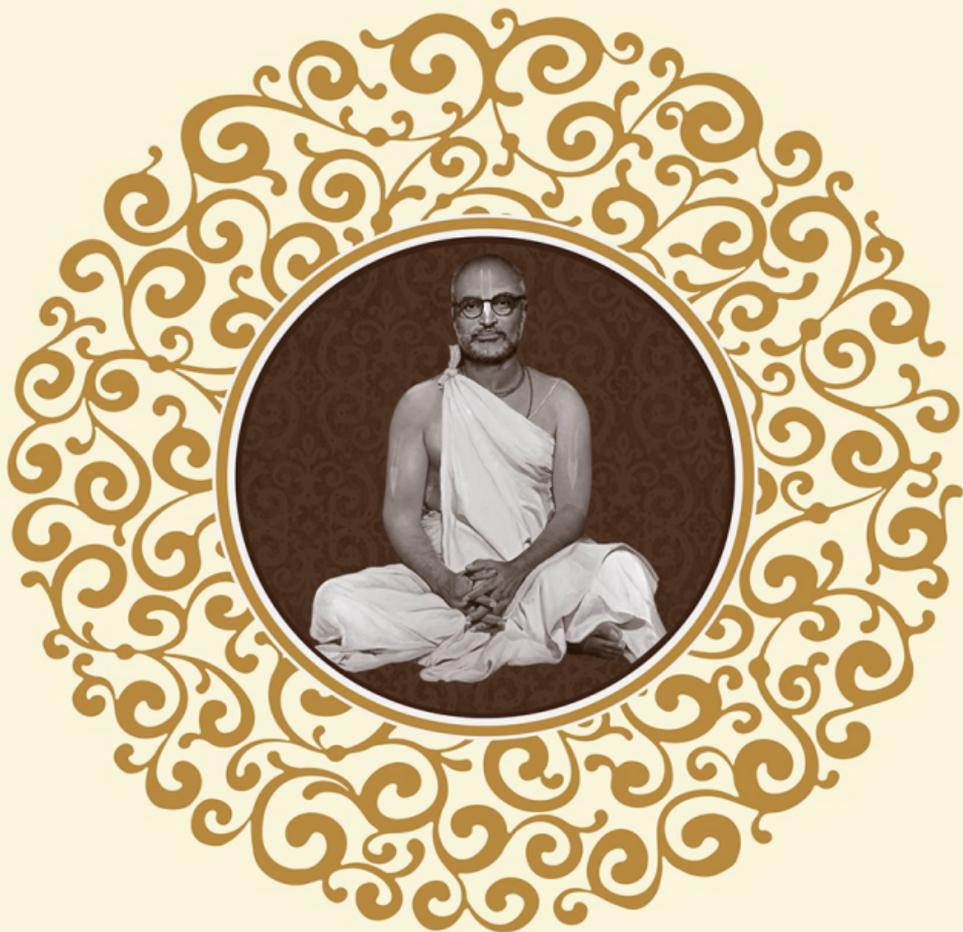


Volcanic Energy

Lessons from the Life of
Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja



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

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śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

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Introduction

The words of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, the very embodiment of Śrī Gaurāṅga-deva's mercy potency (*śrī-gaura-karuṇā-śakti-vigraha*), were the very life and soul of my most worshipful *gurupāda-padma*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Throughout his life, Guru Mahārāja deeply imbibed the principles of Śrīla Prabhupāda and perfectly followed his conduct, without the slightest deviation. This book is a collection of my personal experiences with Guru Mahārāja, as well as my personal views on the lessons to be learned from those experiences.

Although externally, the precepts of one pure *ācārya* may appear different from those of another pure *ācārya*—as may the methods through which they express those precepts in their conduct—they are, in fact, non-different and completely harmonious. Thus, this publication is beneficial not only for the disciples and grand-disciples of Guru Mahārāja, but for all devotees who sincerely desire to understand and implement in their life the finer points of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings, for it provides an account of the exemplary life of a pure Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*. By reading this publication, sincere devotees will certainly be inspired to eagerly traverse the path leading to pure *bhakti*.

In my advanced age, I am unable to perform any physical

service, and my memory is beginning to fade. My only desire is that I be granted the boon that until my last breath, I remain able to speak *hari-kathā* and glorify the eternal associates of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his authentic followers, regardless of institutional considerations. It was on the principle of ‘unity in diversity’ that I received the guidance, blessings, and support of various powerful Vaiṣṇavas, and thereby came to understand—and to a meager extent realize—the *adhokṣaja-vastu*, or that which is beyond the domain of the material senses.

The publication you hold in your hands is an abridged version of a more voluminous edition we had hoped to publish by Utthāna Ekādaśī, the appearance day of my beloved master. There is a Sanskrit saying: “*śreyāṃsi bahu vighnānī*—for one who performs auspicious work, many obstacles are inevitable.” In our life, also, we experience endless obstacles at each and every step. Still, because of the mercy and encouragement of *śrī guru* and of the soft-hearted devotees, we never become discouraged.

In the near future, the publishers and I hope to release the full edition of *Volcanic Energy*, but whether we succeed in doing so is solely dependent upon Bhagavān’s sweet will. Although one may laboriously spend gallons of blood, sweat and tears to accomplish a task, one’s endeavors will never come to fruition without the sanction of the Lord.

āpana icchāya jīva koṭī vāñchā kare

kṛṣṇa icchāya haile tāre tabe phala dhare

Although the living entity may have many desires, they are fulfilled only if Śrī Kṛṣṇa so desires.

Accepting this as truth, we will push forward with our publication services and accept the results as His grace.

As the nature of such a publication as this necessitates historical accuracy, the names of individuals and the specific details of significant events have been included to the extent that our memory allows. Whatever has been written in this book has been written purely for the service and glory of my most worshipful *gurupāda-padma* and with the intention to inspire sincere devotees to hear about his flawless conceptions and conduct. Keeping Guru Mahārāja's instructions and teachings on my head, I have guided the editors to express sensitive subjects in a manner consistent with the etiquette of *bhagavat-dharma*. We intentionally excluded certain subjects and events that may be deemed sensitive for some. If, as a result of our attempt to preserve historical accuracy, someone experiences personal grief from reading any part of this text, I appeal to his or her *vaiṣṇavatā* and beg forgiveness.

The incidences described in this book that took place before I took shelter at Guru Mahārāja's lotus feet have been presented as I have heard them, either directly from Guru Mahārāja's lotus mouth, from the disciples of Śrīla

Prabhupāda, from my godbrothers, or from Guru Mahārāja’s mother, who made me a recipient of her endless affection and thus conferred profuse blessings upon me. We have presented all narrations exactly as they happened, without exaggeration or embellishment.

The content of this publication has been adapted from lectures I have given in various places and presented here in the style known as *bhāva-anuvāda*, which clearly conveys the moods and intended meanings of my spoken words.

After transcribing an article, the publishers read that article to me and included any corrections or additional points I gave them. They then edited that adjusted draft and organized its content. As with any anthology of anecdotes, the stories herein are independent accounts that can be read without concern for sequence. The reader can start and stop at any point without loss.

I am deeply appreciative of the devotees involved in this publication for their ardent efforts and genuine desire to preserve and share the teachings and exemplary conduct of my most worshipful *gurupāda-padma*. In this book, they have, in a manner utterly devoid of speculation, presented the *vāñī* and conduct of Guru Mahārāja purely, just as I have heard and witnessed it.

In his *Śrī Gaura-kiśorāṣṭakam*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Deśika Ācārya Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, has written “*mūḍhair avedyam prañatābhi-*

gamyam—he is unascertainable by the unsurrendered, but remains fully accessible to the surrendered.” The life, teachings and conduct of a pure Vaiṣṇava cannot be understood by those who lack surrender to a pure Vaiṣṇava; only surrendered souls can comprehend the true import of his life and activities. Those who read or hear the contents of this publication in a mood of surrender will undoubtedly meet with immense benefit. I am certain that broadminded persons will develop a profound attachment to the nectarean topics of the divine life, conduct and teachings of my most worshipful Guru Mahārāja. I tightly catch hold of and embrace the lotus feet of those who are attracted—and those who in the future will be attracted—to such a pure *ācārya*, and I hanker for their mercy and blessings.

O readers, because you aspire to become pure, one-pointed devotees of *bhāva-grahī*

1

Janardana (Śrī Kṛṣṇa), I am certain that your reading of this publication will be authentic, and that like Him, you will expertly extract its essence.

Vaiṣṇava dāsānudāsa

Bhakti Vijñāna Bhārātī

Śrī Annakūṭa Mahotsava
Monday 31 October, 2016



1 He who lovingly accepts the essence of one's offering.

Devotional Practices

The proper way to celebrate one's birthday

Once when Guru Mahārāja was present in Vṛndāvana during his appearance day festival, he sang the following *kīrtana* written by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

*āmāra jīvana, sadā pāpe rata,
nāhikô puṇyera leśa
parere udvega, diyāchi je katô,
diyāchi jīvere kleśa*

Śaraṇāgati (1.4.1)

My life is perpetually dedicated to sin; thus I am without a trace of piety. I have given others great anxiety and brought only misery to living beings. *

His melodious voice was so heart-warming that all the assembled devotees began to cry.

After performing this *kīrtana*, he addressed the audience. “Today is Utthāna Ekādaśī, the day when the Lord wakes up after resting for four months. It is also the disappearance day of my *parama-gurudeva*, Śrī Śrīmad Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja. Others devotees have already spoken at length about Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja’s glories today, so I am taking this opportunity now to pray to my *parama-gurudeva* that I may become the recipient of his mercy and the mercy of

his dearest disciple, my most worshipful Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. It just so happened that on this day in 1903, I was born in the Kāñcanapāḍā village of the Faridpūra district of what is now East Pakistan

1

“We find in the description of the birth ceremonies of Śrī Rāmacandra, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu how Śrī Daśaratha Mahārāja, Śrī Nanda Bābā, Śrī Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, Śrī Jagannātha Miśra, respectively, served the deity of the Lord, the *brāhmaṇas*, their relatives and all living entities by offering edibles, cows, ornaments, sweets, donations and many other items. Additionally, they taught their children that on one’s birthday, it is one’s duty to beg for the mercy of their elders, touch their feet, pray to them and listen to them narrate their experiences.

“Even today, this Vedic etiquette is followed mostly everywhere in India. My mother taught me early on how one ought to observe one’s birthday. She used to say that on the day of his birth, a person is put into the prison of a gross and a subtle body to suffer his past *karma*. This suffering is reduced or increased according to his conduct. Conditioned souls should not view their birthday as an opportunity to happily contemplate the number of years they have been shackled in the prison of their gross and subtle bodies.

Rather, they should use this day as an opportunity to serve and pray for release from this world, or at least pray in a repentant way for the ability to tolerate the suffering they experience here. They should be joyous only if they receive an opportunity to serve Śrī Hari on that day. Liberated souls, on the other hand, are naturally joyous on the day of their birth, because for them it is a chance to celebrate and remember the years they have served their worshipful Lord in this world. They have not come here to suffer the reactions of *karma*; rather, their only objective in this world is to deliver the conditioned souls from the darkness of ignorance by illuminating the spiritual path with the torchlight of knowledge. For this work, Bhagavān provides them with the salary of *prema*.

“On this day, the day of my birth, it is my duty to worship *śrī guru*. For me, *śrī guru* manifests in four ways. The first is the one who destroys my ignorance. Since Bhagavān is the source of unlimited knowledge, he is the root of *guru-tattva*, and thus appears in the form of *caitya-guru*. Therefore, it is my duty to worship Him today. The second manifestation of *śrī guru* is Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder of the Śrī Caitanya Maṭhas and Gauḍīya Maṭhas established worldwide, who personally engaged me in the service of the Lord and thereby gave my life meaning. Thirdly, I consider the Vaiṣṇavas, especially the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, as individual manifestations of *śrī guru*, for they increase my remembrance

of the conduct, instructions, teachings and heartfelt desires of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

“Fourthly, I consider my disciples as my *gurus*, because by always surrounding me, residing with me and expecting me to be a model of proper conduct, they force me to behave properly and also cause me to deeply reflect on my every action. I will never benefit by associating with someone who offers me praise and flattery. Giving up such association, I will always keep the company of those who instruct me by pointing out my mistakes.

“Since I consider my disciples as my *gurus*, it is my natural inclination to serve them. I am not a fool that I will sit on an elevated seat and accept the worship of my worshipful objects for my own sake. If I were to do this, there would be no *pūjā*. Instead, when I see that my *gurus* have a desire to worship me on the day of my birth, I am obliged by affection to serve them by accepting such adoration, for they are my worshipful objects, and it is my duty to serve them by abiding by their wishes. In this way, there is no difference between worship and blessings. By offering me worship, they bless me that I may serve them by pleasing them through the medium of accepting that worship. By performing *kīrtana* before me, they provide me with the opportunity to serve them by performing *śravaṇa* (hearing).

“Although my disciples are my *gurus*, my great affection for them sometimes forces me to instruct and chastise them in

the same way that Nanda Bābā and Yaśodā Maiyā are seen to chastise, punish, instruct and even bind the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Because of their deep affection, their mood of submissiveness to the Lord is eclipsed by their mood of being His loving father and mother. From one perspective, *guru* is an authority figure, and from another he is his disciple's closest friend and well-wisher. The concepts of being the protector and the protected are simultaneously present in the pure devotees of the Lord. Sometimes, according to need, the influence of one of these moods is seen to dominate the other, and sometimes the other is seen to be dominant. In this way, there is no fault if out of deep affection the servant is seen to chastise or instruct the object of service. Today, a strong mood of being the protected has arisen in me, as you are all protecting me by bestowing your most merciful blessings upon me.

“We personally witnessed the manner in which Śrīla Prabhupāda observed his appearance day by offering his gratitude and service to the Vaiṣṇavas. Today, I will take this opportunity to serve you all and express my gratitude for continuously showering your blessings upon me. Those who worshipped me today should know that in reality, they have worshipped my *gurudeva*, who is the real object of worship for the whole world. Service to *śrī guru* is as good a service to Bhagavān.”

At that time, Guru Mahārāja personally offered

daṇḍavat-praṇāma, sandalwood paste, garlands, clothes and donations first to all his godbrothers present there, and then to all the *paṇḍās* (*brāhmaṇa* priests). When someone would say, “Today is your appearance day, please be merciful to me,” Guru Mahārāja would reply, “I do not pay attention to whether it is my birthday or some other day. Even so, it is one’s duty to serve *sādhus* on one’s birthday, and I do not want to pass up a single opportunity to serve the Vaiṣṇavas while I am still consciously aware. I am therefore using my birthday as an excuse to perform *vaiṣṇava-sevā*. Because Vaiṣṇavas do not wish to accept anything for themselves, they should be served on some pretext.” It was Guru Mahārāja’s specialty that he would invite and offer respect to even the Gosāis, who were principally against the Gauḍīya Maṭha, and give them the opportunity to listen to the pure, unadulterated teachings of the Gauḍīya Maṭha.

Guru Mahārāja would tell us, “Vaiṣṇavas are our worshipful deities. We must offer them *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* along with any offerings we may give them. We have learned this etiquette from observing the conduct of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Some of the Vaiṣṇavas present here, especially the disciples of my godbrothers, are like my disciples, and so they will hesitate to accept anything from me if I have to offer them *praṇāma*. Therefore, you should offer them all these items, just as I have offered them to my godbrothers—with respect and proper etiquette. Some Vaiṣṇavas have come

from far-away places, like Nandagrāma, Govardhana, Kāmāi, Karehlā, Kiśorī-kuṇḍa and so on, and have spent a great deal of money to travel here. Offer them donations in such a way that some money remains after their travel expenses have been covered. Never be a miser in the service of Vaiṣṇavas.”

Spiritual impressions at an early age

Sometimes when Guru Mahārāja would see a mother or father with their child, on the pretext of instructing them, he would tell them about his childhood. “When I was just four years old, my father, Śrī Niśikānta Devaśarmā Bandopādhyāya left this world, and my mother, Śrīmatī Śaivālīnī devī, was very devotional and highly inclined to serve *sādhus*. She maintained me, her only son, by residing in the house of her brothers. Because she was a devotee of the Lord, she would always make me listen while she recited from the scriptures, and would daily have me memorize a few verses from *Bhagavad-gītā*. As a result, I could recite the entire *Bhagavad-gītā* from memory by the age of eleven. Additionally, she would regularly narrate and teach the essential teachings of other scriptures to me, and I thereby learned them by heart. The impressions my mother’s devotional practices left on my heart became the impetus for me to take up the spiritual path later in life. Taking birth in the home of a devotee is the greatest of boons. Śrīla

Bhaktivinoda has written in his *kīrtana*:

*janmāobi moe icchā jadi tora
bhakta-gr̥he jani janma hau mora*

Śaraṇāgati (2.3.4)

O Lord, if You desire for me to again take birth in this world, then may I be born in the home of Your devotee.

“Nowadays, because of the influence of Kali-yuga, people are uninterested in teaching their children about spiritual matters, and they unfortunately consider such matters to be a waste of time. We must request people, especially the devotees, to train their children in such a manner that they receive permanent, spiritual benefit by developing attachment to *nitya-dharma*, or one’s eternal duty. The heart of a child is like clay, which takes shape according to the potter’s expertise.”

A deep concern for others

When Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha’s newly printed publications would arrive, Guru Mahārāja would narrate a pastime from his childhood to inspire others not to make a business out of printing *bhakti* literature, and that they should instead see it as a means of helping others. He would tell us, “In my childhood, I observed that many other students were deprived of a proper education because they were unable to

purchase textbooks. I saved my own pocket money and also sought donations from a few affluent persons, and then used those funds to open a small library in my home. There, I created a space where the students could sit and study the library's textbooks. Gradually, I collected many more books—some new and some old. I later arranged for books to be delivered to those students who lived far away and were unable to visit my library. Textbooks in those days were not often changed or rewritten as they are nowadays.”

This incident demonstrates that since his very childhood, Guru Mahārāja possessed a deep concern about the welfare of others. Most people do not possess such concern for others, even after reaching old age, but instead remain concerned only to fulfill their own selfish desires. The fact is, Guru Mahārāja possessed such compassionate concern because of his previous *samskāras*, or impressions.

Spiritual teachings on the pretext of an injury

Guru Mahārāja also used to mention, “When I was a student, I was once injured while playing with my friends at school and started bleeding. A teacher arrived there after hearing about the accident from one of the students and tried to console me. I told the teacher my mother had always told me that whatever the Lord does, He does solely for our welfare, and therefore My injury must have happened for my own good. I told him it was not a serious injury, as I had not

lost a limb, and that everyone must face the results of his previous actions.’ Being astonished to hear such insight from a young boy, the teacher tightly embraced me.”

Meeting with Śrīla Prabhupāda in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura

Guru Mahārāja told us that from a young age, he stayed with his maternal grandfather in Kāñcanapāda, along with his childhood friend Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya. Although the two were of the same age and began attending school at the same time, Guru Mahārāja was so intelligent that he was twice sent to a higher standard, or grade, and therefore eventually studied two standards ahead of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya. The two were very close friends and visited many holy places together. After finishing their studies, they stayed together in a rented apartment in Kolkata, where they would often perform *kīrtana* together.

In relating the story of how he met Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Guru Mahārāja would say, “Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya and I once desired to have *darśana* of Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, and we thus departed for Kolkata to stay in the *dhāma* for a few days. There, we stayed at the Kāñca-kāminī *dharmasālā* and arranged to have our meals at a nearby hotel.

“While having *darśana* of Śrīdhāma Navadvīpa, we heard the glories of Śrīdhāma Māyāpura and the beautiful deities of Mahāprabhu there. Because of this, I developed a

great desire to have *darśana* of Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. When we inquired from the local residents of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma about Śrī Māyāpura, they said, ‘Oh dear! Māyāpura is very far away. If you were to leave now, you would not reach until dark. And when you were to finally arrive, you would discover there is nowhere to stay.’

“After the men left, an old lady standing near the bank of the Gaṅgā said in a very soft voice, “Bābā, do you see that island with a palm tree across the Gaṅgā? That is Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. The residents of Navadvīpa have misguided you because they are envious. Do not pay any attention to them; proceed to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura for *darśana* by crossing the Gaṅgā.’

“Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya and I heeded the old lady’s words and crossed the Gaṅgā. When we reached Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, we saw that a festival was happening there. Inquiring from the devotees at the *maṭha*, we discovered that a famous doctor from Kolkata, Śrī S. N. Ghoṣa, along with his wife, had accepted *dīkṣā* from the Founder-*ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. In order to honor this great occasion, the doctor and his wife arranged a festival for the service of the deities, *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas.

“During the festival, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya and I met Śrīla Prabhupāda for the first time. Upon seeing us, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked who we were and why we had come to

Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. We told him that we had come to have *darśana* of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *śrī vigraha* (deity form).

“He asked, ‘Have you not previously had *darśana* of any *śrī vigrahas* elsewhere?’

“ ‘Yes, many times,’ I answered. ‘I have visited Haridvāra, Vārāṅāsī, Gayā and other places.’

“ ‘Do you think you truly had *darśana* of *śrī vigraha*?’ Prabhupāda inquired.

“Understanding the gravity of Śrīla Prabhupāda's question, I replied, ‘I certainly saw Them with my eyes, but I cannot say for sure whether I truly had Their *darśana*.’

“Śrīla Prabhupāda then said, ‘What is the benefit of going for *darśana* if not to have *darśana* in the true sense? In reality, *darśana* is performed not with the eyes, but with the ears. The scriptures say “*adhokṣaja-vastu śravaṇaika vaidha*—hearing is the only method one can know an entity that is *adhokṣaja*, or beyond material sensory perception.” ’

“After speaking to us for some time, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked us to accept lunch *prasāda* there in the *maṭha*. When I accepted his invitation, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya protested, saying, ‘We have already arranged to take our meals at the hotel. If we do not show up, they may become upset with us.’

“I replied, ‘We are very fortunate. A *mahāpuruṣa* (great personality) has invited us to honor *mahāprasāda* here.

There is no need to worry about the hotel manager; our relationship with him is based solely on money. As long as we pay him, all will be okay.’ ”

In this way, Guru Mahārāja related to us how he accepted Śrīla Prabhupāda as a *mahāpuruṣa* in their very first meeting, and how he had full faith that his words were a source of great fortune.

Performing service in secret

When Guru Mahārāja returned to Kolkata from Śrīdhāma Māyāpura after his first interaction with Śrīla Prabhupāda, he began to regularly visit the *maṭha* at Śrī Bhaktivinoda Āsana, located at 1 Ultadaṅgā Road, Kolkata. In those days, Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed in Kolkata for the majority of his time. Guru Mahārāja would listen to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *hari-kathā* there, and by his regular association, his inclination to serve Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas steadily increased. Every evening, he would serve *prasāda* to all the *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* in the *maṭha*. Although it was forbidden for a person who had not yet received *dīkṣā* to serve *prasāda* in the *maṭha*, an exception was made for Guru Mahārāja, because he belonged to a high-class *brāhmaṇa* family, possessed a favorable nature and had impeccable conduct.

Guru Mahārāja would engage the salary he earned from his profession in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas by purchasing and anonymously sending whatever they

needed for their day-to-day use. While doing this, he would remember the following verse:

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

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.22.35)

A soul that has accepted a human body will meet with all auspiciousness and success if he engages himself in following *śreya-mārga*—that is, engaging his life, wealth, intelligence and words in the service of the Lord and His devotees.

No one in the *maṭha* would have even the slightest clue as to who was regularly sending all those items. Guru Mahārāja possessed firm faith in the essence of the principle described in Śrīla Jagadānanda Paṇḍita’s *Prema-vivarta* that was often quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda: “*gopanete atyācāra gorā dhare curi*—even if you misbehave in secret, Gaura will catch you.” Similarly, righteous activities performed in secret can never be hidden from Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. There is no need to externally speak about the service one has rendered. If a person recounts the details of his service to one and all, it simply reveals his hidden desire to gain worldly fame.

Formally accepting shelter at the lotus feet of śrī guru

Although the relationship between *guru* and disciple is eternal, Guru Mahārāja manifested the pastime of surrendering his life at the lotus feet of his *gurudeva*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura, by accepting formal initiation in *vaiṣṇava-dharma*. On the supremely auspicious day of Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī, 4 September, 1927, Guru Mahārāja accepted *harināma* and *dīkṣā* from Śrīla Prabhupāda as a favorable consequence of regularly and unfailingly hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda's *hari-kathā* and serving the Vaiṣṇavas.

At the time of initiation, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave Guru Mahārāja the name Śrī Hayagrīva dāsa Brahmācārī. Guru Mahārāja's childhood friend Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya also accepted *harināma* and *dīkṣā* that very same day.

No room for self-interest in honesty

Prior to joining Gauḍīya Maṭha, Guru Mahārāja worked for an English-owned business that purchased linseeds from farmers, packaged them and sent them to England. Most of the employees worked under Guru Mahārāja. Once, it came to Guru Mahārāja's notice that some of the workers were adulterating the product by replacing linseeds with sand during the packaging stage. The stolen linseeds were then sold off, and the profits were shared among the thieving workers. When Guru Mahārāja heard this, he approached the

owner and said, “Some of our employees are engaged in an extremely disgraceful act. For their petty self-interest, the reputation of the business is being destroyed. I made a huge mistake by blindly trusting them. You should therefore have me arrested. I do not even know for how long they have been engaged in such a dishonorable act. But ignorance cannot be accepted as an excuse. After you have me arrested, you may also have them arrested.”

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

Wishing only for the welfare of all

When Guru Mahārāja was working in Kolkata before joining the *maṭha*, he once had a toothache. As a quick remedy to reduce the pain, one of his colleagues gave him a pinch of tobacco to be kept in his gums. Throughout his life, Guru Mahārāja had never even inhaled the scent of intoxicants, and therefore when he put the tobacco in his mouth, he fell unconscious, being unable to tolerate its pungent smell. All his limbs turned bluish. It appeared as if he had been poisoned. His colleague was astonished and unsure about what to do. Guru Mahārāja was admitted to

Śambhunātha Paṇḍita Hospital. After receiving treatment, his health recovered somewhat. The doctor and the police officer asked him, “Whom do you suspect might have given you poison?” Guru Mahārāja replied, “The person who gave me the tobacco—not poison—is my friend, and he gave it to me only for my wellbeing. My body simply rejected it. There were no ill intentions.”

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

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

The ability to recognize unparalleled love

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

Once, his godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prakāśa Aranya

Gosvāmī Mahārāja visited his home along with Śrīpāda Kīrtana Prabhu during their monthly *bhikṣā* collection. Seeing the portrait of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the hall, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked Guru Mahārāja, “Do you feel happy upon seeing this very beautiful portrait of Śrīman Mahāprabhu hanging on the wall?”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Yes, Mahārāja-jī. I do. Sometimes I sit and chant in front of it, and I feel happy by seeing it.”

Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja gravely asked Guru Mahārāja, “Is it the duty of Śrīman Mahāprabhu to please you by remaining present on your wall, or should you be the one making endeavors to please Him? Bhagavān’s name and deity form, which includes His portrait, are non-different from Bhagavān Himself. For His service, you should take His portrait down from the wall and keep it in a proper place.”

Accepting Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s teaching with firm faith, Guru Mahārāja immediately took down the portrait of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, and through his own conduct demonstrated the standard by which one should show proper respect to the images of Bhagavān and His pure devotees by later sending it to Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha, where it was kept on the chariot during every future *nagara-saṅkīrtana* organized by the *maṭha*. Guru Mahārāja did not frivolously place such images here and there, nor did he allow any of his

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

After Guru Mahārāja took the portrait of Śrīman Mahāprabhu down from the wall, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked, “You have accepted Śrīla Prabhupāda as your spiritual master. What arrangements have you made for cooking?”

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

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

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

Although Śrīpāda Kīrtana Prabhu was quietly

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

Guru Mahārāja became overwhelmed with joy to hear this. The *mamatā* (possessive affection) Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja displayed for him was unprecedented. Guru Mahārāja felt eternally grateful to him for the rest of his life, and he served Śrīla Mahārāja with great enthusiasm whenever the opportunity arose.

Offering his life to the service of the maṭha

After accepting *dīkṣā*, Guru Mahārāja continued to reside in a rented apartment in Kolkata. After some time, his associate and housemate Śrī Nārāyaṇa Mukhopādhyāya married and moved elsewhere. Thereafter, Guru Mahārāja’s cook, an Oriya *brāhmaṇa*, was the only other resident in Guru Mahārāja’s apartment.

As was mentioned earlier, Guru Mahārāja’s senior godbrothers Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prakāśa Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīpāda Kīrtana Prabhu used to visit his apartment to collect a monthly donation. During one of their visits, Śrīla Araṇya Gosvāmī Mahārāja affectionately said to him, “Hayagrīva Prabhu, I see that you have not yet married

and are living alone in Kolkata, away from your mother and step-brothers. You must undergo great difficulty to maintain this apartment and make sure food is on the table. Despite all this effort, you are very sincerely serving Śrīla Prabhupāda and the residents of the *maṭha*.

“Why don’t you take a step further and engage all your time and energy in the service of the *maṭha*? Society will glorify the *maṭha* upon seeing that such a young, distinguished and well-educated person as yourself resides there. You are capable of performing many services. By joining the *maṭha*, you will be able to serve throughout the entire day, and thereby become qualified to receive the true mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrī Caitanya Mahaprabhu never advised to any of his unmarried followers—including Śrī Gopala Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and others—to perform *bhajana* in the *gṛhastha-āśrama*; rather, because their parents were Vaiṣṇavas and because they were the only children in their immediate family, He instructed them to serve their parents while their parents were still alive and to perform *sādhana-bhajana* in Vraja only after their parents had passed away. It is my opinion that you should deeply consider dedicating yourself completely to the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda as soon as possible.”

Honoring the words of his senior godbrother, Guru Mahārāja abandoned all his worldly activities in a very short time and joined the *maṭha* with a sincere and burning desire

to fully engage himself in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas through his mind, body and words.

Desiring a permanent position

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

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

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

my position at this firm may become permanent.”



1 Present-day Bangladesh.

A Life in Service

Volcanic energy

Once, when Guru Mahārāja had returned to Śrī Dhāma Māyāpura on Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī after completing a preaching tour with his senior godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw him and immediately said, “It is very good you have come. Now please proceed to Mathurā without delay. Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* is just around the corner. You should go there, meet with the local *paṇḍās* and discuss with them about scouting locations for the camps and all the details related to providing the pilgrims with suitable arrangements for food, water and so on.”

Following Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instruction, Guru Mahārāja prepared to leave for Mathurā at once. At that time, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked a devotee to prepare *pūrī* and *sabji* for Guru Maharaja, but when Guru Maharaja said, “There is no need. I can survive without it,” Śrīla Prabhupāda gave him his own lidded *lotā* (a flask-like container), which was filled with sugar water and uncut lemons, and told him to prepare lemonade along the way.

After Guru Mahārāja had left for Mathurā, Śrīla Prabhupāda told a *brahmacārī*, “Hayagrīva Brahmacārī is full of volcanic energy. He is always ready to perform any kind of service with the utmost enthusiasm, and no matter

what the situation is, he always returns successful.”

Guru Mahārāja once told me, “During Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical presence in this world, he mercifully made sure I was constantly busy. When I would return to Śrīla Prabhupāda after working hard to accomplish one task, he would immediately give me another task to perform. He did not have to ask anything about the first task, because he knew that I would not approach him unless that task had been completed. Although physically exhausted, I would experience unparalleled happiness to fulfill his order. I used to sometimes think that a time would come in my life when I would be able to live by a fixed schedule, so that I could peacefully chant my fixed number of rounds, chant my *gāyatrī-mantras* at the appropriate times and carefully read and study *vaiṣṇava* literature, just as some of my godbrothers did. But when after Śrīla Prabhupāda left this world and I received plenty of time to do as I pleased, I lamented that I was no longer busily engaged in service in the way during my days with him. It was only after he externally disappeared from the vision of this world that I understood such laborious service is my very life. After realizing this, I always tried to keep myself as busy as Śrīla Prabhupāda kept me.”

Hearing this, I understood just how appropriate it was that Śrīla Prabhupāda described Guru Mahārāja as having volcanic energy.

Recognizing the significance of an item given by guru or a sādhu

Once, Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja together engaged in the service of organizing a spiritual exhibition in Paṭṇā, Bihar. As a result of the cold weather there, Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's hand became so dry that it started to crack and bleed, and Guru Mahārāja began to shiver intensely. Seeing their condition, Śrī Sakhī-carāṇa Bābū, a wealthy *grhastha* disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who had funded the construction of the Yogapīṭha temple, brought a sweater for each of them, but neither of them accepted it.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived there after a few days, Śrī Sakhī-carāṇa Bābū expressed to him the anxiety he felt upon the devotees refusing the sweaters he offered. Śrīla Prabhupāda told him to bring those sweaters to him, and he then called for Guru Mahārāja and Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja. When they came before him, he gave the sweaters to them, which they readily accepted. I am not sure what Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja did with his sweater, but Guru Mahārāja, who never had the habit of wearing a sweater, kept it folded on his bed throughout the rest of his life.

Guru Mahārāja's *sevaka* once asked him, "What is the need to always keep this sweater on your bed? You never wear it."

Guru Mahārāja replied, "A *sādhu* always keeps a *loṭā*

(water pot) and a blanket with him. Therefore, I use the blanket when I feel very cold; I never wear a sweater. However, realizing the significance of an item given directly by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, I always keep this sweater nearby. It is my sincere desire that my head rest on this sweater at the time I leave this world.”

His *sevaka* asked, “When Śrī Sakhī-caraṇa Bābū offered this same sweater to you, you did not accept it. But when Śrīla Prabhupāda offered it to you, you accepted it without hesitation. What is the mysterious reason behind this?”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Had I accepted the sweater from Śrī Sakhī-caraṇa Bābū, I would have wholeheartedly felt indebted to him. But since I received it from Śrīla Prabhupāda, that sense of gratefulness is instead reposed in Śrīla Prabhupāda alone. Anything that Śrīla Prabhupāda gives us is *nirguṇa*, or free of materiality. Everything that we receive from him reminds us of him, and such remembrance is highly beneficial for obtaining our spiritual welfare. We would therefore accept things only from Śrīla Prabhupāda, and not others.”

“The responsibility of serving śrī guru is yours alone”

The 1936 deity installation ceremony at Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Sarbhog, Assam was scheduled to be performed under the auspicious of Śrīla Prabhupāda. At that time, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Āśrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a

disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, was the in-charge of the Sarbhog *maṭha*. Guru Mahārāja and his godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja arrived in Sarbhog two days prior to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s scheduled arrival, in order to oversee all the arrangements for the installation ceremony and festival. They were astonished to see that no preparations had been made for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s arrival or for the deity installation and its related festivities. When Guru Mahārāja inquired from Śrīla Āśrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja about the situation, Śrīla Āśrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja replied, “Śrīla Prabhupāda gave complete responsibility to Śrī Nimānanda Prabhu, but he did nothing.” Hearing this, Guru Mahārāja discussed the issue with Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and thereafter enthusiastically arranged everything with the help of his other assembled godbrothers. Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in Sarbhog with his associates on schedule, and all the festivities were beautifully accomplished in a highly organized fashion.

After the ceremony, Śrīla Āśrama Goswami Mahārāja repeatedly requested Guru Mahārāja to relay to Śrīla Prabhupāda how Śrī Nimānanda Prabhu did not fulfill his responsibility, in hopes that Śrīla Prabhupāda would correct Nimānanda Prabhu by instructing him about the loss inherent in failing to perform a task given by *śrī guru*, and also admonish him to be mindful in the future. Being unable to ignore his godbrother’s repeated requests, Guru Mahārāja

mentioned the incident to Śrīla Prabhupāda one day while he was fanning flies away from Śrīla Prabhupāda while Śrīla Prabhupāda was strolling through a garden.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “ ‘*Etau cāo keno? Eto duḥkha pāo keno?*—Why do you desire so much? Why do you suffer so much?’ Why do you expect so much from Nimānanda Prabhu or anyone else? Why do you feel so greatly pained when these expectations are not fulfilled? The service of *śrī guru* is entirely your responsibility, from *ca-va-tu*, or A to Z. If someone helps you in this service, then you should feel grateful. But if you fret over someone’s refusal to help, then you will be at fault, and not him. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is Kṛṣṇa’s major-domo. She considers Herself responsible for all services to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If some *sakhī* helps Her in even the slightest way by, for example, bringing water or grinding spices, She feels indebted to her. But if no one is present to help Her render service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, She does not complain or feel any animosity toward anyone, even in Her mind.”

This instruction of Śrīla Prabhupāda is highly beneficial for all sincere *sādhakas* who desire to attain their topmost spiritual welfare. Guru Mahārāja would many a time be filled with transcendental emotions while narrating this incident.

An object of others’ faith and conviction

When Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in Sarbhog for the deity

installation ceremony at the Gauḍīya Maṭha established there, he gave the entire responsibility of arranging the deity installation to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. According to *vaiṣṇava* regulations, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja performed an *abhiśeka* and then decorated the deities with beautiful ornaments, clothes, garlands and sandalwood paste.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda entered the deity room and saw that the deities were fully decorated, he immediately walked out, saying, “There is no need for me to be inside the deity room; *śrī vigraha* has already been installed. No *sevā* remains to be done.”

Hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja became remorseful and thought, “I have mistakenly performed everything. At the very least, I could have reserved the service of offering garlands to the deities for Śrīla Prabhupāda. I have definitely committed an offense at his lotus feet.”

After a few days, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja revealed the pain in his heart to Guru Mahārāja and requested him to write a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda on his behalf that described his remorsefulness and his desire to seek forgiveness for his offence. Guru Mahārāja agreed to write the letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and received this reply:

No activity performed by a surrendered soul is ever considered an offence. Although it is true he may

sometimes commit a mistake, his master does not pay much heed to it; he simply corrects him. If Śrīdhara Mahārāja is fully surrendered at heart, he need not worry about anything. If he is not surrendered, he should most certainly understand that although the activities performed by an unsundered person—such as deity worship—may externally appear to be *sevā*, they are in fact always full of offences.

After reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's reply, both Guru Mahārāja and Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja could not suppress the tears that flowed from their eyes. They further discussed the gravity of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mood and intentions, and thereby regained their composure.

The faith and conviction Guru Mahārāja's godbrothers had for him was such that they would often request only him to express their anxieties to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Upon receiving Śrīla Prabhupāda's reply, Guru Mahārāja would help them understand and imbibe the true meanings of Śrīla Prabhupāda's deeply insightful words.

The deep vision of great personalities

Once, Śrīla Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and my Guru Mahārāja were staying in the Madras Gauḍīya Maṭha as *brahmacārīs*. My Guru Mahārāja was then known as Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī. Although they were *brahmacārīs* and not *sannyāsīs*, they were accepted as experienced seniors

because they sincerely followed Śrīla Prabhupāda.

During their stay, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī noticed that a particular *brahmācārī* refused to mix with the other residents of the *maṭha* and hardly spoke with anybody. He instead sought solitude wherever he could find it, in order to focus on his reading and chanting. Sensing something suspicious about these activities, Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī approached Guru Mahārāja and told him of his concerns. He said, “Prabhu, although this *brahmācārī* is chanting and reading a great deal and avoiding gossip, I feel that something is wrong. Can you please investigate?”

Guru Mahārāja understood the legitimate reason for Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī’s concern, and afterwards called for the *brahmācārī* and asked him, “I have heard that you do not associate with any other residents of the *maṭha*, what to speak of joking with them or sitting with them to take *prasāda*. Why is this?”

The *brahmācārī* replied, “I do not wish to become involved in gossip, and that is why I prefer to keep to myself.”

Guru Mahārāja said, “I think it would be better for you to sit with them and develop relationships. Try to lead your life in a natural way, as the other residents of the *maṭha* do. Even if you have to sometimes joke with them and engage in gossip, still, it is not a problem. Why? Because there is something to learn in each and every activity of the

devotees.”

Feeling utterly confused, the *brahmacārī* replied, “Prabhu, although you are very senior to me, you are instructing me to do the opposite of what I have heard from other senior Vaiṣṇavas. I do not want you to feel as if I am challenging you, but Śrīman Mahāprabhu has said not to listen to or speak gossip. But you are asking me to indulge in material talks with *brahmacārīs* if required. This is greatly puzzling.”

Guru Mahārāja then explained himself: “Listen properly. Presently, you are residing in this *maṭha* only with your body, and not with your mind. If you will not heed my words, then after some time your body will also go from here; you will surely return to your home. But if you follow what I have suggested, at least you will continue to stay here by body, and then gradually your mind will come to stay in the *maṭha* as well. Therefore, be peaceful and please try to follow what I have told you.”

This instance shows that although Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmacārī was considerably young, he was *dūra-darśī*, capable of seeing what will come in the future beyond the present circumstances. While ordinary persons hold an external conception of proper and improper conduct, the perception of those who are *dūra-darśī* extends beyond outer appearances. Such persons can see clearly what is deep inside the hearts of others, as well as what will become of

them in the future. Both my Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmācārī could ascertain that because this *brahmācārī's* mind was not fixed in being a servant of Śrī Hari, *guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, he would quickly tire of his rigorous *sādhana* and leave the *maṭha*.

Sometime later, that *brahmācārī* received a letter. But instead of having it sent to the *maṭha*, he had the sender address it to a nearby *grhastha* family. Seeing that a letter had come for a resident of the *maṭha*, that family explained the situation to Guru Mahārāja and handed him the letter. Upon reading it, Guru Mahārāja learned that the *brahmācārī* had previously sent a letter to his mother, informing her that he would soon return home, and that she should therefore arrange both a job and a wife for him. The letter Guru Mahārāja had received was the mother's reply, in which she accepted the responsibility and told him to return quickly. Shortly after the letter's arrival, the *brahmācārī* left the *maṭha*.

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

Mahārāja, eventually accepted *sannyāsa* from him.

Service in Separation

The essence of sannyāsa is service

While Guru Mahārāja was still a *brahmacārī*, Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed him to accept *sannyāsa*. He asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, “What must I do after accepting *sannyāsa*?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “You should continue performing whatever *sevā* you are performing now.”

“In that case,” Guru Mahārāja said, “this *brahmacārī* dress (*veśā*) seems more favorable for the services I am rendering now. When I preach, I usually request younger *brahmacārī* boys to accept seats higher than my own, and then tell all the devotee donors present there, ‘Do not think these boys are ordinary persons. They are worthy of even my service, and are worshipful even for me. You are very fortunate to receive the opportunity to serve them, so take full advantage of it.’ In this way, I am able to collect sizeable donations for the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. But if I were to accept *sannyāsa*, these younger *brahmacārīs*, who are hesitant even now to accept a seat higher than mine, will definitely refuse to do so in the future. This will be an obstacle to my *sevā*. You have always given service the highest priority, and I wish to follow your ideal conduct from the core of my heart. I therefore request you not to award me *sannyāsa* at the present moment.”

After hearing Guru Mahārāja's words, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "You are *prakṛta-tridaṇḍi-sannyāsī*, a *sannyāsī* in the truest sense. A person does not become a *sannyāsī* by simply accepting the dress of a *sannyāsī*. The inclination to perform *sevā* is the only measure of seniority. It is very much possible that the actual position of a person formally situated as a *brahmacārī* may be that of a *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha* or *sannyāsī*, depending on his heart's propensity (*citta-vṛtti*). Similarly, according to his *citta-vṛtti*, a person who has been formally awarded *sannyāsa* may actually be a *brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha* or a *vanaprastha*."

*jei bhaje sei baḍa, abhakta—hīna, chāra
kṛṣṇa-bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi-vicāra*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.67)

Those who perform *bhajana* are exalted, whereas non-devotees are destitute and contemptible. In the worship of Kṛṣṇa, there is no consideration of caste or familial lineage.

After Śrīla Prabhupāda disappeared from this world and entered *aprakāṣa-līlā* (the unmanifest pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda), many problems flooded the Gauḍīya Maṭha. At that time, in accordance with Śrīla Prabhupāda's conduct and teachings (*ācāra-vicāra*) and philosophical stance (*vicāra-dhārā*), Guru Mahārāja rendered many exalted services to the *maṭha-mandiras*

and deities established by Śrīla Prabhupāda, as well as to Śrīla Prabhupāda's dearest treasure: his disciples. The profundity of the affection with which Guru Mahārāja performed such services cannot be explained through words.

Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sarvasva Giri Gosvāmī Mahārāja and many of Guru Mahārāja's other godbrothers repeatedly emphasized to Guru Mahārāja, "Śrīla Prabhupāda has left us such a big mission with many services to fulfill. If a qualified person like you declines to accept *sannyāsa* and refuses to assume the most important responsibility of serving as a *guru*, then how will those services ever be accomplished?"

Respectfully honoring the instructions of his godbrothers, Guru Mahārāja accepted *sannyāsa* according to the *vaiṣṇava* regulations from his senior godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Śrī Jagannātha Purī-dhāma at Śrī Ṭoṭā Gopīnātha Mandira on Gaura-pūrṇimā, Thursday 9 March, 1944, and became known as Śrī Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja.

Humbler than straw and tolerant like a tree

Guru Mahārāja took possession of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha on behalf of Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu. After some years, Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu retired from his job and began residing at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha. He accepted *sannyāsa* from Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijnāna Āśrama

Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and became known as Śrī Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja.

Śrīla Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja then started awarding initiations to aspiring devotees. However, few devotees would approach him; most felt inspired to accept initiation from Guru Mahārāja. Therefore, following the advice of some of his advisors, Śrī Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja told Guru Mahārāja, “I shall award initiations in Śrī Caitanya Maṭha. It would be better if you were to award initiations in the Yogapīṭha temple, the appearance place of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.”

Guru Mahārāja happily agreed, saying, “As you please. There is no issue at all in this.”

When Guru Mahārāja began awarding initiations in the Yogapīṭha temple, most of the devotees visited him there. Seeing this, Śrī Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja suggested to Guru Mahārāja, “It would be better if you could award initiations in Śrīvāsa-aṅgana.” Guru Mahārāja again readily agreed.

When Guru Mahārāja began awarding initiations at Śrīvāsa-aṅgana, most of the devotees again started going there. Seeing this, he was subsequently asked to move to other places—such as Śrī Murāri Gupta’s residence and Rudradvīpa, among others—to give initiations. Even then, Guru Mahārāja never felt the slightest inconvenience within his heart, what to speak of the desire to contest it.

The completely unadulterated manifestation of the following words that emanated from the lotus lips of Śrīman Mahāprabhu was wholly seen in the divine character, personal conduct and behavior of Guru Mahārāja:

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

Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka (3)

In a humble state of mind, one should think oneself lower than the straw in the street and be tolerant like a tree. Being devoid of all sense of false prestige, one should be ready to offer all respect to others without desiring respect in return. In such a state, one is eligible to constantly chant *harināma*.

On one occasion, the Governor of West Bengal visited Śrī Caitanya Maṭha to attend a function and was introduced to all the *sannyāsīs* on the stage, including the president of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja. However, he was so affected upon seeing the divine personality of Guru Mahārāja, who was adorned with all the transcendental symptoms of a realized soul, that he addressed Guru Mahārāja as “Guru-jī! Guru-jī!” during his conversation with him.

After this incident, a certain advisor of Śrīla Tīrtha

Gosvāmī Mahārāja told Śrīla Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, “Mādhava Mahārāja has a more charismatic personality than you. As long as he stays in Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, you will not be glorified by others. You must therefore take a bold step to rectify this issue.”

Serving Śrīla Prabhupāda by accepting disciples

Initially, Guru Mahārāja did not possess even the slightest desire to accept disciples. He inspired and brought many people to the path of *bhakti* simply through his personal conduct. While Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present, Guru Mahārāja inspired many people to take shelter at Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus feet. And later, after Śrīla Prabhupāda entered *nitya-līlā*, he inspired many people to take up the path of *bhakti* in the line of Śrīla Prabhupāda under the shelter of the lotus feet of his (Guru Mahārāja’s) godbrother, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Among such persons were Śrī Jatin Miśra, the father of the eye specialist Śrī Suren Miśra; the three distinguished brothers Śrī Apūrva Pāl, Śrī Baṭa Kṛṣṇa Pāl and their brother; and Śrī Govardhana Piḍī, who previously remained in a constant state of intoxication, openly associated with a prostitute in front of his house, and ceaselessly engaged in all sorts of prohibited activities, just like Ratnākara and Jagāi and Mādhāi. Guru Mahārāja also offered many sincere devotees he had inspired in the service

of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja, such as Śrī Akiñcana Mahārāja, Śrī Avadhūta Mahārāja, Śrī Śrautī Mahārāja and Śrī Paśupati-nātha Prabhu.

Later, Guru Mahārāja began accepting disciples only after many of his godbrothers repeatedly requested him to do so. He was particularly inspired by Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu, who said, “Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *vicāra-dhārā* (line of conception) will be preserved only if you serve Śrīla Prabhupāda by accepting disciples. I will preach extensively in Assam and inspire many people to accept shelter at your lotus feet, so as to assist you in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

It was due to the inspiration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu alone that many devotees from Assam took shelter of Guru Mahārāja. When all the original Gauḍīya Maṭha branches were divided into two separate institutions, it was Guru Mahārāja who took possession of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha on behalf of Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa Prabhu. At the time the keys to the *maṭha* were handed over to Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Jagamohan Prabhu said, “Our plan was to shoot anyone other than you who would have come forward to accept these keys.”

The extent of the endeavors Guru Mahārāja undertook to provide the best possible maintenance and protection of the *maṭhas* established by his *gurudeva* can never possibly be explained by words alone.

Encouraging everyone to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda in all situations

Guru Mahājā's disciple Śrī Lokanātha Prabhu, who after accepting *sannyāsa* was known as Śrī Bhakti Suhr̥t Dāmodara Mahārāja, used to perform service to the deities at three locations, namely Śrīla Prabhupāda's *samādhi* temple, Śrīla Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja's *samādhi* temple and Śrī Caitanya Maṭha.

Another disciple of Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Bhagavān dāsa, who was later known as Śrī Bhakti Niketana Turyāśramī Mahārāja, rendered *pūjārī* services at Śrīvāsa-aṅgana. Similarly, other disciples of Guru Mahārāja were engaged in rendering various services at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha and its branches.

Guru Mahārāja always encouraged his disciples to render service to all such places established by and related to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He would hand over all the donations he received during his preaching efforts to Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja. But many unfavorable circumstances arose one after another. The situation reached a tipping point when Śrī Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja plotted a conspiracy against Guru Mahārāja in which he very cunningly advised all the disciples of Guru Mahārāja staying in Māyāpura to pack their belongings and join their *gurudeva* at his preaching program in Nawab-gaṅja, thereby forcing them to leave Śrī Caitanya Maṭha forever.

Even after coming to know all about this event, Guru Mahārāja never became distressed. Instead of becoming disheartened, he engaged much more enthusiastically in the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda in order to fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda’s innermost desires. Śrīla Prabhupāda would say, ‘In truth, the *maṭha* exists in its principles, and not in its bricks and mortar.’ Inculcating this teaching deep within his heart, Guru Mahārāja perfectly abided by the lesson of the following verses without complaint or criticism:

*alabdhe vā vinaṣṭe vā
bhakṣyācchādana-sādhane
aviklava-matir bhūtvā
harim eva dhiyā smaret*

Padma Purāṇa

One who is devoted to *hari-bhakti* should remain undisturbed and continue remembering Hari, even if he is unsuccessful in obtaining food and clothing, or if what he has obtained is lost. *

*tat te ’nukampām su-samīkṣamāṇo
bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam
hrd-vāg-vapurbbhir vidadhan namas te
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.8)

One who, while always expecting Your mercy, tolerates the results of his previous misdeeds and

constantly offers respects to You with his heart, speech and body, is eligible to receive the inheritance of Your lotus feet.

Later, Guru Mahārāja and a few of his godbrothers and disciples began staying in a rented house in Kolkata, and from there preached everywhere.

An elevated perspective on the breakup of the Gauḍīya Maṭha

Guru Maharaja often expressed his elevated perspective on the breakup of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. In Guru Mahārāja's biography, *Pāvana-jīvana-carita*, authored by my godbrother *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja, our Guru Mahārāja's view on the matter has been recorded in the author's words as follows:

“On 23 December, 1936, after returning from Puruṣottama-dhāma (Purī) to Śrī Bāgbāzār Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata, and before entering *nitya-līlā*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda gave his final instructions to the devotees present one early morning.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda told his surrendered disciples, ‘Everyone should preach the teachings of Śrī Rūpa-Raghunātha with the utmost enthusiasm. Our ultimate aim is to become the dust of the lotus feet of the *rūpānugas*, the staunch followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. All of you should

remain united under the guidance of the *āśraya-vigraha*—or in other words, *śrī guru*—in order to please the transcendental senses of the *advaya-tattva*, or the unknown and unknowable Absolute Truth (Śrī Kṛṣṇa). With one common objective, you should collectively serve Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the source of all *āśraya-tattva*.’

“*Jagad-guru* Śrīla Prabhupāda advised his surrendered disciples to remain under the guidance of the *āśraya-vigraha* and he empowered them to reside together with the single objective of preaching the message of Śrī Rūpa-Raghunātha. Narrow-minded persons possessing *anarthas* may think that the pastimes that took place after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance were in violation of his order. If we do not subscribe to the concept that all that happens due to the grace of Śrī Hari is auspicious, then our life will be haunted by sorrows. Nothing can happen without the Lord’s will. Because the Lord is all-auspicious, whatever happens as a result of His desire is always for the best, and therefore it must be auspicious. Small-minded persons are unable to comprehend that many seemingly unfavorable incidents may be the Lord’s way of accomplishing a big task.

*pṛthivī-paryānta jātô āche deśa-grāma
sarvatra sañcara haibeka mora nāma
Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Antya-khaṇḍa 4.126)*

The chanting of My name will be heard in every town

and village in this planet.

“In reality, whatever has transpired has been in accordance with the desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and all has happened with the objective of preserving both the above-mentioned words of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the previously-mentioned statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s non-different manifestation. In order to deliver the whole world, Śrīla Prabhupāda invested his disciples, who are capable of delivering the entire world, with the power of his mercy, and thus inspired them to live separately and preach. He did not wish to limit his disciples, who were themselves qualified to be *ācāryas*, by ordering them to stay at one place together and thus restrict their capacity for and efficiency in preaching. Today, by the miraculous efforts of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples, preaching work has reached every corner of the earth, and everyone is accepting the teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, thus fulfilling Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s prophecy.

“If Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples were devoid of his mercy potency (*kṛpā-śakti*), if they were not under the guidance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and if they were full of *anarthas*, then it would not have been possible for them to preach all over the world on such a great scale.

“Unfortunate people who are unaware of the Lord’s actual desire become trapped in the quicksand of *aparādha* by praising one person and criticizing another, and thus fall

from the spiritual path. All Śrīla Prabhupāda’s associates have followed his instructions according to their respective capacities, and they continue to follow his instructions with a non-duplicitous mood. The honest preaching of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples has led many fortunate living entities to become attracted to the teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and thus enable them to make their life successful by accepting the etiquette of *bhakti* and engaging in *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* with sincerity.”

Tolerating false allegations

When Guru Mahārāja’s disciples were cunningly forced to leave Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura, Guru Mahārāja began renting an apartment on Rāsa-bihārī Avenue in Kolkata for everyone to stay. He began preaching from there, and within a short span of time, by Guru Mahārāja’s divine influence, the construction of *maṭhas* began in various locations like Kolkata, Māyāpura and Hyderabad.

When this news reached Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, some envious persons began speaking against Guru Mahārāja: “After Śrī Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Mādhava Mahārāja was the second best collector of funds in the Gauḍīya Maṭha. He must have withheld some of his collections while he was staying in Śrī Caitanya Maṭha. Otherwise, how would it have been possible to start building *maṭhas* one after another, so soon. He has certainly stolen Śrī

Caitanya Maṭha's wealth.”

When Guru Mahārāja heard about these allegations, he said, “Through his own conduct, Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us not to react to such statements. When faced with such a situation, we should remember the verse beginning *tat te 'nukampām*

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, engage in introspection (*su-samīkṣamāṇo*), and understand that actually, our detractors are inadvertently doing us a favor. By hearing their false allegations, people will assume we have enough money to repay their loans, and thus they will happily loan us whatever funds we require.”

There were many such incidents that very clearly manifested the quality of *taror-iva sahiṣṇunā*, being as tolerant as a tree, in the transcendental character of Guru Mahārāja.

Genuine concern for the wellbeing of all

Guru Mahārāja used to serve Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sambandha Turyāśramī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, by sending him money every month. Once, Śrīla Turyāśramī Gosvāmī Mahārāja sent a letter to Guru Mahārāja from Jesaur, Baḍadiyā, in former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), requesting him to send the money to a person in Bairākapura who would then bring it to him.

Without disclosing this to anyone, Guru Mahārāja would send money to him through me every month. There were

many other devotees about whom Guru Mahārāja was always very concerned and whom Guru Mahārāja would always serve by sending whatever they required. Some of these devotees I never met in my life, nor did I ever witness them visiting Guru Mahārāja. Still, Guru Mahārāja, absorbed in some internal mood unknown to others, would always remain engaged in such services. It is absolutely impossible for anyone to comprehend or draw any conclusion about his divine activities unless one attains the same elevated *citta-vṛtti*, or consciousness, he possessed.

The object of his godbrother's respect

Once, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Sundara-gopāla Prabhu, Śrīpāda Atulānanda Brahmācārī and other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda were at the Sealdah station in Kolkata. Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who was then residing at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, was also present at the same station, but was a little further away. They called for Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu to come close to them, and asked “Keśava! How are you?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu replied, “I am very well.”

They again asked, “Keśava! How are you?”

He replied, “I am extremely well.”

They then audibly said among themselves, “Just see!

Although he has left the *maṭha* established by Śrīla Prabhupāda, his very own *gurudeva*, he says that he is very well.”

Hearing their words, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kesava Prabhu calmly said, “Had I continued to stay with you, I would have only ever heard that you alone are engaged in *bhajana*, and no one else is capable of properly serving. I would have been compelled to label all others as non-devotees, and would have become expert in *vaiṣṇava-nindā* (criticizing devotees).

“Fortunately, I have been saved from all such wretchedness by staying with Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja. With him, I remain immersed in practicing the principle of considering everyone else as honorable and myself as worthless. So to reaffirm, yes, I am extremely well. What have you to say about that?”

Someone said, “Listen! Śrīla Prabhupāda blessed Śrī Tīrtha Mahārāja by saying, ‘May you attain abundant auspiciousness.’ Did he ever give such a blessing to Mādhava Mahārāja?”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu replied, “No one blesses a recipient of a Master of Arts degree by saying, ‘I bless you to acquire a Master of Arts degree.’ Such blessings are for those who have not yet attained some particular qualification. Therefore, the reason Śrīla Prabhupāda did not bestow the blessing to achieve abundant auspiciousness upon Śrī

Mādhava Mahārāja is because he had already achieved abundant auspiciousness. By sincerely reflecting on the situation of another, one can easily understand why Śrīla Prabhupāda would have felt it necessary to bless them in this way.”

“They have sent Lakṣmī away”

When Guru Mahārāja was cunningly made to leave Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, Śrī Sakhi-caraṇa Rāya Bhakti-vijaya (later known as Śrī Sakhī-caraṇa dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja) said, “*Lakṣmī ke vidāyī diyechē*—They have sent Lakṣmī away. Due to their misfortune, some of the people of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha have banished someone who not only engaged in all services for the pleasure of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, but also used to collect the largest amount of donations for such services.”

Fulfilling the promise of Śrīla Prabhupāda

When Śrīla Prabhupāda once performed a deity installation in Sarbhog, Assam, the huge crowd that gathered to have his *darśana* appeared like an endless procession of ants. Observing the scriptural etiquette that one should not visit a *sādhu* without something to offer, everyone brought offerings like rice, grains, vegetables and so on. As all came forward one by one to receive his *darśana*, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked his *sevaka*, “Where are all these people going? It appears as if they are passing through the *maṭha* on their way

elsewhere.”

His *sevaka* replied, “They are not going anywhere else, and have come only for your *darśana*. They have never before received the opportunity to see a *tridaṇḍi-sannyāsī*. After hearing about your glories, they have all come for *sādhū-darśana*.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was touched and said, “So much eagerness they have for *sādhū-darśana*! So much faith they have in *sādhū*! I will come here every year.”

Unfortunately, Śrīla Prabhupāda performed his *aprākṛta-līlā* (disappearance pastime) soon after, and thus never physically visited Sarbhog again.

Remembering Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words that he would visit Sarbhog every year, Guru Mahārāja would yearly visit Sarbhog to celebrate Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance day. He would say, “Whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda has spoken can never be false. He will appear here every year in his deity form.” In this pastime, Guru Mahārāja exemplified the consciousness (*citta-vṛtti*) of a fully surrendered disciple in relation to fulfilling the words and innermost desires of *śrī guru*.

The great wealth of a tattered blanket

Wherever he travelled, Guru Mahārāja always carried one particular blanket with him, which he would place on his bed. Although he would receive many blankets during his

travels, he would only ever use that one particular old blanket.

Guru Mahārāja's *sevaka* once removed that old blanket, hid it somewhere and replaced it with a beautiful new blanket. Upon seeing that the old blanket was missing from his bed, Guru Mahārāja at once inquired about its whereabouts from his *sevaka*, who replied, "That blanket had gotten quite old and was worn out, so I..."

Guru Mahārāja interrupted him to say, "Even if it were completely worn out and torn to pieces, I would have it sewn back together and use no other blanket for the rest of my life. My most worshipful *gurupāda-padma*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, very mercifully sat on that blanket, being fully aware that it had previously been used by me. If you were to understand its true value, you would never try to remove it. It is not important whether an item is old or new, or if its price is high or low; its true value is completely dependent on its connection with a great personality who either gave it with love or used it and mercifully left it for others as his remnant."

Such was Guru Mahārāja's attachment toward a seemingly insignificant object that was connected to Śrīla Prabhupāda. His attachment to that blanket gives some indication as to the immensity of his attachment to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The apparent end point others' attempts was for him a starting point

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

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Mahārāja, because many pilgrims had come to our *maṭha* for Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, we have incurred a great debt. Today I was busily engaged in settling these debts and resolving other issues, so that the services of the *maṭha* can continue. I beg for you and all the other Vaiṣṇavas present to please forgive me for my delay.”

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja then said, “ ‘*Nārambhān ārabhet kvacit*—There is no need

of such an ostentatious display.’ Why have you taken on more responsibility than you can easily handle?”

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

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

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

“In this regard, I have had firsthand experience. Śrīla Prabhupāda had sent *pūjyapāda* Mādhava Mahārāja—then known as Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī—and me to acquire some land at the meeting place of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda at Kovvur, near the banks of the Godāvarī River, in order to establish Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s footprints (*pāda-pīṭha*) there. After many days of endless endeavor, I said, ‘Hayagrīva Prabhu, Śrīla Prabhupāda has sent us here with great hope to obtain a piece of land on which to establish Mahāprabhu’s *pāda-pīṭha*. My *brahmācārī* name given by Śrīla Prabhupāda was Rāmānanda dāsa, and this is the meeting place of Śrīman

Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya. Although we have tried our best to acquire land, we have not been successful. What is your opinion? Should we stay here longer, or should we leave for Madras for preaching?”

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

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

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

Beyond the glorification of my Guru Mahārāja, this narration relates a significant lesson. Although Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja was senior to my Guru Mahārāja, having joined the *maṭha* and having been awarded *sannyāsa-veśa*

earlier than him, he did not hesitate in observing and speaking about the good qualities of his junior godbrother. Śrī Goloka Vṛndāvana is the topmost abode, superior to all other Vaikuṅṭha planets, and it remains eternally free from even the faintest scent of jealousy and envy. Because Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja is among the great personalities who are sincere (*nirmatsara*) followers of the loving residents of this very Goloka Vṛndāvana, he remains free from the material limitations of this world, and was therefore able to offer such genuinely humble and non-duplicitous praise.

1 A *maṭha* is a place where spiritual aspirants reside in the company of spiritual teachers, whereas a *mandira* is a place where the deity form of the Lord resides. The institutions founded by Śrīla Prabhupāda incorporated both aspects in one establishment and are referred to as *maṭha-mandiras*.

2

*tat te 'nukampām su-samīkṣamāṇo
bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam
hṛd-vāg-vapurahir vidadhan namas te
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk*

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (10.14.8)

One who, while always expecting Your mercy, tolerates the results of his previous misdeeds and constantly offers respects to You with his heart, speech and body, is eligible to receive the inheritance of Your lotus feet.

The Subtleties of Devotion

Seeing to the comfort of Vaiṣṇavas is our duty

Once, Guru Mahārāja organized a religious convention (*dharma-sabhā*) in Kṛṣṇanagara and invited many of his godbrothers. Due to heavy rain, a leak in the ceiling developed in the room in which Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, was staying, and so water had dripped all through the night. When Guru Mahārāja came to know of this, he personally went to Śrīla Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja's room, offered *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* and very humbly sought forgiveness. "I am highly embarrassed by my inability to arrange suitable accommodations for you. Please be merciful and forgive me."

Śrīla Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja said, "Mahārāja! I was awake well before the water began dripping from the ceiling. I was peacefully sitting inside my mosquito net and chanting *harināma*. There is no need for you to feel distressed."

Guru Mahārāja called for me and said, "The leak in the ceiling needs to be fixed immediately. Have it completed today. Please have it repaired nicely, so that this problem does not reoccur. Our guests have come solely due to our invitation, and not of their own impulse. We will therefore be at fault if they experience any discomfort. It is an offence if we do not make sincere efforts to serve the Vaiṣṇavas, so it

is our duty to make suitable arrangements to ensure that their stay here is comfortable.”

As per the instructions of Guru Mahārāja, I had the entire roof covered with tin sheets, on top of which I placed bricks. As a result, not a single drop of rainwater dripped into the room.

Personally and sincerely serving his godbrothers

Guru Mahārāja used to invite his godbrothers to his *maṭhas* in Kolkata, Vṛndāvana, Chandigarh and other places for the sake of preaching the message of Śrī Rūpa-Raghunātha. On all such occasions, Guru Mahārāja would personally ensure that they had been provided with all the amenities required to make their stay comfortable. He would visit their room daily, offer *praṇāma* and humbly inquire whether they were comfortable and if there was anything they needed. He would then call for their respective personal servants and give them full permission to take whatever they needed for the service of their *gurudeva* from the *bhaṇḍārī* (person in charge of supplies) without hesitation, be it milk, yogurt or anything else.

Do not be a miser in vaiṣṇava-sevā

Śrī Śrīmad Kuñja-bihārī dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, was once the *maṭha* in-charge of the Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha branch in Kaṭaka. Later, he stayed in Vraja and was always deeply absorbed in *bhajana*. He

somehow maintained his life by performing *mādhukarī-bhikṣā* (begging small amounts of alms from many homes) while visiting different parts of Vraja-maṇḍala. In his old age, he came to reside in Śrī Vinoda-vāṇī Gauḍīya Maṭha, a branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Vṛndāvana. In those times, the *maṭha* did not offer the best accommodations or facilities, and so Bābājī Mahārāja had to stay in a room with a ceiling made of asbestos panels.

When Guru Mahārāja visited Śrī Vinoda-vāṇī Gauḍīya Maṭha, he went to Bābājī Mahārāja's room, offered him *praṇāma* and asked, “Is our inability to offer you the best facilities a cause of concern or inconvenience for you?”

Bābājī Mahārāja replied, “It is my habit to maintain myself through doing *mādhukarī-bhikṣā*, and here I am being served very nice *prasāda* three times a day. I am accustomed to sleeping in *kuṭīras* (huts), *dharmasālās* (traveler's inns) and even under trees. Here, I have been provided with a separate room. How, then, can the question of inconvenience arise?”

After this incident, Guru Mahārāja told us, “Our service has only two objects: Viṣṇu and the Vaiṣṇavas. Of the two, service to the Vaiṣṇavas is more important. Therefore, you should render service to the Vaiṣṇavas carefully, without making any mistakes. I am not saying that you should offer opulent food to Bābājī Mahārāja, but rather that you should serve him with the utmost sincerity and dignity and use

whatever resources are available to the greatest extent possible. Never act like a miser while offering honor and respect to the Vaiṣṇavas, as it will only adversely affect your spiritual progress.”

The highest ideal of Vaiṣṇava conduct

After Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance from this world, many of his renounced disciples who had dedicated their lives for his service used to gather every year on the day of Śrī Jagannātha mahotsava (the day after Śrī Gaura-pūrṇimā) at Śrī Caitanya Sarasvata Maṭha in Navadvīpa, which was established by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja. On one such occasion, I had the good fortune of witnessing a most astonishing example of the highest ideal of Vaiṣṇava conduct.

After honoring *mahāprasāda*, all the Vaiṣṇavas went to take rest in their respective rooms in the *maṭha*. Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, however, sat and rested on an easy chair outside his *bhajana-kuṭīra* while his *sevaka*, Śrī Bhakti Sundara Govinda Mahārāja, took Guru Mahārāja inside Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *bhajana-kuṭīra* and requested him to take rest on Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s bed. Guru Mahārāja signaled Śrī Govinda Mahārāja to lay a mat and pillow on the floor nearby. He then lay down and rested on the mat, and not on Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s bed. Śrī Govinda Mahārāja

told me, “The transcendental body of your Guru Mahārāja and his attractive face made it appear as if he was a manifestation of Bhagavān Himself.”

Later, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja invited Guru Mahārāja to sit on his easy chair, but Guru Mahārāja declined. Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja said, “According to *vara-varaṇanera nyāya*—that is, the logic of a groom on the day of his wedding—there is no fault if you accept my seat. Just as it is not considered disrespectful when a groom rides atop a mare during his wedding procession while his elders—like his father, grandfather, priests and other relatives—walk on foot, there would be no consideration of offense if you were to sit in my easy chair.

“When Śrī Sukadeva Gosvāmī accepted an elevated seat in the presence of his father, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa; his grandfather, Śrī Parāśara Muni; and great sages like Āṅgirā Ṛṣi and Bhāguri Ṛṣi in order to narrate *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* to Parīkṣit Mahārāja, his act of sitting up high was completely free from any fault or offense. Similarly, there will be no fault or offense should you choose to accept a seat in my easy chair.”

Still, Guru Mahārāja did not accept the seat. He said, “The conduct of a groom and that of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī is followed in the wake of some particular circumstance for the sake of service. Such conduct is not for general circumstances, and therefore it cannot be imbibed in one’s

regular day-to-day conduct. Imitating such conduct without discrimination will definitely be considered an offense.” The etiquette and conduct Guru Mahārāja demonstrated in front of his senior godbrother was ideal and ought to be followed by everyone.

His eagerness to serve his godbrothers

Śrīpāda Jagamohana Prabhu, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, wrote a letter to both Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kusuma Śravaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Guru Mahārāja expressing his desire to stay with either of them. In the letter to Guru Mahārāja he wrote, “I have heard you established an institution in Kolkata named Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. If you will allow, I wish to reside with you there. Kindly inform me about your decision, and I will arrange accordingly.”

When Guru Mahārāja read Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu’s letter, he replied immediately, without any delay: “I have become highly inspired by hearing that you wish to come and bestow your mercy upon this wretched soul. I take this as an indication that Śrīla Prabhupāda is still merciful to me. Please come to Kolkata as soon as you receive this letter.”

There was some delay in Śrīla Śravaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s reply, and so Guru Mahārāja’s letter was the first reply to reach Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu. After a few days, Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu wrote another letter: “I have heard that

you are organizing Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* this year. I would like to perform Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* with you, and after completing *parikramā*, accompany you to Kolkata.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “At the moment, we are still considering whether or not to perform Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* this year. If and when it becomes confirmed, however, can you not accompany us from here in Kolkata via the coach that will be reserved for transporting all the devotees? Please do not deprive those of us in Kolkata of your kind association, for which we have developed a greed to attain.”

After receiving Guru Mahārāja’s letter, Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu agreed to immediately go to Kolkata, and he informed Guru Mahārāja of his itinerary. One day, Guru Mahārāja called for me and said, “Today, my godbrother Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu will arrive from Mathurā at Howrah Station. Go and receive him with great honor. Offer him *praṇāma*, *candana* (sandalwood paste) and a flower garland and escort him here. Although he wears white cloth, he has remained celibate throughout his entire life. He will most certainly be adorned with bright *vaiṣṇava-tilaka* on his forehead. After confirming his identity, book a taxi and accompany him here; do not bring him by bus or tram.”

Following the instructions of Guru Mahārāja, I went to Howrah Station to receive Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu. The present system of reserving individual seats in a designated

coach did not exist in those days, and I therefore searched for Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu in each of the coaches, one by one. Seeing a devotee dressed in white and adorned with *vaiṣṇava-tilaka*, I asked, “Are you Jagamohana Prabhu?”

Without confirming his identity, he asked, “Has Mādhava Mahārāja sent you?”

I replied, “Yes,” and I offered him *candana*, a flower garland and *praṇāma*, took his luggage and belongings, booked a taxi and accompanied him to the *maṭha*. Guru Mahārāja became extremely delighted upon meeting him.

A proper approach can make us understand the heart of Vaisnavas

When Guru Mahārāja announced in 1966 that camps would be set up at eighteen different places during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* that year, his godbrother Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Suhr̥t Paramārthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja approached him and said, “Mahārāja, when Śrīla Prabhupāda performed Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, I served in the organizing party in the rear, and was therefore unable to have proper *darśana* and hear the glories of all the pastime places in Vraja. Now that you are organizing Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, it is my strong desire to take full advantage of this opportunity to visit the places where Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes. However, I will only attend if you accept fifty rupees in *parikramā* fees from me.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Vaiṣṇavas are worshipful for us, and accepting fees from them is against my principles, especially after having invited them to take part in an event I am arranging. You are a *niṣkiñcana* Vaiṣṇava; you accept Kṛṣṇa as your only wealth. Therefore, I cannot accept any *parikramā* fees from you.”

Hearing Guru Mahārāja’s words, Śrīla Paramārthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja fell silent. As he was leaving Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Vṛndāvana to head toward the Śrī Govinda-jī *mandira*, I was approaching the *maṭha* from the other side of the street. Seeing me, he said, “Fate has not allowed me to perform Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*.”

When I asked him why he felt that way, he explained everything. I asked him, “Mahārāja, why are you insistent upon giving fifty rupees?”

He replied, “I am able to give fifty rupees, and so if I fail to give it or if it is not accepted from me, then I will have committed an offence called *vitta-śāṭhya-doṣa*, or being miserly with one’s wealth.”

I told him, “I will accept those fifty rupees from you. In this way, you will no longer be required to give them to Guru Mahārāja, and Guru Mahārāja will be spared accepting a fee from you, who are his worshipful object.”

“What will you do with those fifty rupees?” he asked.

“With this money,” I replied, “I will order *rabaḍī*

at some place during the *parikramā* and use it in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.”

He readily accepted my proposal and happily participated in the *parikramā*. When the *parikramā* reached Kāmyavana, I took the money from him and arranged for forty kilograms of *rabaḍī* to be distributed among all the pilgrims. Everyone honored that *rabaḍī-prasāda* with great happiness. At that time, I loudly announced, “Śrīmad Bhakti Suhr̥t Paramārthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja *kī jaya!*”

Śrīla Paramārthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja later reprimanded me and asked, “Why did you take my name and advertise me as the donor of the *rabaḍī-prasāda*?”

I replied, “In using your name, I advertised my own purpose.”

“How is that?” he asked.

I said, “Now that all the devotees have heard it was you who had donated the *rabaḍī-prasāda* for the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, some of them may enthusiastically come forward to perform a similar service, and thereby we will be able to overcome any financial difficulties that may stand in the way of our service.”

Śrīla Paramārthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja became pleased to hear this. My explanation later proved to be true: many devotees daily came forward and gave me money to purchase many items for the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

When I told Guru Mahārāja what had transpired, he said

“Śrī Paramārthī Mahārāja is a *niṣkiñcana* Vaiṣṇava. I did not want to accept *parikramā* fees from him. But he did not understand my mind. I would have readily accepted a monetary contribution for some other service. You have helped him understand this and have inspired him to participate in Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*. My heart is filled with joy because of this. But this was not the only service you performed. By loudly calling out his name, you have pleased me further, because we will never retreat (*paścāt-pāda*) in our efforts to loudly proclaim the glories of the *niṣkiñcana* Vaiṣṇavas.”

Vaiṣṇava-sevā and guru-sevā are non-different

Whenever Guru Mahārāja would preach at various places, many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would also join him in order to give the common persons there an opportunity to attain their topmost welfare. When Guru Mahārāja’s householder disciples would come forward to offer clothes, donations and other items, Guru Mahārāja would say, “I am relatively young and will surely come here again in the future, whereas my godbrothers are senior to me both in age and in the realm of *bhakti*, and may not visit this place again. Who knows whether or not you will attain the fortune of having their *darśana* and association again? You should therefore serve them by offering all these gifts to them, and not me.

Vaiṣṇava-sevā and *guru-sevā* are non-different.”

In remembering these words of Guru Mahārāja, the following teaching repeatedly manifests in our heart:

*‘āmi tō ’vaiṣṇava’ e buddhi hōile,
amānī nā ha ’bō āmi
pratiṣṭhāsā āsi’, hṛdaya dūṣibe,
hōibō niraya-gāmī*

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
Kalyāṇa-kalpataru (Uccavāsa 2.8.2)

If I develop the idea that ‘I am a Vaiṣṇava,’ then I will never become humble. My heart will become contaminated with the desire to receive honor from others, and I shall go to hell. *

Due to the influence of time and our great misfortune, the conduct Guru Mahārāja followed and demonstrated in his day-to-day personal dealings is seen today only in a very few exceptional devotees. Nowadays, we mostly observe in others the opposite of the conduct and behavior he exemplified.

All one’s possessions are to be seen as instruments in vaiṣṇava-sevā

After the construction of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha was completed in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda—including Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga

Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabha Bhaktisāra Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śaraṇa Śānta Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahansa Mahārāja and others—acquired land in Īsodyāna and expressed their desire to stay in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha while building their own respective *maṭhas*.

Guru Mahārāja ordered me, “Whenever any of my godbrothers visits Māyāpura, he should stay in my room (*bhajana-kuṭīra*), and you should serve him with a standard greater than you would employ when serving me.”

Some of Guru Mahārāja’s above-mentioned godbrothers agreed to stay in his *bhajana-kuṭīra*, while others, due to their possessing a mood of reverence toward him, declined his offer. In all situations, Guru Mahārāja always considered everything in his possession as an instrument of *vaiṣṇava-sevā*, and not as an object for anyone’s sense enjoyment. He was always wholeheartedly absorbed in the objective of serving and bringing pleasure to his godbrothers.

A fair and expert mediator

Guru Mahārāja’s personal conduct, divine characteristics and pure, non-duplicitous affection were extraordinary, so much so that his senior godbrothers would request him to act as a mediator and prescribe a suitable solution whenever a

disagreement would arise among them. This is visible in the following incidents.

After Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktyāloka Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja initially stayed together and preached the message of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja would accept disciples, and Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja would preach under his guidance. It was due to the preaching of Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja that Śrī Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja and Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja took shelter of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Later, when some differences arose among them, Guru Mahārāja was called to reconcile those differences and resolve the situation. After hearing each of their views, Guru Mahārāja said, "Śrī Keśava Mahārāja has many renounced disciples, and therefore it is better that Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha remains with him. Śrī Madhusūdana Mahārāja should continue preaching from the *maṭha* in Burdwan, and later I will personally assist him in acquiring a plot of land in Māyāpura and building a *maṭha* there. Śrī Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja should be given a sufficient amount of funds so that he can purchase land in Māyāpura and continue his services most suitably."

The solution Guru Mahārāja proposed was readily accepted by all of them. Guru Mahārāja inspired a lady devotee, Śrīmatī Pannā Mā—a disciple of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja who had taken up the path of *bhakti* after hearing *hari-kathā* from Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja—to acquire land in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura for Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and, true to his word, personally assisted in the construction of Śrīla Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s *maṭha* to the furthest extent possible.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saudha Āśrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīpāda Nṛsimhānanda Prabhu also used to preach together. When, for various reasons, some differences arose between them, it was Guru Mahārāja alone who helped them come to an amicable resolution. Although he was a junior godbrother, they all gave importance to his suggestions, and when an agreement was reached, they expressed their heartfelt gratitude to him.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja had established an institution called Śrī Gauḍīya Saṅga. The institution later faced many difficulties after Śrīla Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s disappearance, and it was Guru Mahārāja alone who resolved the issues.

Rescuing a godbrother from a most grave situation

After Śrīla Prabhupāda performed his *aprākṛta-līlā*, or

his physical disappearance from this world, a dark period engulfed the Gauḍīya Maṭha, and one after another, many *brahmacārīs* who had taken shelter of the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda left the *maṭha* and returned home. Somehow, Guru Mahārāja brought some of these devotees back to the *maṭha*. Among them, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja (then Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmacārī) was foremost. Guru Mahārāja walked for a long distance to reach Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmacārī's house, and when he finally reached there, he saw Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Brahmacārī sitting in his wedding ceremony, about to get married. Guru Mahārāja spoke to his father, Śrīpāda Vaikuṅṭhanātha Prabhu, who was also a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda: "You are a Vaiṣṇava and a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. How could you allow your renounced son to get married? Why did you not stop him from doing this?"

Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha Prabhu replied, "To the best of my ability, I have tried to persuade him not to get married. But I did not force him to remain a *brahmacārī*, as he may have thought I was not interested in handing over his inheritance to him or that I had become bereft of all affection for him."

Guru Mahārāja said, "If you would kindly allow, I would like to try to stop him from getting married and, if possible, take him back to the *maṭha*."

Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha Prabhu said, "Certainly you can try. It will be a matter of great joy if you succeed in doing so."

After speaking with Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Prabhu, Guru Mahārāja brought him along with him and left the wedding ceremony, where the priestly duties were being performed by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Bhūdeva Śrautī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Later, Guru Mahārāja asked Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to award *sannyāsa* to Śrī Rādhā-ramaṇa Prabhu.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja would often mention, “It was Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja alone, and no one else, who was highly merciful to me and rescued me from that most grave situation.”

Vaiṣṇava-sevā is our topmost priority

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Deśika Ācārya Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupada who had accepted *sannyāsa* from Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, stayed for most of his life in Vraja at Śrī Kāmaī Karehlā, the appearance place of Śrī Viśākhā Sakhī. He once became somewhat sick and mentioned in a letter to Guru Mahārāja that he needed fifty rupees in order to purchase medicine.

In those days, Guru Mahārāja resided with a few other devotees in a rented apartment on Rāsa-bihārī Avenue in Kolkata. Whatever rice they collected through performing *bhikṣā* (begging alms) was sold in order to purchase various

essential items for the *maṭha*. Śrī Saṅkarṣana Prabhu, a resident of Ranāghāṭa, had donated a few brass cooking utensils, and somehow or other the affairs of the *maṭha* were being managed. When Guru Mahārāja read the letter from Śrīla Ācārya Gosvāmī Mahārāja, tears flowed from his eyes as he considered, “Although our situation is dire, it is my duty to serve my dear godbrother in his time of need.” While pacing in his room, he devised a way to raise such a large sum of money. Eventually, he ordered me to call for his godbrother Śrīpāda Uddhāraṇa Prabhu.

When Śrīpāda Uddhāraṇa Prabhu came before Guru Mahārāja, Guru Mahārāja requested him, “Could you please kindly ask the shop owner who purchases the rice we collect in *bhikṣā* for a loan of fifty rupees? Tell him we will repay the loan as soon as possible by collecting much larger quantities of rice. In case you are unable to procure a loan of fifty rupees from him, then accept whatever he gives you and try to collect the balance from the house of Śrī Govinda Bābū. We have received an opportunity to serve a Vaiṣṇava, and it is our duty to act on this opportunity right away. Serving our godbrother is our topmost priority, especially during this time when he so desperately needs help.”

Śrīpāda Uddhāraṇa Prabhu collected a loan of thirty rupees from the shop owner and twenty rupees from Śrī Govind Bābū’s wife. It was only when he handed over those fifty rupees to Guru Mahārāja that Guru Mahārāja felt relief.

Guru Mahārāja then said to me, “Go to the Lake Market post office at once and send a telegram money order to Śrī Bhakti Deśika Ācārya Mahārāja. Do not delay for even a moment.”

I left immediately and sent the money order. When I came back and informed Guru Mahārāja, he said nothing, but his expressions communicated his gratitude, as if we had performed some great favor to him.

Serving the Vaiṣṇavas without delay

Once, when Guru Mahārāja was honoring *prasāda* right before leaving for Vṛndāvana from Kolkata, I read a letter to him that had just arrived from his godbrother, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Deśika Ācārya Gosvāmī Mahārāja. It read, “I need a medicine called *sādhanā* for my eyes. It is not available anywhere in Vraja, so please bring it with you from Dhākā Pharmacy in Kolkata.”

Guru Mahārāja immediately gave me his train and coach number and told me, “Take some money, purchase the medicine and proceed directly to Howrah train station. If I were to wait for you here in the *maṭha*, I would miss my train. I will therefore meet you at the train station in my coach.”

When I reached Dhākā Pharmacy, the shopkeeper had just opened the shop and was sweeping the floor. After hearing my request, he quickly finished his sweeping, but said that he would help me only after he had offered incense and *ārati* to

the deities in his shop. I am unable to describe the agony I suffered upon learning there would be a delay. I could only wait until he had completed his morning rituals. After finally procuring the medicine, I reached Howrah station and saw that the green light had already been given and the train was just about to leave the platform. I kicked off my wooden sandals and ran as fast as I possibly could toward Guru Mahārāja's coach, as if I was racing to win a gold medal. When I got closer to Guru Mahārāja's coach, I saw him leaning out of the door of the coach awaiting the arrival of his godbrother's medicine.

Just as I handed over the medicine to Guru Mahārāja, the train began to pull out of the station, and he said, "We are fortunate to have taken advantage of this opportunity to perform *vaiṣṇava-sevā*."

Miserliness has no place in the service of Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇavas

A very poor *grhastha* disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda would daily come to our *maṭha* to honor *prasāda*. One day after lunch *prasāda*, when all the residents of the *maṭha* were resting, Guru Mahārāja told me, "Quietly go to the storeroom and fill this Prabhu's bag with rice. Make sure no one comes to know of this. Certainly, no one would stop me from giving anything to anyone, nor would they mention such an incident to anyone outside of the *maṭha*. But if anyone

were to harbor any ill feelings about this devotee and think him to be in any way inferior, then that person would be committing an offence. It is only to safeguard against such a regrettable offence that I am having it done discreetly. At times, Śrīla Prabhupāda tests my inclination to serve the Vaiṣṇavas by presenting before me the apparent underprivileged state of some of his disciples. Therefore, I always remain careful never to fail such an examination. We should always remain very careful in our attempts to assess the character of Vaiṣṇavas. We must never neglect or dishonor them under any circumstances. We have renounced the world for the sole purpose of serving Śrī Viṣṇu and the Vaiṣṇavas. The only key to our success is to never act miserly while serving them.”

Providing shelter to a godbrother

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

I, too, was in Vṛndāvana in those days, engaged in the

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

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

The recipient of his godbrothers’ trust

Some time after Guru Mahārāja’s disappearance from the vision of this world, Śrīpāda Girendra-govardhana Prabhu, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, was forced to take shelter in the house of one of his disciples, because he had no personal assistants to serve him. Once, while speaking about Śrī Girendra-govardhana Prabhu, Śrīla Bhakti Suḥṛt Paramārthī

Gosvāmī Mahārāja, another disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, sorrowfully and tearfully said, “If Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja had still been physically present in this world, Śrī Girendra-govardhana Prabhu would not have been forced to stay in the house of his disciple, because Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja would have certainly arranged for him to stay in his *maṭha* under the care of his disciples.”

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

Remembering, honoring and serving his godbrothers on their appearance days

One day, Guru Mahārāja called me into his room and handed me flowers, fruits, sweets, a set of saffron-colored clothes and an envelope containing *praṇāmī* and ordered, “Go and give these things to Śrī Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja and offer *praṇāma* to him with the utmost devotion. Offer *praṇāma* on my behalf, as well. I am sending you, because he may be hesitant to accept these items if I were to personally offer them.”

According to Guru Mahārāja’s order, I went to Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s room, offered *praṇāma*, offered him the items given by Guru Mahārāja and then relayed the message that Guru Mahārāja also offers his

praṇāma. Śrīla Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja laughingly said, “According to the *tithi*, today is my birthday. All this is for me on my birthday! Mādhava Mahārāja remembered my birthday, even though he is so busy.”

This was the first time I came to know about the date of Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s appearance day (*avirbhāvati*). In this way, Guru Mahārāja initiated the practice of honoring the appearance day of his dear godbrother.

When I returned to Guru Mahārāja and informed him that I had given everything to Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he said, “One should worship the Vaiṣṇavas on their appearance days by remembering and serving them. We should hear the glorifications (*kīrtana*) of their most sublime qualities and divine character. Because Śrī Purī Mahārāja is my senior godbrother, I have taken a room directly below his, so that I may always honor him by keeping him on my head and thus receive the shelter of his lotus feet.”

“Only Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja can resolve this issue”

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja had great affection and honor for Guru Mahārāja, which was evident whenever they would meet together.

Once, a female disciple of Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja donated to her *gurudeva* a piece of land in Basīrahaṭa, in the North 24 Paraganās district of West Bengal, and a few of his renunciate disciples started residing

there. The relatives of that disciple filed a complaint with the local police against Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja's disciples who were staying there. As a result of the complaint, they were held in the local police station. Upon hearing this news, Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja sent his *sannyāsa* disciple Śrī Bhakti Sundara Govinda Mahārāja to Guru Mahārāja with the message "Only Śrī Madhava Mahārāja can resolve this issue."

After Śrī Bhakti Sundara Govinda Mahārāja related the details of the incident to Guru Mahārāja, Guru Mahārāja immediately dropped everything and headed to the office of the Deputy Superintendent of Police, who was the son-in-law of a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. After Guru Mahārāja told him everything, he said, "I have not come here to take advantage of your position by seeking an unjust favor. I do, however, request you to carefully check the registration documents for the property and accordingly decide which of the two parties is right as per the law."

The Deputy Superintendent then thoroughly checked all the documents. He helped the renunciants in every way, and eventually got them released from jail.

Guru Mahārāja was always eager and ready to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda and those connected to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He was always extremely delighted and grateful whenever he received an opportunity to serve them.

Duty extends beyond death

One day, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śobhana Padmanābha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupada, told Guru Mahārāja, “I have established a small *maṭha* between Kolkata and Purī at a place called Mechedā Junction. I wish to hand over its ownership to you and reside in any of your branches of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “We would be delighted to have you stay in any of our *maṭhas*, and would be greatly fortunate to have you. We will serve you in all ways, to the best of our ability. However, I sincerely request you not to hand over the ownership of your *maṭha* to me in your will. In the event that I leave my body before you, you will be dependent upon my disciples to care for you, as you will be left bereft of any property or funds should you leave everything to me. If at that time those disciples of mine are unable to properly serve you with due respect, then I will be guilty of not fulfilling my commitment to you.”



1 A classic Indian sweet made by boiling condensed milk and sugar.

Following the Footsteps of Śrī Guru

Never pass up the opportunity to serve the Vaiṣṇavas

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

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

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Later, we may find so many people willing to contribute to the construction of rooms that we will run out of space in the *maṭha*. But the opportunity we have received to serve many senior Vaiṣṇavas at one time and in one place will never again present itself.” With this

mood, Guru Mahārāja organized great festivals in many places—like Yāśāḍā, Guwāhaṭī, Kolkata, Purī and other locations—and invited all the Vaiṣṇavas.

Taking full advantage of the opportunity to serve Vaiṣṇavas

After the disappearance of my *śikṣā-guru* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, the *maṭha* in-charge of Śrī Keśava-jī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā, sent a letter to Guru Mahārāja under the direction of Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja, the then *ācārya* of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. He wrote, “We will be coming for *darśana* of Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma under the auspices of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. If you were to kindly allow, we would like to stay in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha with our entire party for many days. Please inform us of your decision, so that we may make all the required arrangements.”

In his reply, Guru Mahārāja wrote, “We will indeed be extremely pleased to have your association here. However, we have one condition: while staying with us, do not make any independent arrangements for cooking. Your entire party will have to accept the same *prasāda* that is being cooked and honored by the *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* of our *maṭha*. If you find this condition acceptable, then you can plan your schedule as per your convenience.”

Guru Mahārāja then said to us, “Just see! The Vaiṣṇavas have very mercifully given us an opportunity to serve them. A most appropriate opportunity to render service has knocked on our door, and it is our duty to take full advantage of it. Because they may some day acquire a place of their own in Vṛndāvana, this opportunity may never come again.”

Some years after the disappearance of Guru Mahārāja, my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prāpanna Tapasvī Mahārāja once went to Haridvāra with ten devotees and stayed at a branch of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti at Kankhal, in Haridvāra. There, the *maṭha* in-charge requested Śrī Tapasvī Mahārāja to make separate arrangements for cooking. When Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, who just so happened to be there at the time, saw Śrī Tapasvī Mahārāja cooking separately, he chastised the *maṭha* in-charge, saying, “When we went to Vṛndāvana for *darśana* and stayed at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, Śrīpāda Madhāva Gosvāmī Mahārāja perfectly arranged for the accommodations and *prasāda* of our entire party for many days, and you cannot arrange for *prasāda* for even ten devotees, and that too for only two days.”

The *maṭha* in-charge then requested Śrī Tapasvī Mahārāja not to cook separately, and from then on, the *prasāda* for all the devotees was prepared by the residents of the *maṭha*.

We found out about this incident only because Śrī

Tapasvī Mahārāja narrated it to us. At that time, I told Tapasvī Mahārāja that this is the quality of Vaiṣṇavas: they remember and follow the conduct of their *guru-vargas* and feel deeply indebted to them.

There is no lack of space in the heart of a Vaiṣṇava

Śrī Satyavrata Prabhu, a disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, once visited us with a desire to reside at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata, which at that time was located in a rented house. In those times, we would have to cook rice two or three times every meal, because the pot we used for cooking rice was small in size, and we did not have enough money to purchase a larger pot. Feeling a little uneasy upon hearing Śrī Satyavrata Prabhu's desire, one *brahmacārī* said to Guru Mahārāja, “Because there are too many devotees staying here, we must constantly bear many inconveniences. How will we be able to accommodate even one more person?”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “He will stay wherever we stay, and honor whatever *prasāda* we honor. He has no special or extra demands, and so there is no need to make any separate arrangements for him. It is our duty to assist Vaiṣṇavas in their *bhajana*. For true Vaiṣṇavas, there is never any dearth of space. If there is any deficiency, it is in the heart alone and should be removed. Other than this, there is no deficiency that can ever become an obstacle in our service to the

Vaiṣṇavas.

“There were once three highly exalted Vaiṣṇavas residing in three different parts of South India. After hearing of each other’s respective qualities, they decided to visit to Śrī Raṅga-kṣetra, unbeknownst to each other, with the desire to meet one another. Thus, they separately departed for their journey from their respective places. Along the way, they encountered a heavy storm with strong winds and pouring rain. One of them found an old small cottage-like place with a door and took shelter there. Because he was exhausted from the journey, he somehow managed to lie down in that space, despite its small size. After some time, he heard a knock at the door. A voice from outside said, ‘Who is the great personality residing here? Can he mercifully give me shelter here for some time?’

“The Vaiṣṇava inside the room opened the door and asked the traveler to come inside. The Vaiṣṇava outside the room looked at the room and said, ‘It is only with great difficulty that you yourself can lay in this place. If I were to come in, you would be very uncomfortable. Do not worry, I will try to find another place.’

“The other Vaiṣṇava said, ‘Although the space is small for the two of us to lie down, it is big enough for us to sit and pass the night happily without any inconvenience. Please be merciful to me and come inside without any hesitation.’ Agreeing to his proposal, the Vaiṣṇava standing outside

seated himself inside the small room.

“They had just started speaking *hari-kathā* when they heard a knock at the door. Outside was another person asking if he could take shelter in the room. When they opened the door, the Vaiṣṇava standing outside saw that only the two Vaiṣṇavas could sit in the very small room, and he was hesitant to go inside and inconvenience them. Understanding his mood, the Vaiṣṇavas sitting inside said, ‘If two of us can spend the night sitting, then why can’t the three of us can spend the whole night standing? Please come inside. We all shall engage in *hari-kathā*.’

“In this way, because there was no deficiency of any sort in their hearts, they happily spent the whole night engaged in *hari-kathā*, and their pleasure knew no bounds, especially when they realized that they were all visiting Śrī Raṅga-kṣetra only to meet each other.

“You should heed this story and somehow adjust to accommodate Śrī Satyavrata Prabhu during the heavy storm that has presently hit Gauḍīya Maṭha. This storm will eventually pass. Later, you will not only remember this occasion and consider yourself fortunate to have received such association, but you will also pray to again obtain such association, without caring for the external inconveniences.”

His neutrality

A disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī

Mahārāja once expressed a desire to reside with us in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. When I asked Guru Mahārāja for permission, he said, “It is our duty to aid in the *bhajana* of whosoever wishes to come and reside in our *maṭha*. There is no need to inquire from me or seek my permission on this subject in the future. However, if someone is coming from another *maṭha*, you should first seek the advice of his *gurudeva*, or if his *gurudeva* is not easily contactable, you should consult with his *maṭha* in-charge before accepting him as a resident of our *maṭha*.”

As per the instructions of Guru Mahārāja, I approached Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and humbly submitted the proposal to him: “One of your *brahmacārī* disciples desires to stay in the Kolkata branch of our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. But we shall agree to it only if you have no objection.” He replied that he had no objection.

Later, when the Oriental Institute established by Śrīla Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was attacked by dacoits, he wrote to us requesting us to send that disciple of his, who was physically very strong, so that he could help provide security for the *maṭha*. At that time, Guru Mahārāja described to the *brahmacārī* in detail the glories and importance of rendering *guru-sevā*, having firm unflinching faith in *guru*, and sincerely following the words emanating from the lotus lips of *śrī guru*. Having sufficiently made the *brahmacārī* understand the significance of *śrī guru*'s glories, Guru

Mahārāja made the necessary arrangements for his journey to Vṛndāvana.

Affectionate concern for pilgrims

Whenever Śrī Caitanaya Gauḍīya Maṭha would host a *parikramā* of Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala, Guru Mahārāja would give us many instructions regarding the arrangement of the pilgrims' *prasāda* and accommodations. He would not only instruct us to engage in *vaiṣṇava-sevā* in such a way that the Vaiṣṇavas would be pleased, but would also himself serve in this way. We were all utterly astonished to see the dedication with which he served the Vaiṣṇavas.

Once when we were in Nandagrāma during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, it rained heavily during the night. Everyone was peacefully sleeping in their respective rooms, but Guru Mahārāja awoke as soon as he heard raindrops falling on the roof of the *dharmasālā* (guesthouse). He got up from his bed, woke me up and ordered me to go and check the pilgrims' outside tent for leaks. I tried to pacify Guru Mahārāja by saying, "We have constructed an earthen ridge around the tent. It is impossible for water to find its way inside."

Still, Guru Mahārāja was not satisfied. He said, "I will only be able to sleep after you personally go down and check that all is okay."

On Guru Mahārāja's order, I inspected the tent and

reported to Guru Mahārāja, “Everything is fine, and the pilgrims are resting peacefully. Not a drop of water has entered the tent. The waterproof tent has two flaps, so there is no possibility of rain entering from the canopy. You can sleep without any worries.”

Guru Mahārāja then said, “It would be good if you could check the condition of tents on the rooftop, as well.”

I found myself in a dilemma. On one hand, it would be impossible for me to enter the tents on the roof, as they were occupied by ladies. On the other hand, it is my duty to carry out the order of *śrī guru*. Although I was unsure about what to do, I took Guru Mahārāja’s torch and headed for the tents on the rooftop. As I walked up the stairs, I happened upon my godbrother Śrī Viṣṇu dāsa (later known as Śrī Bhakti Vaibhava Araṇya Mahārāja after accepting *sannyāsa*), who told me without my asking, “The tent on the roof is fine; no water has entered inside and everything is safe.”

After I mentioned this to Guru Mahārāja, he was greatly relieved. He asked, “Did you inquire from other devotees, too?”

I replied, “Yes. I received this information from Śrī Viṣṇu Prabhu.” Hearing this, Guru Mahārāja became pacified and lay on his bed. Before falling asleep, he exquisitely described the unlimited mercy of Śrī Bhagavān, Bhagavān’s parental affection for His devotees and his own responsibility during the *parikramā*, and he expressed his

sincere gratitude for all the devotees assisting him in his service.

Service to the Vaiṣṇavas should be sincere and heartfelt, not commercial

Once, when Guru Mahārāja was daily performing *kīrtana* and giving discourses in Goalpara, Assam, some devotees who lived in the mountains far away would ride their bicycles approximately twenty kilometers each way to attend Guru Mahārāja’s programs. One day, it rained heavily during the evening program and continued raining after the *kathā* had finished.

Guru Mahārāja called for me and my godbrother Śrī Mādhavānanda Prabhu and said, “Go and arrange for *prasāda* and accommodations for all the devotees who have travelled from the mountains by bicycle. These devotees have commuted a far distance to hear spiritual discourses with deep faith. We should serve them whenever an opportunity arises. Their commute to hear *hari-kathā* is non-different from performing *dhāma-parikramā*. The true benefit of performing *dhāma-parikramā* is achieved only when one visits the *dhāma* with *praṇayi-bhaktas*—devotees who possess transcendental love for Bhagavān and His devotees—and hears *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana* from their lotus lips. Because the place where pure self-realized devotees of Bhagavān (*viśuddha-bhaktas*) reside is non-different from

Vṛndāvana, those who visit such pure devotees should be served in the same manner as those who visit the *dhāma* for *parikramā*. Such service should be sincere and heartfelt; it should not be commercial. The ideal way of serving pilgrims is by following the example of Śrī Śivānanda Sena.

“Śrī Śivānanda Sena would serve the devotees travelling from Bengal to Purī during their yearly journey to visit Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He would affectionately provide whatever the pilgrims required for their respective devotional practices, and he thereby received immense spiritual benefit. Similarly, we too will receive great benefit by providing the Vaiṣṇavas with whatever they may need, and we will not expect anything in return. Everyone in this material world is concerned only for his own personal benefit, so why should we not be concerned about our own spiritual benefit? Those who serve pilgrims with great sincerity will definitely receive the mercy of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, just as Śrī Śivānanda Sena did.”

Guru Mahārāja’s words filled our hearts with a rabid transcendental desire to dance in ecstasy. With this great joy in our hearts, we enthusiastically arranged for the pilgrims’ stay for the entire journey.

Helping and serving the Vaiṣṇavas as a principle, not for saving money

Once, when we organized a pilgrimage of North India,

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sambandha Akiñcana Gosvāmī Mahārāja suggested to Guru Mahārāja, “If we can skip Dakor, Ujjain and other nearby places we originally planned to visit, our journey will be reduced by one thousand kilometers. This will save us money, which can then be used in the service of the *maṭha*.”

Hearing this, Guru Mahārāja said in English, “My principle is to help and serve the devotees, not to save money. I have brought these pilgrims in order to serve them, not to profit from them. Moreover, these pilgrims have expressed their full faith in us and are travelling with us as if they are our dependents. They will visit these places maybe only once or twice in their entire life. It is completely inappropriate to cheat them.”

The topmost method of serving prasāda

Once, Guru Mahārāja organized a large festival at the Gokula branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha and invited all the local *paṇḍās* (priests). In those days, the *paṇḍās* would accept *prasāda* only from the hands of those who had been born in *brāhmaṇa* families. For this reason, Guru Mahārāja engaged his *brāhmaṇa*-born disciples in serving the *paṇḍās*. While *prasāda* was being served, Guru Mahārāja stood nearby and called out for the *sevakas* by the surnames they used prior to joining the *maṭha*, just so the *paṇḍās* would know for sure they were being served by familial

brāhmaṇas.

He called out to me, “O Narottama Cakravartī! Serve chickpea-flour *laḍḍūs* to everyone.” As I served the *laḍḍūs*, he pointed at Śrī Sohan Lāl Paṇḍā and indicated via hand gestures that I should serve him as many *laḍḍūs* as I could fit in my two hands. Although Guru Mahārāja had told me not to count the number of *laḍḍūs* a person is served, still, being curious to know how many *laḍḍūs* Sohan Lāl Paṇḍā could eat, I kept count. In the first serving, I gave Sohan Lāl Paṇḍā twenty *laḍḍūs*, which he ate very easily. Guru Mahārāja then indicated that I should again give him another two handfuls of *laḍḍūs* without asking if he would like more. Again, he ate every single *laḍḍū* on his plate, one by one. Guru Mahārāja stood smiling, happy at heart, and continued signaling me to give Sohan Lāl Paṇḍā more and more *laḍḍūs*. While eating the *laḍḍūs*, Sohan Lāl Paṇḍā also ate *kachaurīs*, *purīs*, buttermilk and other preparations. It wasn’t until he had eaten eighty *laḍḍūs* that he asked me to stop serving him more.

At that time, some guests were honoring *prasāda* in Guru Mahārāja’s room, as well as in the courtyard outside his room, and I served *prasāda* at those two places, also. As I was serving there, Sohan Lāl Paṇḍā quickly got up and left, taking his leaf plate with him to throw in the garbage bin. Seeing that Sohan Lāl Paṇḍā himself had to throw out his own leaf plate, Guru Mahārāja became very angry and said, “Is there no one in the *maṭha*! The entirety of our spiritual

merits has gone away. Even the most ordinary people abide by the saying ‘*atithi-devo bhava*—an uninvited guest is a representative of the Lord.’ Can we not understand the proper mood we should have while serving a formally invited guest? Should an invited guest be given a chance to throw away his own leaf plate?”

I became very frightened to witness Guru Mahārāja’s anger. Noticing my fright, Guru Mahārāja said, “I saw that you were serving *prasāda* at two or three places; I will take that into consideration. But what are the other residents of the *maṭha* doing? If invited guests are not served with dignity, then the host will be at fault, not the servants.”

Guru Mahārāja later told all the *sevakas*, “Our guests should be served as much *prasāda* as they desire without them having to ask. Otherwise, they may feel shy or embarrassed to ask for more. In order to assess our guests’ individual tastes, we should keep a close eye on their respective plates and serve each of them accordingly; this is the topmost method of serving *prasāda*. A guest should be served whatever he or she has taste for, without hesitation.”

Guru Mahārāja possessed an astonishingly deep desire to satisfy everyone in every possible way.

There is no loss in giving

During the course of Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, pilgrims would stay in large camps that had been set up at

various locations. At every such location, Guru Mahārāja would send various amounts of *sīdā*—uncooked grocery items such as rice, pulses, flour, sugar and vegetables—to each of the local *paṇḍās*’ houses according to the number of members in their respective families. Many times, my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja would avoid or attempt to delay sending these items to the *paṇḍās*. But Guru Mahārāja would never allow such neglect. He told Śrī Purī Mahārāja, “A crop is only as good as the seed from which it has grown. Therefore, an intelligent farmer sows good quality seeds at a most appropriate time. There is never any harm in sowing seeds in soil. In fact, merely one sown seed provides a farmer with the gift of many more seeds. Therefore, the act of giving never leads to a shortage for the giver. Whatever is destined for us shall always remain with us.

“Listen carefully to the following story, which I heard in my childhood. Once, an astrologer told someone, ‘You are destined to always have one-and-a-quarter rupees with you. You will never accrue more, nor you will possess less.’ That person was very kind and charitable in nature. He never failed to give something to any visitors he would receive. Still, he would always be left with a balance of one-and-a-quarter rupees. One day, when he happened to again meet with that same astrologer, he said, ‘You told me that I am destined to have only one-and-a-quarter rupees in my

possession, but I have distributed hundreds of rupees to many people.’

“The astrologer said, ‘Brother! Whatever you donated to others was not destined to be yours; it belonged to them, as per their respective destinies. Even if you were to desire so, you would never be able to give away something destined for you. Therefore, please continue donating whatever is practically feasible. This will never result in any shortage for you. Whatever the receiver takes is destined for him. You are merely the medium through which he receives it.”

This teaching had a profound effect on Śrī Bhakti Prasad Purī Mahārāja. From that point until his last day in this world, he served everyone, including the *paṇḍās*, by all possible means.

The symptoms of a truly successful festival

Whenever Guru Mahārāja would organize a grand festival in any of his *maṭhas*, he would be sure to honor not only the *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs*, but every conscious being in attendance with special attention. He instructed us that although the deities are offered fresh garlands everyday, on festival days They should be offered garlands made from the most exquisite flowers. Similarly, although They are adorned with clean clothes every day, on festival days They should be dressed in extraordinarily beautiful new clothes and lavishly decorated with ornaments. All Their

paraphernalia, like Kṛṣṇa's flute, should also be special for the day of a festival, and the cows in the *maṭha's gośālā* (cowshed) should be served high quality feed that is different from their daily diet. All hired persons serving in the *maṭha*—laborers, masons, guards and others—should also be offered something special on the day of a festival. A festival will be successful only when all these activities have been performed. Such was the magnanimity of Guru Mahārāja's vision towards everyone and everything.

Engaging servants according to their respective natures

Once, when I was with Guru Mahārāja sitting outside of his *bhajana-kuṭīra* in the Māyāpura branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, all the *maṭha's* cows came and stood next to us. Guru Mahārāja asked, “Why have all these cows come here?”

My godbrother Śrī Bhagavān dāsa (who later became Śrī Bhakti Niketan Turyāśramī Mahārāja after *sannyāsa*) replied, “They came because Narottama Prabhu is here.”

“Why is that?” Guru Mahārāja asked.

“He serves the cows nowadays.”

Guru Mahārāja then said to me, “Bring the cows something to eat, otherwise it will be a breach of etiquette.” On Guru Mahārāja's order, I went to a nearby garden, picked many ripe guavas and then returned to give them to Guru Mahārāja. Guru Mahārāja then spread out the guavas on the

ground of an elevated courtyard, and the cows lovingly ate them. Guru Mahārāja smiled when he saw this. He then took ten rupees from his pocket and gave it to me, saying, “Bring forty kilograms of dried mustard seed paddy from which oil has already been extracted and feed it to the cows.” After I did this, Guru Mahārāja spoke extensively about how Śrī Kṛṣṇa lovingly served His cows and calves in Vraja. This *kathā* inspired me to serve the cows in the Māyāpura *maṭha*, whose lives were completely dedicated to enthusiastically serving Śrī Śrī Rādhā Madana-mohana-jī. On this inspiration, I would bathe all the cows and calves with Lifebuoy brand soap once a week and give them food according to their individual tastes, which I discovered by carefully observing them.

When Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdāna Gosvāmī Mahārāja once saw the effulgent bodies of our cows, he asked me, “Who serves these cows?”

I replied, “I do, Mahārāja-jī”

“What is your name?” he asked.

“Narottama Brahmācārī.”

“No, I want to know the surname you used prior to joining the *maṭha*.”

“I was previously known as Narottama Cakravartī.”

“Cakravartī, you say? Yes. You have come from a *brāhmaṇa* family. This is why you are serving them so nicely. One of my disciples does not serve cows because he

possesses an inferiority complex. He says, ‘I am a *brahmacārī*. I should serve Ṭhākura-jī. Why should I serve cows?’ Well, I can plainly see that Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja knows very well whom to engage in which services.”

His affection for Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s bovine servants

In Kolkata, a judge once donated a cow to Guru Mahārāja. Guru Mahārāja arranged for Śrī Uddhāraṇa Prabhu to take that cow to the Māyāpura branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. Later, another person donated another cow to Guru Mahārāja, and Guru Mahārāja sent that cow to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, also. That same year, Guru Mahārāja awarded *sannyāsa* to my godbrothers *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Lalita Giri Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Āśrama Mahārāja and others, and then took them along with him to visit various holy places. In the meantime, the cowherd boy who was looking after the cows in the Māyāpura *maṭha* demanded a monthly fee of sixteen rupees for his services, instead of the agreed-upon eight rupees he was currently receiving. I sent a letter to Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu in Kolkata and asked him if he could spare one *sevaka* to serve the cows. He replied in his letter, “It appears that Śrī Śrī Rādhā Madana-mohana-jī wish for you to serve the cows; I have no one here in Kolkata whom I can send to assist you.”

Meanwhile, Guru Mahārāja informed me by letter, “The

cows complained to me in a dream that they are not being served properly.” Considering Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Jagamohana Prabhu’s statements to be the order of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, I served the cows to the best of my ability.

When Guru Mahārāja returned to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, he offered *praṇāma* and flower garlands to the cows and gave them something to eat. I asked him whether the cows were still complaining to him. He smiled and replied, “No, they do not complain to me anymore.”

Guru Mahārāja saw all cows as Kṛṣṇa’s topmost servants and was extremely pleased to see them being served nicely.

Considering oneself the servant of all

Once, the mother of Śrī Gajānana Tāpaḍiya-jī, who had contributed the entire cost of the construction for our Kolkata *maṭha*’s *kīrtana* hall, donated a red cow and her white calf for the service of the *maṭha* while Guru Mahārāja was away on a preaching tour. I kept that cow in the Kolkata *maṭha*, where construction work was still under way. When Guru Mahārāja returned from his preaching tour and reached the previous Kolkata branch Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha on Rāsa-bihārī Avenue—where the residents of the *maṭha* were staying while the new *maṭha* was being constructed—he heard about the new cow and said to me, “Serving cows is excellent. But in a city like Kolkata, how and where will she be able to stay? Our *maṭha* is quite small.”

I replied, “If forty devotees can stay in the *maṭha*, we can certainly make room for one cow.”

Guru Mahārāja said, “It would be great if you could look after a cow here. Then, not only Ṭhākura-jī, but my godbrothers, also, would receive pure milk when they visit here.”

Guru Mahārāja then asked the *bhaṇḍārī* (in-charge of the supply room), “How much milk does the cow give in the morning and in the evening?”

The *bhaṇḍārī* replied, “Ten liters in the morning and five in the evening.”

Guru Mahārāja turned to me and asked, “Do you allow the calf to drink enough milk, or do you allow him to drink just a little and take the rest for yourselves?”

I replied, “I cannot be certain whether the calf drinks until his stomach is full. But His face and body tell me that he does not experience any discomfort.” Guru Mahārāja became very satisfied to hear this.

The next morning, Guru Mahārāja came to the place where the red cow and her tranquil calf were staying to have their *darśana*, after which he offered them *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* and flower garlands. He then called the *bhaṇḍārī* and said, “I have come unprepared. I do not have any food to offer the cows. Go to Gaṅguram Māravāḍī sweet shop and bring the best available *sandeśa*

.” When the *bhaṇḍārī* brought the *sandeśa* sweets, Guru Mahārāja very blissfully fed them to the cow and her calf with his very own hands.

Later, Guru Mahārāja went around the *maṭha* and inquired about what the cows were being fed, which containers were being used to feed them, which utensils were being used to extract milk, and other questions, after which he personally examined everything. He then extensively glorified the beauty of the red cow and her white calf. Whenever a festival would take place at the *maṭha* on Rāsa-bihārī Avenue, Guru Mahārāja would include special items for the cow and her calf when making a list of all the items needed for the festival.

Ignoring hostility, recognizing service rendered

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

After his injury, he sought help at our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha branch in Kolkata on Rāsa-bihārī Avenue, which Guru Mahārāja had established in a rented home. I admitted Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja to Śambhunātha Hospital, where I knew one doctor, Dr. Brahma, who arranged for an

X-ray examination of his tailbone. Later, when Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was discharged from the hospital, he spent a few days at Ayurvedic Aṣṭāṅga Hospital, after which he returned back to his *āśrama* in Māyāpura. During his time under our care, we served him to the best of our abilities.

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

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja had made a deal with a worker to extract juice from the date trees growing on the property of his *āśrama*. As compensation for his labor, the worker would receive half of the total juice he collected. However, the worker was wicked-hearted and wanted to keep everything for himself. He told Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja, “You are a *bābājī*, a renounced person. Of what use is this juice to you?” When he refused to yield after repeated requests, they had heated arguments and a fierce fight. That wicked worker struck Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja very hard with a stick and badly injured him. Śrī Gaura dāsa Prabhu, a disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja, sent news to me, saying, “The lion’s child has been hit by a jackal. Please go and help him if you can.”

When I arrived at Śrīla Kṛṣṇa-prema dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja’s *āśrama*, he narrated the entire story to me.

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

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

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

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

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

I read Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja’s letter to Guru Mahārāja,

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

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

*prabhu kahe—bhaṭ ṭācārya, karahô vicāra
gurura kiṅkara haya mānya se āmāra
Śrī Caitanya-caitāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 10.142)*

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

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

its actual meaning until that moment.

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

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

Serving his detractors

Śrī Śrīmad Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, used to reside at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura. Once, when Guru Mahārāja was engaged in the service of preaching in Nawabgañja, a small town near Kolkata, Śrīla Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, with concealed intentions, cunningly told all the renunciate disciples of Guru Mahārāja, "Your Guru Mahārāja

has sent a message ordering you all to immediately pack your bags and depart for Nawab-gañja. He requires the assistance of many devotees to hold a large *nagara-saṅkīrtana* there. After his preaching program there is complete, he will proceed on a long preaching tour to many distant places, and you shall all accompany him.”

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

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

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

Vilāsa Gabhastinemi Gosvāmī Mahārāja for safekeeping.

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

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

As per the desire of Guru Mahārāja, we arranged for Śrīla Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja’s *prasāda* from our *maṭha*, as well as everything else he required. When Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja was released from the hospital, he did not go back to Śrī Puruṣottama Gauḍīya Maṭha, but rather expressed his desire to stay with us in our Purī branch of Śrī Caitanya

Gauḍīya Maṭha. In the *maṭha*, a new room with an attached bathroom had recently been built for Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja during his attendance of the *śrī vyāsa-pūjā* celebrations of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We arranged for Śrīla Guru dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja to stay in that very room.

After the surgery, Bābājī Mahārāja was prescribed black glasses, which made it difficult for him to see. Once, while honoring *prasāda* in the *maṭha*, Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja came across Śrī Bhagavān dāsa, but because his black glasses obscured his vision, he could not make out who was in front of him. He asked, “Who are you?”

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

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

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

untrue.”

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



1 An Indian sweet made by kneading sugar into curd.

Invaluable Spiritual Teachings

“We make mendicants, not business men”

Guru Mahārāja acquired land in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura for the purpose of establishing a branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. In those times, land was very inexpensive. One man, Śrī Rāma Nārāyaṇa of Bhojanagar, was greatly devoted to Guru Mahārāja and had rendered immense service for Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata.

When he saw the land Guru Mahārāja had acquired in Māyāpura, he told Guru Mahārāja, “If you were to kindly allow me, I could enroll a few persons as members of your *maṭha* and charge them a reasonable membership fee. In this way, we would raise funds for the construction and maintenance of the *maṭha*. Additionally, the soil of this land is highly suitable for making bricks. Moreover, regardless of how much soil you use, the soil will always be replenished when the Gaṅgā floods during the rainy season. If you allow me to establish a brick factory here once you lay the foundation stone, I could arrange for the workforce and whatever else would be required. You would only have to appoint one person to sit at the cash counter and manage the accounting. Profits made from the brick factory could be used to initially construct the boundary walls. Later, the deity room, temple hall and the devotees’ residences could all be very easily constructed without the need to seek out any

donations.”

In response to Śrī Rāma Nārāyaṇa-jī’s suggestion, Guru Mahārāja said, “While your proposal is certainly excellent for making a poor man rich, it will not be possible for me to accept it. Our mission is to turn rich persons into mendicants and to provide all spiritual seekers who have taken shelter in the *maṭha* with an opportunity to become completely dependent on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and thereby become *akiñcana*. Though *akiñcana* is generally taken to mean ‘without possessions,’ here, *a* means ‘Kṛṣṇa,’ and *kiñcana* means ‘wealth.’ In other words, we aim to enable such persons to accept Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their only wealth and to strengthen their character most appropriately by instilling in them the inclination to perform *nirguṇa-bhikṣā*, or begging alms not as an act of enjoyment performed under the influence of the three modes of material nature, but for the sole purpose of keeping the body connected with the soul, so that one may continue performing service to Bhagavān and His devotees. It is not our objective to lead them to the endless journey of material *karma* by making them dependent on some property, guesthouse or any other business, thus nourishing their false pride of being the doer.

“Currently, we are directly witnessing and experiencing the reason Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has given the instruction that Vaiṣṇavas should not construct *maṭhas* and temples. The opulence of such institutions will always attract

persons who join with the intention of enjoying sense gratification. Instead of diminishing, their sense enjoyment only strengthens more and more as time passes. Despite this, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda established many *maṭhas*, because he fully understood the true, innermost desire of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, ‘We will build *maṭhas* and temples in order to provide all those who desire to engage in *bhakti* with an opportunity to serve and hear the pure message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Even if only a couple such persons are inclined to join, our mission will be successful.’ Following these words of Śrīla Prabhupāda we, too, have begun constructing *maṭhas*.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda forewarned, ‘A storm is approaching in the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Although an empty husk externally appears similar to paddy, it is devoid of grain, and shall therefore always be useless. However, the actual paddy—that is, the true followers of the *maṭha*—shall reach far and wide and lead to the growth and expansion of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, thus resulting in the topmost welfare of all people. Never, under any circumstance, become unenthusiastic or fearful in your performance of *hari-bhajana* and your chanting of *harināma*. Although disturbances may come and sense enjoyers may remain attached to the objects of their senses, those who sincerely desire to perform *bhajana* shall make use of the opportunity provided by the *maṭha* to

associate with *sādhus*, and thus progress on the path of *bhakti*.’

“Therefore, to the extent feasible, we should refrain from the hostile act of providing others with easy access to sense gratification.”

Gently correcting his disciples

Guru Mahārāja had great taste for hearing *hari-kathā*. Wherever he stayed, he would organize programs and invite many of his godbrothers to speak. He would not only listen to their *hari-kathā* himself, but would also encourage others to take advantage of the rare opportunity of hearing such discourses.

Guru Mahārāja would also listen very attentively when his disciples would speak *hari-kathā*. If someone among them explained a *siddhānta* appropriately, he would praise him, and if someone’s explanation of a *siddhānta* was erroneous, he would privately call him and correct the mistake with love and affection.

Once, my god brother Śrī Gaurāṅga Prasāda Brahmācārī (now Śrī Bhakti Saurabha Ācārya Mahārāja) mentioned a verse in his *hari-kathā*:

*bhaktistu bhagavad-bhakta-
saṅgena parijāyate
sat-saṅgaḥ prāpyate pumbhiḥ
sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ*

Bhakti is awakened by associating with the devotees of Bhagavān. The association of *śuddha-bhaktas* is attained only by the previous accumulation of spiritually pious activities.

He defined the term *sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ* as ‘*sukṛti* accumulated from the activities of previous births.’ Guru Mahārāja heard this explanation from his courtyard. Later, Guru Mahārāja called for him and asked, “Does this mean that one cannot attain *sādhu-saṅga* as a result of the *sukṛti* accumulated in this very lifetime? No, it does not mean this. He certainly can attain it. Therefore, the term *sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ* in this verse means ‘previously earned *sukṛti*,’ and not ‘*sukṛti* earned in previous births.’”

Serving by helping others serve

Guru Mahārāja would often tell his *sevakas*, “Many of you are highly qualified to perform a great many services. Although you are all individually capable of serving Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, still, engaging others in service is much more significant than serving alone. By engaging others in service according to their individual capacities, you are helping them progress in *hari-bhakti*. This is the best means of bestowing true honor upon others. When a *sevaka* is able to engage others in this way, it assists him in chanting *harināma* with a pure heart.”

A few principles of life in the maṭha

Guru Mahārāja would often tell the *maṭha* in-charges, “You should provide all newcomers with a special opportunity to engage in *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*. Although it is essential for all residents of the *maṭha* to daily serve *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* through the media of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*, it is the senior residents who should attend to any services that might need attention during the time of *hari-kathā*. We should not engage newcomers in such services so that we may then sit for *hari-kathā*. Instead, we should provide them with the opportunity to hear. However, if a devotee avoids hearing *hari-kathā* on the pretext of performing other important services and instead wastes his time in mundane talks or unnecessarily going here and there, then he will be at fault.

“Also, only senior devotees should collect funds for the *maṭha*, because those who are not completely fixed in the path of *bhajana* will attain greater benefit by performing services other than this. However, if it is absolutely necessary, at least two devotees should go for collection whenever feasible. But they should remain together while they are out, because the misfortune of becoming ensnared in the net of *māyā* can happen any time one goes outside the *maṭha*.”

Wealth is meant for Mādhava

Śrī Indra Kumāra, a disciple of Guru Mahārāja and a former resident of Punjab, opened a medical shop in Canada and permanently settled there. When he once visited India, he brought with him a gold pocket watch as a gift for Guru Mahārāja. When he gave Guru Mahārāja the present in a closed box, Guru Mahārāja accepted it. When Guru Mahārāja later opened the box and discovered the gold watch, he called for me and showed it to me. He then ordered me to bring Śrī Indra Kumāra. When I returned with Śrī Indra Kumāra, Guru Mahārāja told him, “I cannot accept or use this pocket watch under any circumstances, nor can I give it to any of the *maṭha*’s residents. Gold is one of the places where Kali resides, and therefore accepting golden objects for one’s personal use will cause one to become attached to materiality and perhaps deviate from the path of *hari-bhajana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda has warned:

*tomāra kanaka, bhogera janaka,
kanakera dvāre sevhô mādharma*

Vaiṣṇava Ke (3)

Your wealth is a source of sense enjoyment; use it to serve Mādhava, the husband of Lakṣmī-devī.

“You should therefore return this watch. If you so desire, you may sell it and use the money to have some ornaments made for Ṭhākura-jī. Through this, you will be able to serve

Ṭhākura-jī, and we too shall be saved from facing any difficulty or dilemma.”

Hari-kathā is to be heard carefully

Guru Mahārāja once said in his *kathā*, “During the course of our preaching tours, we meet many new people, and many new people come forward to meet us. Hermann Göring—Adolf Hitler’s second-in-command, who bore significant responsibility for the atrocities committed in Nazi Germany during his time—used to say that there are four types of people: active intelligent, active foolish, lazy intelligent and lazy foolish. He said, ‘An active intelligent person always engages his intelligence in promoting war, and is therefore unable to sit idly. Thus, despite his virtues, such a person is not qualified to join the military, which requires discipline. I always maintain my distance from active but foolish persons and remain satisfied by saluting their actions from far away. I promote lazy intelligent persons to high posts as departmental heads, because they will never promote war, but will be able to intelligently handle the attacks of an opponent if war was forced upon them. Lazy foolish persons are superior to active foolish persons, since they do not make as many mistakes on account of their hesitance to act.’

“Although this may be the consideration of Göring, our understanding is different. Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that the

Gauḍīya Maṭha is like a hospital, and we must therefore accept and treat everyone who wants to be admitted. We must provide patients with whatever medicine they require and nourish them according to their respective diets. We who desire to completely dedicate ourselves to the line of Śrīman Mahāprabhu can never exclude anyone. It is only when we include everyone and move ahead on the path of *bhakti* that Śrīla Prabhupāda, the entire *guru-paramparā* and Bhagavān will be pleased with us. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, ‘To assist in drawing even one conditioned soul away from his or her perverted attachments to the material energy is the greatest act of compassion, and such an act is infinitely more benevolent than constructing unlimited hospitals or schools. Bringing a single person to the path of pure devotion requires one hundred gallons of blood.’ Keeping these words in mind, we should always provide those whom we meet with the opportunity to be connected to *hari-bhakti*, and also provide them with guidance appropriate for their respective positions. We should patiently offer them bona fide instructions, maintain kindness in our interactions with them and always conduct ourselves in a spotless manner. By this, they will be progressively uplifted from their respective positions and gain the opportunity to become qualified to render devotional service unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. This is the topmost gift of the Gauḍīya Maṭha.

“During the pastime of Guṇḍicā Mandira-marjana,

Śrīman Mahāprabhu appointed those who cleaned most effectively as *ācāryas* and mildly rebuked those who were unable to clean so well. He then ordered those latter persons to serve the *ācāryas* and established that this alone was the means to obtain their topmost welfare. He remained silent only toward those who did not come forward to serve. It is therefore my earnest request that whatever type of person you may be, you should all engage all your actions and intelligence in a way that is favorable for *bhakti* and does not harm anyone. Intelligence is good, provided it does not create hindrances in achieving our ultimate goal. Everyone should engage his or her intelligence for obtaining transcendental, spiritual welfare and know for certain that such welfare is achieved only by engaging in *hari-bhakti*. It is foolish not to use our intelligence to advance in *bhakti*.”

Guru Mahārāja then quoted the following verse from the *nīti-śāstras*:

*sva-kāryam uddharet prājñah
kārya-dhvamsena mūrkhata*

An intelligent person should somehow do what is necessary. Foolish is he who spoils the business at hand.

I was not present when Guru Mahārāja spoke this. My godbrother Śrī Aprameya Brahmācārī told me, “Guru Mahārāja spoke about four types of people today. It was a

very grave subject, and I even noted it in my journal.” He then proceeded to tell me all that Guru Mahārāja had said, according to his own understanding.

When I heard what he had said, I suggested, “Perhaps what you have understood is not actually what Guru Mahārāja meant.” When I proceeded to explain what I felt was Guru Mahārāja’s intention, He did not accept my words.

Later, when Śrī Aprameya Brahmācārī went and told Guru Mahārāja of my opinion on the matter, Guru Mahārāja said, “Although you had heard the *kathā*, you did not properly understand it. But Bhāratī Mahārāja understood it perfectly, even though he was not present. You should associate with him.”

Being simple hearted, Śrī Aprameya Brahmācārī himself came and told me what Guru Mahārāja had said. He expressed to me, “It is astonishing how you could understand Guru Mahārāja’s point without having been there.” I replied that I had previously heard that *kathā* from Guru Mahārāja.

A practical example of employing our possessions in the service of the Vaiṣṇavas

When I completely left my family’s home and joined the *maṭha*, I used to wear a wristwatch. But when I noticed that no one in the *maṭha* wore a wristwatch, I stopped wearing it and kept it in my bag.

Having noticed this, Guru Mahārāja, on the pretext of

asking the time, inquired from me about my watch. I replied, “Seeing that no one in the *maṭha* wears a wristwatch, I decided to take it off.”

Guru Mahārāja said, “When a person follows in his own life the conduct he has observed in great personalities without being instructed to do so, it is symptomatic of a desire to attain his true welfare. Still, it is important to keep a watch. By doing so, you will be able to serve senior Vaiṣṇavas whenever they desire to know the time. Additionally, you will be able to remain punctual in your services. But you should not keep a wristwatch, which could give the impression that you are wearing it for show; it would be better to keep a pocket watch.”

Maintaining proper conduct even at the expense of inconvenience

When we were once in Purī with Guru Mahārāja trying to acquire Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance place, my godbrother proposed that we rent rooms in a house on the Grand Road that was owned by a devotee from the Rāmānandī *sampradāya* who would charge us a rate of fifty rupees a month. My godbrother spoke highly of the rooms and was trying his best to convince Guru Mahārāja.

When Guru Mahārāja asked my opinion, I, who speak the plain truth straight from my heart and am not carried away by sentiment when making decisions, replied, “I am not the least

bit inclined to rent those rooms. The principles and lifestyle of Rāmānandī *sādhus* are vastly different in nature from those of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. In that house, the common source of water for all is a single well. The Rāmānandī *sādhus* staying there draw water from that well using the very same *loṭā* (water pot) they use for cleaning themselves after passing stool. How could we possibly stay in a place where such conduct is followed?”

Guru Mahārāja said, “What you have said is absolutely correct. It will not be feasible for us to stay with such persons. To the greatest extent possible, we should always, in all circumstances, follow the proper conduct that our *guru-varga* has taught.

*śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-
pañcarātra-vidhiṃ vinā
aikāntikī harer bhaktir
utpātāyaiva kalpate*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.101)

Those who do not observe the regulations prescribed in the Śruti, Smṛti, Purāṇas and the *Nārada-pañcarātra* simply create a disturbance in society, even if they are engaged in unalloyed devotion to Śrī Hari.

“We shall stay in the *maṭha* of Śrī Bhakti Kumuda Santa Mahārāja. We can somehow bear the increased travel

expenses, which will be perhaps ten times greater than if we were to stay with those Rāmānandī *sādhus*, but will never compromise the principles of our *sadācara*.”

Forgetfulness is no excuse

Once, after the completion of Jhūlan Yātrā (a festival celebrating the swing pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda-jī), Guru Mahārāja ordered my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prāsada Purī Mahārāja and me to go to the Mathurā train station to bid farewell to a preaching party. By the time we returned to the *maṭha*, *prasāda* had already been served. The *bhaṇḍārī* (the devotee in charge of provisions) had mistakenly forgotten to keep *prasāda* for us, and so very little *prasāda* was left. I purposely told the *bhaṇḍārī*, “Prabhu, I am not feeling well, and so I will not take *prasāda*. Please kindly serve *prasāda* to Śrī Purī Mahārāja.” When the *bhaṇḍārī* took the plate of *prasāda* to Śrī Purī Mahārāja, Purī Mahārāja saw the inadequate quantity of *prasāda* and threw the plate in anger.

Hearing the sound of the plate crashing against the floor, Guru Mahārāja came out from his room and asked Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu, “What happened??”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu then told Guru Mahārāja everything, and said, “Because you, Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja and this gentleman, Śrī Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Mahārāja, have

appeared in *brāhmaṇa* families, you all possess a natural tolerance. Therefore, you are able to tolerate hunger. At times, you even have no concern whether you are served. Not all are capable of this, however.”

Guru Mahārāja then called the *bhaṇḍārī* and chastised him. “This should never happen again. It is improper to forget to reserve *prasāda* for devotees who have gone outside for some service.” He then sent the *bhaṇḍārī* to seek forgiveness not from Śrī Purī Mahārāja, who had expressed his anger, but from me, whose reaction was devoid of agitation.

Through this pastime, Guru Mahārāja imparted two lessons. Firstly, he taught that those who bear the responsibility of providing others with *prasāda* or other items in the *maṭha* should serve very carefully, because they will be at fault if any mistake is made in discharging their service, even if the person being served does not express displeasure. And secondly, he taught that it is improper to become angry at trivial things. Those who become angry at mere trifles should consider the saying “to err is human,” and remember that they themselves also make mistakes from time to time. If we miss a meal, it will not bring death. Those who sincerely desire to take up the path of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* should remember the words of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

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

Do not give anxiety to anyone during the course of your life. For the benefit of others, forget your own pleasure.

A deep, heartfelt reverence for the dhāma and Bhagavān's pastime places

Once on the day of Nṛsimha-caturdaśī in our Kolkata *maṭha*, Guru Mahārāja asked a few devotees standing nearby, “Who among you can go to Śrī Nṛsimhapallī and offer *khīra bhoga* (sweet rice) to Śrī Nṛsimhadeva and bring it back, so that we may break our fast with the *prasāda* tomorrow?”

My godbrother Śrī Balarāma Prabhu said, “I could have gone if you had asked me earlier, but I am afraid it is impossible for me to go now.”

Hearing this, I told Guru Mahārāja, “I can go.”

“Very well,” Guru Mahārāja replied.

At that time, I realized that the train for Kṛṣṇanagara would soon depart, and so I immediately left for the Sealdah train station without even getting my sandals. I caught a train to Kṛṣṇanagara, where I bought milk, sugar, rice and firewood, and then departed for Nṛsimhapallī. There, I had the *khīra* prepared and offered to Śrī Nṛsimhadeva. After the *pūjārī* had finished the offering, I collected the *prasāda* and returned back to the Kolkata *maṭha* via Kṛṣṇanagara.

When I reached the *maṭha* in the evening, I showed the *khīra-prasāda* to Guru Mahārāja. Words cannot explain the bliss Guru Mahārāja experienced. Although he did not speak a word, his deep, heartfelt reverence for the *dhāma* and Bhagavān’s pastime places externally manifested through his expressions.

By then, the devotees had already finished honoring *anukalpa prasāda*, or *prasāda* suitable for days of fasting. The *bhaṅḍārī* approached me and lamented, “I have mistakenly forgotten to keep a plate of *prasāda* for you.”

Feeling overjoyed and satisfied by seeing Guru Mahārāja’s blissful expressions, I said, “Guru Mahārāja has bestowed his mercy on me through you. I am thoroughly convinced that by helping me to observe a complete fast on Nṛsiṃha-caturdaśī, you have ensured my welfare.”

Instruction through his own conduct

A *brahmacārī* named Śrī Śyāmala dāsa used to reside in the Kolkata branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. Once, he became severely sick, and as a result became mentally unstable. After examining Śrī Śyāmala Brahmācārī, a doctor prescribed a particular oil to be applied to his head. But whenever anyone would try to apply that medicinal oil to his head or would ask him to do it himself, he would strongly disapprove and shout, “Do you think I am mad? Why are you asking me to use a medicinal oil that is prescribed for mad

persons?”

One day, Guru Mahārāja ordered me to bring that oil to him and also call Śrī Śyāmala Brahmācārī. In my entire life, I had not witnessed Guru Mahārāja apply any kind of oil to his body. But in front of Śrī Śyāmala Brahmācārī that day, he applied some oil to his head and said, “Oh! This oil is very nice. Just see! I am applying it to my head. Why, then, are you shy to apply it to your head?” Hearing Guru Mahārāja’s words and seeing that Guru Mahārāja himself was using the same oil, Śrī Śyāmala Brahmācārī applied some of it to his own head.

From that day, Śrī Śyāmala Brahmācārī would daily apply the oil to his head and say, “Even Guru Mahārāja uses this oil. It is not for mad persons, but is good for everyone.” By regularly using the oil, Śrī Śyāmala Brahmācārī became well again after only a few days.

Guru Mahārāja would never instruct through giving orders, but would instead do so through his own conduct. Through this pastime, he manifested his *bhakta-vātsalya*, or parental affection for surrendered devotees.

His concern for the innocent

Once, one *brahmācārī*—whom we will call ‘Brahmācārī A’ for the purposes of maintaining clarity in this narration—made derogatory and untrue statements about another *brahmācārī*, whom we will call ‘Brahmācārī B.’ When my

godbrother Śrī Mādhavendra Prabhu, who happened to be listening, mentioned this to Brahmācārī B, Brahmācārī B unrelentingly insisted that Śrī Mādhavendra Prabhu reveal the accuser's name. Śrī Mādhavendra Prabhu thought, "If I tell him it was Brahmācārī A who had made such statements, he will definitely quarrel with him. However, he does not possess the courage to quarrel with Narottama Brahmācārī." Just to get rid of him, Śrī Mādhavendra Prabhu mentioned that I was the *brahmācārī* to falsely accuse him. Brahmācārī B approached me and expressed his anger and disapproval. I did not react or say a word to him, nor did I search for Śrī Mādhavendra Prabhu and ask why he falsely identified me as the *brahmācārī* slandering Brahmācārī B.

When Brahmācārī B eventually found out it was Brahmācārī A and not me who had spoken ill of him, he went and quarreled with him. After Brahmācārī A faced the brunt of Brahmācārī B's anger, he went to Guru Mahārāja and complained. During the discussion, he mentioned that I had been falsely accused.

Guru Mahārāja then called for me and asked me about the incident. I replied, "This is quite an ordinary situation, and I therefore did not consider it worthy of your attention. When people stay together at one place, misunderstanding is inevitable. Brahmācārī B is very simple-hearted, and therefore he gets into altercations based on externalities instead of calmly trying to identify an issue's cause and

resolve it.”

Guru Mahārāja then called for Brahmācārī B and ordered him to beg forgiveness from me, who had never complained about the situation. “Although you improperly expressed your anger to him based on false information, still, he never retaliated or reacted. Moreover, he did not express even the slightest bit of irritation toward you when I asked him about the issue. Instead, he acknowledged your simple-hearted nature. You should learn from his conduct.”

Guru Mahārāja did not send Brahmācārī B to seek forgiveness from Brahmācārī A, who had complained, nor did he give any importance to Brahmācārī A’s false accusations.

Maintaining Vaiṣṇava etiquette

Once, a *maṭha* in-charge ordered another *maṭha-vāsī* (resident of the *maṭha*) to do something. That *maṭha-vāsī* was senior to him not only by age, but also in years staying in the *maṭha*. Seeing this, Guru Mahārāja removed the in-charge from his post and sent him to another *maṭha*, where he no longer retained a managerial position.

Guru Mahārāja said, “Śrīman Mahāprabhu never tolerated any transgression in following Vaiṣṇava etiquette. Does being a *maṭha* in-charge imply that one has a license to circumvent the etiquette of offering due respect to senior devotees? I cannot tolerate to see him committing offences by

which he will be led to his doom. Does a father allow his son to jump into fire? Never!”

Guru Mahārāja would always greatly stress the importance of following proper Vaiṣṇava etiquette.

No refusal, no competition

Before the start of every Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, Guru Mahārāja would tell us, “I will never under any circumstances refuse a devotee who desires to perform Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* with us, nor will I prohibit anyone from taking *prasāda* here, even if that person has not made a monetary contribution for the *parikramā*. However, nobody should make the mistake of thinking that I desire to increase the number of attendees in order to compete with other organizations or to prove something to them. I never allowed Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* to be discontinued, even in the face of innumerable impediments, nor will I ever allow this in the future. We will begin the pilgrims’ registration card numbers from one hundred, so that we may reserve the cards numbered one to ninety-nine for unexpected guests.”

The principle of showing proper respect to those who have given up their homes for the service of the maṭha

Once, Śrī Cūnī Lāl Datta, a resident of Tejpura, Assam, performed Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* under the guidance of Guru Mahārāja, as did a *gr̥hasṭha* devotee named Śrī Nimāi

dāsa, who was from Tejapura and belonged to the same caste as Śrī Cūnī Lāl Datta. Śrī Nimāi dāsa had recently accepted *dīkṣā* from Guru Mahārāja, entered the *vānaprastha-āśrama* and began residing at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha as a *vanacārī*.

In those days, *parikramā* was performed on foot, with camps set up at different locations. There were eighteen camps in total. When we camped at Śrī Brahmāṇḍa Ghāṭa, Śrī Cūnī Lāl Datta had a dispute with Śrī Nimāi dāsa and became very upset with him. He came to the place where Guru Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī and I were sitting and quietly mentioned to Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu, “I have funded the construction of the temple and *kīrtana* hall at the Māyāpura branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. If Guru Mahārāja removes Nimāi dāsa from the *maṭha*, I will finance the construction of a guest house and rooms for the residents of the *maṭha* there.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu mentioned this to Guru Mahārāja, who replied, “Śrī Cūnī Lāl does not have any children. Ask him if he is able to give all his wealth and property to his wife and become a *maṭha-vāsī*. I will personally arrange for whatever he may need. There is no need for him to donate money for the rooms or a guest house. Anyone can give donations for construction work. The *maṭha*'s existence is meaningless if no spiritual teachers or spiritually inclined students reside there. Such students

interested in learning spiritual subjects are in short supply. If an elderly person joins the *maṭha*, he will at least be engaged in distributing *caraṇāmṛta* and take part in the *āratis*. But although a wealthy person is able to finance the construction of a temple without difficulty, will he attend *maṅgala-ārati* during the winter, or will he remain sleeping snugly in his bed, buried under a quilt? What Vaiṣṇava would accept the proposal of a person who suggests that a *maṭha-vāsī*, who by some great fortune has decided to stay and serve in the *maṭha*, be thrown on the street simply due to some trivial dispute? How is it possible for a Vaiṣṇava to ask someone to be removed from the *maṭha*?”

Śrī Cūnī Lāl Datta fell quiet after hearing Guru Mahārāja’s response. Realizing that his material attachments prevented him from leaving his home and taking shelter of the *maṭha*, and understanding that it was therefore improper for him to speak about Śrī Nimāi dāsa in this manner, he lamented and repented for his proposition.

Severing the thick knots in my heart

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

scriptures, and thereby made me thoroughly realize the meaning of the following verse:

*tato duḥsaṅgam utsrjya
satsu sajjeta buddhimān
santa evāsyā chindanti
mano-vyāsaṅgam uktibhiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.26.26)

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

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

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

caranāmṛta.

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

When Guru Mahārāja established Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in 1955 in a rented property at 86A Rāsa-bihārī Avenue in Kolkata, I joined the *maṭha* fulltime. There, Guru Mahārāja indirectly addressed me by saying, “It is true that the Vedas advise one to abstain from useless conversation, maintain complete silence and remember Bhagavān at the time of honoring *prasāda*. The followers of Śrīman

Mahāprabhu, however, know that the significance of the following statements are much greater than simply remembering Bhagavān by mind: “*param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*—may *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* be all-victorious,” “*kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*—always perform *kīrtana* of the names of Śrī Hari,” and “*harer nama harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā*—the only means of deliverance in the age of Kali is to chant the holy names, chant the holy names, chant the holy names of Śrī Hari; there is no other way, no other way, no other way.” The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas therefore relish singing the glories of both Bhagavān and *mahāprasāda* at the time of honoring *prasāda*, and thus use that time most suitably.”

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

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

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

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

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

Once during Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, the entire *parikramā* party gathered to hear *hari-kathā* and honor *prasāda* below a large *pīpala* tree that grew on the land of an oil merchant. There, flat rice was soaked, mixed with *guda*, tamarind and other ingredients, and was then served to everyone. After everyone finished honoring *prasāda*, the devotees who were engaged in serving *prasāda* then honored

prasāda themselves. Normally, Śrī Acintya-govinda Prabhu, Śrī Viṣṇu dāsa Prabhu and I would serve, along with a few other devotees, *prasāda* to the *sannyāsīs* and *maṭha-vāsīs*. At the time, I considered it highly disgraceful to even step on the land of an oil merchant, but somehow, with a heavy heart, I stepped onto that land while remembering the *kīrtana* by Śrī Narotamma dāsa Ṭhākura, which I had heard from the lotus lips of Guru Mahārāja:

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

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

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

*śvapaca-grhete, māgiyā khāibô,
pibô sarasvatī-jala
puline puline gaḍāgaḍi dibô,*

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

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

Once, I accompanied Guru Mahārāja and many other devotees during his preaching in Tejpura, Assam. There, Śrī Bhagavata-prasāda, the owner of Darang Tea Estate, who belonged to a *vaiśya* (*baniyā*) family, invited all the devotees to honor *prasāda* in his home. When asked whether I would be in attendance, I replied, "I am feeling unwell. I will stay here". No one understood that the real reason I declined the invitation was because my previous strong impressions and the hard knots binding my heart allowed me only to accept *prasāda* at the house of a *brāhmaṇa*, and not at the house of a *vaiśya*. Guru Mahārāja, however, understood my mood, and thus quoted a verse from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya-līlā* 20.57) for my welfare:

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

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

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

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

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

When I was a *brahmacārī* staying in the Kolkata *maṭha*, fellow *brahmacārīs* would occasionally approach me and offer to wash my clothes or clean my room. Although I would always forbid them to do so, they would at times forcibly engage in such services. One day, when a *brahmacārī* was forcefully taking the bucket containing my soaking clothes, Guru Mahārāja saw us and said to me, "Give him your

clothes for washing. Try not to become an obstacle to his inclination to serve. By serving Vaiṣṇavas more advanced than yourself, you can earn much more than he will earn by washing your clothes.”

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

Perform or perish

The land Guru Mahārāja had acquired in Kolkata for establishing Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha included an old building that needed to be razed in order to construct a new building. During the building’s demolition, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja visited the site. After observing us in our work, he asked me, “Have you people gone crazy? This place has been beautifully built with the most exquisite materials, like Italian mosaic flooring, Belgian glass windows, and door and window frames made from top-quality Burmese *sāguna* wood. Yet, you are knocking it all down. Are you out of your mind? When Mādhava Mahārāja arrives, please tell him that Siddhāntī

Mahārāja visited this site and has advised against demolishing the building.”

I personally conveyed Śrīla Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s message to Guru Mahārāja, who asked me, “If your goal is to throw a stone at this nearby door, how will you do it?” In response, I mimicked softly tossing a stone with very little force.

Guru Mahārāja then asked, “Now, if you intend to throw the stone somewhere far, how will you do it?” I then mimicked throwing a stone with much greater force.

Guru Mahārāja concluded, “Similarly, the higher we aim, the better our efforts to achieve our goal will be. Upon reaching a country he wanted to attack and conquer, Napoleon would either burn his ship or intentionally sink it, boldly signifying to his soldiers that their only option was to perform or perish. When he ordered his army to cross over the Alps mountain range, most of the soldiers were dumbfounded, and said, ‘It is impossible!’ Napoleon replied, ‘The word *impossible* exists only in a fool’s dictionary.’

“When a person is left with no other option but to act, he makes his best efforts to accomplish his goal. But if given the slightest leeway, he thinks endlessly without acting. It has been rightly said, ‘Necessity is the mother of invention.’ Therefore, demolish that building, so that we may be compelled to act to construct for ourselves a place to stay. Moreover, we need a much bigger hall for *hari-kathā* and

kīrtana, even if it is only a tin shed without opulent decorations.”

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

Different instructions for different natures

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

One day, Guru Mahārāja asked me, “A resident of the *maṭha* needs new clothes. Please purchase a set from the control shop,

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so that I may give it to him.”

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

Guru Mahārāja replied, “I am aware you have brought these fine clothes, but for this person, a set of simple clothes

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

Never support the sense enjoyment of others

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

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

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

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

Being careful not to increase others' propensity to enjoy

When Guru Mahārāja used to perform Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, a few capable *gṛhastha* devotees—like Śrī Prahlāda Rāi Goyal and Śrī Harasāimal from Delhi, Śrī Narendra Kapūr from Ludhiana, and others—would arrange for their cars to be used in the service of elderly pilgrims during *parikramā*. During the course of one such *parikramā*, both Śrī Prahlāda Rāya Goyal and Śrī Narendra Kapūr separately offered to donate a new car for Guru Mahārāja to employ in the service of the *maṭha*.

Guru Mahārāja told them, “I cannot accept your offer; it would not set a good example. If we were to keep a car in the *maṭha*, then everyone would want to use it. If I allow the car only to be used for majorly important services, then immature neophyte devotees will criticize and become envious. For this reason, I have advised the driver of your personal car, which you have temporarily lent us to use in the

service of the elderly during *parikramā*, to follow the specific instructions given by either myself, Śrī Bhakti Pramoda Purī Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Vijnāna Bhāratī Mahārāja and Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja only, and none else. Otherwise, anyone and everyone may take the car for whatever reason they deem fit, and thereby increase their propensity to enjoy.”

I used to travel by car only while accompanying my *guru-vargas*, and never used the car for my own personal reasons.

Using even pockets in the service of the Vaiṣṇavas

Seeing that Guru Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja did not wear a *kurtā*, I too stopped wearing one. One day, Guru Mahārāja handed me his glasses case and said, “Keep this in the pocket of your *kurtā*.”

I mentioned, “I stopped wearing *kurtās*, because I observed that both you and Śrīla Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja do not wear them.”

“Oh, so you too have become a *sādhu*?” Guru Mahārāja smilingly said. “Merely imitating the Vaiṣṇavas will not suffice; we must imbibe their conduct only after understanding the deep import behind it. Those who perform service should always keep a pen and a notebook at the ready. Because you are in the association of Vaiṣṇavas, you

should always remain alert to service opportunities. Although due to their nature, Vaiṣṇavas may not directly ask anything from you, you are still expected to perceive any needs they may have and act accordingly. Always wear a *kurtā* that has pockets, so that you do not miss any opportunity to serve.”

Since that time, I have always been careful to follow Guru Mahārāja’s instruction by wearing a *kurtā*.

Brahmacārīs, not karmacārīs

Once during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* when we set up camp at Śergarh, I spent the whole night loudly calling out “Radhe, Radhe! Rādhā-Govinda!” while patrolling the camp’s perimeter for security. That night, a couple of dacoits managed to sneak inside the camp. They tried to steal the iron chest in which our godsister Nandarānī kept her valuables, but little did they know she had tied a metal chain around it and held one of the chain’s ends under her pillow. She loudly screamed the moment she heard the sound of the chain being yanked out from under her. When the dacoits fled in fear, I spotted one of them and began chasing him. As I gained on him after chasing him for some time, I lassoed him with a noose I had fashioned from my *gala-vastra* (neck cloth) and brought him back to the camp. Guru Mahārāja then took that dacoit to the police station and filed a case against him.

After a police officer at the station heard the entire story,

he told Guru Mahārāja, “When your people captured this man, they brought him back from a very dangerous place. Typically, we have seen that when people go there, they do not return alive.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “Actually, it was only one person who captured him, and he is a *brahmacārī*, not a *karmacārī* (paid worker). True *brahmacārīs* have been trained in such a way that they are unafraid of sacrificing even their life for the service of *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas.”



1 A store in which simple clothes are sold at government-controlled rates.

Establishing the Innermost Desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda

His firm faith in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

Guru Mahārāja used to preach in Tejpura, Assam. During one of his visits there, a gentleman named Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī would daily attend Guru Mahārāja’s *hari-kathā* at the Bengali Theatre. Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī was the first person to request Guru Mahārāja to accept a separate seat on the dias. He told Guru Mahārāja, “Previously, you would share a sitting place with your godbrothers, but now you are performing the role of an *ācārya* and have accepted many disciples. Please mercifully accept a separate sitting place.” On his request, Guru Mahārāja accepted a separate sitting place for the first time.

One day, Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī approached Guru Mahārāja and said, “Mymother has been unwell for quite some time. She is bedridden and has not eaten or drunk anything for many days. Her medical tests were unable to report any sickness. Sometimes when we offer her *caraṇāmṛta* or Gaṅgā water, she opens her mouth and accepts it. In order to deliver her from this painful situation, I have donated cows, carried out *caṇdrāyaṇa vrata*

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and also arranged for the recitation of *Śrīmad-*

Bhāgavatam, but with no effect. I feel greatly distressed upon seeing her pitiful condition. I am unable to understand my duty during this stage of her life. I would be grateful if you could kindly advise us as to how she can be delivered.”

Guru Mahārāja told him, “If a person hears *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the lips of a non-devotee (*avaiṣṇava*), from one who charges a fee for its recitation (*bhṛtakapathaka*), or from someone who makes his living reciting it (*bhāgavata-jīvī*), then not only will his existing auspiciousness be destroyed, but it is likely he will attract even more inauspiciousness. Therefore, you should hear *Bhāgavatam* only from a devotee of the Lord whose very life is *Bhāgavatam* and who is the well-wisher of the entire world. Only then can one achieve one’s true, topmost welfare.”

Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī then said, “In that case, you alone must speak *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to my mother. Where else will I find a person with the characteristics you have described?”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “I am already engaged in speaking three times a day here, and so it will not be possible for me to accept any other engagements at this time.”

Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī then requested Guru Mahārāja to arrange for a similarly qualified person to recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Guru Mahārāja told him, “I will send my godbrother Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu in my stead. You can

arrange for him to be taken to your place tomorrow.”

The following day, Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī sent his car at the agreed upon time. I was with Guru Mahārāja transcribing his dictation when news came of the car’s arrival. Guru Mahārāja asked me to call Śrī Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu. I went to look for him, but found that he had already left for another program. I conveyed this message to Guru Mahārāja, who then ordered me to go to Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī’s home along with another three or four devotees and take with us *karatālas*, *kaṁsa*, *mṛdanga* and the *caraṇāmṛta* of Śrī Ṭhākura-jī.

I wondered what would happen if Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī’s mother were not to attain deliverance upon hearing my recitation of *Bhāgavatam*. Despite this concern, I followed Guru Mahārāja’s order. When I arrived, I put *caraṇāmṛta* into that *mātā-jī*’s mouth and then asked the family to arrange my seat in such a position that she could properly hear the recitation of *Bhāgavatam*. We performed *śrī bhāgavata-kathā* and *kīrtana* at their place and then returned. I was greatly astonished to hear that Śrī Sudhīra Bakśī’s mother departed from this world the very next day.

Upon observing Guru Mahārāja’s firm faith in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—a scripture that Śrīman Mahāprabhu has described as the supremely flawless evidence for establishing the Absolute Truth—as well as his transcendental influence as displayed through this incident,

my faith and conviction in his most divine personality increased exponentially.

Always mindful of the master's comfort

Once during Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāśa Hṛṣikeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja and I, their servant, were travelling from Śrī Saṅket-bihārī to Nandagrāma by car. On the way, our car ran out of petrol and stopped. I arranged for a *ṭāṅgā* (horse cart) by which Guru Mahārāja and others could continue on to the *dharmaśālā* (guesthouse).

Before departing, Guru Mahārāja tossed me his money bag, which I nimbly caught. Later, as I was giving money to the driver to fetch petrol, I saw the key to Guru Mahārāja's room in the money bag. I asked the driver, "Will you pass through Nandagrāma on your way to get petrol?"

The driver replied, "Definitely. The only bus route is via Nandagrāma."

I gave him Guru Mahārāja's room key and said, "Since I have to wait here with the car, you should first go to the *dharmaśālā* and give this key to Śrīpāda Dīna-bandhu dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja (a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda) before fetching petrol." Heeding my words, the driver eventually arrived at the *dharmaśālā* and gave the keys to Śrīla Bābājī

Mahārāja quite some time before Guru Mahārāja’s arrival.

When Guru Mahārāja reached the *dharm-śālā*, the devotees who had come along with him went to their respective rooms. But when Guru Mahārāja realized that his room key was in the money bag he had given me, he began to pace around, without mentioning the situation to anyone, so that no one would be inconvenienced. Śrīla Dīna-bandhu dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja approached Guru Mahārāja and said, “Mahārāja, please take rest in your room.”

Guru Mahārāja said, “Gurubhāi (dear godbrother)! I made a great blunder today: I left my room key with Bhāratī Mahārāja.”

Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja said, “Mahārāja! Bhāratī Mahārāja has sent the room key through the driver, and it reached me even before your arrival.” Guru Mahārāja then went to his room and rested.

Guru Mahārāja mentioned the incident during *hari-kathā* that evening, and also explained the symptoms of an *uttama-sevaka* (advanced, topmost servant) and an *adhama-sevaka* (unqualified servant). While describing the ideal serving tendency (*citta-vṛtti*) a servant should possess, he said, “An *uttama-sevaka* is always conscious of all the services at hand, and he is expert in assessing which services he should attend to and at what time he should attend to them. Although the master—that is, the object of service—may not be mindful of his belongings, like his keys, the *uttama-sevaka*

gives great attention to such items and eagerly endeavors wholeheartedly to make sure his master is not inconvenienced. Such a *sevaka* is highly satisfied to please his master and does not mind enduring physical or mental trouble to this end. Bhagavān sees the endeavor of a sincere *sevaka* and provides him with all the required intelligence to properly perform service.”

That day, I felt highly bashful when many devotees conveyed to me the affection and satisfaction Guru Mahārāja possessed for me as a result of the service I performed. The following words of Śrīla Kṛṣṇdāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī repeatedly drifted in my mind like waves on a shore:

alpa-sevā bahu māne ātma-paryanta prasāda
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 1.107)

The Lord considers as great whatever little service one offers, and He mercifully offers Himself to that person in return.

His faith in my ability to serve him

Whenever I would leave from Śrīdhāma Māyāpura to visit our Kolkata *maṭha*, I would always joyously collect large quantities of *ghee*, *paneer* (curd cheese), bananas, cabbage and other items from the *dhāma* and bring them to Guru Mahārāja, who always said that seeing, touching, honoring and distributing anything from the *dhāma* leads to

the most sublime transcendental pleasure. Guru Mahārāja would assign great significance to every item I had brought, and while distributing them among the devotees, he would specifically tell them, “Today you are receiving this item from the *dhāma* as *prasāda*. You are greatly fortune to have met with this opportunity to taste and honor an item produced in the *dhāma*. Bhagavān has been merciful to you, for He has sent someone to bring this item to you as a token of His mercy.”

Once, I had gone to visit Guru Mahārāja in his *bhajana-kuṭīra* in our Kolkata *maṭha* after returning from Māyāpura, but when I entered his room, I came to know he was taking bath at the time. His personal assistant, Śrī Madana-gopāla Prabhu, was also not there in the room. I had brought some *paneer* for Guru Mahārāja, but since neither he nor his assistant were available, I left it with the *bhaṅḍārī* and immediately went outside to acquire a permit for purchasing cement and drop off some letters I had seen in Guru Mahārāja’s room at the post office.

When Guru Mahārāja returned to his room after bathing, he noticed the letters on his table were missing and asked Śrī Madana-gopāla Prabhu, “Did Bhāratī Mahārāja come here?”

Since Śrī Madan-gopāla Prabhu was not in Guru Mahārāja’s room while I was there, he replied, “I did not see him.”

Later, when Guru Mahārāja saw me after lunch *prasāda*,

he asked me about everything and said, “I was initially a bit worried that the letters had been misplaced, because I had written them with great care and attention. Then, my worry increased when Madan-gopāla said that he had not seen you. But now that I have learned you posted the letters, I want to say one thing. Although I have many disciples who readily do whatever I tell them, none are like you, who are able to use his intelligence to understand which services should be performed, without having to be told. I wish that I could be so fortunate as to have just one or two people like you with me at all times, so I could incessantly preach the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu to a greater capacity.”

A deep love for Bhagavān’s dhāma

Whether during Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, Śrī Kṣetra-maṇḍala *parikramā*, a North Indian tour or a South Indian tour, Guru Mahārāja never paid any mind to the cleanliness of the ground while offering his prostrated obeisances (*daṇḍavat-praṇāma*). Once, Guru Mahārāja offered *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* at Viśrāma Ghāṭa, even though it was very muddy. At that time, Śrī Revatī-rañjana Caudhurī quickly called for his wife. “Come! Come!” he shouted. “Look! This is the only site worth seeing. Although Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja has such a beautiful face and features and is wearing spotlessly clean clothes, he is offering *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* in a very muddy

area. He has truly realized the transcendental glories of the *dhāma*. Such conduct and affection for the Lord’s pastime places is our one and only goal.”

Tolerating cruelty

One day, when the construction of our Kolkata branch of Śrī Caitanya Gaudīya Maṭha was almost complete, Guru Mahārāja told me, “I want to view the dome of our *maṭha* from a distance, to see how it looks from far away.”

I replied “Certainly. Just tell me from which direction and at what distance you would like to see it, and I will take you.” Guru Mahārāja then got up, and we headed out of the *maṭha*.

After walking for some distance, we stood at the corner an intersection and observed the dome. At that time, a group of boys passed by. Upon seeing Guru Mahārāja’s tallness, his glowing crimson complexion and his divinely attractive features, as well as my tall and stout physical appearance, they commented, “Just see! These people are thriving on the donations of others.”

Guru Mahārāja and I both heard their comments. To prevent me from retorting, Guru Mahārāja said, “We should not think of those who mock us as adversaries, nor should we react to their insults. Those who accept the dress of a *sādhu* ought to follow the example of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, who performed *kīrtana* and distributed the wealth of

transcendental *prema*, even after Mādhāi had struck in the forehead with an earthen pot. They should learn to not only tolerate the brutality of antagonists, but also wish for their welfare, just like Śrīla Prabhupāda, who remained unprovoked even after being attacked at Prauḍhāmāyā during Śrī Navadvīpa *parikramā*. They should tolerate not only cruelty, but also the insults hurled at them, which pierce much deeper than the sharpest-edged weapons.”

Hardly commenting further, the boys passed ahead of us. After that, the situation was over, and I realized the futility of reacting to such trivial insults.

Accepting nothing for himself

Once, Guru Mahārāja preached in Amritsar accompanied by twenty devotees, including Śrī Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja, Śrī Ghanaśyāma Brahmācārī, myself and a number of our godbrothers.

Lālā Śrī Viśana dāsa, who was the greatest contributor to the construction of the Śrī Durgiyānā *mandira* in Amritsar, had arranged for our accommodation, *prasāda* and whatever else Guru Mahārāja and his party required. He introduced us to a milk vendor and said, “He will provide whatever milk you may require in both the morning and evening.” He then introduced us to a grocer and said, “Whatever you may need—be it rice, pulses, flour, ghee or anything else—please do

not hesitate to ask him. He will provide you with whatever you need.”

Guru Mahārāja later told us in private, “We are *bhikṣukas* (mendicants). We should never ask for or accept anything for our own use. In fact, we are *sādhus*, or persons who are fully dependent upon *sat-vastu* Śrī Bhagavān and follow the principle of ‘*yatheccha lābhe santoṣa*—being completely satisfied with whatever comes of its own accord by the desire of Śrī Bhagavān.’ Additionally, ‘*tat-krpāvalokanam*—*sādhus* see His mercy in every situation,’ and therefore a preaching *sādhu* should never ask for anything for himself.

“Above all, a *sādhu* preacher should not stay in the home of a *gṛhastha*. However, if he is circumstantially compelled to stay in the home of a *gṛhastha*, he should do so in a most disciplined manner and strictly maintain the Vaiṣṇava etiquette befitting a renunciate. He should remain satisfied with whatever the *gṛhastha* devotee provides according to his capacity and of his own sweet will. If out of extreme necessity the preaching *sādhu* should require anything beyond what his *gṛhastha* host is capable of providing, he should request money from the *bhaṇḍārī*, or *āśramī*,

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of the *maṭha* before departing on his journey, and purchase whatever is needed with that money. He should remain fervently careful that others do not find his activities

to be objectionable or disgraceful. Therefore, ask neither the milk vendor nor the grocer for anything. All that we need will become available by the mercy of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān. If any of you need anything additional, then you can ask me for the money to purchase it. Although our host has told us to ask for whatever we desire, still, I will feel great shame if anyone accepts anything for his own use.

Following Guru Mahārāja's order, none of us asked for anything from either the milk vendor or the grocer. But when the milk vendor became increasingly insistent, we agreed to daily accept five liters of milk. Lālā Śrī Viśana dāsa, however, instructed the milk vendor to forcibly give us twenty liters. When Guru Mahārāja came to know we were accepting twenty liters of milk a day, he chastised us. When we informed Guru Mahārāja that we asked for nothing, but rather Lālā Śrī Viśan Dāsa instructed the milk vendor to give us twenty liters of milk, Guru Mahārāja said, "Okay, fine. Cook *khīra* daily with that milk, and I will offer it to Ṭhākura-jī. Every evening, we will distribute that *khīra* to the audience after *hari-kathā*." We prepared *khīra* daily and Guru Mahārāja happily distributed the *prasāda* to the audience every night.

After the Amritsar program had concluded and we continued on to another program at a different location, Lālā Śrī Viśan Dāsa told others, "The devotees stayed at my place here for fifteen days, but I did not incur any costs. First of all,

they did not want to take anything. Then, even when I offered, they would not accept anything. When finally, I forcibly gave them something, they distributed it to everyone. They are truly uninterested in accepting anything for themselves, whether for immediate or later use. Many other visiting *sādhus* often ask for us to provide them with supplies for their journey, but Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja and his travelling *sādhus* were uninterested in accepting supplies for themselves even while they were staying here. What, then, can be said of their interest in collecting things to take with them?”

When Guru Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastime, Lālā Śrī Viśana dāsa published an article in a local Amritsar newspaper informing all about Guru Mahārāja’s physical disappearance from this world. He wrote, “Throughout my lifetime, I have received *darśana* of many *sādhus* who have visited Amritsar to speak *hari-kathā* and perform *kīrtana*, but despite their best efforts, none of them could hide their faults from my astute perceptiveness. Śrī Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the only great soul who exhibited an absolutely spotless (*bedāga*) character during his visit in Amritsar. He was, in the truest sense, a *sādhu*. What to speak of me, even the most wicked of persons would be unable to detect any fault in his divine character.”

Śrī Murāri Lāl Vāsudeva of Punjab National Bank used

to accompany Lālā Śrī Viśan Dāsa to hear Guru Mahārāja's *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana*. He, along with his four sons, had personally served Guru Mahārāja and observed his conduct very closely.

After Guru Mahārāja entered *aprākṛta-līlā*, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa, one of the sons of Śrī Murāri Lāl Vāsudeva, moved to Mumbai. There, he invited some preaching devotees to visit his home for some days. As soon as the devotees entered his house, a few of them demanded a few items, including two dozen bars of Dove brand soap. Śrī Raghunātha dāsa then phoned my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja and asked, “Mahārāja-jī, please confirm whether or not these preachers have been sent by Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. Perhaps they are independently travelling here and there to fulfil their own selfish motives in the name of preaching and helping the whole world find ‘welfare.’”

Śrī Purī Mahārāja asked, “What makes you suspect they have not been sent by Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha?”

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa replied, “When our respected Guru Mahārāja-jī, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, came to Amritsar, all the *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs* accompanying him never accepted anything for themselves, even after being requested many times. Instead, they always insisted they required nothing. But the devotees visiting my home today have deceitfully presented

themselves as penniless and have presented a long list of demands. Their instructing tone smacks of self-righteousness and implies they feel themselves to be doing us a great favor by staying with us.”

Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja then chastised the devotees and reminded them of their duty to follow Guru Mahārāja’s ideal conduct of being an *uttama-sevaka*, a topmost servant, which is helpful in successfully spreading the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Begging and building is to be done only for the pleasure of Śrī Hari, guru and Vaiṣṇavas

When Guru Mahārāja began performing Śrī Navadvipa-dhāma *parikramā* from Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, he was sometimes forced to seek out loans in order to fund its expenses. Yet, he would never ask for money from the devotees attending the *parikramā*. When guest houses were constructed in Guru Mahārāja’s *maṭhas* in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, Śrīdhāma Vṛndāvana and other places, he never asked for any rent from the visiting guests. In order to manage the expenses of the *maṭha* and to properly discharge other services such as preaching, he always gave more prominence to *bhikṣā-vṛtti*, the practice of begging alms. His firm conviction was that the practice of *nirguṇa-bhikṣā-vṛtti*—or begging alms for the pleasure of Śrī Hari alone, and not for one’s sense gratification—prevalent in the *vaiṣṇava-*

sampradāya is most favorable to *bhakti*, and that *sāttvika-*, *rājasika-* and *tāmasika-vṛttis*—activities motivated by the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance, respectively—are unfavorable for *bhajana*.

Guru Mahārāja would say, “In regard to those who undertake the responsibility of managing the affairs of a *maṭha*, temple, *sādhu-nivāsa* (residence for saintly persons) or guest house, our conception is this: ‘*keo tare, keo mare*—some may be delivered, while others may be ruined.’ If these activities are performed without attachment to their results and are done in a way that is favorable to *bhakti*, then a person can cross the ocean of material existence. But if he engages in such services while being attached to their results, they become unfavorable for *bhakti* and he will become further entangled in the web of material existence.

“When engaging in the services of organizing and managing the affairs of *parikramā*, accommodating Vaiṣṇavas, building guest houses, awarding *dīkṣā* and establishing deities, we should always remember that these activities should not be commercial. If any service is performed for the pleasure of anyone other than Śrī Hari, *guru* or the Vaiṣṇavas, then it is *vaiśya-vṛtti*, an act of a business. If someone constructs a place with the sole desire for Vaiṣṇavas to come, stay and perform *kīrtana* and *hari-kathā*, then this desire is the mother of all auspiciousness.”

As long as I was engaged in such services, I followed

this order of Guru Mahārāja to the best of my ability.

The astonishing effect of sādhu-saṅga

During the installation ceremony of the deities at Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Māyāpura, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, with *jhampas*

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in his hands, sang the following *kīrtana* composed by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura:

*hari bolbo āra madana-mohana heribo go
ei rūpe vrajera pathe calibo go*

Prārthana (55.1)

I will chant the names of Hari and behold Madana-mohana. In such a state, I shall travel the path to Vraja.

*

I never again received the opportunity to witness Śrīla Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja performing *kīrtana* with the same transcendental and exceptionally unique mood in which he was so deeply absorbed that day. That was also the first occasion I saw Guru Mahārāja raise his arms in ecstasy and loudly call out “Haribol!” He did not ritualistically lift his arms every time after the *kīrtana*, as is the custom nowadays.

Once, when Guru Mahārāja went to preach in Amritsar, a similar incident happened to me. When my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Lalita Giri Mahārāja began singing, Guru Mahārāja,

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu and others started dancing. I, too, unknowingly started dancing with raised arms.

Some days later, when my godbrother Śrī Khairātī Lāl, a resident of Amritsar and principal of Guru Nanak University, informed me that I had danced profusely with my arms raised, I replied, “Impossible! I have never even danced in *kīrtana*, let alone danced with raised arms.” When he said he could prove it with evidence, I challenged him, “Let’s see! How could you possibly prove this?”

He then brought a series of photographs that were taken that day, and I was greatly astonished to observe myself dancing in ecstasy with my arms raised high. The glory of the effect of associating with Guru Mahārāja and other associates of Śrīla Prabhupāda was such that my stone-like heart melted as a result of their mercy, and I unknowingly engaged in an act completely opposite to that of my natural behavior.

Śrī harināma is the only solution

Once, when Guru Mahārāja was preaching in Delhi, a man named Śrī Hotī Lāl Śarmā, the husband of a greatly devoted godsister of ours, from Merathā, Uttar Pradesh, came to meet him and said, “Mahārāja! Although my father died long ago, I often see him in my home. He looks very sad. I consulted with many scholarly priests and diligently

performed the many activities they recommended as possible solutions, including *nārāyaṇa-bali* and other rituals, but none of their methods proved fruitful. My wife has repeatedly asked me to approach you and request you to prescribe a solution. I would be extremely grateful if you were to suggest a solution by which the issue could be permanently resolved.”

Guru Mahārāja advised him, “Daily perform *kīrtana* of the *hare-kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* in your residence for one month.” When Śrī Hotī Lāl Śarmā asked Guru Mahārāja, “Who will perform the *kīrtana*?” Guru Mahārāja replied, “You and your wife, and you should do so accompanied to the clapping of your hands. Meet with me after one month and let me know if the situation has changed.”

Guru Mahārāja was still in Delhi when Śrī Hotī Lāl Śarmā visited him again and said, “My wife and I performed *mahā-mantra kīrtana* as you advised, and after only fifteen days, I stopped seeing my father. By your mercy, I have developed firm faith in the glories of the *harināma mahā-mantra*. Please accept me as your disciple.” In this way, Guru Mahārāja awarded him initiation into the chanting of the *harināma mahā-mantra*.

It was because Guru Mahārāja possessed firm conviction and unflinching faith in the glories of *śrī harināma* that he recommended such a method and refrained from prescribing any lesser, inferior solution.

Expressing deeply subtle points through his language

Whenever Guru Mahārāja would construct a *maṭha* and install *śrī vigraha*, he would always arrange for the deity of Śrīman Mahāprabhu to be brought from Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma. His inner mood was that because Śrīman Mahāprabhu appeared in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma to distribute *unnatojjvala-rasa*—the most exalted, resplendent mellow of transcendental amorous love—to the whole world, His *vigraha* should also come from Śrī Navadvīpa.

On one such occasion, Guru Mahārāja asked Śrī Bhakti Prasāda Āśrama Mahārāja and Śrī Chūnī Lāl Bābū to bring Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *vigraha* from Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma, but they expressed their inability to do so. At that time, no plans had been made for me to attend the installation ceremony. Guru Mahārāja sent a telegram wherein he ordered Śrī Āśrama Mahārāja to “send Narottama with Mahāprabhu.”

When I read the telegram, I very seriously began to contemplate why Guru Mahārāja decided to arrange his words in this particular way. As a result, the following thought manifested in my heart: “Guru Mahārāja advised for the very form of Śrīman Mahāprabhu present in his heart to be manifested externally as *śrī vigraha*. In reality, Mahāprabhu's *vigraha* is not inert, non-living matter, but is non-different from Mahāprabhu and is most worshipful. Therefore, Guru Mahārāja is ordering me to come along with

Mahāprabhu as His servant, and not to bring His *vigraha* along with me. In truth, no one possesses the ability to take Mahāprabhu anywhere. He is the supremely independent Lord. He goes anywhere He desires simply by that desire itself. Without His desire, no one can take Him anywhere.”

The language Guru Mahārāja used in his telegram was totally new to me. Never had such a thought previously come to me, even in a dream.

“Make vaiṣṇava-sevā your very life and soul”

Guru Mahārāja often gave the following instructions to his renounced disciples: “Renunciants should always remain careful to stay far away from the desire to attain *kanaka* (gold, or wealth), *kāminī* (women) and *pratiṣṭhā* (worldly prestige). You should assist everyone who comes forward with the desire to perform *bhagavad-bhajana* (service to Bhagavān). The act of assisting those who wish to gain freedom from the clutches of *māyā* is among the limbs of *bhakti*. If for some reason a *maṭha-vāsī* becomes displeased and leaves the *maṭha* to return home, one should sincerely and honestly endeavor to bring him back to the *maṭha*. It is only when we fully accept the Vaiṣṇavas to be worshipful, or worthy of our sincere service, that we can become free from the clutches of *māyā*; there exists no other means.

“Without serving Vaiṣṇavas, the inclination to serve Bhagavān will never arise in one’s heart. Therefore, you

should always sincerely endeavor to serve Vaiṣṇavas and make such service your life and soul. The main reason for organizing festivals at the *maṭha*—such as Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā*, Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, pilgrimages to North and South India, and so on—is to render service to and gain the association and blessings of the Vaiṣṇavas, for serving them is the topmost *sādhana*.”

These teachings were perpetually reflected in the personal conduct, *hari-kathā* and writings of Guru Mahārāja.

Three main obstacles on the path of bhajana

Guru Mahārāja would often mention, “Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that there are three obstacles on the path of *bhajana*: *kanaka* (wealth), *kāminī* (women) and *pratiṣṭhā* (prestige). Regarding the first obstacle, *kanaka*, Śrīla Prabhupāda taught that one can attain the topmost state of consciousness by avoiding deep attachment (*āśakti*) to acquiring wealth and instead cultivating deep attachment for the lotus feet of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas and Bhagavān alone. It is improper for renunciants to worry about the future and accumulate material wealth. If those devotees who perform *bhikṣā* (the collection of alms) for the service of Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas do not hand over everything they have collected to the *maṭha* in-charge and instead keep something for their own personal use, they will not be able to perform *hari-bhakti*. Such an act will never effect a shortage in the *maṭha*, but will rather only

adversely affect one's own spiritual advancement.

“While Śrīla Prabhupāda was physically present, Śrī Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja, I and Śrī Bhakti Vilāsa Nemi Mahārāja were, in that order, the foremost collectors among all his disciples. Whenever I would stay with either Śrī Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvāra Mahārāja or other senior godbrothers, I would never spend a *phūṭī kauḍī* (single farthing) from the collected money for my own personal use. I would, however, use some of the money to serve those godbrothers with whom I was staying by providing them with whatever they needed. The first thing I would do after collecting was hand over the entirety of the collections to the *maṭha* in-charge, because I had heard from Śrīla Prabhupāda that it is improper to use any donation one has received for one's own personal use. The proper method is to first hand over everything one has collected to the *maṭha* in-charge and then ask him for whatever one may need. Therefore, I would always ask Kuñja-dā

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for whatever I needed.

“To ensure that the consciousness of those performing the service of *bhikṣā* will gradually implement Śrīla Prabhupāda's view on the etiquette of collecting donations, it is absolutely necessary for the *maṭha* in-charge to be highly

affectionate to all the *maṭha*'s residents and, most importantly, always remain concerned for their spiritual advancement. Also, he must be realized in even the subtlest matters of spiritual life, and he should be willing and able to take care of the residents of the *maṭha* when they are unwell or in any other time of need, even if he must bear the burden of taking a loan to provide them with whatever they require.

“It is for this reason alone that I tell those who, being eager for me to construct a *maṭha*, wish to donate land to me that I can only accept their land if I am able to find a suitable and virtuous devotee who can handle the responsibility of maintaining a *maṭha*, and whose association can effectively divert the consciousness of the local people toward the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

“The reason we now have so many *maṭha-vāsīs* in our Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha is because from the very beginning, I have taken care of all those who have taken shelter of the *maṭha* and have provided them with their day-to-day needs, accommodations, medicine and treatment, even if it required taking on a loan.

“Sometimes it occurs to me what would happen if I were to leave this world before repaying my debts. But Śrīla Prabhupāda inspires me by reminding me from within that Śrī Viṣṇu and the Vaiṣṇavas are the only objects of our service. If I am able to serve only one of the two, I will choose to serve the Vaiṣṇavas. If I happen to leave the world before

repaying a loan I had taken to serve the Vaiṣṇavas, then I will repay that loan in my next life and will enthusiastically take on even more loans in order to remain in the eternal service of the Vaiṣṇavas. My constant prayer is that I may maintain such a consciousness forever, without deviating from this principle for even a moment.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned *kāminī* as the second obstacle on the path of *bhakti*. For men, *kāminī* refers to women, and for women, it refers to men. Those who are unable to control their senses should be married by Vedic ritual. According to the Vedic scriptures, it is acceptable for even *brahmacārīs* to enter householder life after performing *upakurvana*, or begging their *guru* and senior Vaiṣṇavas for permission by saying, ‘I am unable to control my senses and am unqualified to live a life of renunciation. I implore you to please allow me to enter into the *gṛhastha-āśrama*.’ But for those who have taken *sannyāsa*, it is strictly forbidden. A *sannyāsī* who leaves the path of renunciation is a *vāntāśī*, or a person who eats his own vomit. Whether in a gross or subtle manner, it is most dreadful for renunciants to associate with women in a way that is against the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures. Those who sincerely desire to perform *hari-bhakti* should always be mindful of the teachings given by our previous *ācāryas* on this matter. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura has said:

ramañī-jana-saṅga-sukhaṁ ca sakhe

carame bhayadaṁ puruṣārtha-haram
Śrī Śrī Godruma-candra-bhajanopadeśaḥ (3)

O friend! The pleasure to be had in the company of women leads to anxiety and robs one of the true goal of life.

“Śrī Jagadānanda Paṇḍita has mentioned in his *Prema-vivarta* (7.12):

jadi chāhō praṇaya rākhite gaurāṅgera sane
choṭa haridāsera kathā thāke jēnō mane

If you desire to maintain love for Śrī Gaurāṅga, then always remember the story of Choṭa Haridāsa.

“In *Śrī Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka* (8.24), Śrī Kavi Karṇapūra has quoted Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as lamenting:

niṣkiñcanasya bhagavad-bhajanonmukhasya
pāraṁ paraṁ jigamiṣor bhava-sāgarasya
sandarśanaṁ viṣayiṇām atha yoṣitām ca
hā hanta hanta viṣa-bhakṣaṇato 'py asādhu

Alas! For those who have completely abandoned all material desires and seek to cross the ocean of nescience by sincerely cultivating service to Bhagavān, it is more detestable to expectantly see a sense enjoyer or enjoy gazing at a woman than to

willing drink poison.

“Furthermore, it is written in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

tamo-dvāraṁ yoṣitām saṅgi-saṅgam

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (5.5.2)

The association of those who are fond of women leads to the deepest darkness.

“Śrīman Mahāprabhu has been quoted by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī as follows:

*prabhu kahe—“vairāgī kare prakṛti sambhāṣaṇa
dekhite nā pārō āmi tāhāra vadana*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 2.117)

“I will not see the face of a renunciate who interacts intimately with women.

*kṣudra-jīva saba markāṭa-vairāgya kōriyā
indriya carāīā bule ‘prakṛti’ sambhāṣiyā”*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 2.120)

Those immoral persons whose renunciation is like that of monkeys simply wander around satisfying their senses and intimately conversing with women.”

“We should repeatedly hear the explanations of these verses and many other verses like them from the lotus lips of

śrī guru and Vaiṣṇavas and follow their lessons with a firmly determined heart. One can be saved from *kāminī* only by associating with self-realized Vaiṣṇavas. In this regard, Śrī Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has written in *Śrī Prema-bhakti-candrikā* (2.11):

*kibā vā kôrite pare kāma-krodha sadhākere
jâdi haya sādhu-janara saṅga*

If one remains in the association of *sādhus*, then that association will take him beyond the influence of lust and anger, as well as the friends of these iniquities.

“*Pratiṣṭhā*, or worldly prestige, is the third and the most prominent obstacle on the path of *hari-bhakti*. It is easy to recognize an attachment to *kanaka* and *kāminī*, but it is extremely hard to identify an obsession with *pratiṣṭhā*. Unless a person is completely devoid of this desire himself, it is extremely difficult for him to recognize a true *sādhu* who is free from that same desire, and it is impossible for him to differentiate between those who long for *pratiṣṭhā* and those who are completely free from any desire to attain it.

“In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 4.146), Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has mentioned:

*pratiṣṭhāra svabhāva ei jagate vidita
je nā vāñche, tāra haya vidhātā-nirmita*

It is common knowledge that the nature of prestige is such that, by the arrangement of providence, those who do not want it get it.

“A person who performs *bhajana* with a desire to attain *pratiṣṭhā* never in fact obtains that *pratiṣṭhā*. A Bengali maxim states ‘*je cāhe se pāye na, je pāye se cāhe na*—one who desires something never obtains it, and one who obtains something never desires it.” This is the barometer used to assess the desires present in the heart of a *sādhaka*. Śrīla Prabhupāda has likened the desire for *pratiṣṭhā* to a *bāghinī*, or tigress. Just as a tigress swallows its prey whole, the desire for *pratiṣṭhā* similarly, in the truest sense, swallows whole the *sādhaka’s* mood of surrender, which is his spiritual life-air. In other words, due to the effect of *pratiṣṭhā*, the *sādhaka* begins leading an undisciplined life devoid of principles and regulations.

“Therefore, if the *sādhaka* desires to achieve spiritual welfare, he should give up the desire for *kanaka*, *kāminī* and *pratiṣṭhā* with firm determination and be cautious not to nourish them or allow them even the slightest opportunity to enter his heart. All such desires are temporary, are embodiments of inauspiciousness, and are completely against the natural propensity of a *jīva*, which is to serve Bhagavān.

“One should learn the difference between *phalgu* and *yukta-vairāgya*. Remember: all that glitters is not gold.”

Bhāgavan is the maintainer of all

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

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

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

One day, after Guru Mahārāja had established Śrī

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

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

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

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (3.27)

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

Do not become distracted from our only duty in this world

When Guru Mahārāja was a *brahmacārī* in the *maṭha*, he met Dr. Sarvapallī Rādhā-kṛṣṇan, who would later become the second president of India in 1962. Before Dr. Rādhā-kṛṣṇan became president, Guru Mahārāja was once asked to represent the Gauḍīya Maṭha by chairing a debate between Dr. Rādhā-kṛṣṇan, a follower of the doctrine of monism (*advaitavāda*) and Dr. Nagarāja Śarmā, a strong proponent of dualism (*dvaitavāda*). Feeling himself unqualified to accept the post and wanting to honor his senior godbrother, Guru Mahārāja requested Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja to chair the debate. After he became President of India, Dr. Rādhā-kṛṣṇan invited Guru Mahārāja to the Presidential residence, Rāṣṭrapati Bhavana. During that visit, Guru Mahārāja took my godbrother Śrī Maṅgala-nīlaya Brahmācārī and me along with him to congratulate Dr. Rādhā-kṛṣṇan and give him spiritual advice for leading the country.

Dr. Rādhā-kṛṣṇan welcomed Guru Mahārāja at the door and accompanied him inside the presidential palace. During the course of their conversation, Dr. Rādhā-kṛṣṇan recited a verse about *vairāgya*. Later, Guru Mahārāja offered him a flower garland that had earlier been offered to the deities, as well as some of Ṭhākura-jī's *mahāprāsada*. At that time, he quoted the same verse Dr. Rādhā-kṛṣṇan had previously quoted and explained the various types of *vairāgya*: *śuṣka-vairāgya* (dry renunciation), *markaṭa-vairāgya* (monkey

renunciation), *śmaśāna-vairāgya* (temporary renunciation) and *yukta-vāirāgya* (practical renunciation).

Guru Mahārāja also explained, “The secondary meaning of the word *vairāgya*—which is *vigata-rāga*, or the absence of worldly attachments—and the principal meaning—which is *viśiṣṭe-parama-puruṣe-rāga*, or a special attachment to the Supreme Person, Śrī Bhagavān. Those who possess little intelligence appreciate the secondary meaning of the word, whereas the exalted devotees (*mahājanas*) always favor the primary meaning, which describes a natural detachment for worldly activities that manifests as a consequence of having developed deep attachment (*anurāga*) to the Supreme Person, Śrī Bhagavān. A person cannot become a devotee simply by controlling his senses in a superficial manner. If this were possible, there are many impotent people in this world would have become great devotees. Superficial sense control has no meaning unless one possesses a deep affection and attachment to *guru*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Indeed, renunciation without *kṛṣṇa-prīti* is merely false renunciation.

“On the other hand, those who have a taste for serving the Lord are naturally renounced, because they lose all interest in lower tastes as a result of experiencing that higher taste of *kṛṣṇa-sevā*:

*viṣayā vinivartante
nirāhārasya dehinaḥ*

*rasa-varjam raso 'py asya
param dṛṣṭvā nivartate*

Śrīmad Bhagava-gītā (2.59)

He who identifies himself with his body may restrict his enjoyment by withdrawing the senses from their objects, but his taste for sense pleasure remains. One whose intelligence is fixed, however, has realized Paramātmā; therefore, his taste for sense objects automatically ceases. *

“Externally restraining the activities of the senses does not remove the desire to engage in those activities. Does fasting eradicate one’s desire to eat? When a person experiences a higher taste, however, his interest for lower tastes very naturally disappears. The joy experienced in the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa completely eclipses the charm found in the inferior pleasure of this world. It is for this reason *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.1.32) states that Śrī Nārada Ṛṣi instructed Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira ‘*tasmāt kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet*—you should therefore fix your mind in Kṛṣṇa by any means possible.’ This principle is the basis of *yukta-vairāgya*, which is truly the only worthwhile form of renunciation.”

When Dr. Rādhā-kṛṣṇan heard the enlightening words emanating from the lotus lips of Guru Mahārāja, he offered Guru Mahārāja *praṇāma* and expressed his sincere, heartfelt gratitude. During that occasion, many photographs were taken

of Guru Mahārāja with Dr. Rādhā-krṣṇan, and Śrī Maṅgalanīlaya Brahmācārī and I were also included in a number of them. Although due to my nature I have not preserved those photographs, I am sure someone must have them.

While we were exiting Rāṣṭrapati Bhavana, Guru Mahārāja told us, “We did not come here as visiting guests or tourists, who desire to explore an opulent building or admire architecture or beautiful objects. Our only objective in visiting any place is to chant the holy names of Bhagavān by performing *kīrtana* and delivering *hari-kathā*. If any desire other than the desire to perform this service enters our heart, or if we develop an attachment to the wondrous objects of this world, we will never attain spiritual welfare. The only thought we should have while visiting any place or seeing any objects is that the whole world is a temporary embodiment of inauspiciousness. The one and only means of attaining our topmost welfare in this world is by remembering and chanting the names of Bhagavān, who is the eternal source of all auspiciousness. Maintaining our life here in a way that requires minimal effort, we should spend all our time endeavoring to attain our principal objective, pleasing Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas through love and affection.”

The importance of establishing sambandha-jñāna

At Mai Hiran Gate in Jalandhar, an old lady once asked

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

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

The next day in the assembly, Guru Mahārāja repeated the old lady’s question and, for the spiritual welfare of everyone present, delivered his answer: “Mātā-jī, you have been daily visiting the temple for a long time. But have you once considered the nature of your relationship with the presiding deity of this temple?”

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

Śrīla Guru Mahārāja then said, “It is impossible to

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

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

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.5.30)

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

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

“Every *jīva* has an eternal servitor relationship with

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

thousands of lifetimes of this practice.”

Offer service before accepting anything

When Guru Mahārāja would go out for preaching, he would always carry drinking water with him. After reaching the venue where he was to speak *hari-kathā*, he would immediately perform *kīrtana* and *deliver his discourse*. It was only after performing such services that he would accept water, *prasāda* or any offering from the organizers or hosts. If during the program he felt thirsty before he received the opportunity to perform the services of *kīrtana* and *hari-kathā*, he would drink only the water he had brought with him, and not any water offered by the hosts. His view was, “We are devotees. Our only wealth is Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. If we accept the offerings of our hosts without first offering to them this wealth through the means of *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana*, then we will become indebted to them. Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught us this important lesson through his own conduct. Once, when he was invited by the king of Kasim Bāzār to speak *hari-kathā* but did not receive the opportunity to do so for three days, he observed a total fast, accepting only one *tulasī* leaf. Similarly, in his *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta* (4), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has explained the principle of *dadāti pratigrhṇāti*: one ought first to offer before accepting.”

Encouraging the propensity for sādhu-sevā

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

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

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

On our way back, my mind was busy reflecting: “Śrī Guru Mahārāja himself has instructed us not to eat anything

offered by non-Vaiṣṇavas. However, today he himself ordered me to accept the offering of a non-Vaiṣṇava. What is the reason for this?”

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

Dancing and singing for the pleasure of Bhagavān alone

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

and began ecstatically dancing and performing *kīrtana* for a long time.

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

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

A similar incident happened in Sahāranapūra, as well. One day, Guru Mahārāja performed an ecstatic *kīrtana* and danced in complete bliss. The next day, the news spread everywhere of his heart-warming dancing and *kīrtana*, and so everyone was eager to witness them. Many people assembled at the venue the next day. When Guru Mahārāja was told that many people had come simply to witness his dancing and *kīrtana*, and that they would feel blessed if he could begin the programs with that, he said “*Sādhus* and

Vaiṣṇavas do not engage in dancing and *kīrtana* for the pleasure and entertainment of ordinary people. Rather, they do so purely with the intention of serving Bhagavān. If one performs *kīrtana* to satisfy ordinary people, he may develop affection or attachment for them, but it can never be considered *hari-bhakti*. Dancing or performing *kīrtana* with a desire to acquire the recognition and praise of misguided individuals is in fact no better than the stool of hogs, and it is completely unfavorable for *hari-bhakti*. In reality, such dancing and *kīrtana* falls within the category of *traiyātrika*, or the performance of materialistic dance, singing and playing of musical instruments.”

The whole world can be sacrificed for rāma-nāma

Once, Guru Mahārāja preached in Guwahati, Assam, in the company of many other devotees, the most prominent of whom were Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu and Śrīpāda Cintāharṇa Pāṭagiri Prabhu, both of whom were Assamese disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda who knew the local language. As per the instruction of Guru Mahārāja, the two met with *deśa-priya* Śrī Gopīnātha Bordoloi—the then Chief Minister of Assam who was an object of affection for the country’s citizens—to invite him to hear *bhāgavata-kathā* at Guru Mahārāja’s program.

During the meeting, Śrī Bordoloi first asked them to introduce themselves, their organization and the reason for

their visit. After their introduction, he asked, “You are both Assamese. Why, then, have you not accepted the principles of *śrī bhagavata-dharma* as preached in Assam by Śrī Śaṅkara-deva, Śrī Dāmodara-deva and others? Why have you instead accepted the teachings of Śrīman Caitanyadeva from Bengal?”

Śrīpāda Cintāharaṇa Prabhu requested Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu to kindly answer Śrī Bordoloi, and Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu obliged: “Respected Mr. Bordoloi, if I may, I would like to preface my reply to your question with a brief question of my own. You, too, are Assamese, and you belong to a *brāhmaṇa* family. Why then did you consider it appropriate to attend Oxford University in England, accept Englishmen as your teachers (*gurus*) and follow their teachings, when they use paper to clean themselves after passing stool instead of following the proper practice of using water? What more should I speak about their lack of etiquette?”

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

Śrī Gopinātha Bordoloi was rendered speechless. Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Prabhu and Śrīpāda Cintāharaṇa Pātagiri Prabhu left his office and returned to Guru Mahārāja.

When they arrived back at Guru Mahārāja's quarters, they were greatly surprised to see to Śrī Bordoloi sitting next to Guru Mahārāja. They realized he had come by car while they travelled by *rikśaw*.

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

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

Śrī Gopinātha Bordoloi became highly inspired by the deep-rooted, subtle views of Guru Mahārāja. After this incident, he often visited to hear Guru Mahārāja's *hari-kathā* and honor *prasāda* with all of us. He also many times expressed his desire to abandon his active social life, accept

sannyāsa and stay always in the association of Guru Mahārāja. His fellow Congress party members, however, would tell him, “If you accept *sannyāsa*, then our position in Assam will rapidly deteriorate.” After a short time, Śrī Gopinātha Bordoloi left this world.

On inviting esteemed members of society

Guru Mahārāja once sent me to invite Śrī Jñānī Zail Singh, the then Chief Minister of Punjab who later became President of India, to be the chief guest for an annual function at the Chandigarh branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha scheduled for that very evening. I took my godbrother Śrī Dhanañjaya dāsa Ādhikārī (Śrī Dharmapāla Sekharī) along with me and went to Śrī Jñānī Zail Singh’s office without having first made an appointment or even so much as having notified his office of our plans to visit. When we arrived, he was busy in an important meeting.

His assistant told me, “Mahātmā-jī, I assure you that you will get to meet Mr. Singh, but I am afraid I cannot tell you how long it will take for his meeting to let out.”

“That is not an issue,” I replied. “I can wait as long as it takes to meet him.”

After his meeting finished, Śrī Jñānī Zail Singh brought us to his room and accepted our invitation. At the end of our conversation, he said in Punjabi, “Santa-jī, *dūdha chako*—Your grace, please accept some milk,” which Śrī

Dharmapāla Prabhu translated for me.

After we accepted a glass of milk, I told Śrī Jñānī Zail Singh, “Let us now leave together for the function. Guru Mahārāja and many other devotees are waiting in the *maṭha*.”

Śrī Jñānī Zail Singh readily said, “*Calo jī, calo*—Sure, let’s go.”

When we reached the *maṭha*, seeing us offering *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* to Ṭhakura-jī, Śrī Jñānī Zail Singh offered *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* and a *praṇāmi* offering of one hundred one rupees. Guru Mahārāja welcomed him and appointed him the chairman for that evening.

In his speech as chairman, Śrī Jñānī Zail Singh said, “I consider myself very fortunate today. When I was invited, I thought I would be attending some sort of procession. But when I arrived at this assembly and heard the profoundly deep spiritual discourses spoken by the *mahātmās* assembled here, I learned so many things.”

He told me after the program, “You have done me a great favor by bringing me here tonight.”

Later, I asked Guru Mahārāja, “Whenever we hold festivals and functions at the various branches of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, you invite many distinguished persons, irrespective of whether they are Sikh, Ārya Samājī or followers of some other spiritual path. What is your internal reason for inviting them?”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “I invite the renowned members of society and appoint them as chairpersons or chief guests in order to make them understand that the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are relevant not only for Hindus, but for the whole world. Because of their prominent positions in society, many other people will be inspired to sit in the assembly and hear these principles. By hearing the teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, all people—irrespective of race, caste, religion or country—will be benefitted. The wise and intellectually inclined will certainly be influenced by and find merit in these teachings.

“Dr. Sarvapallī Rādhā-kṛṣṇan, the second President of independent India and a follower of non-dualism (*advaita-vāda*), became attracted to Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s principle of inconceivable oneness and difference (*acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*) by only briefly associating with the *sādhus* of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. Being inspired by this association, he ceremonially inaugurated the Kolkata Research Institute of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha and an oriental institute established by Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja.”

“After Śrī A. T. Gāṅgulī—a renowned, well-educated and wealthy resident of Rajasthan—visited the Gauḍīya Maṭha twice and heard the logically expressed philosophical conclusions of the devotees here, he gave up the path of *karma-kāṇḍa* (fruitive activities) and adopted the path of

bhakti.

“Similarly, when a Vice Chancellor named Sūraja Bhāna Śarmā, who followed the path of Ārya Samāja, came to Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha and heard that in the practice of *sanātana-dharma*, which gives great importance to the existence of consciousness and personalism, fire is considered a conscious demigod through whom offerings can be made to all other conscious demigods through the process of fire sacrifices (*yajñā*), he too became attracted to the Gauḍīya Math.

“All living entities can attain their supreme welfare by hearing about the true conception of the eternal relationship between the minutely conscious living being and the supremely conscious Bhagavān. I invite distinguished guests for the sole purpose of making them hear these most exalted teachings. By offering them honor and respect, they become more inclined to hear our viewpoints. If they happen to be fortunate, they will accept Mahāprabhu’s teachings. In this way, we follow Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s principle of *mānadena*, or offering respects to one and all. If the objective of an invitation is righteous, then the invitation itself will always be righteous, no matter whom is invited.

“We do not invite prominent members of society in order to exploit their positions for notoriety. Our sole objective is to help them and those related to them attain their true, topmost spiritual benefit. Through His pastime of refusing to

meet with King Pratāparudra, Śrīman Mahāprabhu established through His own conduct that devotees should not meet with kings or politicians with the intention of personally benefiting from them. However, it is not prohibited to interact with kings or politicians in order to benefit them by engaging them in the service of Bhagavān. Śrīman Mahāprabhu exhibited this when He later bestowed His transcendental mercy upon King Pratāparudra for the king’s spiritual benefit.

“The scriptures have mentioned:

*niṣkiñcanasya bhagavad-bhajanonmukhasya
pāram param jīgamiṣor bhava-sāgarasya
sandarśanam viṣayiṇām atha yoṣitām ca
hā hanta hanta viṣa-bhakṣaṇato ‘py asādhu
Śrī Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka (8.24)*

Alas! For those who have completely abandoned all material desires and seek to cross the ocean of nescience by sincerely cultivating service to Bhagavān, it is more detestable to expectantly see a sense enjoyer or enjoy gazing at a woman than to willingly drink poison.

“Śrīla Mādhavendra Purīpāda had taken a vow not to ask anyone for anything or meet with materialists (*viṣayīs*). But when Gopāla specifically asked for *sākṣāt-sevā*—service performed either directly in person or by obeying a personal

instruction—and not *āropita-sevā*—or service imposed on the Lord according to one’s own desire—Śrīla Mādhavendra Purīpāda met with many influential people in Purī and asked them to make contributions for the Lord’s service. In this way, he broke his vows without incurring any fault.

“In the same way, we must remain careful to perform the *sākṣāt-sevā* ordered by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

jāre dekhô, tāre kahô kṛṣṇa-upadeśa
 Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 7.128)

Instruct whomever you meet to follow Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s instruction.

“The Lord has further provided reassurance in this matter:

kabhu nā bādhibe tomāra viṣaya-taraṅga
 Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 7.129)

If you perform pure *sākṣāt-sevā*, you will not be enticed by materialistic people or materialistic objects.

“Following this instruction of Śrīman Mahāprabhu is true *sākṣāt-sevā*, and we should never conclude that by obeying this order we are in any way disregarding the essence of the teaching Śrīman Mahāprabhu has given by initially refusing

to meet with King Pratāparudra.”

On witnessing abominable behavior in sādhus

Once, Śrī Vardā Prasāda, the owner of a company that supplied electricity to Silchar, Assam, arranged for Guru Mahārāja to deliver *hari-kathā* at a program organized in the hall of his bungalow. During the program, a lawyer present in the audience wrote a question on a piece of paper and gave it to me with the request that I deliver it to Guru Mahārāja. When I found an opportunity, I put the note on the table in front of Guru Mahārāja.

Shortly after Guru Mahārāja read the note, he read the question aloud. “ ‘The following verse is difficult to understand:

*api cet su-durācāro
bhajate mām ananya-bhāḥ
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ
samyag vyavasito hi saḥ*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (9.30)

Even if a man of abominable character engages in *ananya-bhajana*, exclusive devotion to Me, he is still to be considered a *sādhu*, because his intelligence is firmly fixed in *bhakti* to Me. *

“ ‘How can a *sādhu* be engaged in abominable behavior (*su-durācāra*)?’ ” After reading the question, Guru Mahārāja

turned off the fan near him, making sure that everyone witnessed him doing so. He then asked the same lawyer “Why are the fan blades still rotating even though the power has been turned off?”

“Because of their previous momentum,” the lawyer replied. “But it will gradually slow down and finally stop.”

Guru Mahārāja then explained, “In the same way, a person who has taken up the path of one-pointed *bhakti* completely abandons all sorts of *su-durācāra*. But due to his past impressions and previous habits, some of those undesirable actions may still be visible in his character for some time. Even so, he must be considered a *sādhū*, because the very next verse states:

*kṣipraṁ bhavati dharmātmā
śaśvac chāntiṁ nigacchati
kaunteya pratijānīhi
na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*

Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (9.31)

He quickly becomes virtuous and attains eternal peace. O Kaunteya, declare it boldly that My *bhakta* never perishes. *

“In other words, if he is one-pointed to Kṛṣṇa he will very quickly become *dharmātmā*, or a pure devotee, even though he is seen to engage in *su-durācāra* due to his previous habits.”

Obtaining the true benefit of performing parikramā

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

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

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

Śaraṇāgati (6.3.3)

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

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

The fire of separation touches those nearby

Once during Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* in 1956, Guru Mahārāja was singing a Bengali *kīrtana* in front of Śrī Ādikeśavadeva:

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

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

Because the majority of the devotees present during that *kīrtana* were from North India, they were unable to understand the meaning of the Bengali *kīrtana*. Still, tears flowed from the eyes of everyone who heard Guru

Mahārāja's heart-melting voice. I had never previously danced in *kīrtanas*, but the power of that particular *kīrtana* was such that my feet started moving and I began dancing without any intention or even the slightest desire to do so; it was as if something was forcing me to dance.

After Guru Mahārāja's *kīrtana*, one *mātā-jī* from Jagadhari, Punjab, named Mitrarāṇī, approached Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāśa Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and asked, "Could you please explain the meaning of the *kīrtana* Guru Mahārāja was singing just now?" After Śrīla Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja explained the meaning, she said, "The transcendental bliss we experienced during that *kīrtana* was indescribable. But even after hearing its meaning, the same type of bliss is not manifesting in my heart. Why is this so?"

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

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

Out of deep love, the *praṇayi-bhaktas* suffer feelings of *viraha* (separation) from Śrī Kṛṣṇa when they feel themselves unable to attain His direct *darśana*. If we sincerely perform *parikramā* in the association and under the guidance of such devotees, then the *viraha-agni* (fire of

separation) present in their hearts will certainly touch us, also. However, those who perform *parikramā* with devotees who lack such transcendental love for the Lord can never experience these transcendental pangs of separation.

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

While watching a film, one may for a moment imbibe the emotions expressed by the film’s actors, but those emotions will fade shortly after the story’s end. In the same way, the sentiments experienced by a person when he performs *parikramā* in the association of devotees who do not possess *pranaya* (affectionate love) for the Lord and His pastime-

places quickly fade. In such *saṅga*, one can only attain *puṇya* or the cleansing of his past sins, but never *bhakti-unmukhī sukṛti* (spiritual fortune that leads one to the path of *bhakti*), what to speak of *praṇaya*, which is the real fruit of *dhāma-parikramā* and is obtained only in the association of *praṇayi-bhaktas*.

1 An austerity in which the amount of food one consumes is gradually reduced to zero and then increased to normal according to the lunar cycle.

2 A person who collects and stores all the ingredients necessary for serving Śrī Bhagavān and His devotees, and also manages the affairs of a *maṭha* or *āśrama*.

3 Large *karatālas*, or ‘whompers.’

4 Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa, who later became Śrī Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja.

Of Separation and Love

Acquiring the divine appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda

When Guru Mahārāja came to know about the possibility of acquiring the divine appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda in Purī, he firstly approached Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, who was the presiding *ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha at that time. Through Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, he requested him, “There is no scarcity of resources at your disposal. Please assume proprietorship of this place, so that we may all gain the fortune of visiting and offering our *praṇāmas* there without restriction.”

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

Upon receiving Śrīla Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s reply, my Guru Mahārāja, in the company of his godbrother Śrīpāda Jagamohana Prabhu took me along with him as his assistant

to approach Śrī Bhakti Kevala Auḍulomi Mahārāja, the then presiding *ācārya* of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Bāgbāzār, Kolkata, and request him to acquire custody of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance place.

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

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

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

Who but ‘Mādhava?’

In those days, the disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda would gather at the *maṭha* of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara

Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Koladvīpa after completing Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*.

When my Guru Mahārāja met with his godbrothers at that time, he informed them about the opportunity to purchase the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda in Jagannātha Purī, and he suggested they could purchase the land collectively.

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

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

*mādhavo mādhavo vāci
mādhavo mādhavo hṛdi
smaranti mādhavaḥ sarve
sarva kāryeṣu mādhavam*

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

Although the name ‘Mādhava’ in this verse refers to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja

spoke the verse in reference to my *most worshipful* Guru Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and thus implied, “Mādhava Mahārāja is in the words and hearts of his godbrothers. All his godbrothers remember Mādhava Mahārāja, because he is able to collect any amount of *lakṣmī* (money). All his godbrothers remember Mādhava Mahārāja in all their undertakings, and that is why anything can be accomplished when Mādhava Mahārāja is there. What is the need to rely on anyone else?”

Upon hearing this, Guru Mahārāja understood that his godbrothers were blessing him by entrusting this service to him alone, and so he offered his prostrated *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* to all of them. Thus, he happily accepted the entire responsibility of acquiring Śrīla Prabhupāda’s appearance place.

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

In the meantime, Śrī Bhakti Prajñāna Yati Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, submitted to the authorities of *Dakṣiṇa Pārśva Maṭha*, the owners of the site of Śrīla

Prabhupāda’s appearance at that time, a lengthy collection of documents and letters, asserting, “Ours is the original and real Gauḍīya Maṭha. We alone reserve the right to bear the responsibility of managing the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The institution on whose behalf Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja has submitted his application is not the original *maṭha*.”

They also submitted to the High Court a petition requesting a ‘stay order’ on the transfer of rights. Guru Mahārāja was distraught to hear this news. In the beginning, before he made any independent endeavor to acquire the property, he had approached Śrīla Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja with a proposal. It was due only to Śrīla Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s refusal that Guru Mahārāja began soliciting his other godbrothers for help, which later lead him to accept sole responsibility for acquiring the property. At that point, after so much endeavor, it was unfeasible for him to relinquish his role in that service.

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

deliberate on the stay order.

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

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

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

Other than Guru Mahārāja, those present at the festival included his constant companions Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śravaṇa Trivikrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmacārī, Śrīpāda Jagamohana Prabhu, Śrīpāda Uddhāraṇa Prabhu, Śrī Śrīmad Indupati dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and many surrendered disciples of Śrīla

Prabhupāda, the most prominent of whom were Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kumuda Santa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Kamala Madhusūdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saurabha Bhaktisāra Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vilāsa Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vikāśa Hṛśīkeṣa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Saudha Āśrama Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Rāsa-bihārī dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prapanna Daṇḍī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Suhr̥t Bodhāyana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prapanna Dāmodara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Suvrata Paramārthī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Dr. Śyāmasundara Brahmācārī and Śrīpāda Yatiśekhara dāsa Adhikārī.

During the five-day festival commemorating the *vyāsa-pūjā* of Śrīla Prabhupāda, various Vaiṣṇavas spoke on his teachings, instructions, statements, conduct, character and personality from a multitude of viewpoints. During that ongoing sequence of heart-touching narrations, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, with great eagerness and a heart filled with joy, said to all those present, “Now that we have been bestowed with the opportunity to construct a Gauḍīya Maṭha at the appearance place of Śrīla Prabhupāda, all his disciples will be extremely pleased to

annually gather here at his birthplace in honor of his appearance day festival, and at his *samādhi-pīṭha* in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura to honor his disappearance day festival. Of this there is no doubt.”

The distribution centers of unnatojjvāla-rasa

In his lectures, Guru Mahārāja would often offer his perspective about the divine birth of Śrīla Prabhupāda. In *Padma Purāṇa*, Śrīla Vyāsadeva has stated *hyutkale puruṣottamāt*. By these words, he prophesized that the message of *śuddha-bhakti* for Kṛṣṇa, the primeval Supreme Lord, would be distributed to the whole world, and that the epicenter of this distribution would be the land of Puruṣottama, or Śrī Purī-dhāma. This prophecy was fulfilled by the appearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in that very Śrī Puruṣottama-dhāma.

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

Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Firm faith beyond external circumstances

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

Because of the unclean condition of that place, I was hesitant to offer *praṇāma*. However, upon seeing others offering *praṇāma*, I would find a less grimy place and offer *pañcāṅga-praṇāma*

1

and quickly get up. But after repeatedly hearing about the glories of this divine place from the lotus lips of our *guru-varga*, I gradually began offering *aṣṭāṅga-praṇāma*

2

to that place, just as they did.

On appointing ācāryas

Prior to performing any significantly important activity, Guru Mahārāja would normally, in private, ask the opinions of various devotees before announcing his personal opinion on the matter. Once, Guru Mahārāja called for me and said, “My godbrother Śrī Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvāra Mahārāja has recommended that before I physically leave this world, I should appoint not one, but four disciples to succeed my position as *ācārya* after my departure, so that the activities of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha will continue smoothly. He said that among my disciples, he does not observe a single qualified person to whom everyone will listen and obey after I leave this world. He also said that he himself will appoint four *ācāryas* in his own *maṭha*. I have sought and heard the opinions of other devotees on this matter. What do you have to say on the subject?”

I replied, “I am unqualified to offer any opinion on this matter. but because you are asking, I will share my immediate thoughts, although I have not heard the opinions of those with whom you have already discussed the matter. I perceive that the society of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha will be able to properly function with only one appointed *ācārya*, at least for the foreseeable future. It seems to me that quarrels would arise if the disciples of four *ācāryas* were to reside together at one place.”

Guru Mahārāja further inquired, “If chosen, would you accept the responsibility of being the *ācārya* after I leave?”

I replied, “I have never given this issue any thought, but one thing I can assuredly say is that the compassion required of an *ācārya* has not yet manifested in my heart. An *ācārya* should be prepared to go to hell in order to rescue all *jīvas* from the clutches of *māyā*, as was the case with Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja and Śrī Vāsudeva Datta. For this reason alone, I am presently not eager to accept the responsibility of being *ācārya*.

“Also, I have heard from your lotus lips that one’s *bhakti-latā*, or creeper of devotion, progressively grows and eventually takes shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which are compared to a wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpa-vṛkṣa*). Then, under the protection of this *kalpa-vṛkṣa* alone, fruits begin to appear on the creeper. The *sādhaka* then relishes the ripened fruit of *prema*. When the fruits appear in such a quantity that they will be wasted due to the *sādhaka*’s inability to relish them all, the desire appears in his heart to distribute those fruits. Because I have not yet reached such an elevated position, I am therefore not presently very eager to undertake this service of being *ācārya*.”

*sāstra paḍāiyā sabe ei karma kare
śrotāra saḥite yama-pāṣe ḍubi’ mare*

Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Ādi-khaṇḍa 2.68)

Although a person may teach the scriptures, he and his students will be punished by Yamarāja, the king of

death, if he, [not understanding the purport of those scriptures,] performs worldly activities [or spiritual activities without understanding their import].

Having heard my words, Guru Mahārāja said, “In order to gain expertise on the subtle points of this subject, you should minutely study and deliberate upon the section in the second part of *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* that describes the symptoms of a *guru* and a disciple, as well as the relevant parts of *Śrī Vedānta-sūtra*. You, also, may one day have to accept the responsibility of serving as an *ācārya*. Previously, I too had no intention to take this responsibility. When Śrīla Prabhupāda manifested his disappearance pastime, I used to send everyone who I inspired to follow the path of *bhakti* to seek the shelter of Śrī Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja and other godbrothers of mine. However, with the passage of time, I had to accept the role of *ācārya* in order to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda. Awarding *dīkṣā* to a sincere seeker is as much a limb of *bhakti* as the act of accepting *dīkṣā*. I will not remain physically present in this world for all eternity, and so after I leave, the devotees of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha must accept the shelter of another *ācārya*. Spiritual seekers should not remain independent if they truly wish to attain true spiritual welfare.

“A lawyer named J. N. Vasu once suggested to Śrīla Prabhupāda, ‘It would be best if you were to firmly proclaim

one person as the future *ācārya* of your institution. You may mention this in your will. Such an arrangement would be best for the institution's future.'

“But Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, ‘A conditioned soul cannot determine or declare a person to be an *ācārya*. This can be done only by Bhagavān or a *mukta-puruṣa*—a liberated soul who is free from the four defects of a conditioned soul—acting on His behalf. Otherwise, conditioned souls will have many inharmonious opinions on the subject. It is therefore inappropriate for an *ācārya* or *sādhu* to be appointed by conditioned souls or through the process of voting. Just as everybody is able to see the sun the moment it rises, everyone will be able to recognize an *ācārya* when, by the supreme will of Bhagavān, he manifests himself. I fully endorse this view from the core of my heart. Still, I am apprehensive that an unfit person may misapply my statement that the *ācārya* is not selected or elected, and thus accept the post of *ācārya* on the strength of his charisma.

“ ‘That is why after assessing the prevailing situation at this time, I told my many senior disciples to form a governing body of ten to twelve members, and that Kuñja-bihārī would manage it as long as he lives.’

“After Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, a governing body consisting of twelve members was formed as per his instructions. This governing body in turn selected and appointed one individual as the *ācārya*, of whom most of the

members of that governing body later disapproved. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda left no clause in his will regarding the society's management after his departure, everyone faced a multitude of difficulties.

“Later, when a lawyer named Śrī S. N. Banerjee was consulted, he said, ‘Looking at all of your documents, it is clear that most of the activities being conducted in the *maṭha* are public in nature, and therefore the trustees do not possess any specific power. Moreover, only the appointed trustees can initiate litigation.’

“Earlier, Śrīla Prabhupāda had appointed three trustees for some other purpose: Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa, Śrī Ananta Vāsudeva Paravidyābhūṣaṇa and Śrī Paramānanda Brahmācārī. As per Śrī S. N. Banerjee's advice, Śrī Kuñja-bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Śrī Paramānanda Brahmācārī filed a joint lawsuit against Śrī Ananta Vāsudeva, which resulted in the original institution being separated into two parts. The events that followed, which further divided the Gauḍīya Maṭha into even more parts, are fully known to you. Those who were qualified separated from the original institution and began preaching independently, and even established their own societies. On the other side, those who were not so qualified or not inclined to preach independently or accept the role of *ācārya* had to face many painful situations. Śrī Bhakti Sāraṅga Gosvāmī Mahārāja's society, Śrī Gauḍīya Saṅgha, also faced many difficulties after his departure when

he did not leave any legal documents regarding the future of the society's management.

“Therefore, having taken your opinion and all I have just mentioned into consideration, I must agree that appointing one single *ācārya* will facilitate the smooth functioning of the society for at least some considerable amount of time. After consulting with my senior godbrothers, I will appoint one person as the president and *ācārya* of the society. I will be pleased if my disciples accept this decision.

“Following the example of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have constituted a governing body consisting of twelve members. The person I will appoint as *ācārya* will not be empowered to appoint the next *ācārya* on his own. Rather, he will only be able to recommend to the governing body three individuals among the society whom he feels qualified to accept the role of *ācārya*. The governing body members will then decide the next *ācārya* by holding a closed election.

“One should not think that I have created a new system, or that this system is different from that which Śrīla Prabhupāda proposed. Śrīla Prabhupāda has, as per the injunctions of revealed scriptures, instructed us to be mindful of time, place and circumstances while making decisions.

“I appoint life members in the society. If any member of the society, whether a governing body member or a life member, happens to perform some serious offence or engages in immoral conduct or an activity in defiance to the

principles of living in the *maṭha*, then the governing body will issue him a notice three times, in order to give him a sufficient opportunity to rectify his situation. It is only when such a person fails to improve his conduct that the governing body will take action, and not before. I am establishing these rules with the realization that they are imperative for the institution to function properly in the future.

“If a qualified member of the society other than the presiding *ācārya* is inspired by Bhagavān to begin the service of awarding *harināma* and *dīkṣā*, it does not mean that he will become deprived of my mercy or that he will be disobeying me. However, all the present and future consequences should be gravely considered before engaging in this service.

“Even if a qualified disciple of mine awards *harināma* and *dīkṣā* while I am still physically present, there is no fault in his doing so. The service of accepting disciples has been mentioned as one of the sixty-four limbs of *bhakti*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has designated ‘*bahu-śiṣya-karaṇa-tyāgaḥ*—renouncing the acceptance of many disciples’ as the twelfth limb of *bhakti*. We can therefore understand that it is certainly an activity of *bhakti* for a qualified person to accept a moderate amount of disciples. Thus, I will not stop anyone from accepting disciples. Some of our previous *ācāryas* accepted disciples while their *guru* was physically present. For example, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī had accepted

disciples during the presence of his *gurudeva*, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī. Our most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda, also, awarded *harināma* and *dīkṣā-mantras* to some devotees while both his spiritual masters, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, were still physically present in this world. The principles of the spiritual world are highly exalted, grave and subtle in nature. If narrow-minded people do not allow such principles to be implemented, then the result will be utter chaos.”

The *ācārya* is *niṣpakṣa* (impartial) and *nirpekṣa* (free of expectations), and his main symptoms are *nirbhīkatā* (fearlessness) and *udāratā* (benevolence). He is fearless, independent and follows the teachings of the scriptures.

An astonishing samādhi pastime

As soon as my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Lalita Giri Mahārāja heard that Guru Mahārāja had entered *nitya-līlā*, he immediately set off for Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. When he arrived, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja asked him to offer *ārati* and *bhoga* to Guru Mahārāja. When Śrī Giri Mahārāja offered flowers at Guru Mahārāja’s lotus feet, he touched Guru Mahārāja’s feet and said, “The body of Guru Mahārāja has not turned cold, nor has his bodily complexion paled. I am afraid we may be offering him *samādhi* while he is still present.” In reality, this was not the case; Guru Mahārāja’s body simply never became cold.

Manifesting his disappearance pastime

At the time Guru Mahārāja manifested his sickness pastime two months prior to his disappearance pastime, he dictated a letter for me to my godbrother Śrī Balabhadra Brahmācārī, who had the letter signed by Guru Mahārāja himself. In the letter, Guru Mahārāja wrote, “I did not have even the slightest desire to be taken to the hospital, but due to the persistent desire of a few devotees, I was compelled to have myself admitted. They want to see what can be done to improve my health, and for their sake, I will cooperate with their wishes.”

Sometime later, I received a letter from my senior godbrother (*satīrtha*) Śrī Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja in which he had written, “Gurudeva is constantly remembering you. It would be best if you could hand over the responsibility of managing the construction of the Purī *maṭha* to someone else and come to Kolkata immediately.”

As soon as I received the letter, I told my godbrother Śrī Gaurāṅga-prasāda Prabhu, “Go to the railway station and purchase a ticket to Kolkata for me. There is no need to confirm a reservation, and it does not matter for which train the ticket is made.”

When I reached Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Kolkata, my godsister Śrīmatī Kamala Ghoṣa immediately started crying upon seeing me and said, “Please bring Guru Mahārāja from the hospital as soon as possible.”

When I arrived at the hospital, my godbrother Śrī Bhakti Sundara Nṛsimha Mahārāja was engaged in Guru Mahārāja’s service. Seeing that I had come empty-handed, Guru Mahārāja asked, “Have you brought your bedding?”

“What is the need for bedding?” I replied. “If it is required, I will have it brought from the *maṭha*.”

Guru Mahārāja said, “Do not sleep on the hospital beds. They are used by many people. By sleeping on someone else’s bed, you will obtain their qualities, and their consciousness will make a place in your heart. So please, do not sleep on anyone else’s bed. If you are unable to get your own bedding, then you should first spread your upper cloth (*uttarīya*) on their bed before sleeping on it.”

Shortly after, Guru Mahārāja sent Śrī Nṛsimha Mahārāja to collect donations for an upcoming annual festival at the Kolkata *maṭha*, and kept me with him at the hospital as his *sevaka*. After a few days in the hospital, the doctor told me, “It would be better for your Guru Mahārāja if you were to take him back to the *maṭha*.” After Guru Mahārāja was discharged from the hospital, I brought him to the Kolkata *maṭha*. Having heard Guru Mahārāja was performing a sickness pastime, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Vana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja visited him and stayed in the *maṭha* with us.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja performed continuous *kīrtana* for the pleasure of Guru Mahārāja.

When Guru Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastime, he took shelter of the date of Śukla Pratipadā, Tuesday, 27 February, 1979, the disappearance day of *vaiṣṇava-sārvabhauma* Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and Śrī Rasikānanda Prabhu. With a sentiment similar to that of Haridāsa Ṭhākura during his last days, Guru Mahārāja entered *nitya-līlā* while uttering: “*Aneka nācāilo prabhu, rakhaho nācana*—You have made me dance time and again, now please stop.”

Ignoring faults and nourishing good qualities

Due to my ignorance during my initial days in the *maṭha* as a fulltime *brahmacari*, I unknowingly compelled my most worshipful *gurupāda-padma* to go out of his way to accommodate and tolerate the many heart-binding knots within my heart. I ignorantly engaged he who is worthy of my service in serving me. Because Guru Mahārāja is a limitless reservoir of parental affection and compassion, he nurtured me as his own child and engaged me in his service. Through this, he exemplified the role of an *adoṣa-darśī*, or one who ignores the faults of others. Observing the tiniest, most miniscule amount of good qualities in me, he nourished those qualities and thereby inspired me to move forward on the

path of *bhakti*.

Following the principle “*bhṛtyasya paśyati gurūn api nāparādhān*—do not see the offences of the *sevaka*,” Guru Mahārāja very compassionately allowed such a completely unqualified and offensive person as me to render all types of services, without restriction. Moreover, he accepted service from me even during the final days of his physical presence in this world, and also accepted my service of putting him in *samādhi* with my own hands under the guidance of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Promoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

1 Obeisances in which five parts of the body touch the ground.

2 Prostrated obeisances in which eight parts of the body touch the ground.

Appendix

The Nectarean Joy of Meeting While in Separation

**By Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara
Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

My heart has become spontaneously stricken with deep grief due to being deprived of the direct association and audience of my most beloved friend and the most prominent of my fellow godbrothers, Śrīpāda Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja, who was the foremost associate of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the recipient of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s special affection. Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja was the divine personification of extraordinary service, or, to quote Śrīla Prabhupāda, “The foremost servant, whose energy is volcanic.” It is only because of his adamant, most painstaking and sincere efforts, that he could overcome numerous obstacles and succeed in providing us all with this fortunate opportunity to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda by honoring his

appearance day in this most transcendently sacred temple, the very site of Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance in this world. Although Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja remains far away from the vision of ordinary persons, he continues to provide his association in form of this service, unbeknownst to such externally-minded individuals.

Being deprived of his [direct] association, my heart is stricken with grief. Yet, during today's great ceremonial festivities, I am gradually able to recognize his presence in the great efforts and services being rendered by his most qualified and beloved followers today, and am thus relishing the indescribable, nectarean joy of meeting, while [remaining immersed] in [the experience of] separation. For [this experience,] I feel deeply grateful.

[Excerpts from an article published in *Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī*: February 1980.]

The Staunch Follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Principles

**By Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana
Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

Although Śrīpada Mādhava Mahārāja was my younger god-brother, I observed that he was adorned with all transcendental qualities. I accepted the renounced order of

life in 1924. At that time, Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja was a *brahmacārī*. Our *gurudeva* had given him the name Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmacārī. India at that time was under British rule, and so the method of preaching was somewhat different. In fact, after the disappearance of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His associates like the Six Gosvāmīs, Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura, Śrī Syamānanda Prabhu, Śrī Śrīnivāsa Ācārya and all other prominent ācāryas, the Vaiṣṇava world faced an era full of darkness. During that period, my *gurudeva*, an eternally realized associate of the Supreme Lord, the divine personality Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, appeared in this world to establish the principles of *dharma* and to reveal to the whole world the true identity of pure devotional service as practiced and preached by Śrīman Mahāprabhu, an impossible task for common persons.

In His Navadvīpa pastimes, Śrīman Mahāprabhu manifested His pastime of delivering the living entities by propagating *harināma-saṅkīrtana-dharma*, the universal activity prescribed for this age of Kali-yuga. Moreover, He appeared and distributed to everyone something that was never offered in any previous age by anyone: His very own mood of devotional service and topmost possession: the most elevated, brilliant *madhura-prema*, or devotional service in the mood of conjugal love. Due to the influence of this age of quarrel, the sweetness of *vraja-prema* described by Śrīman

Mahāprabhu and the Gosvāmīs was being presented to society in a distorted manner by various concocted religious institutions. One Vaiṣṇava has identified thirteen of such institutions, or *apasampradāyas*, as follows:

*āula, bāula, kartābhajā, neḍā, daraveśa, sāt
sahajiyā, sakhībhekī, smārta, jāta-gosāt*

*ativādī, cūḍādhārī, gaurāṅga-nāgarī
totā kahe ei terara saṅga nāhi kari*

At the time, the educated community considered *vaiṣṇava-dharma* to belong to the uneducated and immoral. Amid such a dark state of affairs, Śrīla Prabhupāda fearlessly spoke the real truth of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Although he faced great difficulties and impediments, he boldly refuted all the prevalent misconceptions about the principles of pure devotional service and established in this world the glories of pure *bhakti* as practiced and preached by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Such an act cannot be accomplished by ordinary persons with ordinary power. By transmitting power in his disciples, Śrīla Prabhupāda preaches throughout the whole world the unprecedented glories of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's pure *prema-dharma*. I was introduced to Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja while engaged in such preaching service. Upon seeing Śrīpāda Mādhava Mahārāja's unshakable passion and limitless capability for

preaching the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, I felt proud to have him as my godbrother. Unprecedented was the way he boldly and fearlessly preached the truth through his ever-smiling face, his spotless character, his readiness to sacrifice his own life for the service of *guru* and his adopting of the most ideal life principles without deviating so much as an inch from the principles of *bhakti* as taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

No one can sever the eternal relationship we have with Śrīla Prabhupāda as his disciples. The mutual relationship between godbrothers is eternal, because ultimately, our goal is to always remain under the shelter of the lotus feet of śrī *gurudeva*. I request the disciples of Śrīpada Mādhava Mahārāja to relinquish all duplicity and follow the ideal principles of their *gurudeva*. Śrī Bhagavān never pardons a hypocritical person, and there is no place for duplicity or violence in the kingdom of *prema*. It is only when we sincerely honor and respect the words of śrī *gurudeva* and preach by imbibing his instructions in our own conduct that we are able to receive his blessings.

[Excerpt from an article published in *Śrī Caitanya-vāñī*:
February 1979.]

The Founder-ācārya of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha Enters

Nitya-līlā

By Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī
Gosvāmī Mahārāja

At nine o'clock in the morning on Śukla Pratipadā *tithi*, the sixteenth day of the month of Govinda, 492, according to the Gaurābda calendar (Tuesday 27 February, 1979, according to the Gregorian calendar) on the auspicious disappearance day of *vaiṣṇava-sarvābhauma* Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīla Rasikānanda-deva Gosvāmī, the Founder and President-*ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha—an institution with branches across the country—the most respected *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, concluded his pastimes in this world while in his *bhajana-kuṭīra* in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, situated at 35, Satish Mukherjee Road in South Kolkata, amidst the tumultuous chanting of the holy names of Bhagavān. He entered into the third *yāma*, or forenoon pastimes, of the *aṣṭa-kāliya-nitya-līlā* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda Gopīnātha Madana-mohana Nayanānātha with a desire to meet Śrī Śyāmasundara at Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa at noon. Identifying himself as the servant of Śrī Varṣabhanāvī-dayita dāsa, he has most eagerly entered into the eternal service of his *gurudeva*. Although it is a matter of great joy that he has attained the eternal service of his most

worshipful Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda-jī in Their transcendental abode, Śrī Goloka Vṛndāvana, which is situated far beyond this illusory material world, the pain and spiritual loss felt in the hearts of his beloved associates and followers due to his physical absence is extremely unbearable. His godbrothers, his countless disciples—both ladies and men—and all the ladies and the gentlemen who were attracted to his divine qualities, today realizing themselves to be completely helpless and without a shelter, cry bitterly.

His most enchanting, divine lotus face; his peaceful, soft and pleasing bright complexion, which sparkled like gold; and his extremely soft body, which was just like a lotus, befit his unlimitedly compassionate heart, which was completely full of egalitarian kindness for all. His divinely benevolent character was completely devoid of the concept of ‘mine and yours.’ He truly embodied the phrase “*vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*—the world is one family.” His sweet voice, which sounded as if it were submerged in honey, was ripe with true love and affection. He was insurmountably passionate in preaching the principles of pure devotional service to Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga, and his efforts to that end were untiring. He was unceasingly affectionate to his fellow godbrothers, and he possessed a strong parental love for his disciples.

Śrī Mahārāja’s expertise in refuting misconceptions about the path of *bhakti* was extraordinary, as was his ability

to establish the actual principles of *bhakti*, which are based on the authentic scriptures. He energetically excavated the lost places of pilgrimage, propagated the importance of following Vaiṣṇava etiquette, manifested the service of deities by establishing many *maṭhas*, yearly organized Śrī Navadvīpa *parikramā* and triennially organized Śrī Vraja-*maṇḍala parikramā*. He was capable of drawing out the jewel-like essence of any subject by churning the ocean of the scriptures, and what is more, he virtuously preached those teachings by imbibing them in his personal conduct. His attachment to *bhagavad-bhajana* was astonishing. His tolerance and humility were exemplary; he considered himself as worthless, even though he possessed the most desirable qualities in terms of family background, conduct, knowledge and intelligence. Despite possessing these qualities, he was completely devoid of pride. He was enthusiastic to distribute the *prema-dharma* of Śrī Caitanya-deva everywhere, without considering the caste or creed of those to whom he was distributing it. He desired to assist every living entity in attaining his or her eternal spiritual welfare. He was completely devoid of any desire for worldly gain, recognition or fame. He possessed sincere faith in rendering service to Śrī Hari, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. These are but a few of his countless divine qualities. As these qualities appear one by one in the consciousness of the devotees [who now feel themselves bereft of his

association], the agony of their separation from him is exponentially increased in the core of their hearts.

The President and *ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha appeared in this world in 1903 on Utthāna Ekādaśī in the Kāñcanapāḍā village of the Faridapūra district of Bangladesh. His father, the late Śrī Niśikānta Bāndhopādhyāya, a renowned personality in that province, named him Śrī Heramba-kumāra Bāndhopādhyāya. Śrīla Ācāryadeva's mother's name was Śrīmatī Śaivālīnī devī. Although his father was a resident of Bharākara village in Dhākā, Śrīla Ācāryadeva was born at his maternal ancestral place, the aforementioned village of Kāñcanapāḍa. After his birth, he spent the next four years in Faridapūra with his father. When Śrī Ācāryadeva lost his father in his childhood, he returned to Kañcanapāḍā, and it was there that he spent his childhood and attended school.

From his very childhood, he exhibited great faith in spiritual activities. His sacred thread ceremony was conducted at the age of seven. From then onwards, as per the instructions of his religiously devout mother, he would regularly study the scriptures like *Śrī Mahābhārata*, *Śrī Rāmāyaṇa*, *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and others. Because his mother regularly recited *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* to him, he memorized it in its entirety, and his belief that its subject matter is the complete real truth became firm and unflinching.

Since his early childhood, he was habituated to lead a

firmly disciplined life. He was widely renowned in the community as a *naiṣṭhika-brahmacārī*, or a committed, lifelong celibate. By the effect of the matchless sweetness of his divine body—which was tall, brightly complexioned, flawlessly beautiful, wonderfully well-formed and majestically radiant—and his kind behavior, he held leading positions in various fields of activity since his time as a student. His desirable qualities and competence were readily visible when he took part in sports and acted in amateur plays based on spiritual subjects. He was always a frontrunner when he participated in social service activities. For example, he helped poor students by establishing a library and also took part in the nation's freedom movement.

His deep faith and proficiency in spiritual subjects was evident, even in his childhood. Everybody was amazed to observe his acute intelligence during his life as a student. Later in his youth, after studying various scriptures, including Vedānta, he studied the spiritual literature related to *bhakti*, namely *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. As he became increasingly attracted to the highly sound principles of *vaiṣṇava-dharma*, he realized that since these scriptures are topmost, it is most sensible to follow them while under the guidance of a true spiritual master and to dedicate one's life to preaching their message.

During his youth, his renunciation of worldly objects became quite pronounced. He renounced the material world

and first went to Haridvāra, and later to the Himālayas in order to perform penances. There, inside a cave, after he had been absorbed in meditating on the Supreme Lord for some days according to a severely austere procedure, he suddenly received a divine order to return to Bengal. After doing so, he met *om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvātī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda*, the Founder-*ācārya* of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha and other Gauḍīya Maṭha branches, and within a short time accepted the shelter of his lotus feet. From then on, he followed and extensively preached the teachings of pure *prema-bhakti* as practiced and taught by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. By virtue of his unflinching, single-pointed devotion to the lotus feet of his *gurudeva* and the mercy he received from him, he quickly became renowned as a glorious preacher who was among the associates of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who gave him the name Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmācārī. Later, when he accepted the renounced order of life, he became known as *parivrājakācārya tridaṇḍi-svāmī Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja*. He had accepted the mood of one in the renounced order during his steadfast *brahmācārya*.

By the divine influence of his wonderfully magnanimous and most ideal conduct, and by the effect of listening to his highly potent *hari-kathā*, thousands of people, both men and women, from all over the country—from east to west, north to south—became attracted to Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *prema-*

dharma and accepted initiation into *gauḍīya vaiṣṇava-dharma*, became established in following the etiquette of devotional service and are now performing *sādhana-bhajana*. The manner in which Śrīla Ācāryadeva Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Mahārāja established magnificent preaching centers—which included non-profit and volunteer-based Sanskrit Educational institutions, libraries to facilitate debates on comparative religion, primary and higher secondary schools, charitable hospitals and many other types of organizations—in each region of the country—Śrī Vṛndāvana in the north, Guwahati in the east, Chandigarh in the west and Hyderabad in the south and many other *maṭhas* at different locations—was simply supernatural and divine, as was the way in which, within a single lifetime, he laboriously and passionately preached to everyone the *prema-dharma* practiced and preached by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, irrespective of the caste and creed. He extensively preached to both the highest and the lowest communities of society, to the rich and the poor alike. As a result, countless men and women from different castes all over the country have been initiated into Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *prema-dharma* and have become established in following *vaiṣṇava* etiquette. Above all, his most extraordinary and unique contribution to the larger Śrī Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community is his untiring twelve-year effort to acquire and manifest the glories of the

divine appearance place of *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda*, the Founder-*ācārya* of the many branches of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, in Śrī Purī-dhāma.

My *gurudeva*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, is glorified by the words “*śrī-gaura-karuṇā-śakti-vigrahāya namo 'stu te*—offer heartfelt obeisances to the embodiment of Śrī Gaurasundara’s mercy potency.” As a result of the mercy of that *śrī gurudeva*, his dearest associate, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, has fulfilled his heartfelt desire by preaching throughout the world the very name, form, qualities and pastimes he (Śrīla Prabhupāda) previously glorified. Now, being again drawn in by that very mercy, Śrī Mādhava Mahārāja has accepted the eternal shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s divine lotus feet, which bestow freedom from sorrow and fear and are the source of eternity. It is for this reason alone that Śrī Kavirāja Gosvāmī has boldly proclaimed in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 7.11)*, “*kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana*—one can not propagate *nāma-saṅkīrtana* without being empowered by Kṛṣṇa.” Just as Śrīman Mahāprabhu enriched His dearest associate—that is, my *gurudeva*, Śrīla Prabhupāda—by bestowing upon him His own effulgent form and prized quality of magnanimity before sending him to this material world to preach the glories of the Lord’s holy names and service, Śrīla Prabhupāda similarly sent his dearest

associate, Śrī Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Prabhu, into this material world after bestowing upon him his own effulgent form and prized qualities and infusing him with his limitless power of mercy (*kṛpā-śakti*). As a consequence of receiving this power of *śrī gurudeva*'s mercy, he quickly established skyscraper-like temples and *maṭhas* in almost every state in the vast expanse of this country, whose borders are formed by the Himālayas in the north and the ocean in the south. In this way, he instituted the service of the deities of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Gāndharvikā-Giridhārī and preached the glories of *śrī harināma mahā-mantra*, which is adorned with thirty-two syllables. After accomplishing these services here in this world, he has again returned to serve the lotus feet of his *gurudeva*.

All the associates of Śrīman Mahāprabhu—like Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī and others—have entered into the Lord's eternal pastimes after fulfilling Śrīman Mahāprabhu's most cherished desires, and subsequently, all other *guru-vargas* who came in their disciplic succession have, under the guidance of *śrī gurudeva*, attained the eternal shelter of *śrī guru*'s lotus feet and thereby gained the qualification to render service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Yugala in their amorous pastimes after fulfilling the most cherished desires of their respective *guru-vargas*. We, too, should similarly follow with our body, mind and words the lotus footsteps—

that is, the teachings and conduct—of all such exalted personalities. Śrīman Mahāprabhu offered the garland hanging from His own neck to his followers and instructed them to engage in *kīrtana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s names, which are our most cherished possession:

*āpana galāra mālā sabākāre diyā
ājñā kare prabhu sabe—kṛṣṇa gāo giyā*

*bôlô kṛṣṇa, bhajô kṛṣṇa, gāo kṛṣṇa-nāma
kṛṣṇa binu keha kichu nā bhābihô āna*

*jadi āmā’-prati sneha thāke sabākāra
tabe kṛṣṇa-vyatirikta nā gāibe āra*

*Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 28.25-
27)*

Offering His own garland to everyone, Śrī Gaurahari advised, “Sing ‘Kṛṣṇa!’ Speak about Kṛṣṇa, serve Kṛṣṇa and invoke His name. Know for certain that there is nothing other than Kṛṣṇa. If you have affection for Me, then sing only of Kṛṣṇa, and no one else.”

Therefore, our duty after his disappearance is to fulfill His most cherished desire by performing that service that is dearest to him. In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.109)*, Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written:

Śrī Jagadānanda Paṇḍita has said:

*'gorāra āmi, gorāra āmi' mukhe balile nāhi cale
gorāra ācāra, gorāra vicāra laile phala phale*

Prema-vivarta (8.6)

Simply saying "I am Gaura's! I am Gaura's!" does not suffice. The fruit is only attained when one follows Gaura's conduct and conceptions.

Therefore, we must thoroughly follow Śrīman Mahāprabhu's teachings and conduct by body, mind and soul.

In accordance with the principle stated in *Raghu-vamśa* (14.46), "*ājñā gurūṇām hyavicāraṇīya*—the order of the spiritual master must be obeyed without consideration," which has been quoted in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 10.145), the most distinguished way for a disciple to express his or her love for *śrī guru* is to take a vow to endeavor to fulfill *śrī gurudeva's* most cherished desire by mind, body and words.

Just before completing his manifest pastimes in this world, my most worshipful Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed his desire to hear two *bhajanas*: *Tuhū dayā-sāgara*, which is Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's translation of the second verse of Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*, and *Śrī-rūpa-mañjarī-pada*, a *kīrtana* from Śrī Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's *Prārthanā*. In this way, he very precisely revealed our life's only duty. With a great sense of grief in our heart that arises from deep-rooted feelings of separation from *śrī gurudeva*,

we must weep and vow to fulfil his most cherished desires. Showing a complete disregard toward fulfilling *śrī gurudeva's* desires on account of the agony of separation can never be considered a proper example of loving devotion.

It is only because of our disinclination towards rendering service that Śrī Ācāryadeva manifested his sickness pastimes. For many years prior to his leaving this world, he enacted the pastime of suffering from a heart ailment. Both his disciples and his highly expert doctors had repeatedly advised him to take rest, but no one among them was able to restrain him, the volcano of *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* who was always full of volcanic energy. He would say, “I have taken birth as a mortal human, and will thus one day have to face death. It would therefore be better to use my last breath to perform *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has described: ‘*bhajite bhajite, samaya āsile, e deha chāḍiyā dibô*—absorbed in *bhajana*, when the time arrives, I shall readily give up this body.’ ” Although he was personally never in favor of consulting a doctor or *kavirāja* (an Ayurvedic physician), he was unable to deny the persistent requests of his disciples. Thus, the doctor would be called every so often to administer medicines according to his prescription. Those who served Śrī Mahārāja did so to the best of their abilities, and there was no margin for error in their service. For two months, devotees remained awake both day and night and took turns lovingly serving him with the utmost

sincerity. In this way, they remained engaged in the service of their *gurudeva*. However:

*kṛpā kôri' kṛṣṇa more diyāchilā saṅga
svatantra kṛṣṇera icchā—kailā saṅga-bhaṅga
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 11.94)*

Kṛṣṇa mercifully gave Me the association of a Vaiṣṇava. But because He is independent in His desires, He has now severed that association.

His prominent disciple servitors—namely *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vallabha Tīrtha Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Lalita Giri Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Sundara Nṛsimha Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Bhūṣaṇa Bhāgavata Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Prasāda Purī Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Vaibhava Araṇya Mahārāja, Śrī Maṅgala-nīlaya Brahmācārī, Śrī Pareśānubhava Brahmācārī, Śrī Madana-gopāla dāsa Brahmācārī, Śrī Nityānanda dāsa Brahmācārī, Śrī Nṛtya-gopāla dāsa Brahmācārī and others—are fortunate to have tirelessly rendered service to their *gurudeva* day and night. While he manifested his sickness pastimes, devotees arranged for *nāma-saṅkīrtana* and the recitation of various scriptures—like *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gīta* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—and devotional prayers to be continuously performed in both the *maṭha* and hospital. During that time, non-stop continuous *nāma-saṅkīrtana* lasting for three days

and three nights was sometimes performed in the *maṭha*. From the time he entered the *nitya-līlā* of the eternal abode of Vraja at nine o'clock in the morning of 27 February, 1979, until the time his divine body was offered *samādhi* in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, the loud congregational chanting of the divine holy names continued on. By great fortune, the presence of the *nāma-bhajanānandī* Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja ensured that all services were smoothly accomplished and were accompanied by the loud chanting of the holy names. Śrī Bhāgavata dāsa Brahmācārī and many others accompanied Śrī Bābājī Mahārāja in the *nāma-kīrtana*.

At four o'clock in the evening on 27 February, 1979, *pūjyapāda* Mahārājaśrī was brought out of his room on his bed, taken into his dear temple hall, the *saṅkīrtana-bhavana*, and was placed in full view of his eternally worshipful life and soul, Śrī Śrī Guru-Gauraṅga-Rādhā-Nayananātha-jiu. Countless devotees, both men and women, offered him flowers and garlands while continuously singing his glories as streams of tears poured forth from their eyes—an extremely heartwarming scene. All *pūjyapāda* Mahārājaśrī's fellow godbrothers—namely myself, Śrīmad Bhakti Suhr̥d Bodhāyana Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī, Śrīpāda Jagamohana Brahmācārī, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and others—along with all of their disciples from all *āśramas*—*sannyāsīs*, *brahmācārīs*, *grhasthas* and

vānaprashthas—tearfully offered flowers and garlands to his divine body. He was then offered Śrī Bhagavān’s flower garland and sandalwood paste remnants, and *tulasī* leaves from the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord and *mahāprasāda* were placed in his mouth. His fully decorated bed and his divine body, which had been ornamented with fragrant flowers and garlands, were placed upon a large truck that had also been decorated with beautiful leaves, buds and flowers. The members of the *saṅkīrtana* party sat nearby and loudly chanted the holy names, accompanied by *mrdanga*, *karatālas* and other instruments. The prominent singer was, again, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇadasa Babaji Mahārāja.

Many devotees respectfully followed Śrī Mahārāja by bus during his journey to Śrīdhama Mayapura. At about eleven o’clock at night, Śrī Mahārāja and the accompanying devotees reached the parent branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, situated at Īsodyāna in Śrīdhama Māyāpura. Bitterly crying, the residents of the *maṭha* there offered their heartfelt welcome to Śrī Mahārāja. His divine body, along with his bed, was respectfully placed in the large temple hall, a place that was very dear to him. The devotees loudly cried and offered prayers at his lotus feet while *saṅkīrtana* was continuously performed. After careful deliberation and consulting prominent Vaiṣṇavas, Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Bhūṣaṇa Bhāgavata Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Lalita Giri Mahārāja, Śrīpāda

Jagamohana dāsa Brahmācārī, Śrīpāda Kṛṣṇa-keśava Brahmācārī and other Vaiṣṇavas and I selected a place north of the deities' room and past a *bakula* tree as the place for establishing Śrī Mahārāja's *samādhi* in the *maṭha*. With the site established, Śrī Bhāgavata dāsa Brahmācārī and other devotees began digging the *samādhi* pit, which measured seven-and-a-half feet in height and was as wide as the height of an average man on all four sides. At the bottom of the *samādhi* pit, Śrī Mahārāja's seat was established to face the eastern direction.

The digging of the *samādhi* pit was completed at approximately two o'clock in the morning. At that time, cow *ghee* was applied to Śrī Mahārāja's divine body while I recited Vedic hymns. During the auspicious recitation of those hymns, his divine body was bathed with water of the most worshipful Śrī Gaṅgā. After his body was wiped dry, he was dressed in a new set of clothes and decorated with *tilaka* in twelve places. I then wrote the *samādhi-mantras* from *Saṁskāra-dipikā* on the chest of Śrī Mahārāja using mud from Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Afterward, Śrī Mahārāja was taken from the temple hall to the *samādhi* pit amidst the loud chanting of *kīrtana*. As someone called out the *jaya-dhvani*, Śrī Mahārāja was lowered into the *samādhi* pit and seated on a new *āsana* facing east. After Śrīmad Bhakti Lalita Giri Mahārāja worshipped Śrī Mahārāja using sixteen types of paraphernalia and offered him fruits, roots and sweets as

bhoga, he performed *āratī*. After all the present devotees offered flowers to the lotus feet of Śrī Mahārāja, his body, which had been fixed in an upright sitting position, was dressed in new saffron cloth and then completely covered with salt and earth. While devotees offered earth, an indicating marker was kept to identify the exact place of his forehead. Once the earth enveloped the entirety of his body, a potted *tulasi* plant was placed above the *samādhi* and decorated with flower garlands from all sides. The devotees present then performed *parikramā* of the *samādhi* accompanied by a *mahā-saṅkīrtana*. All this took place from three o'clock to five o'clock in the morning.

On the morning of 28 February, 1979, immediately after the rituals of Śrī Mahārāja's *samādhi* ceremony were completed, I narrated the pastime of Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura's departure from this world as it is described in the Eleventh Chapter of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta's Antya-līlā*. *Kīrtana* was performed before and after his lecture. Śrīla Mahārāja's appearance day happens to be on Utthāna Ekādaśī, the same day as the disappearance day of my *parama-gurudeva*, Śrīla Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja. It was on the disappearance day of my *parameṣṭhī-gurudeva* (great-grand spiritual master), Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, that *pūjyapāda* Śrīla Mahārāja manifested his disappearance pastime. Śrīla Rasikānanda Prabhu, also, disappeared on this day.

The message of Śrīla Mahārāja's disappearance pastime has been and continues to be widely announced everywhere throughout the country by telegram, telephone, All India Radio and daily newspapers. Condolence messages are being received from all over. News of Śrīla Mahārāja-jī's disappearance was published in *Yugāntara* on 28 February and in the 1 March editions of *Ānanda Bāzār Patrikā* and *Basumati*.

On 27 February, my fellow godbrothers *pūjyapāda tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Hṛdaya Vana Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhāntī Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Kankana Tapasvī Mahārāja and Śrīmad Bhakti Viveka Bodhāyana Mahārāja, and Śrīmad Bhakti Saudha Āśrama Mahārāja arrived at the Kolkata *maṭha* to offer their condolences, while Śrīpāda Bhakti Kusuma Śramaṇa Mahārāja and Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Yati Mahārāja visited Śrīdhāma Māyāpura Maṭha the following day, on 28 February, to express their sympathies. The disciples of Śrīpāda Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Yāyāvāra Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Madhusūdana Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Bhakti Prāpana Dāmodara Mahārāja, the servitors of Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha and many others have visited the Māyāpura branch of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha to express their condolences.

The disappearance festival of the President and *ācārya*

of the original Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha at Īśodyāna, Śrīdhāma Māyāpura was held at that very *maṭha* on Thursday 1 March, 1979. The most prominent of Śrī Mahārāja's servants—*tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Prasāda Āśrama Mahārāja, Śrīmad Bhakti Suhr̥t Dāmodara Mahārāja and Śrī Maṅgala-nīlaya Brahmācārī—addressed the gathering by narrating his transcendental life and qualities. The eleven presiding *ācāryas* of ISKCON were also present, and through their speeches, they offered their heartfelt devotional offerings to Śrī Mahārāja's lotus feet. *Pūjyapāda* Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, through various *kīrtanas* based on the mood of separation, further nourished the somber mood of the assembly. All the assembled devotees were then served *mahaprasāda* to their satisfaction.

[Excerpts from an article published in *Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī: February 1979.*]

About Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja is one of the foremost disciples of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, a dear and powerful commander in the army of Śrīla Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. During his time in the *maṭha*, he received not only the personal association of his *gurudeva* and the chance to intimately serve him, but also the opportunity to intimately serve many disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. As a result of this service, he received their affection and profuse blessings to realize the deep truths of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*.

Through the example of his flawless conduct, Śrīla Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja teaches that non-sectarianism and glorifying and serving the Vaiṣṇavas are the greatest assets for those who wish to advance in spiritual life, and that serving and glorifying the Vaiṣṇavas is more important than serving and glorifying the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is especially known for his encyclopedic knowledge of Gauḍīya Maṭha history and his firm faith in *vaiṣṇava-sevā*. Being a well-respected, stalwart Vaiṣṇava, his instructions and guidance are sought after by common and advanced Vaiṣṇavas alike.