing letters to him. He would call me "Akashvani" (radio broadcast), as I would give him the news of all his devotees in these parts of interior Bengal.

In Kharagpur he said to Ramesh da about me, "She is *siddha bakul*". In Anjangarh he had once told me "*smriti rekhe diyo*" - preserve the memories. At the time I never imagined that many years later, he would have me churn my memories and write them down. It is his sweet will whom he chooses to accomplish certain tasks. In future, his intelligent and qualified devotees who have been blessed by him will surely write down more about him. In fact they are already doing this. Besides, how much do I really know about his divine pastimes?

He is *Paramaananda Parampurusha* - Supremely Blissful Supreme Being. His talks were always sprinkled with wit and his keen sense of humour. Everything about him was extremely sweet. It is impossible for me to express in words the manner in which I experienced Him. With this sadness in my heart and with his causeless mercy, I have been able to publish this small book. When I penned down these

memories, I struggled a lot thinking what title to give it? One night I had a dream wherein in large glittering blue letters was written "Leela Katha Madhuri". This is the title I decided to use.

On the occasion of the 500th birth anniversary of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, I had gone to Sri Gauranga Ashram in Bhubaneshwar. At the time, seeing the general demeanour and behaviour of the Ashram inhabitants, I was quite upset. I wrote a letter about what I saw and other personal issues of mine and gave it to Maharaj in the Salt Lake Ashram in Kolkata. He took the letter from me and said "This is on record with me". His disciple Bithika Das was present there. I had not realised that Maharaj would give the letter so much importance. I was surprised.

Once, Maharaj gave two discourses on Srimad Bhagavatam in Kolkata; first at 20 Duff Road for one day and the second at 12 Harish Mukherji Road for three days. I could not write down anything from those two discourses. After constructing his ashram in Bhubaneshwar, Maharaj used to come to Kolkata and stay at Utkal Bhavan where I met him several times. In Utkal Bhavan I met with one his disciples Piyush for the first time. Piyush had seen a divine light emerging from Maharaj and felt greatly blessed to witness that extraordinary sight.

In this evening of my life, I can say with total candour that even before meeting with Maharaj, I was a *sadhak* (practitioner), in the path of divine love (*madhurya bhava*).

In this context I recall a humorous incident. Once I had gone to Sri Gauranga Ashram in Kharagpur to attend the annual function there. When the *leela kirtan* singer Kamala Adhikari stood up to sing, she said, pointing to Maharaj and everyone sitting there, "All of us are *Prakriti* and Sri Krishna alone is *Purush*". I got very angry with her for referring to Maharaj as "*Prakriti*". When the programme ended I went to her room and said "Why did you call Maharaj "*Prakriti*"? He is not *Prakriti*! He is an *Avatar Purush*". The singer did not say anything to me at the time. The next day in the *kirtan* programme, she rose and said "Yesterday evening I referred to Maharaj as *Prakriti* and one of his daughters became quite annoyed. Hence I ask forgiveness from that daughter". I was even angrier to be referred to as Maharaj's "daughter", but what could I say? I just kept quiet.

After the establishment of the Salt Lake ashram in Kolkata, I used to write regularly. In 1990 after a bad bicycle accident, I was bed-ridden for a whole year. As a result, meeting with Maharaj and my writing stopped. When I recovered, I began to write down the memories again and called it "Memoirs". After a long gap, when I went to meet him one day, I heard Maharaj say to another devotee "Baba, you are talking like a seer who speaks as a witness of the truth".

Now I am no longer in touch with most of the devotees of those bygone days. But I have maintained contact with Maharaj's dear devotees Sadhan Majumdar and his wife Sebika in Kolkata. The respected Pabitra Ghosh inspired me saying "Your

writing is very beautiful; you should write and pour out everything (about Maharaj's *leela*)". After reading one of my early writings, Sadhan Babu and his wife also encouraged me to keep writing.

I am deeply grateful to the other devotees and disciples of Maharaj who enjoyed my writings and gave me their support and good wishes

May Maharaj's stories be honoured and venerated by everyone and be the source of all auspiciousness to them.

Jai Sravan Tirtha Maharaj Jai!

Gaurdasi
(Hashi Duttagupta)

July 2009



His Divine Grace Om Vishnupad Paramhansa Parivrajak Acharya
108 Tridandi Swami
Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha Goswami Maharaj

Om Vishnupad 108 Tridandi Swami

Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha Goswami Maharaj

His Divine Grace Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha Maharaj, or Baba to thousands of his devotees and disciples, was an embodiment of divine compassion and love, showering his grace on one and all. A modern day Saint, with a Master's Degree in Philosophy and English, he was born in the city of Prayag (Allahabad) on 16th March 1926 on the auspicious day of Gaur Purnima (the appearance day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu), in a wealthy and pious Bengali Brahmin family.

After completing his education, he left home in his early 20s and was initiated into the *Brahmacharya* (celibate novice) order, in the Gaudiya Mutt, where after some years, he accepted the vow of *Tridandi Sannyas*.

After the demise of his Guru, Baba left Gaudiya Mutt and travelled across the length and breadth of the sub-continent, as a wandering mendicant. During his travels, he met many highly-realised saints and benefacted countless people irrespective of caste, creed, religion or gender, who came to him seeking his blessings.

In Bengal, the land of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Baba spent considerable time in the villages of interior Bengal in those places where Sri Mahaprabhu and His associates performed their pastimes. In 1985, to mark the 500th anniversary of Sri Mahaprabhu's travel to southern India, he organised a historic *pada-yatra*, retracing Mahaprabhu's journey from Puri to Rameshwaram.

Baba eventually established his own ashrams in Kharagpur, Bhubaneshwar, Kolkata, Navadwip, and gave spiritual initiation to many thousands of disciples in India and abroad. He visited Mecca in Saudi Arabia and England among other places. He also authored a seminal work known as *Srimad Bhagavatamrita* and several other books in Bengali.

A modern-thinking and pragmatic sage, Baba was nevertheless, deeply religious and strictly followed *Vaishnava Dharma*. He was an enigmatic personality who was at once practical and traditional. Many of his devotees and disciples have experienced his innate divinity and witnessed inexplicable visions of him as Sri Narsinghdev and Krishna.

After a brief illness, Baba departed on 1st December 2004 in New Delhi. His *Samadhi Mandir* lies in his ashram, Sri Chaitanya Institute of Vaishnava Culture, in Bhubaneshwar, Odisha. His *pushpa-samadhis* are in Sridham Vrindavan in District Mathura, U.P., and in Navadwip, West Bengal.

श्रीमत् भक्तिश्रवण वंदनास्तोत्रम् (सुप्रभातम्)

मधु वसंत फालगुनी होलिमग्र वृद्धावन फ़ाग भूषितम्
गौर पूर्णिमा शुभलग्र जातकम्
महाप्रेमावतारी करुणा पाराबारी भुवन मंगल कारणम्
प्रणमामि गौरहरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम्॥

उज्ज्वल सजल युगल करुणा निर्झर नयन कमलम्
शांत गभीर चपल सुंदर भ्रमर कृष्णक्षि तारका युगलम्
सुदीप्त नासिका सयनेन तिलक रचितम्
उत्कुल्ल मुख कमलसुंदर शोभित फुल्ल रक्ताधरम्
प्रणमामि गौरहरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम्॥

पूर्वराग रंजित अर तरुण प्रभात रवि नवकिशलय रूप तारुण्यामृत स्नानम्
अस्तमित पश्चिम दिगंत आवीरावृत गैरिक सुषमा लावण्यामृत स्नानम्
मिलन विरह विधुर मधुर तव स्मरणम्
प्रणमामि गौरहरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम् ॥

क्षीण कटि तट धृत मोहन गैरिक समादृतम्
मोहन पदविक्षेप तरंग भंग रचितम्
उज्ज्वल अरुण वसन तरुण कांति लावण्य दयूतिम्
प्रणमामि गौरहरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम्॥

हास्यरसोज्ज्वल मुख कमल मौन मुखर विषाद मधुरम् भक्त
हृदय वृद्धावनविहारी लीलानंदकारी नयनानंद दायकम्
भक्त हृदपद्मस्थित चिमय मूर्ति सदा स्फूरितम्
प्रणमामि गौरहरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम्॥

मुखारविंद मुखरित सदा हरिनाम संकीर्तनम्
भक्त अगाणित अलिकूल मुखारविंद परिवृत सदा गुंजरितम्
मनोरम भक्त हृदय राज्य राजाधिराजम्
प्रणमामि गौरहरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम् ॥

मुखपद्म निःसृत भागवतामृत वीणाविनिंदित सुधाधरम्
तृष्णित भक्त चातक चित्त सुखेन करोति पानम्
शरणागत रक्षक आश्रित पालक आश्रित वत्सलम्
प्रणमामि गौरहरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम् ॥

नित्य सत्य शुद्ध बुद्ध निर्विकार निरंजनम्
योगमाया समाश्रित विद्घन तनु प्रकाशितम्
योगमाया समावृत निजजन परिवृत महामहिमा उद्धासितम्
प्रणमामि गौर्हरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम्॥

रासकेली वर्णनाधिकारी रासहोली नायकम्
रासलीला टीकाकार रास रस अधीक्षरम्
धीर ललित आपततृप्त आपतकाम आत्माराम रामम्
भैरव बाबाजी स्त्रेहसिक्त बाल गोपालम्
प्रणमामि गौर्हरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम्॥

कामना आरती मोहन
मनोहर मूर्ति सिंग्ध नयनानंद दायकम्
हे करुणा निधान प्राणपुष्पांजलि ग्रह्यताम्
हे चिर सुंदर चिर किशोर चिर नवीनम्
प्रणमामि गौर्हरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम्॥

पतीनां पति मीरायाः पति हास्याः गति सर्वकारण कारणम्
सज्जन रंजन हास्याः जीवन व्रजजीवन व्रजनाथम्
अशोक अभ्य अमृताधार युगल चरणपद्म दीन भक्त सम्पदम्
प्रणमामि गौर्हरि श्रवण तीर्थ पदम्॥

इति गौरदासी विरचितं श्री श्रीमद् भक्तिश्रवण तीर्थ महाराज्ञ वन्दनास्तोत्रम् सम्पूर्णम् ॥

Brief Life Sketch of Paramhamsa Parivrajak Acharya

108 Tridandi Swami Sri Srimat Bhakti Sravan Tirtha

Goswami Maharaj

*1971 Anjangarh, West Bengal
As narrated by Maharaj (Baba)*

Birth and Early Life

"I was born in the Tula Ram Bagh locality of Allahabad (Prayagraj). At the time of my birth, my mother was in the agony of a prolonged labour. Ours was an orthodox Bengali Brahmin family. That is why my mother was not taken to the hospital for my delivery. My paternal grandfather was restlessly pacing up and down in the garden. Just then, a *sannyasi* (monk) came and stood before him. My grandfather told the monk everything (about my mother's prolonged labour). The *sannyasi* took some water from his *kamandalu* (water pot) and handing it to my grandfather said, 'Give this to your daughter-in-law'. After my mother sipped this water, I was born. The time of my birth was 12 noon. It was the day of Gaur Purnima, the auspicious appearance day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Dol Yatra (Holi festival). The monk was nowhere to be seen again".

"Three generations of my family were doctors. My grandfather, my father and my elder brother were all doctors. My brother was several years older than me. After completing his MBBS, preparations were being made to send him abroad to London for further studies. My parents told him, 'You should get married first and then go to London'. But he was not ready for marriage. Despite this, my parents fixed his marriage without his consent. Thereafter, my brother left home and went to Haridwar and became a monk. He was a *sannyasi* in the Advaita order and I am a *sannyasi* in the Vaishnava order".

"Before leaving home, my brother had left a letter for me. In the letter he wrote, 'I had thought that I would be able to stay at home for some more time, but Mother and Father did not make it possible. You too will adopt the same path that I have chosen'. He had also written a letter to the family of the girl he was betrothed to, seeking forgiveness for his actions and saying wedded life was not for him. He lives in Haridwar practising medicine among the monks. Whenever I go to Haridwar, I meet him. My brother was very fond of me".

"After my brother left home my mother's full attention was focussed exclusively on me and she was very keen to see me married. In my heart I used to think, 'Just

wait, I will show you how your wish will be fulfilled' (*Maharaj said this with a wicked laugh*).

"Once, a patient of my father passed away while delivering a child. Father brought that baby girl home with him. From that time she grew up with us as our sister. She too is an FRCS doctor".

"After I left home, my mother was completely shattered. Father told Mother that she could not force me to do whatever she wanted, 'After all, what have we been able to do for him?' he said".

"My sister took spiritual initiation (*diksha*), from me. Before I entered monkhood, my name was Sundarlal. My mother addressed me as Lala".

"I never told lies. Once my father asked my brother to post a letter and my brother said he had done it when he actually hadn't. After a few days my father discovered that letter and he was so upset with my brother that he did not speak to him for three months".

"My mother was greatly troubled by my irregular eating habits. I would go off to college without eating anything. She would call up my professor and complain about me and she herself would not eat either. While getting ready for college, my attendant would help me put on my shoes".

"I obtained first rank in my Masters in college. A girl in my class was my competitor. When she failed to get the first rank, she took to bed. I left home at the age of 24".

(Author's Note: In Anjanagarh, late in the night with very few devotees present, Maharaj would reminisce about his pre-monkhood days, chuckling with laughter. I, (the writer), learned from his disciples that he had a Masters Degree in English and Philosophy from Allahabad University.

In response to a question by his disciple Pratima of Kharagpur, Maharaj had said that in Philosophy he had majored in Patanjali Shastra. This was a very difficult subject which everyone did not succeed in.

Maharaj knew all the 18,000 shlokas of Srimad Bhagavatam by heart. I never saw him give a discourse by reading from scripture. Maharaj had also said that before undertaking the study of Srimad Bhagavatam and other scriptures, one had to complete a four-year course in Sanskrit grammar first. But Maharaj had completed this course in just one year in Vrindavan).

College Days

"One day after college ended, all my friends said, 'let us go to the Taj hotel'. With much excitement, all of us in a group went to the hotel. At the time Taj was the biggest hotel in Allahabad. My friends ordered cold drinks. All of us enjoyed the drinks and then the waiter brought the bill, the amount of which was ₹300/-. Those days ₹300 was a princely sum".

"The friend who was most enthusiastic about going to the hotel and who had initiated the outing was shocked. Turning to me he said, 'Brother, do something.. Save our honour!' What was I supposed to do? I did not have that much money either! After thinking for a while, I asked the waiter to keep the bill with him and that my father would settle it. Everyone knew my father in Allahabad".

"Saving ourselves in this way, we all got out of there. The waiter took the bill to my father. Father asked me, 'What is this all about'? I told him the entire incident. Father settled the bill and sent off the waiter and turning to me said, 'You could have very well paid this yourself'."

"I have mentioned earlier that ours was an orthodox family. I was once invited by a Muslim classmate to his birthday party. Mother asked me not to go there. Father remarked that it would be against social etiquette to disregard the invite.

'Therefore you should take some flowers and go to his house'. Mother said, 'Very well, you may go but do not eat anything there'. I obeyed them both. I went to my friend's house with flowers but did not have anything to eat".

"My father taught me Arabic and my grandfather tutored me in Sanskrit and also taught me the Upanishads and Puranas".

"Once after my college years, I met with a very bad car accident due to which I was in a coma for three months. I was taken to Delhi for hospitalisation. After prolonged treatment and prayers to Goddess Katyayani by my parents, I regained consciousness".

"In the hospital, my mother from my previous birth (Manju Bhargavi), came to see me along with her own mother. They came to know about my accident from my present mother. When I regained consciousness, I had called out loudly 'Ma, Ma!'. My mother from my previous birth, who was standing beside my bed said, 'Here I am, your mother...' At that time, she was a young girl of eleven years".

"Many years later, I met the same mother (Manju Bhargavi) again at the Tirupati Balaji temple. She was then living in Bangalore. She was a renowned Bharatnatyam dancer".

First Meeting with My Guru and Renouncing Family Life

"One day in Allahabad, an assistant professor of my college came to our house and told my mother that a *Sannyasi* (monk) from Gaudiya Mutt was scheduled to give a discourse at the college. The professor added, 'Bring your son along with you'.

"On the day of the programme, I accompanied Mother to the discourse. The speaker (my Guru Maharaj), gave a talk on one's *dharma* in life. I liked it very much".



Srila Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Goswami

suitcase and taking some money, I was about to leave home when my sister caught me. Shouting out to my mother she said, 'Ma! Dada is running away!' Mother woke up and catching hold of me, asked, 'Where were you going?' 'I am going to Father'.

'Then why are you running off stealthily so late at night?' That day I couldn't say anything more".

"On returning home, Father heard about the incident and said, 'You never used to lie before. If you wanted to come to me, then why were you trying to sneak off quietly at night?' I could not say anything, but I kept waiting for an opportunity. After some days, late at night I left, in just one attire, without taking any money or clothes".

"I went to a friend's house nearby and waking him up said, 'Take me in your car to Prayag now'. My friend exclaimed, 'Now? So late in the night?' I said, 'Not a word. Otherwise I will leave right now'. Without saying anything more he took me in his car to Prayag. At that time my Guru Maharaj was staying in his *Mutt* (monastery), near the Sangam which was known as Prayag. Then, right there I took shelter at his lotus feet.

My Guru Maharaj was Sri Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Goswami Maharaj, the Acharya and Head of Gaudiya Mutt".

"After hearing the discourse, I paid my obeisance to him. Guru Maharaj held my hand and asked, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am Atman'. He said, 'Wah! Beautifully said!' Then he told me to come and meet him later that night. On hearing this, mother said, 'No, you will not go to that Sadhu. I have heard that he is not good.' A dread had taken root in my mother's mind because her older son (my brother), had left home and become a *sannyasi*. Now she feared that she would lose her younger son too".

"Without letting my mother know, I went and secretly met with Guru Maharaj. He was happy. Paying my obeisance, I told him, 'I want to quit home and take shelter at your feet. Father and Mother will not give me permission. How do I come?' Guru Maharaj replied, 'Run away at night and come to me'."

"One night my father had gone out somewhere. Packing some clothes in a

"Initiating me into Brahmacharya, he took me to the Kurukshtera Mutt and left me there in the care of the local Mutt in charge".

I will not be able to beg

"After my initiation into *Brahmacharya*, Guru Maharaj sent me and two other *brahmacharis* out to beg for alms. The three of us went in three different directions. In my first round of begging, a woman gave me ₹100/. When my round of begging finished I returned to the Mutt. The other two also came back. Guru Maharaj said 'You have collected the most'. I replied, 'Just because of this, please do not send me to beg for alms again'."

(Author's Note: In the Kharagpur Sri Gauranga Ashram, I have witnessed Maharaj's disinclination to ask anyone for anything. One day there was no money to buy charcoal. Just then an unknown boy came and gave Maharaj ₹10 and went away. While recounting this incident, Maharaj said, "It is not my nature to ask").

Brahmacharya life in the Kurukshtera Mutt

"After initiating me, Guru Maharaj took me to the Kurukshtera Gaudiya Mutt. He told the *Mahant* (Head of the Mutt), 'I'm leaving him here in your care. Make him study the scriptures'. But the *Mahant* of the Mutt did not look upon me kindly. There were 27 other brahmacharis in the Mutt. There was a cowshed with many cows. The *Mahant* did not let me study the scriptures; instead he gave me the duty to clean the cowshed, cut hay, wash utensils and other similar tasks. This went on for a year. After that I was given the job of cooking twice a day, for all the Mutt inhabitants.

"The brahmacharis of the Mutt were quite fond of me. By the grace of Ma Jagadamba, my cooking was so good that the brahmacharis started praising it".

"I thought that I would be doing the cooking work in the Mutt for the rest of my life. After another year passed, Guru Maharaj wrote a letter that he would be coming to the Kurukshtera Mutt soon. The *Mahant* called me and said, 'When Guru Maharaj comes, do not tell him what all work you have been doing here'. I replied, 'I shall not say anything, but if the other brahmacharis tell him then what can I do?' The other boys too were not happy with the *Mahant*'s behaviour. They told everything to Guru Maharaj".

"Guru Maharaj was very unhappy. After that he took me along with him to the Delhi Mutt. Thereafter I remained with him. He made me study the scriptures".

In the Delhi Mutt

"When giving a discourse, if my Guru Maharaj forgot any *shloka* or verse, he would turn to me and ask me to recite it. Being pleased he would say, 'O Ganesh *Shrutidhar..*' (one who retains whatever he hears and repeats it exactly afterwards)".

"In the Delhi Mutt a woman would often come and ask Guru Maharaj for spiritual initiation. Guru Maharaj always sent her back saying, 'Bring your husband with you'. The woman would say, 'My husband does not want to be initiated. So does that mean even I will not get *diksha* (initiation)?' The woman was persistent. One day pointing to me Guru Maharaj told her, 'You will receive initiation from him'.

"After the disappearance of Guru Maharaj, the same woman came to the Mutt and said to me, 'Now you give me *diksha*'. I said, 'Bring your husband along'. She got annoyed and said, 'Like Guru like disciple. How many times should I say that my husband does not want to be initiated? He doesn't go to any Mutt-Mandir or *sadhu-sannyasi* (monks)!. I gave her an apple and said, 'Take this *prasad* and give it to your husband and children to eat'. The woman took the apple and left. Her husband was not ready to eat the *prasad*, but their children insisted that he eat it saying if he didn't it may bring bad luck to them. Thus compelled he ate the apple".

"I had asked the woman to come to the Mutt the next morning and she came. I had already placed two mats on the floor and asked the woman to sit on one. She sat down. Meanwhile in her house, when her husband got to know that she had gone to the Mutt, he came running to take his wife away. When he arrived all agitated and angry, I looked at him and pointing to the mat said, 'Sit down'. Without uttering a word he sat down. Both of them got initiated that day".

"In the Delhi Mutt another incident occurred. Near the Mutt was the house of a gentleman who complained that every day at dawn, due to the sound of bells (rung during the morning *aarti*), his sleep was getting disturbed and he experienced several other problems. After hearing all this, I forbade the *brahmacharis* from playing the *mridangam* and cymbals during the morning *aarti*. I added, 'Wait and see what will be the result of this...' .

"In Delhi itself, a piece of land had been purchased for a new Mutt. When the Mutt was built, we all moved there. Afterwards of course, the original rented place had also become ours. Some years later that gentleman's wife passed away. He himself was afflicted with white leprosy. His family and relatives abandoned him. Then he sought me out. Taking initiation from me, he surrendered. That is why I say that family may abandon you, but Guru never will".

"While staying in the Delhi Mutt, one day I got to hear that the Mahant of the Kurukshetra Mutt was beaten up badly. His arms and legs were fractured and he was taken to a hospital by the *brahmacharis*. Hearing this news, I went to see him in the hospital. He said to me, 'I troubled you a lot and now I am suffering the consequences of my actions. Please forgive me'. I replied, 'You had to suffer. Just see the play of karma'".



Srila Advaita Acharya's House

Nirvikalpa Samadhi

"In Shantipur, Babla, in Srila Advaita Acharya's house, Sriman Mahaprabhu blessed me with His *dashing* and gave me my title and a *japa-mala* (rosary).

I used to wonder why my Guru Maharaj had not yet given me a *japa-mala* when he had given it to everyone else. Later Guru Maharaj told me, 'this is why I did not give you a *japa-mala* earlier' (after I had received it from Mahaprabhu)".

*(Author's Note: In Kharagpur Sri Gauranga Ashram late one night, Maharaj showed the *japa-mala* to Dr. Pradhan and told him the story. I was also present there. It was a very beautiful shiny white *japa-mala*. I had heard the story of Maharaj's nirvikalpa samadhi from his Shantipur disciple and Tarapad Babu of Badkulla. Maharaj was in nirvikalpa samadhi for 72 hours in Babla, Shantipur. In Anjangular, Maharaj had said that after the disappearance of his Gurudev, unable to bear his separation, he had become a parivrajak sannyasi (wandering monk).*

In that very same place (Srila Advaita Acharya's house), my own Gurudev Parivrajak 108 Sri Durga Prasanna Paramhansa, had sat in meditation late one night and gained the darshan of Sriman Mahaprabhu. Bestowing his divine darshan Sriman Mahaprabhu said to him, "Acharya! What are you thinking? Without the holy name the beings of Kaliyug have no way of salvation. Spread the glory of the holy name".

I have not seen Maharaj spend even one day without bhajan or kirtan of the holy name. He used to bring kirtan groups from interior places in Bengal along with him to Sridham Navadwip).

Disappearance of Maharaj's Guru Maharaj

(Narrated by Maharaj in Anjangular in 1971)

"It was the day of Sri Jagannatha Rath Yatra (Chariot Festival). In our Puri Mutt, many devotees and disciples had gathered with the desire of having *darshan* of the Rath Yatra. Mahatma Shish Kumar Ghosh was also present".

"Amidst the large gathering of devotees, Srila Guru Maharaj came and occupied his seat in the hall adjacent to the temple (*Naat Mandir*). At that time, one of our god-brothers, having gained fame in Vrindavan in the art of singing kirtan, had also come to the Mutt".

"Guru Maharaj summoned him and ordered him to sing kirtan. After listening for some time, Guru Maharaj said in a reproachful tone, "Are you singing for name and fame or money, by focusing your attention on the tune, tempo and rhythm or are you singing to serve the Lord with love and reverence?"

"Hearing the tone of Guru Maharaj's voice, the singer fearfully and in tears folded his hands and said, 'Gurudev! Please forgive me!' Guru Maharaj replied, 'No! You are not worthy of pardon!' He then instructed some of the god-brothers to take him out. Two god-brothers pulled him by his arm and took him out. Then Guru Maharaj looked at me and said, 'Sravan, you sing a bhajan'.

"Seeing the fate of my god-brother, my soul had nearly left my body. Joining my hands I said, 'Guru Maharaj, you have named me Sravanananda. I derive joy by hearing. Ask me to give a talk and I shall do it. But I shall not be able to sing'. Guru Maharaj said, 'No. You have to sing'. I then sang the bhajan '*Bhajahu re man sri nandananda...*' composed by Govinda Das Kaviraj. Guru Maharaj was pleased". "After that playing the *mridanga* he himself started singing the bhajan '*nache vishwambhar sura-dhani tirey ...*'."

"Ending his bhajan he said, 'I have distributed the fruits of my entire life's *sadhana* (spiritual penance) amongst you all. Even if nobody listens to you, just pursue your bhajan behind closed doors'. After that he breathed his last there itself (*Maha Prayan*). That day none of us could go to Jagannathdev's Rath Yatra".

Excerpts from Maharaj's Life as a *Parivrajak Sannyasi* (Wandering Monk)

(As narrated by Maharaj)

"Once during my life as a perambulating monk, I fractured my leg and sat under a tree with a towel spread out in front of me. Passersby dropped some coins on the towel. Later some volunteers of the Bharat Seva Sangh saw my condition and took me to a hospital".

Gift of Life

"There is a Sri Radha Govinda temple in Kalimpong. I used to go there often. On the road to the temple just outside a house, I met a small child. That child grew very fond of me. Whenever I went to the temple he would also come along chatting with me".

"One day while going to the temple, I saw a large crowd in front of that house. People were crying and wailing in the house. I went inside to find out what had happened. I learned that the little boy had died all of a sudden. I felt very bad as that child used to love me very much and I had grown quite fond of him. I looked at the dead boy, then calling a person from amongst the crowd, I told him to go to the Radha Govinda temple and tell the priest that I (Maharaj) have asked for a *prasadi* flower garland (garland offered to the deity). He returned with a garland which I put around the neck of the dead child. Shortly, the boy sat up".

"The people in the crowd started saying, 'Does this *sannyasi* practice magic?' I said, 'It is the grace of the Lord's garland'. That very day I left Kalimpong".

Joyous Vrinda Devi

"Once I went to a place to give a discourse on Srimad Bhagavatam. Before I started, another person had just finished his discourse on the same subject. As I started my talk the audience rose and began to leave. I told the audience, 'Do not go just yet. See how joyous Vrinda Devi is to hear Krishna *katha* and I pointed to the tulasi plant kept there which was swaying vigorously, although all the windows in the hall were shut as it was mid-winter. Seeing this supernatural sight the audience sat down again. I started my discourse and nobody left".

An Elderly Sannyasi

"I went to give a discourse at another place. A *sannyasi* preacher was finishing his talk. I also listened. That preacher was an elderly *sannyasi*. When I started my discourse, that elderly *sannyasi* also sat down and heard me".

"After I finished he came and paid his obeisance to me. I said, 'You are my senior! Why are you offering pranam to me?' The *sannyasi* replied, 'We too give discourses but after listening to you I felt as if you are actually witnessing the *leela* and describing it'."

Sriman Mahaprabhu Is Like a Banyan Tree

"I had gone to yet another place to give a discourse. A speaker was already talking so I sat down and listened. Among the audience a woman was sitting and sleeping. The preacher saw the woman and said, 'Sleeping during a discourse? Just get up and leave!' I said, 'Please do not get angry. Sriman Mahaprabhu is like a great spreading banyan tree. Afflicted by the material world a human being sitting in the cool shade of the tree may well fall asleep. That is natural'. The preacher exclaimed, 'What a beautiful explanation you have given!'"

Jatila's Husband

"I had gone to a devotee's home to give a discourse. The house next to my host's was that of his brother, where at the same time, a poetry recital programme had been organised. Many people had gathered to hear the poetry recital whereas only 2-3 persons were present to hear the Bhagavat *katha*. After thinking a while, I told a person to go to the next house and ask the man who was reciting poetry, the name of Jatila's husband, 'Tell him Maharaj wants to know'."

"Surprised to hear the question the singer said, 'I don't know. If Maharaj knows, find out from him and let me know'. The person returned and told me all this. I said, 'Go and tell the singer to come here to me'. As soon as the singer came and I asked him to sit down. After that telling him the name of Jatila's husband I started my discourse.

Along with the singer, the entire audience from the poetry programme also came over to this house. I started my discourse and everybody heard the Bhagavat *katha* with rapt attention. That was the end of the poetry recital that day".

An Encounter with Army Officers

"Once I went to Punjab. I was to give a talk to a group of army officers. Inside the hall, all the officers had a glass of liquor in their hands. As I entered I too was offered a glass of liquor. I said, 'I have never had this and never will'. Then they started taunting me saying that I didn't know social etiquette etc. I started the discourse immediately".

"As I began speaking all fell silent, listening to me spell-bound. After the discourse was over everyone came up to me and paid obeisance. I remarked, 'If I had taken the alcohol as you wanted, none of you would have come and offered your obeisance to me'. Then they said they were sorry and asked for forgiveness".

Penniless at the Railway Station

"Once I was to give a discourse in someone's house for three days. I had to go there by train. After the programme was over and I was leaving, the host did not give me any *dakshina* (donation), or train fare. Since it is my nature not to ask anything from anyone, I went to the railway station empty-handed. An attendant accompanied me. He taunted me and said 'Go! Give more discourses!'"

"We sat there for a while. Presently an unknown gentleman approached me, offered me obeisance and handed me an envelope. There were ₹ 30/- in the envelope. I bought the tickets and took the train".

Desire for Material Gain

"I went to another person's house to give a discourse. I started by singing the popular bhajan, '*...ei dhan jebon, jauban putra parijan...ki ache iti re... kamal dal jala jeebon tala mala bhajo hari pada neeti re..*' (What is there in this wealth, life, youth, sons and relations... this life quivers like a drop of water on a lotus petal..O worship you, the feet of Hari everyday..)"

"The head of the family came and said, 'Maharaj! What is this song that you are singing? I'm getting this *katha* done to attain wealth!' (Maharaj laughed while narrating this anecdote).

Unknown Boy

"I was living in Sridham Vrindavan and I had invited a *sadhu* to have the afternoon meal at my place. The afternoon passed. The *sadhu* arrived very late. He asked me, 'What *bhog* did you offer Giridhari today?' I said 'I offered *rasmalai*'. He said,

'Oh! I am very fond of *rasmalai*..' and added that his patrons had come to meet him and therefore he got delayed while talking to them".

"Just then, an unknown young boy entered my room. Addressing me he said, 'I am not able to get water anywhere for a bath. I will bathe in your bathroom'. The *sadhu* was taken aback at the boy's words and said, 'Aren't you an impudent lad! How dare you?' The lad replied to the *sadhu*, 'Why are you talking in between? You are a greedy *sadhu*. What does it matter to you? You did not come here on time. Rather you kept sitting with rich devotees out of greed for money and after coming here you say that you want to eat *rasmalai*?! Look at this Maharaj. He doesn't eat anything himself but feeds everyone else.' I told the boy, 'What is the need for all this talk? You have come to bathe. Go and have a bath.'"

"The boy handed me a red rose. At that time there were no red roses anywhere. Then he went into the bathroom. I started chatting with the *sadhu*. A long time passed and there was no sound from the bathroom. I went and checked but nobody was there. None of us saw how the boy left. He had simply disappeared".

"The *sadhu* then said that he wanted the flower given by the boy. I said 'Here, take it'. As soon as the *sadhu* tried to take the flower he stumbled and fell as if an unseen hand had pushed him. Dazed, the *sadhu* sat up and out of fear did not touch the flower again".

The Guide

"Once I had to go to Angulai in Orissa to meet one of my disciples who was a BDO (Block Development Officer) there. From Cuttack I travelled by car to Kendrapada. Reaching there, the driver told me that since the road to Angulai was very narrow he wouldn't be able to take the car any further. Then I started walking. It was quite a distance to Angulai and soon darkness descended. Presently a storm with strong winds and heavy rain started. Spotting a shop on the road side, I went and asked the shopkeeper for shelter. Apparently the shopkeeper did not want to give shelter to an unknown *sadhu* and he closed the door on my face. The attendant accompanying me complained, 'Where have you brought us?' Just then he slipped and fell into a nearby ditch and started shouting, 'Baba! Baba!' I pulled him out. Holding my *padukas* (wooden slippers) in my hand, we kept walking".

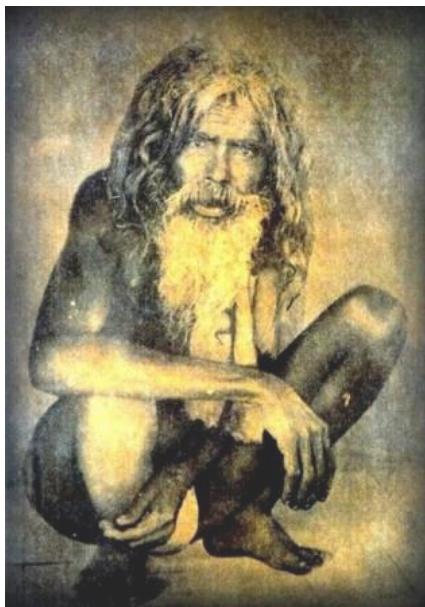
"On the dark lonely rural path, I suddenly saw a man coming towards us with a lantern in his hand. The stranger asked me, 'Where are you going?' I replied that I was going to the house of the BDO in Angulai. He said, 'Let me take you there'. I asked him where he lived. Pointing in a direction he said, 'There'. In the dim light of the lantern, I discerned that by the side of the road, near a banyan tree there was a hut. Finally we reached the disciple's house. There was a well in the yard and the stranger brought water from the well and washed my feet".

"The disciple's wife Rekha was sitting and reading. When she heard me call out, she was startled, 'Who is calling on such a dark stormy night? Surely not ghosts or spirits?' I said, 'It is me your Gurudev. Open the door'. She opened the door and we went inside. Rekha went to get me a towel and some dry clothes. Addressing my disciple, I told him that a stranger had brought us safely to his house in such inclement weather and that he should be given a tip. But that stranger was nowhere to be seen. He simply vanished".

"Hearing the entire incident my disciple said, '...but there is no banyan tree or hut on that road.' The next morning taking the disciple along I went on that same road again and sure enough there was no banyan tree or hut".

"That night I had a dream wherein Purushottam Sri Jagannatha gave me darshan and said, "I was the one who guided you to Angulai'."

In Vamshidas Babaji's Ashram



Srila Vamshidas Babaji Maharaj

"During my stay in Sridham Navadwip I once gave a discourse on Srimad Bhagavatam. At that time there lived a Maha Vaishnava there by the name of Srila Vamshidas Babaji Maharaj. After hearing my discourse he invited me to his ashram to give discourses in the month of Kartik (Oct/Nov)".

"Vamshidas Babaji was such a great devotee that vegetables for his seva would come floating by themselves on the waters of the Ganga near his ashram. He would collect them and cook them for offering to the deity. I went to his ashram in the month of Kartik. A young girl around 16-17 years of age would come to the ashram everyday and cook the *bhog prasad* (food offering) and go away".

"One day I asked Vamshidas Babaji who the girl was. He replied, 'She lives close by'. On another day I told the girl, 'I would like to go to your house'. The girl said, 'Later, not now'. This way many days passed".

"The day before I was to leave, I went along with the girl saying, 'Today I will definitely visit your house'. After going some distance near Sri Narsinghdev's temple, the girl vanished. I simply couldn't understand which way she had gone. I enquired from the local people about the girl but no one could say anything.

I returned to the ashram and narrated everything to Vamshidas Babaji. He laughed and said, 'Oh! Didn't you recognise her? It was Devi Lakshmi who came and did your seva. She resides in the temple of Sri Narsinghdev. You will not see her again'."

Sri Giri Maharaj

(Author's Note: Late one night, Maharaj narrated this story for the first time in Anjangular. The second time I heard him narrate it again one night in Bhubaneshwar Ashram, while sitting on the rooftop terrace surrounded by devotees).

"Swami Hariharananda and I were once sitting by the bank of the Ganga in Haridwar. Just then the grieving relatives of a dead 12 year old boy brought his body there. Most probably the boy had died of a snake bite. The relatives intended to consign the child's dead body to the holy Ganga".

"Just then, an aged *sannyasi* arrived there along with some of his disciples. The name of the old *sannyasi* was Swami Krishnananda Paramhansa. He was then 112 years of age. First he told us, 'This body of mine has become afflicted with the infirmities of old age. For the welfare of humanity, I wish to live for sometime more'. Then addressing the dead boy's father, Swami Krishnananda said, 'For the welfare of the world I would like to enter your son's body and live for some more time. Do you have any objection?' The child's father replied, "My son has died and I have to consign him to the Ganga. If you, for the welfare of humanity want to take shelter of his body, I have no reason to object". The old *sannyasi* told the father, 'Then just leave the body here and go'. The dead boy's father and relatives left".

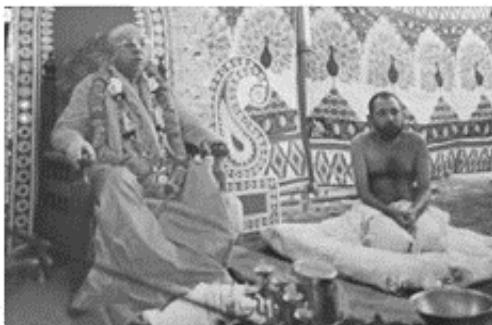
"The *sannyasi* told his disciples, 'After I enter the body of this boy, you shall cremate my aged old body'. Then right in front of us, using his yogic powers, his consciousness left his old body and entered that of the young boy. The 'boy' came alive and sat up and the body of Krishnananda Paramhansa lay there lifeless".

"Then the 12 year old boy-sage told his disciples, 'I shall now go to the Himalayas for further *sadhana* (penance). If any of you want to accompany me, then come along'. Two men from amongst his group of disciples left with the 'boy sage' and the remaining disciples performed the funeral rites of the aged body of Swami Krishnananda. That young boy was eventually known as Giri Maharaj".

"Many years later one day Giri Maharaj showed up unexpectedly at the shop of my devotee Batuk Bhai in Kharagpur and said, 'Arrange for a car immediately to take me to Tirtha Maharaj. If you delay anymore I will not be able to meet him. In a short while he will be leaving for Delhi'."

"Batuk Bhai said, 'I visit him every day and if he was going to Delhi, wouldn't I know about it?' Giri Maharaj said, 'Hurry up! Only when we get there you will see. He is my Guru Maharaj too'."

"After that both of them took a taxi and started out. I was on the way to the railway station to travel to Delhi. On the way we both met".



Giri Maharaj at Maharaj's lotus feet

(Author's Note: While narrating this incident, Maharaj smiled sweetly remembering his bygone days. Many years later I saw Sri Giri Maharaj in Sri Gauranga Ashram Kharagpur. He was about 30 years of age - fair complexioned, good looking and wearing white dhoti and upper cloth. I saw him again some years later in the Bhubaneshwar ashram. In Kolkata during Maharaj's festivals, he would sit very humbly at the feet of his Guru Maharaj. I never saw him talk. He did not permit anyone to pay obeisance to him or touch his feet. He would always sit in vajrasan. It has been some years since he left his body).

Widow Begets a Son

"I went to see a disciple in a hospital in Cuttack. In the next bed, a young woman was looking at me and crying. Comforting her I said, 'Don't cry, ma. You will get well soon.' The woman said, 'Baba, please don't ask me to get well. Who will look after me?' A small boy was standing near her bed. In a surge of emotion I said, 'Why! Your son will!' She said that her husband was a soldier and had been killed in the war and she did not have any children. I told her to come and meet me in my Bhubaneshwar ashram and gave her my address".

"Some years later she came to meet me - with her husband and infant son in her arms. After recovering, she had married for a second time".

Wish Fulfilment

"I went to a devotee's house to give a discourse. Paying obeisance to me the aged head of the family said, 'Baba, please grant that I may die by putting my head at

your feet.' The discourse on Srimad Bhagavatam went on for three days. When I was preparing to leave, the old man came and bowed down at my feet. He did not raise his head again. He died just as he had wished".

Consecration of Swami Bhairavananda's Radha Madhava Deities

"Swami Bhairavananda wanted to consecrate the twin deities of Sri Radha Madhava in his Chandikhol ashram. Fixing a date for the event, he sent a letter to Sri Radha Damodar Jiu temple in Sridham Vrindavan saying, 'For the consecration of Sri Radha Madhava deities please send your most beloved person on that day for the *pran-pratishtha*.'

"During my perambulations I once visited his ashram. The hermitage was situated on top of a hill. As I was standing on the top of the hill admiring the scenic beauty around the ashram, Swami Bhairavananda came and caught hold of my hand. He said, 'I had written to Sri Damodar Jiu in Vrindavan to send his most beloved person to my ashram for the *pran-pratishtha* of Sri Radha Madhava. You are that most beloved person and today will be the consecration of the deities.' I said, 'You are mistaken. It's not Me. Must be someone else.' Swami Bhairavananda replied, 'I know it is you whom Sri Damodar has sent.' Holding my hand he took me to the ashram and I performed the *pran-pratishtha* of the deities".

"Swami Bhairavananda became very fond of me. He would address me as Bal Gopal (Baby Krishna). He used to feed prasad to tigers, snakes, deer and other wild animals together on the hill. I used to visit Chandikhol from time to time."

Swami Hariharananda

"Swami Hariharananda was a sort of eccentric *sadhu*. He did not have any fixed place of residence. He was very fond of me. Once he happened to be in Kalimpong when I was also there. A devotee came and offered obeisance to him. Swami ji said, 'May everything of yours be ruined,' The devotee froze, petrified on the spot, thinking what a frightful thing the swami had said. I then explained to him that 'ruined totally' meant the destruction of all his obstacles and misfortune on the path of *bhajan* (spiritual practices); that is what the swami meant. Saints never utter a curse without good reason. The devotee was reassured hearing my explanation".

"I used to go to Kalimpong from time to time. Once I was giving a discourse at a place and Swami Hariharananda was also present there. Many devotees, men and women thronged the place. They had come to listen to my discourse on Srimad Bhagavatam. A certain officer's wife had also come to hear the *katha*. That lady had a chronic disease which caused her to suffer severe pain in her lower abdomen. That day while seated in the midst of the audience to hear my

discourse, her pain suddenly increased acutely. The woman was unable to get up and leave from the middle of the gathering and nor was she able to bear the pain. Swami Hariharananda was sitting next to this lady. Suddenly he pressed his foot down on her lower abdomen. Watching this 'improper behaviour' many in the assembly became restless. I asked everyone to listen to my discourse quietly".

"After the discourse ended, the woman paid her obeisance and left. In the meantime someone had informed her husband about what has happened during the discourse. Her husband came in a huff to see me. He wanted to know from me how a *sadhu* could behave in that manner in public. I told him, 'First, go and ask your wife what happened, only then you will be able to understand the whole matter'. His wife said that when she was listening to the discourse, her pain increased tremendously and she was unable to move. When Swami Hariharananda pressed his foot on her stomach, in a short time her pain decreased. The woman was cured completely."

"While in Kalimpong I once went for a walk in the hills near a Bhutia village. At that time, I used to wear 2-3 gemstone rings on my fingers. One of them was a diamond ring. Suddenly I saw that I was surrounded by 3-4 tribal Bhutia men. Their intentions seemed mala-fide. Just then a very big venomous snake appeared out of nowhere and slithered fast towards them and they fled in fear. I was not afraid. When Lord Krishna saves, who can harm one?

(Author's Note: I too have seen the rings on Maharaj's fingers. The rings were ultimately given to some anti-social elements when they had pointedly asked for them from Maharaj in the Kharagpur ashram).

Healing on a Train

"Once I was travelling by train from Bhubaneshwar. Next to me, a man was sitting with his wife and daughter. When the train stopped at a station the woman took out some food - *roti* and *sabzi* - from a tiffin carrier and gave it to her husband and daughter to eat. But she herself did not eat anything. Observing this I asked her, 'Ma, you did not eat anything?' The woman replied, 'Baba, I am sick. I will not be able to eat this.' Then I said to her, 'Ma, give me one *roti* and *sabzi*'. She served me on a plate. Taking the plate in my hand, I recited a little *mantra* and handing the plate back to her said, 'Ma, now you eat this'. The woman hesitated. I said 'You will be healed if you eat this; you won't have any trouble. You will be able to eat everything'. After eating the food the woman was healed. Before leaving I gave them the address of the Bhubaneshwar ashram. They came and met me later and took initiation from me."

Woman Who Delivered Stillborn Babies Begets a Son

"One day a teacher came to me. I asked him, 'What is the matter? You look sad.' The teacher replied, 'My wife has delivered still-born babies two times. This time too, the doctor says it will be a dead child. That is why I am sad.' I told him, 'Ask your wife to come and see me'. When she came I took her to the Lingaraj temple and gave her the *prasadi bel patra* (leaf of wood apple tree which had been offered to Sri Lingaraj), to eat".

"In due course the woman gave birth to a healthy child. The teacher was overjoyed and came to give me the news. The woman's doctor came to see me and asked, 'Maharaj, how did the prognosis according to medical science prove wrong?' I said, 'It is God's Grace'."

(Author's note: Maharaj healed many women who used to deliver still-born babies. They all became mothers of healthy children).

Unknown Dog

"Once I was giving a discourse at Giri Govardhan in Sridham Vrindavan. Just then, a handsome dog came and started digging up the earth at a particular spot, a little distance from where I was sitting. I told the devotees to mark the spot. When the dog came and stood by my side a photograph was taken. After that the dog went away and no one saw where it went. Nobody in the area knew the dog. After the discourse ended I asked the people to dig up the marked spot. On digging there a box was found. From the box a *kamandalu* (water pot) and a manuscript of "Vaishnava Darshan" written by Sri Baladeva Vidyabhushan was found. (The dog was Lalita Sakhi)."

"After returning from Vrindavan I was staying in the Bhubaneshwar ashram. The news of my finding the manuscript of Vaishnava Darshan became known in the Vaishnava community.

One day four young men came to meet me. They told my attendant that one of them had a pain in his chest and so they wanted to take tulasi and Sri Narsinghdev's *charanamrita* from me. All four came inside; there was no one else in the room. I was sitting on a bed beside the wall. One of the young men, on the pretext of showing his chest quickly took out a pistol and keeping it at my chest said, 'Give us the manuscript of Vaishnava Darshan'. I said, 'By killing me will you get Vaishnava Darshan? It is not with me.' While talking thus, I grabbed hold of his hair and banged his head against the wall. The pistol fell from his hand. His companions ran away. I picked up the pistol and thereafter the young man also ran away."

(Author's Note: My guess as to why they ran away is that definitely they must have seen the form of Lord Narsinghdev in Maharaj, otherwise seeing their companion being overpowered why would they run away? Rather they would have attacked Maharaj to save their friend. Many others also have had the good fortune of seeing Maharaj as Narsingh dev. Sri Bhagavan is benign to devotees and terrifying for non-devotees).

Humorous Anecdotes

Language confusion

"Once when I was in Gaudiya Mutt I had gone to the Mutt in Chennai (formerly Madras). There I met an old friend and asked him how his wife was. Hearing me speak, one of the *sadhus* asked one of the resident monks of the Mutt, 'Why is he using this kind of inappropriate language?' The monk who was asked the question was a Bengali *sadhu*. The Bengali *sadhu* told the local South Indian *sadhu* that in Bengali a wife is called as *Bau* and the South Indian *sadhu* said that in the local language a prostitute is called a *bau*!"

"Once I had gone to a disciple's house in Chattogram, present day Chittagong in Bangladesh. After I had finished eating, the disciple's wife asked her husband, 'Should I give Baba a *gordona*?' The disciple said, 'Give'. I was alarmed. What is this? Are they going to grab me by the scruff of my neck and turn me out? Just then his wife came and gave me a pillow. Then I understood that they called a pillow *gordona*. (In Bengali normally a pillow is called *baalesh* and *gordona* means to grab one by the neck. But in Chittagong *gordona* also meant pillow).

Anchor of Attachment

Maharaj once narrated this moral story. "Once a marriage party, along with the groom wanted to go by boat to the wedding venue. After a quarrel with the boatman they decided to take the boat themselves. One of them took the helm and another began to pull the oars. The rowing continued through the entire night. At dawn they saw that the boat was exactly at the same spot, because the rope which was tethered to a post had not been removed. In other words it was still anchored".

Purport: As long as we have material attachments we will not be able to progress in *sadhan bhajan* (spiritual practices).

(Author's note: In Anjangular after his discourse, singing and kirtan were over, Maharaj would narrate these humorous anecdotes. He would tell Rani di (disciple in whose house he stayed while in Anjangular,) to let go of her attachment towards her grandchildren.)

The Burnt Yamaraj Cannot See With His Eyes

An old woman was walking carrying a load of wood on her head. She was in great pain as she hobbled along and muttered a colloquial expression to herself, "The

burnt Yama cannot see with his eyes" (She wanted to die because of her suffering). Hearing this Yamaraj (the God of Death) appeared before her and said, "Old woman, come with me now.." Seeing Yamaraj, the old woman said, 'No, no Baba! I will not go now! I was wrong to curse you.'

Clapping his hands with an amused chuckle, Maharaj said 'This is the condition of a living being who is enchanted by Maya. When he suffers he wishes to die and says God is not just etc., but actually he doesn't want to die'.

The Clever Sevak

"Once I had gone to Assam to a disciple's house. The disciple asked my attendant, 'What does Baba like to eat? What is his favourite food?' My attendant replied, 'Vegetables and greens, fried savouries, sweet rice pudding etc.' (*shak, sabji, bhaja, peethe payash*). When I heard this I asked my attendant, 'Do I really eat all that?' The sevak replied, 'Baba I am also here, na?' Just think, what a clever sevak. His name was Digambar Swami".

The Blanket Doesn't Leave Me!

"Once, a prince was initiated by a Guru. After staying in the palace for a few days, the Guru was preparing to leave. The prince entreated to his guru, "I will also go with you! I do not like it here.' The Guru said to him, 'My path is very arduous. You will suffer greatly. You are the son of a King; you will not be able to tolerate the hardships'. The prince was adamant and said, 'No, I shall face all the difficulties'. In spite of dissuading him many times, the Guru could not stop him and finally said, "Very well! Let us go!".

"After leaving the kingdom and walking for some time, the prince complained that his legs were aching and he would not be able to proceed till he rested for a while. He said, 'Let me take a nap under this tree'. Looking at him the Guru said, 'There is still time. Go back! This path is not for you'. The prince replied, 'After resting a while I will be able to walk again. Please do not worry'."

"The Guru was unable to continue his journey because of the prince. In this way with the prince in tow, they both entered a forest. Now the prince said, 'Gurudev! I am feeling very cold. Please give me a blanket'. Nearby, a bear was sleeping under a tree. Pointing to it, the Guru said, 'Go and take that blanket'. Taking the bear to be a blanket, the prince hugged it. The bear also 'hugged' him back. Then he screamed and said, 'Gurudev! The blanket doesn't leave me!'"

Purport: If you hold on to the world, the world will also hold on to you. Also, one must always obey the Guru without question.

A Disciple's Property

Once, a guru went to the home of his disciple. After spending a few days in his house, the guru prepared to leave. Paying his obeisance, the disciple said, 'O Gurudev! Everything that is mine is yours. What more can I give you.' Saying these words he left for work without giving any *dakshina* to his guru. The guru thought in his mind 'Just wait, I will teach you a lesson'. The guru instructed his attendant to go to the disciple's storage room, take out some bags of rice and put them in the boat. The attendant did as instructed.

Summoning the disciple's wife, the guru asked her to hand over all her jewellery. The good woman removed whatever ornaments she was wearing and handed it over to him. Then the guru got into his boat. Just at that time the disciple returned home. His wife told him 'Gurudev has taken everything just as you said. You are fortunate that he didn't take me along too'. The disciple said 'Just wait and see, I'm not done with him'. Saying this, the disciple grabbed a sickle and rushed to the river. The guru's boat had not yet departed. Running to the boat the disciple shouted out, 'Gurudev! Don't go yet! Everything here is yours! Your holy feet are also my wealth. Let me cut them and take them with me.' Seeing the disciple approaching with the sickle in hand, the guru said, 'Son, take back everything of yours' and he handed over all that he had taken from the disciple's house.

The Foolish Donkey

"Once, while in Kashi (Varanasi), Sriman Mahaprabhu was sitting on the Manikarnika Ghat on the bank of the river Ganga. Just then, he saw two people embarking on a boat. In a short while another person came on board carrying a big sack of rice on his head. He sat in the boat but continued to carry the sack on his head. Mahaprabhu told him, 'Put your sack down in the boat'. The man replied, 'If I put the sack down, the boat will sink'. Mahaprabhu said, 'Material minded people are like foolish donkeys. They think that if they put their material burden at the feet of Guru and God, they will lose everything'."

Nectarean Words

- None of us is going to live forever so it is imperative that we make good use of this human life by chanting the holy name.
- Living in one's own house and chanting the holy name will make the home like an ashram.
- The name of Sri Krishna is the Truth.
- A thousand lies have no leg to stand before the truth.
- The union of the gopis with Krishna is like a sweet *sandesh* meeting the tongue.
- God always protects his devotees.
- What is needed is simplicity and absence of duplicity. Shri Bhagavan is the redeemer of the fallen - *patitapaavan* - and not the redeemer of the duplicitous (*kapat-paavan*). The problem is that we have not genuinely become *patita* (humble, with an attitude of surrender). Rather we have become *kapati*, i.e., duplicitous.
- Whatever I speak is the Truth.
- Mere chanting and counting of beads is not sufficient. One must also do *seva*.
- That which lies forgotten, deeply hidden and in slumber within us is awakened with the association of *sadhus* and devotees. In their association our inherent true nature - love for God - is awakened.
- Question: Will we ever attain God?
Answer: Just as a mother cat picks up her kitten and transports it to a safe place and the kitten is not even aware of it. Similarly in the association of saints (*satsang*), one is delivered in the presence of God without even being aware of it.

(Badkulla 1969)

- One should not be too proud of one's good fortune.
- 'Smriti rekhe diyo' Write down the memories (to the author).

- Shri Bhagavan is more merciful towards the poor, meek and humble.
- Bhajan "*TulasiKrishna preyasi namo namo.....*" "O Tulasi beloved of Sri Krishna, salutations unto you". You can make the impossible possible as you have received a *siddha mantra* (perfected mantra), from Pournamasi Devi. Addressing his disciples Maharaj said 'You too have received *siddha mantras* from me and can achieve the impossible. So keeping firm faith in the lotus feet of the guru, continue chanting the holy name and you too can make the impossible possible'.
- I am fully aware of what you all speak about in your homes.

(Anjangarh 1970)

- At times, a devotee who takes the guru to be God is well on the way to deliverance whereas a disciple of the guru who doubts his divinity proceeds to hell.
- One who seeks shelter at the feet of the Lord is freed from fear.
- Gopi premer madhurima tribhuvane nai taar upoma ...* (In all the three worlds there is no comparison to the sweetness of the Gopis' love for Krishna).
- Without the grace of saints no worthwhile work can be accomplished; when devotion to Krishna does not awaken in the heart, we remain entangled in material attachments. Whereas, with the dawn of Krishna *bhakti* our intentions are fulfilled. We do not have this firm belief in us.
- When the guru's grace is upon us the negative influence of planets gets neutralised. There is no need to wear gemstones (to pacify the planets).
- The material world is a prison house of sorrows. One has to become strong on the strength of one's devotion.
- If there was no greed for wealth, this world would be like heaven.
- If my devotees and disciples are not ready to spare even ₹5.00 in donation, nor contribute some *seva*, then how can I ensure their blessedness?
- You all spend so much time and money on your children every day. Am I also not one of them?!
- Grace (*kripa*) flows in two ways - you give something to get something.

- One day all my *leelas* and pastimes performed amongst you will be written down.
- Question by a devotee: Living in the midst of the material world, how can we pursue our spiritual practices?
Answer: Why do you worry? You are all safe in a fortress. *Sadhus* like us are standing in front of the cannon.

(*Badkulla* 1970)

- The path of *sadhana* (spiritual practice), is strewn with thorns.
- Everyone is focused on their own happiness. No one thinks about the guru's happiness. The guru is omniscient. Why do you have to tell him everything? He already knows. If someone wants only happiness in life and no sorrow at all, is that possible? One has to experience sorrow. You cannot grow without knowing sorrow. Gold gets purified by burning in fire. The path of *bhajan* opens up in the midst of sorrow.

(*Kalyani* 1985)

- When there are worms and parasites in the stomach no matter how much nutritious food you eat, it will have no positive effect on the body. If a very wealthy person has a weakness for prostitutes then he will lose all his wealth in pursuit of his addiction. In the same way when spiritual aspirants indulge in gossip, fault-finding, useless talks, lies, slander etc., they lose all the accumulated merit of their *bhajan*, penance, austerity etc.

(*Anjangular*)

- Expounding on the word 'sumsara' Maharaj explained, 'Sum' means that which is temporary, or ephemeral and 'sara' means that which is the eternal truth. Resorting to the eternal truth, our effort must be to filter its essence from worldly life.
- There no purpose in our greed and hankerings.
- He who takes shelter of the lotus feet of God has no fear of even the Yama of Yamaraj himself! Such a person bypasses the influences of Maya and escapes from the clutches of Yamaraj.
- Addressing his disciples, Maharaj said, 'The manner in which I left my home, the same way I left Gaudiya Mutt'.

(Krishnanagar)

- There are four stages in the progressive development of the soul. Budding, formative, blossoming and fully bloomed.
- Sadguru does not belong to any one person, whoever calls out to him he responds to them.
- Addressing a disciple Maharaj said, "Abandon your doubting nature. God permeates every atom of creation. Does that mean you will go and embrace a tiger? Lord Jagannatha has big lotus like eyes with which he can see everything. Nothing is hidden from him". Putana, who smeared poison on her breasts and killed numerous infants as they suckled her milk, that demoness was delivered by Krishna and was given the position of a mother in Golok Dham by him. So, what are you all worried about?!"

(Badkulla)

- Goswami Tulsidas has written that Lord Sri Ramachandra did not perform the worship of Goddess Durga (before the battle with Ravana). To ensure the victory of Sri Rama, the demigods went to Lord Brahma and on his suggestion they performed the worship of the ten-armed goddess.
- Question by a devotee: "How to overcome our false ego - the sense of me, mine and doership"?
Maharaj: "To surrender oneself at the feet of the Lord, to become his, to consider oneself as his humble servant - all very easy to say but extremely difficult to do. In the Chandi Paath, the devotee prays "*Rupam dehi* - which means to pray for the awakening of one's true nature - i.e., of being the eternal servant of Sri Krishna".

(Kalyani 21.10.1985 on Maha Ashtami)

- The duty of a Vaishnava saint is to mitigate the sorrows of devotees. Shri Bhagavan answers the prayers of his devotees. The Lord by any name is dear to a true devotee.
- The body becomes sublimated when we go on performing our *bhajan* continuously.
- The husk covering the grain of rice has no value. But it is vital in protecting the grain of rice from heat, rain and cold. In the same way, *sadhus* and *sannyasis* seemingly have no productive value in society. However they act as a protective shield for the people. A *Sadguru* effectively protects his/her disciples and devotees".

(Badkulla)

- According to Vaishnava philosophy when a devotee has a feeling of separation from Krishna the sentiment is known as 'Vipralambha bhava' (love in separation).
- I do not look to my own good. Rather I shall look to your benefit. I know very well how good or bad I am".

(Salt Lake Ashram)

- When a great man calls someone else great, it is very good to hear".

(Bhubaneshwar Ashram)

- *Ishte nishtha thakle anishta hoi na* -Total faith in one's *Ishta* (preferred divinity), ensures protection from undesirable occurrences (*anishta*). We lack such fixed dedication and faith, that is why we suffer undesirable consequences".
- *Seva karte karte aadar kam ho jata hai*" (As a person continues doing *seva*, his/her respect or love (for the served) become less and less - i.e., familiarity breeds contempt.
- When there is absence of a guru in one's life, the attachment to insignificant material things leads to toxicity in our lives. After establishing a bond with the guru the disciple feels bad if he or she is unable to do anything in their guru's service.
- No one is interested in knowing one's true self. Everyone wants sense gratification. We are impoverished in terms of soul gratification. A cook does his job well for the salary he or she earns but when the mother cooks for the family, then how is the food? (*Sambandh gyan* - knowledge of relationship).
- Nitai Gaur say 'Be humble, be with everyone. Be behind everyone (put yourself last), be in the midst of everyone.
- Rabindranath Tagore said, 'It is best when the mighty and powerful walk along with the weak and humble'.
- *Manush bhootguli bodo akrityaga*. Ghosts (evil) dwell in human form all around us. These people are always ungrateful.

- Whatever anyone asks of me be it money, wealth, love or devotion I fulfil their wishes.
- Your nature is to commit offences and my nature is to overlook your offences.
- Sorrow, pain and disease draw one closer to God.

(Salt Lake ashram 1986)

- Spiritual initiation is repentance for our past negative *karmas*. Thereafter, if any sin is committed one should shed tears of genuine repentance at the lotus feet of the guru. The proper repentance for the sin of theft or stealing is to host a *sadhu bhandara* (mass feeding of holy persons, *sadhus*, monks etc.).

(Bhubaneshwar ashram)

- All of us were residents of the transcendental Golok Dham at some point. We have appeared in the world of Maya only as a result of our offences.

(Badkulla)

- When having darshan of Sri Radha-Madhava in the temple, one must have eyes of love and devotion.
- Faith makes everything possible. One must have faith in the words of saints.

(Anjangarh)

- Thakur Rabindranath said that in the midst of change you remain the same (*chir-puraatan*).
- My prayer is not to avert calamity but rather to have the strength to overcome calamity and emerge victorious.
- *Guru-giri abhishokto jeebon*. The life of a guru is a cursed one. No one is interested in one's own salvation, they all want only material benefits, whether it is the marriage of one's daughter or a good job for one's son. If the son or daughter fails in their exams then Baba is to be blamed. If a daughter is born in place of a son then Baba is to be blamed. I am

expected to cure every one of their diseases and ailments. Have I come here to do all this? Nobody wants self-realisation.

- If anyone is with me only for their self-interest then I will ensure that they are not near me. But the devotee who weeps for me, I will keep him/her close to me. If you spend a little time with me, then you will realise that I am closer to you than your own spouse, son or daughter.
- People living in the ashram constantly want something or the other. I have yet to find a *sevak* who will serve out of pure love and devotion.
- To a devotee, "Do you think I do not have the capability? What would I not give to someone who has genuine faith and devotion in me"!
- *Sevika*: "You have 2-3 wristwatches. Why don't you donate one?"
Maharaj: "It is not up to me to give anything in donation or charity. I myself am donated."
Sevika: "To whom have you been donated?"
Maharaj: "I have been donated to Srimati Radharani".
- When the *jivatama* (individual soul) tries to hold the hand of God there is a danger that his grip might fail and he may fall. Meaning there is a danger of a spiritual fall. However when Sri Bhagavan holds your hand, then there is no fear of falling.
- To a devotee: "Do not judge me until you have seen my final *leela* (act).
- To a disciple: "I am very fond of beautiful handwriting. You will get a job because of your handwriting."
- To a devotee: "You have my affection and I never forget my word."

(*Salt Lake ashram*)

Offer the heart

(22 July 1988)

An old lady devotee asked Maharaj, "Baba, if one doesn't wear *tulasi-mala* can they not do bhajan?" Maharaj replied "Why not Ma.. the heart can be offered as *tulasi* at the Lord's lotus feet. What is needed is pure love.

There is a bhajan written by Narottama Das Thakur "*Tilak kata golai mala shei to aek Kalir chela; parokiya sadchen mamu sange niye parer bala; Narottama kohe bhai door koro ei leela khela*"

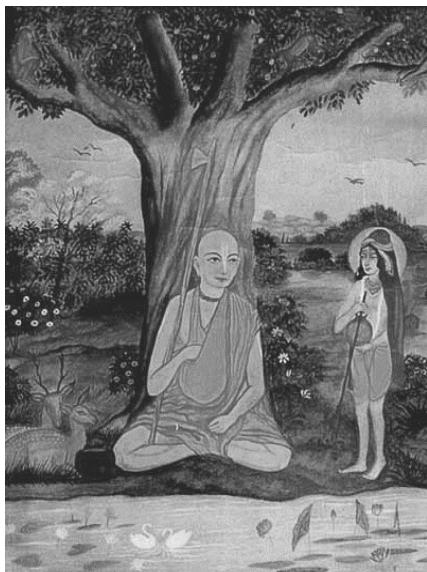
(Merely applying a big tilak and wearing *tulasi mala* does not make one a devotee. One may wear all the symbols and pretend to be a devotee and yet elope with another woman. Narottama says "Stop all this pretence".)

Maharaj's Discourses

Srila Madhavendra Puri and Kheerchora Gopinath

(Summary of the discourse given by Maharaj in Badkulla)

"After visiting many holy places Srila Madhavendra Puri, the abode of transcendental devotion, arrived in Sridham Vrindavan. Sitting beneath a tree he was chanting the holy name. His nature was such that he never begged for alms. If anyone by themselves offered him some food, he would respectfully accept it".



Gopinath and Srila Madhavendra Puri

Goswami continued to sit under the tree chanting the holy name. Eventually he dozed off. Puri Goswami saw a dream wherein Shyamkishore Muralidhar Krishna asked him 'O Gosai, didn't you recognise me? It was I who gave you the milk. Listen to me Madhavendra; I lie buried in the nearby forest under a mound of earth. Dig me out from there and install me on the top of Giri Govardhan. My great grandson Vajra had originally installed me (in deity form) there. The Yavanas (Muslim invaders) had dislodged me and thrown me away. I have been waiting for

"On that day, it was well past afternoon and nobody had yet offered him anything to eat. He was still fasting. Just then a young cowherd boy came up to him with a small pot of milk and said, "Puri Goswami, you have been fasting all day. Here, have this milk."

"Looking at the young boy Puri Goswami pondered, 'Who is this beautiful effulgent lad?' Gazing at the boy with unblinking eyes he asked him, 'Who are you? How did you know that I have been fasting all day?' The young boy answered 'I live nearby. The local milkmaids told me that you have not eaten all day. I like to give to those who do not ask anything of anyone. It is time for me to milk the cows so I shall go now and come back later to collect the pot'. Saying this, the boy left".

"Puri Goswami drank the milk and kept the pot aside but even till late in the night no one came to collect it. Puri

you all this while thinking when will my Madhavendra come and reinstall me on Giri Govardhan'. Saying this Sri Krishna disappeared from Puri Goswami's dream".



Consecration of Sri Giridhari on Govardhan Hill

"At the crack of dawn, Srila Madhavendra Puri summoned the *Vrajavasis* and told them about his dream. The *Vrajavasis* got together and clearing the dense undergrowth, they dug on the spot pointed by Puri Goswami and recovered an enchanting black stone statue of Sri Krishna. With the help of the local people Srila Madhavendra Puri installed the deity once more on the top of Govardhan hill. The deity was duly consecrated according to religious rituals and regular worship was started".

"Some time later, Lord Giridhari appeared once again in Puri Goswami's dream and said that his body was burning with the unholy touch of the *Yavanas*. He told Puri Goswami 'You go to Neelachal (Puri Jagannatha) and bring back

the sandalwood of Neela Madhava and apply the cooling paste on my body. Only then will my body cool down'. Following the Lord's instructions Puri Goswami handed over the responsibility of the worship of Lord Giridhari to a priest and left for Neelachal. Travelling on foot, he eventually reached the village of Remuna in the Balasore district of Orissa".

"During his fourteen years of exile in the forest, Sri Ramachandra had come to Remuna along with Sita Devi and Lakshman. Seeing the charming and verdant forest Sri Rama had named the place Remuna. On reaching Remuna, Sita Devi got her period. Desiring to have a bath she said to Rama 'Lord I need to take a bath, but there is no water here'. Lord Rama then shot seven arrows consecutively into the earth deeply piercing it and a fountain of pure water emerged. Thus the river Saptaswara was created. Sita Devi then bathed in that river".

"One day, both Sri Rama and Sita were sitting on a large boulder by the bank of the river. Gazing at the beautiful surroundings suddenly Rama laughed. Seeing him laugh Sita asked him 'Lord what is the cause of your laughter?' Rama replied 'I laughed thinking about my incarnation in the forthcoming *Dwapar Yuga*'. Sita asked 'Prabhu, in what form will you appear? Please show me'. Lord Rama then took an arrow and proceeded to etch on a large rock, the charming figure of Sri Gopinath holding a flute. Sita said, 'Lord, show me how to do it'. Placing the arrow

in her hand and holding her hand in his, Rama then continued to draw out the figure of Gopinath. Sita Devi is the primal creative energy and Sri Rama is the energetic principle. When they together drew the figure of Gopinath, it came alive (that divinely beautiful deity is now famously known as *Kheerchora Gopinath*).



Sri Kheerchora Gopinath in Remuna

concluded his nightly *seva* and distributed the *kheer prasad* among the devotees present. Then shutting the temple door he collected the remainder *prasad* and went home”.

Finishing his meal the priest went to sleep. In his sleep Lord Gopinath appeared to him in a dream and said 'O priest, earlier this evening my great devotee Madhavendra Puri had a desire to taste my *kheer prasad*. Therefore I hid a pot of *kheer* within the folds of my raiment for him. Go now to the temple, retrieve the pot of *kheer* and give it to Puri Goswami'.

"The priest awoke with a start and ran with great haste to the temple. Opening the sanctum, lo and behold he found a pot of *kheer* in the folds of the Lord's garment. Then taking the pot the priest went out of the temple and started searching around, calling 'Who is Madhavendra Puri?' When Puri Goswami heard his name being called he said, 'Here! I am the unfortunate Madhavendra Puri'. The *pujari* responded 'You are not unfortunate but rather the most fortunate! For you, Lord Gopinath stole a pot of *kheer* and kept it aside. He appeared in my dream and told me this. Now please take this *prasad*'. Accepting the pot with ecstatic joy and

Standing in the temple and gazing at the deity Puri Goswami ruminated over the story of the appearance of Lord Gopinath. Just then the world famous nectarean *kheer bhog* (thick condensed milk-and-rice pudding) was being offered to Lord Gopinath. Puri Goswami thought to himself 'I wish I could taste the *kheer prasad* so that something similar can be prepared and offered to Giridhari in Govardhan'. The very next moment he repented and thought to himself, 'Alas! The *kheer* has not even been offered yet, and here I am desiring to taste it!'

"That night he sat beneath a tree and started chanting on his beads. There in the temple of Lord Gopinath, after offering 12 pots of *kheer* to the Lord, the priest



Samadhi of Srila Madhavendra Puri

horripilation Madhavendra Puri exclaimed 'Ah! Lord Gopinath! How merciful you are even to an offender like me'!"

"Later Srila Madhavendra Puri reflected on the entire incident and thought 'When the day dawns, news of this miraculous incident will spread like wildfire. Devotees, men and women will flock to have a glimpse of me and glorify me. It is best that I leave this place at once'."

"In *Chaitanya Charitamrita* Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has written '*protishthaar hoye Puri palaiya jaye, protishtha bhakter pichhone dhai'* (Fearful of name and fame Puri Goswami was running away, but fame always runs after a true devotee).

Elaborating on this verse Maharaj said "A devotee may well not desire fame and glory but the Lord wants his devotee to become famous".

"Before the day dawned Puri Goswami left for Neelachal. Reaching there he bathed in the sea and went to have *darshan* of Lord Jagannatha. After spending a few days in Purushottam Dham he collected the sandalwood and started his travel back. On route to Vrindavan he once again had to stop at Remuna".

"During the night in Remuna he had a dream wherein Giridhari Gopal told him 'Madhavendra, remain here and offer me (in the form of Gopinath deity), the Neela Madhava sandalwood paste then my body will cool down. There is no need for you to return to Vrindavan now'. Following the Lord's instructions, Puri Goswami stayed back in Remuna and offered the sandalwood paste to Lord Gopinath there".

"Due to his love for his devotee the deity of Sri Gopinath in Remuna had stolen *kheer* and was thenceforth known as *Kheerchora Gopinath* (Pudding Thief Gopinath). To this day, the same *kheer bhog* is offered to Lord Gopinath".

"Srila Madhavendra Puri spent the remainder of his life in Remuna. His sacred relics - his sitting mat, blanket, water pot, *paduka* (wooden sandals) have all been preserved there".

"Chanting the Lord's names, "Hey dayalu deen-dayaardra nath, hey Mathuranath!" (O merciful lord, O saviour of the fallen, O Lord of Mathura!), Puri Goswami breathed his last in Remuna.

His samadhi is in Remuna in a small shrine near Sri Gopinath's temple".

Sri Sri Bhakta-Shiromani Madhavendra Puri Goswami Maharaj ki Jai!!

Sriman Mahaprabhu's Childhood Pastimes

(Summary of the discourse given by Maharaj in Badkulla)

"Once early in the morning, little Nimai was running around in the courtyard playing by himself".

"*Sachira anginaay gaurachand bairaayi re; Sachira nondoner chorone shonar nupur runu-jhunu baje re...*" (The moonlike Gaura is dancing in the courtyard of Mother Sachi; the golden anklets around the lotus feet of Mother Sachi's darling son are making a sweet *runu-jhunu* sound ..)

"*Kanak varana raatul chorone kanaka nupur, hathe kanak bala golai kanak mala..*" (Golden anklet around his golden-complexioned pink lotus feet, golden bangles around his arms and a golden necklace adorning his neck....)". In the words of a Vaishnava poet, 'It is as if a lump of golden butter is rolling in the dust..'."

"Little Nimai was playing like an ordinary child. Just then, a passing thief spotted the child wearing valuable golden ornaments playing by himself and seeing no one around, picked him up and carried him away on his shoulders. His intention was to take the child to his home and remove his ornaments. The thief held the two soft lotus feet of little Nimai against his chest in case the child would fall off. Aah..! What blessed fortune that this thief was holding in his hands those sacred lotus feet that are the object of meditation of *yogis* and *rishis*!"

"Carrying Nimai the thief kept walking but well into the afternoon he still could not reach his house. Walking all over Navadvip exhausted and tired the thief found himself back exactly where he started from, i.e., in front of Jagannatha Mishra's (Nimai's father's) house. He took Nimai from his shoulders, placed him down and went away. The idea of stealing the gold ornaments was completely forgotten. Having touched the Lord's lotus feet his eyes were streaming with tears".

Tirthankar Brahmana

"One day a mendicant *brahmana* came to Jagannatha Mishra's house. The *brahmana* used to visit places of pilgrimage. He would cook his food with his own hands, offer it to Lord Vishnu and then eat it".

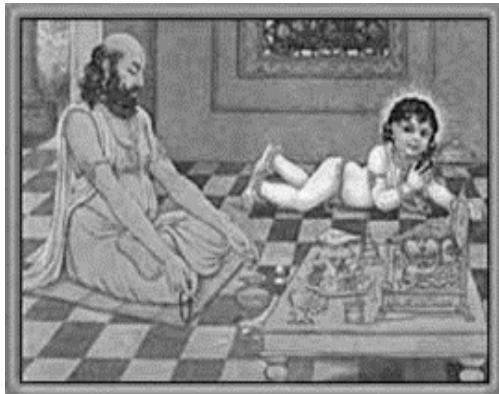
"Mother Sachi provided all the necessary items for him to cook his meal. After preparing the meal, the *brahmana* sat down to offer it to the Lord. Offering the

bhog he shut his eyes and sat in meditation. When he opened his eyes after some time, he saw little Nimai eating the rice and vegetables from the offered plate".

"The *brahmana* cried, 'Alas! Alas!' Hearing his cries Jagannatha Mishra and Sachi

devi came quickly to the spot.

Picking up naughty little Nimai in her arms Mother Sachi left the room. Jagannatha Mishra apologised profusely and requested the *brahmana* to cook once again. He assured the man that this time they would keep a strict watch over Nimai".



Little Nimai eating the Lord's *bhog* offering

watch over his son it was unfathomable how and when Nimai slipped away and went into the *brahmana*'s room".

"Hearing the commotion Jagannatha Mishra quickly ran to his room. The *brahmana* said, 'It seems that I have to be on fast today! Lord Vishnu has also not partaken the offering!' Jagannatha Mishra said, 'If the revered guest of a house goes hungry it is very inauspicious for the host. And how can we have our meals too? Kindly have mercy on us and prepare the offering one more time. I will tie up naughty Nimai and keep him inside.'

"Just then Jagannatha Mishra's elder son Vishwarupa reached home after school. Hearing all about the incident, he clasped the *brahmana*'s feet and appealed to him to prepare his food one last time. Vishwarupa said 'I will myself keep a watch over my brother. Do not worry; my brother will not be able to come here under any circumstances'. With no other option left the *brahmana* once again cooked and offered the food to Lord Vishnu".

"Vishwarupa took Nimai into a room, locked it and kept a watch over his brother. Soon drowsiness overcame him and he dosed off. Nimai sneaked off again and no one was any the wiser".

"Sitting in meditation after offering the *bhog* when the *brahmana* opened his eyes, he was stunned. He exclaimed 'Alas! Alas! What have you done?!" This time Nimai replied, 'What else can I do? You are offering the *bhog* to me again and again, how can I not accept it?' Saying this Nimai revealed his four-armed Vishnu form to the

fortunate *brahmana* who saw that little Nimai was not there anymore. He fell at the lotus feet of the Lord in prostration and became unconscious”.

“Regaining consciousness he once again saw that little Nimai was standing there. Nimai told him, ‘Whatever you have seen and heard here, do not tell anybody. You must leave Navadwip today itself’. The blessed of the blessed *brahmana* partook the prasad with great respect and joy. Without uttering a word to anyone and with tears of ecstasy streaming down his eyes, he departed”.

Pundit Keshav Kashmiri

“Nimai’s elder brother, the handsome and learned Vishwarupa suddenly left home and took to monkhood at the tender age of sixteen. Shattered, the parents somehow survived this heartbreak by holding on to their beloved little Nimai. Nimai became their dearer-than-life wealth and the apple of their eyes”.

“Nimai started his education in the school of Gangadas Pandit. Observing his extraordinary prowess and keenness to learn, his father Jagannatha Mishra became concerned. One day expressing his fear to his wife he said, ‘Our son Vishwarupa became fully learned in the scriptures at a young age and realised the ephemeral nature of the material world and hence renounced it to become a monk. I fear if Nimai becomes a great scholar he too will do the same thing. Hence I feel it is better if he remains at home ignorant, without any education’.”

“Nimai’s schooling was then stopped. Nimai did not say anything to his father but his restless and naughty behaviour increased manifold due to his inner sorrow. Gathering his friends from the neighbourhood he would go to people’s homes and latch the main door from outside; in the darkness of night they would raid banana plantations and cut down the trees and so on. His disruptive behaviour kept increasing. Sometimes he would sit on a heap of used and discarded earthen pots and smear the soot on his face”.

“Finally, on the advice of the neighbours Nimai was once again admitted in the school. This time also, he dedicated himself to his studies with great enthusiasm”.

“Soon afterwards Nimai’s father passed away leaving mother and son grief stricken. Despite her own sorrow, Mother Sachi focussed her attention on raising her young son. Without the disciplining hand of his father and with the indulgence of his mother, Nimai’s precocious behaviour increased even more, but his learning did not lessen”.

“In due course, Nimai was married to Lakshmipriya the daughter of Vallabhacharya. In a very short time Nimai completed his studies and started his own school. His fame as a learned *pundit* (scholar) spread all over Navadwip. At the time Navadwip was a major centre of learning. It was the residence of many

learned and articulate scholars. Scholars from all over the country would go to Navadwip to engage in debates and discussions”.

“Around this time, there came to Navadwip a renowned scholar by the name of *Pundit Keshav Kashmiri*, with the desire to engage in debate with the local *pundits*. The *pundits* told him “We are in no position to debate with you. Nimai Pundit is the best scholar in Navadwip, you go to him”. In the evening Nimai was sitting along with his students by the banks of the Ganga. Keshav Kashmiri went there with the local *pundits* (who were envious of Nimai), also trailing behind him to watch the fun thinking that now Nimai Pundit would be humbled”.



Nimai Pundit and Keshav Kashmiri

Show me where the faults are!” Nimai recited the verses and pointed out the faults. The world-conquering scholar immediately saw where the faults were in his verses. Incredulous he said to Nimai, ‘I recited my hymn of a hundred verses at the speed of a storm! How did you memorise it all?!’ Nimai answered ‘Just as by the grace of Goddess Saraswati you are a world-conquering scholar, similarly some are *shruti-dhar* (those who are able to memorise instantly on hearing once)’.”

“Seeing the great scholar defeated, Nimai’s students laughed aloud. Nimai admonished them. Humbled Keshav Kashmiri, the formidable world-conquering scholar returned home”.

“Receiving him respectfully Nimai asked Keshav Kashmiri to have a seat. Addressing him Nimai said, ‘We have all gathered here on this charming evening on the bank of the holy Ganga. Would you like to expound on the glories of the Ganga?’ Proud of his scholarly prowess Keshav Kashmiri instantaneously composed and recited a hundred verses in praise of the Ganga. Then he asked Nimai Pundit ‘How do you find my composition?’”

“Nimai, now humility personified, respectfully addressed Keshav Kashmiri, ‘The hymn that you just composed is indeed praiseworthy but just as leprosy can mar the beauty of an otherwise handsome person, in the same way there are a few faults in your composition’.”

“Stunned and disbelieving the pundit explained, ‘Faults?! In my composition?!

"Keshav Kashmiri was blessed by Goddess Saraswati and he would get her *darshan* at times. Sitting in meditation that night, the *pundit* invoked the Goddess and she appeared before him. He asked her reproachfully, 'Mother! You made me lose to a mere boy?!" The Goddess smiled and replied, 'He is no ordinary 'boy'. He is the Lord of Golok (Krishna), and He is my Lord as well. Do you think I can outshine him? You should not feel any shame in losing to him. Go to Him tomorrow morning and ask for His forgiveness'. The *pundit* did as instructed by the Goddess".

"The following day when the *pundit* went to meet him, Nimai said, 'Do not disclose to anyone what the goddess told you. Leave this place and go away tomorrow'."

"Some years later *Pundit* Keshav Kashmiri met Sriman Mahaprabhu in Puri Dham (after Nimai had taken *sannyas*)".

Srila Narottama Das Thakur

"With a desire to spread the holy name, Sriman Mahaprabhu went to his father's birthplace in Eastern Bengal, modern day Bangladesh, in the Shrihatta district, south of Dhaka. On reaching there he stayed in the house of Padmanabha. A *brahmana* by the name of Tapan Mishra came to visit Mahaprabhu. Tapan Mishra prayed to Mahaprabhu to expound on the goal of *bhakti yoga* (yoga of devotion) and the means to attain the goal".

"Sriman Mahaprabhu said, 'All these elements and whatever else there is, are all to be found in the congregational chanting of the holy name (Sri Naam Sankirtan). You will remember your true identity as a servant of the Lord. Continuous chanting of the holy name and surrender to the holy name will ensure that all perfections (*sarva siddhis*) are attained'.

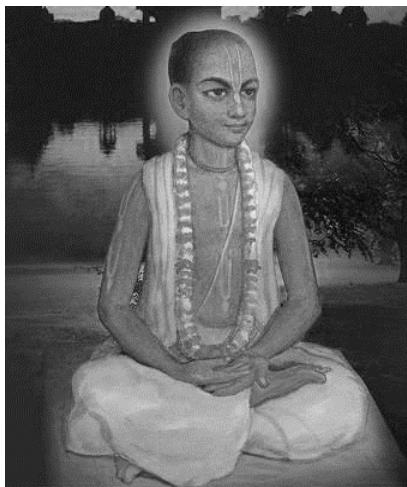
*'Harer naam harer naam harer naameva kevalam
Kalau nasteva, nasteva, nasteva gatir anyatha'*

'In the age of Kali the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord, the holy names of the Lord, the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way, no other way, no other way. The only means of attaining blessedness in the present age is to take shelter of the holy name'.

"Following the order of Sriman Mahaprabhu, Tapan Mishra went to live in Kashi (Varanasi). Much later, he met with Mahaprabhu in Kashi after he took *sannyas*".

"On his return journey from East Bengal, Mahaprabhu went to the bank of the river Padma and called out loudly 'Narottama! Narottama!' The devotees asked, 'Who is Narottama?' Mahaprabhu replied 'Narottama is the son of King Krishnananda of Kheturi in the Rajshahi district. He is my chosen one'."

"Addressing the river Padma Mahaprabhu said 'Padme! I am leaving in your care the wealth of devotional love (*prema bhakti*) for Narottama. In the future when Narottama comes to your bank, please give it to him'. Padma asked the Lord 'How will I recognise him?' Mahaprabhu replied 'When he comes here to your river bank, seeing him you will have ecstatic symptoms such as tears of joy, shivering, horripilation etc. Your waters will dance in waves of joy'."



Srila Narottama Das Thakur

"This same Narottama went to the bank of river Padma and receiving the wealth of devotional love left for him by Sri Mahaprabhu, roared jubilantly. The eight symptoms of divine ecstasy manifested in his body. His heart no longer interested in worldly life, he renounced the material world and went to Sridham Vrindavan".

"In Vrindavan, Narottama Das Thakur was in the care of Srila Jiva Goswami. At that time Srila Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis had already left the world. Narottama Das Thakur approached Srila Lokanath Goswami, a classmate of Mahaprabhu, to receive spiritual initiation (*diksha*) from him. Considering himself unworthy, Lokanath Goswami was not inclined to give Narottama Das any initiation. He said to Narottama, 'You are the son of a King and this path is extremely arduous. You will not

be able to follow it'. All of Narottama's pleadings and prayers failed to move Srila Lokanath Goswami and he continued to decline to initiate him".

"Not deterred, Narottama started to provide personal and menial service to Srila Lokanath Goswami without his knowledge. He would rise early in the morning before dawn and clean and sweep the place where Lokanath Goswami relieved himself. He would fill the water pot with fresh water, keep some ashes for washing hands etc., and leave the place before Lokanath Goswami woke up".

"One day Lokanath Goswami thought 'Who is doing all this service to me? I have to find out'. So he woke up in the early hours and hid himself in behind some bushes in that place. Presently he saw Narottama arriving and cleaning the area".

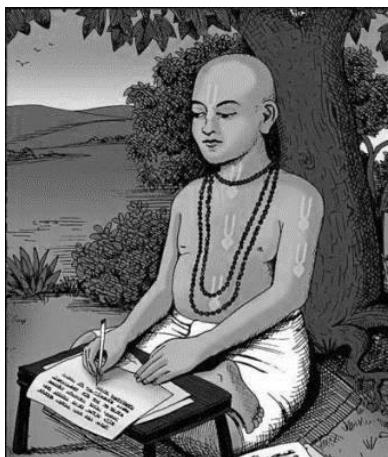
"Pleased with his humble service attitude Lokanath Goswami agreed to initiate him. He told Narottama 'Go and bathe in the Yamuna and then I shall initiate you'. After receiving initiation Narottama Das Thakur wrote one of the most heart-touching bhajans in praise of the guru, '*Sri guru-charan padma, kevala bhakati sadma.....*'

"After some years, on the instructions of Srila Jiva Goswami, Srila Narottama Das Thakur along with Syamananda Prabhu and Srinivas Acharya travelled to Bengal. Narottama Das went to Kheturi, his birth place in eastern Bengal to propagate chanting of the holy name. He preached love for the holy name in western Bengal too and attained fame as Srila Narottama Das Thakur. (Thakur is a title given to one who has attained the topmost position in his spiritual pursuit)".

"He composed many devotional songs and kirtan. He is the founder of the *Garanhata* tradition of *leela kirtan*. The village of Kheturi lies within the boundary of *Garanhata Parganas* (group of villages)".

"Srila Narottama Das Thakur established a temple of Sriman Mahaprabhu in Kheturi and celebrated a grand festival on its consecration".

Gopal Bhatt Goswami



Srila Gopal Bhatt Goswami

"On his travels to southern India, Sriman Mahaprabhu went to the holy town of Srirangam in Tamil Nadu, for the *darshan* of Bhagavan Sri Ranganath. He stayed as a guest of Venkata Bhatt, the temple priest in Srirangam. His young son Gopal used to serve Mahaprabhu. Later on when he grew up, Gopal Bhatt went to Vrindavan".

"Once, Gopal Bhatt travelled to Haridwar and on one particularly stormy night, stayed in the house of a *brahmana*. The pious *brahmana* couple hosted Gopal Bhatt in their home with great care and attention. At the time of Gopal Bhatt's departure the *brahmana* said to him, 'I am childless, however I did not serve you with any desire for a child. But now at this moment I have great desire for a son. With your blessings my desire will surely be fulfilled'. Gopal Bhatt

replied, 'So be it'."

"In Vrindavan Gopal Bhatt used to live in a small shack near Nidhivan. One day when Gopal Bhatt returned from his bath in the Yamuna, he saw a young boy sitting outside his hut. He asked the boy 'Who are you?' The boy replied 'I was born as a result of your blessing. My parents have sent me here to serve you'."

"Gopal Bhatt used to worship 12 *shaligram shilas* every day. Once, a rich merchant visited Vrindavan. Having attained great success in his business he was gifting precious ornaments to the deities in the temples of Vrindavan. When he went to

Sri Gopal Bhatt Goswami to give him some ornaments, Gopal Bhatt said 'Oh.. but I do not have a deity. I only worship these *shaligrams*'. The merchant replied, 'No matter. Kindly accept these gifts'. Handing over the ornaments he left".

"That night after putting the *shaligram shilas* in a basket for safekeeping, Gopal Bhatt Goswami prayed 'Oh Krishna! I wish I had a deity of yours so that I could decorate it with these beautiful ornaments'. He went to sleep with this wish".



Sri Radharaman Jiu

"The next morning when Gopal Bhatt woke up he saw that the lid of the basket was open. He quickly took the basket and looked inside and to his amazement, he found an enchantingly beautiful 12 inch statue of Krishna among the other 11 *shaligram shilas*. Picking up the figurine Gopal Bhatt examined it closely admiring it, when he found a piece of the 12th *shaligram* stuck on its back. He realised that as a result of his earnest prayer one of the *shaligrams* had turned into a deity. This is the famous Sri Radharaman deity of Vrindavan".

"Later that night Sri Radharaman appeared in Gopal Bhatt's dream and said 'I have appeared here in answer to your prayer. Now you decorate me grandly and worship me as you desired and establish my temple'.

As directed by the Lord, Gopal Bhatt had a temple built and installed the deity and formally began the custom of chanting the *Mahamantra* from the day of the consecration".

"The descendants of the young boy who had come to serve Gopal Bhatt Goswami continue to serve Sri Radharaman to this day. All the other temples of Vrindavan follow the customs, rules and regulations established by the Radharaman temple. Gopal Bhatt Goswami is one of the Six Goswamis of Vrindavan".

The Deliverance of Jagai and Madhai

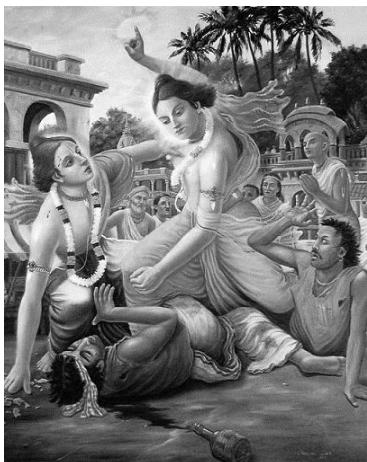
"In Navadvip, Sriman Mahaprabhu, the Sanctifier of the Age of Kali, performed Hare Krishna *naam sankirtan* along with his intimate associates in the courtyard of Srivas Pundit's home to purify the hearts of all human beings".

"One day, summoning Srila Nityananda Prabhu and Haridas Thakur, Mahaprabhu told them 'You both take a group of *kirtan* singers and go around the town chanting the holy name'. Thus on the instructions of Mahaprabhu, under the

leadership of Nityananda Prabhu and Naamacharya Haridas Thakur, the chanting of the *Hare Krishna Mahamantra* formally began in the streets of Sridham Navadwip".

One day, Nityananda Prabhu told Mahaprabhu 'Lord, you need to deliver the two rascals, Jagai and Madhai. There is no deplorable act that these two *kotwal* (constables of the law), have not committed. Intoxicated with liquor they gallivant around with disreputable women'.

Mahaprabhu asked, 'Do they commit the offence of slander?' Nityananda Prabhu replied 'Where do they have the time to slander? Apart from slander they have committed all other offences. Even the meek and humble have not been spared from their atrocities'. Mahaprabhu said 'If they have not committed slander then they may be delivered. All of you continue chanting the holy name as per your schedule'."



Deliverance of Jagai and Madhai

"That day, taking along a group of *kirtan* singers Nityananda Prabhu went to chant the holy name in front of Jagai and Madhai's house. Hearing the sound of the loud *kirtan* with *khol* and *kartal*, both the brothers rushed out and shouted to the *kirtan* party to stop their singing. But the singers did not stop. Raising his arms Nityananda Prabhu said, 'Brothers! Just once say Hari Hari!' Then in great anger, Madhai picked up a broken piece of clay pot and hurled it at Nityananda Prabhu. The broken piece hit Nityananda Prabhu on the forehead drawing blood and his face was covered with blood. Even then Nityananda Prabhu remained calm".

"Nityananda said, 'Just because you hit me, do you think I shall not give you love of God? Dear Madhai! Just once say 'Hari!'. Madhai went to hit him again but Jagai held him back.

With the speed of lightening this news reached Sri Gaurusundar. He reached the spot immediately. Seeing the blood flowing from Nityananda Prabhu's forehead, the fountainhead of forgiveness (Mahaprabhu) became furious and took on a fierce form. Mahaprabhu was just about to invoke his Sudarshan Chakra when Nityananda held his hand and said 'Prabhu! Please calm down! You have taken a vow that this time you will not pick up any weapon but will redeem by bestowing love'."

"Mahaprabhu restrained himself. Just then Jagai came and clasped Mahaprabhu's lotus feet and fervently prayed for forgiveness. Mahaprabhu replied 'If you do not sin anymore then you will be forgiven'. Tearfully Jagai said 'I shall not commit

offences anymore'. By this time Madhai also felt deep remorse and falling at Mahaprabhu's lotus feet, he begged for forgiveness. Mahaprabhu replied 'If Sripad Nityananda forgives you then only you shall be pardoned'. Then Nityananda Prabhu drew Madhai into his arms and said, 'My brother! Just say 'Krishna Krishna' say 'Gaur Hari'!"

"Thereafter Mahaprabhu also forgave Madhai.

As an act of repentance Mahaprabhu told the two brothers to go to the bank of the Ganga and serve the Vaishnava devotees there by applying sandalwood paste on their foreheads. The two brothers Jagai and Madhai, both habitual offenders, transformed into gentle compassionate Vaishnava devotees".

The Deliverance of Chapal Gopal

"Sri Gaurhari was performing the auspicious *Naam Sankirtan* in the courtyard of Srivas Pundit's house. The orthodoxy in Navadvip found it intolerable. The nightly chanting and singing disturbed their sleep and some found it simply unbearable".

"Srivas Pundit had a neighbour by the name of Chapal Gopal. Once around midnight, he placed on a banana leaf, a skull filled with liquor, grains of rice, hibiscus flowers etc., (pertaining to black magic), and kept it outside the door of Srivas Pundit's house with the intention of maligning his good name. The local people would assume that they performed dark rituals behind closed doors".

"At the crack of dawn when Srivas opened the main door and saw these items on the doorstep he was startled and cried out, 'Alas! Alas! Who has done this mischief?' He then removed all the items, cleaned the spot and went and bathed in the Ganga. Mahaprabhu came to hear of this incident".

"After a few days, Chapal Gopal was struck with a deadly strain of leprosy. Much later when Mahaprabhu returned to Navadvip after taking *sannyas*, Chapal Gopal fell at his lotus feet and admitted his offence begging for forgiveness. Mahaprabhu told him 'You have committed the sin at the feet of Srivas Pundit. If he forgives you, you shall be forgiven'. Then Chapal Gopal fell at Srivas Pundit's feet and prayed for forgiveness. Srivas Pundit pardoned him and told Mahaprabhu 'Lord, he is truly repentant, please forgive him'."

"As a result of Srivas Pundit's plea and Mahaprabhu's grace Chapal Gopal was completely cured of leprosy".

A *Brahmachari* in Srivas Angan

"In Navadwip, a *brahmachari*, who only drank milk for sustenance, lived in a hut on the bank of the Ganga. He came to know that Nimai Pundit had closed down his school and along with his close associates, performed *kirtan* every night in Srivas Pundit's house. He wished to join and listen to the *kirtan* one day. He shared his desire with Srivas Pundit, who thought it would be a good thing for the pious *brahmana* to join the *kirtan*. With Srivas Pundit's permission the *brahmachari* went to attend the *kirtan* one evening".

"After a few rounds of *kirtan*, Mahaprabhu called Srivas and asked him 'Srivas, why am I not feeling the usual bliss in *naam sankirtan* today? Is there some outsider here?' Srivas replied 'Prabhu there is only one pious *brahmana* present here and no one else'. Mahaprabhu said 'What is the use of him being a pious *brahmana* if he has not surrendered himself?' Hearing this the *brahmana* fell prostrate at Mahaprabhu's lotus feet. Mahaprabhu then said, 'Now you have truly surrendered yourself'."

Srivas Pundit's Mother-in-Law

"Another day Mahaprabhu told Srivas Pundit 'Listen Srivas, today also I am not feeling any joy in the *kirtan*. Has any outsider come here? Please search and tell me'. Srivas Pundit looked throughout the house, except for one room in the western side of the house. Coming back to Mahaprabhu he said 'Lord I have searched everywhere and I could not find any outsider'. Mahaprabhu replied, 'Go and look in the room in the western corner'. When he went into that room Srivas Pundit found his mother-in-law hiding there. Her intention in hiding was to secretly see whether they were actually performing *kirtan* or doing some other undesirable act. Srivas Pundit then took her out of the room and sent her to the women's quarters".

Mukunda Dutt

"One day Sriman Mahaprabhu told Srivas, 'Listen Srivas, from today the doors are shut for Mukunda. Do not allow him to join us anymore'. Srivas Pundit asked 'Lord, what is Mukunda's offence?' Mahaprabhu replied 'His faith is not firm yet. When he is here with me, he praises the path of devotion and when he is with the people who pursue knowledge, or with those who practice rituals, he praises their paths too. I do not wish to see his face again'."

"Mukunda Dutt was a classmate of Sriman Mahaprabhu and he was one of the daily regular *kirtan* singers in Mahaprabhu's group. When Mahaprabhu had performed a play enacting the roles of Lakshmi, Radha and Rukmini, Mukunda Dutt

was the main singer. Such a close and dear associate, Mahaprabhu did not wish to see again!"

"Srivas went and informed Mukunda Dutt of Mahaprabhu's decision. Mukunda told him 'Please ask Prabhu after how many lifetimes will I get his association again'. When Srivas Pundit informed Mahaprabhu about Mukunda's query, he replied 'Tell him he will get my association again after a million births'. When Mukunda heard Mahaprabhu's response he started dancing with raised arms and said, 'I will get him! I will get him! After a million births I will get him!' Mahaprabhu came out of the house and embraced Mukunda to his heart and said, 'Because of your firm faith in my words, that you will attain me after a million births, you have me now!'"

"When Mahaprabhu took sannyas and let for Purushottam Dham Puri, only four persons accompanied him, Srila Nityananda Prabhu, Jagadananda, Damodar and Mukunda Dutta".

The Death of Srivas's Son

"One evening in Srivas Angan, Mahaprabhu told the devotees 'Today I do not feel any joy in the *kirtan*. Go and see what has happened in the inner rooms of the house'.

Inside the house they found Srivas's only son had just died due to cholera. Srivas sternly told his wife and other family members not to raise a hue and cry and that there should be no disturbance in Mahaprabhu's *kirtan* programme. Further he said 'If you say that you cannot remain without lamenting for your dead son, then go to the bank of the Ganga and cry as much as you want'. Hearing the harsh words of Srivas Pundit his wife Malini and the other women stifled their tears".

"Coming to know of this incident from the devotees, Mahaprabhu went into the inner rooms. Taking some water in his hand, he sprinkled it on the body of the dead child. The boy sprang to life and sat up. Addressing the child Mahaprabhu said, 'Why are you immersing my devotees in sorrow by your untimely demise?' The child replied 'Lord, this is the lifespan you have allotted me, and since it is over, I have to leave. I was born in the house of a devotee and I have had your *darshan* - that is my great good fortune. Joyfully you should allow me to depart'. Saying this, the boy again fell down dead".

"Mahaprabhu said, 'How will I leave such dear devotees, who put aside their personal tragedies for my sake?' That day Mahaprabhu's dearest devotees got a hint that he was planning to leave them".

"Among those dear devotees was Mukunda Dutt. He thought to himself that he would not be able to remain alive in separation from Mahaprabhu. So he planned

to end his life before Mahaprabhu's departure. Thinking thus, one night when his wife and children were fast asleep, he started sharpening a knife.

The all-knowing Mahaprabhu came running to Mukunda's house and knocked on the door loudly, calling out, 'Mukunda! Open the door!' Mukunda had to open the door. Mahaprabhu snatched the knife from his hand and said, 'Mukunda! Is this the example of your love for me? You are my devotee! Why do you want to kill yourself and attain hell? Place your hand on me and vow that you will never take such a step again'. Hearing the commotion Mukunda's wife came and fell at Mahaprabhu's feet. Sobbing she said, 'Lord, today you have saved me from untimely widowhood. I am your purchased servant for the rest of my life'."

Tantric Sannyasi

"Once Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was going to Shantipur accompanied by Srila Nityananda Prabhu. On the way, Mahaprabhu said to Nityananda Prabhu 'Sripad, I am very hungry. Please arrange for some food'."

"Nearby there was an ashram of a *tantric sadhu*. Both of them entered that ashram. Mahaprabhu bowed down to the *sadhu*. Pretending to bless him, the *sadhu* said 'May you be blessed with wealth and a beautiful wife'. Mahaprabhu said, "Whatever is in my destiny I shall undoubtedly attain. What is the need to ask? Rather you bless me that I may always be Krishna conscious".

"Eyes red with anger the *tantric* said, 'You dare to counter my blessing?!" Seeing the dialogue getting out of hand, Nityananda Prabhu interjected and said, 'This young boy is very hungry, so he is talking some nonsense. Please give us something to eat if you have'. Mischievously the *tantric* asked 'I have some 'karan' (cause). Would you like to drink it?' Not understanding Mahaprabhu turned to Nityananda and said, 'What does he mean by 'karan'?' Nityananda Prabhu replied 'Liquor'. Horrified Mahaprabhu said 'I would rather end my life than be in a place where *sadhus* consume liquor'. Saying this he rushed towards the Ganga to end his life. Nityananda forcibly restrained him from doing so. Mahaprabhu said, 'Sripad, my days in Navadwip are over'."

"Three days after this incident, Srikantha Mahaprabhu took *sannyas* initiation from Sri Keshav Bharati and left Navadwip for good, immersing Mother Sachi, Vishnupriya Devi and countless dear devotees in a sea of sorrow".

Raja Subuddhi Rai

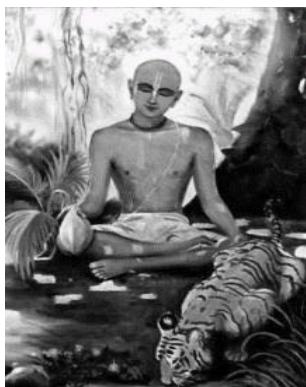
"Subuddhi Rai, one of the kings of Gaur (Bengal), was ex-communicated by the religious orthodoxy for some reason and expelled from Hindu society. In order to be accepted in the society again Subuddhi Rai approached some religious leaders

for a remedy. Some of them suggested that he would have to swallow burning hot ghee and molten glass as repentance, the result of which surely would be death. Therefore in the hope of saving his life he abandoned Gaur and proceeded to seek shelter of Sri Mahaprabhu. He met with Mahaprabhu in Kashi when the latter was on his way to Vrindavan".

"He asked Mahaprabhu for the means of proper repentance. Mahaprabhu said 'You do not have to do anything. Just say 'Krishna Krishna' along with me. Perform Hare Krishna kirtan. In Krishna bhajan there is no consideration of caste or community'."

(Summary of two discourses given in Kolkata on Gaur Purnima)

Haridas Thakur



"Today is Vasant Purnima, the most auspicious day that ensures the redemption of all fallen souls. On this Queen of all Full Moon days, appeared the most munificent and magnanimous Sri Sri Gaurasundar enlivening the lap of Mother Sachi. On this most blessed day, under the guidance of Srila Swarup Damodar, we shall now hear the edifying story of Sri Sri Gaurasundar".

[Namacharya Srila Haridas Thakur](#)

"Srila Naamacharya Haridas Thakur used to chant Hare Krishna Mahamantra one lakh (100,000) times audibly, and two lakh times silently every day. At that time Shantipur was under the rule of Kazi Shirajuddin and Navadwip under Chand Kazi. The news of Haridas's chanting reached their ears. They both felt that it was wrong of Haridas who was born a Muslim, to be chanting Harinama. If this went unchecked, it would have a negative influence on the Muslim community".

"Both of them approached the ruler of Gaur, Hussain Shah and lodged a complaint. Hussain Shah sent his police to arrest Haridas Thakur. He further ordered that Haridas Thakur be given exemplary punishment so that it would serve as a warning to the Muslim community. The constables arrested Haridas and brought him to Hussain Shah's court but the Shah could not meet Haridas then. On the ruler's instructions, Haridas was put in prison. At that time, many Hindus who could not pay their taxes were also put in prison.

"They all knew Naamacharya Haridas Thakur and they thought if such a saintly person came in their midst, it would be a blessing. When Haridas Thakur was

brought to the prison they were all ecstatic to see his radiant and calm face. Naamacharya Haridas Thakur raised both his hands in blessing and said 'May you always be like this'. Hearing his words the prisoners thought 'What kind of blessing is this? Are we going to be in prison for ever?!' The ignorant fail to understand the words of saints".

"Understanding their confusion, Haridas Thakur said 'That is not what I meant. The signs of love for Krishna and devotion that you showed upon seeing me, my blessing was for that devotion to remain forever, i.e., may you always be Krishna conscious'. The prisoners were appeased after this explanation. Their consciousness was suffused with spiritual ecstasy. They forgot the misery of their imprisonment. The *darshan* of devotees and *sadhus* cleanses one's consciousness and their mere touch can awaken ecstatic love of God".

"The next day Haridas Thakur was produced before Hussain Shah. Seeing the calm and gentle face of Haridas Thakur, the naturally cruel demeanour of the King somewhat softened. He said 'Born in a Muslim family, why do you chant the name of a Hindu god? You should chant the name of Allah. If you conduct yourself as a good Muslim, then there will be no punishment for you'."

"Srila Haridas Thakur replied calmly 'God is one without a second. He has many names. I like the name Hari, and so I chant that name. What is wrong in that?' The ruler then said, "No. That will not do. If you do not give up the Hindu's Hari-naam then you will be punished with death". Naamacharya replied 'Even if this body is cut into pieces I will not stop chanting Hari naam. As long as I am alive, I will not stop chanting Hari naam'."

"The ruler then ordered his constables to take Haridas Thakur to 22 different market places in the town and flog him in public till his death, 'Let people see his terrible punishment'. The constables carried out their orders and started flogging Srila Haridas Thakur mercilessly. But Naamacharya just kept chanting Hari naam. There came a time when the constables became exhausted and stopped".

"Talking among themselves they said, 'This time we are surely going lose our heads. The ruler will think that we have deliberately spared his life. Now what shall we do?' Seeing their fear and sorrow Naamacharya fell down "dead". Now relieved, the constables informed the ruler that Haridas Thakur had died. Hussain Shah announced that being born a Muslim, yet Haridas Thakur kept chanting a Hindu God's name, therefore he would not be buried according to Islamic rites and to cast his body into the Ganga. The constables carried out his command".

"As soon as the cool waters of the holy Ganga touched Haridas Thakur's body he came alive. Coming out of the river and still chanting the holy name, Srila Haridas Thakur went to the ruler and said, "Please do not punish the constables. They are not at fault. The cool and holy waters of the Ganga revived me; therefore you may please punish me again".

"Astounded and accepting defeat, Hussain Shah said, 'Please go wherever you wish and chant whatever name you like. You shall not be punished anymore'."

"In Srivas Angan when Sri man Mahaprabhu had revealed his divinity, he raised his upper garment and said to Haridas Thakur 'See Haridas! When you were being flogged, I entered your body and took all the lashes of the whip on my body. My devotees are very dear to me'. (*Narrating this episode Maharaj was in tears and his voice was choked.*)"

"Mahaprabhu continued, 'When the whips were searing your body, you were chanting 'Om Kling Gauranga'. That is why I covered your body with my own and took all the beatings'. When Haridas Thakur saw the scars of the whipping on Mahaprabhu's body, which was as soft as freshly churned butter, he fainted and fell at Mahaprabhu's lotus feet. Sri Sri Gaur Sundar placed his lotus hands on his head and Haridas Thakur regained consciousness".

Srila Advaita Acharya

"Once on Vasant Purnima, when Mahaprabhu manifested his divinity, he enquired 'Why does Sri Advaita Acharya (Nada), who worshipped me with tulasi leaves and Ganga water and forced me to descend from Golok, not come here to see me?' He then sent Ramai Pundit to Shantipur (to fetch Advaita Acharya from his residence). Only Mahaprabhu used to address Advaita Acharya as "Nada". Some people would call him 'Sitapati' as his wife's name was Sita. Yet others referred to him as 'Gaur aana Thakur' (he who brought Sri Gaurhari to earth)".

"The reason why Advaita Acharya did not go to meet Mahaprabhu was because Mahaprabhu would not allow him to prostrate at his lotus feet. For one thing, Advaita Acharya was much older than Mahaprabhu and secondly he was the godbrother of Mahaprabhu's initiating guru, Srila Ishwar Puri. Thus they were both disciples of Srila Madhavendra Puri. Therefore Mahaprabhu used to prostrate in front of Srila Advaita Acharya. Due to this reason Advaita Acharya did not go to Srivas Angan to participate in the nightly kirtan sessions".

"Once when Advaita Acharya went to Vrindavan, he met a *sadhu* called Gaur Das who gave him a picture of Sri Krishna drawn by Vishakha Sakhi (one of the eight principal *sakhis* of Smt. Radharani). Srila Advaita Acharya used to worship that picture. One day Srila Madhavendra Puri visited the house of Advaita Acharya in Shantipur. He said to him 'You are worshipping only the one (Krishna). Where is the other? (Radharani)'. Saying this he gave Advaita Acharya the twelve-syllable Krishna Prema mantra and he also gave him a picture of Smt. Radharani painted by Yogamaya Pournamasi Devi. Handing the picture to him, Srila Madhavendra Puri said 'Now you worship them both together every day'. Advaita Acharya asked, 'If I worship them devotedly everyday with tulasi and Ganga water, can they not

unite and appear upon this earth in one form?" Puri Goswami replied "Of course they can. They will definitely come if you implore and worship them".



Srila Advaita Acharya

"Seeing the deplorable condition of human beings in the present age, taking tulasi leaves and Ganga water in his hand, Srila Advaita Acharya would pray earnestly to Golokbihari Hari. With a great roar he would cry out, 'Lord come! Come now upon this earth!' After completing his worship, he would then drop the tulasi leaves and flowers into the Ganga".

"After some days of doing this Advaita Acharya one day noticed that the tulasi and flowers which he dropped in the Ganga began to flow in the opposite direction, i.e., against the current. Astonished, he started walking along the river bank all the while keeping his eyes on the tulasi and flowers. After walking a considerable distance he saw that the flowers

had reached the women's bathing ghat in Navadvip, where Mother Sachi was bathing and circumambulating her, the flowers and tulasi vanished into the waters. Feeling happy Advaita Acharya returned home thinking that his prayers had been heard and his wish would soon be fulfilled".

"When Sri Mahaprabhu was born Advaita Acharya and Haridas Thakur were overjoyed and danced in ecstasy, knowing that their prayers had indeed been answered. On the night when Mahaprabhu appeared enlightening the lap of Mother Sachi, the full moon was eclipsed in the night sky. The full moon was in the grip of Rahu. Srila Kaviraj Goswami, giving beautiful metaphors has said that on the night of Mahaprabhu's birth, Rahu had gripped the full moon as if to say 'O Moon! You are full of faults. Tonight the faultless Chaitanya moon has appeared in the sky-lap of Mother Sachi so where is the need for you?'

"What else happened that night? Due to the eclipsed moon the entire firmament was reverberating with the chanting of Hari naam. The one who was born to spread the sweet Hari naam in every house and every city, the Father of Naam Sankirtan, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared along with the holy name".

"At the time Mahaprabhu appeared, Navadvip was a renowned centre of learning and was famous for its debates on logic and philosophy. Hindu society was rigidly divided between *varnashram dharma*, caste, creed and untouchability. Myriads of gods and goddesses were being worshipped. The ruler of the land was a Muslim. Krishna *katha* was extremely rare. There were but a handful of genuine devotees".

"When he was born, Mahaprabhu i.e., baby Nimai did not suckle his mother's milk in the maternity room. Jagannatha Mishra wondered how the child would survive. Nilambar Chakravarti was the maternal grandfather of Nimai. This same Nilambar Chakravarti was Garga Muni during Krishna Leela in the Dwapar Yuga. Jagannatha Mishra, Nimai's father, sent for him. When Nilambar Chakravarti observed the situation he said, 'How can the child accept his mother's milk when she has not yet been initiated?'

"Jagannatha Mishra then asked 'How can she be initiated while she is still in the maternity room? It is against custom'. Nilambar Chakravarti replied 'For *Mahapurush* there is no rule and regulation. Inform Srila Advaita Acharya. He will be able to initiate her'. Advaita Acharya was the incarnation of Lord Shiva. He had two homes, one in Navadwip and the other in Shantipur. At that time he was staying in his Navadwip house. When he was informed, he came and gave initiation to Mother Sachi in the maternity room. After that baby Nimai drank his mother's milk. Through this *leela* the Lord showed that he does not accept anything from the uninitiated".

"Nilambar Chakravarti drew Nimai's astrological chart and declared, 'This is not an ordinary child. He has all the characteristics of a *Mahapurush*'."

"Baby Nimai would often cry but when he heard the sound of Hari kirtan, he would stop crying. Once though, little Nimai's crying did not stop despite all efforts. He told his father 'Please go and get the Ekadashi offering from Hiranya Pundit's house'. Jagannatha Mishra wondered how did Nimai know that offerings are made to the Lord in Hiranya Pundit's house and that they observed Ekadashi fasting? The offering was brought from Hiranya Pundit's house and after Nimai ate it, he became quiet".

"In Srivas Angan Sriman Mahaprabhu displayed his various divine forms. One day, as instructed by him, Ramai Pundit went to Srila Advaita Acharya's house and said, 'Prabhu wants to see you''. Advaita Acharya responded 'I do not accept that your Lord is God. I shall not go with you. You go back'. Ramai Pundit returned and told Mahaprabhu 'Srila Advaita Acharya will not come. He does not accept that you are God'. The omniscient Gaurhari said, 'He has followed you here; he is just outside the door'. Saying this, the Lord took his associates and went to Sitapati and holding his hands, brought him into Srivas Angan. Mahaprabhu sat down on his seat and addressing Srila Advaita Acharya said, 'I know that you are annoyed with me. Now you fulfil your heart's desire'. Saying this he extended his two lotus feet, which are the most cherished treasure of saints and placed them on the bowed head of Srila Advaita Acharya".

"Advaita Acharya fell prostrate at those lotus feet that are worshipped by gods, yogis and saints and clasped them to his heart and to his head. Mahaprabhu then said 'Now that your desire has been fulfilled, tell me what more do you want?' Advaita Acharya replied 'You are distributing the love of God to everyone. My wish

is that you should also give it to Mother Sachi'. Mahaprabhu replied "That is not possible. She has committed an offence against you'. When her elder son Vishwarupa had become a *sannyasi*, Mother Sachi felt that Srila Advaita Acharya was instrumental in her son's decision. Mahaprabhu, who knows everyone's heart, had therefore acted in this manner".

"As soon as this conversation reached Mother Sachi's ears, she fell at her Guru, Advaita Acharya's feet and begged for forgiveness. Now Sriman Mahaprabhu blessed Mother Sachi with the wealth of Krishna *prema*. That day was also Vasant Purnima".

"One day Mahaprabhu sent for Mukunda Dutt and said, 'Let us go to Hiranya Pundit's house'. The Lord accompanied by his associates set out for the house of the two brothers Hiranya and Jagadish Pundit in Godrumadwip. That day was also Vasant Purnima, the birth anniversary of Sriman Mahaprabhu".

"Mahaprabhu got into a boat with Mukunda Dutt and all the devotees. In the waves of the Ganges the boat was swaying to and fro violently and presently began to sink. The devotees said, 'Lord! The boat is sinking! Why are you not saying anything?' Mahaprabhu remained silent and then after a few minutes he said 'Yes. It will sink. Not only the boat but our mortal bodies too which are like boats in the material world, will sink. At any moment we can drown therefore be ever vigilant. Start chanting Hari naam to save yourselves'."

"With everyone chanting the all-purifying Naam, the boat reached the shore. Mahaprabhu arrived at Hiranya Pundit's house along with all his associates. Both the brothers used to observe Ekadashi fasting. Ekadashi is the personified energy of Lord Vishnu and is the mother of devotion. Just as it is not possible for a child to be born without a mother, similarly devotion cannot be attained without observing Ekadashi".

"According to the legend, when Sri Vishnu, under the influence of Yogamaya, was in deep Yoga Nidra (yogic sleep), two demonic beings Madhu and Kaitabh emerged from his ears and began to attack him. Lord Vishnu's *vaishnavic* energy emerged from his body and fought with the two demons. The two demons went and hid themselves in five food items namely rice, barley, wheat, lentils and mustard seeds. Therefore Ekadashi fasting is observed by abstaining from these five items".

"The meaning of "upavaas" is, 'upa' means near and 'vaas' means to dwell or stay. So it means to be near Sri Krishna. The holy name and the named are non-different. When we take the name of Hari, it is Hari the Supreme Being Himself. That is why one should perform maximum Hari-naam sankirtan".

"In the house of the blessed Srivas Pundit, Sriman Mahaprabhu started the chanting of the world-purifying Hari naam on an Ekadashi day. Krishna *naam* is the

sole object of devotion for the liberated. We should chant the holy name devoid of all offences”.

“Entangled in Maya, the living entity has many faults - falsehood, duplicity, uncontrolled speech, uncontrolled anger and uncontrolled tongue. To satisfy his tongue his mind runs in all directions. For the living entity the urges of the tongue and the genitals will always remain. Just as a wealthy person who has a weakness for prostitutes will soon squander away his entire wealth on them, in the same way, a *sadhak* on the spiritual path may squander his entire pious merit through the offences he commits”.

“However, chanting the name of Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu carries no such danger. This is why Srila Nityananda Prabhu advocated chanting the name of Sri *man* Mahaprabhu. ‘*Bhaja Gauranga kaho Gauranga laho Gauranger naam re’*.”

“Just as when a person has excess bile secretion, the taste of rock candy sugar feels bitter on the tongue. Nevertheless rock candy is the proper remedy for excessive bile. Similarly in the beginning chanting of Hari *naam* may not be relishable for a novice *sadhak*, but continuing to chant is the only remedy for the dissolution of *anarthas* (negative tendencies). What does a person chanting Gaur *naam* have to fear? Chanting the Gaur *naam* inoffensively will result in a joyful contended life and not an ugly life like a rotten brinjal”.

“*Namo maha-vadanyaay Krishna prema pradaayate Krishnaaya Krishna Chaitanya naamne Gaur twishey namah*”.

Jai Maharaj!!

Kolavecha Sridhar

“In Sridham Navadwip, Bhakta Sridhar used to sell different edible parts of a banana tree, e.g., the trunk, leaves, flowers and the fruit. He was also called Kolavecha Sridhar. Sri *man* Mahaprabhu went to Sridhar’s stall to buy some of his produce. Picking out his items, Gaurhari asked ‘Sridhar how much for these?’ Sridhar replied ‘Sixteen *annas*’ (₹1.00). The Lord said, ‘But I shall give you only eight *annas*’. Sridhar replied, ‘Mine is fixed price. No discount’. Continuing to bargain in this way Gaurhari finally said, ‘I will not give you more than this’. Mahaprabhu and Sridhar engaged in a tug-of-war over the items. The Lord insisted on purchasing the items from Sridhar only and yet he would not pay the price asked”.

“Devotees’ offerings are very dear to Sri Gaurhari. Sridhar too was not ready to give at half price and so the haggling continued. The Lord asked him, ‘Sridhar, do you know who I am?’ Sridhar replied ‘Why wouldn’t I know? You are Jagannatha

Mishra's son Nimai Pundit'. Mahaprabhu chuckled and said 'You don't know anything. The Ganga you worship everyday - I am her father'.

"Whatever little money Sridhar earned by selling his produce he would spend half of it in the worship of Ganga and the other half on his sustenance. Hearing Mahaprabhu's words Sridhar said 'If you are the father of Ganga, then you need not pay anything at all. I will give it to you for free'. Mahaprabhu would buy everyday from Sridhar and no one else. Sridhar on his part would come to his shop everyday and keep aside his best produce for Nimai Pundit".

"One day, the Lord came to the shop and saw that Sridhar was not there. He asked the nearby shopkeeper why Sridhar had not come. The shopkeeper told him that Sridhar was at home with high fever and was mumbling something in delirium. Hearing this Mahaprabhu started running along the bank of the Ganga to Sridhar's house, which was three miles away from the market. On reaching his house, the Lord heard Sridhar mumbling 'Nimai Pundit is my Lord; may he be my Lord life after life...' Mahaprabhu said 'Sridhar, I have come! Sridhar's wife who was standing at the doorway, stepped aside as Mahaprabhu entered the hut and gathered Sridhar in his embrace. Sridhar said 'Lord, do not touch me! Your golden body will become soiled'.

"Sridhar was so poor that the roof of his hut was not even thatched and there was not even a cot in the hut. Due to the divine touch of Mahaprabhu, Sridhar's fever broke. Mahaprabhu said 'Sridhar, from tomorrow I want you to participate in the *Hari-naam sankirtan* in Srivas Angan'.

Then Mahaprabhu said, 'Look here Sridhar, see who you were (in your past life)'. Sridhar saw Sri Ramachandra standing there with bow in hand and then he saw Kadambini, Guha Chandal's mother serving Sri Ramachandra forest fruits and roots. Cooking a meal of vegetables and greens, she fed these with her own hands to Sri Rama with supreme joy, and the Lord was equally relishing the food with great satisfaction".

"After that he saw the tribal fruit-seller woman seated with little Gopal in her lap and lovingly petting him, while tears of ecstasy flowed from her eyes. Little Gopal addressed her as 'Ma' and then she gave all the fruits in her basket to him".

"Sri Gaurhari Nimai Pundit said 'Sridhar, in Treta Yuga you were Kadambini, the mother of Guha and in Dwapar you were the fruit-seller woman'. Next Mahaprabhu said 'Sridhar, I am very thirsty. Please give me some water to drink"'. Distressed Sridhar said 'Lord! How can I give you water? There is not even a single utensil in this house!' In one corner of the hut, there was a terracotta water pot and top of it, a cracked metal cup with a hole was kept. Then, surprised and speechless, Sridhar watched as his Lord Nimai Pundit got up and quickly walked to the water pot. Then he took the broken cup and pressing his finger against the hole, he

dipped the cup in the pot and took some water in it and drank. Seeing the compassion of the Lord, tears streamed down from Sridhar's eyes".



Mahaprabhu orders Chand Kazi to remove the ban on Naam Sankirtan

"This incident of Mahaprabhu drinking water in a broken cup in Sridhar's house is a famous example of his universal compassion and mercy towards the lowest of the low in the caste hierarchy. Thus Sridhar attained a place amongst the intimate associates of Sri man Mahaprabhu at the nightly *kirtan* sessions in Srivas Pundit's house".

"For one full year Sri man Mahaprabhu exhibited his divine qualities amongst his closest associates in Srivas Pundit and Chandrashekhar Acharya's house where he revealed his various divine forms. After this, Mahaprabhu accepted the *sannyas* order and left Navadwip".

Chand Kazi

"With the blessings and guidance of Sri man Mahaprabhu and under the leadership of Sri Nityananda Prabhu and Naamacharya Sri Haridas Thakur, the chanting of the world-purifying Harinaam started as a daily routine in every street and lane of Sridham Navadwip".

"This daily congregational chanting in the streets became intolerable to the opponents of *kirtan*. They went in a group to the Kazi and complained about the disturbance being created due to the loud chanting and requested the Kazi to have it stopped. The Kazi issued orders that congregational chanting in the streets of the town would henceforth be prohibited".

"In several places, constables of the Kazi broke the Sri Khols (*mridangas*) and snatched away the *kartals* (cymbals) of the singers. When this news reached Mahaprabhu he told the devotees 'Go and inform all the townspeople that we shall observe a non-obedience of this order and we will all perform *nagar-sankirtan*. Everyone should be ready'. That night the Kazi had a dream wherein a fierce form of Sri Narsinghdev appeared and told him 'You have dared to break my Sri Khol! If you want to save yourself and your entire clan then withdraw this unjust order immediately'. After seeing this dream the Kazi was extremely frightened.

The next day in the gathering dusk when the sun was setting, the residents of Navadwip came out of their homes in large numbers and assembled on the streets bringing along various musical instruments such *khols*, *kartal* and gongs. Many of them also carried lighted torches in their hands. Srila Haridas Thakur, Srila Nityananda Prabhu, Srila Advaita Acharya and all the other close associates of Mahaprabhu also assembled together in the streets”.

“The founder of *naam sankirtan* Sri Gaurusundar wearing silken garments, a brilliant sandalwood tilak adorning his forehead, a long flower garland swinging around his neck presenting a world-enchanting form, also came and stood in their midst. There was no limit to the joy of the *sankirtan* lovers that day”.

“Divided into three groups, in great jubilation, loudly chanting the holy name and circumambulating the town, the huge procession reached the door of Chand Kazi. Hearing the tumultuous sound of *sankirtan* Chand Kazi locked himself in his house. Sri Gaurhari knocked on the door and said, ‘Open the door!’ Opening the door the Kazi said ‘Your mother used to address me as ‘dada’ (brother), so you are like my nephew. Tell me, what do you want?’ Mahaprabhu said, ‘Mama (uncle), remove this unlawful prohibitory order’. The Kazi replied in a very mild tone ‘That I will surely remove. And I will also make a law to ensure that even in the future no other Kazi can stop *naam sankirtan*’. Chand Kazi went on to become a great devotee of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu”.

“The *samadhi* of Chand Kazi lies in Mayapur and is worth visiting. There are two trees adjacent to the *samadhi* which are believed to be three hundred years old. One of them is a Champa tree (frangipani) which keeps showering flowers on his *samadhi* and the other one is a Neem tree. The attendant of the tomb lives beneath the trees. Visitors light candles and offer flowers, money etc., at the *samadhi* and bow their heads in respect”.

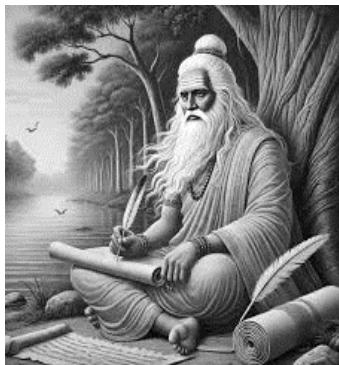
Significance of Guru Purnima

(Kolkata 13 July 2003)

“Under the divine guidance of the most worshipful, world-sanctifying *avatar* Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, we shall endeavour to hear the story of the auspicious Guru Purnima *tithi*. This is the birth anniversary of Srila Vyasadev. Just as Janmashtami commemorates the birth of Sri Krishna, in the same way Guru Purnima marks the birth of Sri Vyasadev”.

“Parashar Muni, the father of Vyasadev had named him Krishna. Since he was born on a ‘dwipa’ (island), he was also named ‘Dwaipaayan’ (born on an island). As he went on to divide and organise the vast Vedas into four parts, he was called Veda Vyasa. His full name was thus Krishna Dwaipaayan Veda Vyasa”.

"The son of Rishi Vashishta was Shakti. Shakti's son was Parashar. Vyasadev was the son of Parashar and Padmagandha (whose earlier name was Mastyagandha and who was later known as Satyavati).



Srila Veda Vyasa

Vyasadev was an empowered incarnation of Sri Krishna. He collated and divided the vast ocean of knowledge, the Vedas, into four portions; he authored 108 Puranas, the great epic Mahabharata, which includes the Bhagavat Gita and the 1008 names of Lord Vishnu (Sri Vishnu Sahasranama), in it. And later, he penned the glories of Sri Krishna in a seminal work known as Srimad Bhagavat Mahapurana. No human being has the capacity to author such varied and immense literature".

"Vyasadev's father Parashar Muni was the first one to observe his son's birth anniversary. After him, Vyasadev's son Paramhansa Sri Sukadev Goswami observed his father's anniversary. Since then Guru Purnima is observed and celebrated in all ashrams and monasteries as well as by disciples in their homes".

"Parashar Muni was a devotee of Lord Narsinghdev. Vyasadev was born due to the grace of Sri Narsinghdev. On the blessed and auspicious day when devotees gather at the lotus feet of their guru to honour and worship him, they ensure their own happiness. We must always remember that we have to hear *katha* and *kirtan* for the pleasure and satisfaction of the Lord and not for our own pleasure".

"In Ekachakra gram, Birbhum, Bengal, Hadai Pundit's wife Padmavati, gave birth to a male child whom they named Kuber. Later on he was given the name Nityananda by Srila Madhavendra Puri".

"Once, a wandering *sadhu* came to Hadai Pundit's house when Kuber was 10 years old. The holy man requested the gift of Kuber as alms from Hadai Pundit. Perplexed, Hadai Pundit told his wife, 'Today Narayana is testing us severely. Will you be able to give your only son to the *sannyasi*?' Padmavati replied 'Why not? During our marriage, I had vowed to support you in all your righteous actions in life'."

"Hadai Pundit and Padmavati handed over their beloved and only son to Shankararanya Puri, the *sannyasi*. In his perambulations around the country, the monk accompanied by Kuber, eventually reached the temple of Vitthal in the holy town of Pandharpur, Maharashtra".

"At the time when Sri Krishna was reigning in Dwarka Dham, there lived a devotee called Pundalik in Pandharpur. Pundalik was totally dedicated in the service of his aged parents. Stories of his selfless devotion to his parents spread far and wide and also reached Sri Krishna's ears in Dwarka. Sri Krishna thought to himself, 'I must go and meet Pundalik once'."

"Arriving at Pundalik's humble house, Sri Krishna stood outside and called out to him. At that time Pundalik had just started bathing his parents. He replied from inside the house, 'Who are you and why have you come here?' Sri Krishna replied 'The fame of your selfless service to your parents reached my ears and I wanted to meet you. I am Dwarkadheesh Krishna'. From inside the house Pundalik replied, 'I do not have time right now; I will first finish bathing my parents, then feed them and put them to rest. Thereafter I will meet with you'. Sri Krishna asked 'Will you not even offer me a place to sit?' Pundalik replied 'Where can I ask you to sit? Here, sit on this brick'. And he tossed a brick near Sri Krishna. Krishna then stood on the brick, with his hands on his hips, waiting for Pundalik".



Sri Pandharinath Vitthal

"Putting his parents to bed, Pundalik told them 'Sri Krishna from Dwarka has come to meet me; let me see what he wants'. Shocked, his parents said 'What are you saying?! Dwarkadheesh Krishna has come to our door and you did not say anything all this time?! Come let us all go and meet him!' When they came out, in place of Sri Krishna, they saw a beautiful black stone statue of him, with his hands on his hips standing on the brick, still waiting.

Thereafter a temple was built and the deity of Krishna was consecrated. In the Marathi language a brick is known as 'vitthi'. Hence the deity is known as Vitthaleshwar, Vitthalnath or simply Vitthal. In the Vitthalnath temple *naam sankirtan* is performed round the clock. Therefore the Lord is known as *Shabda Brahma* or *Naad Brahma* (God in the form of sound vibration).

There in the temple of Vitthalnath, Shankararanya Puri told Kuber, 'Listen Kuber, He whom you seek so earnestly, Krishna has appeared in the house of Jagannatha Mishra in Navadvip and is known as Nimai. His mother is Sachi Devi. In my *poorvashram* (before I took *sannyas*), I was his elder brother Vishwarupa. He is waiting for you to join him to start his *leela* in this *avatar*'. Saying this he embraced Kuber and merged into his body. After this Nityananda Prabhu shone with the effulgence of a thousand suns.

Thereafter Kuber met with Srila Madhavendra Puri and was initiated by him. Madhavendra Puri said 'From now onwards you will be known as *Avadhoot Sannyasi* Nityananda Puri'."

"After this, Nityananda Prabhu proceeded to Navadwip. Reaching there he stayed as a guest in the house of Nandanacharya, a close associate of Sri Mahaprabhu. He asked Nandanacharya if he knew anyone by the name of Nimai Pundit in the town. Nandanacharya answered, 'Who doesn't know the renowned scholar Nimai Pundit in Navadwip? He has just returned from Gaya after performing his diseased father's last rituals (*pind daan*), and how he has changed! Setting aside his teaching and scholarly debates he has started chanting Krishna Krishna and shedding tears incessantly'."

"Nityananda thought to himself 'I have wandered the length and breadth of this land searching for Krishna. But now here, I will not go out in search of him. If he is my beloved Lord and the in-dweller in my heart, he will himself find me'."

"The next day Mahaprabhu told his followers 'Last night I had a dream that a *Mahapurush* has come to Navadwip. He was clad in blue attire and a blue turban, fair-complexioned with long arms and carrying a plough'. Addressing Srila Haridas Thakur and Srivas Pundit he said 'You both go into the town and search for this *Mahapurush* and bring him to me'."

"Haridas Thakur and Srivas Pundit searched every nook and corner of Navadwip for Nityananda Prabhu, but they missed Nandanacharya's house. They returned to Mahaprabhu and informed him that they could not find any such personality. The all-knowing Lord said "You could not find him? Now come with me". Accompanied by his associates the Lord straightaway went to Nandanacharya's house. There Mahaprabhu's close associates saw a divinely effulgent *sannyasi* deep in meditation".

"In Dwapar Yuga, he who was the wielder of the plough in Vraja, Lord Balaram had now appeared as Sripad Nityananda Prabhu in Kalyug".

"The Lord asked Srivas Pundit and Mukunda Dutt to recite *shlokas* from the Bhagavat Purana. Hearing the *shlokas* Nityananda Prabhu stirred and displaying symptoms of divine ecstasy, he swooned. Mahaprabhu sat next to him and placed his lotus hand on his head. Nityananda Prabhu opened his eyes and looking at Mahaprabhu said, 'Are you the same Krishna of Vraja? But where is your *chuda* (top knot)? And where is your flute?' Mahaprabhu replied 'Yes, I am the very same Krishna. In Vraja I had a *chuda* and sported a flute as a cowherd boy. But in this *avatar* as a *sannyasi*, I shall wear a *kaupin* (loincloth), and carry a *danda* (*sannyasi*'s rod). In Vraja I used to play and frolic and now I roll in the dust crying in ecstasy'."

"Embracing Nityananda to his heart Mahaprabhu said, 'I have been waiting for you. Come let us go for a boat ride on the Ganga'. *Sahachara songe gaura anande bibhor re.* (In the midst of his dear companions Gaura was greatly joyful)".

"To fulfil his promise Mahaprabhu went to the bank of the Ganga. Which promise? Once in Vaikuntha hearing Devarishi Narada's transcendental *kirtan*, Lord Vishnu's lotus eyes filled with tears of ecstasy which flowed down touching his chest, lotus navel and reached his lotus feet. Observing this, Lord Brahma collected the tears from Lord Vishnu's lotus feet in his *kamandalu* (water pot). Thus from the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu was born the world sanctifying Ganga, that flowed in the heavenly regions".

"Pleased with the penance of Maharaj Bhageerath, when Lord Brahma ordered Ganga to descend into the mortal world she approached Lord Vishnu and said 'Father I am now going to descend into the mortal world for the salvation of Sagara's descendants. All the people of the world will wash off their sins in my waters. How will I absorb all that?' Lord Sri Hari replied 'There is no cause for your concern. I too shall descend on the earthly plane near your bank. I will bathe in your waters and perform Harinaam *sankirtan* thus absolving you of all the sins washed in your waters'."

"To fulfil this promise, Sriman Mahaprabhu accompanied by Nityananda Prabhu and all his associates went in a boat on the Ganga and performed rousing *naam-sankirtan*. There was no limit to the bliss of Ganga Devi that day".

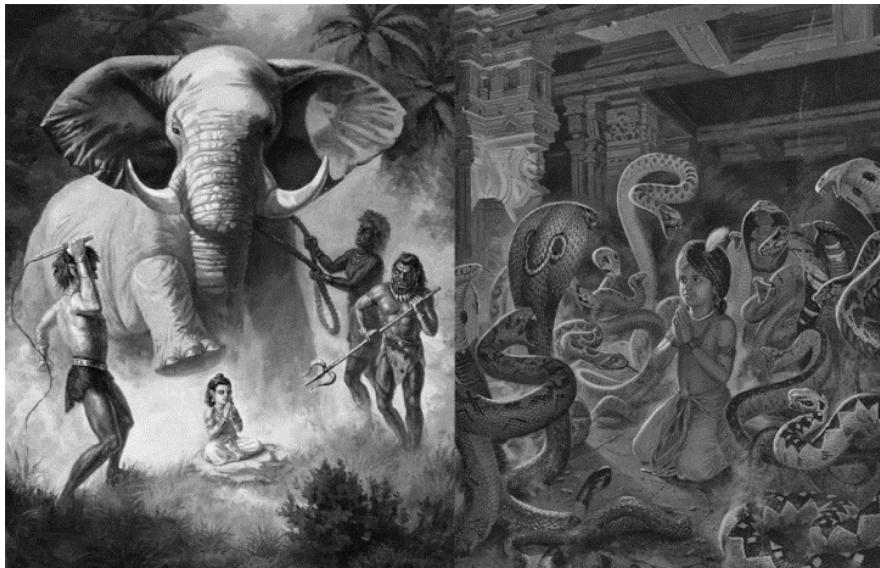
"Later, accompanied by Nityananda Prabhu, Sriman Mahaprabhu went to Srivas Pundit's house. Mahaprabhu asked Nityananda 'Sripad, tomorrow is Vyasa Puja, Guru Purnima, where do you plan to observe the festival?' Pointing to Srivas Pundit Nityananda said 'Here, in this *brahmana*'s house'. Srivas Pundit was the incarnation of Devarishi Narada in Kali Yuga".

"The following day, Vyasa Puja was observed in Srivas Pundit's house where Srivas Pundit officiated as the priest and was making Nityananda Prabhu repeat the *mantras* he was uttering. After completing the *mantra* recitation he told Nityananda to offer a flower garland on to Vyasadé's seat. Taking the garland in his hand, Nityananda rose and started looking about as if searching for someone. Ramai Pundit went to Sriman Mahaprabhu and said, 'Prabhu, Nityananda is not offering the garland to Vyasadé'. Mahaprabhu came along with his associates and told Nityananda, 'Sripad, please offer the garland to Vyasadé'. Instead of doing so, Nityananda put the garland around Mahaprabhu's neck. Mahaprabhu exclaimed 'Sripad! What have you done?!' Nityananda replied 'I offered you the garland because Vyasadé will be more pleased as you are the Guru of all Gurus, Jagadguru Lord Sri Hari'."

"Mahaprabhu then placed his lotus hands on his head. Thereafter Mahaprabhu gave a discourse on Srimad Bhagavatam, under the divine guidance of Srila Sukadev Goswami".

Maharaj then said "Today let us all imagine that we are sitting in Srivas Angan and hearing the Bhagavat *katha* from Sriman Mahaprabhu".

"Bhagavan Sri Narsinghdev is Adi Guru. It was he who had narrated the first ever *Bhagavat katha* to Lord Brahma and thereafter Brahma narrated it to Devarishi Narada. Let us now hear the glories of Bhagavan Sri Narsinghdev".



The torment of Bhakta Prahlada

"The Lord's child-devotee *Bhaktaraj* Prahlada was tormented in various ways by his own father Hiranyakashipu because Prahlada did not accept him as the Supreme God. Prahlada was given poison to drink, thrown into the sea, thrown under the feet of a mad elephant, put into a cage full of poisonous snakes etc., and yet the child survived without a scratch. In his Gurukul, the *asura* classmates of Prahlada asked him 'You are being subjected to so much torture, are you not afraid?' Prahlada replied, 'No, I am not afraid. My Lord Hari always protects me. In this world Sri Hari alone is worshipful, our protector and maintainer'. His classmates asked 'Who told all this? Our teachers Sanda and Amarka have not taught us this. Rather they forbid us from taking the name of Sri Hari'. Prahlada replied 'I learnt all this in my mother's womb itself. My guru is Devarishi Narada. When he used to

recite the *Bhagavat katha*, my mother would listen to him and I also heard the *katha* in her womb'."

"Frustrated in his attempts to kill his son Prahlada, Hiranyakashipu also asked the same question. 'Who is it that saves you every time?' Prahlada replied 'My Lord Hari'. Hiranyakashipu then said 'But Hari is *niraakar* (formless) and *nirgun* (without attributes)'. Prahlada replied 'Yes, my Sri Hari is *nirgun* and *niraakar*. But at the same time He is *saguna* (with attributes) and *saakar* (with form). Like a coiled serpent whose length and breadth cannot be estimated by looking at it, but when it uncoils and begins to move you can see its size and speed of movement. In the same way when Sri Hari appears in our world to perform his *leela*, then only we can see his form and qualities. His intimate associates also appear along with him. He is present both in inanimate (*jada*) and enlightened (*chetan*) souls, just like ice and water. Water has the quality to quench thirst as does ice, but the power to satisfy thirst is present more in water than in ice'."

"After killing the arrogant and powerful demon King Hiranyakashipu, Bhagavan Narsinghdev went to a lake in Madhyadwip in Navadvip, washed his hands, bathed in the cool waters and rested by its shore. Navadvip consists of nine islands. (Mahaprabhu was born in the island known as Antardwip). Liking the place very much Sri Narsinghdev became a deity and remained there permanently. It is a very beautiful lake with clear waters and shady trees along its banks. The place is known as Narsinghpur or Narsinghapalli. Many of us do not even know of its existence".

"Once Sri Shankaracharya told his disciples 'Today I shall give a discourse, all of you be present'. At the time of the discourse Shankaracharya saw that one of his disciples, Sureshwar was not present. Sureshwar had gone across the river Alaknanda to beg for alms. Shankaracharya went to the river bank and called out to Sureshwar. Sureshwar could hear his guru calling out to him, but he could not find a boat right then to cross the river and reach his guru. Sureshwar then thought to himself, 'When one can cross the ocean of material existence by the Guru's grace, then why should I not be able to cross this river?' Thinking thus he stepped into the swift-flowing river and immediately a lotus flower emerged beneath his feet. For every step he placed on the water, a lotus appeared beneath his feet and thus a bridge of lotus flowers was seen in the river. These were not normal soft lotuses, but hard ones which could sustain his weight. In this way he could effortlessly cross the river".

"Standing on the opposite bank, Shankaracharya witnessed this miracle. Overjoyed he embraced Sureshwar and said, 'From today you will be known as Padmapaad'. This Padmapaad was a devotee of Lord Narsingh dev".

"Once, Shankaracharya was captured by a gang of *kapaalik sannyasis* (practitioners of human sacrifice and other dark tantric rituals). They had captured Shankaracharya with the intention of offering him as a sacrifice in their rituals".

"The disciples of Shankaracharya searched for him everywhere without any success. Then Padmapaad sat in meditation and saw that his guru was in the captivity of *kapaalik sannyasis*. He became very anxious to free his guru from the *kapaalikas*. At that moment the spirit of Sri Narsinghdev manifested in the body of Padmapaad. Grabbing a sickle he ran towards the place where the *kapaalikas* were encamped. Reaching there he attacked them, beheaded them with the sickle and saved his guru Sri Shankaracharya".

"Although Sri Shankaracharya was an *Advaita Sannyasi* yet he had established a small temple for Sri Narsinghdev in his monastery. Adi Shankaracharya went on to establish four prominent *Mutts* (monasteries), in the four cardinal directions of India. In the north in Joshimath in the Himalayas, is situated the Sri Shankaracharya Jyotir Mutt on the bank of the river Alaknanda. In the west in Dwarka, Gujarat, near the seashore is the Sharda Mutt or Saraswat Mutt; in the south in Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu near the coast, the Sringeri Mutt and in the east in Jagannatha Puri, Odisha is the Govardhan Mutt. In each of these *Mutts* he established a small temple for Lord Narsinghdev. Devi Saraswati is one of the consorts of Lord Narsinghdev. Many of us do not know this when we perform her worship".

"Once there was a man who was an ardent devotee of Devi Lakshmi. Pleased with his devotion the Goddess appeared before him. The devotee noticed that there drops of blood on Devi Lakshmi's lotus feet. He asked her 'Mother, why is there blood on your lotus feet?' She replied, 'Millions of devotees worship me, prostrating and banging their heads of my feet, praying for the fulfilment of their desires. What else do you expect?'

"The devotee then observed that there were tiny droplets of blood on her forehead as well. Seeing that, he again asked about it. The Goddess replied, 'There is a devotee of my Lord Sri Hari who has literally imprisoned him with his devotion and worship. I am hence deprived of his association. When I approached Hari and asked him where he was, he replied that his devotee had asked for a boon to worship him exclusively and hence he was in captivity in his house. The Lord continued 'If you want me back then you have to fall at his feet and beg him to release me'. That is why my forehead is bleeding from constantly falling at that devotee's feet for my Lord Hari's release'."

"The devotee of Devi Lakshmi then replied 'I shall worship you both together so both of you do not have to suffer any separation from each other'. From then onwards the worship of Bhagavan along with his consort began to be practiced".

(Author's Note: All of us too perform worship and offer prayers to God and gurus for the fulfilment of our worldly desires. When we submit such a list of desires at their lotus feet, we fail to realise that we may be causing them some difficulty and the very feet we worship may well be bleeding. The Vaishnava takes our laundry list of material desires, cleanses our hearts and consciousness and in turn gives us the nectarean taste of divinity. Sri Guru prema kalpataru adbhut prakash".)

Sakshi Gopal

"Once, two Brahmins, one elderly and the other young, set out on a pilgrimage. Travelling to various sacred places, the duo reached Sridham Vrindavan where the older man fell ill. He was delirious and writhing in high fever. His young companion diligently looked after him and nursed him back to health. When the older man recovered, in gratitude he said to the young man 'You have served me so dedicatedly and helped me recover. I wish to make you my own. On our return to our hometown, I shall hand over my only daughter to you in marriage'. The young man replied 'This is not right. I am not worthy of your daughter because I am very poor and also my family and social standing is not equal to yours. So please do not make such promises'."

"The old man said 'No! I have become indebted by your selfless service to me in this sacred Dham and I shall do my duty as I see fit'. The young man said 'Now you are making a commitment, but back in your house, you have your wife and three sons - will they agree to it?' The senior man replied 'Why will they not agree? She is my daughter and I shall give her in marriage to you. In the presence of this deity of Sri Gopal here in this temple, with Him as a witness, I give you my solemn word that I shall give my daughter's hand in marriage to you'. After this, both the men returned to their respective villages".

"When the old man got home and narrated everything about his illness and of his promise to the young *brahmana* to his wife and sons, they vehemently objected to it. They said 'This marriage cannot happen. He is very poor and unsuitable'. The old man said 'I have given my word in the presence of Sri Gopal'. The sons asked 'Are there any other witnesses? So just keep quiet about it. This marriage will not take place'."

"After some time had passed, the young *brahmana* thought that the old man is not talking about his promise anymore. He thought that it would be detrimental to the old man if he did not keep his word given in front of Sri Gopal as witness in Vrindavan. Thinking thus, the young man went to the old *brahmana*'s house and asked him 'Have you forgotten your promise?' The old man replied 'What promise? I do not remember anything of the sort'. The old man's sons had tutored him to speak in this manner".

"The young man was extremely pained that the old *brahmana* did not recollect his promise. He went and gathered some village elders and told them the whole story. They questioned the old man 'Why are you going back on your word now?' The sons of the old man said 'This man had fed our father with some intoxicant when he was ill, with the aim of extracting some material benefit. Is there any witness who can vouch for our father's promise?' The young man replied 'The deity Gopal is the witness'. Then the sons said 'Go and bring your witness'. Saying this they beat him up and drove him away".

"The young man then went to Sri Gopal's temple in Vrindavan. Praying to Gopal earnestly regarding his predicament, he sat down there without food and water for three days and three nights. He said 'O Lord! Save the old man from the sin of breaking his promise'. The Lord was moved by the sincere prayer of the *brahmana*. One the fourth day the Lord appeared before the young man and said, 'I shall accompany you to your village to give my testimony. You walk ahead and I shall follow behind you. But do not turn and look back even once. If you do so then I shall become rooted on that spot and not move anymore. Hearing the sound of my ankle bells you will know that I am walking behind you'."



"Moved by the sincere prayer and implicit faith of his devotee, Sri Gopal walked behind him from Vrindavan to Vidyanagar, in southern India. Arriving in Vidyanagar, Gopal's foot got stuck in the sand. As he was trying to extricate his foot, the sound of his anklets could not be heard and so the young man turned around to see what had happened. He saw that Gopal was standing with one foot in the sand and was trying to extricate his other foot. Gopal said, 'Now I shall not move anymore. You better summon all the villagers here'. Gopal continued to stand in the same spot".

"When the villagers heard this extraordinary story, they came out in herds. People from nearby villages also flocked to see the charming deity of Gopal. The old man along with his wife and sons also came to the spot.

Sri Sakshi Gopal

In front of all the assembled people Gopal confirmed that the old *brahmana* had indeed given his word in his presence that he would give his daughter in marriage to the young man. Then nobody had any objection and the old man gave his daughter in marriage to the young man".

"The King of Kanchi had a beautiful temple built for Gopal and He (Gopal) came to be known as Sakshi Gopal (Witness Gopal).

Eventually when the King of Puri Purushottam conquered Kanchi in a battle, he brought the deity of Gopal with him and had him established in a temple near Puri".

Summary of discourse on Janmashtami

"The appearance and activities of Sri Krishna are divine. First we need to understand the principle (*tatva*) and then the fact or reality (*tathya*), of the Lord, only then we will enjoy hearing Krishna *leela*. Exactly like theory and its practical application. Who is Sri Krishna? Why should we hear about him"?

"Imagine that Rabindranath Tagore of Shantiniketan is going to act in his play Kabuliwala. All his fans and literature lovers in Shantiniketan, who know and admire him, have assembled to watch their favourite Rabi Thakur acting in the play. They all know and recognise Rabi Thakur for who he is. All of them are eager to see how he will enact the role of Kabuliwala. Here the principle (*tatva*) is Rabi Thakur and his enactment of the role of Kabuliwala is the reality or expression (*tathya*) of the principle. When the basic principle is understood then the reality becomes all the more relishable".

"Just as when one sees that a man is stabbing another person with a knife, he immediately assumes that the person is a murderer or a dacoit. But when he gets closer, he sees that the man is not a dacoit but a doctor. Not a murderer but a saviour. In order to save the other person's life he used a scalpel to operate on him. So the doctor is the principle and the reality is that he is trying to save the patient's life".

"In the same way, who is Sri Krishna? Why should we worship him? Once we know that it will be easy to understand his *leela*. Sri Krishna is the principle and his divine *leela* is the practical reality of the principle".

"On the death of Rishi Yaduvar, his wife Pournamasi Devi was overcome with grief. It became intolerable for her to continue to live in Avantinagar on the banks of river Shipra. On the order of Devarishi Narada, Pournamasi's son Sandipani told his mother 'Mother your mind is extremely agitated with sorrow. You require a change of scene. Go to Vrindavan by the banks of the Kalindi (Yamuna), along with my son Madhumangal and daughter Nandimukhi and live there'.

Pournamasi Devi asked 'Where is this Vrindavan? What is its significance?' Rishi Sandipani answered 'The King of Kedar along with his daughter Vrinda performed severe austerities in Vrindavan. Upon his death Vrinda continued with her penance. Pleased with her, Lord Shri Hari appeared before her and blessed her saying 'This place will be known as Vrindavan after you. I shall appear here by the banks of this Kalindi and I shall sport and display my sweet *leelas*'.

"Following her son's advice Pournamasi Devi went to Vrindavan. There she performed penance and austerities and attained *siddhis* (spiritual powers). Thereafter, she became the guru of Nanda Maharaj and Rani Yashomati. She initiated them both in the Kama Gayatri *mantra*. Pournamasi told them that Sri Krishna will be born in Mathura in Kamsa's dungeon and that he will then come to

Vrindavan and will live and perform his *leelas* there. All this is the external story of the gross visible world (*sthool jagat*”).

“Now let us go into the subtle world. Overburdened with the weight of the sin of the people, Mother Earth taking the form a cow went to Lord Brahma. Shedding tears she told Brahma of her intolerable pain and the sinful activities of the arrogant, powerful and cruel King Kamsa. Taking along Mother Earth and all the demigods, Lord Brahma went to the shore of the *Ksheer Sagar* (Ocean of Milk). There all of them chanted many hymns in praise of Lord Shri Hari. The entire firmament resounded with the echo of their hymns. Sri Hari Vishnu heard their prayers. Thereafter His sonorous voice which removes all fear, was heard, ‘Do not worry. The destruction of the arrogant Kamsa is certain. I shall descend on the Earth and remove the burden of Mother Earth’.

“Now, getting back to the material world, there was a grand procession going on in Mathura. After marrying Devaki the sister of Kamsa, Vasudev and his bride were being taken in a chariot in a celebratory procession. King Kamsa himself was driving the chariot as he was very affectionate to his sister. Just at that time, a voice resounded from the skies saying ‘O arrogant Kamsa, the eighth child of your dear sister Devaki will be the cause of your death.’ Hearing these words Kamsa was enraged and drawing his sword he was about to kill Devaki. Grabbing his hands, Vasudev pleaded with him and said ‘Just listen to me. I vow that I shall hand over all the offspring born to Devaki, into your hands. You need have no fear as I have never uttered a false word in my life. Why do you want commit the sin of murdering your own sister?’ Vasudev was renowned for being a truthful person; hence Kamsa was appeased by his words. He knew Vasudev never uttered a lie. He said ‘Very well. Let it be so. From today both of you shall be imprisoned in the dungeon’. On his orders Vasudev and Devaki were put in chains and imprisoned”.

“In the prison Devaki gave birth to six sons and as per his promise Vasudev handed over all the new-born infants into the hands of Kamsa, who mercilessly killed them all. The seventh conception of Devaki was Lord Balaram. Yogamaya, by her powers, transferred the seventh foetus of Devaki into the womb of Vasudev’s first wife Rohini. Hence one of the names of Balaram is Sankarshan. At the time, Rohini was living in Nanda Maharaj’s house in Gokul. Nanda Maharaj was the close friend of Vasudev”.

“We have already said earlier that the birth and activities of Sri Krishna are transcendental, not like those in the material world. First Krishna appeared in the heart of Vasudev. Vasudev saw a divine light. He felt an inexplicable joy in his heart. He told Devaki about the divine light he saw. Then from the heart of Vasudev the brilliant light moved to Devaki’s heart. Devaki also experienced the same bliss on seeing the light. Shortly the dark prison was illuminated by a dazzling light and Lord Vishnu holding the *shankh* (conch shell) *chakra* (discus) *gada* (club) and lotus in his four arms appeared before

Devaki and Vasudev. The Lord told them 'Your bad days will be soon be over. I shall appear as your eighth son and put an end to the evil Kamsa'.

"Now let us hear who were Vasudev and Devaki. In his previous life Vasudev was known as King Prathni. Desiring a child he and his wife Sutapa performed arduous penance by the banks of the river Kaveri. Pleased with them, the Lord appeared and said 'Ask me a boon'. King Prathni and his wife replied 'We would like to have a son like you'. Sri Hari replied 'I am one without a second. There is none other like me. Hence I myself shall come as your son'.



The Supreme Lord appears before Vasudev and Devaki

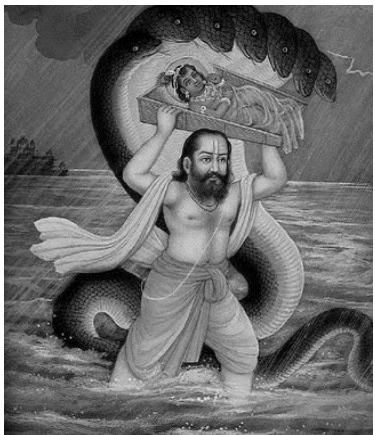
"At long last that auspicious day and time arrived - the eight day of the dark fortnight in the blessed month of Bhadrapad (the monsoon season). It was midnight and the Moon and the star Rohini were in harmonious conjunction. This is why it is called "Jayanti".

Sri Krishna was about to appear in Kamsa's prison. The earth was adorned with extraordinary beauty, the trees and creepers had sprouted new tender leaves and flowers and a pleasant fragrant breeze was blowing".

"Presently the heavy chains binding Vasudev and Devaki fell open by themselves. The heavy padlocks on the prison doors opened by themselves and the doors too fell open. The guards were fast asleep. The Supreme Lord first gave *darshan* to Devaki and Vasudev in his four armed form".

"In the Bhagavat Geeta, Sri Krishna assured Arjuna and through him all of humanity, that whenever *dharma* (righteousness) decreases and *adharma* (unrighteousness) increases in the world, He will descend to protect the devotees and righteous people and destroy the evil and belligerent. He promised that he will appear time and again in the different Yugas to re-establish *dharma*".

"Beholding the brilliant four-armed form of Sri Bhagavan, Vasudev said 'Lord, hide this four-armed form of yours; Kamsa's spies are everywhere. If he gets the news of your appearance it will be extremely difficult to protect you'. Sri Hari answered



Vasudev carrying Krishna across the

'Have no fear. Behold! I shall now hide my divine four-armed form'. Then the Lord took the form of a normal newborn infant. He told Vasudev 'Take me immediately to the house of Nanda in Gokul. There you will see that Nanda's wife Yashoda has just given birth to a baby girl. You will place me there and bring the female infant back here with you'.

"Weeping, Devaki handed over the baby to Vasudev. By the influence of Yogamaya all the prison guards were deep asleep, Vasudev's chains had fallen open and the doors of the cell were also open. There was a fierce thunderstorm with torrential rains going on in the night sky. Guided by flashes of lightening, Vasudev made his way along the path to the river Yamuna. Lord Ananta spread his

thousands of hoods like an umbrella over the

divine child to shelter him from the rain. Seeing the river Yamuna flowing fast with tumultuous waves, Vasudev became concerned thinking how would he be able to cross it? The river was in spate. As he stood there worried, the Yamuna parted her waters and made a path for Vasudev to cross. Vasudev crossed the river effortlessly and reached the house of Nanda Maharaj in Gokul. There also, by the influence of Yogamaya, all the people were deep asleep. Nanda Maharaj's wife Yashoda too was fast asleep. Lying near her were her newborn twin babies, a son and a daughter. Yashoda's son was Golokbhari Vamshidhari Sri Krishna and the daughter Yogamaya. (Hence in Chandipaath Devi Yogamaya is referred to as 'Anuja' - younger sister)".

"Vasudev gently placed his son next to Yashoda's son and picked up the baby girl. As soon as he placed his son down, both the sons of Devaki and Yashoda merged into one. Vasudev then retraced his steps, crossed the Yamuna and reached back in Kamsa's prison. Once again Vasudev and Devaki found themselves bound in chains. The guards woke up and saw Devaki's newborn child. Hearing the news from the guards, Kamsa rushed to the dungeon in haste. Snatching the infant from Devaki's lap he saw that it was not a boy but a girl. He thought 'Was the incorporeal voice just an illusion? No matter if it is a girl. It is the eighth child of Devaki. She will have to be killed'.

"Kamsa had come to know that Devaki's seventh pregnancy had miscarried. When the sinful Kamsa raised his hand holding the baby with the intention of striking her against a rock, the baby slipped from his hand and rose high up in the air. Taking the form of Goddess Yogamaya Durga, the female child laughed aloud and proclaimed 'Oh foolish Kamsa! The one who will slay you has already appeared and he is safe'. Saying this Yogamaya disappeared from sight".

"If you were to study the Bhagavatam carefully then you will know who Nanda and Yashoda are. Who were these two persons whom Krishna accepted as mother and father and appeared in Vrindavan? In their past lives Nanda and Yashoda were Drona and Dhara, a *brahmana* couple who were very poor, but dedicated to *dharma* and always welcoming of guests. One night a *brahmachari* arrived at their hut as a guest. The *brahmachari* said 'I am a 'payo paayi' (subsisting on milk only), *brahmachari* and I do not consume anything other than milk'. The poor hosts fell into a quandary. They did not even have a cow. Drona said to his wife 'Go to the wealthy shopkeeper nearby and get some milk as we have to properly serve our guest'.

"Dhara went to the shopkeeper and begged for some milk. That trader was a sinful person. Seeing the young and beautiful Dhara, his mind began to entertain evil thoughts. He said 'I shall give you the milk but after serving your guest you have to come back to me'. Dhara, being an innocent simple-minded woman, agreed. She said 'Very well. I shall serve the guest and come back here'. Taking the milk on this condition, she returned to her hut and told her husband everything. Drona said 'Alright, as you have given your word, go back there after serving the guest'.

"Dhara then served the milk to the hungry *brahmachari*. Drinking the milk the *brahmachari* said 'Mother, I am satisfied. Now you go back to that shopkeeper and give him this little left-over milk and tell him to have this *Bhagavat-prasad*" (sacred remnants)'. Dhara followed his instructions. After having the *prasad* milk the evil desires of the shopkeeper vanished. His heart was filled with remorse. Falling at Dhara's feet he begged for forgiveness. He said 'Where is that *brahmachari*? Please take me to him'.

"Reaching Dhara's hut he fell at the feet of the *brahmachari* and said 'Thakur! I am a great sinner. Please forgive me!' Then the *brahmachari* revealed his form as the two-armed Muralidhar Krishna and gave his *darshan*. Just because the wicked trader had done a small *sadhu seva* by giving a little milk, he was redeemed. Drona and Dhara were amazed to see that in the place of the *brahmachari* now stood Bhagavan Sri Krishna! The Lord said to Dhara 'In the forthcoming Dwapar Yuga, I shall appear as your son. I shall sit in your lap and suckle your milk. Where else can I find such motherly love? For me you went and begged for milk. In Dwapar in Vrindavan you will have many thousands of cows and you will have no dearth of milk to feed me. Your names will be Nanda and Yashoda'. This same Drona and Dhara were Nanda and Yashoda".

"Many people do not know that at the same auspicious moment when the Lord appeared in Kamsa's dungeon, Yashoda in Gokul gave birth to twin infants. Under the influence of Yogamaya, Yashoda had fallen into deep slumber after her delivery and she did not even know that she had given birth to twins.

Although Sri Krishna is One, we see Him in His different aspects or forms. This Vrajendranandan Krishna (born in Gokul to Yashoda), is our worshipful Lord and it

is Him we have to follow and worship. According to Vaishnava doctrine, it was Vaikuntha-vasi Vishnu, the wielder of the Sudarshan chakra (who was born in the dungeon in Mathura), who later left Vraja and went to Mathura on Kamsa's invitation. The original Vamshidhari Vrajendranandan Krishna remained in Vrindavan, although in an unmanifest form. Vamshidhari Krishna only performs *prema-leela* (loving pastimes). His different expansions perform all the other *leelas*".

"Now let us hear why the Lord appeared as a child. After killing Hiranyakashipu, Lord Narsinghdev was so exceedingly angry that the powerful energy of his fury was threatening to destroy all of creation. Even after many entreaties and hymns, the demigods were not able to pacify him. Seeing the Lord's uncontrollable rage, Lord Brahma gently ushered Bhaktaraj Prahlaad into his presence. Hearing Prahlaad's prayers Lord Narsinghdev became calm.



Prahlaad sitting on Sri Narsinghdev's lap

Seeing the child Prahlaad, the Lord recalled how much torment and oppression the little child had endured; he needed to be comforted. Therefore he stopped his dance of destruction and lifted Prahlaad onto his lap.

When he sat Prahlaad on his lap the Lord saw that the child's joy at sitting on his lap was much more than his own joy of having him on his lap. At that time the Lord desired to experience the mellow of maternal love. He desired to come as a human child and experience the unconditional love of a mother and father".

"Hence later in Treta Yuga he came as Sri Ramachandra and again in Dwapar Yuga, he came as Sri Krishna".

Jai Maharaj
Jai Sri Narsingh dev

Miscellaneous Anecdotes

A Mother's Lament

"In the Bhutia locality of Kalimpong every night after 11p.m., the loud piteous cry of a woman would be heard. When I heard it, I decided I would go there. Out of curiosity a couple of people accompanied me. We reached that place by car at around 11 o'clock at night. After hearing the wailing shriek of the unseen woman, my companions were not willing to stay there any longer. So that night I had to return with them."

"On the following night at the same time, I reached that spot alone by car. Just as on the previous night, when I heard the cry of the woman I went forward to confront her. It was a woman's spirit. She told me that her house was in this Bhutiapalli area. She had 4 children. Her husband used to torment her mercilessly. She had an untimely death due to cholera because her husband had not provided any medical treatment to her. She was extremely miserable for having left her small children. Hearing her sorrowful story I ensured her deliverance."

"The next morning I went back to Bhutiapalli to verify her story. I came to know that she had told me the truth. After that day her nightly lamentation was not heard again."

On the way to Allarnath

"Once during my *parivrajak* days, I walked from Puri to Allarnath. Late one night I was walking alone on the dark, lonely road when all at once, I saw a woman standing in the middle of the road. As I kept walking forward she walked backwards, all the time blocking my path. I could understand that it was a woman's departed spirit praying for deliverance. I sat under a tree and started doing *japa*. After a while a branch of the tree under which I was sitting broke and fell down. And the woman's spirit also disappeared."

A Haunted Room in Kharagpur

"When I was staying in Kharagpur I was called to do a *katha* on Srimad Bhagavatam in somebody's house. It was a three-day programme. I was allotted a room on the second floor. I was accompanied by an attendant. At night I was resting on the bed and my attendant was sleeping on the floor beside me. In the middle of the night I heard the sound of the window in my room opening and footsteps around the room. The light switched on in the bathroom and the sound of

someone bathing could be heard. My attendant awoke and sat up and said to me 'An old woman is roaming around here'. The lights were flickering and turning on and off. This went on for a while. As soon as I would sit up all the disturbances would cease and no sooner did I lie down than the strange occurrences - sound of footsteps, water splashing in the bathroom, window being opened and shut, flickering lights - would be heard again. All this frightened my attendant very much. I said to him, 'It's nothing. Just go to sleep'. He said, 'If I flee in fear then I will also drag you along with me'. Saying this he took his bed sheet and tied one end of it around his waist and the other end around my foot."

"After a while he got up and fled in fear and I too fell from the bed. I undid the knot around my foot and started doing *japa*. After some time, just as the day dawned, a branch from a tree adjacent to the house broke and fell down. My attendant was so frightened he said, 'Baba I will not stay any longer in this house'.

In the morning I summoned the three brothers in whose house all this happened and asked them 'Did your mother pass away in this room some years ago?' They confirmed that it was true. I then asked them 'Knowing about the disturbances occurring here, why did you put me in this room? None of you use this room'. They replied 'Baba we feared that after knowing everything you wouldn't stay in the room and knowing you to be a *Mahapurush* (divine personality), we wanted you to deliver our mother's soul'. I told them that their mother had indeed been delivered, but that they should have informed me of the real situation beforehand. 'Now my attendant will have to bear the consequences for a few days' I said. (My attendant who had run away in fear, suffered with high fever for 17 days. Ultimately I went to his house and personally healed him. Then the fever broke)".

The Advent of Giridhari in Kharagpur Ashram

"Once I went along with the King of Ramgarh to his palace in Gopivallabhpur. When I went to have darshan of Sri Radha Madhava in the royal palace temple, I observed that the original manuscript of Vrindavan Campu written by Srila Jiva Goswami was kept in front of the deities. I asked the King whether I could borrow the manuscript to read while I was staying there. The King told me that his ancestors over generations had worshipped the sacred manuscript and as such there was no custom of doing a reading of it. The he said to me, 'How can I give it to you to read? Tell me?' Disappointed, I did not say anything and went and sat in the royal garden".

"After some time a dark complexioned handsome young lad about 16-17 years of age, came to me holding the manuscript in his hands. The boy said to me 'Here, the King has sent the manuscript for you to read'. Taking the manuscript in my hands I wondered whether the King was trifling with me. First he said that there was no custom of reading the manuscript and then he sends it to me? Looking at the young lad I asked him, 'Where do you live?' The boy replied 'In the temple'. I

asked 'What do you do?' The boy replied, 'I give discourses on the Bhagavatam and clean the temple premises'. Surprised I said 'You are of such a young age and you give discourses on the Bhagavatam?' He replied, 'If you don't believe me, then ask me anything (from the Bhagavatam)'."

"I asked the boy to give an explanation of a particular verse from the Bhagavatam. He then proceeded to give a very beautiful and unique explanation of the verse which I had never heard before. I said to him, 'You expound the verses very beautifully. I need someone like you. Will you stay with me?' The boy replied, 'I will come to you after three months'. Saying this he went away."

"After some time the King came to the garden. I said to him 'You told me that there is no custom of reading the manuscript, then why did you send it to me? A young boy came and handed it to me'. Hearing me the King said 'But I never sent you the manuscript! There is no such young boy living in the temple or nearby. Lord Gopinath Himself must have handed over the manuscript to you. So please take it with you'."

"Three months after this incident, I went to Swami Bhairavananda's ashram in Chandikhol. The swami asked me 'Did you meet a young boy three months ago?' I said 'Yes'. Swami Bhairavananda, 'My Giridhari has instructed me that he wants to be with you. So kindly take him with you'."

Bombay Mangoes and Darshan of the Lord

(Narrated in Bhubaneshwar Ashram on the occasion of Sri Narsingha Chaturdashi)

"My disciple Raj Kapoor from Bombay has sent mangoes (to the ashram). You all heard this today. You all would surely be eager to see those mangoes. And after seeing them you would naturally want to know how they taste. First you heard about the mangoes and then you saw them, touched and felt them, then tasted them. Darshan of the Lord also happens in the same way. First we hear about Him and then we desire to see Him and relish the experience of Him. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'First catch the fish and put it in a basket. Then fry it, cook it, make a curry or sweet-sour relish out of it - eat it anyway you like'. First hearing, then seeing and desiring and lastly experiencing".

At Salt Lake Ashram

Once there was a discussion among devotees that many these days do not believe in the existence of God anymore. In response Maharaj narrated an anecdote.

"Once, Swami Vivekananda went to the palace of the Maharaja of Patiala. During their talks, the Maharaja said that he didn't believe in idol worship - in fact, he didn't believe in the existence of God itself. Pointing to a picture on the wall,

Swamiji asked 'Whose picture is this?' The Raja replied it was the picture of his father. Swamiji said, 'What is the proof that this is indeed the image of your father? Only your mother can say with certainty who your father is. Only the mother's word will be believed. In the same way, our *Shruti-mata* (scriptures) says that there is a God. Why would you not believe in the words of the scriptures which are like a mother to us?' The Maharaj changed his opinion by the influence of Swami ji".

"The courtiers of the King were trembling in fear hearing Swamiji's words. Swamiji continued "If I were to say 'take down this picture of your father and spit on it, will you do it? Or even if I spit on it, will you tolerate it? The Lord God is our Supreme Father.' Realising his mistake, the King remained silent. The King's ministers and courtiers were wondering with great fear what severe punishment the young *sadhu* would have to endure".

In this context Maharaj said, "Householder devotees also have their contribution. Had people like Mahendra Gupta and Balaram Basu not been there, what would have happened to the young *sannyasis* of Ramakrishna dev? Who would have looked after them? How would people have known about Ramakrishna dev?"

"After the death of Sri Ramakrishna dev, when there was a tussle between the *sannyasis* and householders over his remains, Swami Vivekananda said 'Let them have the ashes, we shall take the bones. Otherwise people will say that the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna fought over his remains'."

(Author's Note: Hearing about Swami ji felt so good as if Maharaj personally met with him. Extremely sweet to hear. He narrated one more incident related to Swami ji that day).

"When Swami ji returned to Kolkata from America, two important persons came to the Kolkata Ashram and told him 'Naren, what you said about Ramakrishna dev - that he is an avatar - is not correct'. Swamiji was not in a good mood that day. He heard their words silently and did not protest or argue. When those two persons left, Swamiji's guru brother Yogananda said "Naren, what have you done? Why did you not protest their words? Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna dev) is a great avatar - and you yourself have said this - today by being silent you have belittled Thakur!?"

"A little irritated Swamiji said, 'If I had not propagated about him, who would have known about Ramakrishna dev?' Angrily Yogananda retorted 'If Thakur had not showered his grace on you, then you would not be the famous Swami Vivekananda today! The son of Attorney Vishwanath would have been just another attorney.' At this Swamiji hurled choice abuses at Yogananda, including on his parents. After that both of them went to their respective rooms".

"After a while one of the guru-brothers went to Swamiji and said 'Yogananda is crying in his room'. Hearing this Swamiji could not remain in his room and rushed to Yogananda and gathered him in an embrace. He said 'Brother were you pained

by my words?' Yogananda replied 'No. I'm weeping in joy. You are my guru-brother; you can surely abuse me. But what *punya* (good deed) did my parents do that you abused them as well!' Swami ji laughed and left the room".

"Not in sorrow, not in anger but crying in joy. That was the level of love that they had for Swami Vivekananda! Such was their deep faith and love".

Maharaj in Balichak

*Mookam karoti vaachaalam panngum langghayate girim
Yat kripa tamaham vande Shri Krishna Chaitanya ishwaram*



Balichak Dak Bungalow

Once I went to Sri Gauranga Ashram in Kharagpur. Earlier on the same day, Maharaj had already left for Balichak to his disciple Bechu Hazra's house. Naren, the ashram *sevak* told me that there was to be a 3-day *Bhagavat Katha* programme at Bechu Babu's house in Balichak. He added that the women disciples of Maharaj accompanied by Naren, would leave for Balichak to attend the *katha* on the following day. Deciding to go along with them, I stayed back in

the ashram that day.

On the next day, we all reached Bechu Babu's house by the afternoon train. Bechu Hazra penned the book "*Nilachaler Pathey*" chronicling the historic *pada-yatra* organised by Maharaj, from Kharagpur to Puri in 1985. Bechu Babu also managed the *pada-yatra* on a day-to-day basis in the absence of Maharaj.

As soon as we reached his house we saw that there was a vibrant festive atmosphere in the house. It was a big house with large rooms, a big courtyard and pretty *alpanas* (*rangoli*) adorning the doorways. There was an elaborate *alpana* around the seat where Maharaj would sit (to speak the *katha*) and the *simhasan* was adorned all around with many marigold flowers. The entire place was very richly decorated.

Maharaj was staying in the Dak bungalow in Balichak. In the late afternoon he arrived at Bechu Babu's house by car. First he went inside the house where the

members of the household offered their prostrations to him. After that he came out and casting his radiance all around, sat in his seat.

On the first day, he started narrating the Bhagavatam from the very beginning. Starting from the birth of Srila Sukadev Goswami to Maharaj Parikshit getting cursed due to the influence of Kali, he spoke for two-and-a-half hours straight. The hungry *koyal*-like devotees are blessed to relish the nectarine fruit of Srimad Bhagavatam spoken by Srila Sukadev Goswami. Non-devotees are deprived of this. It is said that the Srimad Bhagavatam is the ripened fruit of the vast tree of the Vedas. The stories of Krishna *leela* are already very sweet, but hearing them in Maharaj's sonorous voice rendered them all the more sweet.

*Mukha nisrita Bhagavatamrita veena vidinta sudha dhaaram
Trishita bhakta chaatak chitta sukhen karoti paanam
Pranamami Gaur Hari Sravan Tirtha padam*



Room in Dak Bungalow where Maharaj stayed

Kalia Damana (the subduing of the hydra-headed Kalia serpent in the Yamuna). I could not attend any more days of the *katha* as I had no more leave from my school.

Much later, I again met Bechu Babu in the Bhubaneshwar Gauranga Ashram, when he narrated the story of his first meeting with Maharaj. Balai Babu and I listened to him.

Bechu Babu said that he never had any faith or devotion towards *sadhus* and *sannyasis*, especially Vaishnava *sannyasis*. The reason was the popular salacious stories of the amorous dalliance between Radha and Krishna. He said "Before actually meeting with Maharaj, I had an unpleasant experience with one of his disciples in connection with a piece of land. Guru Maharaj sent a message through

After the day's *katha* ended, devotees paid obeisance to Maharaj one by one. Thereafter Maharaj got into his car. His disciple Pratima went along with him. They did not depart immediately as Bechu Babu was speaking with Maharaj in the car. I kept gazing at them without batting an eyelid. When the car finally moved forward and Maharaj disappeared from view, I came to my senses.

The next afternoon I went again to Bechu Babu's house and heard the second day's *katha* which was on

another person to go and meet with him. After receiving his messages several times, I went to meet him at the Kharagpur Ashram. Since I had heard that one must prostrate before *sadhus*, I offered my pranam to him. Then I asked 'Why have you summoned me?' He told me to end the dispute with regard to the land. I said 'You are a *sannyasi*. Why are you getting involved in our land dispute?' Maharaj did not respond but just laughed. He has such a sweet laughter, isn't it?' Saying this much Bechu Babu stopped. Neither Balai da nor I asked anything more.

Balai da went on to say that some of Maharaj's close disciples - local and from outside - were spreading unsavoury rumours about him and it was anticipated that these people would create some ruckus. Bechu Babu said something very beautiful. He said 'They are like moths. They can never go near the sun. They will burn up before that'.

In Sri Gauranga Ashram Maharaj introduced Bechu Babu and told us that he was an educationist. Later a Balichak *kirtan* singer told us that he was an English teacher in the high school.

During Maharaj's historic *pada-yatra* from Kharagpur to Puri, Bechu Babu was given the responsibility to manage the day-to-day affairs of the *pada-yatra* in Maharaj's absence. This job he did with great discipline and dedication.

Maharaj in Lowada

(27 March 1988)

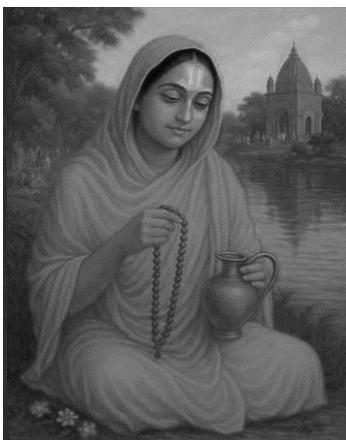
Once I heard that Maharaj would be giving a discourse on the Bhagavatam in Lowada in Medinipur district and I prepared to go there along with one of his disciples, Geeta. We reached Lowada by train and were guided to Manik Babu's house by persons who had been placed at the railway station to guide visitors to his house. Manik Babu was a disciple of Maharaj. The discourse was organised in an empty paddy field in a very large *pandal*. There was a good crowd of many local and outside people. We spent the night in the house of Manik Babu.

The next morning we went to see Maharaj in the Dak bungalow where he was staying. The bungalow was situated in a charming area, where there was a lake with clear water surrounded by trees. There were no other people living in the vicinity. At a distance, some shops and houses could be seen.

Maharaj's attendants Ila and Bithika Das had accompanied him. Balai da had come from Badkulla. That day in the afternoon many devotees were blessed to partake the divine *prasad*. In the late afternoon Maharaj started for the *pandal* by car. We followed behind him. Arriving at the venue Maharaj took his seat casting his effulgence all around. The large *pandal* was fully packed with people. It was so

crowded that some people had to take seats outside the pandal. Maharaj started his discourse by narrating the story of Ganga Mata.

"The princess of Natobar was Sachi. When Sachi reached marriageable age, her parents started looking out for a suitable husband for her. Sachi however told her parents that she would not get married. She said 'I shall go to Sridham Vrindavan and perform my *bhajan* and *sadhana*'. Seeing their daughter's inclination and determination, her parents decided not to insist on her marriage. They told her, 'Go wherever you find peace. We shall not put any obstacles in your path'.



Ganga Mata Goswamini

"Sachi went to Vrindavan and stayed under the shelter of one Haridas Goswami. One day Sachi prayed to Haridas Goswami for spiritual initiation. He replied 'For a period of one year, you should bring two *matkas* (clay pot) of water from the Yamuna everyday; one for the bath of the deities and with the second pot of water, you should clean the temple. After that we shall speak about initiation'. For one year Sachi followed this regimen dedicatedly. Thereafter she again approached Haridas Goswami and asked him for *diksha*. He again replied 'After a year. For this year you should beg alms in Vrindavan'."

"Just as in the previous year, this time also Sachi, the beloved daughter of a King, followed the instructions and begged for alms without any pride and with sincerity. After one year, she again approached Haridas Goswami and prayed

for initiation. This time he initiated her. At the time, one of his disciples Lakshmi Mata came to Haridas Goswami's cottage. He told her, 'I'm handing over Sachi to you. You will teach her'."

"After some time Haridas Goswami told Sachi that her learning period was over. He said 'Now you go to Purushottam Dham Puri; discover the hidden places of *leela* and renovate the broken temples. Go and live in the house of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya where Mahaprabhu had stayed briefly'.

Obeying her Guru's orders Sachi went to Puri. After having *darshan* of Sri Jagannatha Mahaprabhu, she proceeded to the house of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. The house was dilapidated and in a state of ruin. Sachi cleaned up the place as much as possible and started living there and worshipping the deity of Sri Radha Govinda which were served by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya".

"After some time, the day of Varuni *Snana* came. On the night before the festival, Lord Jagannatha appeared in Sachi's dream and said 'Listen Sachi. Tomorrow is

Varuni *Snana*. Go and bathe in the Ganga'. Sachi replied 'Lord, there is no Ganga here. How can I do Ganga *Snana*?' The Lord replied 'There is a lake nearby which is also called Ganga. Go and bathe there in the early hours. To bless you the river Ganga will appear there in the waters of the lake. After you bathe there you will be known as Ganga Mata'."

"Following the instructions of Sri Jagannathdev, Sachi went in the early hours of the following day to bathe in the Ganga Sarovar. As she took a dip in the water, all of a sudden tumultuous waves and huge tidal surges occurred in the lake as Sri Ganga Devi (the river) manifested in the waters. The powerful waves swept Sachi from the lake all the way into the sanctum sanctorum of Sri Jagannatha temple! As she was being tossed round in the waters inside the sanctum, Sachi had a vision that a magnificent *kirtan* procession was taking place on the banks of the Ganga. She was engrossed in listening to the melodious *sankirtan*. Even the *pandas* and servitors of Lord

Jagannatha outside the sanctum could hear the sound of the *kirtan*. Opening the doors they entered the sanctum and found Sachi there, unconscious".

"They thought that Sachi must have hidden in the sanctum to steal the Lord's ornaments. The King was informed, who then ordered that Sachi be imprisoned. Sachi was put in prison. That night Sri Jagannathdev appeared in the King's dream and said 'Listen King, you have committed a grievous offence by putting my dear devotee Ganga Mata in prison. She did not enter the sanctum to steal my ornaments. It was I who ordered her to have a dip in the Ganga Sarovar. Ganga Devi appeared and transported her in her waves into my temple. Her name from today is Ganga Mata. You have to release her immediately and take spiritual initiation from her. Only then you will be free of this offence'."

"Receiving the Lord's order the King hastened to the prison and offering obeisance to Sachi, he released her. He told her about his dream and Sri Jagannathdev's instructions. Sachi had already been told by the Lord to give initiation to the King. From now on we shall address Sachi as Ganga Mata."

"Ganga Mata gave *diksha* to the King and his wife. The *pandas* and servitors of the temple also desired to take initiation from her. Ganga Mata declined. She said that



Sri Jagannatha Temple in Puri

she had not been instructed to do so by the Lord. She did not give initiation to anyone else”.

“On the orders of Ganga Mata, the King had the house of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya restored and renovated. Daily worship and *kirtan* started to take place in the house. Devotees from many places started to gather there. The fame of Ganga Mata spread far and wide”.

“Once, Syamananda Prabhu, whose earlier name was Dukhiya Krishna Das, came to Puri. He invited Ganga Mata to visit his Gopivallabhpur ashram. After a year, Ganga Mata went to the Gopivallabhpur ashram and gave a discourse on Bhagavat Dharma”.

“She also came here to Medinipur, to this Lowada village where we are all gathered today. On this same Ekadashi *tithi* she gave a discourse on Srimad Bhagavatam. We are commemorating that day. All of you should imagine that it is not me, Maharaj, but Ganga Mata who is giving the discourse”.

“Just as Sukadev Goswami, sitting by the Brahma Kunda in Naimisaranya, narrated to Raja Parikshit about how the Vraja gopis came in groups to Vamshivat, but in his mind he was in Vrindavan’s Vamshivat. In the same way today, we shall also visualise that Ganga Mata is giving the discourse”.

“When Krishna left Vrindavan for Mathura to kill Kamsa, Nanda Baba was in deep sorrow thinking that having attained Krishna as his son, he (Nanda) had not done anything for him. Just then Devarishi Narada came there. He asked ‘Why are you so sorrowful Maharaj?’ Nanda Baba said ‘Devarishi I got Krishna as my son, but I could not do anything much for him. Was there something lacking in our love that made Krishna leave us? Nothing gives me peace.’ Devarishi said ‘Listen O King, to this *Bhagavati katha*. In Mithila, The King Rajarishi Janak asked his Nava-Yogendras two questions. These Nava-Yogendras were great devotees and Vaishnavas. The two questions were ‘What is at Atma-Dharma (one’s intrinsic duty) and what is the way to attain supreme peace.’”

Maharaj spoke in his honey sweet voice and in perfect rhythm and harmony. Hearing his narration of Ganga Mata’s story, my thoughts were already in a far-away realm. He spoke the *Bhagavatamrit katha* for two hours. I was unable to capture in writing his super-excellent narration. That is why I just stopped. Sri Krishna Leela is in itself extremely sweet and attractive to hear. And in Maharaj’s divine voice, his words spread like transcendental waves all over the *pandal*. The audience - hundreds of them - listened with rapt attention and wonder.

This same kind of festival had taken place in Lowada twice before. This time by Maharaj’s grace Geeta and I had the good fortune to attend it.

After the discourse ended, the process of *pranam* started. Hundreds of devotees lined up to offer their obeisance to Maharaj, who in his infinite mercy accepted their *pranams*. After that he rose and left by car to the Dak bungalow. Now *leela kirtan* started in the *pandal*. After hearing Maharaj's discourse for over two-and-a-half hours, I did not have the capacity to sit through the *leela kirtan*. We left for Manik Babu's house where we had *prasad* and then along with Balai da we went to the Dak bungalow. There was no crowd there. Maharaj was seated and generally chatting with devotees.

On the 5th of April Maharaj was due to depart to the Arab countries on a visit. One devotee asked 'Over there will you speak about the commonality among all religions?' Maharaj replied 'No, all that is done. I shall speak something new; something from the Quran and Chand Kazi's story'. Another questioned "Will you speak about how the Hindu *dharma* is superior?" Maharaj replied 'No. Rabindranath Thakur has said that to praise oneself is actually to demean oneself'.

After that Maharaj instructed Balai da to escort Geeta and myself to Kolkata the next day. On the following day when we reached the Salt Lake ashram in Kolkata, Maharaj was addressing the devotees.

He said "One has to go to the Chamundeshwari temple from Bangalore. One day while in Bangalore, I said that I would go to the Chamundeshwari temple for *darshan*. Everyone said that the time was already 10 a.m., I would only reach there around 1 p.m., and the temple would be closed and *darshan* of the goddess would not be possible. I insisted, 'No. I will leave right now' and I left. A few people accompanied me.

When we reached the temple, the main priest came towards me. Offering a flower garland around my neck he escorted me to the temple. The door of the sanctum was open. I said to the priest 'The temple doors are normally not open at this time...?' The priest replied 'Yesterday night Ma Chamundeshwari appeared in my dream and said 'Tomorrow my son will come for my *darshan*, keep the doors open'. Further Ma told me, 'That person will be dressed in orange robes with a *japa-mala* in his hands and he will purchase two coconuts and a garland. Seeing all that you should know that he is my son'.

"I said 'You are mistaken. I am not that person'. The priest replied 'No. I am not making any mistake. Everything that Ma told me matches with you perfectly'. I had indeed purchased two coconuts and a flower garland as soon as I got out of the car. The priest continued, 'Ma also told me that you will give me Sri Narsinghdev's *charanamrita* (sacred water), which will heal my chronic stomach ailment'."

"I entered the temple, put the garland around Ma Chamundeshwari, gave the coconuts to the priest for Ma's *seva* and also gave him Sri Narsinghdev's *charanamrita*. After that I returned to Bangalore".

After hearing this anecdote, we all went and had prasad.

Maharaj in Gopaldas Babaji's Ashram

Once Maharaj came to Krishnanagar accompanied by his mother from a previous birth, Manju Bhargavi. They were on a visit to all the noteworthy places in the area. I went to Krishnanagar to have his *darshan*.

Maharaj called Kanu da and told him, "I shall be going to Navadwip to meet with your father (Gopaldas Babaji). You go in advance to Navadwip and inform your father". I told Kanu da that I would also go along with him. He agreed. I had never been to Navadwip before. We went by bus and reached Gopal dada's ashram. On the way, Kanu purchased a *shefali (parijat)* flower garland. Kanu told his father that Maharaj would soon be coming to the ashram. Hearing this Gopaldas got busy making some arrangements. He told Kanu to get a group of *kirtan* singers from nearby and handed me a *jhadu* (broom) and told me to sweep the rooms. He also gave me a sheet to spread over the wooden cot.

Kanu returned shortly with a group of *kirtaniyas* carrying their *khols* and *kartals*. Gopal dada handed me a pot of Ganga water to sprinkle on the path that Maharaj would walk on. In a short while we all went to the main road (as the ashram was in a narrow lane where a car could not enter). Shortly Maharaj arrived along with his mother in one car and Kanu's mother Radharani and some others were behind them in another car. I walked ahead on the path sprinkling Ganga water and Maharaj and his mother followed. They entered the house and his mother took her seat on the wooden cot. Gopal dada handed Maharaj the garland which he placed around his mother's neck and prostrated in front of her.

After this Gopal dada stepped into another room and Maharaj followed him and asked "Are you annoyed with me?" I did not hear what else they spoke about.

After some time Maharaj said that he would go to the Balaram Mandir which was very close by, with his mother. Gopal dada went along and I too followed. In the temple Gopal dada called for the priest, who was not around. The pujari came, prostrated before Maharaj and sat down. He had been suffering from an acute headache for several days. When Maharaj learnt of this he pressed the priest's head with both his hands. After a few minutes of doing this he said to the priest, "Go now, you will be alright".

After this Maharaj had darshan of Lord Balaram and left with his mother.

Naamacharya Haridas Thakur

"In Bhudan village, Jessore district in undivided Bengal there lived a *brahmana* Vaikuntha Das. He was a pundit with deep devotion to the Lord. His wife's name was Revati. They were quite advanced in years but still childless. One day while on a walk in the morning, Vaikuntha Das spotted a very beautiful infant lying in a lonely wooded area. Surprised he wondered why such a radiant and beautiful baby was lying there. Could it be the abandoned child of an unmarried woman? Just at that time a Muslim gentleman Mir Musharraf came there. As soon as Vaikuntha Das saw him he recognised him as his childhood classmate. Although Mir Musharraf was a Muslim, he was a good person".

"He told Vaikuntha Das 'Thakur this is my son. His mother has passed away due to some disease. He is just 12 days old. If you could kindly adopt him and raise him, then this motherless boy will be saved. My worry too will be over'. Taken aback Vaikuntha Das replied 'How can I, a *brahmana* take your son into my home? It will not be accepted by society although it is a fact that I am childless'. Mir Musharraf was not one to give up. He said 'Thakur, you always say that where there is *bhakti* (devotion), love and friendship, there caste and clan considerations are futile. The real issue is to be without ego and attachment. Now have you forgotten all those words?'

"Vaikuntha Das observed that the baby had signs of devotion. Without saying anything more, he picked up the motherless infant and took him home. The child grew up in the shade of the love and affection of the *brahmana* couple. In the course of time, when the boy attained 15 years of age, one day he began to writhe in acute pain. Seeing his suffering, the parents almost gave up their life due to the agony of seeing their child in pain.

Just then, a *Mahapurush* came to their door. After travelling to many places of pilgrimage such as Vrindavan and Puri, he came to Vaikuntha Das's house and was welcomed as a guest. Seeing the child in pain, the merciful *Mahapurush* Srila Madhavendra Puri, placed his divine hand on the boy's head. By the touch of the effulgent *sannyasi*, the boy was immediately healed. Thereafter Srila Madhavendra Puri initiated the boy and gave him the name Haridas. By the grace of the great Vaishnava devotee, Haridas then left his home and went to Bongaon. At the time the name of Bongaon was Benapol".

"Constructing a small straw hut for his *bhajan* and *sadhana*, Haridas started living there. He planted a tulasi shrub in front of the hut, watered it every day and performed his *naam sadhana* (repetition of the Mahamantra), continuously. He would beg for food in the vicinity for his sustenance and continue his penance. His was a very arduous *sadhana* - three lakh (300,000) Hari *naam* in a day; two lakh in silent *japa* and one lakh loudly for the emancipation of all living and inanimate beings".

"Once Srila Haridas was meditating, 'When Yogamaya Paurnamasi Devi saw the supremely ecstatic condition of Srimati Radharani as she chanted Krishna *naam*, she said to Nandimukhi 'Sri Krishna's name is so very sweet that when it is uttered by the tongue one wishes to have millions of tongues to do *naam sankirtan*. Once you hear it you feel that two ears are not enough. Just as during a flood, all the waters in lakes, rivers and ponds overflow their boundaries and merge together in the same way love of *naam* makes all our senses merge together and become fully satiated'.

"The *Naam* enters the portals of the ears and sitting on the chariot of the mind it becomes the *Nami*, Vamshidhari Mohan and dances in our senses. The mind being the king of the senses, the rest of the sense organs also get engrossed in Krishna *seva*".

"After some time, Srila Haridas Thakur while living in the hut granted salvation to a prostitute".

The Deliverance of Laksha Heera

"After receiving initiation from the abode of supreme love Srila Madhavendra Puri, Haridas Thakur in his youth, went to the woods near Benapol to perform his penance. In due course devotees started to visit his hut. The *zamindar* of the area was one Ramachandra Khan. In order to disturb Haridas' penance, he deployed a prostitute to go and tempt him so he would fall from his spiritual path. One night the prostitute dressed very attractively, entered Srila Haridas Thakur's hut. First she bowed to Vrinda Devi and then offering her obeisance to Haridas Thakur's lotus feet, she sat down".

"Because she had prostrated to him, unbeknownst to her, divine grace began to descend on her. She said 'Thakur, hearing about your qualities and greatness I have come to take benefit of your sacred association'. Displaying no anger and with a calm mind Srila Haridas Thakur said to her, 'Now I shall proceed to chant Harinaam loudly, you sit and hear'.

"The Naam brings the Nami down from Golok Dham and the same Naam also brings those who are at the height of cunning, duplicity and lust, down to a humble level. Srila Haridas Thakur chanted while Laksha Heera heard the heart touching kirtan. In this way engrossed in the divine vibrations of the holy name, dawn broke in the sky. Laksha Heera realised that she could not remain there any more as people would start gathering. Offering her obeisance to Haridas Thakur she said 'I shall come again tonight to hear the Naam'."



Laksha Heera tries to tempt Srla
Haridas Thakur

"That night she went again to Haridas Thakur's hut, prostrated to him and sat down. Thakur Haridas said 'My quota of Harinaam is not yet over. I shall chant and you listen. When my objective is fulfilled, I shall fulfil your desire'. Once again the night passed in Naam *kirtan* and the day dawned. The woman offered obeisance to Haridas Thakur and said she would return at night".

"On the third night Laksha Heera came once again to Haridas's hut. Offering *pranam* to him she sat down. In sweet words Haridas Thakur said to her, 'For two nights you have been suffering without sleep, being forced to hear my chanting. But what can I do? I perform one crore (10 million), *naam* in a month. Today is the last day of the month, in a short while my target for *naam* will be achieved. You sit and hear the *naam* and your wish too will be fulfilled'. What Haridas Thakur meant was that the woman had heard the holy name for two nights and received

Bhakti Devi's grace and now on the third night, she would attain God (*Bhagavat praapti*)".

"Haridas Thakur began *Sri Naam kirtan* and Laksha Heera listened to the sweet sound. After finishing the *kirtan*, Haridas Thakur, eyes filled with compassion, looked at Laksha Heera and asked, 'Now tell me. What is your wish?' Totally transformed by the divine name, Laksha Heera said 'Lord, just give me a place at your lotus feet. As a prostitute I have committed many sins in this life. Now show me the way to redeem myself'.

"Calmly Haridas Thakur replied, 'I am aware of the plot hatched by Ramchandra Khan, but I did not get agitated. I decided to plant the seed of devotion in the barren desert of your mind and see the flower of Krishna *prema* bloom. Now return to your house, distribute your wealth among the poor and the *sadhus* and cut off your beautiful thick hair. Come back to me as a pauper and I shall give you the Krishna *prema* *mantra*. Your name will henceforth be Krishna dasi. Chanting three lakh *naam* daily, you will become a famous Vaishnavi'.

"After delivering Laksha Heera, Haridas Thakur left Benapol and went to Chandpur, where he stayed as a guest at Balaram Acharya's house. Devotees used to go there to listen to Krishna *katha*. Among the audience were one Govardhan Das and

his son Raghunath Das, who was then a child. Raghunath Das was later initiated by Srila Haridas Thakur and went on to become one of the six Goswamis of Vrindavan".

"From there Srila Haridas Thakur went to Shantipur in Nadia District. Building a small hut on the banks of the Ganga he continued his spiritual practice there. At the time, another great Vaishnava lived in Shantipur, Srila Advaita Acharya, who was also a disciple of Srila Madhavendra Puri.

He was born in Lakhai Gram in Srihatta district. His given name was Kamalaksha Thakur. His wife was Sita Devi. Due to this some people also referred to him as Sitanath. Srila Advaita Acharya was the combined incarnation of Lord Shiva and Maha Vishnu. These two great saints Srila Haridas Thakur and Srila Advaita Acharya met in Shantipur".

"One day Advaita Acharya went to Haridas Thakur's hut and said "It is my father's *shraddh* (annual death anniversary), I would like you to be present in the rituals, accept the offerings and sanctify me'. Haridas Thakur told him that he was born a Muslim, etc., but he failed to convince Advaita Acharya and on his repeated insistence, he went to the place where the *shraddh* was being performed.

Many prominent citizens of Shantipur as well as Advaita Acharya's relatives had also come. When they saw Haridas Thakur, they objected saying that they would not sit in the same place as him and have the offerings. With folded hands Advaita Acharya pleaded with his relatives and guests saying 'He is a *Maha Bhagavat* (a great saint), a Vaishnava and a *sadhu* who chants the holy name endlessly. If he is humiliated here, my father's obsequies will not be completed properly'. The guests did not pay any heed to his words and prepared to leave. However Srila Advaita Acharya was not in the least perturbed. He told the guests to each take a packet of uncooked raw food grains to cook and eat in their homes. They agreed to this and taking their packets they all returned to their homes".

"When the guests had reached their respective houses, a severe storm and heavy rain started. Mother Nature displayed her anger in full measure. Due to the fierce winds and rains, no house in Shantipur could light the fire (to cook food) in their homes that night. Finally at dawn the next day, the storm abated. All the guests and relatives of Advaita Acharya, having spent the whole previous day hungry, went back to his house. They were all served the previous day's cooked food. After they had eaten, Advaita Acharya took them all to the hut of Haridas Thakur. There they were astonished to see Haridas Thakur in the small shack chanting the holy name peacefully and they saw that a fire was burning in a clay pot in one corner of the hut. They were amazed to see this sight.

Srila Advaita Acharya said, 'Despite suffering so much abuse and humiliation Haridas Thakur never once stopped his *naam bhajan*. The fire in his hut did not get

extinguished by the storm because of his *bhakti*'. All the people fell at Haridas Thakur's lotus feet and prayed for forgiveness".

Maya Devi

"Srila Haridas Thakur was living and performing his penance in his small hut by the bank of the Ganga. One night a beautiful woman came to him just as Laksha Heera had done earlier. Haridas Thakur told her the same thing – listen to the holy name. 'As soon as my *naam japa* is complete I shall fulfil your wish'. On the third night when Haridas Thakur completed his rounds he looked at the woman and asked 'What do you want?' The woman introduced herself as Maya Devi and said that she had come to enchant him with her powers, 'but having come here I am myself enchanted. I never imagined that hearing the name of Krishna would cause love of Krishna to overflow in my heart. Please give me the *mantra* of Krishna *prema*'."

"We all know that even Lord Brahma was fooled by Maya Devi when he thought that Sri Krishna was a mere cowherd boy playing in Vrindavan and not the Supreme Lord Himself. Maya Devi who had committed that offence against Lord Brahma in Dwapar Yuga, now clasped the lotus feet of Srila Haridas Thakur, the incarnation of Brahma in Kali Yuga and said, 'Thakur, you have taken the shelter of Madan Mohan Krishna, hence it is not in my power to enchant you. Now in order to redeem myself from my offence, give me the Krishna *prema mantra*'. Receiving the *mantra* from Haridas Thakur, Maya Devi accepted him as her guru".

*Namo mahavadanyaay Krishna prema pradaayate
Krishnaaya Krishna Chaitanya naamne gaur twishey namah*

Maharaj's Birth Anniversary

Once Maharaj was taken seriously ill and was admitted into hospital in Delhi. As there was no improvement in his condition he was shifted to erstwhile Madras (Chennai). Since his birth anniversary was approaching, his past-life mother Manju Bhargavi expressed the desire to celebrate it in Bangalore in her home.

The devotees in Bhubaneshwar also desired to celebrate the day in the ashram as was customary. They asked Maharaj and he permitted them to observe the celebrations in Sri Gauranga Ashram Bhubaneshwar.

Myself (the author), Balai da, Bechu Hazra, Divakar Panda, Meera Panda and others, all of us brought various items needed for the celebrations such as flowers, fruits, sweets etc., and assembled in Gauranga Ashram. In the early morning, I washed and cleaned the *Nat Mandir* and a photograph of Maharaj was placed on a

sofa. The *Nat Mandir* was nicely decorated with many flowers. I wove a flower garland and put it on Maharaj's picture.

While we were all joyfully making the arrangements, all of a sudden out of the blue, a local goon appeared and started hurling abuses for no reason at all. Divakar Panda was the main organiser of the festival. He was sitting in a chair and had put on a cassette with devotional music. When the goon started abusing him, he did not react, but wisely remained silent. In a short while the goon went away. (After a few days I learnt from Balai da that both the arms of the goon were paralysed and he could no longer use them. If Divakar Panda had reacted that day the matter would have gone out of hand. Lord Narsinghdev saved everybody and the culprit got the result of his *karma*).

On one side, the *prasad* - rice, *dalma*, *chutney* and *kheer* - was being cooked in medium sized vessels, enough to feed 30-40 people at the most. After the cooking was finished *bhog* was offered to the Lord, followed by the *aarti*. As we were preparing to sit down to have *prasad*, we saw around 50-60 local devotees entering to have *prasad*. Everyone ate sumptuously to their fill.

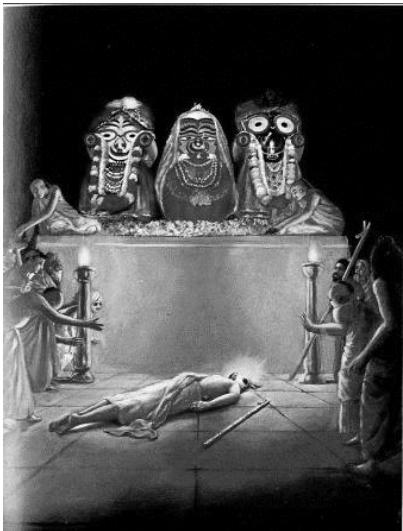
After finishing the *prasad*, I retired to a room with a book of *Bhagavat leela*. Presently we saw groups of people coming to have *prasad*. The attendant boys asked me if *prasad* could be served to them I said "If there is enough then serve them". In this way *prasad* was served to devotees until 5 p.m.! This was a miracle as the amount of food cooked was only for 30-40 persons but hordes of people came and ate their fill. I thought to myself that I was trying to read a book about the Lord's *leela* but here was a *leela* happening in front of my eyes!

In the evening a woman came and asked for *prasad*. By that time only rice, *chutney* and *kheer* remained. We asked her if she would have it, she agreed. She ate the rice with the *chutney* and had the *kheer prasad* contentedly. I felt blessed to witness the glory of *Mahaprasad* and Maharaj's divine miracle that day.

After the evening *aarti* everyone departed for their respective destinations. Bechu Babu, Balai da and I caught the train back to our stations. My heart and mind were filled with bliss and writing about this has given me much happiness.

Sriman Mahaprabhu and Vasudev Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya

"When Chaitanya Mahaprabhu first came to Purushottam Dham Puri, he went to Sri Jagannatha temple. Entering the temple he was so overwhelmed by ecstatic emotions that he ran towards the sanctum to embrace the Lord. Just as he approached the deity he fainted and fell on the ground. The priests of Lord Jagannatha rushed over (to remove him). At the time, the chief Pundit of the royal court of Puri, Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya happened to be in the temple along with his pupils. Looking at the figure of Mahaprabhu lying on the ground he wondered



Mahaprabhu fainted as he entered the sanctum of Sri Jagannatha with great care carry him to my house'. Mahaprabhu was taken to his house".

"On the other side of town, Mahaprabhu's four associates, Nityananda Prabhu, Mukunda, Jagadananda and Damodar were frantically searching for him after crossing the Atharanala Bridge. Earlier after having a bath in the Bhargi river along with his associates, Mahaprabhu had left them and ran towards the Jagannatha temple. Nobody could keep up with him when he ran. And on top of that he had told them not to follow him, 'I shall go alone and have *darshan* of Lord Jagannatha by myself. With all of you I am hindered in my goal'. Therefore his associates kept a good distance from him as he ran off".

"But when Mahaprabhu disappeared from their view his associates became concerned. In his emotional state which path did he take? Restless and worried they searched for him everywhere. Just then they ran into Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's brother-in-law Gopinath. Who was this Gopinath? He was an associate of Mahaprabhu in Navadvip. Two years earlier, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had told him to go and live in Puri adding that he would meet with him there (in Puri), later. Gopinath said to the associates 'Prabhu has come to Puri and I do not know about it? It was he who sent me here to Puri. Come let us all go to Jagannathdev temple and search for him'."

who the young handsome *sannyasi* of tender years was and he spotted the signs of ecstatic devotion on his body".

"Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was a renowned pundit of that era. There was no other learned scholar of his stature in India at the time. Although he was a follower of Advaita philosophy, he knew the signs and symptoms of a great Vaishnava devotee. He observed the eight-fold *saatvic bhavas* (ecstatic devotional symptoms) manifest on the person of the young *sannyasi*. Desiring to embrace Lord Jagannatha the *sannyasi*'s eyes were streaming with tears. When the *pandas* came rushing towards the unconscious Mahaprabhu, he ordered them to halt. He said 'Nobody will touch this *sannyasi*'. None of the *pandas* - not even the King of Puri himself - could dare to ignore Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's orders. They stood back. Then Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya told his students 'Pick up this young *sannyasi* and

"Arriving at the temple they came to know that a young *sannyasi* had fainted and fallen in the sanctum sanctorum and that Vasudev Sarvabhauma had taken the *sannyasi* to his house. Taking Nityananda and the other associates along, Gopinath went to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house. He was thinking 'On the Lord's instructions, I have been living in Puri and waiting for him all this time and he has come here and gone to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house?! How blessed is the Bhattacharya!' Reaching there they saw that Mahaprabhu was still unconscious. Seeing him they all exclaimed 'Here he is - our Mahaprabhu!'"

"With a frown Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya said 'Lord Jagannathdev is Mahaprabhu. Why are you addressing this young *sannyasi* as Mahaprabhu?' Gopinath replied 'This is Gaursundar - Bhagavan Himself, our Mahaprabhu'. Sarvabhauma said 'Gopinath, have you lost your senses? What nonsense are you talking? God does not incarnate in Kali Yuga. None of the scriptures say this'. Gopinath replied, "He is not a *leela avatar*, but the *Avatari* himself; not a part incarnation but the Supreme Lord Himself'.

"Sarvabhauma asked 'How do you know that he is Bhagavan? What is the evidence of this?' Gopinath replied, 'What evidence do I need? My own experience and my own attainment is enough evidence for me. By his grace, I have seen his divine form and realised his divinity. The day he graces you with a similar experience, you too will understand. He is the son of Jagannatha Mishra and the grandson of Neelambar Chakravarti'."

"Vasudev Sarvabhauma said 'Neelambar Chakravarti was my classmate; we both studied together in Mithila. I know Jagannatha Mishra too'. At this point, Mahaprabhu regained consciousness and sat up. Sarvabhauma offered his prostration to him. The Lord blessed him saying 'May you be Krishna conscious'. Sarvabhauma thought 'This young man is an *advaita sannyasi*, he should be taught the Vedanta'. He said to Mahaprabhu 'I know your father. Your maternal grandfather was my class mate. Hence you are like a son to me. For your own good, I want to tell you that as you have taken *sannyas* at such a young age; mere chanting *Hari kirtan* and dancing will not do. How will you keep your uncontrollable urges under check? You need to study Vedanta. That is the rule for *sannyasis*'."

"Mahaprabhu humbly replied, 'I do not know what is good for me. After receiving initiation into the *mantra* from Gurudev I became mad to attain Krishna. Thereafter I took *sannyas* and on my mother's instructions I came to Neelachal Puri. You are like a father to me. Please do whatever you think is good for me. I am in your care. Arrange for a place for me to stay'.

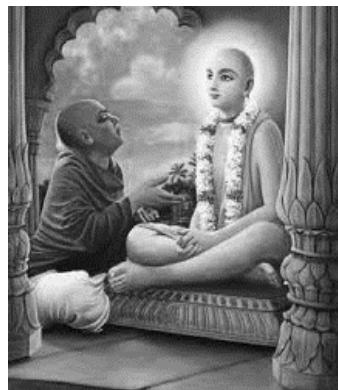
Sarvabhauma said 'Take rest today. From tomorrow I shall teach you the Vedanta and I shall tell Maharaj Prataprudra to make arrangements for you to stay in Kashi Mishra's house'. The Lord replied 'So be it'."

"From the next day, Sarvabhauma sat Mahaprabhu near him and began his explanation of Vedanta. Every day Sarvabhauma would explain the concepts of Vedanta and Mahaprabhu would listen quietly without any question or reaction.

In this way when seven days had passed Sarvabhauma thought 'To whom am I trying to teach this Vedanta? Is he a pundit or a fool? Gopinath had told me that in Navadwip he was a learned scholar - Nimai Pundit - who had his own school. Then how is he listening silently without any question, without any emotion?' Losing his patience Sarvabhauma finally asked 'Look here, I have been labouring for seven days explaining the Vedanta, but you have not asked me a single question or clarification! Are you not able to understand my explanations? Tell me what have you learnt from these past seven days of hearing?'

"Mahaprabhu now broke his silence and said gravely 'Listen Sarvabhauma..'
(Earlier Mahaprabhu had said that he was like a son to Sarvabhauma and that he did not know what was good or bad for him, and now he was addressing him by his name. Mahaprabhu was displaying his divinity therefore he addressed Sarvabhauma by his name). He said 'Listen Sarvabhauma, I understand the concepts of Vedanta very well, but I am not able to understand your explanations of it. You have not told me the straightforward meaning of the verses, just the secondary interpretation'. Taken aback Sarvabhauma thought 'This young man certainly does not lack audacity! I am one of the most erudite scholars of Bharat and he says my explanations are not correct!?' He said to Mahaprabhu 'You think my explanations are wrong? So now you tell me what the correct explanation is!'
"Mahaprabhu gave 18 different meanings for the "Atmaram..." verse. Sarvabhauma had given nine different meanings for the same verse. Also Mahaprabhu did not touch upon Sarvabhauma's explanations when he gave his own interpretations. He presented entirely new and different meanings of the *shloka*. Mahaprabhu also expounded on the six unlimited opulences of Sri Bhagavan. Hearing the meaning of the Vedanta verses as given by Mahaprabhu, Sarvabhauma was wonderstruck. He thought to himself 'Who is this sannyasi!?' His pride in his profound learning was shattered.

When this question arose in his mind as to who was the *sannyasi*, then Mahaprabhu showered his grace on him. Sarvabhauma saw that the young effulgent *sannyasi* was no more to be seen, in his place in front of him stood the six-armed form Shri Bhagavan, a unique form which was never before displayed in any other Yuga. This form was first shown by Sri Gaurasundar; two arms of the



Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya
instructing Mahaprabhu in Vedanta

weirder of the bow Sri Ramachandra, two arms of Muralidhar Krishna holding a flute and two arms of Sriman Mahaprabhu holding a *sannyasi*'s staff and a *kamandalu*".

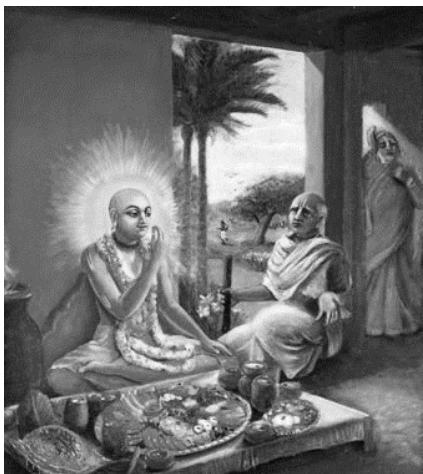
"Seeing the six-armed form of the Lord, Sarvabhauma fainted and fell down. Mahaprabhu placed his lotus hand on Sarvabhauma's head. When Sarvabhauma regained consciousness and opened his eyes, he saw that the young *sannyasi* was sitting near him. After witnessing the six-armed form of the Lord, Sarvabhauma composed a hymn in his praise. Thereafter Sriman Mahaprabhu went to Kashi Mishra's house".

"Sarvabhauma spent the entire night unable to sleep thinking 'Who is this *sannyasi*, in front of whom my great learning became insignificant? And the darshan of the six-armed form that I saw - what was that? Does this youthful *sannyasi* know magic? Is he a magician? Or could it be that Gopinath is right? That this young *sannyasi* is indeed the Lord Himself?' In this way he spent the whole night tossing and turning".

"Early the next morning, Mahaprabhu went to have *darshan* of the Lord in Sri Jagannatha temple. The *sevait* of Lord Jagannatha gave Mahaprabhu some *prasad*. Taking it Mahaprabhu ran to Sarvabhauma's house. As soon as he reached he called out 'Sarvabhauma!' Sarvabhauma came out and Mahaprabhu said 'Here, have this *prasad* of Sri Jagannathdev'. Like a robot Sarvabhauma accepted the *prasad* and ate it. Prabhu said 'Oh..! What is this Sarvabhauma? You are a learned pundit of Vedanta. You have eaten the *prasad* without completing your morning ablutions?' Sarvabhauma replied 'I am no longer a Vedanta pundit. You have mercifully destroyed all my wrong notions. I have lost faith in ritualistic Brahmanism. Sacred *prasad* must be taken as soon as one receives it'. Mahaprabhu laughed and said 'Come. Let us now chant Hare Krishna'. Vasudev Sarvabhauma lifted up his two arms and began to dance chanting 'Krishna Krishna!'

"Just then Gopinath arrived there and exclaimed, 'What is this? What is going on here?' Gopinath was the happiest person to see the Lord's grace on Sarvabhauma. He had not been speaking to him for past several days, due to Sarvabhauma's attempt to teach the Lord Vedanta. He was also annoyed with Mahaprabhu for indulging Sarvabhauma. Now his joy and bliss overflowed. By the act of giving him the Lord's *prasad* Mahaprabhu conferred his full grace on Sarvabhauma. Displaying the symptoms of ecstatic devotion such as tears, shivering etc., Sarvabhauma began chanting Hare Krishna *kirtan*.

By the Lord's grace, he attained Krishna *prema* and became a great devotee of Mahaprabhu. He composed two hymns in praise of Mahaprabhu, "Sachisutashtakam" and "Sachitanayashtakam". Such a great pundit Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya was".



Mahaprabhu eating prasad at Sarvabhauma's house

"Once, Sarvabhauma had a keen desire to invite Mahaprabhu for a meal in his house; just the Lord alone and no one else. He expressed his wish to Mahaprabhu and he agreed. On the day of the meal, Sarvabhauma and his wife got busy preparing many varieties of dishes for the Lord. Sarvabhauma's wife prepared many delectable Bengali and Odiya culinary items and sweets with great care. Sarvabhauma's only daughter Shathi and her husband Amogh, also lived with them at the time. The son-in-law Amogh was an atheist".

"Mahaprabhu arrived in the afternoon to have his meal. After offering the preparations to Sri Krishna, Mahaprabhu sat down to eat. Sarvabhauma sat at the door with a big stick in his hand in case his son-in-law created a disturbance. All

the food items prepared with so much love and care were served joyfully one by one to Mahaprabhu by Sarvabhauma and his wife. Mahaprabhu also ate the meal with great relish and satisfaction.

Just at that moment Amogh arrived on the scene. As soon as he heard the news, the son-in-law came running to see the *sannyasi* being fed. Looking into the room from the door Amogh said 'How can *sannyasi* eat so much?! How many people's food is he having?' Sarvabhauma raised his stick and ran after him. Amogh ran away, but Sarvabhauma was burning with rage. He had invited Mahaprabhu to his house and now he had to witness this intolerable insult. Looking at his daughter Shathi he said 'It's better if you become a widow. There is no use having such a husband'. Thereafter he and his wife decided to redeem the sin by fasting unto death. Just imagine what the level of devotion one must have to want his own daughter to be widowed! Oblivious to all this, Mahaprabhu finished his meal and left".

"The dark shadow of his gross offence began to grasp Amogh by and by. He started vomiting throughout the night and his condition became very serious. Gopinath went running to Mahaprabhu and said 'Amogh is at death's door Prabhu! Please come quickly!' Mahaprabhu replied 'Oh.. ? Come let's go at once!' Reaching the house, Mahaprabhu ran his hands over Amogh's body and said 'Now you be well'. Amogh said 'Lord I am a rascal. I have offended you personally. It is better if I die'. Sarvabhauma had also said 'Death is the right punishment'. Mahaprabhu said 'You have not committed any offence. Just chant Krishna Krishna with me'. Amogh recovered fully and became a staunch devotee of Sriman Mahaprabhu".

"Learning from Gopinath about the fast unto death vow of Sarvabhauma and his wife, Mahaprabhu went to see him. On the Lord's orders they both gave up their fast and had *prasad*".

Jai Maharaj !!!

(Author's Note: Hearing the discourse of Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya a devotee asked Maharaj "Amogh was delivered by the Lord. What about us? What will be our fate?" Maharaj replied "Now hear the story of the gopis who went to meet with Krishna on the full moon night. Just hearing the story, you will be delivered").

Glimpses of Krishna's Vrindavan Leela

Deliverance of Putana

Why should we worship Sri Krishna? In reply to this question Sukadev Goswami said, "If we don't worship the immeasurably merciful Krishna who gave the child murderer Putana the position of a maid servant in Golok, then who else is worth worshiping?"

Upon seeing Putana's face, Baby Krishna closed his eyes. Vaishnava acharyas have explained the reason for this in various ways:

1. The first reason being that Krishna did not want to see the child murderer Putana's face.
2. Krishna thought that if he were to see her then her disguise (as a beautiful woman) would disappear and her original Rakshasi form would be exposed, Seeing her horrible and ugly Rakshasi form Mother Yashoda and Rohini would be terrified, hence it is better if I keep my eyes closed.
3. Krishna thought that although the evil Putana had come with the intention of killing him by giving him her poison-smeared breast to suckle, nevertheless she had come in the form of a Mother, so how can I kill someone who comes to me as a mother?
4. Krishna knew that anyhow he would have to kill Putana but how would he be able to see her intense agony at the time of her death, hence he closed his eyes.
5. The acharyas have also said that just as all newborn babies tend to sleep most of the time, in the same way Baby Krishna was pretending to sleep

These are all his infant leelas. Even granting Putana the rare position of a midwife in Golok is also a part of his infant leela. Just as a child may throw away a precious golden ornament not knowing its value, in the same way, he gave the highest reward to Putana without any consideration.

Rain of Flutes in Vrindavan

"Once in the early hours of the morning when Srimati Radharani hurriedly left the Nikunja, she unknowingly carried Krishna's flute along with her to her house. Radharani's sister-in-law Kutila was always trying to find fault with her. Just as Radharani entered the house Kutila spotted Krishna's flute. Radharani realised her blunder and fervently remembered Pournamasi Devi, the one who arranges all the *leelas* in the Dham.

Just then Pournamasi arrived at the door. Pointing to the flute, Kutila said to her mother Jatila, "See your chaste daughter-in-law! She has Krishna's flute in her

room!" Jatila said to Pournamasi Devi "You are always praising Radharani, now you see what she has done with your own eyes!" Pournamasi exclaimed "Oh my! Is that so? This is exactly what I came to tell you! Last night it rained flutes in Vrindavan! You will find flutes in every house". Then Pournamasi went into Kutila's room and came out with another flute. She also found a flute in Jatila's room. Kutila could not say anything. She was stunned.

The daughter of Vrishabhanu Srimati Radharani breathed a sigh of relief. Pournamasi Devi collected all the flutes and had them burnt. She returned the original flute to Krishna.

Jai Radhe!!

Appearance of Srimati Radharani

"Once in Golok Dham Sri Krishna went into Viraja Gopi's Kunj. Telling his friend Sridama to stand guard by the door, Krishna told him not to allow anyone inside. Sridama stood guard. Just then Srimati Radharani arrived there. She told Sridama "Move away from the door and let me enter". Sridama replied 'Nobody is allowed to enter'. Getting angry Rai Kishori said 'By not allowing me to enter you have behaved like a Daitya (*rakshasa*)'. She cursed Sridama saying that he will be born upon the earth in an *asura* family. Aggrieved Sridama said 'You have cursed me without any reason. I too curse you that you also will be born on earth. You will suffer in the fire of separation (from Krishna) for one hundred years! What is my fault? I was just following my friend's orders'.

"Hearing Sridama's curse Srimati Radharani began to cry. Hearing all the commotion, Krishna came out of the *kunj*. Consoling Radharani Sri Krishna said 'Don't cry Kishori. I too shall appear on earth. This time our *leela* will happen in Vraja Dham'. Rai Kishori said 'When I am born there the first thing I want to see is your lotus face. Unless I feel your touch I shall not open my eyes'. Shyamasundar said 'So be it'."



Krishna asks Radharadhi to open her eyes and see him

"Many people think that Srimati Radharani is older than Sri Krishna. This is not correct. Radharani is one year younger than Krishna. In Vraja Dham when Vrishabhanu Maharaj's wife Kirtida Devi gave birth to a girl child then Nanda Maharaj said to his wife Yashoda 'Your friend Kirtida has given birth to a girl child, but the infant seems to be blind. She hasn't opened her eyes yet. Go and see the mother and child'."

"As Rani Yashomati was going to her friend's house, little Gopal climbed into her lap. Reaching Kirtida's house Yashoda started talking with her and Krishna got off her lap and crawled to Radharani's crib. Seeing her lying there he touched her eyes and said 'Kishori! I have come. Open your eyes now and see me'. Upon feeling the touch of Krishna's lotus hand, Srimati Radharani opened her eyes. Kirtida exclaimed 'Does your Gopal know magic?' Then she picked up Radharani and placed her into Yashoda's lap and putting Radharani's hand into Krishna's hand she said "Here, I have given my daughter into Gopal's hand".

The Fruit Seller

(22 July 1988)

"In Sridham Vrindavan there lived an aged woman fruit seller. Once she came in the vicinity of Nanda Bhavan and called out "Buy my fruits! Here! Buy my fresh fruits!" Hearing her call little Gopal came running out of the house and said "O Fruit seller! I want some fruits". The old woman saw the child and was struck with wonder. She thought 'Ah! What a beautiful child! I cannot turn my eyes away from him!' Gopal spoke sweetly lisping like a baby. The fruit-seller woman said 'Why would I not give someone like you my fruits? I shall give you all the fruits of my karma of many lifetimes! I shall certainly give you the fruits but what will you give me in return?'"

"Little Gopal went back inside the house and from a sack of grain that was kept in the courtyard, he scooped some grain in both hands and looked around to make sure that his mother was not watching. Tiptoeing slowly so that his ankle bells did not jingle too loudly, he silently brought the grains in his small cupped hands, which resembled red lotuses. Few grains kept falling from his tiny hands as he walked to the fruit-seller woman and there was only very little left in his hands."



The fruit-seller woman and Krishna

"Looking at sweet little Gopal, the fruit-seller woman thought 'Ah! If only this child would call me 'Ma' once'. Gopal asked her "What are you thinking?" The woman

answered 'Will you address me as Ma once? Will you come into my lap?' Gopal replied 'You are my mother mago'. Saying this he got into her lap. Taking him in her lap the woman's eyes began streaming with tears which moistened her chest. Gopal said 'You really are my mother, but you have forgotten. I shall now give you the divine sight to see who you were. In Treta Yuga you were Guha Chandal's mother and I was Ramachandra. You lovingly fed me so many delicious food items. I sat with Sita and relished the food to my full satisfaction. You fed me with your own hands. After killing Ravana when I returned with Sita after fourteen years, you were waiting for me and how overjoyed you were to see me'."

"The fruit-seller woman saw a vision in front of her with Sri Ramachandra and Guha's mother Kadambini lovingly feeding him. Lord Ramachandra said 'Now see'. Now the woman saw that Baby Gopal was sitting in her lap and calling her 'Ma, Ma'. Gopal said 'Give me your fruits Ma... all of them'. The fruit-seller woman said 'I shall give all my fruits to you. I shall give you the fruits of my *karma* of many lifetimes. Who would not give everything to one like you?' The woman emptied her basket and gave all the fruits to Gopal and picking up her empty basket she went away wiping her tears of joy".

"After a while she felt that the basket on her head was feeling heavy. When she took it down she saw that her basket was filled with invaluable jewels and gems. Can anyone who has had His *darshan* ever lack for anything?"

"Guha's mother Kadambini in Treta Yuga and Dwapar Yuga's fruit-seller woman was in Kali Yuga born as Sridhar, the banana flower and stem seller in Navadwip during Gaur avatar. Sridhar was extremely poor. Whatever he earned by selling his banana products in the market, he would spend half of it in the worship of Ganga and the rest was for him and his family to subsist on".

"Once Nimai Pundit went to Sridhar's stall. Picking out the items he wanted he asked Sridhar 'How much for this?' Sridhar replied 'Sixteen *annas*'. Prabhu said 'Listen Sridhar I will give you eight *annas*...'. Sridhar countered, 'This is the fixed price. No discount'. A loving tussle ensued between the Lord and his dear devotee. Prabhu kept insisting and Sridhar kept resisting. In this way, the tug of war continued for a few minutes. Then Prabhu said 'Sridhar! Do you know who I am?' Sridhar replied 'Why wouldn't I know? You are Nimai Pundit, Jagannatha Mishra's son'. Prabhu said 'The Ganga, whom you worship every day, I am her father'. Sridhar said 'If that is so, then you do not have to pay anything. Just take it for free'.

"Everyday Sridhar would lovingly select and keep aside his best produce for Mahaprabhu. Without Sridhar's banana flower and stem, Mahaprabhu would not be satisfied. The Lord is most happy with his devotees' offerings".

"Once Prabhu went to the market and found that Sridhar was not there. He asked the nearby stall owner where Sridhar was. The man replied that Sridhar was at

home, delirious with high fever. When Prabhu heard this he ran along the banks of the Ganga to Sridhar's house, which was at a distance of three miles. Running on the hot sand he kept saying "Sridhar Sridhar". Sridhar's wife was standing at the entrance of the hut. When she saw Mahaprabhu running towards the hut, she recognised him from the descriptions Sridhar had given about his beauty and qualities and she quickly stepped into the hut. Prabhu entered and said 'Sridhar! I have come!' Sridhar was writhing in high fever and muttering 'Vishwambhar Nimai Pundit is my Lord. May he be my Lord birth after birth'."

"Sridhar was lying on the ground. Prabhu went and lifted Sridhar in his arms. Sridhar cried aloud and said "Lord! What are you doing? Your golden body will become soiled by touching me. My body is so dirty and smelly due to the fever". Prabhu said 'Sridhar I am always hungry for love. Touching you will render the three worlds pure. Your devotion has the power to purify all the three worlds'."



Sridhar sees Mahaprabhu 's divine form

"The Lord passed his lotus hands all over Sridhar's body. Now recovered, Sridhar sat up and said 'Prabhu you are so merciful'. Prabhu said 'Look here Sridhar, see who you are and who I am. I am giving you the divine sight'. Sridhar saw the same scene from Treta Yuga of Kadambini Guha's mother feeding Sri Ramachandra with her hands and then he saw in Dwapar Yuga the fruit-seller woman with Gopal in her lap".

"Prabhu said 'In Treta Yuga you were Guha Chandal's mother and I was Ramachandra and in Dwapar you were the fruit-seller woman and I was Krishna'. Then Sridhar's transcendental

vision vanished and he saw Nimai Pundit in front of him. Prabhu then said 'Sridhar I'm very thirsty, give me some water'. Sridhar replied 'Prabhu I have just one iron cup which has a hole in it. In what can I offer you water?' Prabhu said 'So what?' Saying this Mahaprabhu took the cup and pressing his finger against the hole, filled it with water and drank it. After drinking Prabhu said 'I am satisfied'. Sridhar said 'This is your causeless mercy'. The news of Nimai Pundit drinking water at Sridhar's house spread all over Navadwip and became a well-known *leela* of the Lord".

Completing Sridhar's story Maharaj said "Just as one has to drink tender coconut water directly from the coconut as otherwise its taste will change, in the same way one should hear Krishna *katha* directly from a devotee as otherwise its import will change".

Damodar Leela

(22 October 2002)

"It was the early morning of the first day of Kartik. Taking along all his people, Nanda Maharaj went in a big procession to worship Giri Govardhan. Rani Yashomati was churning yoghurt and softly singing *padavali kirtan* and Gopal was sleeping. Presently Gopal awoke and opened his lotus eyes and went to his mother, who was churning the curd for him only. Looking at his mother Gopal gestured that he wanted to suckle her milk and grabbed the churning stick. Ma Yashoda happily put aside the churning rod and placed Gopal on her lap and he began to nurse".

"There in the kitchen, the milk from Padmagandha cows was on the stove. Yashoda saw that the milk had boiled and was spilling over. Quickly she forcibly removed Gopal from her breast and putting him down, ran to the kitchen to save the milk. Little Gopal became very angry at being abruptly removed from his mother's lap and put down on the floor. He saw a stone lying there and with all his strength he threw it on the pot containing the yoghurt. The earthen pot shattered and the curd spilt all around. Seeing the damage he had done, he became afraid that his mother will be very angry. Ma Yashoda reduced the flame on the stove and returned to Krishna".

"While narrating the story sitting on the shore of Brahma Kunda in Haridwar Srila Sukadev Goswami told Maharaj Parikshit 'King, the pot broke into pieces and the curd spilt all around, as if crying that it had been deprived of the opportunity to serve Krishna. Everyone wants to serve Krishna hence the curd was crying'. Parikshit Maharaj listened with rapt attention, amazed".

"Ma Yashoda returned to see the churned curd split all over the floor. She thought that if Gopal continued with his precocious behaviour in this manner, then he will become quite uncontrollable, 'It is my duty to discipline him'. The epitome of maternal love Yashoda did not consider Krishna to be the Supreme Godhead but her little boy. She began to search for him. Seeing her coming Gopal ran in fear knowing she will punish him and discipline him. Ma Yashoda too was chasing him with the same intention. But she fell down in running after him and couldn't catch him".

"Hari, the Giver of Liberation, thought that it is impossible for anyone to catch me unless I myself allow it'. Impossible even for Ma Yashoda.

When a devotee, having performed penance to Krishna for long, realises that he doesn't have the *yoga-bal* (power of yoga), *tapo-bal* (power of penance) nor the *karma-phal* (fruit of karma), to attain Hari by his own efforts, then and only then the Lord compassionately showers His grace on the devotee and gives Himself to him".

"Seeing Mother Yashoda perspiring and greatly hassled Krishna thought that if he didn't stop running Ma would never be able to catch him. In the same way when a devotee is completely exhausted in his endeavours and is ready to surrender, then Bhagavan comes before him. Thus he decided to stop running and allowed himself to be caught.



Krishna tied up to a mortar
by Mother Yashoda

Seeing the stick in her hand, Krishna fearfully rubbed his tear-filled eyes, smearing the kohl of his eyes all over his face and looked extraordinarily beautiful. Ma Yashoda then caught Gopal by his hand and brought him into the courtyard. Seeing tears of fear in Gopal's eyes she threw away the stick and decided to tie him up. Mother Yashoda got busy in trying to bind the Giver of Liberation Sri Hari with a rope. When she wanted to tie a knot she found that the rope was two fingers short. Some women who were there went to find more rope. But every time they added more rope they found it was still two fingers too short. Mother Yashoda thought why is the rope always two fingers short? Unable to bind him but not ready to give up, Yashoda was totally perplexed".

"Continuing his narration Sri Sukadev Goswami said 'O King, He who is feared even by Yamaraj, is now afraid of innocent Mother Yashoda. Both his eyes were filled with tears'. The same principle is seen here

- when the devotee after trying their best, is ready to give up, at that moment the Lord showers His mercy. There is always a distance of two fingers between Bhagavan and his devotee. When the devotee performs his spiritual practice he moves one finger toward the Lord. On his part Sri Bhagavan also moves towards him by one finger. Thus they unite in the middle of the river of love".

"Seeing his mother utterly exhausted, Gopal thought 'Now I have to be bound'. Just then Ma Yashoda untied the string that held her hair up and added it to the rope to bind Krishna. This time she was able to tie him up. To make sure he remained in one place, she tied him up to a big grinding mortar in the courtyard".

"In Sanskrit a rope is called "Daam" and the stomach is called "Udar". Because Yashoda tied Gopal around his stomach with a rope, therefore he is called Damodar (*daam+udar* = Damodar). The Hindu month of Kartik (Oct-Nov) is known

as Damodar Month. During this month devotees remember this *leela* of Mother Yashoda and Gopal and observe fasts and other austerities.”

“Sukadev Goswami continued ‘The Giver of Liberation Sri Hari is now bound to a mortar with a rope. Now He would understand what it feels like to be in the position of a bound soul just like all of us in this material world who have to go through joy, sorrow, sickness etc. Living entities are bound by His insurmountable Maya’.”

“Now what did Srila Sukadev Goswami say next? ‘The Treasurer of the demigods Kuber had two sons - Nalakuvara and Manigriva. They were followers of Rudra. Steeped in arrogance they believed everything untrue to be true. They consumed liquor and lived an unprincipled life. One day both of them accompanied by many women were frolicking in the river Mandakini, in the nude. Just then Devarishi Narada passed by the Mandakini singing the praises of Lord Hari. He was aghast to see the unbridled shameless behaviour of the two men’.

“Seeing the Devarishi, the women came out of the river and bowed to him. But Nalakuvara and Manigriva remained in the water totally intoxicated. Narada thought ‘Being followers of Rudra is this their behaviour? I shall have to do something to ensure their salvation’. Those who are *Mahapurush* (great souls), always feel very sad to see the moral decline of men”.

“Devarishi said to them ‘Being sons of Kuber, you have displayed the most uncivilised behaviour. Your weakness for liquor and women had led you to this state where you have lost the sense to discriminate between good and bad. Now therefore, both of you will lose your sense faculties and become trees. Become a pair of Arjuna trees and remain thus until you attain stillness’.

Hearing the curse of Narada both Nalakuvara and Manigriva came running to him to beg forgiveness. Narada said ‘I was chanting the glories of Sri Radha Madhava for your benefit, but you did not even hear it. Although blessed with the ability to hear the Lord’s name yet you did not do that and displayed vulgar behaviour. So therefore both of you will become a pair of immobile Arjuna trees and dwell in Nanda Maharaj’s palace. In the forthcoming Dwapar Yuga, Lord Krishna will deliver you. When Krishna, bound up in ropes by his mother will glance upon you, you shall be released from your bondage’.”



Krishna liberates Manigriva and Nalakuvara

"Whatever great souls utter is always for the benefit of mankind. It is never to be taken as a curse but rather as a blessing".

"Mother Yashoda had tied Gopal to a grinding mortar and gone inside the house. Now Gopal started walking slowly dragging the heavy mortar behind him. In this way he came between the two Arjuna trees. He crawled through the small gap between the trees but the mortar got stuck in between. When he tried to pull it through the twin trees with all his strength, both the fully grown trees were uprooted fell with a great crash on the ground. There emerged two godlike entities from the trees. They fell prostrate at the Lord's feet and said 'Although we were blessed with sense faculties yet we never used it for any good. Now please bless us that we may always be engaged in your devotional service'."

"In the Bhagavat Gita Sri Krishna said to Arjuna 'O Arjuna! The mind is very restless; it cannot be disciplined. It can't be easily controlled. The mind is the King of all the senses but it has negative tendencies. However when the mind is surrendered (to God), then all the other senses too are automatically surrendered. Therefore, just surrender your mind to Me'. Arjuna replied 'To give up my mind is very difficult O Krishna. The mind is under the control of Maya and it the main reason for our attachment to material things. Hence it is not possible for me to surrender my mind'."

"Sri Krishna replied 'If you cannot do that, simply love me'. Arjuna replied 'Even that is not possible. My love has already been distributed among my wife, sons and family. How can I give you all my love. My affection is not pure as my mind and consciousness have not been purified'."

"Krishna continued 'If even that is not possible for you, then simply do your duty and surrender the fruits of your actions to me. You say that devotional love has not awokened in you and that your love is polluted. Just surrender your actions to me'. Arjuna said 'How is it possible to give up my doership in my actions? I cannot do it'."

"The simplest way to attain the Lord is by pure love. The living entity is naturally drawn to love. Living in the world of Maya his love has become polluted. Just as water is always pure but it becomes polluted due to external factors. Then there is a need to filter it. In the same way our natural love of God which has become impure, can be purified by the process of *bhajan*. A brass pot needs to be cleaned everyday only then it shines. Regular association with holy persons (*sadhu-sangh*) and hearing Krishna *katha* will remove the impurity in our minds. Devotional love (*prem bhakti*) will slowly awaken".

***Bhramite bhramite yadi sadhu-vaidya paya
Tanra upadesha-mantre pisachi paalaya***

– Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita 14-15

'While roaming in the different worlds birth after birth, when a living entity finally meets a true saint, the Maya demoness flees from his mind'.

"When Arjuna said that he cannot not even surrender his mind, then Krishna tells him to at least bow down once to Him. Rabindranath Thakur has said 'May I be able surrender my whole self in one namaskar, Lord, one namaskar'. Then the sons of Kuber said 'Lord, now please bless us that we may always serve you with all our senses, to your satisfaction'."

"Nanda Maharaj and his associates entered the courtyard just as the two trees fell crashing down. They witnessed this incredible incident. The sons of Kuber vanished from sight and Nanda untied Gopal's ropes and picked him up in his arms. Mother Yashoda had tied him up and his father Nanda released him from his bondage".

"Sitting in his father's lap Gopal complained about his mother 'Maiya is always scolding me; she tied me up without any reason. She has no consideration that I am a mere child. Dada Balaram eats the churned butter but I am called a butter-thief. I will not stay here anymore. I shall cross the Yamuna and run away'."

"Srila Sukadev Goswami said to Parikshit Maharaj 'Rajan, whosoever hears this story of Lord Krishna's Damodar *leela* in the month of Kartik with faith and devotion, their *karmas* of many lifetimes will be burnt up'. Those who give a religious discourse of this text will of course, be benefitted but even those who hear it with faith and devotion will be greatly blessed".

"In the Srimad Bhagavatam it is said 'Those who are ignorant, nothing needs to be said about them; but those who possess wrong knowledge and make a show of religiosity - their consequences will be fearful'."

"During the month of Kartik, devotees vow to undertake a fixed routine of religious practices (*niyam seva*), through hearing and chanting the Lord's *katha* or name. Sri Mahaprabhu's associates such as Mukunda Dutta, Govinda Das, Srila Haridas Thakur, Sanatan Goswami, Raghunath Das Goswami etc., followed this practice of *niyam seva* in Kartik. Just remembering their glories we shall be supremely blessed".

"We should always remember that whatever devotional practices we undertake, they are only for the satisfaction and happiness of Sri Hari, not for our own happiness. He is the only object of worship and worth following".

*Hey Krishna karuna sindhu deenabandhu jagatpate
Gopesh Gopika kaanta Radha kaanta namostute*

Summary of Discourse on Raas Leela

(Anjangularh)

"It was the full moon night in the autumn season. Mother Yashoda fed Gopal milk and butter and put him to sleep. But sleep eluded Gopal's eyes. Through the open window, the rays of the full moon were falling on Gopal's lotus face. Gopal saw that the full moon was surrounded by many stars in the clear night sky. He thought just as the Moon is surrounded by stars today, in the same way I too will be surrounded by the gopis. He recalled the promise he had made to the Gopis on another full moon night. Which promise?"



Devi Katyayani of Vrindavan

"All the unmarried and married *gopikas* of Vraja heard about the extraordinary beauty and qualities of Krishna from Yogamaya Pournamasi Devi and they yearned to have Krishna as their husband. Following her advice and in order to have their wish fulfilled, they undertook a religious vow to propitiate Goddess Katyayani Durga for a full month".

"Who is Katyayani Devi? The sage Katyayan performed penance and worship of Devi Bhavani (Durga), in Vrindavan and obtained her *darshan*. Pleased with his devotion she said to him 'Those who worship me here (in Vrindavan), will have their wishes fulfilled'. Granting this boon she added 'I shall be known as Devi Katyayani here'."

"The Vraja *gopis* would rise in the pre-dawn hours during the early winter season (November/December), walk in a group to have a bath in the Yamuna and in their wet clothes, worship Goddess Katyayani on the banks of the river for a full month. Their prayer was '*Nanda-sutam patim me dehi...*'. Meaning they wanted only the son of Nanda Maharaj Krishna, as their husband and not any other Krishna. They marked this distinction very particularly".

"After the completion of a month, Krishna accompanied by his intimate friends Daam, Sudama, Vasudama and Sridama went to see the *gopis*. He made a promise to them 'My dear Gopis, after a year, in the next autumn season on the full moon night, I shall fulfil your wish. On that day you will attain me'. The *gopis* completed

their vow and returned to their homes. They waited eagerly for that full moon night when in the clear autumnal sky the moon would be surrounded by all the stars”.

“Recalling his promise to the *gopis*, Gopal took his flute and left his bed. He went to Vamshivat by the bank of the Yamuna. There standing in a three-fold posture he began to play his sweet flute. Krishna vibrated the Kaam Gayatri mantra through his flute which was irresistibly attractive to the gopis. His flute emitted a blissful transcendental vibration. When that enchanting sound entered the ears of the *gopis* who had already surrendered their hearts to Krishna, they immediately dropped whatever they were doing and ran towards the sound. They did not even look at each other. They were on a journey of love (*abhisor*) to their beloved Krishna. What was the state of the *gopis* whose consciousness was surrendered to Krishna? These gopis were in *kanta-bhava* or desirous of conjugal relationship with Krishna. When that transcendental melody entered their hearts through their ears, they became agitated with love. It was as if Sri Krishna virtually pulled the gopis, who are His own, by the hair to come to him”.

“The crest jewel of Paramhansa Goswamis Srila Sukadev Goswami continued narrating to Maharaj Parikshit, ‘Rajan, the *gopis* filled with love came in groups to meet with Krishna’. Sitting and narrating the Bhagavat katha in Haridwar on the banks of the Brahma Kunda, Sukadev Goswami envisioned that he was in Vamshivat on the Yamuna, that is why he described the *gopis* as ‘coming’ (to Vamshivat), rather than ‘going’.”

“Maharaj Parikshit asked ‘How is it that no one else heard the sound of the flute?’ Sukadev Goswami replied ‘The living entities in this material world are mired in their own bondage; some are engaged in sense gratification, some are busy in acquiring knowledge and yet others are engaged in karmic pursuits, thus they were deaf to the transcendental vibration of Krishna’s flute’. Maharaj Parikshit asked ‘How will this deafness go?’ Sukadev Goswami replied ‘Rajan, by hearing and remembering the *gopis*’ journey of love towards Krishna, this deafness will be removed’.”

“The Vraja *gopis* can be classified into five categories,

1. *Rishichari*
2. *Shrutichari*
3. *Devipoorva*
4. *Saadhansiddha*
5. *Nityasiddha*

“*Rishichari* gopis were those sages and *rishis* who dwelt in Dandakaranya forest during Lord Rama’s exile in Treta Yuga. After Sita devi was kidnapped by Ravana and Rama was disconsolate, crying out ‘Ha Sita! Ha Sita!’ the sages seeing his state thought that if we too had served Rama so well, then he would have loved us

as much as he loves Sita. Knowing their heart's desire, Sri Ramachandra told them 'In the next Dwapar Yuga your desire will be fulfilled'."

"*Shrutichari gopis* were in their previous lives goddesses of Shruti (Veda). *Devipoorva gopis* were demigoddesses in Devlok. *Sadhansiddha gopis* were originally goddesses who, on the instructions of Lord Brahma, performed penance to attain Krishna. *Nityasiddha gopis* are the eternal gopis who permanently reside in Golok Vrindavan. When Sri Krishna incarnates in the world to perform his *leela*, the *Nityasiddha gopis* also incarnate to participate in his *leela*".



Gopis arriving at Vamshivat to meet Krishna

"Smiling sweetly, the crest-jewel of all Relishers, Shyamsundar said 'Welcome, welcome'. Sri Krishna thought 'The world should know how much these *gopis* love me'. He continued 'O most fortunate ones, is all well in Vraja? What is the purpose of your coming here to this dense forest in the dead of the night? What can I do for you, please tell me'."

"The Vraja *gopis* were stunned and stood still wondering 'Why is

he talking in this manner? When he knows about our internal feelings for him, how can he ask us why we have come here? Why such formal behaviour?' But the *gopis* were unable to say anything. In their hearts they thought 'If all was not well in Vraja, then our husbands would have come to you and not us'. Their hearts were bursting with emotions but they were unable to utter a word".

"Seeing them standing silent Krishna told them 'If you have come here to admire the beauty of the forest on this full moon night, then do so and return to your homes and serve your husbands. Your husbands must be worried not to find you at home and must be searching for you'."

"Just as one's head is lowered when a heavy burden is placed on it, the *gopis* too lowered their heads due to the heavy burden of their sorrow. Just then their glance fell on Shyamsundar's lotus feet. Even though his face was heartless, his lotus feet were not so. The *gopis* began to talk amongst themselves saying 'If he is going to humiliate us like this, it is better that we go and drown in the Yamuna'. Srimati Radharani said 'To take one's own life is a great sin and we shall be eternally barred from serving his lotus feet'."

"The supremely clever Krishna continued 'It is not right for you to dally with another man in this dark lonely forest filled with wild animals. You should return to your homes and serve your husbands'."

"One of the *gopis* said, 'If one's husband is away earning a living in another place, the chaste wife worships his image. But when the husband is at home then is the wife expected to continue worshipping his image? We have worshipped our husbands' image (Krishna) at home and now that we have come to your lotus feet we want to serve you. After giving up our families, relatives, husbands and children, societal norms and even religion we have come to you. So do not tell us about morality and *dharma*. You should say all this to those persons who are not yet surrendered to you. Your lotus feet are the source of transcendental nectar; they bestow fearlessness and destroy all sorrow. That is why having surrendered to your lotus feet we have lost all fear of the world. We have become fearless'."

"Another *gopi* said 'If a person forcibly drags a woman from her home, ties her up to a tree, flogs her and asks why she has come here; your words are exactly like that!' Another *gopi* said 'If you continue talking to us in such a cruel manner and tell us to leave, we shall either enter the dense forest and be devoured by the wild animals or else we shall drown ourselves in the Yamuna. We certainly do not want to return to our homes'."

"Krishna said 'I can see that you all have no fear of anything, but I have! I am famous as a *brahmachari* in Vraja. You want to ruin my good name? If I spend the night in this lonely forest with you all, my good name will be tainted. I have a fear of being publicly disgraced. When you love someone, would you try to ruin them? Hence do not attempt to ruin me and return to your homes'."

"The state of the *gopis* became very pitiful. With their faces lowered they began praying in their hearts 'Hey Govinda rakho chorone...' (O Krishna, keep us at your lotus feet...)".

"Now abandoning his cleverness Shyamsundar said 'Very well, since you are not willing to return to your homes, then let us all go to the *raas mandala*'. Now it was the turn of the *gopis* to be mischievous, they said 'Now why should we go with you? We are famously known as chaste women in Vrindavan. We too are afraid of disgrace'. Shyamsundar thought, 'Now what is this? They are just telling me what I told them'."

"When the *gopis* thus turned their faces away, then by the influence of Yogamaya - who arranges all the paraphernalia of *raas leela* - the impossible became possible and a transcendental miracle took place. The divine *raas leela* started. There were as many Krishnas as there were *gopis*. With every *gopi* there was the Supreme Enjoyer Krishna. In this situation the Demigod of Desire (Kaam) Madan appeared".



Raas Leela

"The husband of Rati, Madan was extremely arrogant. He felt that right from Brahma down to the lower living entities, everyone was under his irresistible influence. Lord Shiva had burnt up Madan in anger but there was nothing remarkable about this. Although Madan's body was reduced to ashes, his presence continued to dwell in the minds of living entities. As he lives in the mind, hence he is called Madan and dwelling in the mind, his pride became excessive. He thought nobody could resist his power. Madan thought 'Even Sri Ramachandra could not escape my power; losing Sita he had cried 'Ha Sita Ha Sita! and lamented greatly. And afraid of me, Krishna plays like a small boy in Vrindavan'."

"The omniscient and in-dwelling Sri Hari saw the pride and arrogance of Madan. He thought Madan's arrogance will have to be crushed. Krishna addressed the *gopis*, 'Madan has arrived and I shall fight with him. Will you all be my chariots?' The *gopis* replied 'Yes, we are ready'. Krishna said 'But please be aware that you will be gravely wounded in this fight. I shall be in the chariot'. The *gopis* said 'For your happiness, we are ready to be wounded. Our bodies, mind and consciousness are all completely surrendered to your lotus feet'."

"Krishna then challenged Madan. Whoever challenges their opponents for a fight, then it is to be understood that they are very strong. Krishna told Madan 'Attack!' Madan got into the fight with his flower bow and five arrows of beauty, temptation of the tongue, alluring music, touch and enchanting fragrance".

"Srimati Radharani and the rest of the *gopis* took on their bodies, the onslaught of the arrows shot by Madan. Krishna remained in the chariot unmoved. Madan's quiver became empty and he was running away embarrassed, but on the indication

of Krishna, the *gopis* caught hold of him. Krishna told Madan, 'Give me your solemn oath that you will never go near my devotees'. Madan promised and said 'All this time I acted as a hindrance but now I shall act as a facilitator between you and your devotee. I shall help your devotee'."

"Sitting on the chariot-like hearts of the *gopis* Krishna defeated Madan in the great battle of love, hence he is known as Madan Mohan. In the *raas mandala* Madan was enchanted by Sri Krishna. The demigods and goddesses witnessed this extraordinary *raas leela* from the heavens. The *raas leela* went on for a full day of Brahma".

"Continuing his narration Srila Sukadev Goswami said to Maharaj Parikshit, 'O King, whoever hears this tale of the wonderful fight between Krishna and Madan during the *raas leela*, the disease of their minds namely, lust and desire, will be destroyed'."

"Maharaj Parikshit had a question 'All those gopis who were with Krishna on that night, were they not committing the sin of union with another man?' Sukadev Goswami replied 'Rajan, Sri Krishna is the Supreme Being. He is the Husband of all husbands, the Lord of the Universe. If any act is committed keeping him in the centre (of one's consciousness), that is not considered a sin. In the *Raas* the individual souls went to meet the Supreme Soul. Sri Krishna is the final destination and the ultimate shelter of all *jivas*'."

"When the *raas* dance was going on, every *gopi* saw that Krishna was dancing with her alone with his hands on her shoulders. For a minute the *gopis* thought how fortunate they are that they had attained Krishna. Neither Brahmani, nor Indrani or Rudrani had attained him. Thus their minds wandered to those topics were Krishna was not present. Sukadev Goswami said 'Rajan, the Vraja *gopis* became momentarily proud'."

"In the midst of all this, Srimati Radharani became annoyed. Radharani being the chief paramour of Krishna, used to frequently get angry with him, with or without any reason. She saw that all the *gopis* were with her beloved. Normally he (Krishna), is with her alone but on this night he was with all the other *gopis*. She thought 'If he can do *raas* with the others, then so be it. Where is the need for me?' Radharani's mind and her thoughts were centred in Krishna. Pouting with loving anger, she left the *raas mandala* and went away. Noticing her absence, Krishna realised that without Radharani the *raas leela* is simply not possible. Just as flowers are woven on a single thread to make a garland, in the same way Radharani is the main thread holding the *raas* together. Without her all the rest of the flowers (*gopis*) fell apart. He also then left the *raas mandala* and went in search of her".

"There are two reasons why Krishna left the *raas leela* arena. The first reason was to check the pride of the *gopis* and increase their pure love for him. When milk

comes to a boil on the fire, if the heat is reduced and the milk continues to boil, it attains thickness and better taste. Secondly, Krishna wanted to find Radharani and be alone with her, which would also pacify her jealous anger”.

“Sukadev Goswami continued ‘Rajan, Krishna attracts all beings, but who is it who has attracted Him? That is only Raseshwari Rai Kishori Srimati Radharani’. Krishna went in search of Radharani and found her in a lonely grove. After placating her for some time, they both started plucking flowers. Radharani was not able to pluck flowers from the higher branches. Shyamsundar said ‘Kishori, climb on to my shoulders and pluck them’. Srimati did so. Shyamsundar said ‘Priya ju, hold on tightly to the branch’. As she held the branch with both her hands, the Supreme Prankster Krishna moved away leaving her hanging on and swinging from the branch. After hanging for a while in this manner, Radharani finally let go of the branch and fell down unconscious”.

“Now let us return to the *gopis* in the *raas mandala*. When they found Krishna absent from their midst, the *gopis* desperately started searching for him. Maddened with the pain of separation, they addressed the trees in the grove ‘O tall Ashoka, O mighty banyan tree! Have you seen our heart’s beloved?’ Getting no answer from them they said ‘Why would you tell us? You are all male. You can never understand the agony of our hearts’. Then they asked the tulasi shrub ‘Have you seen our Shyamsundar passing from here?’ Again not getting any answer the *gopis* said ‘Why would you help us? Are you not our rival co-wife? Even if you have seen him you would not tell us’.”

“Thus lamenting in grief, the *gopis* kept walking in the woods and presently they saw the footprints of Krishna in the soft sand. They also saw a pair of smaller footprints alongside Krishna’s. The *gopis* concluded that the footprints belonged to Radharani. Then they started taunting her intimate friends, ‘See! Look at the behaviour of your great friend. She is roaming around alone with Krishna’. Thus maddened by the agony of separation from Krishna, the *gopis* started saying anything that came into their minds”.

“Walking on still further they saw that only one pair of larger footprints were in the sand. Continuing to walk they came upon Srimati Radharani lying in a grove unconscious”.

“Raseshwari Rai Kishori Srimati Radharani, whose complexion like a golden *champak* flower, was lying on the ground like a *champak* garland. The *gopis*, who until now were taunting Radharani’s friends, said ‘After losing Krishna none of us were in this condition! We simply started searching for Krishna’.”



Smt.Radharani gave the Mahamantra to all the gopis

"The intimate friends of Radharani sat surrounding her. Regaining consciousness Radharani said 'If we keep following him, Krishna will go deeper and deeper into the woods. His body, which is softer than freshly-churned butter, will be wounded by the thorns in the forest'. Even after being abandoned by Krishna, Srimati Radharani was deeply concerned for his well-being. She said 'Come! Let us all sit here and cry loudly 'Ha Krishna! Ha Krishna!'.

That night Srimati Radharani chanted the Mahamantra for the first time. That Holy Name, which until then was hidden in transcendental Golok Dham, was first given to the *gopis* by Vrindavaneshwari Srimati Radharani. All the *gopis* then chanted Krishna *naam* in unison. In this way, the *gopis* who were like different streams of love for Krishna, went and merged in the great lake of Krishna *prema*".

"Hiding near the entrance of the grove, the crest jewel of all Enjoyers Shyamsundar heard all their talks. How much longer could he stay away from his dearest *gopis* after giving them so much pain? At last he appeared in front of them. Covering his face with his upper cloth he stood in front of them, a mischievous smile on his red lips. Srila Sukadev Goswami said 'Krishna had a guilty smile on his face, just as a small child goes and hides under a bed while his mother searches for him frantically everywhere and then finally, the naughty boy comes out of hiding with a mischievous smile. This was exactly the sentiment of the Supreme Prankster Shyamsundar'."

"The *gopis* who had lost their senses in separation from Krishna, now became angry upon seeing him standing in front of them. One of them said 'Listen Shyam, there are three types of people in this world; *bhajile bhaje* - something for something; just as people will invest and tend to their cows because it will give

them milk. A reciprocal attitude. Second category is *na bhajileo bhaje* - something for nothing. Just as when parents take care of their children without expecting anything in return; an attitude of natural affection, like *sadhus* who serve humanity without any expectation in return, purely out of love. And the third category is *bhajileo bhaje na* - nothing for something. When the receiver of affection not only does nothing in return, but rather he maligns his well-wishers and stabs them from the front".

"Sri Krishna said 'I understand! You want to put me in the third category! But you should also know that I am not like the other men in this world. When someone does even a little for me, I return it many times over. Listen to me my dearly beloved *gopis*, I have been conquered by you because your love is exclusively for me and me only. I have many dear devotees and I am loved by many, but I have been defeated by you".

"In the Bhagavat Gita the Lord says that he reciprocates the exact same sentiment with which a person worships him. But in relation to the *gopis*, Krishna could not keep this promise. He lost to them".

"By the influence of Yogamaya, the expert who makes the impossible possible, the *raas leela* started once again. The *raas* went on for a very long time - the duration of one day of Brahma - for one full year on the earth.

*He Krishna karuna sindhu deena bandhu jagatpate
Gopesh gopika kaanta Radhakaanta namostute*

*Raas keli varna adhikari raas holi nayakam
Raas leela tikakaar raas rasa adhishwaram
Dheer lalit aapta tripta aapta kaam atmarama ramam
Pranamami Gaur Hari Sravan Tirtha padam*

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