



Get Rid of the *Avadhūta*, Śrīvāsa!

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A Brief Introduction

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have a personal relationship with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu? To talk with Him face-to-face, and have loving exchanges with Him?

It's not something we can speculate about or artificially induce. But we can hear about such loving exchanges, learn from them and become attracted and attached to entering into them as a humble servant of the servant.

Today, let's visit the world of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His very dear associate and servant, Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura tells us that Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura “*pleased the Lord in various ways by performing saṅkīrtana, reciting Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, and displaying proper etiquette. It was in his house that the Lord first revealed Himself.*” (CB Antya 5.36-37) And Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains the nature of the “proper etiquette” that so greatly endeared Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura to Him,

(His) proper etiquette (was) filled with great affection and love devoid of awe and veneration. (CB Antya 5.36-37p)

Such a special personality would obviously attract Gaurasundara and encourage Him to have very intimate and heart deep exchanges with him. Let's explore just a few of these through the eyes of Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura.

Get Rid of the Avadhūta, Śrīvāsa!

*For sometime, Nityānanda resided in the house of Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita. He was constantly in the mood of a child and did not manifest any other mood. He would not eat rice with His own hands, so Mālinī, the chaste wife of Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, fed Him like her own son. She knew well the glories of Nityānanda, therefore she served Him as a loving mother serves her child.**

One day Gaurasundara was sitting and discussing topics about Kṛṣṇa with Śrīvāsa. (He noticed Nitāi's behavior, and decided to test Śrīvāsa). He said, “Why are you letting this avadhūta stay in your home? I know you are very magnanimous, but we do not know to which caste and family He belongs. If you want to protect your own caste and family, you should immediately get rid of this avadhūta.”

Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita just smiled and said, “O Lord, it is not proper for You to test me in this way. If anyone worships You for even a day, he is my life and soul. Nityānanda is Your very body, and I am the witness of this fact. Even if

Nityānanda holds a pot of wine, associates with women, and spoils my caste, life, and wealth, still my faith in Him will never waver. I am telling You the fact of the matter.”

When the Lord heard these words from the mouth of Śrīvāsa, He got up, roared loudly, and embraced him tightly to His chest. “O Paṇḍita Śrīvāsa, what did you say? You have so much faith in Nityānanda? You have understood My confidential associate Nityānanda! O Śrīvāsa, I am most pleased with you and desire to give you a very special benediction. Even if Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune, has to beg alms from door to door, you will never be afflicted with poverty. Everyone in your house, including the dogs and cats, will have unflinching devotion for Me. I am offering Nityānanda to you. Please take care of Him in all respects. I am placing Him in your care.”

After giving Śrīvāsa this benediction, the Lord returned to His own home.

— **CB Madhya 8.6-23**

** śrīvāsa-panḍito dhīmān yaḥ purā nārado munih
parvatākhyo muni-varo ya āsīn nārada-priyaḥ
śrī-rāma-panḍitaḥ śrīmān tat-kaniṣṭha-sahodaraḥ
nāmnāmbikā vraje dhātrī stanya-dātrī sthitā purā
saiveyaṁ mālinī nāmnī śrīvāsa-grhiṇī matā*

Śrīvāsa is Nārada, who plays such an important part in Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*. Nārada Muni’s friend Parvata Muni appeared as Śrīvāsa’s younger brother Ramāi. **Śrīvāsa’s wife Mālinī Devī was Kṛṣṇa’s nurse in Vraja, Ambikā. (Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā 90)**



Oh Śrīvāsa, Are You Afraid of Something?

(1)

The son of Śacī regularly performed kīrtana throughout the day and night. Thus the Supreme Lord inaugurated Nāma-saṅkīrtana, and as a result, all the devotees’ distress was mitigated. But as Śrī Śacīnandana repeatedly and loudly cried out, “Haribol!” the sleep of the atheists was repeatedly broken.

When the happiness of their sleep was disturbed, the atheists became angry and freely blasphemed all the devotees — a sure sign of their own ruination. One of them said, “What madness has come upon them?” Someone else said, “We are unable to sleep at night.” Someone said, “The Supreme Lord will

become angry because of this loud noise, and that will surely result in their destruction.” Another said, “Rather than cultivating real knowledge, they are acting most whimsically and arrogantly.”

Someone else said, “Anyway, who knows what kind of kīrtana they are doing? That foolish brāhmaṇa Śrīvāsa is behind all this. Just to fill their bellies by begging, these four brothers loudly call out the name of Kṛṣṇa as if they were afflicted by insanity. Can’t they achieve piety by chanting in their minds? Does chanting loudly bestow greater piety? They are all mad men!”

Someone else said, “O brothers, we are doomed! Because of that Śrīvāsa, the entire country will be ruined. This morning I heard that on the King’s order two boats are on their way here. The King has heard about the loud kīrtana in Nadia and has ordered that the culprits be arrested and brought before him. Now that crafty Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita will slip off in some direction or other, leaving us to face certain ruin. I frankly told you some time ago that we should throw his house into the Ganges. But you took it as a joke and did not pay any attention. Now just see how we will all be destroyed.”

One of them then said, “Anyway, what does this have to do with us? Let’s just bind Śrīvāsa and turn him over to the proper authorities.”

From town to town the news spread: “The King’s men are coming to arrest the Vaiṣṇavas.”

Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita was most liberal. He had firm faith in what he heard and, considering that the Yavanas were ruling the kingdom, he became fearful. But Gauracandra knew the heart of His devotee.

— CB Madhya 2.222-239, 242-243

(2)

During this time, Mahāprabhu Viśvambhara, who was indefeatable throughout the three worlds and more attractive than Cupid, fearlessly wandered about Navadvīpa. Fragrant sandalwood pulp was smeared all over His body. His lotus eyes and bimba lips were enchanting. His curling hair adorned His face, which resembled the full moon. A brāhmaṇa thread enhanced the beauty of His shoulders and His exquisite form. He was dressed in fine cloth, and His lips were tinged with the color of betel. He happily proceeded towards the banks of the Ganges. Upon seeing Him, all pious persons became happy, but all the atheists became morose and said, “In spite of hearing the news, He is not at all frightened. He wanders about the town like a prince.”

Someone else said, “O brother, I know His plan. Wait a while and you will see. This is all a cover up for His escape.”

Viśvambhara fearlessly looked around and saw before Him the beautiful flowing Ganges and its charming banks. Nearby He saw many bulls and cows. They were lowing as they came to the bank of the river to drink water. Some of them raised their tails and ran about, some of them fought each other, some peacefully rested, and some drank water.

Seeing this, the Lord repeatedly thundered, “I am He, I am He!”

In that mood, the Lord rushed to Śrīvāsa’s house, where He loudly exclaimed, “O Śrīvāsa, what are you doing?”

Again and again, the Lord kicked the door of the room in which Śrīvāsa was worshiping Nṛsimhadeva. “Who are you worshiping? Who are you meditating upon? Look, He whom you are worshiping is standing before you. Open the door! Open the door!”

Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita’s meditation broke and he saw a blazing fire. He opened his eyes and looked around him. He saw Viśvambhara sitting in vīrāsana (the posture of a hero) and holding conch, disc, club, and lotus in His four hands. The Lord repeatedly roared like an intoxicated lion as He slapped the left side of His stomach. Seeing Him, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita began to tremble and became completely speechless. Viśvambhara said, “O Śrīvāsa! All these days didn’t you know about My appearance? The loud chanting and roaring of you and Advaita Ācārya forced Me to leave Vaikuṅṭha and come here with My associates. You are living here in My company without recognizing Me, and Advaita Ācārya has avoided Me by going back to Śāntipura. But I will deliver all saintly people and destroy all the miscreants. Do not worry. Just offer prayers to Me.”

Śrīvāsa cried out of love on seeing the Lord, and the fear in his heart was dispelled by the Lord’s assurance. The most fortunate Śrīvāsa cried tears of love and rolled on the ground after seeing that most wonderful manifestation of Śrī Gauracandra. Śrīvāsa’s entire body became filled with ecstasy, and he stood up with folded hands and began offering prayers to the Lord. Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita was a natural scholar and a mahā-bhāgavata. Having been ordered by the Lord, he offered heart-felt prayers.

What wonderful happiness was felt throughout his entire body! That best of the brāhmaṇas merged in an ocean of bliss and the fear in his heart was

dispelled by his Lord's assurance. The Lord smiled after hearing the prayers of Śrīvāsa. And being compassionate, the Lord spoke to him. "Bring your wife, children, and other members of your household and let them see My form. In the company of your wife, worship My lotus feet and ask for any benediction you desire."

Being ordered by the Lord, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita immediately brought all his family members. He offered at the feet of the Lord whatever flowers were there for the worship of Viṣṇu. In the company of his wife, the brāhmaṇa cried as he worshiped the lotus feet of the Lord with sandalwood paste, flowers, incense, and lamps. Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita led his brothers, wife, servants, and maidservants in humbly falling at the lotus feet of the Lord. Lord Viśvambhara is the well-wisher of Śrīvāsa, so He placed His lotus feet on the heads of everyone there. Unseen by outsiders, the Lord touched everyone's heads with His lotus feet. He smiled and said, "May your minds be always fixed on Me."

— **CB Madhya 2.245-269, 293-303**

(3)

Then Lord Viśvambhara roared loudly again and spoke to Śrīvāsa as follows, "O Śrīnivāsa! Are you afraid of something? Is there some rumor that the King's soldiers are coming to arrest you? By My own supreme will, I am the director of all living entities in the innumerable universes. The King will have you arrested only if I make him do so. If this were not the case — if he independently ordered your arrest — then this is what I would do. I would be the first to board the boat and present Myself before the King. Will the King remain sitting on his throne after seeing Me? No, I will bewilder him and drag him down. Even if this does not happen and he holds Me for questioning, then this is what I will tell him: 'Listen, O King, bring all your Mullahs and Kazis to ascertain the truth. O King, bring all the elephants, horses, animals, and birds that you have. Instruct your Kazis to recite your scriptures and make those creatures cry in love of God.' If they are unable to do this, then I will manifest Myself to the King and say, 'You dared to stop saṅkīrtana on the advice of those crazy fellows! Everyone has now seen what very little power they actually have. Now behold My power with your own eyes. After saying this, I will gather his elephants, horses, deer, and birds and induce them to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa and cry. I will induce everyone to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa and cry, including the King and his subjects. Do not maintain the slightest doubt. I will show you all this right before your very own eyes.'

The Lord then looked at Śrīvāsa's niece, a small girl named Nārāyaṇī who was standing near Him. Even today Nārāyaṇī is known among Vaiṣṇavas as

the recipient of Lord Caitanya’s all-merciful remnants. Śrī Gaurāṅga, the Supersoul of all living entities, ordered her, “Nārāyaṇī, chant the name of Kṛṣṇa and cry.” That four-year-old child immediately acted as if she was mad. She cried and chanted, “O Kṛṣṇa! O Kṛṣṇa!” and forgot herself. Tears flowed from her eyes to the ground in torrents and saturated the entire area around her.

Lord Viśvambhara smiled and said to Śrīvāsa, “Now have your fears been dispelled?” The expert speaker Śrīnivāsa knew all truths. He raised his arms and spoke to the Lord. “O Lord, even when in the form of time You annihilate the entire creation, I am not afraid because of the power of Your holy names. So what is there to fear now that You are personally present in my house?”

Speaking in this way, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita and his associates became overwhelmed just to see the Lord’s amazing devotional opulences. Noticing this, Lord Viśvambhara then sternly instructed Śrīvāsa, “Do not disclose any of this to anyone.”

After some time Viśvambhara regained external consciousness and felt somewhat ashamed of His behavior. He pacified Śrīvāsa, and then returned to His own home.

— CB Madhya 2.304-330, 338-339



You Will Never Go Hungry, Śrīvāsa!

Sometime after Gauracandra had taken *sannyāsa*, He visited Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita at his home in Kumārahaṭṭa (now known as Hālisahara).

At the time He arrived, Śrīvāsa was absorbed in meditation. But his meditation suddenly broke when he saw his worshipable Lord standing before him.

Seeing the Lord of his life, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita fell to the ground offering obeisances. Paṇḍita Thākura held the Lord’s lotus feet to his chest and sighed deeply as he cried loudly. Gaurasundara embraced Śrīvāsa and soaked his body with tears of ecstatic love. By the mercy of Lord Caitanya, everyone in Śrīvāsa’s household was most pious. They all raised their arms and cried upon seeing the Lord.

On receiving the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha in his house, Śrīvāsa's happiness knew no bounds. He brought a fine seat by carrying it on his head and offered it to the lotus-eyed Lord, who sat down on it. All the Lord's associates sat around Him and continuously chanted the names of Kṛṣṇa. The chaste ladies of the house vibrated auspicious sounds, and Śrīvāsa's entire house became filled with ecstasy.

In this way Śrī Gaurasundara joyfully stayed a few days in the house of Śrīvāsa.

The two brothers—Śrīvāsa and Rāmāi—glorified the Lord's qualities, and the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha became overwhelmed with ecstasy as He danced. Śrīvāsa and Rāmāi were most dear to Lord Caitanya. There is no doubt that the two were as good as Lord Caitanya's body. Śrīvāsa pleased the Lord in various ways by performing saṅkīrtana, reciting Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, and displaying proper etiquette. It was in his house that the Lord first revealed Himself.

One day in a solitary place Mahāprabhu asked Śrīvāsa about his household affairs.

The Lord asked, "I see that you do not go anywhere. How then do you maintain your family, and how will you maintain them (in the future)?"

Śrīvāsa replied, "O Lord, I tell You that I don't like to go collecting anywhere."

The Lord then said, "You have a large family. How will you maintain them all?"

Śrīvāsa said, "One will somehow or other receive whatever he is destined to receive."

The Lord then said, "Then you should take sannyasa."

But Śrīvāsa replied, "I cannot do that."

The Lord said, "You will not take sannyāsa, and you will not go to anyone's door to beg alms. How then will you maintain your family? I do not understand what you are saying. Nowadays if one does not go out and bring something, nothing will come. Tell Me, if nothing comes to your door, what will you do?"

Śrīvāsa clapped his hands three times and said, "One, two, three — this is the secret."

The Lord said, “What is the meaning of this ‘one, two, three’? Why did you clap?”

Śrīvāsa replied, “This is my firm conviction. If I do not receive food for three days, then, I tell You the truth, I will tie a weight to my neck and drown myself in the Ganges.”

As soon as the son of Śacī heard Śrīvāsa’s words, He roared loudly and stood up.

The Lord said, “What did you say, Paṇḍita Śrīvāsa! You will starve for want of food! Even if Lakṣmī has to beg, your household will not be afflicted by poverty. O Śrīvāsa, have you forgotten what I personally said in the Bhagavad-gītā? Those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form — to them I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have.” I personally carry on My head the needs of any person who thinks of Me without deviation. All perfection will automatically come to one who thinks of Me but does not go to anyone’s door (for begging). I personally protect and maintain anyone who remembers even My servant. The servant of My servant is most dear to Me. Such a person easily attains Me without a doubt. How can My servant be in anxiety for food, when I am there to maintain him in all respects? O Śrīnivāsa, you just sit happily at home. Everything will automatically come to your doorstep. My benediction to Advaita and you is that your bodies will never be affected by old age.”

Śrī Gaurasundara then called Rāma Paṇḍita and said, “O Rāma, listen to what I say. My order is that you must always serve your elder brother as if he were the Supreme Lord. O Śrī Rāma Paṇḍita, you are as dear to Me as My own life. You should never give up the service of Śrīvāsa.”

Hearing the Lord’s words, Śrīvāsa and Śrī Rāma became unlimitedly happy and their desires were fulfilled. By the mercy of Lord Caitanya, everything comes to the door of Śrīvāsa even today.

***How can I describe the magnanimous nature of Śrīvāsa?
The three worlds become purified simply by remembering him.***

— CB Antya 5.7-14, 33-58, 61-71



Who Is Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura?

(1)

— He is a member of the Pañca-tattva —

*pañca-tattvātmakaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ
bhakta-rūpa-svarūpakam
bhaktāvatāraṁ bhaktākhyam
namāmi bhakta-śaktikam*

Let me offer my obeisances unto Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has manifested Himself in five as a devotee, expansion of a devotee, incarnation of a devotee, pure devotee and devotional energy.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is therefore called bhakta-rūpa (the form of a devotee), and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu is called bhakta-svarūpa (the expansion of a devotee). Śrī Advaita Prabhu, the incarnation of a devotee, is viṣṇu-tattva and belongs to the same category.

— CC Ādi 7.6+p

*ei tina tattva,—’sarvārādhyā’ kari māni
caturtha ye bhakta-tattva,—’ārādhaka’ jāni*

The three predominators [Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Nityānanda Prabhu and Advaita Prabhu] are worshipable by all living entities, and the fourth principle [Śrī Gadādhara Prabhu] is to be understood as Their worshiper.

*śrīvāsādi yata koṭi koṭi bhakta-gaṇa
’suddha-bhakta’-tattva-madhye tān-sabāra gaṇana*

There are innumerable pure devotees of the Lord, headed by Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura, who are known as unalloyed devotees.

In his Anubhāṣya, Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, describing the truth about the Pañca-tattva, explains that we should understand that Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the supreme predominator and that Nityānanda Prabhu and Advaita Prabhu are His subordinates but are also predominators. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Lord, and Nityānanda Prabhu and Advaita Prabhu are manifestations of the Supreme Lord. All of Them are viṣṇu-tattva, the Supreme, and are therefore worshipable by the living entities. **Although the other two tattvas within the category of Pañca-tattva — namely, śakti-tattva and jīva-tattva, represented by Gadādhara and Śrīvāsa — are worshipers of the Supreme Lord, they are in the same category because they eternally engage in the transcendental loving service of the Lord.**

— CC Ādi 7.15-16+15p

(2)

— He is the foremost of the Lord's devotees —

*bhagavānera bhakta yata śrīvāsa pradhāna
tān'-sabhāra pāda-padme sahasra praṇāma*

There are innumerable devotees of the Lord, of whom Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura is the foremost. I offer my respectful obeisances thousands of times unto their lotus feet.

— CC Ādi 1.38

(3)

— He is maddened by the sentiment of servitude to
Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu —

*śrīvāsa, haridāsa, rāmadāsa, gadādhara
murāri, mukunda, candraśekhara, vakreśvara
e-saba paṇḍita-loka parama-mahattva
caitanyera dāsye sabāya karaye unmatta*

Śrīvāsa, Haridāsa, Rāmadāsa, Gadādhara, Murāri, Mukunda, Candraśekhara and Vakreśvara are all glorious and are all learned scholars, but the sentiment of servitude to Lord Caitanya makes them mad in ecstasy.

— CC Ādi 6.49-50

(4)

— He is Nārada Muni in *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* —

*śrīvāsa-paṇḍito dhīmān yaḥ purā nārado muniḥ
parvatākhyo muni-varo ya āsīn nārada-priyaḥ
śrī-rāma-paṇḍitaḥ śrīmān tat-kaniṣṭha-sahodaraḥ
nāmnāmbikā vraje dhātrī stanya-dātrī sthitā purā
saiveyaṁ mālinī nāmnī śrīvāsa-grhiṇī matā*

Śrīvāsa is Nārada, who plays such an important part in *Kṛṣṇa's līlā*. Nārada Muni's friend Parvata Muni appeared as Śrīvāsa's younger brother Ramāi. Śrīvāsa's wife Mālinī Devī was Kṛṣṇa's nurse in Vraja, Ambikā.

— *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* 90