

All glory to Sri Guru and Gauranga

Spiritual Successors Of The Six Goswamis

By the Grace of the Founder-President-Acharya
Of Nabadwip Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math
Ananta sri vibhusita Nitya-lila-pravistha
Om Vishnupada Paramahamsa Parivrajakachary kula chudamani
Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Dev Goswami Maharaj

Under the Divine Guidance and Inspiration Graciously Granted by His Most
Beloved Attendent and Authorized Successor
Om Vishnupada Paramahamsa Parivrajakacharya Astottara-sata Sri
Srimad Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev Goswami Maharaj

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Vande Rupa Sanatana

*krsnotkirtana-gana-nartana-parau premamrtambho-nidhi
dhiradhira-janapriyau priya-karau nirmatsarau pujitau
sri-caitanya-krpa-bharau bhuvi bhuvo bhavahantarakau
vande rupa-sanatanau raghu-yugau sri-jiva-gopalakau*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Goswamis, namely Sri Rupa Goswami, Sri Sanatana Goswami, Sri Raghunatha Bhatta Goswami, Sri Raghunatha dasa Goswami, Sri Jiva Goswami and Sri Gopala Bhatta Goswami, who are always engaged in chanting the holy name of Krishna and dancing. They are just like the ocean of love of God, and they are popular both with the gentle and with the ruffians because they are not envious of anyone. Whatever they do they are all-pleasing to everyone, and they are fully blessed by Lord Chaitanya. Thus they are engaged in missionary activities meant to deliver all the conditioned souls in the material universe.

- Sri Sri Sad-Gosvami-astaka, verse 1, by Srinivas Acharya

Srinivas Acharya was the son of Gangadhara Bhattacharya, a class friend of Nimai Pandita. His home was in the Nadia district of West Bengal.

Gangadhara was from a brahmin family and a pandit. He married at Yajigram near Katwa. One day, when Gangadhara Bhattacharya was going home from his father-in-law's house he heard that Nimai Pandit had come to Katwa to take sannyas, renouncing family life to become a monk. Gangadhara knew Nimai Pandit as a great scholar and a charming figure in all respects, so he went to see what was happening.

A sannyasi of the Shankara school, Keshava Bharati, had a big ashram there in Katwa. People had gathered to see Mahaprabhu and they were behaving like mad people, crying and wailing. Gangadhara Bhattacharya came and watched. He thought, "Nimai Pandit is taking sannyas? What is this? Nimai Pandit is an inconceivable scholar and he has a very beautiful form. Nimai Pandit has an all-capturing, commanding presence and he has come to take sannyas! We cannot

conceive of life in Nabadwip without him! How will his mother feel? He is even leaving his young wife to take sannyas. This is shocking!” With this feeling he came to see the sannyas ceremony of Nimai Pandit.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

Gangadhara Bhattacharya was struck dumb to find what was going on there. There were two parties. One party, under the direction of Mahaprabhu, was requesting Keshava Bharati to do the function as soon as possible. Another party stood there saying “No! This young boy can never be given such a sannyas life! You Bharati, we won't allow you to give sannyas to this boy. You have come to spoil our society. It can never occur!” In this way it went on. Gangadhara was watching, and finally Mahaprabhu's will prevailed. Everything subsided in the afternoon and the sannyas ceremony began. Then finally, it was done.

Mahaprabhu told Bharati “I have got this mantram of sannyas in a dream. Please see whether it is the real mantram or not.” He spoke it into the ear of Bharati. Bharati said, “Yes it is all right. This is it. Take it.” In his way he took sannyas. And when it was time to give the sannyas name Keshava Bharati was thinking, “What name should be given?” At that time there was some sound from above: “Sri Krishna Chaitanya!” Bharati took that name and the name was given to our Lord. Gangadhara had waited so much, so long, so far, to see all of this. After this Mahaprabhu started towards Vrindaban chanting the name of Krishna and the sloka of Bhagavatam of the tridandi bhiksu: *evam samasthaya paratma nishta upasidham purva tamai mahadbhir aham tarisyami duranta param* (I shall cross over the ocean of nescience and become firmly fixed in the service of Lord Mukunda.)

Mahaprabhu went off towards Vrindaban and Gangadhara returned to his own village half-mad, always saying, “Sri Krishna Chaitanya”. Whenever anyone would say anything to him he would reply, “Sri Krishna Chaitanya.” No other word would come out of his lips. Only “Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Chaitanya, Chaitanya.” So a name was given by the public - he was known as Chaitanya das from that time. Of course, he recovered somewhat after some time.

When Mahaprabhu was in Puri, Gangadhara went to see him along with his wife. Mahaprabhu told him, “You have got a very good son as a devotee and his name will be Srinivas”. So when Gangadhara came back to his home Srinivas was born in his house. Srinivas was very beautiful and a born scholar. His father Gangadhara left home when Srinivas was very young.

Sri Srinivas Acharya

Automatically Sri Chaitanyadeva and Nityananda came in the mind of Srinivas and their lila was surcharged within him. He had no other tendency. When he was about fifteen, he came to Nabadwip to see the birthplace of Sri Gauranga. He sat near the house of Mahaprabhu, at the bathing ghat on the banks of the Ganges. He was idly sitting there, a boy of fifteen.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

He did not know anything, or even himself: he doesn't know himself. In this way, Vishnupriya devi saw him and had pity. She took the boy to her home and fed that boy.

Srinivas went to meet Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in Puri. But after going about three fourths of the distance he heard that Chaitanyadeva has left the world. What to do? He continued his journey.

When Srinivas arrived in Puri, Gadadhara Pandit was there and they met in the Tota Gopinatha temple. Gadadhara Pandit embraced Srinivas and told him, "I am waiting for you Srinivas. My Lord has ordered me to teach you the Srimad Bhagavatam. You will explain the Bhagavatam to the whole of Bengal: you will be an unprecedented lecturer on the Bhagavatam. But still you won't be able to read my book because the letters are half-washed away by the tears. So go and get a fresh book, go to Srikhanda, and taking my name try to secure a copy of the Bhagavatam. Bring it here and I shall teach it to you".

Srinivas Acharya returned to Srikhanda in Bengal and secured a copy then returned to Puri. But when he reached Puri he heard that Gadadhara Pandit had left this world. Srinivas was disappointed. He thought, "I am such a distressed soul. Wherever I am going, the object I adore has just been removed a little before I arrive. First Mahaprabhu disappeared, then Gadadhara Pandit, who gave me some hope that he would teach me the Srimad Bhagavatam. What ill fate I have got!"

Then what to do? He went away. But Gadadhara Pandita's will was there, so when Srinivas went to read the Bhagavatam he found that the understanding of everything is rushing to him. Such deep understanding of such high and beautiful descriptions of the Lord and His lila were within him, yet at this time he had still not taken initiation from any Vaishnava.

Srinivas started for Vrindaban to have darshan of Rupa, Sanatana, Gopala Bhatta and others. Raghunatha Bhatta was also there in Vrindaban. When Srinivas was only a few miles away from Mathura he heard that Sanatana Goswami had passed away. The people were saying that Sanatana Goswami, who had been the prime minister of Bengal and then renounced that position to become a penniless servant of Mahaprabhu, that Sanatana Goswami who had captured the whole of Vrindaban within his heart, that Sanatana has passed away. This was a great disaster for the devotees in the land of Vrindaban.

Srinivas thought that Rupa and Raghunatha, Sri Jiva and Gopala Bhatta, they are still living. Somehow he dragged his feet forwards, walking on and on until he reached Mathura. There he heard that last night Rupa Goswami had left this world. Oh! what a hopeless and cursed soul I am! Coming so near and yet I could not see those two generals of Mahaprabhu. Mahaprabhu had sent two of his generals to Vrindaban to carry out his orders and to establish the kingdom of the Gaudiya Vaishnava there!

Then, somehow he dragged his body to Vrindaban and when he arrived he found the evening aroti was going on in the Govinda Mandir with very great splendor. A great crowd was there. Rupa Goswami had just passed away, so with a feeling of mad bereavement and suffering the devotees were madly chanting Sri Rupa Goswami's name. The aroti was going on in this way. Srinivas could not stand that sort of wave, that sentiment in the mood of separation, and he fainted there at the Govindaji temple. When he regained consciousness he found that Jiva Goswami was engaged in discussion with some of his followers there. Srinivas woke up and he did what was necessary and proper at that time. And so it was, that Srinivas started to live and do bhajan in Vrindaban.

Srinivas Acharya took initiation from Gopala Bhatta, Narottam Thakur took initiation from Lokanatha Goswami, and Shyamananda from Jiva Goswami.

There were many incidents in the meantime. Jiva Goswami was there and Sri Jiva was in charge of all the books written by Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami. After a time, when Srinivas, Narottam and Shyamananda were going to return to Bengal, the treasured books were placed in a wooden casket and given to the charge of Srinivas Acharya. He was found to be more educated and to have more scriptural knowledge, so the books were given in his charge. Jiva Goswami instructed him, “Take the books, copy them and preach in Bengal. We shall see to the preaching in this side of the country but in the land of Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu the books will have good circulation so you may take the books there.” Srinivas took the books and the three departed on two bullock carts.

The big casket was loaded on a cart and they travelled by the main road. One night, the cart was on the roadside and Srinivas, Narottam and Shyamananda were sleeping somewhere nearby. In the night the book box was removed. When they woke in the morning they found the cart was empty. The big wooden box with the books was gone! They were horrified. Those three devotees tried their best to search nearby but they could not find any clue.

Shyamananda and Narottam, feeling disappointed, left the place for their own home. But Srinivas Acharya could not. “I was specially selected and given the responsibility of keeping these higher scriptures and I cannot go back home without doing anything to get the shastras back. How can I do it?”

He wandered like a madman here and there. This beautiful young boy who people thought was mad. They thought this young boy's head is cracked. Here and there he was wandering, crying and chanting.

There was a zamindar, a chief of the aborigines, whose name was Birhambir. He was a chief of that locality and he had some attraction for devotion and the Bhagavatam. Every day he held a class on the

Bhagavatam in his house in the afternoon. His guru was someone by the name of Vyasa. Vyasa used to explain the Bhagavatam and many devotees used to come to hear Bhagavatam from him. Srinivas was passing his days like a madman here and there but somehow he heard about the lectures and went there to hear the Bhagavatam. He was eager not to express himself but he knew he was an educated man, a good scholar, especially of the Bhagavatam. No one else knew that and he also did not give any hint of that. Then one day Vyasa was explaining something wrong and, unconsciously, Srinivas could not check himself and pointed out the mistake. “You are explaining the meaning in this way, but the proper meaning will be that.” Then the attention of all the devotees present, including the king, fell on that boy.

Who is he? Vyasa, who was explaining Bhagavatam, was also charmed. “We all took him to be a madcap but he is pointing out such fine points. Who are you?”

The questions became very intense and Srinivas had to admit that, “I am a wretched soul. This Bhagavatam, and so many other very high level Vaishnava scriptures, I was taking from Vrindaban, in a big box, a box filled up with those Vaishnava scriptures, but thieves came and stole them from here, about a year or so ago, and still I am wandering around in search of those books.”

“Oh!” then they knew. Birhambir had an astrologer who used to predict what is what, and where. When that box filled with scriptures was near his capital he called the astrologer and asked him, “What is there on that bullock cart?” Those chiefs of Vishnupur were all robbers, looting princes. The astrologer told the king, “There are very highly valued jewels in that box”. Then Birhambir managed, by his own men, to steal the box, and they took the box in his house. Birhambir opened it and found many holy books. He closed the box and kept it hidden. After hearing from Srinivas, he said, “Oh, you have lost those books. You are an owner of that? That casket is here in my house. We have taken it. My astrologer told me that many valuable jewels were contained in there and being misguided we took them.”

Then Srinivas came back in his light again. He went and fell prostrate there and asked them to get some articles of aroti. Then he began to offer aroti to the books, the shastra, the representation of Krishna and His devotees. He began worshipping the books and after aroti he opened the trunk. Then he sent information to Narottam and Shyamananda and they came back to Vishnupur. After this Birhambir and many people of the place became Srinivas's disciples.

Birhambir did much service for the Gaudiya Vaishnavas. His capital city of Vishnupur gradually developed many, many temples. A large number of temples were established in that place that are still standing today. They had very strong rulers from that time and they would force their subjects, "You must take the Harinam mantra, chant Hare Krishna, or otherwise we will banish you from here." The rule of the king was so much so that even an ordinary cultivator, after finishing his work and before going to bed, he would think, "Oh, I must take that mallika, I must obey king Gopala Singh's order to chant Hare Krishna." In this way everyone would chant Hare Krishna. Otherwise, if there was information that someone did not take the Name then he would be banished from the kingdom. The whole line of kings after that were Vaishnavas.

Srinivas Acharya went from Vishnupur to Yajigram near Katva and with the help of Narottam, Shyamananda and Virbadhra the son of Nityananda Prabhu and the sons of Adwaita Prabhu, Srinivas Acharya began extensively preaching the Gaudiya Vaishnava philosophy, the message of Srimad Bhagavatam: the Bhagavata Dharma. They also preached in parts of Bihar and Orissa as well. The transcendental flow, the wave of inundation came, by this trinity of Srinivas, Narottam and Shyamananda. The new wave of the ocean of devotion was spread by the combination of these three devotees who came after Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu. These three held up the torch of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas in the years after the departure of Mahaprabhu.

Srila Narottam das Thakur

Narottam Thakur went to the Manipur side, to Assam, and almost the whole of Manipur was captured by him, including the king. So in Manipur we generally see that the Manipuris are disciples of Narottam Thakur and his succession. He has done such extensive preaching in that side. And in Bengal, Nityananda Prabhu and Srinivas Prabhu preached very extensively, while in Orissa it was Shyamananda Prabhu who preached among the people.

Years before, when Mahaprabhu went to Ramakeli after taking sannyas, he came to a place on the northern side of the river Padma. Mahaprabhu began calling out “Narottam, Narottam,” but his associates could not understand why. “Why is he taking the name of Narottam here?” This Bhagirathi river which flows through Nabadwip Dham is the small branch of the Ganges and the big branch is known as the Padma river, which flows into Bangladesh. Just on the opposite side of the banks of the Padma, across the big branch of the Ganges, a wealthy kayastha zamindar family was living, and Narottam was born later into that kayastha family.

Narottam's elder brother was named Krishnachandra. He was a big zamindar, a small king. From his early childhood, Narottam had some natural inclination towards Mahaprabhu, Radha Govinda and Vrindaban. He did not marry, but he was given to the devotional life. Gradually, he found his friend in Srinivas Acharya.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

It is said that in his youth Narottam came to see Nabadwip Dham. Together with Srinivas, Narottam began the circumambulation of different parts of Nabadwip. Before this, Jiva Goswami was shown the different parts of Nabadwip Dham by Nityananda Prabhu. Then Ishana, the old servant of Mahaprabhu's house, showed Narottam and Srinivas all the nine islands of Nabadwip. Ishana explained the pastimes of Mahaprabhu's place to them.

Narottam Thakur had tried hard and had got initiation from Lokanatha Goswami. Lokanatha Goswami's original house was in

the Jeshore district. Lokanatha went to Vrindaban and lived the life of a sannyasi and his peculiar habit was that he did not like to mix with anybody. His apprehension was that to talk with a man would mean to break his continuous memory of Krishna. So he did not like to meet with anyone. So much so that he did not even store any water for visitors to drink. Not even a glass. In this way, if any guest were to come and ask him for some water, he could honestly say "I don't have any drinking water." His water pots were always empty. In such a strict way he used to keep up his continuous devotional life without any gap. Lokanatha did not like to accept anyone as his disciple. He was very determined, thinking, "I won't initiate anyone."

Narottam Thakur felt "I must have my initiation from this noble man, this great man." But he knew that Lokanatha had already vowed not to accept any disciples. Srinivas Acharya took initiation from Gopala Bhatta. Shyamananda got initiation from Jiva Goswami, initiation again. And Narottam was inclined towards Lokanatha Goswami. But how to get initiation? He tried to find out.

In the early morning Lokanatha Swami used to go out and pass stool before he took bath and performed worship. Narottam found that place and began to cleanse the area in a careful way. After a few days this caught the attention of Lokanatha Goswami. "Who is cleansing this place? I come to pass stools in this place but someone has found out. Who has been coming and cleaning this place and purifying it?" Then he detected and caught Narottam. Lokanatha asked him, "Why have you come to do this without my permission?"

Narottam fell flat at his feet and began crying. Narottam said, "I want your blessings, your grace. Without that my life is useless. Please be kind on me. I am a wretched man. I have come from Bengal. You please beat me." Lokanatha Goswami was defeated, and at last he gave initiation to that single person Narottam.

Narottam in his turn later inundated the whole of Northern Bengal with Krishna consciousness and the whole of Manipur came under his influence, under his grace. He gave initiation right and left. In Northern India and Eastern Bengal, Assam and Manipur.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj has mentioned that this is very similar to the case of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji had no disciples besides Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. But Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur himself preached very widely and gave initiation to many thousands of people.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

We find Narottam das Thakur says, “When will Lokanatha take me and connect me with Rupa Goswami?” Narottam Thakur is praying, asking, when will my guru Lokanatha take me by hand and offer me to Sri Rupa Prabhu, Sri Rupa Manjari. The absolute consideration of Guru Parampara is evident there in that prayer. Our guru parampara is Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya (radha-krishna nahe anya), Svarupa Damodara, Rupa, Sanatana and then Narottam Thakur. Then Viswanatha, then Baladeva, and Bhaktivinode Thakur. Mostly they have no body connection at all but only the connection in the line of spiritual flow of the same order and intensity and height. It is siksa-guru-parampara, not diksa-guru. Physically they had no connection but are connected only through the flow of the spiritual knowledge that has come from here and there. The degree of spiritual knowledge that has come down, that is to be accepted. And they are all in madhura rasa.

When I was initiated by Prabhupada, at the time of initiation he told me something about Hari-katha, the pastimes of the Lord. I was a newcomer when I came out. Vasudev Prabhu was conversant with siddhanta, with spiritual knowledge, with shastric (scriptural) knowledge. He asked me, “What did Prabhupada say after your diksa initiation?” I told that such and such things were told by Prabhupada just after diksa. Vasudev Prabhu told me, “You are a very fortunate one because Prabhupada told you at the time of diksa about Radharani's group”. So the madhura rasa connection is there. And also when Prabhupada was passing away he asked me to chant a kirtana, Sri Rupa Manjari Pada, composed by Narottam Thakur. The Rupanuga sampradaya: knowledge and education of the rupanuga bhajana. Even the sakhis who are in madhura rasa, those sakhis cannot enter the place where Radha-

Govinda are united privately, but the manjaris, the young girls, they are allowed there. They are the younger section and that is allowed. And that is the highest rasa. When that rasa is produced in their private union the manjaris can have some taste of it, but even the sakhis cannot. So the highest point of our attainment, of our aspiration is there in rupanuga bhajan. Service to Sri Rupa Manjari. Sri Rupa Manjari is the leader of all the manjaris and there in her group the highest quality of union, rasa, is to be found. So there is this Rupanuga sampradaya. The members, they have the greatest fortune.

The disciple must see that “My guru has got suddha-nama”. Not only that, but the disciple sees the direct touch or presence of the leader of the particularly sweet rasa, of madhura rasa in his Guru. You may see Radharani, Lalita, Visakha, Rupa Manjari, in a particular group, you may see that there in Sri Gurudev.

*nikunja-yuno rati-keli-siddhyair
ya yalibhir yuktir apeksaniya
tatrati-daksyad ati-vallabhasya
vande guroh sri-caranaravindam*

(I worship the lotus feet of the Divine Master, who is extremely dear to the Supreme Divine Couple who sport in the groves of Vraja, because he is very expert in those appropriate engagements that are performed by the sakhis in order to serve the amorous Pastimes of the Divine Couple.

- prayer by Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti)

Prabhupada told us, “My guru Gaura Kisore dasa Babaji is Guna Manjari.” But if I have a deeper vision I can see Radharani there. A deeper vision. He is seeing Gurudev is a manjari. But if we get a further insight then we shall be able to see Radharani there. Higher or deeper you may say. First there is Paramatma, then deeper than that there is Krishna. Where there is Krishna, all is there. The deeper vision. That is for Krishna's pleasure. However He likes He can show Himself, “Come see everything!”. A soul's deeper sraddha can carry him so he is drawn personally to Krishna. Or this deeper sraddha can draw us personally to Radharani. Faith, sraddha, can give you anything and everything. Faith. Faith of different quality. Faith of different intensity.

Variegated faith. Hare Krishna! Faith gets you nearer and nearer.
Different faith takes me nearer.

Faith comes from faith, from sraddha. Devotion, bhakti, comes from bhakti. It is *ahaituki apratihata*. So bhakti is the cause of bhakti. Nothing else can produce bhakti. Nothing else can produce faith. Just as from one candle another candle is lit. So faith from the heart of a devotee can be transferred into another. The Guru, the sadhu, extends faith.

The different classifications of faith are there. The different types of faith. Krishna is my friend, Krishna is my master - in this way, the classifications of faith are there.

Srila Shyamananda Prabhu

Very rarely, by the will of the Lord, we find that the type of faith changes. In the case of Gaudiya Vaishnavas we find this of Shyamananda Prabhu, who was Hridaya Chaitanya's disciple. His faith changed from sakhya to madhura through a special grant of Lalita devi.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

Shyamananda was initiated in sakhya rasa from Hridaya Chaitanya, then he went to Vrindavan. In the very early morning he was taking the name of Krishna while walking. Suddenly he found a golden anklet on the pathway. A leg ornament. He took it, and put it in his bag. And with the touch of that leg ornament he felt ecstatic joy within himself and great energy for chanting hari-nama. Going on, he was feeling intensely inspired while taking the name of Krishna on his lips. He was sometimes looking back towards the place where he got that anklet when suddenly he found that one divine girl was searching for something in that place.

He came back and said, “What do you search for, sister?”

She told him, “My mistress Radharani has lost her anklet somewhere here. I have come to collect that.”

He said, “Oh, I have got it. I have collected it. Is it this?”

She replied, “Yes.”

He gave it to her, to Lalita Devi. Then she took the anklet and put it on his forehead and a permanent spot was there on his forehead. A mark of that anklet. Then Lalita Devi disappeared.

Shyamananda was more enthusiastic, “What did I see today here!”

Shyamananda couldn't rub the mark off his forehead. He couldn't efface it. And he felt his tendency towards service under the guidance of those girls awaken within himself. From the friend circle (sakhya-rasa) his mental conversion came automatically towards madhura rasa. He felt it and he consulted Jiva Goswami,

“This is the case. What to do? Irresistibly I feel within that I must serve Krishna under the direction of these divine damsels. I feel that sort of service mood even though I previously got admission into sakhya rasa from my gurudeva and I’m trying to cultivate that sakhya rasa, that mood of the friendly circle.”

Jiva Goswami said, “You have got such wonderful grace from the upper class and you may take initiation in this madhura rasa from me.” And yes, Shyamananda took further initiation from Jiva Goswami.

This act was not concealed. Gradually it came to be known to the public and his previous guru Hridaya Chaitanya came to know that Jiva Goswami had again initiated Shyamananda Prabhu. Hridaya Chaitanya addressed the assembly of Vaishnava in Vrindavan, saying “This Goswami has done wrong. He has enticed my disciple and this is against Vaishnava etiquette.”

Then they called for Jiva Goswami to give an explanation for this but Jiva Goswami did not go. He sent Shyamananda. “Shyamananda, go and explain your position.”

Shyamananda went and stated, “This is the fact, which forced me to change my course of life.” Then he explained about his meeting with Lalita Devi. Many of them there did not believe him. Shyamananda told them that, “I got the sign, this nupur tilak on my forehead. If you do not believe it then you may efface this sign.” They tried but failed. Then they gave recognition to Shyamananda. “Yes it is possible.”

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

Radharani, internally, previously asked Subal about this. To Subal she communicated, “I am taking one of your servitors within my camp.” Amongst the leaders there was some understanding of the transformation. So it is possible that this type of conversion may happen. By special interference of the will of those high officials or of Krishna himself it is possible.

It is *achintya bhedabheda*. Krishna says, “I am everywhere, I am nowhere. Everything is in me, nothing is in me. Try to understand this peculiar wonderful adjustment of mine. Everything is with me. Try to follow this understanding.”

Krishna is an autocrat: “Do this thing. Do that thing!” He is not under any law. The beauty, the absolute beauty Sri Krishna, is not under law. We hear a thousand times, “He is above all”. Above all, and transcendental. Still our habit is such that we want to bring everything within the fist of our understanding. But He is *adhoksaja* (transcendental).

Srila Jiva Goswami has given many things in his Sat-Sandarba. For the protection of the higher truth Jiva Goswami has given so many things applying reasoning since otherwise we may be defeated by any other party. Jiva Goswami has given this Sat-Sandarba and for the protection of the higher truth he has given so many things employing reasoning. But Krishna, he is *adhoksaja*.

Love can give love. No other thing can. That is the original conception: *ahaituki apratihata*. None other than Love can produce Love. Love is self-existent. It is the most fundamental substance. None can produce Love but Love, Krishna. None can give. Only Love can give Love, and everything. The most original conception of the Absolute Cause is that the Absolute is Love. One plane of existence: our home. That plane is the home of everyone and we are banished from our home. Let us go directly home! But why should we go home? Because there is infinite causeless affection in that plane. A most affectionate abode, our heart-touching, heart-fulfilling home. Home: sweet, sweet home.

So to go to Krishna means to go home. All are friendly there. There is nothing of strictness, no strict duties and obedience or any harsh treatment. Nothing of the type. So much familiarity, so much intimacy is never to be found anywhere else. This is the universal call: “Go home!” And our home is a sweet home.

Why should we have to take to any path of dry discussion or penance. A path of penance, or any other dry discussion about this thing or that thing. It is not necessary. Only the path of attraction to the Name of Sri Hari and His beautiful Form, Pastimes and Associates, that is to be roused within us. So, Guru Maharaj said we must preach about Krishna. Preach that Krishna is the embodiment of love and beauty. It is our unavoidable necessity. The heart's demand from the innermost core of the heart. Guru Maharaj said we must go and preach this message and that it is for all living beings. Every soul

possesses a heart, a heart will be there: *bhidyate hrdaya grantis*, your false mental concoctions, you sham heart, your ego, all those encasements must be smashed and the real self within will come out and go towards Krishna consciousness. Your inner necessity of your inner ego will direct you. It will attract you and draw you towards that goal: love. Through that process we have to go home.

*bhidyate hrdaya-granthis, chidyante sarva-samsayah
ksiyante casya karmani, mayi drste 'khilatmani*

Sri Krishna says, “When I am seen as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the knot in the heart is pierced, all misgivings are cut to pieces, and the chain of fruitive actions is terminated.”

-(Srimad Bhagavatam, 11.20.30)

Sri Vishnupriya Devi

Srila Sridhar Maharaj said that by her devotion and penances Sri Vishnupriya Devi helped a great deal with the preaching of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Through her acceptance of the mood of separation, her showing of the pangs of separation, she helped a great deal. She melted the hearts of many and did away with the jealousy or antagonistic feeling toward Sri Chaitanyadeva that many people felt. And thereby in Bengal she facilitated the preaching of Nityananda Prabhu and the glorification of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

In the Chaitanya Mangala, Lochan das Thakur described Vishnupriya's terrible feelings of separation in the days that followed Sri Chaitanyadeva's departure from home:

The earth splits from the sound of Vishnupriya's crying. The birds and beasts, even the trees and stones, were shedding tears when they heard it. Falling to the ground she would lament, crying out "Why does my life not end?" In separation, her breath was like fire, drying her lips. And her body trembled constantly. (Cm 2.14.15-6)

Vishnupriya Devi appeared on the Saraswati-puja festival day, when the people who are mad with their study of material existence were celebrating the life they live. But a higher class of study is that study which gives us relief from the troubles of material life. That is the higher study. That type of learning leads to the attainment of the fulfilment of life. That study leads to the attainment of devotion to the Lord.

Vishnupriya Devi is the potency of Sri Gaura Narayana, the yuga avatara who comes here to distribute the name of Krishna and release souls from illusion. In every yuga the Lord appears and in this Kali yuga age the avatara of the Lord is known as Gaura Narayana. His potency is Vishnupriya Devi. The Bhu Shakti of the Lord is the ground on which His playful pastimes are formed, and this Bhu Shakti is represented by Sri Vishnupriya Devi. Bhu Shakti lila; the environment of the Dham, the abode of the Lord. And when

Mahaprabhu went to save the lost souls suffering in this material world, leaving her at Nabadwip, Sri Vishnupriya Devi was still a very young girl.

It is necessary that devotees have a proper understanding of the relationship between Srimate Vishnupriya Devi and Lord Gauranga, Sri Chaitanyadeva. In his book Sri Krishna Chaitanya (Vol 2, page 37) Professor Nishikanta Sanyal wrote:

Sree Gaurasundar is Sree Krishna Himself. Sree Gaurasundar shows by His Own Conduct how other entities are to conduct themselves towards Sree Krishna. He, Sree Gauranga, does not display the role of Enjoyer. He displays instead the Role of the willingly and consciously Enjoyed of Krishna. The Vaishnavas belong to the category of the consciously enjoyed of Krishna. It would be inconsistent with the Role of the Consciously Enjoyed assumed by Sree Gaurasundar to display the Role of the Enjoyer even to the Vaishnavas. The Vaishnavas must not look upon Sree Gaurasundar as the Enjoyer. Sri Vishnupriya Devi finds Herself on the plane of Sree Gaurasundar in the common category of the consciously enjoyed of Krishna. Her true conduct in this position consists in behaving towards Sree Gaurasundar not as towards Krishna, but as towards the Enjoyed of Krishna. She accordingly cannot desire to be the enjoyed of Sree Gaurasundar, although She is no doubt really His Own Eternal Consort. The relationship of Sree Vishnupriya Devi to Sree Gaurasundar is identical with and yet distinct from the conduct of Bhushakti, the Consort of Krishna, in the same way in which the conduct of Sree Gaurasundar towards Her is both identical with yet distinct from that of Krishna towards Her Corresponding Self. The Gaur-nagaris altogether overlook this distinction and by doing so ignore the significance of the Leela of Sree Gaurasundar, thereby committing the gravest offence by setting themselves up as the avowed opponents of the Distinctive Personality of Sree Gaurasundar.

Nimai Pandit (after his initiation) found it increasingly impossible for Himself to perform His duties towards the people of this world in the matter that they expected. He was an ideal Husband who loved His wedded Consort without being subject to sexuality. This is the ideal of connubial relationship enjoined by the Scriptures on

Brahmana householders. Nimai Pandit had exhibited this high level of conduct. Carnality is never the nature of the brahmana householder. Nimai Pandit never looked upon woman as an object of sensual enjoyment. The wedded wife is to be looked upon as a helpmate in practicing the function of the soul.

After Sri Gauranga took sannyas and left Nabadwip Dham, Sri Vishnupriya Devi led a very strict spiritual life. We are told that she was under the guidance of Sachi Devi, the mother of Mahaprabhu, and that she used to nurse Sachi Devi and look after her. Her mother in law Sachi Devi was an old lady and Vishnupriya Devi engaged in her service. She was exclusively devoted to her. But after Sachi Devi disappeared Vishnupriya Devi was independent. One old servant named Ishana was there, and another servant was his brother Vamsivadananda.

Vishnupriya Devi did not generally go out of the room or house. There was a high compound wall and she used to count rice while chanting the holy name. Counting the name, she put some rice aside. With the recitation of the mantra, she put some rice aside. One chant, one piece of rice was put aside. One chant, one piece of rice. In this way, she counted while chanting. Then she boiled the rice and offered it to Lord Krishna and she used to take only that much prashadam for her sustenance. So her body became emaciated, gradually. But she continued that sort of life of austerity.

Narahari Chakravarti:

Every day Srinivasa Acharya would come to see her. He observed her daily activities, which are beyond description. She had completely renounced sleep and if ever she closed her eyes it would be while lying on the bare ground. Her bodily luster, which had formerly glowed more brilliantly than gold, had become dull, and she was as thin as the waning moon on its fourteenth day. She set aside grains of rice while counting the holy names as she chanted, and she would cook only this rice and offer it to her Lord. Of this amount, she would only eat a small portion. No one understood how she could remain alive.

- (Bhakti-ratnakara 4.47-51)

Vishnupriya Devi established Mahaprabhu's Deity and for her whole life she was worshiping that Deity. Her father's name was Sanatan Mishra and in later times that Deity was worshipped in her father's lineage. They continued worshipping the Deity of Mahaprabhu in their family generation after generation.

But as is the case with the mundane world, gradually everything degrades. So after some time in that lineage they were not practicing their holy observances properly. And anyhow, just like a trade the Deity's worship was going on. The Deity is the property of the lineage and every partner has got his own share. The members of that lineage would look after the Deity, some for six months or for three months. In this way the worship was divided.

The Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya

In Chaitanya Caritamrta (Madhya Lila Chapter 7) Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami describes Sri Chaitanyadeva's tour of South India.

Srila Kaviraj Goswami wrote:

Almost like a mad lion, Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu went on His tour filled with ecstatic love and performing sankirtana, chanting Krishna's names as follows.

Krishna! Krishna! Krishna! Krishna!
Krishna! Krishna! Krishna! He
Krishna! Krishna! Krishna! Krishna!
Krishna! Krishna! Krishna! He
Krishna! Krishna! Krishna! Krishna!
Krishna! Krishna! Raksa mam
Krishna! Krishna! Krishna! Krishna!
Krishna! Krishna! Pahi mam

That is, "O Lord Krishna, please protect Me and maintain Me."
He also chanted:

Rama! Raghava! Rama! Raghava! Rama! Raghava! Raksa mam
Krishna! Kesava! Krishna! Kesava! Krishna! Kesava! pahi mam

That is, "O Lord Rama, descendant of King Raghu, please protect Me. O Krishna, O Kesava, killer of the Kesi demon, please maintain Me."

Chanting this verse, Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, known as Gaurahari, went on His way. As soon as He saw someone, He would request him to chant "Hari! Hari!" Whoever heard Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu chant "Hari, Hari," also chanted the holy name of Lord Hari and Krishna. In this way they all followed the Lord, very eager to see Him. After some time the Lord would embrace these people and bid them to return home, having investing them with spiritual potency. Being thus empowered, they would return to their own villages, always chanting the holy name of Krishna and sometimes laughing, crying and dancing.

These empowered people used to request everyone and anyone--whomever they saw--to chant the holy name of Krishna. In this way all the villagers would also become devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Simply by seeing such empowered individuals, people from different villages would become like them by the mercy of their glance. When these individuals returned to their villages, they also converted others into devotees. When others came to see them, they also were converted. In this way, as those men went from one village to another, all the people of South India became devotees. Thus many hundreds of people became Vaisnavas when they passed the Lord on the way and were embraced by Him.

In whatever village Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu stayed to accept alms, many people came to see Him.

*prabhura krpaya haya mahabhagavata
sei saba acarya hana tarila jagat*

By the mercy of the Supreme Lord, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, everyone became a first-class devotee. Later they became teachers or spiritual masters and liberated the entire world. (verse 2.7.107)

In this way the Lord went to the extreme southern part of India, and He converted all the provinces to Vaisnavism. Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu did not manifest His spiritual potencies at Navadvipa, but He did manifest them in South India and liberated all the people there. Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's empowering of others can be understood by one who is actually a devotee of the Lord and who has received His mercy.

If one does not believe in the uncommon, transcendental pastimes of the Lord, he is vanquished both in this world and in the next. Whatever I have stated about the beginning of the Lord's movement should also be understood to hold for as long as the Lord toured South India.

The mercy of Sri Chaitanyadeva upon the people of South India was limitless. He made hundreds of people devotees of Gopala Krishna and those people then converted others in their home villages into Vaishnavas. In this regard, we may note that Sri Chaitanyadeva did

not give gayatri mantra diksa to these devotees in South India. The devotees became “Mahabhagavatas” (pure devotees) and “Acharyas” (gurus) – Kaviraj Goswami’s words in verse 2.7.107 – simply by receiving the Holy Name of Krishna, the Hare Krishna Mahamantra. They never received gayatri mantra diksa from Mahaprabhu. In this way, by the power of the Holy Name, the people of South India became Vaishnavas and devotees of Sri Gaura Krishna.

These events happened in and around the year 1513 of the Christian calendar. Yet within a century or so the preceptorial lines of succession Mahaprabhu had initiated in South India all died out. There were likely a number of reasons for this but perhaps the main reason was that the people of southern India did not have access to the literature of the Goswamis and other Gaudiya Vaishnavas. Devotees in Bengal, Vraja and Orissa had a wealth of devotional literature that never reached South India. Orissa is factually part of South India and Gaudiya Vaishnavism has always been a strong spiritual tradition in Orissa. Particularly as a result of the preaching of Syamananda Prabhu, who had quite literally hundreds of thousands of disciples. But in the Tamil speaking lands and in the west coast regions of South India the memory of Sri Chaitanyadev’s visit and His message of Divine Love gradually died out.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj

In Srimad-Bhagavatam, Krishna says, “First I transmitted Vedic knowledge to this world through Brahma. And that was entrusted to his disciples: the four Kumaras, Marichi, Angira, and other sages.” The knowledge was first invested in them and later in books.

First it was presented in the form of sound, not script. Gradually it became fixed in writing. In the beginning, it descended directly through sound from one man to another, from lip to ear. No script or writing was invented at that time, but knowledge was contained in the form of sound. Passing through the ear to the mouth, and again to the ear of another, gradually it became lost. In connection with the mediator sometimes it becomes lost and disfigured, distorted, and then again the Lord feels the necessity of appearing in this world (*yada yada hi dharmasya*).

The pure understanding given by the Lord when He descends into this world becomes lost, disfigured and distorted because of human misunderstanding and misconceptions. But in order to reestablish the Truth the Lord again and again returns or sends new Spiritual Masters to preach on His behalf. In Sri Chaitanya Charitamṛta, Antya, Chapter 1, we read about the pastimes of Sri Rupa Goswami with Mahāprabhu in Puri. It is clearly explained there that Mahāprabhu empowered Sri Rupa Goswami as the Bhakti Rasa Acharya. Sri Rupa Goswami was empowered to perpetuate the spiritual lineage of Mahāprabhu.

Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said to the devotees, “I met Srīla Rupa Goswami at Prayāga. He attracted and satisfied Me because of his qualities.” Then Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu praised Srīla Rupa Goswami's transcendental poetry. Without such poetic attributes, He said, there is no possibility of preaching transcendental mellows (rasa). Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu then requested all His personal associates to bless Rupa Goswami so that Srīla Rupa Goswami might continuously describe the pastimes of Sri Krishna in Vrindavana.

Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu said, “Srīla Rupa Goswami's elder brother Sanātana Goswami is such a wise and learned scholar that no one is equal to him. “ He told Ramananda Raya, “Sanātana Goswami's renunciation of material connections is just like yours. Humility, renunciation and excellent learning exist in him simultaneously. I empowered both of these brothers to go to Vrindaban to expand the literature of bhakti.”

Srīla Ramananda Raya replied to Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, “My Lord, You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If You like, You can cause even a wooden doll to dance. I see that the truths regarding transcendental mellow that You have expounded through my mouth are all explained in the writings of Srīla Rupa Goswami. Because of Your causeless mercy toward Your devotees, You want to describe the transcendental pastimes in Vrindaban. Anyone empowered to do this can bring the entire world under Your influence.”

Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu then embraced Rupa Goswami and asked him to offer prayers to all the devotees present. Advaita Acharya, Nityananda Prabhu and all the other devotees showed their causeless mercy to Rupa Goswami by embracing him in return. Seeing Sri

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's special mercy toward Srila Rupa Goswami and seeing his personal qualities, all the devotees were struck with wonder.

Then, when Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu left with all of His devotees, Haridasa Thakura also embraced Srila Rupa Goswami. Haridasa Thakura said to him: "There is no limit to your good fortune. No one can understand the glories of what you have described."

Sri Rupa Goswami said, "I do not know anything. The only transcendental words I can utter are those which Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu makes me speak."

In Sri Chaitanya Charitamrta, when telling this story Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami then presents this verse of Srila Rupa Goswami from his book Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (verse 1.1.2)

*hrdi yasya preranaya pravartito 'ham varaka-rupo 'pi
tasya hareh pada-kamalam vande Chaitanya-devasya*

Although I am the lowest of men and have no knowledge, the Lord has mercifully bestowed upon me the inspiration to write transcendental literature about devotional service. Therefore I offer my obeisances at the lotus feet of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has given me the chance to write these books.

Srila Rupa Goswami stayed for some time with Sri Chaitanyadeva in Puri. Then the Lord sent him back to Vrindavana with the specific instruction to write books that explain the important points in the philosophy and religion of the Bhagavata.

The Gaura Purnima festival at Kheturi

After the disappearance from this world of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Gaudiya Vaishnava devotees in Bengal, Orissa and Vraja were overwhelmed with sadness. Srinivasa Acharya, Narottama das Thakur and Syamananda Prabhu, along with other devotees, were busily engaged in sankirtan and preaching. They preached the philosophy of Mahaprabhu that they had learned from the predecessor Acharyas. Srinivasa, Narottama and Syamananda had visited Vraja and had spent several years together studying the teachings of Sri Rupa Goswami, Sri Sanatan Goswami etc. So, when they returned to Bengal with the casket of books given by Srila Jiva Goswami they wanted to distribute those books and the teachings of the Six Goswamis among other Vaishnavas of Bengal.

Srila Narottama das Thakur returned to his home in Kheturi. Hearing of his arrival the residents of Kheturi welcomed him with a great celebration. The father and uncle of Narottama had already passed away but Purushottama, Narottama's uncle, had a son named Sri Santosha Datta and this Santosha had become the new raja of Kheturi. Raja Santosh Datta took initiation from Srila Narottam das Thakur. He dedicated himself to assisting the preaching of Narottam. He arranged for a large temple to be built and within that temple compound they built a big storehouse for food, a kirtan hall, a residence hall, an ashram for devotees, a bathing pond, a beautiful flower garden and a guest house.

Arrangements were made for a grand festival to be held on the full moon day of Phalguna – the Gaura Purnima festival day of Mahaprabhu's appearance. On that day the temple was to be dedicated and Deities installed in a great festival – the greatest festival that had been held by the Gaudiya Vaishnavas since the days of Mahaprabhu's pastimes in Nabadwip. Messengers were sent to near and distant lands to invite Vaishnavas, kings, landowners, poets, pandits and many other illustrious guests. Preparations were made to install six deities at the temple on the Gaura Purnima day.

Sri Jahnava Mata, the wife of Sri Nityananda Prabhu, and other Vaishnavas such as Sri Acyutananda, a son of Sri Advaita Acharya,

were invited to the festival. Indeed many hundreds of famous Vaishnavas attended the festival, with representatives of all the major lineages attending. Lists of their names can be found in no less than three different books: Prema-vilasa, Narottama-vilasa, and Bhaktiratnakara.

The story of how Narottama obtained the Deities installed during the Kheturi festival is described in the book Narottama Vilasa written by Sri Narahari Chakravarti.

Sri Narahari Chakravarti:

In the evening of his first night in Kheturi, when Narottama was finally alone, he began to think deeply about his devotional service to Sri Krishna. Eventually, by the Lord's arrangement, he finally fell asleep late in the evening. In a dream, Sri Gauranga, the son of Sachi told him, "Oh Narottama, in the hope of your coming here, I hid Myself in the form of a metal Deity in the house of an influential landlord. Everyone knows him because he is a rich man with many rice-go-downs, but no one will approach these go-downs because they are full of poisonous snakes. In one of the bigger go-downs I have concealed Myself. Quickly go and open the door of that go-down and bring Me to your house." He then advised Narottama to have more Deities made and then vanished after embracing him.

Narottama excitedly woke to find that it was still dark. He spent the rest of the night performing sankirtana and in the morning quickly completed his daily duties. He then asked various persons if they knew of a rich man who had many rice go-downs which were infested with snakes. Everyone knew the man, and Narottama requested them to take him there. Thus Narottama, along with a few others, went to the rich man's house, who was greatly surprised and happy to receive them. Sri Thakura Mahasaya immediately proceeded straight towards the rice go-down. The rich man was horrified, falling at Narottama's feet he begged with folded hands, "Everyone knows that these go-downs are infested with snakes. Many snake tamers have tried to clear them out but their attempts were in vain. Long ago I gave up hope of getting rid of the snakes and, although I lost considerable money, I was forced to close the buildings down. I could not

possibly allow you to go inside. Please tell me, what I can do for you?”

Thakura Mahasaya simply laughed and said, “Don't be nervous, I shall clear it out now. I have very important business to attend to within your go-down. Afterwards you will be relieved and happy to see what I will bring out from inside.” Saying this, Thakura Mahasaya undauntedly walked towards the go-down, as the spectators trembled in fear. But when the snakes saw Thakura Mahasaya, they immediately left the go-down and went away. In a trance of love, Narottama opened the door and found Navadvipa Candra with His consort. The Deities of Sri Gauranga and his Consort Sri Vishnupriya Devi were there before him. Their bodies were fully decorated with ornaments and Their brilliant beauty was beyond compare. When Narottama picked Them up and lovingly clasped Them to his heart, he was suddenly jolted as if struck by a bolt of lightning.

Everyone was spellbound to see the Deities and began shouting with joy. Someone remarked, “It is not possible for an ordinary human being to do such a thing.” Someone else said, “Who can understand him? Because of his presence our village has become blessed.” Another person commented, “If we are fortunate enough, perhaps we can receive his blessings.” All of them danced happily, calling out the name of Narottama.

As Narottama carried the Deities, a huge crowd followed along behind him. Upon reaching his house, he placed Sri Gauranga and His Consort Vishnupriya on a beautiful celestial seat. With unblinking eyes he stared at the Lord crying incessantly. Suddenly a thought came to his mind and began spontaneously singing a beautiful kirtana about the glories of Gauracandra which he had written but had not yet been heard by others. Narottama sang and danced gracefully, putting the Gandharvas to shame. Even the Yavanas and the wicked souls who were there became mad and sang the glories of Gauranga's pastimes. The sound of kirtana covered the entire world and the demigods showered flowers from the heavens. Gandharvas and Kinnaras remarked with amazement, “Who is that extraordinary person who has suddenly manifested this most sublime and beautiful kirtana? Even we are not familiar with this type of singing. It appears that the dance, music and

instruments have all become personified by his singing. Some of the devotees of Sri Chaitanyadeva have this type of extraordinary power. All the devotees of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu are worshipable by even the demigods and goddesses.” Saying this, they accepting the guise of human beings and came before Narottama to fall at his feet. Thus from that very special day the super-excellent kirtana of Sri Narottama dasa Thakura was inaugurated. On that same day Balarama Vipra and others happily took initiation from Sri Thakura.

With a satisfied heart, Sri Thakura Mahasaya began to serve Gauracandra and Lakshmi Vishnupriya. He appointed Balarama Vipra and others to take charge of the Deities' service. As ordered in a dream, he also arranged for the preparation of five more Deities.

This manifestation of the Deities of Sri Gaura-Vishnupriya marks the beginning of the public worship by Gaudiya Vaishnavas of Lord Gauranga and His Consort Vishnupriyadevi.

In Bhakti Ratnakara, Sri Narahari Chakravarti tells of the miraculous events which happened during the festival at Kheturi.

On the morning of the Gaura Purnima festival day everyone rose early and went to the temple to see the beautiful Deities. The exalted devotee men were seated in one place and Sri Jahnava Mata was seated in a separate place. Srinivas bowed to the Mahants and other Vaisnavas before he began the installation rituals and carefully he installed each of the six Deities on his own throne. According to the wish of the Lord he announced the names of the Deities as Sri Gauranga, Sri Vallabhi Kanta, Sri Braja Mohana, Sri Krsna, Sri Radha Kanta and Sri Radha Ramana. The mahants shed tears as they observed the beauty of the six Deities. The name of Sri Hari resounded and the musicians began to play their different instruments. Brahmins uttered hymns from the Vedas while Srinivas carefully dressed the Deities in gorgeous clothes. He offered scented sandal paste and flower garlands to Mahaprabhu then, after performing the ceremony of worship for the Deities, Srinivas arranged for an offering of lamps before the Deities.

Although the courtyard had insufficient space, many hundreds of people assembled in the temple to watch the offering of lamps. After that Srinivas Acarya offered many tasteful food preparations to the Deities, placing each in a different bowl. He then offered water for washing and betel leaves for chewing. He offered the Deities flower garlands and sandal paste and then fanned them with a chamara. When he opened the door of the temple the sweet scent from the body of the Lord filled the entire courtyard. Everyone was overwhelmed by the shining glow from the bodies of the Deities. Even Srinivas lost control of his emotions seeing the beauty of the Deities and fell on the ground to pay obeisances. He bowed humbly at the feet of the companions of Mahaprabhu and embraced them all with tears of joy. He lay prostrate at the feet of Sri Iswari (Sri Jahnava Mata) who affectionately ordered him to distribute the offered garlands and sandal paste to the assembled devotees. Srinivas carried each garland in a different container and offered them all to the companions of Mahaprabhu. Sri Iswari ordered Nrsimha Caitanya to offer the garlands to Srinivas, Narottama and their followers. Sri Iswari was so overwhelmed by the touch of the garland and sandal paste that she lost control of her emotions and swooned.

Sri Jahnava Iswari stared continuously at Narottama, infusing him with spiritual power beyond the comprehension of common men. The son of Advaita Acarya, Sri Acyutananda, blessed Thakura Narottama Das, and the other Acharyas (mahants) gave him their permission to begin the sankirtana. Together with Sri Narottama were his companions, many of whom were expert in singing, dance and playing of musical instruments. Devidasa, who sat on the left side of Narottama, started by stroking the sweet mardala (an Orissan drum similar to a mrdanga). The other musical instruments joined in, each one seeming to speak in sweet words. Narottama led the kirtana and Sri Vallabha dasa and others repeated each line in turn. Sri Gauranga dasa and others played other instruments and sang together. The audience was hypnotized by the dramatic performance of the musicians.

Then Narottama changed the style of kirtana. He sang in the way of remembrance of the mood of Nadia Candra, Sriman Gaurachandra,

when the Lord was immersed in the mood of Sri Radhika. The singers themselves became emotional during their performance. The audience also. Sri Jahnava Iswari cried when she listened to the song describing the spiritual and devotional qualities of Sri Gaurahari. Sri Acyutananda, Sripati, Srinidhi and others shivered in ecstasy. As the ocean of sankirtana overflowed its banks, little by little, the people in the sankirtana pavilion forgot their own existence and bathed in the tears flowing from their eyes.

While listening to the sankirtana Lord Gaurasundara Himself decided to reveal Himself clearly in that place. Within that pavilion Sri Chaitanya, Nityananda, Sri Advaita and other companions were suddenly manifest like lightning within a cloud. Charming the universe with their appearance, they became the precious jewels of the sankirtana. This pastime of Mahaprabhu enjoying and participating in sankirtana was beyond the comprehension of even Lord Brahma and other gods. The audience was enchanted by the beautiful clothes and graceful gestures of those divine beings. In the midst of the sankirtana they danced gracefully, keeping time with the increasing beat of the musical instruments. Mahaprabhu's indescribable dance in that kirtana seemed to shower love throughout the world. Sri Nityananda's dance caused the world to tremble while Sri Advaitachandra danced like a mad lion and roared in joy. Gadadhara Pandita danced jovially with Srinivas. The joyful dancing of Srivasa Pandita, Murari Gupta, Vakresvara, Haridasa Thakura, Swarup Damodar Goswami, Dasa Gadadhara, Rai Ramananda, Vasudeva Sarvabhauma and Vidya Vachaspati lifted the people out of their sorrows and miseries. Acyutananda danced with tears of joy flowing from his eyes while the dance of Mukunda, Sri Narahari, Sri Raghunandana, Gauridasa Pandita, Sripati, Sri Nidhi, Govinda, Madhava and Vasu Ghosh enchanted the world. Hundreds and thousands of people participated in that dance including Mukunda, Sri Acarya Purandara, Vasudeva Dutta, Brahmacari Suklambara, Sriman Pandita, Yadu, Sri Mukunda Dutta, Sri Madhusudana, Sri Natha, Mahesa, Sridhara, Sankara, Jagadish, Sri Yadunandana, Kasiwara, Sri Raghunatha Bhatta, Rupa, Sanatana, Sri Nakula Brahmacari, Dhanajaya, Vipra Vaninatha, Sikhi Mahiti, Kanai, Vijaya, Suryadasa, Sri Nrsimha, Hridaya Chaitanya, Syamananda, Srinivas, Sri Narottama and others. Even the demigods and

Gandharvas danced with them.

Gaurachandra loves his disciples and thus he fulfilled the desires of Srinivas and Narottama by appearing before them during their sankirtana. When He embraced Srinivas and Narottama He softly told them something confidential which others could not hear. Then Mahaprabhu and his companions disappeared, leaving His disciples in utter despair. Their pitiful lamentation broke the hearts of all who witnessed the scene.

The sudden appearance and disappearance of Mahaprabhu within that sankirtana created a sense of despair amongst the entire audience. Upon the disappearance of the Lord, people were struck by the reality of their miserable lives. In disappointment, they lamented piteously. One person cried out for Mahaprabhu while another looked everywhere, trying to find Sri Advaita or Nityananda. Someone else longed for another sight of Sri Gadadhar Pandit while still another asked for Haridasa and Vakresvara. One person called out for Srivasa and Murari while another asked about Sri Mukunda and Narahari. One devotee wanted to see Gauridasa and Gadadhara while another looked for Sri Swarup Damodara. At last they all abandoned hope, rolling on the ground and crying loudly because they would never see Mahaprabhu and his companions again. Tears flowed so profusely that the ground became muddy. Even heretics who had come to the sankirtana only for fun also began to cry. Lifting their hands high in the air they prayed to Mahaprabhu to protect them from sin and misery.

When Sripati, Srinivas and others regained their external senses they could not believe that they had actually enjoyed the association of the Lord. The people in the audience were also amazed by the vision they had seen. Srinivas and Narottama explained to them that they had been witness to another lila of Mahaprabhu and that the Lord's pastimes are always beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. Sri Jahnava Iswari confirmed this by saying that Mahaprabhu had fulfilled the great desires of his beloved devotees and Narottama by appearing in living form during their sankirtana.

After the Kheturi festival

Through the influence of Jahnava Mata, Srinivasa Acharya, Syamananda Prabhu and Narottam das Thakur the visionary understandings of Sri Rupa Goswami and the other Goswamis of Vraja were revealed to the Vaishnava Acharyas of Bengal who attended the Kheturi festival. The Gaura Purnima festival at Kheturi, in 1574, was a transition point in the growth and expansion of the Gaudiya Sampradaya.

A number of issues of dispute between different Gaudiya lineages were resolved at this grand meeting of Vaishnavas. Neither Narottama nor Syamananda were born in brahmin families, so the issue of whether a non-brahmin can be a Diksa-Guru was raised and resolved to the agreement of the Vaishnava Acharyas. A non-brahmin can be a Guru. The heretic idea of “Gaura-nagari” was also agreed to be a deviation from the true faith of Gaudiya Vaishnavism by the assembled Vaishnavas at Kheturi. Sri Vrindavan das Thakur, the author of Chaitanya Bhagavata, was at Kheturi, and in his writings Sri Vrindavan das Thakur denounced Gaura-nagari as a false, heretical doctrine. Srila Kavi Karnapura, the author of the book Gaura Gannodesa Dipika, was also present there. It is significant that Gaura Gannodesa Dipika was written after the Kheturi festival, for this book was the first book to give detailed information about the spiritual identities of the associates of Sri Chaitanya (such as the revelation that Gadadhar Pandit is Sri Radha and that Nityananda is Balarama). The concept of the Pancha-Tattva also came into wide acceptance after Kheturi, whereas before then each sect had simply followed the teachings of their own Guru Parampara coming from Advaitacharya, Nitai and others – they had not been overly concerned about this theological point (many of the sects didn't really have a clear vision of this issue). The mantra of Sri Swarup Damodar “panca-tattva-atmakam krsnam bhakta-rupa sva-rupakam bhakta-avataram bhakta-akhyam namami bhakta-saktikam” was accepted as a revealed truth by all the Gaudiya Vaishnavas at Kheturi.

Sri Chaitanya Bhagavata was written some time around 1548 – twenty six years before the Kheturi festival. Sri Vrindavana Das

Thakur would have been in his twenties when he wrote Sri Chaitanya Bhagavata. The Chaitanya Charitamrta was written in 1612 – forty eight years after Kheturi and almost eighty years after the disappearance of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu from this world. In Chaitanya Charitamrta we see the philosophy and religion of Gaudiya Vaishnavism presented in a most perfect and beautiful way. All the principal ideas taught by the Goswamis such as the doctrine of Panca-tattva are explained in depth in Chaitanya Charitamrta.

Devotees in the West are for the most part unaware of it, but there are some sects claiming to be Gaudiya Vaishnavas who say devotees should not chant the name of Gaura at all but instead only the Name of Sri Krishna. Yet from the Sri Chaitanya Bhagavata, written by Sri Vrindaban Das Thakur, it is clear that the idea devotees should chant Krishna's name and not the name of Sri Gauranga is contrary to the teachings of Sri Advaitacharya. In Chaitanya Bhagavata (Madhya 6) we read about Advaitacharya's worship of Mahaprabhu and find that Sri Advaita chanted the names of Visvambhara Sri Gauranga with great delight and reverence. After first performing puja with various items of worship, Sri Advaitacharya worshipped Mahaprabhu with this verse (1.19.65) from the Vishnu Purana:

namo brahmanya-devaya go-brahmana-hitaya ca
jagad-dhitaya krsnaya govindaya namo namah
I offer repeated obeisances unto Lord Krishna, who is the
protector and well-wisher of the cows and the brahmanas. He is
also the protector of the entire society. Unto that Lord, who is
always satisfying the senses of the cows, I offer my obeisances
again and again.

Sri Vrindaban Das Thakur continues relating this story, saying that after Advaita Acarya Prabhu offered his worship with this verse he then began to recite verses from the scriptures in praise of the Supreme Lord.

Sri Advaitacharya:

All glory to Visvambhar, the lord of the life of all! All glory to Gaurachandra, Ocean of Pity! All glory to the Lord Who ever vindicates the words spoken by his devotees! All glory to the Supreme Lord, the Person Who is the Great Source of all Divine

Descents! All glory to the Lord Whose joy is augmented by the sight of the beauty of the daughter of the Ocean (Sri Lakshmi)! All glory to the Lord Who wears the ornaments of Srivatsa (the footprint of Bhrigu) and Kaustubha gem! All glory to the Lord Who is the Manifest Form of the Hare Krishna Mahamantra!

In Sri Chaitanya Charitamrta 2.6.258 we find that Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, a direct associate of Mahaprabhu, was chanting only the Name of Gauranga in his japa meditation:

sri-krsna-caitanya saci-suta guna-dhama
ei dhyana, ei japa, laya ei nama

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya always chanted the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna Chaitanya, son of mother Sachi and the abode of all transcendental qualities. Indeed, the chanting of the the Holy Names of Lord Gauranga became his only meditation and japa.

In Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat Antya 4.126 we read the direct prediction of Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu Himself, that His Holy names will be chanted all over the world:

prthivite ache yata nagaradi-grama
sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama.

My Name will be chanted in all the towns, villages and countries of the world.

Other verses from the writings of the Gaudiya Acharyas in this regard:

paksi-matra yadi bale caitanyera nama
sei satya jaibeka caitanyera dhama.

If even a bird chants the Name of Lord Gauranga, it will most certainly attain the transcendental eternal abode of Lord Gauranga Mahaprabhu.

(Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat, Madhya 10.318)

Wandering from house to house amongst the markets of the town, Nityananda Prabhu performed a great sankirtana of the names of Lord Gauranga. In company with those gopalas, Nityananda made the three worlds fully satisfied through the chanting of Lord Gauranga's Names, just as it had formerly been in the land of Vraja when Nanda ruled as king of the cowherds.

(Sri Chaitanya Charita Mahakavya by Srila Murari Gupta 4.28.20)

caitanya-nityanande nahi esaba vicara
nama laite prema dena, vahe asrudhara

If someone only chants with some slight faith the holy names of Gauranga and Nityananda then he is very quickly cleansed of all offenses. Since in the chanting of the names of Nityananda and Gauranga there is no consideration of offenses one will very quickly come to the stage of love of God. Simply by chanting Their names tears of pure love for Krishna will flow from one's eyes.

(Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita 1.8.31)

Misconceptions, such as the assertion that devotees should not chant Gaura-nama, have endured in the world of Gaudiya Vaishnavism – even after the great conference of Vaishnavas at Kheturi. However the Kheturi festival did bring about a great deal of unity amongst the sects, which was certainly a very fortunate thing to occur.

At the same time, the Acharyas of the Gaudiya Vaishnava sects did alter their thinking and endeavour to conform to an “orthodoxy” that was in some ways a different way of thinking of the Acharyas of the earlier period. After Kheturi we find the aristocratic elements in the Vaishnava movement in Bengal became more influential.

In the society of the Vaishnavas, a new devotee was encouraged to take diksa (Krishna Mantra initiation) from a Brahmin grhastha Guru. The Guru would give this disciple mantra diksa with the mantra “Klim Krishnaya Govindaya Gopijanaballavaya Swaha” and other gayatri. After being formally initiated with these gayatri mantras a devotee was considered to be “properly initiated”. Yet it is to be remembered that in Chaitanya Charitamrta (Madhya Lila Chapter 7) it is stated that Mahaprabhu had many disciples in South India who became Mahabhagavatas and Acharyas and who also then made many new disciples, when in point of fact those direct disciples of Mahaprabhu had simply received the Hare Krishna Mahamantra from the Lord and not gayatri diksa. That is to say, in Bengal a devotee was considered to be initiated if he had received mantra diksa, whereas in South India the Lord Sri Gauranga had many disciples who were empowered with His Divine Shakti and who were authorized to make new disciples simply by giving those new disciples the Hare Krishna Mahamantra and “divya jnana” (divine

realization). Even today in East Bengal, Manipura and other places there are lineages where disciples are given the Hare Krishna Mahamantra as the diksa mantra. It is clearly the case that the Hare Krishna Mahamantra was widely regarded as a diksa mantra in the early period of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Indeed, in East Bengal prior to the birth of Mahaprabhu, Namacharya Srila Haridas Thakur gave the Hare Krishna Mahamantra to Mayadevi when he converted her into a Vaishnava.

Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur

Srila Rupa Goswami revealed the transcendental asta kaliya lila of Radha Govinda in Vrindaban. Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur revealed the asta kaliya lila of Sri Gauranga in Nabadwip. That is the contribution Vishvanatha gave to Gaudiya theology. And what he gave is new and original. A fresh revelation. Vishvanatha Chakravarti revealed the eternal, daily lila of Mahaprabhu and also explained how the asta kaliya lila of the servitors in Vraja in the mood of Radha Dasyam is going along. He wrote of the pastimes of the lady friends and servitors of Radharani, telling of different types of service they do throughout the twenty four hours of the day and night. That revelation was given by Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakur.

In his auspicious prayers for remembrance of the eight-fold daily pastimes of Sri Gaura Mahaprabhu, Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura wrote this introductory verse:

*ratryante sayanotthitah sura-sarit-snato vabhau yah prage
purvahne sva-ganair-lasaty upavane-tair-bhati madhyahnake
yah puryam-aparahnake nija-grhe sayam grhe 'thangane
srivasasya nisamukhe nisi vasan gaurah sa no raksatu*

Just before sunrise Lord Gauranga gets up from bed and he stretches his tall, gold body. He talks with his wife Sri Vishnupriyadevi. He washes his face and greets the new day. In the morning he is massaged with oil then he bathes in the celestial Ganges. He performs morning worship of Lord Vishnu (just as Lord Krishna would performed worship in the morning during his Dwaraka lila). In the third period of the day, the mid morning period, the Lord visits devotees at their homes and enjoys talking about Krishna with them. At noon, he happily plays in different groves and gardens on the bank of the Ganges. In the early afternoon, he wanders through the streets of Nabadwip where he enjoys various pastimes with his friends, the eternal residents of Nabadwip Dham. At sunset Sri Gaurahari returns home and worships Lord Vishnu. He performs other rituals also. Then in the early evening the Lord meets with his associates in the courtyard of Srivas Pandit. Together, they loudly chant the holy names and

dance in great ecstasy. Late at night, the Lord again returns to his home and goes to sleep. May this Lord Gaura protect us always.

Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur was born some time around 1640 A.D. and he was the initiated disciple of Sri Radharamana Chakravarti who belonged to the spiritual lineage of Srila Narottama Thakur. Sri Radharamana's Chakravarti spiritual master, Sri Krishnacharan Chakravarti, was initiated by Sri Ganganarayana Chakravarti, a leading disciple of Srila Narottama das Thakura. Visvanatha married at an early age but he renounced home and took the vow of a renunciate then he went to Vrindaban. When he arrived there, however, the devotees in Vrindaban suggested he return home since he was still quite young – so Visvanatha did return to his family for a while. Then he returned to Vraja and finally came to stay at Radhakunda where he engaged in constant, surrendered service of Sri Sri Radha Govinda.

In Vrindaban, Visvanatha found that after the disappearance of the Six Goswamis the glory of Vrindaban was no longer visible. A large number of holy places had been destroyed by Muslims and many brahmins had left Vrindaban, taking the Deities they served with them. Some Deities were standing alone in shrines and were not receiving any service. The devotees in Vrindaban were in constant fear of attack by Muslims. The villagers of Vrindaban had no interest in study of the scriptures of the Goswamis.

Living for many years in Vrindaban, Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur remained deeply absorbed in internal service of Radha Krishna. Feeling loyalty to the eternal Vrajavasis who serve Krishna in the mood of ragatmika bhava, Visvanatha wrote beautiful literature describing the practice of sadhana bhakti in the mood of spontaneous devotion (raganuga bhakti). He constantly remembered the mood of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who was always absorbed in the mood of separation (vipralambha-bhava).

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

*tyaktvasu-dustyaja-surepsita-rajya-laksmim
dharmistha arya-vacasa yad agad aranyam
maya-mrgam dayitayepsitam anvadhavad*

vande maha-purusa te caranaravindam
- Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.5.33

O Supreme Lord, You gave up the goddess of fortune and her great opulence, which is most difficult to abandon, and is sought after even by the gods. In order to perfectly establish the principles of religion. You left for the forest to honor the brahmin's curse. To deliver the sinful souls who chase illusory pleasures. You search after them and award them your devotional service. At the same time. You are engaged in search of yourself, in search for Sri Krishna: reality the beautiful.

Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura has given his explanation that although it seems that this verse applies to Lord Ramachandra, who left his kingdom and went with Sitadevi to the forest to discharge the duties designed by his father, this also applies to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura has drawn out the internal meaning of this verse and applied it in the case of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. *Tyakva su-dustyaja-surepsita-raj ya-laksmim* means he left imperial prosperity which is hard to abandon. Generally we find this in the case of Lord Ramachandra, but Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura says that *surepsita-rajya-laksmim* means the valuable devotional company of Vishnupriya-devi. That may not appear to be a materially big thing, but the dedication that Vishnupriya has shown in her heart for Sriman Mahaprabhu is greater than any imperial standard. And he had to leave that behind. Such a standard of sacrifice and service is never found even among the great society of the gods. For the sake of the public welfare he had to ignore the serving, loving attitude of Vishnupriya.

This verse mentions the curse of a brahmin. That brahmin told Sriman Mahaprabhu, "I want to participate in your nocturnal kirtans in which you taste Krishna lila, but the doors are closed." When Sriman Mahaprabhu used to perform kirtan and taste the *vraja lila* of Krishna, he did so behind closed doors in deep night. But this brahmin thought himself a very qualified, religious person because he lived by only drinking milk and nothing else, so he said, "I must have entrance into that kirtan. I do not eat anything but milk; why should I not be allowed?" Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu replied, "Milk drinking is no qualification for entering into Krishna consciousness." The

brahmin said, “Then I curse you to lose your family life!” “All right,” Mahaprabhu said, and accepted the curse. And later he took sannyasa and chased after those who were misguided by Mayadevi in order to save them. At the same time, although he is Krishna, he accepted the mood of Srīman Radharani. For these two reasons, he left his apparently worldly life: He acted for the welfare of the public and, after finishing that work, he spent the next twelve years tasting the very inner aspiration of Srīman Radharani and searching after his own inner sweetness. This was what he came to show to the world. In this mystic way, Srīmad Bhagavatam has proclaimed the magnanimous appearance of Srī Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Srīla Visvananatha Chakravarti Thakur taught that the greatest devotees of Srī Krishna are the milk-maids of Vrindaban whose mood of loving humility is infinite. In the night when they were at home with their husbands the Gopis sometimes heard Krishna's flute calling to them from the forest. Those Gopis went running out into the night to join Krishna in His rasa dance. But the Gopis were criticized and abused by their family members because they loved Krishna more than anything else. Some of the Gopis who could not meet with Krishna dropped down dead on the ground. Their husbands blocked them from leaving their houses and the Gopis felt such terrible pain in their hearts that could not bear it and died. They gave up their life breath and their souls came to meet Krishna and dance with him in the moonlight. The Gopis did not have an honourable position in society. In their village they were not considered as wives of Krishna - they were the wives of other cowherd men. A virtuous wife is shown respect by people in the village but a woman who is known to go out to meet with a paramour lover is abused and mocked by everyone. Village people say a woman like that has no morals or virtue. Everyone abuses her. For love, she has given up her dignity and honour, and only her dearest friends feel any sympathy with her. Family members may even beat her. They will insult her constantly. Such is her pitiful status in the village. Such was the status of the Gopis of Vrindaban. The mood of love of the Gopis is called *parakiya rasa*, or paramour love, and Srīla Visvananatha Chakravarti Thakur said this type of loving devotion is the most intense type of love that can be felt for Krishna.

In the final years of his presence on earth, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu continuously remembered the mood of separation in *parakiya rasa* felt by the Gopis. Day and night the Golden Lord was burning in the fire of separation and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu constantly remembered the mood of Sri Radha and the Gopis of Vrindaban who gave up everything else for the love of Krishna.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said: *aslisya va pada-ratam pinastu mam, adarshanan marma-hatam karotu va*: the duty of a lover is to be totally surrendered to Krishna. And service does not mean that I will come into direct contact with Him. Remote service is also service, for absence makes the heart grow fonder. Constant loving remembrance within the heart makes love grow strong and become more tangible. We should try to serve Krishna through Krishna's devotees without expectation of any reward. We should try and remember how Sri Radha was longing to see Krishna. We should try to become her sympathetic friend. We should have no desire except to serve her - even without expecting to see Him even once ourselves. We should not try to have his audience but instead we should try to assist Sri Radha for She the best lover of Krishna. We should only want to be utilized by her. The little energy we have must be utilized for his cause, for his purpose. We are his potency and we should prove that we belong to Him. Mahaprabhu says *aslisya va pada-ratam pinastu mam, adarshanan marma-hatam karotu va*, "He may embrace me or reject me, or he may even be indifferent towards me. Whatever he likes he may do, but I have no alternative but to serve him." We must adopt this exclusive and unconditional attitude of surrender. And not think that, "If he doesn't want to reciprocate according to what I want from him then I won't serve him. I shall become an atheist or a mayavadi. Krishna, if you don't come forward to show yourself and satisfy me then I shall seek my own way - I don't want You!" If there is any tinge of such an attitude within us then we are far, far away from the Lord.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

Yatha tatha va vidadhatu lampato, mat-prana-nathas tu sa eva naparah. "We have no alternative but to serve you." To search means to serve: "I want to be utilized for his cause. However petty the service may be, nothing is petty when in his connection, the

least connection, even from far away. He need not please me, even by giving his darshana (audience) in a lightning way (like a flash of lightning). Everything depends on His will.”

Unconditional offering of our life unto him shows faith of the highest type. If our offering is conditional we shall have to remain far away from him. The characteristic of the highest faith is absolutely unconditional: “I am only to be satisfied with just the chance to serve him from afar, through some medium - or many mediums, not only one – dasa-dasa-dasanudasatvam – servant of the servant of the servant. I may have his connection from afar and my energy passes through the devotees, towards him, towards the center of fulfillment. Whatever my position may be, I want my connection with the greatest fulfillment of the whole world!” Everyone is searching for such fulfillment of all their innermost necessities. *sarva-dharman parityajya, mam ekam saranam vraja* (Bg. 18.66): the search for Him eliminates all other duties. A true devotee thinks, “There is no obligation to anyone except one, and He is my Lord, Krishna.” And His most laudable and greatest servitors are those who are in contact with his greatest agent. Not his direct contact, but contact with the greatest agent of His service will constitute the safer and higher relationship of ananya-bhajana, exclusive service.

The clash of Spirituality and Sectarianism

In other Vaishnava schools of thought such as the lineages coming from Sri Ramanuja Acharya, devotees have a different conception about the highest goal of devotion than the conception given to us by Sri Chaitanya and the Gaudiya Vaishnava Acharyas. In 1706, Srila Baladeva Vidyabhushana was sent by Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakur to a meeting of pandits at Galta near Jaipur in Rajasthan to prove the authenticity of the Gaudiya lineage. The leading preceptors of the Ramanandi sect, a sub-branch of the Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya, had told the king of Jaipur, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, that the Gaudiya Vaishnavas are not a genuine spiritual lineage. The Ramanandis reasoned that all valid lineages have a commentary on Vedanta-sutra detailing the essential teachings of their school of thought, but the Gaudiyas don't have any commentary so they cannot be regarded as an authentic lineage. The Ramanandis were worshipers of Lord Rama and they wanted to assert their authority. They wanted to gain the support of the king and take over worship of Deities worshiped by Gaudiya Vaishnavas in various temples. In the meeting of pandits that was convened, Baladeva Vidyabhushana won the debate for the Gaudiya lineage. He presented a commentary of Vedanta Sutra he had written, of which the first verse had been directly explained to him by the Deity Govinda, the Deity of Srila Rupa Goswami.

This period was a difficult time for the Gaudiya Vaishnavas. When the British began ruling India they had a policy of suppressing the cult of worship of Sri Krishna. At one time the British actually promoted the worship of Lord Rama instead of Krishna among the “pagan” Hindu population they were ruling. The reasoning of the British was that Rama was an idealized king who lived a moral and righteous life, having just one wife, whereas Krishna was a debauchee, a liar and a thief. Lord Krishna was something like lust incarnate in the minds of the British Christians. The Chairman of the East India Company, Charles Grant (1746-1823), was a tremendous influence upon Evangelical Christians who were active in rural Bengal and other places in this period, and Grant was of the view that

Hindus are “morally depraved” and “lacking in truth, honesty and good faith”. Charles Grant once declared: “We cannot avoid recognizing in the people of Hindoostan a race of men lamentably degenerate and base...governed by malevolent and licentious passions...and sunk in misery by their vices...”

The basic ideals of Christianity and Vaishnavism are somewhat similar but there are some fundamental differences between them too. In the nineteenth century the Vaishnava devotee Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur wrote a critique of Christianity in his book *Tattva Viveka*. He pointed out that the Vaishnavas do not believe in the existence of any “Satan”. There is only one supreme power and the Vaishnavas do not believe in the existence of any infernal, devilish power which has been working against God to cause evil in the world since the dawn of creation. Bhaktivinode Thakur wrote that the notion that there are two great supernatural powers constantly struggling against each other, one Good, the other Evil, is an idea first propounded by Zoroaster in Babylon. He said the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions have been influenced by Zoroaster's misconception that a Good God is battling against a Bad God in some sort of cosmic war. In contrast to this belief, Vaishnavism teaches that there is one Supreme Being known by many names such as Vishnu, Rama and Krishna - or even Allah or Yahweh - and that the universe is functioning perfectly according to God's plan. Satan is nothing but a myth. Many gods and demons are mentioned in the ancient Hindu scriptures but those beings are people like us who live a lifetime then die and become reborn in a new life where they must suffer or enjoy the results of their karma. There are no devils lurking here and there, trying to tempt people to do evil works - apart from the lust, greed and anger we feel within our own minds. We have only ourselves to blame for the difficulties we experience. Everything that happens to us comes to us through our karma.

Bhaktivinode Thakur said there is no such thing as an everlasting hell, which is another myth that was first imagined by Zoroaster. Living beings create karma then experience suffering as a result of that. But even if a person is a demon like Hitler he will not go to an everlasting hell. The soul reincarnates and experiences the results of his karma and every soul has the capacity to evolve into a pure soul who can enter into the spiritual world and be with God. Hell can

exist, no doubt. There are many people living in a hell on earth today. But Krishna doesn't condemn anyone to live in hell for all eternity.

The story in the Bible about Adam and Eve was discussed in some depth by Bhaktivinode Thakur. The Bible says Adam and Eve were living in a blissful garden but when they did something wrong they were thrown out of that paradise forever. Then, because of the sin committed by those primitive ancestors, all the future generations of mankind are punished by God. Yet we see this God is kind to some people and harsh to others - he is not just. Some babies are born in wealthy homes while others are born into a life of indescribable misery. Not because of anything they did in a previous lifetime or karma or any other such thing, since Christians do not believe in karma, but because God is not fair. He gives some people plenty of daily bread while others starve. This type of God who causes people to suffer for no reason cannot be said to be a loving and Good God. The Gaudiya Vaishnavas do not believe in this sort of God. Gaudiya Vaishnavas believe in Krishna - who is pure goodness.

Some people believe that because of the offence committed by their primitive ancestors Adam and Eve all human beings are born as sinners and offenders. Since the original offence cannot be removed by the human beings themselves, God was born in human form and then God Himself had to endure suffering and death in order that the sins of mankind might be removed. All those souls who believe that God shed his blood so that humankind would be saved from sin are saved by the Saviour, and those who don't believe are condemned to hell.

Bhaktivinode Thakur, however, expressed the view that these doctrines are untrue. He wrote that the “doctrine of salvation for souls by penalizing the God who was born among human beings” is not an intelligible idea for normal thinking people.

In order to believe in this religion a person must faithfully accept several peculiar dogmas. One dogma is that the soul does not exist before birth. Another is that the soul does not exist for all eternity - they say the soul is created when our bodies are created, just as these physical bodies of ours are created at some point in historic time

through sexual union. They also say a soul will never return to earth after dying, for you get just one life, just one chance, and when you die you are judged for what you have done. You will be sent to an eternal heaven or an eternal hell as a consequence of what you did. So if, by Jehovah's will, you happened to have been born in a family of barbarians, and if you lived your life as a barbarian, then you will certainly go to hell. Given that these dogmas are accepted as facts by many preachers of this religion we do wonder, sometimes, whether the preachers of this religion actually have any real vision of the real God and his unlimited grace, mercy and love. The Vaishnavas cannot help but wonder if the preachers of this religion are living in a dark age.

Why are we suffering, and what belief that we may believe in will bring us deliverance?

Bhaktivinode Thakur wrote:

*(prabhu he!) emona durmati, samsara bhitore,
poriya achinu ami
tab nija-jana, kono mahajana, pataile dile tumi*

A wicked mind brought me into this world, O Lord, but one of your pure and elevated devotees has come to bring me out.

*doya kori' more, patita dekhiya, kohilo amare giya
ohe dina-jana suno bhalo katha ullasita he'be hiya*

He saw me so fallen and wretched, took pity, and came to me saying, "O humbled soul, please listen to this good tiding, for it will gladden your heart.

*tomare tarite, sri-krishna-chaitanya, nabadwipi abatara
toma heno kato, dina hina jane, korilena bhava-para*

"Sri Krishna Chaitanya has appeared in the land of Nabadwip to deliver you. He has safely conducted many sad and miserable souls such as you across the sea of worldly existence.

*bedera pratijna, rakhibara tare, rukma-barna bipra-suta
mahaprabhu name, nadiya mataya, sange bhai abadhuta*

"To fulfill the promise of the Vedas, the son of a brahmana bearing the name Mahaprabhu of golden complexion has descended with his brother the avadhuta Nityananda. Together

they have overwhelmed all of the Nadia district with divine ecstasy.

*nanda-suta jini, caitanya gosai, nija nama kori'dana
tarilo jagat, tumi-o jaiya, loho nija-paritrana*

“Sri Chaitanya Gosai, who is Krishna himself, the son of Nanda, has saved the world by freely distributing his own holy name. Go also and receive your deliverance.”

*se katha suniya, asiyachi, natha! tomara carana-tale
bhaktivinoda, kandiya kandiya, apana-kahini bale*

O Lord, hearing those words, Bhaktivinoda has come weeping and bows down to your lotus feet, telling the story of his life.

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusan

India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a patchwork of many states. The British gradually extended their power so that some regions came under direct British control while others managed to remain independent. In the seventeenth century the king of Jaipur was allied to the Moghuls, later changing to an alliance with the British.

Baladeva Vidyabhusana had been born near Remuna in Orissa, and at an early age he learned Sanskrit grammar, poetry, rhetoric, and logic. He then began wandering to different places of pilgrimage, meeting with sadhus here and there. Once, he happened to stay at a temple of the Tattvavadi sect of Sri Madhvacharya, and after hearing their teachings he became a disciple within that tradition. After this, he took sannyasa and travelled and preached the tattvavada-siddhanta throughout the length and breadth of India.

When he was wandering from one place to the next he came to Jagannatha Puri. There, he chanced to meet one of the foremost disciples of Sri Rasikananda Deva (the leading disciple of Syamananda Prabhu), named Pandit Sri Radha Damodar, with whom he discussed spiritual knowledge and devotion to Krishna. At that time Radha Damodar Goswami told Baladeva about Sri Chaitanya's philosophy and his pastimes of mercy. After hearing these things Baladeva's heart was deeply moved. He asked for initiation into the Radha Krishna mantra and began studying the Sat Sandarbha scriptures written by Jiva Goswami with his gurudeva, Radha Damodara Goswami. Later, Sri Radha Damodara Goswami sent him to Vrindaban where he took shelter of Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura. Even later still, Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura chose this learned devotee Baladeva to represent the Gaudiya conception in that crucial meeting of pandits held near Jaipur.

When Baladeva Vidyabhusana came into the assembly of pandits from the Ramanandi lineage Baladeva challenged them to a scholarly debate. In that debate a tumult of arguments were presented by many scholars of the Ramanandi sect. But Baladeva was able to refute most

of their assertions. However neither side was clearly a winner in the debate. Then Baladeva argued that the founder of the Gaudiya Sampradaya, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, had established that the Srimad Bhagavatam is the natural commentary on Vedanta and that no other commentary is needed. The Bhagavatam itself states that it is *bhashyanam brahma-sutranam*, the natural commentary on Vedanta, and this is also stated by Jiva Goswami in his Sat Sandarbha. Therefore the Gaudiya sampradaya has chosen to accept Srimad-Bhagavatam as the original commentary on Vedanta and sees no need for a separate commentary.

At that point, the pandits from the Ramanandi sect shouted: “He admits that there is no commentary! They have no commentary!”

Having no other alternative, Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana promised to show them the Gaudiya commentary on Vedanta within a few days. Then Baladeva went to pray to the Deity Govinda. He was praying for guidance.

While Baladeva was sleeping that night the Deity Govinda came to him in a dream and personally told him to compose a commentary on Vedanta. Waking, Baladeva felt overjoyed. In just a few days he completed a commentary on Vedanta sutra known as the Govinda-bhasya.

Baladeva reveals his source of inspiration in his appendix to the Govinda-bhasya:

*vidyarupa bhusanam ye pradaya
khatim nitye teno yo mamudaraha
sri govinda-svapna-nirdistha bhasye
radhabandhuranga sa jivat*

May Sri Govinda be all glorious. By his mercy, he revealed this commentary to me in a dream. This commentary is especially appreciated by the highly learned and as a result of this I have been bestowed the name Vidyabhusana. But it is really Sri Govinda who deserves all the credit. May that Lord Sri Govinda, who is the most dear life and soul of Sri Radhika, be victorious.

With this commentary in his hand Baladeva went to see the

Ramanandi pandits. They were amazed by his commentary and admitted defeat. The Gaudiya Vaisnava tradition was declared victorious and the gathered pandits gave the title Vidyabhusana, or “one whose ornament is knowledge”, to Baladeva. The king then decreed that everyone should attend the aroti of Govindadeva for it was Lord Govinda who is ultimate source of this new Vedanta commentary.

Baladeva returned to Vrindaban and his siksa-guru Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti was elated by his success. Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur bestowed his blessings on his disciple. Baladeva then began writing commentaries on Jiva Goswami's Sat Sandarbha, and not long after this Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura disappeared from this world. But in his absence the devotees were able to turn to Baladeva Vidyabhusana as their guide and spiritual master.

In his book Prameya Ratnavali, Baladeva Vidyabhusana wrote:
sri madvrah praha visnum paratamam akhilamnaya vedyam ca
cisvam
satyam bhedom ca jivam hari carana jusas tartamyam ca tesam
moksam visnv-anghri-labham tad-amala-bhajanam tasya hetum
pramanam
pratyaksadi trayam cety upadisati hari Krishna-caitanya candra
“Sri Madhvacarya taught that:

1. Krishna, who is known as Hari is the Supreme Lord, the Absolute.
2. That Supreme Lord may be known through the Vedas.
3. The material world is real.
4. The jivas, or souls, are different from the Supreme Lord.
5. The jivas are by nature servants of the Supreme Lord.
6. There are two categories of jivas: liberated and illusioned.
7. Liberation means attaining the lotus feet of Krishna; it means entering into an eternal relationship of service to the Supreme Lord.
8. Pure devotional service is the cause of this relationship.

9. The truth may be known through direct perception, inference and Vedic authority.

These very principles were taught by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.”

Siddha Pranali

Among those who call themselves Gaudiya Vaishnavas there some communities that practice a kind of religious tradition in which a guru tells a new initiate their “siddha identity” in order that the new initiate may practices the meditation that they are serving Sri Sri Radha Krishna in the form of a gopi or manjari, a milkmaid of Vraja. According to this system of belief, a new initiate practices the meditation that they are a manjari serving Radha Krishna under the guidance of their guru, who they also imagine to be a manjari. Followers of this practice say it is based upon the teachings of Sri Gopal Guru Goswami, a direct associate of Mahaprabhu, and his disciple Dhyanaacandra Goswami.

Dhyanaacandra Goswami wrote:

In meditation, before anything else, the practitioner should meditate on the manjari forms of his guru-pranali, beginning with his guru, then parama-guru, etc. Then he shall meditate on Sri Radhika and after that Sri Nandanandana Krishna.
- (Paddhati of Dhyanaacandra Goswami, 344)

However, in regard to this belief system Sri Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakura wrote:

Nowadays in the Gaudiya Vaishnava Sampradaya some immature pancaratrika-mantra traders are presenting imaginary names and forms as the goal and the path of perfection (siddha-pranali); in this way they gratify the minds of their disciples as well as disclose their own foolishness and ignorance of the Vaishnava literatures.

In fact there is a situation where, generation after generation, the successive gurus in various “traditional communities” of Gaudiya Vaishnavas are giving instruction about “siddha-deha” to new initiates, with the gurus telling the disciples about their own “siddha name” and “siddha form”, as well as the disciple's form and name: “you are such-and-such manjari”; but in reality these so-called gurus have no real vision of either their own real spiritual form or the spiritual body of their so-called disciples. The so-called gurus haven't realized their own real “siddha form”. Nor have they attained the

realized the stage of Prema (pure love). But they are initiating new disciples and telling the disciple “you are a manjari and your name is such-and-such-manjari”. The practices of these people are in fact a mere imitation of the practices of Gopal Guru Goswami, Dhyana-candra Goswami and other devotees of the past who had a real and direct understanding of the transcendental form of their innermost self (swarup siddha).

Sri Jiva Goswami stated that a man should not meditate upon the intimate lila of Radha Govinda if he feels any masculine urges. Sri Jiva Goswami's view is that we should all show respect for the intimate pastimes of Lord Krishna within his harem and not seek to intrude into that sacred place while our minds are contaminated by the false presumption that we are “males” who enjoy the beauty of women:

kintu rahasya-lila tu paurusa-vikaravad indriyaih pitr-putra-dasa-
bhavais ca nopasya sviya-bhava-virodhat rahasyatvam ca tasyah
kvacid alpamsena kvacit tu sarvamseneti jeyam

These secret sports are not to be worshiped by those who experience male transformations in their senses, or by those who are in the moods of father, son and servant.

Bhakti Sandarbha (338)

Ladies also, and children too – any and all devotees who have not attained a highly qualified stage of devotion – no junior devotee should attend “lessons in rasa-lila”:

tad etad govinda vraja vijana kantanuvacanamdadhadbhir
yogyasya shravasi paramapyam na sadasi

This confidential rasa lila topic is to be heard by qualified people who carry Govinda in their hearts, and not in a public arena.

Gopal Campu (1.23.1), of Sri Jiva Goswami.

In the eighteenth century, the siddha-pranali doctrine became the mainstream orthodox tradition in Vrindaban and other centres of Gaudiya Vaishnavism through the influence of Jayakrishna das Babaji and other influential gurus of the time.

Jayakrishna das Babaji refused to give instructions about raganuga bhakti to devotees who did not know their “guru pranali”. In the Gaudiya Vaishnava Abhidana we read the story of a young babaji

who once approached Jayakrishna das Babaji, asking for instruction. The young babaji said: “I don't know what a guru-pranali is. I never asked my guru anything about it.” Jaya Krishna das then told him, “The guru on the path of raganuga devotion always gives the guru-pranali to his disciple. The entire line of disciplic succession is found on it - the names of the guru, parama-guru, paratpara-guru and so on. With the disciplic succession, the guru also gives the siddha-pranali. In the siddha-pranali, the guru gives the identities of the disciple and all the line of guru's spiritual bodies - their colour, age, ornamentation, favoured type of service.” Jayakrishna das Babaji refused to teach this young babaji about raganuga bhakti. He told him to return to his guru in Bengal and said he would only teach the young babaji after seeing a written list of all the previous gurus in the young man's lineage.

Some devotees think Jayakrishna das Babaji was an advanced Vaishnava. But it is wrong to say that a disciple must know the “siddha-pranali” in order that the disciple might be able to engage in raganuga bhakti. This conception of raganuga sadhana presented by Jayakrishna das Babaji is entirely different from the method of raganuga bhakti practiced in the time of Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanyadeva and his direct associates.

The proper way of advancement in the path of raganuga bhakti is described in Bhaktirasamrtasindhu 1.2.291, where Srila Rupa Goswami states:

tatra adhikari:
 ragatmikaika-nistha ye vraja-vasi-janadayah
 tesam bhavaptaye lubdho bhaved atradhikaravan

Those eligible for Raganuga Bhakti:

Those who have the feeling: “I want feelings of attraction for Krishna like Ragatmikaikanistha, the feelings felt by the Vrajabasis, the eternal residents of Vraja” – they are eligible to engage in Raganuga Bhakti.

In his commentary, Srila Vishvanatha Cakravarti Prabhu points out that in this verse Sri Rupa Goswami has clearly defined raganuga bhakti. Here, Sri Rupa Goswami states that those individuals who in their intrinsic nature feel an intense longing and firm attachment for

service following in the wake of the feelings and sentiments of the residents of Vrindaban, with no thought or attraction for the majesties of the Godhead, are alone eligible for following in the way of raganuga bhakti.

In the Second Wave of the Eastern Division of Sri Sri Bhakti-Rasamrta-Sindhu, in the section dealing with Raganuga-Sadhana-Bhakti, there is a discussion about whether or not men are able to properly appreciate the mood of amorous devotion (madhura rasa). There, Srila Rupa Goswami has quoted the following verse from the Padma Purana:

*yatha pura maharsayah sarve dandakaranya-vasinah
drstva ramam harim tatra bhoktum-aicchan suvigraham
te sarve stritvam apannah samadbhutas ca gokule
harim samprapya kamena tato mukta bhavarnavat*

In olden times when the great sages living in the Dandaka forests saw the beautiful Person of Lord Rama they desired to enjoy Him. They were all therefore born in Gokul as females and were freed forever from earthly associations of the ocean of the world by attaining the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna through supra-mundane sex-desires.

The sages of Dandaka forest never learned anything about any siddha pranali lineage. Without receiving any instructions about such things they attained their next birth as gopis in Gokul. The spiritual identity they attained arose from within their own inner being. Their spiritual forms of gopis arose as a result of inner awakening and not through any type of formal instruction of the type that was taught by Jaya Krishna das Babaji.

In Sri Sanatan Goswami's book Brihad Bhagavatamritam he tells the story of a young boy named Gopakumar (Sarupa) who received initiation into the Krishna mantra from his Guru but no further instructions.

Gopakumar said: One day a great devotee embraced me and said, "Child, if you wish the perfection desired by all, then bathe in Kesi-tirtha and take from me the mercy of the Lord of the

universes.” When I had bathed, he taught me the mantra. Then, to teach the method of worship, he began to describe the Lord, the object of meditation. Overcome with love, and crying as a woman separated from her love, he suddenly fainted in ecstasy. When he became conscious again I was too frightened to ask him anything. His mind was fixed on something else. He suddenly rose and left. I never met him again. What had I obtained? What result would it bring? How should the mantra be chanted? I did not know anything. Out of respect for his words this mantra alone was on my mouth. Unnoticed by anyone, I eagerly chanted it at every moment. By the power of that great person my heart became purified as I chanted. I developed faith. Thinking of his words I decided that this mantra would lead me to the Lord of the universes. I became happy and I was dedicated to chanting.

The boy then became a pilgrim searching for the Lord, learning many lessons and making progress, step by step. In this story by Sanatan Goswami, written in the same genre as Pilgrims Progress, the seeker journeys through many realms of existence until he finally attains his goal and meets with Krishna in Vrindaban. In the course of his journey Gopakumar sometimes meets his Guru and receives instructions, but at no time does he receive any instruction regarding “siddha-pranali”. Sanatan Goswami has shown that for a sincere seeker everything is attained in the fullness of time if he constantly chants the holy name of Krishna. The boy Gopakumar finally gains an eternal role in Vrindaban in the form of a cowherd boy, a friend of Krishna (sakhya-rasa); but his Guru was absorbed in amorous love (madhura-rasa). In the mood of separation, his Guru would be seen “crying as a woman separated from her love”. Glorifying this book, Srila Rupa Goswami stated in Bhaktirasamrtasindhu (1.4.20): *srimat prabhupadambhojaih sarva bhagavatamrte vyaktikrtasti gudhapi bhakti-siddhanta-madhuri* - The most revered master Prabhupada Sanatan Goswami has explicitly described the ambrosial sweetness of the philosophy of bhakti in his Brhat-Bhagavatamrta even though this bhakti philosophy (bhakti-siddhanta) is most abstruse and a mystery.

It is interesting to consider that because Jayakrishna das Babaji refused to give instructions about raganuga to the young Babaji who didn't know his guru-pranali, it can be supposed that if Gopakumar had come to get instruction from Jayakrishna das Babaji then he also

would have been told that he was ineligible to engage in raganuga bhakti.

Proper raganuga bhakti sadhana is something different from what was taught by Jayakrishna das Babaji. If we carefully study the writings of the Gaudiya Acharyas such as Sri Sanatan Goswami, Sri Rupa Goswami and Sri Baladeva Vidyabhusana, it is clear that a soul does not need to get given instructions about one's spiritual body (swarup). What is truly essential is that a soul should begin to chant the Name of Hari without offences. When this goal is achieved then the natural form of the self and Krishna Prema (divine love for Krishna) will naturally be revealed in one's consciousness, arising as they do from within our own self. In his instructions to Sri Sanatan Goswami, the Lord, Sri Chaitanyadeva himself, said:

nitya-siddha krishna prema sadhya kabhu naya
sraavanadi suddha citte karaye udaya

Pure love for Krishna is eternally established in the hearts of the living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, this love naturally awakens.

(Chaitanya Charitamrta, Madhya 22.107)

There is no need for discussion or further elaboration upon this point. The self evident meaning of the words of Sri Chaitanyadeva is the ultimate siddhanta of the real Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur was told about his siddha-deha (siddha identity) and the siddha pranali of the lineage of Bipin Bihari Goswami when he received initiation from Bipin Bihari Goswami. We have heard from Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Dev Goswami Maharaj that Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's statements in his writings, in regard to siddha-deha and the intimate pastimes of Radha Govinda, are his direct insights about what he was seeing in his meditation. His position is so great and high. He did feel some regard for Bipin Bihari Goswami initially, but the relationship between them was damaged irreparably when Bipin Bihari Goswami decided to join with people who opposed the development of the Mayapur Yogapith. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur had the inspiration that the Mayapur Yogapith really is the birthplace of Sri Chaitanya

Mahaprabhu, as did his siksa-guru Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj; so when Bipin Bihari Goswami gave opposition to this inspirational insight of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and his siksa-guru, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur withdrew from the association of Bipin Bihari Goswami.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

We have to follow the spirit; otherwise after Jahnava devi, the wife of Lord Nityananda, up to Vipina Goswami, from whom Bhaktivinoda Thakura took initiation, there are so many unknown lady gurus. Through them, the mantra came to Vipina Goswami, and from him Bhaktivinoda Thakura received the mantra. We accept Bhaktivinoda Thakura, but should we count all those ladies in our disciplic succession? What was their realization?

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur has also given us a warning in his writings that a disciple should have proper realization before engaging in any meditation upon the siddha-deha:

adhikara na labhiya siddhadeha bhave
viparyaya buddhi janme saktira abhave
If one thinks of their siddha-deha without actually achieving
transcendental realization their intelligence gets bewildered.
(from Bhajana-rahasya by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur)

In the commentary to Bhajana-rahasya written by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami he stated as follows:

chari sloke kramasah bhajana pakkva kara,
pancam slokete nija siddha deha vara,
ei sloke siddhadehe radhapadasraya,
arambha kariya krame unnati udaya,
chaya sloka bhajite anartha dure gela,
tabe jana siddhadehe adhikara haila,
adhikara na labhiya siddhadeha bhave,
viparjya buddhi janme saktira abhave
-(Sri Bhajan Rahasya Rahasyer Pragbandha)

By careful practice of the precepts of Sri Chaitanya presented in the first four verses of Siksastaka, gradually you acquire maturity in bhajan. After that, be eligible for achieving your realized eternal spiritual form by practising the fifth verse. Being well-established in the fifth verse, you will get the service of the Lotus

Feet of Radharani by attaining the realized form. Advancement of bhajan will begin from this and will be developed. After being competent in realizing the transcendental sweet ecstatic feelings through practice of precepts given in the sixth verse, your attachment for ulterior reverse desires will be removed totally. Then actually you will be entitled to get eternal realized spiritual form. When the eight principal modes of transcendental ecstatic feelings will be revealed to you, the criterion of your attainment of the safety region is achieved. Without the manifestation of these ecstatic feelings, if any aspirant poses to get that realized state, it will be cause of disaster to him due to lack of intrinsic spiritual realization from within.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami also wrote:

bhavera ankura ho le vidhi ara thake na

raganuga sraddha matre jata rati haya na

When bhava, the ecstatic mood of divine love actually awakens then the need for following scriptural rules (vidhi) does not remain. However, mere faith in spontaneous devotional service (raganuga) does not produce the actual awakening of transcendental loving attachment (rati).

bhavankura samagame vaidhi bhakti thake na

rucike ratira saha kabhu eka jane na

Only when the seed of intense divine emotion sprouts forth pure bhava, only then is there no need to adhere to scriptural rules and regulations (vaidhi bhakti). One should never consider ruci (the taste for devotional service) to be the same as rati (transcendental loving attachment in devotional service).

raganuga boile i prapta rasa jane na

vidhi sodhya jane jabhu raganuga bole na

Divine rasa can never be factually attained merely by talking about spontaneous devotion (by claiming “I am a raganuga-bhakta”). A beginning student who should still be further purified by following the scriptural injunctions is never said to be on the level of performing spontaneous loving service unto the Lord.

sadhanera purve keha bhavankura paya na

jade sraddha na chadile rati kabhu haya na

No one can ever experience the sprouting of pure ecstatic

emotions (bhava) without first following the regulated injunctions of the scriptures. One who does not give up faith in materialistic things can never attain the stage of spiritual attachment in devotional service.

-(from Prakṛta-rasa-sata-dusani)

It is also to be remembered that Sri Rupa Goswami wrote in Bhaktirasamṛtasindhu that there are people who enthusiastically engage in the practices of raganuga bhakti while having a heart that is filled with desires for selfish enjoyment or liberation. These people may experience bliss and detachment from worldly life through the practice of bhakti but they do not attain real attachment to Krishna (rati). This matter is dealt with in some detail by Sri Rupa Goswami in Bhaktirasamṛtasindhu (1.3.42-55; 2.3.12-14; 2.3.85-91) and in the commentaries of Sri Jiva Goswami and Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti. It is better to wait until we are pure before trying to feel the bliss of madhura-rasa in our meditation. Fools rush in, where angels fear to tread.

Sri Rupa Goswami:

vimuktakilatar yair ya muktir api vimrgyate
ya krsnenatigopy asu bhajadbhyo 'pi na diyate
sa bhukti-mukti-kamatva cchuddham bhaktim akurvataṁ
hrdaye sambhavat yesam katham bhagavati ratih
Rati, the feeling of attraction to Krishna that is sought after by souls who have sacrificed all selfish desires, the feeling of attraction which Sri Krishna withholds in great secrecy, is not easily conferred by him even to devotees who are engaged in spiritual practices. How can there be an appearance of rati in the hearts of those who do not practice unalloyed and pure bhakti because of manifold desires for elevation and salvation, or in the hearts of those who are anxious for self-destruction by way of desiring for merging in the Absolute Brahman?
(Bhaktirasamṛtasindhu 1.3.42-3)

In his commentary Sri Jiva Goswami points out that here it is explicitly shown how rati cannot appear in the hearts of the aspirants for moksa, and that the signs of tears, horripilation, paleness, etc. manifest in them are not real signs of rati. The reason is that they are desirous of the fruits of devotion and salvation, and therefore it is not

possible that rati in the Lord can awaken in their hearts. The defect in them is that they do not practice unalloyed bhakti, which is completely free from the tinge of fruitive karma and dry knowledge.

Meditation upon the siddha-deha, the perfect form of the self, is a devotional practice that only advanced devotees who are free of mundane desires should engage in. In the practice of devotional service it is best if we avoid the mistake that some people are making when they engage in meditation upon confidential pastimes of Radha Govinda while still being contaminated with false ego and mundane lust.

Through chanting Krishna's names and remembering Sri Chaitanya anyone can become liberated and enter the spiritual world. After Sri Chaitanya left Nabadwip he journeyed all over India, encouraging people everywhere to sing and remember the holy names of Lord Krishna. Even animals such as tigers, elephants and bears became mad with joy when they heard the voice of Sri Chaitanya singing the names of Krishna when he was wandering in the Jarikhanda forest.

Sri Prabhodananda Saraswati wrote:

*yatha yatha gaura padaravinde
vindeta bhaktim krta punya rasih
tatha tathot sarpati hrdy akasmat
radha padambhoja sudhambhurasih*

As much as we devote ourselves to the lotus feet of Sri Gauranga, we will automatically achieve the nectarine service of Srimati Radharani in Vrindaban. An investment in Nabadwip Dham will automatically take one to Vrindaban. How one has been carried there will be unknown to him. But those who have good fortune invest everything in the service of Gauranga. If they do that, they will find that everything has automatically been offered to the divine feet of Srimati Radharani. She will accept them in Her confidential service and give them engagement, saying, "Oh, you have a good recommendation from Nabadwip, I immediately appoint you to this service." Srimati Radharani is introduced in the form of Gauranga with the added element of magnanimity. No selfish sensualism can enter our consideration of the pastimes of Sri Gauranga, for there he appears as a sannyasi and a devotee.

The Spiritual Form of the Self

A significant aspect of the siddha-pranali doctrine as it is generally practiced nowadays is the proposition that a guru will assign a spiritual body to their disciple. Followers of this doctrine think the spiritual form of a liberated person is given by their guru to a devotee.

For example, in a book about manjari swarup written by Kunjabihari das Babaji he wrote:

In the Lord's abode, there are an unlimited number of forms, all suitable for rendering service to him. Every one of those forms is non-different from him, being expanded from his effulgence; each one is eternal, full of consciousness and bliss. They are the crowning, central jewels of the spiritual world - its very life.

These unlimited spiritual bodies are the perfected forms of the liberated souls which are awarded to an individual, according to his taste, when he reaches the state of absolute liberation. This state is called attainment of the spiritual body. All these spiritual bodies are eternal for they exist even before the liberated souls enter them and will continue to exist ever afterward. However, prior to the entry of the liberated soul they are in an inactive state.

As all of the unlimited souls are servants of the Lord, each one of them has a spiritual body in the Lord's abode just suitable for rendering service to the Lord. When an individual becomes qualified for direct service to the Lord by the grace of the Goddess of Devotion, then the Supreme Lord awards him that spiritual body.

According to this school of belief, a devotee must be “awarded” or “given” a spiritual body (siddha-deha) by their guru so they can practice the meditation that they are assisting Sri Radha in the divine pastimes of the spiritual world. If some disciple has not been given a spiritual body by their guru then how can the disciple engage in the practice of raganuga bhakti?

Yet it must be pointed out that according to the Vedanta Sutra (4.4.1) and Sri Sanatana Goswami (Bṛhadbhagavatamṛtam, 2.2), a soul never

gets given a spiritual body at any time. The spiritual body is an eternal and inseparable facet of the individual soul, the jiva-atma. The spiritual form of the self is eternally and inseparably connected to the individual self. My spiritual body is inseparable from me and, though dormant, my spiritual body has been with me for all of eternity. When a soul desires to render service to the Lord in his spiritual form then the dormant spiritual body becomes fully manifest. This is clearly stated to be the case in the Vedanta Sutra and in more recent texts such as Sri Sanatana Goswami's book Brhadbhagavatamrtam. It is utterly wrong to think that a soul can be given a spiritual body.

In the commentary by Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana to verse 4.4.1 (sampadyavirbhavah svena sabdat) of the Vedanta Sutra, Baladeva has written the following:

The individual soul who, by means of devotional service accompanied with knowledge and renunciation, attains the effulgent Supreme, becomes free from the bondage of karma and attains a body endowed with eight virtues. This body is said to be the soul's original form. Why is that? The sutra explains, "svena-sabdat" (because of the word "svena"). The word "svena" here means, "in his own original form". For this reason it cannot be said that this passage means, "the soul arrives there and then accepts a form which is an external imposition". In that way it is proved that the form here is the original form of the soul.

In this section of Vedanta Sutra, the topic being discussed is: "When a soul attains liberation does the soul attain a body that is different from himself, as the bodies of demigods are different from their inner self, or does the soul manifest his original identity which is not different from himself?" In Baladeva's commentary, he emphatically declares that in his sutras Vyasa himself is saying that when a soul becomes liberated they realize their inner identity and see they are a purely spiritual self with an eternal body of full of spiritual consciousness and bliss (sat-chitananda).

Baladeva quotes the Chandogya Upanishad:

Thus does that serene being, arising from this body, appear in its own form, as soon as it has approached the highest light, the knowledge of Self. He, in that state, is the highest person (uttama

purusha). He moves about there laughing or eating, playing, and rejoicing in his mind, be it with women, carriages, or relatives, never minding that body into which he was born.

Chandogya Upanishad 8.12.3.

Baladev Vidyabhusan then quotes from the Padma Purana:

anur nityo vyapti-silas cid-anandatmakas tatha

aham artho 'vyayah saksi bhinna-rupah sanatanah

The soul is atomic, eternal, is present by consciousness everywhere in the material body, is by nature full of spiritual bliss and knowledge, has a sense of individual identity, is unchanging, is a witness within the body, and is different from the Supreme.

Srila Baladev Vidyabhusan states that the spiritual form of bliss the liberated being attains is the original form of the soul that lay dormant within when the soul was in illusion. The Vedanta Sutra tells us that the spiritual body of the liberated being is the soul's original form. This form is a form of eternity, knowledge and bliss, as is mentioned in the verse above (cid-ananda-atma). It is not that the soul attains liberation and enters into a spiritual body or a form of existence which is an external imposition, an external state of being different from the self itself. Not at all. The liberated soul realizes the spiritual nature of one's own inner being.

Srila Sanatan Goswami has also presented the same conclusion. In his commentary to verse 2.2186 of Sri Bhadbhagavatamrtam, Srila Sanatan Goswami quotes Shankaracarya's verse, "mukta api lilaya vigraham kritva bhagavantam bhajanta", which he translated as "Even the liberated assume a form and worship the Lord in his pastimes". Srila Sanatan Goswami then quotes Srimad Bhagavatam 6.14.5 "muktanam api siddhanam narayana parayana", that is, "The liberated and perfected souls are engaged in Narayan's service." Then Srila Sanatan Goswami asks himself: "If liberated souls didn't have forms then how could they engage in the Lord's service?" The answer: "Bhagavati layam praptasyapi nri dehasya mahamuneh punar narayana rupena pradurbhavah". Even those who have merged into the Lord have dormant human forms.

The statement of Srila Sanatan Goswami is clear and unambiguous. Even those souls who have never known Krishna and are merged in

the formless light of Brahman have dormant human forms.

In another part of Brhad Bhagatamrtam, the commentary to verse 2.2.207, Sri Sanatana Goswami also wrote:

O great sage, among many millions who are liberated and perfect in knowledge of liberation, one may be a devotee of Lord Narayana, or Krishna. Such devotees, who are fully peaceful, are extremely rare. Impersonalists generally imagine themselves perfect and liberated, and among them a very few may actually attain impersonal liberation. But those rare souls, like all others, are eternal servants of Hari, the all attractive Lord. Out of millions of such rare liberated impersonalists, one very fortunate soul may realize this natural fact. Since intelligence is dormant in the “merged” soul, it can be reawakened. Even the liberated souls who have merged into the formless divine light of the spiritual sky retain their eternal spiritual bodies, complete with spiritual mind and senses. Nothing, not even liberation, can ever deprive a jiva of these assets. Thus when a liberated soul gains the favour of the Supreme Lord's personal energy, his spiritual body and senses are reawakened for hearing and chanting the glories of Lord Hari and acting in other ways for the Lord's pleasure.

The spiritual body and senses are reawakened, so that the soul returns to his original state of pure siddha perfection. This soul in its pure state, still merged in Brahman, can develop a mood of submission to the Absolute and begin moving towards the gates of the spiritual world. Or, awakening with a false sense of ego, the soul may descend into the world of duality, birth and death. Again and again the jiva may attain Brahman and then fall again, developing an “exploiting” mentality that drags the soul back into samsara. However the soul who enters the kingdom of Narayana attains real immortality.

Elsewhere in Brhad Bhagatamrtam, Srila Sanatan Goswami gives a beautiful description of souls entering the spiritual world of Vaikuntha. The form of one's self that someone contemplates during one's life of devotional practice, the stage of sadhana bhakti, is the form you will have in your state of perfection. And that state of being of a soul is capable of further transformation and development.

Srila Sanatan Goswami describes souls entering the spiritual world:

Some came with associates, some with paraphernalia, and some with both associates and paraphernalia. Some merged their associates and paraphernalia in their own selves and became like penniless solitary sages plunged in the nectar of meditation. Some moment by moment manifested different wonderful and charming forms, each opulent with different and wonderful ornaments, features and pastimes. Some were humans, some monkeys, some demigods, some demons, and some sages. Others carried the marks of being initiated in the orders of varna and ashrama. Some were like Indra, Chandra or the other gods. Some had three eyes, some four heads, and some four arms, some eight arms, and some a thousand faces. I will tell you the reason for this great wonder: How can they who taste the nectar of devotion to Lord Krishna not be handsome? The glories of Vaikuntha's residents, who are all beyond the material world of five elements, the glories of Vaikunthaloka and of Vaikuntha's hero, Narayana, cannot be described with the examples drawn from the world of five elements.

(Brhad Bhagatamrtam 2.4.35-41)

The Worship of Mahaprabhu in Nabadwip

In Bhaktiratnakara we read about the situation at Mayapur following the disappearance of Srimate Vishnupriya Devi. We see what life was like in Mayapur in the absence of Mahaprabhu and his immediate associates. The place became almost completely deserted. Gaudiya Vaishnava communities developed in Vrindaban and other places but in Nabadwip the Vaishnava communities almost disappeared and the Shakta religion flourished.

Describing the visit to Mayapur of Sri Jahnava Mata, Narahari Chakravarti wrote:

From Srikhanda, Sri Jahnava Thakurani went first to Nadia which she found vacant because of the disappearance of most of the associates of Mahaprabhu. Sri Ishana and some of his friends, the only persons still living, came forward to receive Ishwari and others. They all felt some relief from meeting Sri Ishwari and for the time being they could forget their misery. However they could not control their grief when they entered the house of Srivas.

Additionally, there is this statement about the visit of Srinivasa Acarya and Narottama to Mayapur:

Sri Srinivasa Acarya, Narottama and Ramacandra entered Mayapur, their minds absorbed in ecstasy. As they entered Mayapur they saw an old brahmin coming in their direction... The brahmin reminisced about the happy days in Nadia when people seemed to swim in an ocean of ecstasy. But Nabadwip had gradually sunk into utter darkness. The brahmin eagerly inquired whether the three Vaishnavas had been companions of Nimai Chand. Srinivasa introduced himself and his two companions to the brahmin, and the old man at once embraced Srinivasa and wept. Looking affectionately into Srinivasa's eyes he said, "My dear son, today my desires have all been fulfilled for I have gotten the opportunity to meet you. When I met Ishana today he told me you would be coming. Ishana is waiting eagerly for you so please go there immediately. I will join you in a short while."

After the devotees met with Ishana, they were shown the birthplace

of Sri Chaitanyadev:

Ishana went with them to the house of Misra in Mayapur. Mayapur is a very beautiful place which gives a soothing relief to the eyes of mankind. It is beyond the reach of anybody to realise the full glory of Mayapur. Even Brahma and other gods remain always mindful about this place. Ishana, along with Srinivasa, Narottama and Ramacandra came to the house of Jagannatha Mishra in the village of Mayapur. While entering into Mishra's house, Ishana became very emotional over the former memory of Prabhu. They stood at one side of the house and began to look at the beauty of the house. He told Srinivasa that this house of Mishra was the Mahayoga pith. This house had increased the elegance of the sport of Prabhu which had been beyond the realization of the gods. Upendra nandana Misravana with his wife Sachi used to worship Vishnu all the time. Everyone in Mayapur would always appreciate the devotional efforts of Jagannatha Mishra and Sachi.

Vishnupriya's Deity had already been moved out from the house of Mahaprabhu at that time. In Bhaktiratnakara it specifically states that after seeing the house of Mahaprabhu the devotees went to another place to offer respects to Vishnupriya's Deity of Mahaprabhu.

In Jaiva Dharma, written by Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur, he writes:

On the Ganges western shore is the village of Pahara pura. That famous village is in the middle of Koladvip, which is itself within Nabadwip. At the time of Sriman Mahaprabhu an especially respectable and influential man named Sri Madhava dasa Cattopadhyaya lived there and he had a son named Srila Vamsivadananda Thakura. By Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy, Sri Vamsivadananda became very great. Thinking him to be an incarnation of Lord Krishna's flute everyone called him Prabhu Vamsivadananda. It was well known that Mother Vishnupriya was especially merciful to Prabhu Vamsivadananda. Then after Mother Vishnupriya disappeared Vamsivadananda moved the Deity form of the Lord worshipped by Vishnupriya Devi from Sri Mayapur to Kuliya Pahara-pura. Later, when Prabhu Vamsivadananda's descendants attained the mercy of Mother Sri Jahnvi and moved to Sripat Baghnpara, the

worship of the Deity of Lord Mahaprabhu was continued in Kuliya-grama by the pujaris living in Malanca.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj explained that at that time there was a great deal of chaos regarding the worship of the Deity of Mahaprabhu. The original family home where Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had been born was not maintained as a shrine. Continuous worship was not maintained at the birthplace of Mahaprabhu in the years after Vishnupriya Devi disappeared. The Deity of Mahaprabhu was taken in rotation to the houses of various priests in the family of Vamsivadananda Thakur and the priests were poor. No permanent temple was established and the Deity was not served in a regulated way.

Then in the later part of the eighteenth century A.D., the ruler of Nabadwip named Maharaj Krishnachandra became a great adherent of the worship of Mother Durga and the Durga puja festival became very gorgeously celebrated in Nabadwip Dham. Perhaps that Durga puja and the Kali puja in Nabadwip were inaugurated in his time. In this period the Smarta pandits, the scholars and Shakta worshipers, the devotees of Durgadevi, came into power to such a degree that the worshippers of the Mahaprabhu Deity installed by Vishnupriya Devi became afraid that some assault might come against the Deity and the Vaishnavas. Then also, there was a famine. The Smarta pandits came and complained to Maharaj Krishnachandra saying that a man is being worshipped in Nabadwip and this worship is the root cause of the famine, so this man-worship must be stopped: Gauranga was a man and Vishnupriya has installed the idol of Gauranga here and that idol is still being worshiped, and is the cause of this famine.

So, the pujari priest of the Deity of Mahaprabhu in the line of Vishnupriya built an underground tunnel and placed Mahaprabhu in there. They covered the tunnel over so the Smartas would not come and disturb Him, and the location of the Deity was kept secret.

At that time a miracle took place. The king of Manipur, Manipuraraja Bhagyachandra Singh, had a dream. In his dream he saw that the pandits of Nabadwip have influenced Maharaj Krishnachandra by saying that Sri Chaitanyadeva is a man, not God, and that the worship of Mahaprabhu has been stopped because of that. In his dream he

was told to go to Nabadwip and invite the pandits to come to a meeting. In that meeting it must be proven to the pandits that the incarnation of Sri Chaitanya avatara is mentioned in the scriptures. In his dream he was told this: “You must try to prove that Sri Chaitanya is the Lord.”

Then a dream was also given to Totarama das Babaji of Vrindaban. Totarama das Babaji Maharaj was a South Indian brahmin who first came to Nabadwip to study the philosophical system known as Nyaya, but before he could finish his studies he became drawn to the Vaishnava ascetic way of life and gave up his philosophy studies to go to Vrindaban where he stayed for many years. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave him inspiration in a dream to go to Nabadwip Dham and supervise the worship of his Deity originally served by Sri Vishnupriyadevi.

Totarama das Babaji is often remembered for the famous verse he wrote in regard to the sahajiya (imitationist) Vaishnavas. These sects had become very prominent in the late 18th century. Totarama das Babaji declared:

aula, baula, kartabhaja, neda, daravesa, sani, sahajiya, sakhibeki, smarta, jata-gosani ativadi, cudadhari, gauranga-nagari tato kahe, ei terara sanga nahi kari

Do not associate with members of these sects: aula, baula, kartabhaja, neda, daravesa, sani, sahajiya, sakhibheki, smarta, jata-gosani, ativadi, cudadhari, gauranga-nagari.

Totarama Babaji came and spoke to king Krishnachandra saying: “The pandits of this locality say that Sri Chaitanyadeva is a man and not God. I have come from Sri Vrindaban to show that in many scriptures there are references to show that Sri Chaitanyadeva is not a man but the Lord himself. He is Sri Krishna, the Supreme God, Himself. I want to prove this by quotations from the scriptures, the ancient scriptures. Call for your pandits who are opposing this fact.”

So there was an assembly of the pandits at the Maharaj of Krishnanagara's fort and Totarama das Babaji was able to prove from different quotations that in the age of Kali the yuga-avatara incarnation of God comes down to earth to establish and preach the

yuga dharma of nama sankirtan. He proved that nama sankirtan is the yuga dharma, the approved religious process for this age. This incarnation of Sri Chaitanyadeva is mentioned in many places and when Totarama das Babaji showed those references the pandits could not stand and face him in discussion.

The Manipur raja also came and saw king Krishnachandra. He was inferior in position to Krishnachandra. But because the king of Manipur was in some alliance with the British this king Krishnachandra, who was under Mohammedan control, gave some attention to the request of the Manipuri king. The king of Manipur was a Gaudiya Vaishnava and a disciple in the line of Narottam Thakur. The king of Manipur said to Krishnachandra Maharaj, "I want to lease some land here in Nabadwip from you." Because of his approach, Krishnachandra Maharaj was very much satisfied that Totarama das Babaji was a man of higher realization, a great sadhu. Krishnachandra told the Manipur raja that he need not lease some land, for some land could be given as a free gift. "As much land as you want, you locate it and I will give it." But the Manipur Raja replied: "No, no I want a lease from you. A lease." Ultimately, some land was given by Krishnachandra Maharaj to the Manipur king and there on that land he constructed a temple and installed Mahaprabhu's seva.

In the meantime, after Totarama das Babaji had defeated the pandits, the original Deity of Mahaprabhu was taken up again from the underground room and devotees resumed regular worship. When the construction was finished for the new temple built by the king of Manipur, the king ordered that the installation of Mahaprabhu must be done according to his dream. But then it was reported to him that the original Deity of Mahaprabhu has already come up from the underground room and regular worship is going on in another place. So since that time the worship has continued for the main Deity of Mahaprabhu installed by Vishnupriya Devi, and for the Mahaprabhu Deity named Anumahaprabhu installed by the Manipura raja.

Influenced by the sincere efforts of Sri Totaram das Babaji, the present site of the compound and courtyard for the temple of the Deity of Mahaprabhu in Nabadwip was chosen and improved. The

old temple at that place was rebuilt and arrangements for daily puja were made. There is a deed in Bengali written in 1785 A.D. stating that the land granted to Tota Ramdasa Vairagi for the service of the Deity of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu should be exempt from tax.

With the death of Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughals, Bengal became independent under its Muslim governors. Siraj Daula, the last independent Muslim ruler of Bengal, was defeated by the British at the Battle of Plassey in 1757. For about seven years the British were in a sort of dual control with the successors of Siraj Daula, Mir Jaffar and Mir Kasim. Then in 1764 Mir Kasim was routed at the battle of Buxar and the British took over administration of Bengal.

It is reported that in 1792 A.D., another temple was built in Nabadwip Dham by a raja named Gangagovinda Singh, the founder of the royal family of Mursidabad who was acting as the chief adviser or Dewan of Lord Hastings. The temple built at Ramchandrapura by Gangagovinda Singh in 1792 was said to have been sixty feet high, with nine pinnacles in red sandstone. It was destroyed by floods and its last remains disappeared from sight in 1821.

Gangagovinda Singh was a Vaishnava and an ardent devotee of Lord Chaitanya. He became inspired by seeing Totarama das Babaji and he bequeathed his entire property to his grandson, Lalababu, and left for Nabadwip accompanied by a few hundred Vaishnavas. In Nabadwip, Gangagovinda attempted to relocate the place where the house of Lord Gauranga had originally stood. After gathering information from some residents of Nabadwip, Gangagovinda Singh decided that the actual location of Lord Gauranga's house was in Ramchandrapura, on the north-western outskirts of present day Nabadwip city.

Unfortunately, the information Gangagovinda Singh relied upon when he decided to build his temple at Ramchandrapura was wrong. In *Bhakti-ratnakara*, written by Narahari Chakravarti one hundred years earlier, it specifically states that Mayapur was on the eastern bank of the Ganga, whereas Ramchandrapura is, and has always been, on the western side of the river. *Bhakti-ratnakara* states that

when Ishana, the family servant of Mahaprabhu, took Narottam Thakur to visit Nabadwip and Ramchandrapura they crossed the Ganga and visited Kulia (Koladwip, Nabadwip) and then Ramchandrapura, then crossed the Ganga again and returned to the birthplace of Mahaprabhu at Mayapur. Bhakti-ratnakara further states that the Mayapur Yogapith is near the old temple of Jagannatha and near the home (and tomb) of Chand Kazi.

In Chaitanya Bhagavata, written by Sri Vrindaban das Thakur, he elaborately describes the great sankirtan procession that Mahaprabhu took to the house of the Kazi, the Muslim governor of Nabadwip. Nowhere in that narration does he say that Mahaprabhu crossed the Ganga in a boat to go to the Kazi's residence, so Mahaprabhu most certainly was not living on the western shore of the Ganges. Additionally, in the extract below from Bhaktiratnakara, there is another description of Mahaprabhu's Kazi damana lila, and in this description of the pastime Ishana tells Narottam Thakur about what happened that evening. Please note that no suggestion is made that Mahaprabhu crossed the Ganga when He was going to the Kazi's residence.

Bhakti Ratnakara:

After spending a pleasant time with his companions Mahaprabhu returned home. Prabhu ordered the people of Nadia to be absorbed in sankirtan and following the Lord's order the town was filled with blissful kirtans. The unhappy heretics complained about this to the Kazi. Thus, much to the displeasure of the Lord, the Kazi forbade everyone to engage in sankirtan. In anger, Prabhu decided to punish the Kazi and began preparing to tour the city with the sankirtan party. Prabhu divided his companions into different groups and directed them to madly sing and dance in various streets in sankirtan. Advaita Acarya took the lead of one group, Haridasa took the lead of another. Srivasa also took the lead of a group and another group was headed by Prabhu Himself with Nityananda and Pandita Gadadhara, while Vakreswara and others led another group. Some of them remained near the Lord, while others spread out into other areas. Numerous people joined in the kirtan and danced madly. What a beautiful sight it was in Nabadwip. Even Narada and other gods and saints joined the

dancing parties keeping themselves disguised. People did not care a fig for the Kazi.

The millions of lights the sankirtan parties carried throughout Nabadwip seemed to turn night time into day. The pleasant atmosphere was enhanced by the cooling soft rays of the moon beaming down upon the women, children, and aged people who joyfully observed the elegant dancing of Prabhu's sankirtan. The entire city vibrated with the sound of "Hari, Hari." The foolish heretics became extremely uncomfortable in the midst of the festivities. Lord Chaitanya's dancing was so enchanting that the people who were sitting in their houses lost control of themselves and rushed out in the street to join the sankirtan party. From the last row of the kirtan party, Ramai, Sundarananda and Mukunda led the singing. Gaurasundara danced in the middle, and Advaita stayed in the front row singing.

As Prabhu danced He looked here and there and at once the people of that direction lit their lamps and uttered, "Hari Hari". What is the use of practicing meditation or performing Vedic rituals when Mahaprabhu's sankirtan is indiscriminately delivering mankind from damnation regardless of one's caste or creed. The housewives lost interest in their appearance and dress, the sannyasi's gave up their meditation, and the most peculiar thing was that even the yavanas (Muslims) began to chant the holy name.

Prabhu suddenly changed his course, proceeding in the direction of Madhai's ghat. At this Barkona ghat Prabhu revealed his wonderful pastimes of dancing and singing. From the bank of the Ganges Prabhu had to pass along this way. There was a temple of Kshetrapala Shiva, in the form of a linga. This powerful deity assumed his original form of Shiva. Prabhu Gaurahari then fulfilled the desire of Shiva by dancing ecstatically with him. Look at this temple of Ganesh. That beautiful deity disappeared from this place after Mahaprabhu took sannyas and the people of this area were extremely unhappy. Over here is the village named Simulia where Prabhu fulfilled Parvati's desire to relish the sankirtan of Prabhu. Look, this is the path leading to the Kazi's house. The Kazi trembled in fear when he heard the Lord approaching. After subduing the Kazi and showering His

blessings upon him, Prabhu returned along this path. With the submission of the Kazi, the heretics were silenced forever.

Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj

Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj was the initiated disciple of Sri Jagadananda Goswami of Sri Vrindaban. He was initiated as Jagabandhu das and received the title “Jagannatha das” when he became a babaji. His siksa gurus were Sri Krishnadas Babaji of Govardhana and Siddha Madhusudana Das Babaji of Suryakunda. In the biography published by devotees at his bhajan sthali in Nabadwip it says Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj lived 147 years on this earth before leaving the physical plane in the year 1897. The siddha bakula tree at his place of bhajan is most wonderful to see, and I feel myself greatly blessed that I was shown that place by my very merciful senior godbrother Sri Haricharan das Brahmachari, during the annual Nabadwip Dham parikrama festival of Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math.

While living at Surya Kunda Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj accepted Madhusudana Das Babaji as his Guru. He never hesitated to fast for three days at a time, even without taking water. Normally he did not sleep at night - he passed the entire night in a sitting position, chanting japa, constantly repeating the Name of the Lord. In the morning he took curd and flat rice for his sustenance, after offering these things to the Lord. He worshipped Deities of Gaura-Nitai for some time at Suryakunda, then later a six hand Deity of Mahaprabhu (sadbhuja). After worshipping this six hand form of Mahaprabhu for ten years, Srila Jagannatha das Babaji one day said, “Bihari, give this Deity to somebody in Vrindaban. I will go to Nabadwip because this body of mine is to be surrendered at the lotus feet of Gaurasundar”.

His disciple Sri Bihari das Brajabasi always took him to places that Babaji Maharaj wished to visit, loading him into a basket he carried on his head and shoulders. Sri Bihari das brought Srila Babaji Maharaj back and forth from Vraja to Nabadwip many times.

For a while Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj lived at Kadamb Khandi, where there was only one pond of water. The villages were far off and the place was deserted. People did not come there, even in the day time. Bihari das and Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj

remained there for both the Ekadashi and Dvadashi day, then Bihari das said, “Father, you have come here to such a place where no food is available...” But Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj assured him, “Don't worry, everything will come here. Just start playing the karatala.” So Bihari das did that. Next morning one villager came there and he could know that for the past three days they were living there without food, with only drinking water to maintain them. So a little after that the villager returned with food for the renunciate devotees. And from then onwards sufficient food would always come - even milk sweets. Every day.

At the last stage of his life Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj decided to go to Nabadwip, leaving Brajabhumi. He normally stayed six months in Vrindaban and six months at Nabadwip. Hearing the news he was leaving all the devotees approached him and asked, “Why are you leaving Vrindaban at this old age?” Hearing these words Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj became emotional and said, “You can all stay at Vrindaban but I will go to Nabadwip. Nitai and Gauranga are the incarnate form of compassion and they never judge the mistakes I make”.

When Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj came to live in Nabadwip he told Bihari das Babaji:

Look, in whose kingdom are you living? You try and acquire his good quality! In Dwapara yuga that was Sri Krishna's kingdom. Now it is Sriman Mahaprabhu's kingdom, and now His advice is to be followed. If we stay at Vrindaban we will salute “Brishabhvanu Nandini”. But those who are clever in the devotional path, they will live in Nabadwip, because every mistake is judged at Vrindaban and there is no forgiveness. And in my Nabadwip there is no mistake. See! for a two pence worth clay container mother Yashoda tied Krishna with rope. But, at Nabadwip, Nimai broke all the clay containers, spoiled the rice and cereals, but mother Sachi said nothing. Similarly there was punishment on the mistake in chanting Hare Krishna Mahamantra. But in my Sriman Mahaprabhu's Mahamantra there is no punishment! “Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Prabhu Nityananda, Sri Advaita, Gadadhar, Srivasadi Gaura Bhakta Vrinda”.

Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj was born about 1750. He visited

Nabadwip often and would have seen the temple built by Raja Gangagovinda Singh which was built when he was forty-two years old. But Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj most definitely did not consider that place to be Mahaprabhu's birthplace.

After Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur rediscovered the birthsite of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu at Mayapur he called Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj to confirm the authenticity of the site. Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj was overjoyed to find the birthsite of Sriman Mahaprabhu had been found. Srila Jagannatha das Babaji Maharaj's first arrival at the Mayapur Yogapith is described in the following article published in the sixth year of the Gaudiya newspaper. The article was written Sri Yadunandana das Adhikari, a disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur. In that article Sri Yadunandana das recounts the things he was told about that day by Sri Bihari das Babaji.

Srila Bihari das Babaji said:

I personally served Srila Jagannatha das Babaji for nearly forty years. At the present age of eighty six I feel very weary. I find it somewhat difficult to come and go these days. Previously my body was very strong. Often I would carry Srila Babaji Maharaj eight to ten miles on my back. I witnessed a host of transcendental pastimes...

Once, Bhaktivinode Thakur arrived at the residence of Srila Jagannatha das Babaji with a kirtan party. The party, accompanied by Srila Babaji Maharaj, quickly advanced towards Sridham Mayapur. During this time another kirtan group was approaching from the Namanapukura side. The two parties chanting the glories of Sri Chaitanya assembled together at the place of the present day Yoga Pith. Srila Jagannatha das Babaji, being over the age of 130 years, was humpbacked, and normally he could not sit in an erect position. But when he would perform the congregational chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord he would extend his body by the distance of five hand lengths and spring upward a distance of over one yard! How wonderful it was when he pointed out the location of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance site. It is also still fresh within my mind the way he struck his stick on the ground with a resounding "crack".

Srila Bihari das Babaji, who is holding a stick, enacts the pastime again as true as life itself.

Mayapur Yogapith

There was a great controversy regarding the discovery of Mahaprabhu's birthplace at Mayapur. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's own initiating guru, Bipin Bihari Goswami, initially supported the Mayapur site. But as years went by he affiliated himself with opponents and became antagonistic. Bipin Bihari Goswami became linked with people promoting the site of Gangagovinda's temple as the actual birthplace of Mahaprabhu. Ultimately, in the year of his death, 1919, Bipin Bihari Goswami formally and very publicly rejected Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur as his disciple.

The final traces of the temple of Gangagovinda Singh in Nabadwip were destroyed by floodwaters in 1821. In 1887, Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur found the birthsite of Mahaprabhu at Mayapur several kilometres east of Nabadwip city. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur certainly didn't think the temple of Gangagovinda Singh in Ramchandrapura was built at the actual birthplace of Mahaprabhu. He maintained that nobody knew where the actual birthplace of Sri Chaitanyadev was.

At the beginning of the temple development project at Mayapur, Bipin Bihari Goswami himself must have been sufficiently convinced that the birthsite was totally lost and had been rediscovered, since Bipin Bihari Goswami agreed to become a director of the new temple committee at Mayapur! Bipin Bihari Goswami would undoubtedly have known that the Mayapur site discovered by Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur was far, far away from the site of the Gangagovinda Singh temple, which was north-west of Nabadwip. If Bipin Bihari Goswami initially accepted Mayapur as the birthsite, the implication is that at that time (1887) Bipin Bihari Goswami wasn't supporting the idea that the well-known site of the temple of Gangagovinda Singh was the birthsite of Sri Gauranga. Indeed, many people were thinking the birthsite had been lost and forgotten.

Until late 1918 Bipin Bihari Goswami and other caste Goswami descendents of the Baghnapura community had some relationship

with devotees serving at the Mayapur Yogapith. On 26 November 1918 at the house of Sriyukta Banamali Dasadhikari, by the direction of Srila Saraswati Thakur, many well known devotees joined together to perform the sraddha ceremony according to Vaishnava-smriti on behalf of the father of Sriyukta Banamali Dasadhikari. At that meeting one son of Thakur Bhaktivinode named Lalita Prashad Datta, as well as Bipin Bihari Goswami and Gauragovinda Goswami of Baghnagara, Ramchandra Goswami of Kansaripada, Purnananda Goswami of Vainchi, Anantadeva Goswami of Khardaha and Sitanatha Nanda were in attendance. They all took prashad and appreciated the discourse about the performance of sraddha according to Vaishnava-smriti given by Prabhupada Srila Saraswati Thakur, who at that time was adorned in the robes of the sannyasa ashram.

It is a fact that support for the Ramchandrapura site arose mostly as an expression of opposition to the dynamic preaching campaign of devotees residing at Mayapur. Another point to note is that Vraja Mohan das Babaji, who established the alternative site in Ramchandrapura at the beginning of the twentieth century, and who oversaw the building of a new temple there, eventually handed over the site to a member of the sakhibhekhi cult named Radhavinodini Dasi. This Radhavinodini Dasi was a man dressed as a woman, a follower of Radharaman Charan Das Babaji who Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati openly called a “sahajiya” or imitationist Vaishnavava. The no-holds-barred approach of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati disturbed many people sympathetic to the sahajiya factions. These persons stand in the forefront of all those who were opposed to Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur and the Mayapur project.

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur had engaged in a careful and detailed search for the holy birthsite of Mahaprabhu. He had discovered Mayapur after researching maps, archeological evidence and other facts about the very ancient settlement at Mayapur. Srila Jagannatha das Babaji, seeing the site discovered by Thakur Bhaktivinode, confirmed that this place was indeed the birthplace of Mahaprabhu. Critics may choose to follow a different line of thought but Srila Jagannatha das Babaji’s followers such as Srila Gaurakishore das Babaji accepted the site discovered by Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur as

the real Yogapith.

Some devotees wonder how the birthplace of Mahaprabhu, a very significant place of pilgrimage for all Gaudiya Vaishnavas, could ever have been forgotten by the devotee communities of Bengal. But in *Bhaktiratnakara* we read that in seventeenth century Nabadwip the Vaishnava communities almost disappeared while the Shakta religion flourished.

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur

Srila Satchidananda Bhaktivinode Thakur, the nineteenth century pioneer of Krishna consciousness, was born in 1838 in Bengal. He worked tirelessly to preserve the spiritual tradition and literature of India; he composed, edited, and published more than 100 books in Sanskrit, Bengali, and English. The pioneer of pure devotion, it was Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur who foretold that people the world over would join together in Sri Chaitanya Maharabhu's Harinama Sankirtan, or congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Krishna. By his profuse writings, Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur infused the current which was to be the renaissance of a devotional civilization, which had become overgrown with spurious interpretations and misrepresentation.

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur advocated exclusive surrender to the service of the Supreme Lord's pure devotees as the life of devotion. To this end he composed a great stream of books, prayers, poems, and commentaries in Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, English, and other languages, which are now revered by the genuine devotees as scripture. His style of presentation was chiefly analytic, simple, and appealing. He taught that the apparently sophisticated philosophies and doctrines which deviate one towards materialism, salvation, voidism, etc. (karma, jnana, sunya-vada, etc.) must be abandoned by the true aspirants of devotion; yet, he acknowledged that from the universal standpoint such literature is a “charming” distraction serving to segregate the insincere from the sincere. Thus he foresaw that inevitably the intelligentsia of the world, the sincere souls, must come to appreciate the all-attractive path of divine love given by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

As has already been mentioned Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur inaugurated the worship of Lord Chaitanya at the holy site known as Sri Yoga-Pith, the advent location of Sri Chaitanyadeva in the holy Sri Dham Mayapur.

The importance of the Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's contribution to

our Sampradaya is immeasurable. Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur, the founder of Sri Gaudiya Math and its branch organizations, published all the books of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur, making the message of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur available to a wide audience. In Sri Gaudiya Math, the majority of songs sung during each aroti (period of worship) are the songs of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur such as Sri Gaura Aroti, Yasomatinandana, Bhaja Bhakata Vatsala Sri Gaurahari, etc. Indeed Srila Sridhar Maharaj said Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur is the main spiritual master of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur and the Gaudiya Math. At Sri Gaudiya Math in its founding period, the bhajans and teachings of other Acharyas such as Srila Narottama das Thakur were also sung and discussed, but Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur was without doubt the main source of inspiration for Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur and his direct disciples in the modern Krishna Consciousness Movement.

This small booklet is essentially about the spiritual successors of the Six Goswamis. This book is about the line of spriritual preceptors who have preached the teachings of the Six Goswamis and Mahaprabhu. There are so many wonderful things we might say about Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur because the revelations he gave us are the very foundation of modern day Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Through Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's advice and writings, and through his successor Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur and, in the following generation, Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the sankirtan movement of Sri Chaitanya has spread right around the globe. There is so much in the teachings and writings of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur that is beautiful and amazing and I myself can only bow down my head and offer my respects, my prostrate obeisances, to that treasure Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur has given. I pray that Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur may cast his merciful glance towards me so that I may be able to simply remember the outstanding brilliance of the Truth he has revealed! Vande Bhaktivinodam....

Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj said:

*vande bhakti-vinodam sri gaura-sakti-svarupakam
bhakti-sastrajna-samrajam radha-rasa-sudha-nidham*

I bow to Sri Thakur Bhaktivinode, Mahaprabhu's love divine

personified. He is the king of all knowers of the purpose of the scriptures, and he is the ocean of Sri Radha's devotion.

The contribution of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur to Mahaprabhu's sampradaya is inestimable. Instead of me trying to envisage the boundary of the ocean from my limited standpoint on a shore where I see a physical horizon - knowing that what I see is an illusion since the ocean does not end at the horizon I can see - I feel I have to withdraw myself from the position of a man who can make any judgement about the extent of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's greatness. I am an insect with a distorted view of existence. Only Bhaktivinode Thakur and those who have received his grace really know the truth about Existence. Only the fortunate souls who have received an understanding of Reality from Thakur Bhaktivinode - only they can make sense of Life and Death. Reality and Maya. I defer to Srila Sridhar Maharaj's conception of Adhoksaja, the Supreme Reality. I remember his words about Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur and make this prayer while sitting in the dust of an insect's life: may I remember, in my next lifetime, these words Srila Sridhar Maharaj wrote about Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur. May I remember this remembrance of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur that was approved by Prabhupada Srila Saraswati Thakur...

“Alas, alas! O Bhaktivinode Thakur, O Supreme Guru, for twenty-two years this world has been plunged into misfortune, long grief-stricken in your intolerable separation. You are the Divine Potency of Sri Gaura, and you graciously made your advent in this earthly plane, being attracted by the living beings' virtuous deeds performed throughout many lifetimes.”

“Since I am lowly and very wretched, it was not my luck to reach the ocean that bestows the fortune of surrender - the Ocean of the Ecstasy of bathing in a particle of the dust of your Holy Lotus Feet. Yet due to your magnanimous nature, you gave your Grace to the whole universe, personally revealing your supereminence as the personification of the Mercy Potency of Sri Gauranga. (That is, by coming into this world, I received His Grace.)”

“O Lord, even all the demigods headed by Lord Brahma feel

frustrated by their inability to (fittingly) sing the glories of your Divine Qualities. What, then, can be said of the attempt of a fallen soul, a mere human like me? Surely, the learned will never waste their eloquent words eulogizing this statement, since even the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna Himself, has sung in the Scriptures His celebrated confession na paraye 'ham---I am unable (to reciprocate your devotion).'

“At a time when religion was evaluated in terms of bodily relationship, saintliness was determined by ignorance, and yoga practice was motivated by sensual pleasure; when scholarship was cultivated just for voidism, japa was conducted for the sake of fame, and penance was performed out of vindictiveness; when charity was given out of pride, and on the pretext of spontaneous devotion the most gross, sinful acts were perpetrated - and in all such anomalous situations even the intelligentsia were at loggerheads with one another...at that very time, you were sent by the Almighty Creator.”

“As the universally cooling moon is beautified by diffusing its nectarean rays, nourishing the plants and inciting the twinkling of the stars, your Holy Advent in this world is similarly ascertained as satisfying the pure devotional Scriptures (through profound study) and blessing the learned with full-blown happiness (by the perfect axiomatic conclusions descending in Divine Succession). With your appearance, the ecstasy of the devotees knows no bounds.”

“By writing many books and by multifarious methods recognized by the pure devotees, you have demonstrated the preaching of Pure Devotional Service unto the Supreme Lord, for the benefit of the whole world. We have heard of similar achievements in previous times by stalwart scholars such as Sri Ramanuja and many other Acharyas; but the Glory of you - the very embodiment of the Nectar of Divine Love - does not end (cannot be confined) here.”

“Merely the Effulgence of His Divine Abode has been designated by the title “Brahman” in the Vedas, and only the expansion of an expansion of His expansion is sought after with great tribulation by the foremost yogis. The most exalted of the liberated souls shine resplendent as the bumblebees at His Lotus Feet. The Primeval

Origin of even the Original Sri Narayana who is the Lord of the spiritual sky above Brahman: He is the Original Supreme Lord, the personification of all nectarean mellows - Sri Krishna - and He, is the One that you give.”

“Situated in the topmost region of the Absolutely Inconceivable spiritual sky is the holy abode of Sri Vrindavan Dhama, in the spiritual planet known as Goloka. There, surrounded by Sakhis, Srimati Radhika revels in the mellows of Divine Pastimes. With Great Ecstasy, She expands the joy of Loving Sweetness in the Service of Sri Krishnachandra, Who is otherwise Served in four relationships up to parenthood. You, O Thakur Bhaktivinode, can give us the Service of that Holy Dhama.”

“The internal purport is known to Sri Svarupa Damodara by the sanction of Sri Gaurachandra, of that which is adored by Sri Sanatana Goswami and distributed by the preceptors realized in transcendental mellows, headed by Sri Rupa Goswami; that which is tasted and enhanced by Sri Raghunatha Dasa Goswami and followers and carefully protected by the votaries headed by Sri Jiva Prabhu; and that which (from a respectful distance) is venerated by great personalities such as Sri Shuka, Lord Shiva, the chief of the demigods, and Lord Brahma, the grandfather of all beings - O wonder of wonders! The Nectarean Rapture of Servitude unto Sri Radhika - That, too, you can give us.

“Where am I, so lowly and fallen, and where are you, the great soul who delivers the universe?!!! O Lord, by your Grace, you are sure to forgive my offenses. O Ocean of Mercy, in the dust of Your Lotus Feet I pray for this benediction: kindly make my life successful by recommending me for admission into the group of Sri Varshabhanavi Dayita Dasa (Srila Saraswati Thakur), who is the dearest one in your heart.”

This is the Prayer in Separation of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur written by our Guru Maharaj, Srila Sridhar Maharaj.

Srila Gaurakishore das Babaji Maharaj

Srila Gaurakishore das Babaji appeared in this world in a Vaisya family living at a hamlet known as Bagjan in Faridpur (or Dacca) district of modern day Bangladesh. In his householder life he was known as Vamsi das and he earned a livelihood as a grain merchant. After the death of his wife he renounced family life and went to Vrindaban, accepting the garb of a babaji from Srila Bhagavat Das Babaji Maharaj, one of the leading disciples of Srila Jagannatha Das Babaji Maharaj. He remained in Vraja dham for almost thirty years performing bhajan, until he heard that Sri Gaurangadev's appearance place in Sridham Mayapur had been discovered and that the worship of Sri Sri Gaura-Vishnupriya had been inaugurated at the Mayapur Yogapith.

Arriving in Nabadwip/Mayapur he stayed sometimes at Sri Svanandasukhadakunja at Swarupganj, where he listened to Srimad Bhagavat from the lips of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur.

Hypocrisy never received any place near Srila Gaurkishore das babaji, who was the embodied form of renunciation of Sri Rupa-Raghunatha. He never gave any indulgence to monkey-like renunciation, following the ways of monkeys that eat fruits, roam naked from tree to tree, and are ferocious by nature and extremely lustful. Those who put on the clothes of a possessless Babaji but take no notice of the instructions Sriman Mahaprabhu imparted to Chota Haridas and thereby engage in debauchery are monkey-like renunciates and hypocrites: Srila Babaji Maharaj avoided such persons at all times.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

Gaurakishore das Babaji Maharaj, the guru of our Guru Maharaj lived very simply in a hut or sometimes in a dharmasala. When he was living in a hut on the Ganges bank another man came and constructed a similar hut by his side and he began to live there. Gaura kisore also gave respect to him and that man also demanded something like that from the people. In this way thigs

went on. But one day, Gaurakisore das Babaji Maharaja remarked of that babaji, that if a lady enters into the labour house and shows, imitates some sort of pain, as if giving birth to a child, will the child come by that mere imitation? She must really have some child in her belly, in her womb. Then naturally the pain will come and the child will come out. But without any pregnancy, if she imitates the pain of giving birth to a child, will the child come out? That is a ludicrous thing. So, only imitating the dress of a babaji, that can not give one the position of a real babaji. So before you take the dress of a general you will have to learn what is the battle, what is the fight, and how to handle so many weapons. You must learn them. But only taking the dress of a soldier does not make one a soldier; so also you must acquire the inner attributes of a babaji, of a high type of Vaisnava. The mere dress cannot make you a babaji.

Devotee:

Maharaja, I have heard that Bhaktisiddhanta Maharaja approached Gaura Kisora Dasa Babaji three times for initiation before he was accepted. Can you explain that?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

Yes, he told, I heard it from his mouth, that by the order of Bhaktivinode Thakura I approached him and that at the time so many pseudo stalwarts of Vaisnava society they - Caran dasa, and others - they wanted to get Prabhupada as their disciple. They tried their best. That he is a promising young man and if we can get him as disciple then my line will be very glorious. But Bhaktivinode Thakura asked him (go to) Gaura Kisora Babaji Maharaja. And he came, proposed.

Babaji Maharaja told, I shall ask Mahaprabhu if he likes, grants, then of course I can do it.

Then after some days he again came and proposed.

Oh, I forgot. I forgot to ask.

You are told that so many pseudo stalwarts, they are hankering after him and this Babaji Maharaja, almost unknown, knows so much, extensive, but he forgot to ask about me. Again another day a similar thing. Why is this? Bhaktivinode Thakura also asked me

and that also I told to him. By recommendation of Bhaktivinode Thakura I came to you. And he says that “I shall ask Mahaprabhu” and then “I forgot, I forgot”.

Then I thought, what is the cause? I am of pure moral character and I am a good scholar and I have got indominable strength of mind to go on with my idea. This ego, this is no qualification really, what I have, and he wants to, what he wants to express by this is that these qualifications are nothing. So I must think my attitude should be that I am unfit and I am begging for his grace. I have come to beg his grace. Saranagati, I am helpless, I am poorest of the poor. With humility I shall have to approach. Without your grace my life is going to be spoiled. I am quite helpless, Maharaja. I want your kindness. Without this attitude he won't accept... So that reaction came in my mind. That these are the qualification of a disciple to approach the guru. Oh, my, I was crushed. I am disqualified, so disqualified that he did not, he ignored me so much that he failed to tell about me to Mahaprabhu. It is not even in his memory. So negligible. I am hurt.

Then I came to realize my approach to guru should be of that attitude, that is the idea. Then when he approached next time, yes, Mahaprabhu has accepted you.

Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur

In the preaching campaign of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami he declared totalitarian war against illusion and even against all other conceptions of religion where those religious traditions were contrary to the pure spiritual faith taught by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Not allowing the pure principles of Sri Chaitanya to be compromised in any way Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami gave his disciples the unadulterated Truth that Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur and Srila Gaurakishoredas Babaji had revealed to him. He taught the teachings of Sri Chaitanya to many thousands of fortunate souls and through those fortunate souls the religion of Sri Chaitanya has spread throughout India and into foreign countries.

Because he was uncompromising in his approach, openly speaking out against false gurus, Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami was bitterly attacked by many people who were threatened by the things he said. Some opponents of Prabhupada Srila Saraswati Thakur tried to murder him. Others made false allegations about him. They tried to brand him as a heretic deviating from the “true tradition” of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami persisted, nevertheless, in his campaign to re-ignite the sankirtan movement begun by Sri Chaitanyadeva. And sixty years after his departure from this world we can see that his efforts have led to the arising of a tremendous, dynamic religious culture, a revitalized Gaudiya Sampradaya that has spread in many branches all around the globe.

I feel the more serious criticisms levelled against Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami should be examined and responded to in a straightforward manner. Consequently I would like to look at the primary issue opponents raised against Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami and respond to that.

Opponents have said the following:

“Sri Kisori Mohana Gosvami and Sri Kisori das Babaji witnessed that Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, when asked by Siddha Sri RamaKrishna das Pandit Baba in the early 1930's, declared that he was initiated in a dream.”

This statement was published on the internet several years ago by Nitai das, a former disciple of Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada who became a disciple of Tinkori das Babaji.

Nitai das:

The main reason for my departure from ISKCON was that I came to believe (and I still believe) that Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati never received proper initiation into the Caitanya Vaisnava sampradaya (community). This revelation absolutely shook my world to pieces. I remember sitting on the roof of ISKCON's Vrindaban guest house the following day sadly watching the sun come up. It seemed like a different sun and the world I saw was not the one I had been familiar with. It was now a strange and frightening one. For weeks I had no idea what I was going to do. The man who broke the news to me was Dr. OBL Kapoor, elder savant of the Caitanya Vaisnava tradition and member of the Gaudiya Math (his initiation name in the GM was a Adikesava Das). He himself, he confided in me, had fortunately found genuine initiation outside the organization of Bhaktisiddhanta, with the great bhakta of the Nitai-Gaura-Radhe-Syam tradition, Sri Gauranga Dasa Babaji.

Even though I greatly respected Dr. Kapoor, I refused to accept what seemed to me to be extremely bad news on his word alone. I interviewed others and did my own research, but everywhere I turned I found the course led to the same unbelievable conclusion. Bhaktisiddhanta had been refused initiation by Gaurakisora Das Babaji and since he had insulted his father's guru, Sri Bipin Bihari Goswami, his enormous ego and rather sharp tongue closed the doors of Krsna's realm to him and to those who have depended on him for guidance. When he was called on his lack of initiation by one of the Caitanya tradition's greatest scholar-practitioners of the last century, Pandit Ramakrsna das Baba, who was universally respected and honored by Vaisnavas of all the sampradayas (communities) in Vrindaban at that time, he turned his venom on

the babas who were following the only recognized form of renunciation in the Caitanya tradition and on the caste Goswami community who were the preservers of the Caitanya tradition for centuries. This has had a profound effect on the functioning of Gaudiya Math (GM) and all its children, one of which is ISKCON.

...

The eyewitnesses I know of and from whom I heard were eyewitness to Bhaktisiddhanta's admission before Pandita Ramakrsna das Babaji that he had not received initiation from Gaurakisora das Babaji. Bhaktisiddhanta was in the habit of visiting Pandit Babaji during his visits to Vraja since he was without a doubt the most respected of the Caitanya Vaisnavas of the early 20th century. On one occasion, certainly before 1914 when Gaurakisora Das Baba passed away, Bhaktisiddhanta highly praised Gaurakisora Das Baba in Pandit Baba's presence. Pandit Baba asked him if he had received initiation from him. Bhaktisiddhanta said he had received it in dream. Pandit Babaji said that that was fine, but he should receive it in the flesh as well since that is the only type of initiation accepted as authentic in the Caitanya tradition. Bhaktisiddhanta said he would and ended the visit. A few years later, in 1917-18, Bhaktisiddhanta returned to Vrindaban, now the acarya of the Gaudiya Math, a famous man with many disciples. He visited Pandit Babaji again. Babaji was living at that time at the Bhagavata-nivasa asrama on Ramana Reti Road. He had been ill and was there to recuperate. When Bhaktisiddhanta visited him, Pandit Baba asked him again if he had gotten initiation from Gaurakisora Das Baba. He answered that he had not, at which point Pandit Baba got extremely angry with him for taking disciples without proper initiation. Pandit Babaji threw him out of the asrama and Bhaktisiddhanta, fearing damage to his reputation, began his campaign of calumny against the Babas of Vraja and forbade his disciples from meeting with them.

I have reproduced the words Nitai das wrote because I believe we should not ignore this. I feel we should deal with these issues in a forthright and open manner. I pray that the devotees will not see my attempt to talk about this and dispel the lies and criticisms against

Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami as an offence on my part (some Godbrothers may feel it is best that we utterly ignore the critics). However my personal feeling is that the things Nitai das said are extremely offensive and moreover, as I will show in a moment, his view of things has no real basis in reality whatsoever. I want to deal with the things Nitai das said in a judicious way and to prove to the devotees that Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami is truly the genuine Vaishnava and representative of Mahaprabhu that Srila Sridhar Maharaj told us he is.

That being said, let's look at the facts.

Through the influence of Dr. OBL Kapoor, Nitai das left ISKCON in 1973 and went to Tinkori das Babaji. It was Dr Kapoor who told Nitai das the story about Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami being initiated in a dream. Yet it seems that Dr Kapoor's own thinking about this matter underwent a major change in the years following his meeting with Nitai das. In a book written later on by Dr Kapoor he wrote:

After his sannyasa Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati once met Ramakrsna Dasa Baba, a siddha saint and the crest jewel of the sadhus of Vrndavana, during those days when Sri Lalita Mohan Goswami, one of his closest associates was sitting near him. Pandit Baba asked him from whom he had taken sannyasa. He replied, "My Gurudeva Sri Gaura kishora dasa Babaji gave me sannyasa in a dream." Lalita Mohan Goswami later told the author about this. " The Saints of Bengal p. 382

Here we have Dr Kapoor saying the discussion between Prabhupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati and Ramakrsna Dasa Baba was about sannyasa initiation. According to Kapoor, the point of discussion was not about whether Prabhupada Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati had received mantra-diksa from Sri Gaura kishora dasa Babaji at all. Nitai das said that previously, in 1973, Dr Kapoor had been saying Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami had not received mantra-diksa from Srila Gaurakishoredas Babaji but later on, in his book "The Saints of Bengal", Dr Kapoor is on record saying that the discussion was about sannyasa-diksa. This is very interesting, is it not?

The next thing to note is that there are discrepancies in the dates given by Nitai das for the supposed meeting(s) between Ramakrsna das Babaji and Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami. In an article on Nitai das's website several years ago it spoke of a meeting that took place in the 1930's at which time Saraswati Thakur was "thrown out" of Ramakrsna's ashram. However in the June 2005 version of his article on this topic Nitai das says the meeting where Saraswati Thakur was "thrown out" was "in 1917-18". I briefly corresponded with Nitai das in April 2006 in regard to this. After those discussions the final conclusion Nitai das came to was that the meeting where Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami was supposedly "thrown out" happened some time after 1926 and not "in 1917-18". According to Nitai das a person named Visnu das babaji was an "eyewitness" and the source for that story. I informed him that the biography of Ramakrsna das Babaji says Visnu das babaji only came to live with Ramakrsna das Babaji in 1926. The "thrown out" meeting couldn't possibly have happened "in 1917-18" because Visnu das babaji only arrived on the scene in 1926.

There are two biographies available to us about Ramakrsna Das Babaji (biographies by Kapoor and by Haridas Dasji). We are told Ramakrsna Dasa Babaji was born in 1857. He was nineteen years younger than Thakur Bhaktivinode and seventeen years older than Saraswati Thakur. He died in 1939, two years after Saraswati Thakur. He took diksa and veshasannyas from Nityananda dasa Babaji, who passed away in 1890. Ramakrsna Das Babaji initially practiced bhajan in a cave for six years under the direction of his guru. Then a controversy arose regarding the Gauranga mantra so to avoid involvement in the controversy Ramakrsna das went to Varsana and stayed there for eight years. After that, he returned to the cave. Then finally in 1918 A.D. Ramakrsna fell ill with influenza and went to stay in Vrndavana in the garden of Madanamohana. He was 61 years old at that time and from the biographies it is clear that he only came into prominence among the Vaishnavas after he went to live in Vrndavana. That is, after 1918.

Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami did not visit Vraja-dham even once in the period 1900-1915, according to the detailed

biography of Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami written by Sripad B.K. Sraman Maharaj (the book “Prabhupada Srila Saraswati Thakura”). In 1898, two years before he received initiation from Srila Gaurakishoredas Babaji, Srila Saraswati Thakur visited Vraja and other holy places together with Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur. It is extremely unlikely that he met Ramakrsna Das Babaji at that time, as Ramakrsna was living in seclusion and would not reemerge until twenty years later. Be this as it may, between 1900 and 1915 Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami visited Puri, South India and various places in Bengal but for most of the time he was staying in Sridham Mayapur and rendering service there.

Srila Gaurakishoredas Babaji passed away on November 19, 1915. Ramakrsna Das Babaji was living in his cave then. He was living there as a solitary recluse who didn't give instructions or meet people. He was not giving advice to people during the whole of the period when Srila Gaurakishoredas Babaji was still present in this world.

Srila Saraswati Thakur took sannyasa in March 1918, on the Gaura Purnima day. It was in 1918 also that Ramakrsna Das Babaji left his cave and went to live in Vrindaban. At any meeting of Saraswati Thakur and Ramakrsna Das Babaji after March 1918 Srila Saraswati Thakur would have been wearing his sannyasi clothes. But then again, from 1906 onwards Srila Saraswati Thakur was not just claiming to be a disciple but was indeed initiating disciples himself. Where is the evidence that Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami went to Vraja and met Ramakrsna Das Babaji, and said: “I was initiated in a dream” to which Ramakrsna replied: “Go to Gaurakishore das Babaji and get proper initiation”. There is no evidence whatsoever to support this story.

Aside this, there were people who were in a position to know whether Srila Saraswati Thakur had received proper initiation. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur placed Srila Saraswati Thakur in charge of the Mayapur Yogapith and sent him as his direct representative to the meeting at Midnapore in 1910. It is inconceivable to think that Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur did not know that Srila Saraswati Thakur had begun initiating disciples in 1906 because Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur

would have undoubtedly seen and known the disciples who were living with Srila Saraswati Thakur in Mayapur. Moreover, Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Maharaj said that Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur told him to render service under the guidance of Srila Saraswati Thakur. There is no doubt that Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur fully supported Srila Saraswati Thakur and there is not one shred of evidence to the contrary.

Another interesting fact for us to consider is that when Srila Sridhar Maharaj (wearing his sannyasi clothes he received from Srila Saraswati Thakur in 1930) visited Ramakrsna Das Babaji in 1933, neither the Babaji nor his followers said anything to Srila Sridhar Maharaj in regard to this story that Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami had not received proper initiation.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

Some fifty years back perhaps, when Prabhupada (Srila Saraswati Thakur) had a tour through Vrindaban, coming back here he struck his forehead by the palm. "I could not see a real Vaishnava in Vrindaban Dham. It is my misfortune." In this way he pressed his palm on the forehead. That is a sign of disappointment, despair. Again, when in 1933 he continued a Braja mandala parikrama, at that time in his weekly paper he wrote that there is no real Vaishnava in Vrindaban. One person there, he may be considered to be a kanistha adhikari, this Ramakrishna das Babaji, who was at that time considered by them to be siddha babaji maharaj. And Prabhupada told that he is only a kanistha adhikari - the lowest division Vaishnava. He was a brahmin, he had austerity, a spotless character, well read in the Vaishnava shastra. But he was considered by Prabhupada only a third class devotee. This Ramakrishna das Babaji who was considered at the time in the whole Braja mandal to be siddha mahatma babaji maharaj.

Once I was coming from Bombay via Vrindaban and I stopped in Vrindaban for some time. For a few days. That was in the summer, on the Nrsimha caturdasi day. I went to visit Ramakrishna das Babaji. The whole of Braja mandal considers him to be a siddha and our Guru Maharaj considers him of the third order, so I went to trace the difference. What is he? Two or three days, continuously, I went in the afternoon to his quarters.

Of course his two or three disciples were there, perhaps reading Bhagavatam, and he is giving advice, an explanation, now and then. I was looking at him and also thinking of my Guru Maharaj, Prabhupada. In the meantime, I heard one of his disciples told him how there was another Babaji of reputation named Pran Krishna das Babaji. One disciple said that Pran Krishna das Babaji was saying "I have completed many years in Vrindaban." That is, he is demanding his position (recognition). And Ramakrishna das Babaji could not tolerate hearing that. He remarked "Oh, he came here but before that he was a grhastha. And now his age may be such and such but I have lived here a long time. I came here when I was fifteen years of age and I have been staying here for so long." I found it was as if he could not tolerate the fame of the other Babaji.

Then I sometimes put my attention on him and was thinking of my Guru Maharaj. What is Ramakrishna das Babaji and who is he? I came to see him with the conclusion that this gentleman is trying hard to attain a particular thing with great austerity and abstention, strictly following the scriptural rules, the practices Rupa and Sanatan inaugurated. He is trying hard to go on by that way. And when I looked at our Guru Maharaj I came into the conclusion that he is a resident of that land (Goloka) and he came down here to give something to the world. That was my conclusion. From here, in ascending method, Ramakrishna das Babaji is trying his best to go up. And Prabhupada has come down to fulfill some order from above. Prabhupada has come to give something to the world. And this gentleman Ramakrishna das Babaji is trying his utmost to achieve progress on the previously chalked out path, trying to get the thing.

Ramakrishna das Babaji did not recognize this sacred thread ceremony which was inaugurated by Guru Maharaj, giving thread to anyone and everyone. Guru Maharaj wanted to create Vaishnava daiva varnasrama and thereby to help both the parties (brahmins and Vaishnavas). The society at large, they should not think that the Vaishnavas are below the brahmin standard; the true Vaishnavas are not lower than brahmins. And those that will come to be a Vaishnava, they must think that they are crossing the stage of brahmanism and then going to become a Vaishnava. This gulf,

the middle stage, that was supplied by Guru Maharaj. A Vaishnava is always above a brahmin. This thing our Guru Maharaj wanted to preach both among the Vaishnavas as well as to the public. Those sahajiya Babajis they could not tolerate this idea so they are hypocrites. They do not understand what is a real Vaishnava. That Ramakrishna das Babaji, who was considered to be the siddha mahatma Babaji in the whole of braja mandal, he ridiculed this idea. From a brahmin family, he could not tolerate this idea, that one who has come to enter into Vaishnavism, from whatever caste, he may first come out as a brahmin before having become a Vaishnava. He must become a brahmin first. Ramakrishna das Babaji could not tolerate that to anyone Guru Maharaj was conferring sacred thread and misusing the use of sacred thread. That was Ramakrishna das Babaji's complaint. So he could not understand the real purpose of what Vaishnavism is.

They were giving this kaupina to anybody and everybody. Kaupina (the clothing worn by a devotee of highest type), that was a higher emblem, that was given by Mahaprabhu to Sanatan Goswami, and that is continued so far downward. Kaupina. Then one of us put a question to a bonafide follower of Ramakrishna Babaji, asking whether the sacred thread is superior or the kaupina is superior? The kaupina is compulsory to a Babaji. So, he asked whether the kaupina ceremony is superior or the sacred thread ceremony is superior? Then the Babaji could not but express that kaupina is higher. So then, when our Guru Maharaj gives sacred thread to persons you complain but you are giving that kaupina, which is higher, you consider; you are giving it to anyone and everyone? What is this? Then they can't say anything. We consider that kaupina ceremony is higher and the sacred thread ceremony is lower. So, first sacred thread ceremony, then after that the kaupina ceremony will come. That kaupina is the sign of the fifth rank (paramahamsa), the sacred thread is of the fourth rank of caturasram (brahmin initiation); and the fifth higher varna is the paramahamsa. That is, paramahamsa dress means clad with kaupina.

Vaishnava means someone doing service to Vishnu. Brahmin means withdrawing from this world, someone who has withdrawn from the charm of this mundane world and who is engaged in

consideration of brahma (spirit). He who is engaged in the service of Vishnu, his position is higher. The Vaishnava is superior. In the whole of Braja mandal such a conception was absent. And Prabhupada could not recognize them as proper Vaishnavas. This is the conception of Gaudiya Math. They have imitated the dress of a Vaishnava, a paramahansa, as of Rupa, Sanatan etc. Imitated, but they do not realize the real purpose, the real principle of a Gaudiya Vaishnava. So the form does not give us Vaishnavism. But the real substance which is necessary, we must acquire that. What is Vaishnavism proper we have to understand, and we are to acquire it. And we must have this audacity that these brahmins as created by Prabhupada, they consider themselves to be servants of the real Vaishnava.

Devotee: So after Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj practically there may not be any proper Babaji.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Proper Babaji was there. One Vamsi das Babaji Maharaj, anyhow by the dint of their previous life they are a real Vaishnava. (taped conversation, 8-12-81)

Sripad Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Maharaj had a personal relationship with Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj, Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur and Srila Saraswati Thakur. He was in a position to know whether Srila Saraswati Thakur had received proper initiation. In his book *Srila Saraswati Thakur*, Sripad Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Maharaj wrote:

Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami was exceedingly fortunate in breathing an atmosphere of pure devotional surroundings from his cradle. He showed unique aptitude for a pure life of religious devotion and formation of various pious habits and practices from the seventh year of age. At that time he committed to memory the whole of the Gita and could explain it. While a student in Serampur Missionary School, in or about 1884-5, Srila Saraswati Thakur was initiated into Nrisimha Mantra and Sri Harinama by Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode... (Srila Saraswati Thakur, Page 1)

Since 1895 Srila Saraswati Thakur had been attending the Viswa Vaishnava Raja Sabha then situated in Krishna Sinha Lane (now

Beadon Row). In 1901 he took initiation into the greatest Mantras of Gaudiya Vaishnavas from Srila Gaura Kishoredas Babaji Maharaj, the well-known saint of Nabadwip. (Srila Saraswati Thakur, Page 3)

Ultimately, this spurious attack upon Srila Saraswati needs to be seen as a “fight-back” against Srila Saraswati Thakur. The criticisms raised by sahajiyas result from the fact that Srila Saraswati Thakur openly opposed the fake Gurus of Nabadwip and people who said that Mayapur is located in Ramchandrapura.

An official answer of Sri Gaudiya Math to many common challenges during its early period is given in a book written by Sri Gaur-Govinda Dasadhikari Vidyabhushan published by Bhaktivinod Asan in Daulatpur. Among the responses to various criticisms is the following:

They say that Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswatipad never received any Diksha-mantra by accepting somebody as his Guru. It is necessary to know his Guru-pranali.

Answer: Your griha-bauls and Jati-Goswamis in their majority are far from being supporters of the regulative principles confessed by Shuddha-Bhaktas and Vaishnavas. If they spread any insubstantial gossip, we are not responsible for that. Sripad Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhu accepted Diksha in full accordance with Shastra from Sri Sri Vishnupad Gaura Kishor das Mahodoy in the month of Magh, 1821 Shakabda. It is yet unknown persons, novices in Bhajan, who are introduced in society by their previous Guru-parampara; famous Vaishnavas don't have to be introduced by this method. Sripad Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhu has given his Guru-parampara in his 'Brahman Vaishnav taratomya Siddhanta' and in Chaitanya Charitamrita.

- (Pratipa-priyanather-prashner-pratyuttor, 21)

Siksa Guru Parampara

The Parampara list Srila Saraswati Thakur gave in his commentary to Chaitanya Charitamrita is the same list given by Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in the introduction to *Bhagavad Gita As It Is*. In *Bhagavad Gita As It Is*, Srila A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj Prabhupada listed the spiritual masters in his Guru Parampara as follows: “26) Narottama, 27) Visvanatha, 28) (Baladeva) Jagannatha”. It is to be noted that Narottama lived some two generations before Visvanatha and that Visvanatha lived two generations before Jagannatha das Babaji. Baladeva was a contemporary of Visvanatha. This list, therefore, is not a list of initiating Gurus and their direct disciples. Rather, it is a list of the most significant spiritual masters in the school of thought of Sri Chaitanya.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj :

The very gist of the guru parampara, the disciplic succession, is siksa, the spiritual teaching, and wherever it is to be traced, there is guru. One who has the transcendental eye, the divine eye, will recognize the guru wherever he appears. One who possesses knowledge of absolute divine love in purity - he is guru.

Otherwise the guru parampara is only a body parampara: a succession of bodies. Then the caste brahmins, the caste goswamis, will continue with their trade, because body after body, they are getting the mantra. But their mantra is dead. We are after a living mantra, and wherever we can trace the living tendency for a higher type of devotional service, we shall find that there is our guru. One who has that sort of vision awakened will be able to recognize the guru wherever he may appear.

- (Sri Guru and His Grace, Chapter 3)

It may happen that for a generation or two there may not be a Vaishnava living and preaching in the world who, to use Srila Sridhar Maharaj's words, “possesses knowledge of absolute divine love in purity”. But then after some time another exalted Vaishnava can appear in the world and renew the spiritual tradition.

How are we to understand that there is a Guru-disciple relationship between Visvanatha and Narottam, and between Jagannatha and Visvanatha?

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur:

The souls of the great thinkers of the by-gone ages, who now live spiritually, often approach our inquiring spirit and assist it in its development. Thus Vyasa was assisted by Narada and Brahma.
- (from The Bhagavat Lecture, 1867)

And again:

He reasons ill who tells that Vaishnavas die
When thou art living still in sound
The Vaishnavas die to live and living try
To spread the holy name around!
- (from Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's poem "Thakura Haridasa")

The Absolute Truth is changeless. Gaudiya Vaishnava Acharyas all speak the same message: *we must worship the Lord and surrender totally to Lord Sri Krishna in the mood of loving devotion*. For a generation or two no great preacher of the Absolute Truth may be present in the visible world, but then after an interval another great spiritual master will appear and present the original message.

Srila Saraswati Thakur's way of presenting his spiritual lineage, a siksa-guru parampara, was not an innovation that he concocted. Baladeva Vidyabusana also presented the Parampara of Sri Chaitanya's lineage in the same way:

*sri krsna brahma devarsi, badarayana samjnakan,
sri madhva sri padmanabha, sriman nrhari madhavan
aksobhya jaya-tirtha, sri jnanasindhu dayanidhi, sri vidyanidhi
rajendra,
jayadharm kramadvayam purusottama brahmanya,
vyasa-tirthams ca samstumah, tato laksmipatim sriman,
madhavendran ca bhaktitah tac-chisyan srisvaradvaita,
nityanandan-jagat-gurun devam-isvara-sisyam-sri, caitanya ca
bhajamahe*

Sri Krishna's disciple was Brahma, whose disciple was the sage of

the demigods, Narada. His disciple was Badarayana (Vyasa) whose disciple was Madhva. His disciple was Padmanabha, whose disciple was Nrihari. His disciple was Madhva whose disciple was Aksobhya, whose disciple was Jaya Tirtha. His disciple was Jnanasindhu, whose disciple was Dayanidhi. His disciple was Vidyanidhi whose disciple was Jayadharmā. His disciple was Purusottama and his disciple was Brahmanya whose disciple was Vyasa Tirtha. His disciple was Laksmipati and his disciple was Madhavendra whose disciples were Isvara, Advaita and Nityananda the guru of the whole world. Another of his disciples was Sri Chaitanya who we offer our respects to.
 - (from Prameya Ratnavali, by Baladeva Vidyabhushana)

The fact is Padmanabha Tirtha, Nrihari Tirtha, Madhava Tirtha and Aksobhya Tirtha were all direct *diksha* (initiated) disciples of Madhva. They were not successive links in the *diksha* chain. Yet Baladeva Vidyabhushana states they were disciples of each other. These are all indisputable *siksha* links; Padmanabha gave *siksa* (instruction) to Nrihari, Nrihari instructed Madhava, etc.

Moreover, in Chaitanya Charitamṛta, in the section where the branches of the tree of Sri Chaitanya's lineage is described, there is a listing for Yadunandana Acharya. We see that the names of Yadunandana Acharya's *diksa* and *siksa* gurus are both mentioned:

*sri-yadunandanacharya - advaitera sakha tanra sakha-
 upasakhara nahi haya lekha
 vasudeva dattera tenho krpara bhajana sarva-bhave asriyache
 caitanya-carana*

The fifth branch of Advaita Acharya was Sri Yadunandana Acharya, who had so many branches and sub-branches that it is impossible to write of them. Sri Yadunandana Acharya was a student of Vasudeva Datta, and he received all his mercy. Therefore he could accept Lord Chaitanya's lotus feet, from all angles of vision, as the supreme shelter.

- (Chaitanya Charitamṛta Adi.12.56-57)

The description of the tree of Sri Chaitanya details the many branches of the Gaudiya Sampradaya. In Chaitanya Charitamṛta we

read that Yadunandana Acharya was the initiating guru of Srila Raghunath das Goswami. But when describing the branches of the tree Srila Krishndas Kaviraj Goswami has linked the name of Srila Raghunatha das Goswami with the name of his siksa-guru, Sri Swarup Damodar Goswami. Srila Raghunath das Goswami is not listed as a sub-branch in the lineage of Sri Yadunandana Acharya:

*mahaprabhura priya bhrtya - raghunatha-dasa
sarva tyaji' kaila prabhura -tale vasa
prabhu samarpila tanre svarupera hate
prabhura gupta-seva kaila svarupera sathe*

Srila Raghunatha das Goswami, the forty-sixth branch of the tree, was one of the most dear servants of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He left all his material possessions to surrender completely unto the Lord and live at His lotus feet. When Raghunatha das Goswami approached Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu at Jagannatha Puri, the Lord entrusted him to the care of Svarupa Damodara, His secretary. Thus they both engaged in the confidential service of the Lord.

- (Chaitanya Charitamrta Adi.11.91-92)

The false propaganda presented by the opponents of Srila Saraswati Thakur is based upon their misconceptions about Guru-tattva. Srila Saraswati Thakur's vision of what constitutes a spiritual lineage is not something he invented, or a misconceived way of understanding Guru-Parampara. The criticisms leveled against Srila Saraswati Thakur by members of various sahajiyā groups find no support in the core scriptures of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

Srila Saraswati Thakur was deeply disturbed to see the activities of the prakṛita sahajiyās who, in the disguise of gurus, were misleading the people. He completely disassociated himself from them and performed worship in solitude in Mayapur while chanting the holy name of Krishna 300,000 times each day. During this time of solitude Sri Chaitanya one day suddenly appeared before him, along with the six Goswamis. The Lord said: “Do not be disheartened, take up the task of re-establishing varnasrama with new vigour. Preach the message of love for Sri Krishna.” After receiving this message Srila Saraswati Thakur was filled with inspiration to preach the glories of

the Lord everywhere.

In 1911, while his father Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur was ill, Srila Saraswati Thakur took up a challenge from some pseudo Vaishnavas who claimed that birth in their caste was the prerequisite for being a Guru. This group of caste Goswami brahmins had aligned themselves with members of the smarta brahmin community and they arranged a discussion at Midnapore in Bengal. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur decided to send Srila Saraswati Thakur to the meeting as his representative. Srila Saraswati Thakur wrote an essay, “The Conclusive Difference Between The Brahmin And The Vaishnava,” and submitted it to Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur for review. Bhaktivinode Thakur was elated to hear the arguments that would soundly defeat the challenge of the smarta brahmins.

On the request of Madhusudana das Gosvami of Vrindaban and Visvambharananda deva Gosvami of Gopiballavpur, Srila Saraswati Thakur traveled to Midnapore where the pandits had gathered for the three day discussion. Some of the smarta pandits spoke and claimed that anyone born in a lower caste (sudra) family, even though initiated by a spiritual master, could never become pure and perform a brahmin's duties such as worshiping the Deity or initiating disciples. Then Srila Saraswati Thakur delivered his speech. He began by quoting scriptural references glorifying the brahmins. Hearing this the smarta scholars became very pleased. He then began discussing the actual qualifications for becoming a brahmin. Srila Saraswati Thakur conclusively proved that if someone is born in a brahmin family but acts like a sudra then he is not a brahmin, and that if someone is born as a sudra but exhibits the qualities of a brahmin then he should be honoured as a brahmin, despite his birth. Srila Saraswati Thakur spoke about the qualities of the genuine Vaishnavas. He discussed the relationship between the genuine brahmins and genuine Vaishnavas. He discussed what type of person can become a spiritual master and initiate disciples. In all this, he quoted extensively from the Vedic literature. After his speech, the listeners applauded his presentation. Sri Siddhanta Saraswati was congratulated by the president of the conference and thousands thronged around him. They washed his feet and took that water out to the crowd who had assembled there. The people took the water and

sprinkled it upon their heads. This was a huge victory for Gaudiya Vaishnavism and a severe defeat for the caste brahmins.

After this, Srila Saraswati Thakur was widely recognized as an Acharya. He was known as a wonderful preacher of the spiritual message of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and a determined opponent of imitationist, cheating gurus.

*nija-sevaka-taraka-ranji-vidhum
vidhutahita-hunkrita-simha-varam
varanagata-balisa-sanda-padam
pranamami sada Prabhupada-padam*

Like the moon that delights the stars, he is surrounded by his circle of personal servitors, making their hearts bloom in divine ecstasy. The malicious non-devotees are made to flee in panic by the sound of his thunderous roar, and the simple, inoffensive souls attain the ultimate fortune by accepting his lotus feet. I make my obeisance unto him; perpetually do I make my obeisance unto the brilliance emanating from the toenails of the holy lotus feet of my Lord.

- (verse by Srila B.R. Sridhar Dev-Goswami)

On November 17th, 1915 Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj left this world. Srila Saraswati Thakur received the news from Sripad Kunjavihari Vidyabhusan (after sannyas, Sripad Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Maharaj). A few so-called Babajis of Nabadwip were quarreling about who should get to build the tomb of Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj. Many of these men wanted to build and own the samadhi temple so that in the future they could make money from visiting pilgrims. Hearing of the disturbance at that scene the Inspector of Police Sri Barindra Nath Singh came there to oversee everything.

Srila Saraswati Thakur arrived and said he wanted to make the samadhi as he was the sole disciple of Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj. After much argument with the Babajis who argued that Srila Saraswati Thakur could not take the body as he himself was not a Babaji, Srila Saraswati Thakur responded in a thunderous voice, "I am the only disciple of Srila Babaji Maharaj. Although I am not a

Babaji I have observed celibacy all my life. By the grace of Srila Babaji Maharaj I have not lived a secret life of illicit conduct and debauchery like the “monkey” renunciates do. If there is someone present here who has a genuinely pure character and who is a renunciate then he can give samadhi to Srila Babaji Maharaj and I have no objection to that. If there is anyone here who, in the last one year, or six months, or three months, or one month, or even in the last three days, did not have any illicit contact with a woman, then he can touch the divine form of Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj. Otherwise, if anyone else touches this body he will be ruined.”

Hearing this the inspector asked, “What will be the proof of this?” Srila Prabhupada replied, “I will believe their words.” All the so-called Babajis left the scene, one by one. Everyone present was amazed to see that. The Inspector of Police was amazed.

Srila Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada made the tomb on the banks of the Ganga in Nabadwip. Sixteen years later the moving course of the Ganga threatened to wash away that tomb. On the instruction of Srila Saraswati Thakur some of his disciples from Sri Chaitanya Math removed the samadhi from Nabadwip to Sri Chaitanya Math, Mayapur on August 21st, 1932.

Sannyasa and Preaching

In the year 1918, on the day of Gaura-Purnima at Vrajapattana in Mayapur, Prabhupada Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami took sannyas. Dressed in saffron clothing, taking the tridanda (staff) and the mendicant's waterpot in his hands, the symbols of asceticism, Srila Saraswati Thakur followed the path trodden by previous Acharyas such as Ramanuja and Madhva who took sannyas to further the preaching of Vaishnavism.

Finding no suitable person to act as his sannyas guru Srila Saraswati Thakur took sannyas while sitting in meditation in front of a picture of his initiating Guru, Sri Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj.

sri siddhanta-saraswatiti viditau gaudiya-gurv-anvaye
bhato bhanur iva prabhata-gagane yo gaura-sankirttanaih
mayavada-timingilodara-gatan uddhrtya jivaniman
krishna-prema-sudhabdhi gahana sukham pradat prabhum tam
bhaje

In the great Gaudiya Vaishnava teacher's line, as Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati he's renowned. Like the radiant sun in the morning sky, he appeared to rescue all souls swallowed by the all-devouring impersonal philosophy. By spreading the teaching of Lord Gauranga to sing the holy name of Lord Krishna, he gave all the chance to dive in the ocean of love for Sri Krishna, the Supreme Person. Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati, my lord, divine master, at his feet do I pray to serve him forever.

-(verse by Srila Sridhar Maharaj)

Since the 17th century, renunciates in the Gaudiya tradition had not been sannyasis. They had become Babajis by accepting the renunciate's dress from another Babaji. No mantra was given to the newcomer Babaji, only the kaupina (clothing). In this tradition, the Babaji simply adopted the renounced way of life. The Babaji tradition itself had begun in the seventeenth century but in the nineteenth century many "Babajis" were living with women and were far, far away from the ways of devotion practiced by Rupa, Sanatana and the Goswamis. In the time of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati

Goswami many men passing themselves off as Gaudiya Vaishnava Babajis were not living a life of true renunciation at all. Indeed, in Bengal people in general had little regard for the so-called Babajis. What is more, the way of life of the genuine Babajis seemed largely irrelevant to the practical spiritual needs of society in general. In view of this Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami decided to take sannyas and preach amongst the masses, as had been done four hundred years earlier by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

After taking sannyas from the Advaita-Vedanta sannyasi Keshava Bharati, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu started towards Vrindaban, chanting the name of Krishna and the verse of Bhagavatam spoken by the tridandi bhiksu of Avanti: *evam samasthaya paratma nishta upasidham purva tamai mahadbhir aham tarisyami duranta param* (I shall cross over the ocean of nescience and become firmly fixed in the service of our Lord Mukunda.) With this thought in mind, after taking sannyas Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami began a preaching mission that would take the message of Sri Chaitanya to all the people of the world.

Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur accepted sannyas because he wanted to demonstrate what real renunciation is. He referred to the behavior of Babajis who smoked and consorted with women as markata-vairagya: “monkey-like renunciation” (a term Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu himself used in reference to fake renunciates). Monkeys live in forests, just as sadhus do. Monkeys go naked and they only eat fruit. But monkeys are always busy with sex and they fight and steal from each other. Similarly, many Babajis were dishonest men who openly had relationships with widows and unchaste women.

Like many of his activities this taking of sannyas by Srila Saraswati Thakur was controversial. In 1901, after receiving diksa (initiation) from Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj and receiving the name Sri Varshabhanavi Dayita das, he had returned to his birthplace of Puri and begun preaching Bhagavatam at the Giridhari Asana. The sahajiya Radharaman Charandas Babaji in Puri had invented a new song: “Bhaja Nitai Gaur Radhe Syam / Japa Hare Krishna Hare Ram”, which he said should be chanted in congregational sankirtan. Srila Saraswati Thakur spoke out against this, giving evidence from

the scriptures proving this to be inauthentic. Radharaman Charandas Babaji also promoted the *sakhibheki* doctrine in Puri, dressing one of his male followers in a woman's sari as if he were a gopi. Srila Saraswati Thakur stated that this too was against Mahaprabhu's teachings. Srila Saraswati Thakur was a fearless preacher but this Babaji was influential in Puri and in various ways his followers tried to suppress the preaching of Srila Saraswati Thakur. At that time Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur asked Srila Saraswati Thakur to go to Mayapur and practice bhajan in that peaceful place.

In February 1905, Srila Saraswati Thakur went on pilgrimage to various holy places in South India. After visiting Simhachal, Rajmahendri, Madras, Perembedur, Tirupati, Kanjiveram, Kumbhakonam, Srirangam, Madurai and other places he returned to Kolkata, and from there he went on to Mayapur. In Perembedur, the birthplace of Sri Ramanujacharya, he gathered information about the practice of tridanda Vaishnava sannyas from a tridandi swami of the Ramanuja sampradaya.

Following in the footsteps of Srila Haridas Thakur he would take the holy name 300,000 times a day while living at Mayapur. He would sleep on the floor, eat only a small quantity of prashadam, and chant the holy name constantly. In the afternoon he would speak Hari katha to the assembled devotees. From time to time he would go to Nabadwip to meet with Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji. Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji was very pleased to see the renunciation of Srila Saraswati Thakur.

In 1906, Srila Saraswati Thakur began initiating disciples. The first was Beni Madhava das. Another disciple was Rohini Kumar Ghosh, an educated youth who left his home in East Bengal to come to Nabadwip in search of spiritual guidance. When Rohini Kumar arrived in Nabadwip he became the follower of a Baul guru and his mistress, whom he was taught to address as father and mother. But one day when Rohini Kumar went to Mayapur to see Lord Chaitanya's birthplace was fortunate enough to arrive when Srila Saraswati Thakur was lecturing in front of the Gaura-Vishnupriya temple. He listened carefully, then returned to the residence of his Baul guru. Rohini Kumar lay down to rest without eating, meditating

upon Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's instructions until he fell asleep. In a dream he saw the Baul and his consort coming towards him as a tiger and tigress wanting to devour him. In distress the fearful boy prayed to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. At that moment Saraswati Thakur appeared in the dream and chased the tigers away, then led him towards Mayapur. The dream broke and Rohini Kumar awoke to see that it was morning. He immediately went to Mayapur and took shelter of Srila Siddhanta Saraswati. Some time later a relative from East Bengal came and took him back to his family home. Eventually Rohini Kumar became a Kolkata high court judge.

Other disciples initiated in that period were Vaishnava Prabhu (1906) and Paramananda Vidyaratna Prabhu (1910).

Brahmins and Vaishnavas

On 25 March 1910, the Gaura-purnima day, Jagadish Basu, a school teacher residing in Kolkata, went to Mayapur with his friend Vaikunthanath Ghosal, the court pandit of the Maharaj of Tripura. At the Yogapith in Mayapur, Jagadish Basu saw Bhaktivinode Thakur for the first time, lecturing in the presence of Srila Saraswati Thakur and other devotees. Vaikunthanath Ghosal introduced Jagadish to Bhaktivinode Thakur. Jagadish prostrated on the ground and tearfully requested the shelter of Bhaktivinode, who replied, “You are an educated and respectable person. If you take up the responsibility of preaching on Lord Chaitanya's behalf then certainly many people will be attracted to His message.”

That same afternoon, Srila Saraswati Thakur preached to Jagadish for several hours and advised him to ask permission from Bhaktivinode Thakur to meet Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj. The next morning Jagadish went to Nabadwip, paid his obeisances, and offered a watermelon to Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji. Although Babaji Maharaj did not usually accept anything from outsiders, when he understood that Jagadish was sent by Thakur Bhaktivinode he happily received this gift. Babaji Maharaj spoke to Jagadish for some time and told him to sing a bhajan from Narottama das Thakur's “Prarthana.” Jagadish sang the song which begins with the words *gauranga balite habe pulaka sarira*.

Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj instructed Jagadish to have full faith in Guru and the Vaishnavas and to become as humble as a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. He advised him to avoid the association of dishonest persons and to chant the holy name of the Lord ceaselessly. Jagadish said that he had not yet taken initiation. Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj told him that since Mayapur was the place of self-surrender, and that since he had now surrendered to Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur there in Mayapur, then in what other way would he obtain the shelter of a Guru but to surrender to Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur? “Go!” he told Jagadish. “The Thakur is waiting for you.” Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj then

blessed him that in the future he would take sannyas and preach the name of Mahaprabhu throughout the world. Jagadish touched the feet of Babaji Maharaj, which Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj normally forbade others to do.

Following the advice of Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji Maharaj, Jagadish asked for initiation from Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur. At midday on the fifth day after Gaura-purnima he shaved his head then bathed in the Ganga, and along with three other devotees he was given kama-gayatri and kama-bija mantras by Bhaktivinode Thakur at his cottage in Godruma.

Jagadish spent much of that summer at Godruma serving Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur. Every morning Jagadish and Krishna das Babaji would perform sankirtana throughout Godruma. One day Bhaktivinode Thakur sent Jagadish with Krishna das Babaji to see Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji. Srila Gaura Kishore das Babaji was very happy to know that Jagadish had been initiated by Bhaktivinode Thakur and told him to also regularly associate with Srila Saraswati Thakur, whom he referred to as “my gurudeva.”

Jagadish went with Bhaktivinode Thakur when he returned to Kolkata. In *Saraswati Jayasree*, the earliest biography of Srila Saraswati Thakur, it says that at that time Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur also called Srila Saraswati Thakur to come to his home in Kolkata. He told Srila Saraswati Thakur to give brahmin initiation to Jagadish and two of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur's other disciples. Srila Saraswati Thakur then performed the rites of Sat-kriya-sara-dipika and gave them brahma-gayatri, guru-gayatri and gauranga-gayatri mantras and the brahmin's threads. On that day Bhaktivinode Thakur gave Jagadish many instructions about varnasrama-dharma and advised him that he should accept guidance from Sri Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati.

Jagadish Basu was the first person to receive sannyas from Sri Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati, and was known thereafter as Sripad Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Maharaj. He preached extensively in India for many years and also in England in the 1930's. His father was Radha Govinda Babaji, who received Babaji vesh from Sri Siddhanta

Saraswati. His younger brother was Ananta Vasudeva, one of the three trustees (GBC members) of the Gaudiya Math appointed by Srila Saraswati Thakur before his departure from this world (Paramananda Prabhu and Sripad Kunjavihari Vidyabhusan were the two other trustees).

Srila Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj

Srila Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj was by birth a member of the Nityananda vamsa, the family of Nityananda Prabhu. After the disappearance of Prabhupada Saraswati Thakur he took sannyasa from Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Dev Goswami Maharaj and opened twenty two temples. Among those temples are some very important tirthas such as Imlitala in Vrindaban and the Acharya Bhavan at Sridham Mayapur. Sripad Goswami Maharaj was sent to London and named as “Missionary in Charge” of the preaching in Europe by Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur. When Saraswati Thakur came to farewell Goswami Maharaj at Howrah station Goswami Maharaj asked him, “What shall I do if someone in Europe wishes to take initiation”. Prabhupada Srila Saraswati Thakur replied, “You give them initiation”. Goswami Maharaj did initiate his first disciple in Europe, an Australian man he brought back to India to meet Srila Saraswati Thakur. Goswami Maharaj then was the first disciple of his generation to become an initiating Guru in the spiritual lineage of Srila Saraswati Thakur.

Commentary to the Hare Krishna Mahamantra by Srila Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj:

The text-

Harey Krishna Harey Krishna
 Krishna Krishna Harey Harey
Harey Rama Harey Rama
 Rama Rama Harey Harey

The nomenclature of the Absolute has been put in this rhyme as Krishna. Krishna literally means That Most Beautiful Personality Who attracts all beings and gives joy. The form of Krishna is His inconceivable simultaneous personal and impersonal, self-contradictory Form. True devotees see that Form in their purified hearts under the influence of Devotional Trance. Rama is His other Name, conveying the idea of His being perpetually engaged in His transcendental revels with His excellent servitors led by His Consort called Hara (Radha).

These three Holy Words, viz..(1) Harey (Hara), (2) Krishna and (3) Rama, have been repeated over and over again addressing the Divine Couple in a systematic order which is realized by pure devotees when, by the grace of the Name, they see the Lord in their heart of hearts with the eye of devotion tinged with the salve of Divine Love, the seed of which is planted in the soul through these Holy Words by the Guru (an Absolute-realized soul who is authorized to act as a Divine Intermediary).

The seed of devotion that is implanted in the soul by the mercy of the Guru and the Supreme Lord, if properly watered by the hearing and chanting of these Holy Words, sprouts forth into a tender creeper of devotion which by her progressive growth enables us to transcend the successive planes of (1) the mundane sphere of active opposition to the Absolute (2) 'Biroja' (Viraja, or Nirvana), the sphere of universal scepticism, and (3) Brahmaloce, or the sphere of dim reflection of transcendental knowledge; till finally we come face to face to the Most Beautiful Personality of Krishna Who is indetical with His Name, Form, Attributes, Activities and Entourages.

The Harey Krishna rhyme of Holy Words is the visualized symbol of the revealed Transcendental Sound originating from the Holy Lips of Krishna - the Primary Source of all Gurus, all transcendental authorities or means of obtaining Divine Knowledge. He is the eye of eyes and the illuminator of sight and other sense organs.

As the hub is the centre of the spokes of a wheel, so Krishna is the eternal core of created beings including Brahma - the creator of this world who first heard the Holy Words and realized their meaning - the drops of Truth forming the stream of the Divine Sound which flowed in disciplic order through the ears, hearts and lips of Narad (Brahma's disciple) and Vyas (Narad's disciple) to the present Gurus - the reservoirs of pure drinking water to quench our spiritual thirst. Shrutee (Vedas) reveals Herself through Guru - the Divine Transparent Agent - to sincere souls purified by the Transcendental Sound - the basis upon which religion is built and the root from which it grows.

These Holy Words are known as the Mahamantra (greatest rhyme of Transcendental Sound), by which the sacrifice of the chanting of the Lord's Holy Name is to be performed.

This Mahamantra is used in this iron age as the transcendental escalator to transport us up to God. This Mahamantra takes us back to our eternal Home away from this world of tribulations where we have been caged due to having misused our free will at the outset. We are now averse to the loving service of the Lord which is the proper function of all individual souls.

The Lord eternally manifests Himself in the Form of the Name through the medium of His plenary servitors, the Gurus, for the deliverance of fallen souls, as we have no access to the Spiritual World through our empiric knowledge.

Sripad Bhakti Sudhir Goswami told us the story that once, pictures of Bhaktivinod Thakur and Srila Saraswati Thakur were going to be placed in the Srimad-Bhagavatam and someone objected to this saying that you can't put these pictures in that book. The man thought that this was some sort of offense to the Srimad-Bhagavatam. Goswami Maharaj was very respected in spiritual society. So taking advantage of his position as a member of the Nityananda Prabhu vamsa, he told that man, "You consider me as a worshipable descendent of Nityananda Prabhu?"

And that man said, "Yes, yes, Gosani."

Goswami Maharaj informed him, "I have sold my head to the lotus feet of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur."

He continued: "Guru is to be seen as Radharani's delegation. And our Gurudev, and his Guru, if their picture will be in the Bhagavatam, which is the holy body of Krishna, Krishna will be pleased. He will be pleased anywhere we put that picture. You understand me?"

And the man said, "Yes Gosani, Yes Gosani I have committed a big offense."

Bhakti Sudhir Goswami advised, this story gives us some indication

as to the style of Sripad Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj's heavy preaching in the line of Srila Saraswati Thakur, establishing the dignity of our Guru-varga.

Another story is that every year, when they would have the meeting of the Visva Vaishnava Raja Sabha, Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj would be elected the president of the assembly and then he would defer to Goswami Maharaj. He would give the chair to him. Srila Guru Maharaj would be elected and then he would install Goswami Maharaj. This is the affectionate loving behaviour of the disciples of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupad.

There is a famous picture of Srila Saraswati Thakur and Sir John Anderson, the Governor of Bengal. Srila Saraswati Thakur is wearing a garland and John Anderson is wearing a garland, but Srila Goswami Maharaj, also in the picture, is without a garland. Once, our Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswami Maharaj told Goswami Maharaj: "Maharaj, why don't you have a garland in this picture?"

Goswami Maharaj answered, "All of the respectable personalities, they have garlands. What is the necessity that I shall have a garland?"

Srila Govinda Maharaj then said: "I think I know the reason why you don't have a garland."

Goswami Maharaj replied: "What do you know?"

Srila Govinda Maharaj said: "I can understand that the man who was responsible for supplying the garland, he was late so you took your garland and you offered it to Sir John Anderson."

Then Goswami Maharaj said: "Oh, now you are crossing Visvannath Chakravarti!" Because Visvannath Chakravarti is always giving confidential details that are not obvious. Visvannath Chakravarti is extracting the inner meaning of things - so Sripad Goswami Maharaj detected that also in Srila Gurudev and gave Srila Govinda Maharaj this high compliment.

Another thing, that is almost inconceivable, is that Srila Goswami

Maharaj would invite Srila Sridhar Maharaj to his Vyasa-puja and Guru Maharaj would gladly come. All of the pranami, all of the offerings, all of the money that was given to Goswami Maharaj, and all of the gifts and everything, Srila Goswami Maharaj would give all of it to Srila Guru Maharaj. We can't believe such Vaishnava behaviour.

The one year that Srila Guru Maharaj couldn't come, when Goswami Maharaj was asked how his Vyasa-puja was that year, said: "This year it wasn't good at all because Srila Guru Maharaj didn't come." Within a few months Goswami Maharaj left the world. Sripad Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj departed from this life in 1962.

Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj

Om Vishnupad Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj Prabhupad, the Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, is the great inaugurator of Krishna consciousness in the Western world. In ten short years he spread the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu everywhere, inundating the world with Krishna consciousness.

The intimate past history of Srila Sridhar Maharaj, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj and Srila Govinda Maharaj is most valuable and interesting to know for all true devotees. They resided together at Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj's Sita Kanta Banerjee Lane house in Calcutta for about eight years. This was prior to Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj's sannyasa. It was during that time that Srila Govinda Maharaj, on the order of Srila Sridhar Maharaj, studied Sri Bhagavad Gita under Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj.

After withdrawing from family life, for one year Srila Abhay Charan Bhaktivedanta Prabhu was a temple manager of one of the Maths of Srila Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj. He then went to accept sannyasa from Srila Bhakti Prajnan Kesav Maharaj, the sannyasa disciple of Srila Sridhar Maharaj.

After travelling to the West in 1965 and spreading Krishna consciousness in a miraculous way previously unseen in the history of the world, whenever he returned to India, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj, who had become known by his disciples and many admirers worldwide as "Prabhupad," would stay with Srila Sridhar Maharaj at Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math in Nabadwip.

namah om visnupadaya krsna-presthaya bhutale
swami sri bhaktivedanta prabupadaya te namah
gurvajnam sirasi-dhrtva sakyavesa sva-rupine
hare-krsneti mantrena pascaty-pracya-tarine

visvacarya prabaryaya divya karunya murtaye
sri bhagavata-madhurya-gita-jnana prayatine
gaura-sri-rupa-siddhanta-saraswati nisevine
radha-krsna-padambhoja-bhrngaya gurave namah

Translation:

I offer my humble obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupad, who is Krishna's beloved associate and who came down to this plane from Goloka. Taking the order of his guru on his head, he is the saktavesa (empowered) avatar of Nityananda Prabhu personified. He distributed the Hare Krishna mantra all over the Eastern and Western world, delivering and uplifting all fallen souls.

He is the best of millions of jagat-gurus, because he is the personification of divine mercy. He has distributed the sweet nectar of Srimad-Bhagavatam and the transcendental knowledge of Bhagavad Gita all over the world. He is constantly engaged in exclusive devotional service to Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupad, Srila Rupa Goswami, and Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu. I offer my humble obeisances unto Srila Prabhupad, who is like a bumble-bee always tasting the nectar of the lotus feet of Sri Sri Radha and Govinda.

- Sanskrit verse by Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Maharaj

The Shakta Guru becomes a Vaishnava

The story that follows was told by Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Maharaj, an eyewitness to the events described:

Once Sripad Yajavar Maharaj, a disciple of Srila Bhaktisidanta Saraswati Thakur, was invited to debate a large assembly of Shakta pandits in West Bengal, but he felt he could not debate with such a renowned head of that pandit society so he invited Srila Sridhara Maharaj to come and debate with that society for seven days. It was so very nice, Srila Guru Maharaj affectionately defeated all the two hundred pandits in that district. It was the highest cultural district in Bengal at the time, and only Srila Guru Maharaj could defeat them. They were really very highly qualified pandits, but having a completely different culture from our Vaishnava society.

We first went to the house of the head of that society. He was a very wealthy man and he heard Srila Guru Maharaj had come to debate with the whole pandit society. He respected Guru Maharaj very much.

That society worshipped a Salagram sila and every day they would give opulent bhoga (offerings of food) to Narayana. They asked Guru Maharaj “We are offering to Narayana every day, will you take that prasadam?” And Guru Maharaj replied, “No, we shall cook and offer ourselves, then we shall take it.” This was before the debate. They said, “You will not take this Narayana Prasadam even though Narayana is the Supreme? They were thinking Narayana is the supreme, so why wouldn't our party take that prasadam. Srila Guru Maharaj said, “We are Vaishnava and you are Shakta (worshippers of Shakti - mother Kali) and your offerings are completely different from ours and because of that we cannot take it.” So that man accepted his answer, but happily agreed to supply very fine rice, ghee, milk and many other fine ingredients. I had rarely seen such hospitality in my life that was of the type expressed in the Mahabharata, Ramayana etc. We were against their culture but still they gave us such good nourishment.

So when they began the meeting they had two hundred followers and there were only seven of us, myself included. One pandit was there who made our calendar each year. Another was the principal of their Sanskrit college. He also held the highest degrees in all of India. That man later sent his grandson to me to take initiation, he was a sannyasi and he could initiate his grandson but he would not because he is a relative so some then may not respect him as guru; he knew all the rules and regulations so he referred his grandson to me for initiation.

To start the meeting they asked who would take the first position and Srila Guru Maharaj said, "Yes, you may question me as you like."

Every morning and evening there would be long discussions with Srila Guru Maharaj. For two hours they questioned him without waiting for an answer. Guru Maharaj took his seat, then one question after another came and Srila Guru Maharaj wanted to reply with his answers, but that respected pandit would say, "No, I have not finished my questions." Then after two hours he was still questioning and I saw Guru Maharaj counting in a particular way, he was making some categories with the questions on his fingers. He put them all into order. When the pandit said, "Now I have finished Maharaj, you please answer." Everybody's face was stunned. This type of questioning for two hours, no one could memorize. Maybe one hundred questions were asked and we were thinking we had lost everything and wouldn't be able to preach Vaishnavism again in that district. But Srila Guru Maharaj elaborated to the pandit that all his questions came within six or seven categories and the pandit accepted this conclusion. Then Guru Maharaj gave the answers, speaking for hours in return, then that man was very happy and he said, "Tomorrow we shall be seated again Maharaj." In this way for seven days the debate continued. It was very nice. I could not believe it was possible. After five days that pandit had already conceded defeat, but very affectionately. Then he said to Guru Maharaj, "I want to take initiation from you but I cannot, that is, I am in charge of this whole area and lineage. Many will be unhappy with me and secondly my family tradition demands we stay in this line, so now I am giving my son to you. His son also was super qualified with double masters degrees in Vedanta etc. Then Guru Maharaj was even more strict and

he said, “Yes, I shall take your son, but he cannot go back to your family, for our Vaishnava tradition is completely different. Then the pandit took some time, but eventually he came to the Vaishnava dharma also; his grandson is now a government minister.

And when that pandit was on his death bed he always remembered Guru Maharaj. Asking his son and others, “Can you show me Srila Sridhara Maharaj again, he is really my honourable friend.” But Guru Maharaj's health was not good at that time, therefore he could not visit him.

His name was Viroja Nanda, he had a tall figure, maybe six feet six inches with a big black beard. He had a very exalted figure and he wore red tilak to show he worshipped Mother Kali. His figure also looked very grand but he was very sober.

Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj

God is present within the holy name that we receive from Sri Guru at the time of initiation, and the Lord in the form of his holy name is full of all potency (*namnam akari bahuda nija sarva saktis*). Through pure chanting of the holy name we will realize the Form, Qualities and Playful Pastimes of Sri Hari (*nama, rupa, guna, lila*), and at the same time we will also realize our own innate spiritual form.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

To get the mantra from a sad-guru, a genuine guru, means to get the internal good will or real conception about the Lord. The seed of a banyan tree may be a small seed, but the great big banyan tree will come out of that seed. The will with which the particular sound is given by the guru to the disciple is all-important. We may not trace that at present, but in time, if a favorable environment is there, it will express itself and develop into something great.

In Sri Bhakti-Rasamrta-Sindhu a very clear and detailed description of the practices of devotional service are given to us by Srila Rupa Goswami. He clearly explains that by faithfully practicing devotional service under the guidance of a genuine spiritual master, either by the path of vaidhi bhakti or raganuga bhakti, a disciple will, in time, develop deep realization and a natural feeling of love for the Lord.

When the heart is open to Krishna natural affection (raga) can arise if the devotee hankers for that. If the devotee feels attracted to Krishna the son of Nanda rather than towards Narayana the Lord of Vaikuntha then Krishna will reveal himself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

If even a debauchee such as Bilvamangala Thakur could attain Krishna prema through cultivating a mood of surrendered devotion - and of course without knowing about anything about the “guru pranali” or “siddha pranali” of his initiating Guru - then surely Lord Krishna will bless any other devotee who sincerely attempts to please Him through loving service and devotion.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj:

Nirjjana-bhajan or *smarana*, exclusive solitary devotion unconscious of the environment, is not at all possible for the beginners. Guru Maharaj clearly said that when we are in a lower position, *smarana* is injurious. Rather, we should take to *kirttana*. *Kirttana prabhava, smarane haibe, se kale bhajana nirjjana sambhava*.

The sahajiya school (imitationists) are more fond of *smarana* than *kirttana*. They are “followers of *smarana*.” They lead a secluded life, and mentally go on identifying themselves with a particular sakhi of their own age, her duty, her place of attendance in a particular place of Vrndavana, in a particular lila, under the guidance of a particular sakhi, and so on. They are required to go on meditating on all these things by their so-called guru. That is the process amongst the sahajiya school, but we do not admit that. We consider it false and imaginary. They are not fit to enter that plane of Radha-Govinda lila. They do not have real *sambandha-jnana*, knowledge of what is what. They only go on with the habitual repetition of a particular mental speculation, but *anartha-nivrtti* (purging of all evils) or any other process based on it cannot be effected. Their imaginary achievement is sheer concoction. They are not aware of the facts - the ontological gradation from Viraja to Brahmaloaka, Vaikuntha and Goloka. They are *pukura-curiwale* “pond thieves”. To think that one can steal a pond is self-deception. We think that kind of “*smarana*” to be something like self-deception.

One must gradually reach the plane of truth - *suddha-sattva*. There are so many planes, so many planets to cross over - *Bhur, Bhuvah, Svah, Mahar, Janar, Tapar, Satyaloka, Viraja, Brahmaloaka*. Mahaprabhu says that the creeper of Bhakti grows and rises up to Goloka, and she has to cross all these planes.

*upaniya bade lata 'brahmanda' bhedi' yaya
'viraja', 'brahmaloaka', bhedi 'paravyoma' paya
tabe yaya tad upari 'goloka-vrndavana'
'krsna-carana' - kalpavrkse kare arohana*
(Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita, Madhya 19.153.4)

“The creeper of Devotion is born, and grows to pierce the wall of the universe. It crosses the Viraja river of passivity (the “Causal Ocean”) and the Brahman plane, and reaches to the Vaikuntha plane. Then it grows further up to Goloka Vrindaban, finally reaching to embrace the wish-yeilding tree of Krishna's Lotus Feet.”

But the psuedo-devotees do not care to know what is Paravyoma, what is Brahmaloaka, what is Viraja, what is the Brahmanda. Without caring to know about these things, they approach any guru, receive some mantram, and go on meditating. But in such a stage, if one goes on meditating on Radha-Govinda lila, instead of entering Radha-Govinda lila, he will rather entangle himself with the ladies and gents of this world. He will become entangled in the domain of lust and he will have to go to hell instead of going up to Goloka.

Carmma-mamsamaya - kama, prema - cidananda-dhama. The carnal appetite is lust, whereas Love is the abode of Divine Ecstasy. So imitation is not success. Rather, it degrades. Imitation degrades. Imagination is only a mental exercise.

Devotee: What if that mental exercise is done with faith?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Mind is separate from the soul. Sraddha, faith, is connected with the soul, atma, and mind is matter. Mind is a part the of material potency - Maya. This is clarified in Gita:

*bhumir apo 'nalo vayur kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahankara itiyam me bhinna praktir astadha* (Bg. 7.4)

Mind is a product of the material potency, and the jiva is a product of parasakti, the principal potency. The Svarupa-sakti, the Lord's Personal Potency, is a further higher potency, higher than the jiva. The nature of the mind is mental speculation (manodharmma). That speculative thought has nothing to do with truth. The experiences of the mind are all drawn from the material world, the world of misconception. The mind is full of misconception (avan-manaso gocarah). Mind cannot reach the stage of feeling or perceiving truth proper. It is only related to mundane things and selfish exploitation.

Devotee: But isn't pure mind a product of sraddha?

Srila Sridhar Dev Goswami Maharaj: Mind cannot be pure. Just as a fossil cannot produce life, so similarly, mind cannot produce sraddha. Sraddha is original and fundamental. When the Supreme Lord appears in the heart, mind vanishes. Darkness cannot produce light. Light comes, darkness vanishes. Truth appears when real pure consciousness appears, and mental speculation vanishes.

In the preaching campaign of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami he declared totalitarian war against illusion and even against all other conceptions of religion where the religious traditions were contrary to the pure spiritual faith taught by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Not allowing the pure principles of Sri Chaitanya to be compromised in any way Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami spoke the plain truth about the teachings of Sri Chaitanya. His exalted disciple Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj carried this message of Sri Chaitanya and Saraswati Goswami to the world, in fulfillment of the desire of Sri Chaitanya that the sankirtan of devotees singing the names of Sri Krishna should be glorious everywhere.

Bengali verse by Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada:

*matala harijana kirtana range
pujala raga-patha gaurava bhange*

The servants of Lord Hari, who revel in satisfying His transcendental desires, worship the path of spontaneous devotion while doing service within the eternal sankirtan of Sri Gauranga.

*bramala chhadi bhoga cinmaya-bange
dhaula pathi-pathi bhakata-sange*

Having given up all types of sense-enjoyment, one should wander through the divine land of Gauda-desh, chanting and running along all the paths and roads in the association of the devotees.

*chhadala para-ghara arcite gange
bujhala rasa-niti nacata dhange*

Leaving the old house behind forever, to worship on the banks of

the River Ganga, one will understand the science of rasa by engaging in sankirtana.

The philosophy of Prabhupada Sri Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami is summed up in this verse, *matala harijana kirtana range pujala raga-patha gaurava bhange*, which can be seen written on the front of the Natya-Mandir temple of Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math at Nabadwip. Devotees in the sankirtan of Sri Chaitanyadev feel extreme joy and a spontaneous attraction (raga) for Sri Krishna while looking upwards towards the lila of Sri Krishna, Reality the Beautiful: *matala harijana kirtana range pujala raga-patha gaurava bhange*.

The Supreme Lord Sri Krishna descended here to give divine love of the divine couple Sri Radha Govinda to the fallen souls in this age of Kali. Five hundred years ago He came in the form of Sri Gaurasundara, the son of Sachi Devi, imbued with the mood of separation (vipralambha bhava). Again, the message of Sri Chaitanya was shown in this world in the person of Bhagavan Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada. The divine teachings of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu reappeared in this living, human form.

Speaking the divine message of Sri Chaitanya, Srila Saraswati Thakur uplifted and enlightened all the faithful souls who have a feeling of devotion for Sri Sri Guru Gauranga Radha Govinda.

Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Maharaj

First we must make ourselves ready for Krishna's service by becoming a good listener, a good receiver, and then we can proceed in the practice of Krishna Consciousness. It is necessary to become a good listener.

Srila Govinda Maharaj:

In the scriptures it is written that raga marga (spontaneous devotion) is a very rare thing, and that if we are practicing devotion within vidhi marga (regulated devotion) we will not get the inspiration of raga marga. In the scriptures it says that when Krishna lila was revealed in this material world so many searchers were attracted by that lila and they followed the process of raga marga, the same process that Kaviraj Goswami gave in Chaitanya-Charitamrita. Whoever will take the mood of devotion of the Vrajabasis to heart, and who has too much attraction and too much hankering for Krishna, they can join within that process of spontaneous devotion. But here there is some difficulty for us, for we are materialists. Whatever path of raga marga the materialists will try to follow, that will go into sahajyaism - and that is like garbage. So then, which way can we properly follow that path of raga marga? When I asked Guru Maharaj about this, Guru Maharaj said, "Yes it is true what you say." Only under the guidance of a spiritual master who is himself liberated, and too much busy with service to Radha-Krishna, under their guidance, if we will try to proceed, then we can go to our destination. But before that it is necessary to keep faith.

We must be faithful. And by the association of the raga marga devotee, who will give some directives and direction to us, through them we can make ourselves very clean. We must follow that path. In that way we can make ourselves very clean. Our attachment to Sri Krishna's service will increase through their association. That is called bhajanakriya. Gradually all anarthas, all undesirable impurities, will go out from us. Because we are always suffering from kama (lust), krodha (anger), lobha (greed) etc., because we are within that jurisdiction, we cannot do anything good for ourselves or for others. Especially because of

the kama, the lust. Krishna lila is full of transcendental lust and if you want to enter there you must first become free from mundane lust.

That is only possible if you get a taste for pure devotion under the guidance of a good spiritual master. Your bhajanakriya will increase under his guidance. Your anartha will disappear. Your nishtha, firmness, will increase. More and more it will increase. Taste will be inconceivably increased in Krishna lila. Then automatically the lust, which in this material world is called kama, it will disappear. And you will be clean and can join with your clean form in Radha-Krishna's pastimes.

By the mercy of Sri Krishna we find a genuine Guru and by the mercy of the genuine Guru we find Sri Krishna. Srila Rupa Goswami says:

adau sraddha tatah sadhu-sango 'tha bhajana-kriya
tato 'nartha-nivrttih syat tato nistha rucis tatah
athasaktis tato bhavas tatah premabhyudancati
sadhakanam ayam premnah pradurbhave bhavet kramah
-(Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.4.15-16)

In the beginning there must be faith. Then one becomes interested in associating with pure devotees. Thereafter one is initiated by the spiritual master and executes the regulative principles under his orders. Thus one is freed from all unwanted habits and becomes firmly fixed in devotional service. Thereafter one develops taste and attachment. This is the way of sadhana-bhakti, the execution of devotional service according to the regulative principles. Gradually emotions intensify, and finally there is an awakening of love. This is the gradual development of love of Godhead for a devotee in search of Krishna consciousness.

How fortunate we are, that we have received the opportunity to associate with Srila Gurudev!

In Sri Tattva Sutra verse 41, Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur has written, “*jnanasuryasyehi rasmayah sastrani*” (Revealed scriptures are the rays of transcendental knowledge). All the Vedic literatures, the holy scriptures, are like rays of light shining or coming from the sages and great devotees.

The scriptures are the thoughts and words of the illuminated sages. The individual soul is a ray of transcendental knowledge and when a soul realizes that Vasudeva, the Lord, is everywhere and everything (*vasudeva sarvam iti*) the soul becomes illuminated by spiritual knowledge and the light of God. In *Sri Tattva Sutra*, Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur explained that transcendental knowledge is likened to the sun for these reasons: transcendental knowledge is manifested from the spiritual form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, transcendental knowledge is self-manifested, transcendental knowledge destroys the darkness of ignorance, and transcendental knowledge reveals all truths. All the scriptures are likened to rays of light emanating from that sun of transcendental knowledge.

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur:

bhakteyna sastram tadvidherjnanavirodhitvat

Pure devotees of Sri Krishna are not to be limited by the rules given in the scriptures because their activities are based on spontaneous attachment which is transcendental to rules and regulations.

-(*Sri Tattva Sutra*, 43)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami warned that if we have not attained *prema* (divine love for Krishna) we should not neglect to follow the general instructions about devotional service presented in the scriptures. So many persons are thinking they have entered the path of spontaneous devotion when in truth they are trudging in the mud of misunderstanding. How fortunate we are, to be able to hear the instructions of Srila Saraswati Thakur so wonderfully presented by Srila Gurudev. His advice and instructions will save us from going down the wrong path! In the scriptures we read the words of the great devotees of the past. If we are genuinely serious in our search for Sri Krishna we will not neglect the words of advice given in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita*, *Sri Chaitanya Bhagavata* and other Vaishnava scriptures. Very clearly the message of Bhagavat Dharma is presented in the holy scriptures: practice devotional service under the guidance of a genuine Guru.

May I have the opportunity to render service at the feet of my Divine Master, Om Vishnupad Sri Srila Bhakti Sundara Govinda Dev Goswami Maharaj, for all of my life, and for all of my next life. My prayer is that I will not be diverted from the proper path by bad association, and that I may have a chance to serve His Divine Grace with full attentive awareness now and tomorrow and the day after that.

Muralidhar das
Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math.
10 December 2003, the appearance day of
His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev Goswami
Maharaj.

Endnote:

Siddhi-lalasa
by
Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura

*kabe gaura-vane, suradhuni-tate, 'ha radhe ha krsna' bo'le
kandiya bedabo, deho-sukha chadi', nana lata-taru-tale*
O when, O when will this soul live in Gaura's forest on the Ganga's
shore singing out the Holy Names “Radha” and “Krishna”,
Renouncing all the body's joys, drenched with all the tears
I've wept walking amidst the forest herbs, I will sit beneath a tree.

*swa-paca-grhete, magiya khaibo, pibo saraswati-jala
puline puline gada-gadi dibo, kori' krsna-kolahala*
When, at some outcaste's home, shall I give up all thoughts of caste
and beg to share humble prasadam with him and drink water from the
stream of Saraswati?
Along the Ganga's banks, my voice choked with my ecstasy
I'll chant “Krishna” in great delight.

*dhama-basi jane, pranati koriya, magibo krpara lesa
vaisnaba-carana- renu gaya makhi, dhorì' avadhuta-besa*
And when will I bow down before a resident of the Dham and beg
from him a drop of mercy. When, O when, will I smear my body
with Dust from a Vaishnava's holy feet, and wear the avadhuta's
clothing?

*gauda-braja-bane, bheda na heribo, hoibo baraja-basi
dhamera swarupa, sphuribe nayane, hoibo radhara dasi*
Then I shall see no difference in the forest of Gauda and Vraja, and I
will be transformed into a resident of the Dham. The true nature of
the Lord's abode will Manifest itself to my eyes, and I will become a
maidservant of Srimati Radharani.