

An assortment of Gaudiya-Vaisnava Nectar

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Sri Vishnu Priya-devi

Vishnupriya is bhu-shakti. She is also Satyabhama. Daughter of Sanatana Mishra, who was a very learned brahmana and Vaishnava. From childhood she was very religious, following all vratas and worships. She especially worshipped Tulasidevi and bathed 2 or 3 times daily in the Ganga. This is where she met Sacidevi who would bless her saying, "May you have a good husband." From that time Saci thought of making her daughter-in-law.

She was Lord Chaitanya's second wife after Lakshmipriya departed this world. The pious brahmana Sri Kashinatha Mishra arranged this marriage. The marriage was held with great pomp and proper rituals. The whole Navadvipa came to see this divine pastime that even demigods cannot see. The Lord hardly gave her attention after this marriage. She bore all this quietly. The night he left to take sannyasa He showed His 4-armed form to her.

She would put one grain of rice in a pot for every round of HKM she chanted, and cook that and share with mother Saci. Ideal widow.

Sri Raghunandana Thakur

He was the son of Mukunda dasa (who is brother to Sri Madhava and Narahari Sarkar). This family hailed from Srikhanda. R.T. was Kandarpa Manjari in Vrajalila and Krishna's son also named Kandarpa in Dwaraka lila. One when his father went on business, the 8-year old R.T. fed the home Deity laddu. He was fearful his father would think he hadn't done the offering when the Deity didn't consume the offering, so he cried and the Deity took. When pop returned, pop thought the kid had eaten it. But later he arranged the same would happen and spied from outside. He also saw the Deity eat the laddu.

The boy composed Gaurbhavamrta at age 8.

A Kadamba tree always yielded to the boy 2 bloomed flowers in any season for his worship of the Lord.

When dancing ecstatically he wanted to bless his disciple Krsna dasa. One of his ankle bells flew off and fell 4 miles away in a pond near that disciple's house. The pond is called Nupurkunda and the ankle bell can still be seen on display there in the village of Akaihati.

He told Srinivasa Acharya that the future of Vaishnavism in Bengal would look bleak because of factionalism. But later he blessed Srinivasa that he would generate a revival of the SKT movement.

At the end of his life he entered nama-kirtana continuously for 3 days. On the 4th day he chanted 'Sri Krsna Chaitanya' repeatedly and left his body.

Pundarika Vidyanidhi

He was King Vrishabhanu in Vrajalila. A rich landowner. Disciple of Madhavendra Puri. Good friend of Madhava Mishra. Gadadhara Pandit took diksha from him. Even before they met Mahaprabhu called out his name, "Oh my father" while in kirtana. L.C. called him Premnidhi. Good friend of Swarupa Damodara.

Gadadhara went with Mukunda Datta to see him because Mahaprabhu had said that

G.P. (who was very attached to Srimad Bhagavatam) should learn S.B, from P.V. P.V. was sitting on an opulent bed, wearing fancy silk clothes and was even smoking a hookah. G.P. doubted him, but M.D. sang a verse from S.B. and P.V. fell off his bed, crying in ecstasy. The verse was about the goal attained by Putana in 3rd Canto.

Raghunatha dasa Goswami

Rasamanjari, or Ratimanjari, or Bhanumati.

Appeared in Krishnapur in 1492. Diksha guru was Yadunandana Acarya. He got vaishnava-kripa from young age. Studied under Balarama dasa Acharya (family pujari) and Haridasa Thakur had visited his house, and gave him instructions. Hearing about LC and L Nitai's many pastimes attracted him. Once he ran to Advaita's house, got blessings of LC, Who advised him not to be crazy, but to return. Later he got Nitai's great mercy.

Story of his meditation on cooking, offering and honoring sweet rice to Giridhari; he got sick from overeating in his mind.

Someone once brought him a beautiful leaf cup with some sweet prasadam. He inquired where the leaf cup had come from, and when he heard the answer, he threw it aside, saying, "That's the place of Chandravali - I'll never accept anything from there."

A businessman gave him money for the excavation of Radha Kunda. As it was being dug up, trees were also cut. RDG had a dream that 5 trees were the 5 Pandavas who were absorbed in meditation on RK-lila.

He says that he'd rather hear the prajalpa of the Brijbasis than Krishna katha anywhere outside of Vrindavana.

Goswami Stories

-Ballabhacharya once visited Rupa Goswami. Seeing him working on a literature, Ballabha inquired to see it and pointed out a mistake. Rupa asked him to correct the work while he took bath. When he was out Jiva pointed out to Vallabha that there was no mistake, and Ballabha was satisfied. So he told Rupa when he returned that your cousin has shown me I was mistaken - don't worry, this work is perfectly composed. After Ballabha left, Rupa was angry with Jiva and told him to return to the east (he meant Bengal). But Jiva went east of Rupa and Sanatana's ashram and moved into an old crocodile cave. There he wrote Gopala Champu, desiring not to offend Vaishnava's point of view. He wrote it on coconut leaves strung together with banyan tree roots. But after composing it he became angry at himself out of humility and threw the manuscript in the Yamuna. At the same time, Sanatana and Rupa were bathing downstream, and the manuscript touched Sanatana's body. He recovered the manuscript and could tell it was Jiva's. So he went looking for him. Villagers told him, "Barobaba, there is a wonderful young sadhu living in that cave on the bank of the Yamuna. He is more austere than even you and your brother, and he chants and cries constantly." So he found Jiva and embraced him, bringing him back to Rupa.

-When Rupa was writing the Radhikastakam, he compared Radharani's hairdo with Her gem on top of it to a black cobra. Sanatana didn't like this. So Rupa said, "Well, that's the only way I can describe it, but I'll think about it." So Sanatana went out. While walking he saw some young girls playing on a swing; two were pushing and one was riding the swing. As he got closer he saw the one on the swing had a cobra in her hair. He returned to Rupa, saying, "You are my guru. Whatever you write is exactly correct."

Srila Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakura

He was a disciple of Radharamana Chakravarti who is in the disciplic line of Srila Narottama dasa Thakur. He spent many years in his guru's house studying bhakti under his tutelage. During his student years he defeated a famous digvijaya pandit and wrote many small compositions known as bindhus. His parents married him early but he had no interest in family life. On his guru's instruction he spent one night with his wife and read Srimad Bhagavatam to her until dawn. Then he left for Radha Kunda and stayed in the bhajana kutir of Sri Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami.

He was known as Hariballabha Dasa and later got the title of Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakur for his uncanny perceptions into the mellows of Krishna bhakti. He was called Rasacharya. He could stop the rainfall by his writing of S.B. commentaries, because the rain didn't want to disturb him or drip on his manuscripts.

He re-established parakiya-bhajan at Radha Kunda by writing a tika on Gopala Champu. For this, some envious persons tried to kill him when he went for his ablutions in the forest, but he took his siddha-deha form of a young girl and they couldn't discern him.

His disciple was Sri Baladeva Vidyabhusana, who wrote the Govinda-bhasya.

Narottama dasa Thakura

He appeared 45 years after Lord Caitanya's disappearance in Raj Sathi district in modern Bangladesh as a son of King Krishnanandana Dhatu. His father had waited long for a son. Astrologers had predicted he'd be a big acharya - parents took this to mean a good ruler.

He was smart boy. He learned his subjects quickly. Narottama was attracted to the katha of Mahaprabhu which was very prominent at that time. He wanted to go to Vrndavana.

Previously in one kirtana Lord Chaitanya had cried out "Narottama!" Nobody except Lord Nityananda knew the meaning of this. Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityananda went to the Padmavati River and left prema bhakti with her for Narottama. She asked, "How will I know him?" LC said, "When his body touches your waters you'll overflow in ecstasy."

When he was 12 LC and LN appeared in a dream and told him to bathe in the Padmavati which was 1 mile from Kheturi, the capital. This was during the calm season. As soon as he stepped in the river, big waves appeared. Padmavati endowed him with prema-bhakti and he turned gold. His parents thought he was sick.

When his father and uncle Purushottama were called to the capital of Bengal NDT ran off to Vrndavana. He travelled quickly, not eating, but got a boil on his foot and had to stop beneath a tree for 3 days. A brahmin came with a pot of milk and left it for him. He prayed to the Lord for direction and had a dream of Rupa and Sanatana who told him to drink the milk and just go. He did and was healed and ran.

He went to Jiva Goswami who told him to go to Lokanatha Goswami who got sannyasa from LC. LG didn't want disciples. So NDT served him secretly for a long time, cleaning stool place and putting a pot of fresh water there and fresh dirt. He would hold the broom to his breast and weep. LG was impressed as NDT was

a prince, so he gave him initiation.

NDT is Champaka Manjari and a direct potency of Lord Nityananda. She is a personal associate of Anangamanjari.

NDT would do manas seva. Once he burned his hands while cooking in his mind, and this was noticed by Lokanatha Goswami. LG told him, "Take full shelter of Jiva Goswami." He became siksha disciple of JG, with contemporaries Srinivasa and Shyamananda Prabhu.

JG wanted his books sent to Bengal. He sent them in a trunk with these 3 siksha disciples. Hambi, a king near Varanasi, was a dacoit and had an astrologer who told him these three mendicants had an enormous treasure in their trunk, so he stole that trunk during the night. Srinivasa was deputed to get the books back while Narottama went on to Bengal. He sat on the bank of the Bhagirathi and cried, thinking about the Lord and desiring to know the place of His appearance. Just then an old brahmana came and asked him why he was crying, and he told him. That brahmana said, "I've seen so many pasttimes", and he took him to the place of LC's appearance, where Isana Thakur was staying. NDT got the blessings of the senior Vaishnavas - Raghunandana, Jahnvi, Bir Chandra.

In his old kingdom, his father and uncle had passed away and his cousin-brother Santosh had become king. Santosh welcomed NDT with all ceremonies and took initiation from him. This was a big thing - others took initiation also. In Khetari he held the first Gaur Purnima festival and installed six Deities - one is now in Vrindavana in Gokulananda temple near the Radha Ramana temple (Deity of Lord Chaitanya). All great Vaishnavas of that time in Bengal came to this festival, including Shyamananda, Jahnvi, Mineketana Rama, Achyutananda, Mukunda Datta and others. NDT started Gauranghatti style of kirtana (because ragas, which are only celestial, do not invoke spiritual emotions). Srinivasa Acharya and Mukunda began singing this style at this first GP festival. After this festival many took dikshas from NDT. But smartas opposed this. He was even making sudras into brahmanas and giving brahmins initiation. He didn't care for the criticisms of the smarta brahmins.

Once he was going with his dear friend Rama Chandra Kaviraja (disciple of Srinivasa - NDT could have been his guru in their relationship, but accepted him as friend). As they walked along they saw two brahmin boys who were bringing goats for a sacrificial slaughter. The two devotees spoke among themselves about the nastiness of this practice, and the reactions to it. When the brahmin boys heard, they became alarmed and, inquiring further, became ND's disciples. Their father was a Shakta and was very disturbed. He got a pandit to discuss with his boys but they defeated him. So he went to a big big pandit named Rupa Narayana Chakravarti and that pandit complained to the local governor, who said "I'll arrange that you debate NDT. You defeat him and we'll settle this matter once and for all."

So Ramachandra Kaviraja and another brahmin disciple of NDT set up a pottery stand and a pan stand near NDT's ashrama. The governor came there with the pandit, and as was the custom, sent servants to the shops for pots and pan. So these "wallahs" talked with the servants only in Sanskrit. Hearing this the two bigshots came to see for themselves; shudras talking first-class Sanskrit, and telling that they were disciples of NDT. This alarmed the two, who fled.

When he was 80-85 he decided to leave the planet. He got a disease in the throat and couldn't speak. Smartas said, "Just see." Disciples begged him, "Don't go now. We'll be finished." But he left anyway, wanting to serve Krishna directly in spiritual world. But Madhavacharya prayed, "If you go now, the movement will be destroyed." So he came back to life as his body was being taken on procession to be interred. He became too much famous for this. One critical brahmin then got leprosy; he came to NDT and begged forgiveness, was cured and took initiation.

At age 105 he decided to leave this world. One day he told disciples, "I want to bathe in the Ganga." But they wouldn't let him step into the river, they just dug a shallow area where he sat and they splashed. But as they splashed his body melted away into the Ganga.

First sankirtan

When Srinivasa Acarya, Dukhi Krsna dasa (later Syamananda Prabhu) and Narottama dasa Thakur were travelling from Vrndavana to Bengal with books given to them by Srila Jiva Goswami, they were robbed at night at Visnupura by Raja Biahm Biya (the thief king). He had his thieves spying along the road as the party of Vaishnavas came along; he stole their decorated box when, after stopping for the night and having kirtan, they went to sleep. His astrologer told him, before he opened the box, that the contents were priceless. When he opened the box he saw the expensive cloth covering the books and his heart soared in anticipation. The first thing he saw underneath the cloth was the writing of Rupa Goswami; just seeing this freed him of all his sins and purified his heart; he experienced love of God and then lamented that he'd caused somebody great grief by this theft. He went to sleep and dreamed a beautiful golden person (more beautiful than a gold mountain) was laughing at him. That person said, "This is all a pastime. You will soon meet someone who will make you exceedingly happy." In the meantime, Srinivasa was informed by the villagers that the king was a great thief and that it was he who had stolen the box of books. Srinivasa met one brahmin named Krsna Ballabh, who became his disciple, along with others. Srinivasa inquired about the king from him, and KB said, "Oh, he's become a very pious man recently - he daily hears SB and is always inviting sadhus to read the SB and explain." Srinivasa said, "Sometime I would also like to go and explain SB to him." KB said, "Why sometime? Let's go now." So in the assembly of the king, Srinivasa appeared, and everyone was impressed with his character. In a beautiful voice he recited SB and gave a stunning explanation that nobody had heard before. The king bowed at his feet, wearing a cloth around his neck as a sign of humility. He became SV Acharya and the king was most glad to be able to return the books to him.

Locan dasa Thakura

Born in Burdwan in Ayurveda doctor family. Disciple of Narahari Sarkar. He was only son, pampered, but devotee from childhood. He wrote the Chaitanya Mangal in Lokerpachali style - 5 meters combined (folk song style). He was married when young, but he was detached from family life. He spent his youth with his guru in Srikhanda. Murari Gupta's writings on the life of LC was inspiration of CM; Vaishnavas changed VdT's CM to CB because VdT is Vyasa of Chaitanya-lila, and Vyasa wrote Srimad Bhagavatam. CM by LdT expands on pastimes of CB.

From CM by LdT: Mahaprabhu leaving Vishnupriya-devi to take sannyasa

Vpd: "Please put your hand on my head and tell me you are not taking sannyasa. This rumor I have heard from others - if it is true, I will enter fire. My life, youth, beauty, dressing, ornamental opulence is only for You. Without you, My life is useless. My heart is burning with grief."

LC, a smile playing on his lips: "Listen, my dear. Don't sully your heart with these thoughts. I now speak for Your benefit, please listen. This world is illusion. The only truths are Vishnu and the Vaishnavas. Our sons, parents, relatives - who is related to whom? Our only sweet relationship is with Krishna's lotus feet. Whether man, woman - such designations are only external. We are spirit soul. Forgetting this, we fall into duality.

Only Lord Krishna is our husband. This body is a combination of flesh, blood, mucus, stool and urine. When we are born, we are covered by maya. We go through youth, maturity, old age, experiencing so many distresses but always maintaining the body as the self. Those whom we think are our friends chastise us and leave us when we are old. We become blind and cry in an ocean of distress. Still, we don't serve the lotus feet of Govinda. Actually, we've taken this birth only to serve Krishna, but we fall down, forgetting the Lord, and suffer in hell. You have to live up to your name of Vishnupriya. Don't burden Your heart with useless remorse. These are my instructions. You now drive away all other thoughts and just think about Krishna."

With these words the Lord showed His 4 armed form to Vishnupriya-devi. She became ecstatic to see this wonderful display; understanding that everything and everyone is eternally connected with Lord Caitanya (because He is Vishnu Himself), she became overwhelmed with joy. But still, she was fixed in her own mood of devotion, thinking of the Lord as Her husband.

She fell down at His lotus feet and declared, "I am most fallen. You are my dear husband. After having gotten this priceless treasure of the opportunity to be Your maidservant, what misfortune has now brought this great downfall upon Me?" She then began to wail loudly and piteously, in great grief.

Seeing one so dear to Him in such a heartbroken condition, Lord Caitanya's eyes filled with tears, and He embraced Her. The cooling rays of His moonlike form calmed Her turbulent emotions.

"Listen, dear Vishnupriya", the Lord spoke again. "I declare to You that whenever You think of Me, I am there beside You, regardless of where I am." Vishnupriya could understand He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He continued: "You please just engage Yourself in Your daily activities, and nobody will disturb You." She silently lowered Her head and cried. Hearing His sweet words and wonderful behavior, Locan dasa is greatly pained, but continues to sing the Lord's glories.

13 Apasampradayas

Kartabhaja: "Guru is all, follow blindly" - but Jiva Goswami says we should know that KC is never blind, and even guru may be infallible.

Gaur Nagari: Sri Chaitanya as Krishna (lampat).

Naraneyi: Buddhistic worship of Lord Chaitanya (started in LC's time).

Atibari: these started in LC's time; LC is God Almighty (ignores His lila as devotee).

Sakhibeki: "gopis."

Sahajiya: "easy"; bodily bhava.

Aula: something like Baul.

Baul: pretends to be mad (from Batul: "becoming mad.")

Cudadhari: "wearing peacock feather"; imitation of Lord Nityananda.

Smarta: smarta brahmins.

Jat Goswamins: family goswamis.

Daravesha: Muslim mendicants influenced by Mahaprabhu.

Shain: ?

-Narada Muni is Madhumangala.

-Narada caused a fight between Radha and Krishna over Lalita (swing pastime).

-Krishna and Balarama - Balaram (formerly Laxman, who had sworn to never appear as the younger brother): friends taunted, "You're not the son of Yashoda, you're black", and Balaram confirmed. When parents asked why, he said, "I'm taking spite for our last lives relationship."

- "Aham vritti suka vritti vyasa vritti nivritti va..." appeared on the manuscript of Sridhara Swami's commentary of S.B. after it had been laid in front of the Lord Vishvanatha in Benares because of controversy over its validity.

-Lord Nityananda married upon the request of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who gave Him this instruction in Puri along with ordering Him to return to Bengal for preaching. The Lord married Vasudha, daughter of a famous brahmin. During the marriage feast, Lord Nityananda saw Vasudha's sister Jahnvi serving out prasadam in her 4-armed form. He recognized her as His eternal potency. So He took her as His wife also.

-Sanatana took diksa from Madhusudana Vacaspati, and Rupa took diksa from Sanatana.

-Bhaktivinode Thakur says the 6 Goswamis are the original brijbasis.

ABHIRAMA GOSWAMI

By Vidhubhusana Bhattacharya

CHAPTER ONE

Appearance of Sri Caitanyadeva and His associates

The Hindu kingdom in India had come to an end. The glorious flag of the Muslims had been flying very proudly in the sky of India. The huge tree-like Hindu religion with its many branches and twigs had become uprooted by the blow of the bigotry of the Muslims of their inclination towards one particular religion. The Mohamedan preachers had been trying to seduce the low caste people of the Hindu society to convert themselves into Muslims. The low caste Hindus being hated by the brahmins began to run after muslim religion. The Muslim kings began to destroy the Hindu temples to erect their Masjids there. At this precarious condition of India, the brahmins who were once very powerful and influential in India, had gradually become helpless to protect the Hindu religion with all its sanctity. They began to regard the new Muslims as sinners and their shadows as most harmful.

The spiritually superior Hindu society had been heading towards destruction due to the lack of proper religious teachings. Above all the laws and rituals of Hindu religion were very stiff and hard to grasp.

The socialist brahmins paid no heed to this tremendous draw back and never tried to reform all these things. They used to absorb in their studies. As they tried to release God through these dry scriptures, gradually they became less devotional and loving of God. The once religious-minded Hindus now became professional in their outlook. So selfish interests began to preoccupy their minds and cheap enjoyment of life became predominant.

Observing the wretched condition India which had once been the abode of God Himself, Advaitacarya and some of the great men became very much aggrieved and they began to pray to God, "Oh God, why this eternally blissful India which had once been the abode of Your divine sports and had once given birth to great men like Dhruva, Prahlada etc. has now become so devoid of love and devotion and has become full of selfish people?"

"Oh Narayana, why this India which had always been rewarded by your grace and had been the place of great sages like Suka, Narada and others, has now become the fighting ground of the heretic Muslims whose sins have made India like this?"

"Even if any place in India used to face any impure attack on religion, you used to appear there yourself taking any feature to protect the wise and virtuous, to destroy the sinners and to deliver them from damn. But why do not you do this this time, oh my deliverer of sinners!" "Hey Prabhu, when India had been suffering from the tyrannical rule of Kamsa and Jarasandha, you appeared as Hari, the destroyer of demons, to protect the helpless and to ruin the tyrants."

"Oh Prabhu, why aren't you hearing us? Where is You, our Lord of life, why aren't you coming to rescue us? Please do come, oh my Lord, in Your loving feature and wipe the whole country by the wave of Your grace and favour. This place has become a desert. Please come as an oasis in it."

These earnest prayers of the devotees most probably moved the heart of God. He Himself began to cry to observe the helpless condition of His favorite land." So he decided to appear in India.

At the end of the Dvapara-yuga, God had appeared in Vrndavana, washed by the water of Yamuna and had performed many sports not only with the gopa boys and girls but also with the grown up gopinis, the most significant of whom was Sri Radhika, daughter of Vrsabhanu and she had no other love than Krsna. That God i.e. Krsna Himself reappeared in a brahmin family of Navadvipa village situated near the bank of Jahnvi (Ganga).

CHAPTER TWO

Sri Caitanyadeva sent Nityananda to Vrndavana to Bring Sridama to Navadvipa

Having appeared in Navadvipa, Narayana became known as Nimai. Nimai was a love to everybody in Navadvipa because of his divine beauty, extreme knowledge and wonderful gestures and postures. Even the great scholars of Navadvipa could not be offended though invariably they used to be defeated by Nimai in debates.

When Nimai was a bright youngman, he left his house as an ascetic. From that time he became known as Sri Caitanya. He used to be ecstatic in the love for Sri Krsna like Sri Radha to whom Krsna was the life. He became very eager to distribute this divine love to one and all. To assist him in this job God Nityananda, great devotee Advaitacarya etc. used to meet him. Prabhu Nityananda being the right hand of Caitanya, began to help Caitanya to great extent. Even the laymen became so impressed by the qualities of Nityananda that when Nityananda used to request them to do or sing Harinama, however heretics they might be, they used to do that unhesitantly.

Even getting the company of Nityananda, Caitanya could not be satisfied because he began to think that if he could not get the company of Sridama who had been the main help to Krsna in His Vrndavana-lila, his project of distributing the love for Krsna would be half-hearted. After thinking a lot, he told Nityananda, "Oh my brother, though there is no flaw in your sincere service in distributing Krsna love, yet it is my request to you that you should go to Vrndavana and fetch Sridama who has been lying in the cave of Govardhana hill in a trance. It is my assumption that without him, we aren't be able to accomplish this great job." Prabhu Nityananda became glad to hear this and without hesitation started for Vrndavana to fetch Sridama.

Now in modern times, it may be seemed so, was he really Sridama of Dvapara-yuga who came to Navadvipa four or five thousand years later at the time of Sri Caitanya? Could he live for such a long time? Was Sridama of Dvapara-yuga be Abhirama of Kali-yuga? To remove them doubt, I request them to think seriously that there will be no impossibility in the dictionary of a superman who has transcendental power like God Himself. In period after period all incarnated persons had appeared in this world having some transcendental powers by which they used to enlighten this world. Thinking about their great contributions to mankind, our heads used to bow down spontaneously. So all these assumptions about Abhirama may not be exaggerations at all.

CHAPTER THREE

The meeting of Nityananda and Sridama in Vrndavana

Nityananda reached Vrndavana. While taking rest on the bank of Yamuna, he could commemorate the Vraja-lila of Dvapara. He could see how he as Balarama used to play with Krsna and Sridama and other gopa boys in Vrndavana. So he became so restless that without any delay he started for Govardhana hill to fetch Sridama.

Coming near to the hill, Nityananda became absorbed into trance. He began to feel as if he had been living in Vrndavana as Balarama of Dvapara-yuga, as if Krsna to protect Vrajabhumi from the fury of King Indra had been lifting Govardhana most easily. The continuous rain had become a failure to do any harm to Vrajabhumi.

Nityananda in a trance started to walk round Govardhana and to shout in name of Sridama. His sincere call ruined the eternal sleep of Sridama who had been lying in the cave of the hill. He came out of the cave and found that a divinely beautiful person had been standing there. As soon as Sridama looked at Nityananda, his heart seemed to leap in joy as if he had seen someone very dear to him. His heart became full of divine pleasure and most lovingly he asked Nityananda, "Who are you? Your sight has been giving me a wonderful divinely pleasure which one can get only from a dear one. Speak out quickly who are you? I cannot keep my patience any longer."

Nityananda answered, "Oh my dear friend Sridama, do you not recognize me? I am your most favorite Valai." These words at once made Sridama dumbfounded and he used to stare at Nityananda for a while. Then he asked, "If you are Valai, see how I am starting to run and catch me." Saying so Sridama began to run very fast. Nityananda began to run after him. While Sridama completed four rounds of Govardhana by running, he found that Valai had been standing behind him. Then Sridama embraced Nityananda very lovingly and said, "Ah, you are my Valai because no one except you can catch me in this way. I failed to recognise you because you are lacking that gorgeous dress and that mesmerising beauty, oh my brother, you are very tired. Now take some rest." After some discussions, Sridama asked Nityananda why he had come to Vrndavana.

Nityananda said, "The human being of Kali-yuga has become very heretical and has given up sadhana and bhajana fully. The lay people are giving up their own eternal Hindu religion and are becoming interested in the religion of the heretics. To remove this type of obstacle from the path of Hindu religion Krsna has appeared in the brahmin family of Navadvipa in the name of Nimai. The aim of Sri Krsna is to bring the flood of love in the country and to do this He himself will practise it in this life. He will guide the people how to obtain the grace of God. We, the friends of His Vraja-lila, have all appeared with him. Only you are absent. So Nimai has become very much eager to get you with him and for this reason he has sent me here to fetch you. So don't make any delay and go with me."

After listening to Nityananda, Sridama told him, "My dear brother, I do not want to go to Navadvipa in this utterly dark Kali-yuga. I shall stay here and spend my days in the practice of yoga. I don't want to suffer the pain of remaining in anyone's womb again. If I want to be with you I have to do this. So go back to Navadvipa and tell Krsna that I am helpless to keep the request."

Nityananda told Sridama, "Oh my brother Sridama, go with me in this body. If Sri Caitanya, the incarnation of Sri Krsna, permits you to be in this body, then with this body and energy, you can assist him in his task."

So Sridama without leaving his Dvapara feature started for Navadvipa with Nityananda for meeting Sri Caitanya. Being very inquisitive about the different changes in the Kali-yuga, Sridama began to ask many questions to Nityananda on their way to Navadvipa lying on the bankside road of the river Ganga.

CHAPTER FOUR

Sridama came to Navadvipa and met Sri Caitanya

Sri Caitanya heartily welcomed Sridama in Navadvipa and asked, "Oh my brother Sridama, why were you living in a cave of Govardhana lonely without coming to us? Don't you know that I used to appear with my companions in period after period in this Bharatabhumi to protect the religion? You are my best help. So I had sent Nityananda to you. Now come on and help me to complete my sport! Meeting Sri Caitanya as the incarnation of Sri Krsna, Sridama became overwhelmed in joy and began to shed tears of joy. Embracing Mahaprabhu, he began to say in a choked voice, "Krsna, why do you appear in Vangadesa instead of Vrndavana? And where is Sri Radha, the supreme power of yours? Why have you given up your gorgeous dresses of Vrndavana and are wearing a dress of an ascetic? I cannot bear this."

Sri Caitanya seeing him so perturbed said in a smiling face, "This Navadvipa has the center of all knowledge and scriptures in the whole of Bharatabhumi. But the over educated and proud brahmanas by their dry discussions have become less interested in God Himself. I have taken my birth here to defeat them in debates and for this reason I had made myself a great scholar. The heretics of Kali have no faith in Prematattva. They understand bodily pleasure only. So I avoided to appear with Sri Radha. In this Kali-yuga, I shall be Sri Radha and teach a lesson to the people how to attain God through divine love. So to attract their attention towards devotion, I have rejected my "mohanavesa" (beautiful dress) and accepted the dress of an ascetic. I want to teach the mankind what is Krsna-lila and for this reason I have to perform Caitanya-lila. So I shall be known as Sri Krsna Caitanya in Bharata and you will be Abhirama."

Then Caitanya told Nityananda, "From now on you should call Sridama as Abhirama and mind that as Sridama was to Krsna, so Abhirama is to me." Nityananda said, "He can be Abhirama but his big and stout physique won't be suitable for this Kali-yuga."

The super-human power by which Krsna had done so many transcendental activities in Vraja, that same power, Sri Caitanya, the incarnation of Krsna, wanted to use to minimize Sridama into Abhirama.

Nityananda and Sri Caitanya began to swing from the shoulder of Sridama by holding his two hands and with the help of the power of the Godhead, Abhirama became short in his figure. He became ecstatic in joy and began to dance madly. Then Sri Caitanya told the ecstatic Abhirama, "Friend, all my friends of Vraja have come here and met me but where are the loving gopinis of Vraja?"

Realising the mind of Sri Caitanya, Abhirama said, "Oh the great lover, you know everything. But I know that you have raised this question just to test me. However I am telling you about the Vraja ladies. All of them to satisfy and complete your sports have given up their women features and appeared in Navadvipa in male features. Except me and Vrndavati will help you by remaining in two opposite sex."

Caitanya said, "Oh my friend, you are a genius. Sri Krsna and you are the same. I have no objection if you and Vrndavati want to teach lesson of love to the world. You are so powerful that still you are able to keep your Dvapara feature with the help of yoga. You are addicted to the love of Krsna in such a great extent that if the change of your feature tried to stand as a hindrance in the way of Krsna love, you used to lie in the cave for a long time because your desire was to disappear in the soul of Krsna at long last. You are the embodiment of divine love. Let you with your Vrndavati madden the men and women of Bengal in the love for Krsna. But my friend, your appearance has filled my heart with blissful pleasure. Now I am very eager to observe the holy places of Vrndavana where Krsna used to perform his sports with Sri Radha and the gopinis who were mad for Krsna."

Observing the ecstatic condition of Sri Caitanya, Abhirama said, "My friend, if you really wish to visit Vrndavana, then hand over all the duties to Nityananda and start for Vrndavana."

CHAPTER FIVE

Conversation Between Sri Caitanya and Abhirama in Vrndavana

Sri Caitanya being ecstatic in love for Krsna started for Vrndadavana with Abhirama. Then he used to visit all the places of Vrndavana one by one where Krsna used to perform his sports with Sri Radha. He became overwhelmed in joy.

He asked Abhirama, "Friend, you are dearer to me than my heart. I cannot explain how I feel excited when I used to listen to the episodes of Vraja-lila from you. I am always bound by your extraordinary qualities." On hearing this Abhirama said humbly, "Oh my dear, my Prabhu, I am a worthless man. I have only Radha in my heart. As Radha used to be maddened in love while looking at the face of her love Krsna, so I am to look at your face. I used to forget my own entity and only try to please you by any means. I used to fetch fruit for my sakha Krsna when he used to remain in the duty of cattle grazing. I used to be mad in joy if my sakha used to be happy to take the taste of the fruits. I used to regard myself the most fortunate creature if I can please my Kanai. His hapiness was mine, his sorrow was mine. Both of us used to become the single unseparable soul."

"Now my dear friend, you have created a madhura bhava in me. You are Radha and Krsna both and you have become absorbed in your created love. As fire and fuels are the same, so also Krsna and Radha. The love between Radha and Krsna is divine and it is above the touch of material pleasure. To make people realise this sort of love, you have appeared in this world."

CHAPTER SIX

Sri Caitanya's Return to Navadvipa

In this way while conversing happily over the topic of Radha-Krsna lila, Abhirama and Sri Caitanya used to spend their days in Vrndavana. Being ecstatic in love for Krsna, Caitanya forgot everything. His all world became full of Krsna. So he forgot the duty of teaching the maya and kama-bound mankind the lessons of divine love for which he had appeared in this world. Speculating all these bhavas of Caitanya, Abhirama began to think in his mind, "Kali-yuga, you are fortunate, and Navadvipa, you too. Radha Krsna in one feature like Sri Caitanya has appeared in this world to flood the whole country in the waves of divine love. But Prabhu by coming to this place of sport of Dvapara-yuga has become absorbed in that bhava of Dvapara."

One day Caitanya used to float in the waves of Yamuna which was full of the fragrance of sandal and began to cry like Radha in the name of Krsna and his lotus like eyes began to shed tears like streams of a river. He used to laugh sometimes and to cry sometimes. Sometimes he used to request invisible somebody. His whole body began to shed sweat and tremble. At that time Abhirama by putting his hand on the body of Caitanya, began to say, "Oh my friend, have you forgotten the aim of your taking human feature? Your devotees of Navadvipa have become very restless for not seeing you. So control yourself and let us return to Navadvipa."

The words of Abhirama brought back Caitanya to senses. He became very eager to perform his duty. He said to Abhirama, "Come on my friend, let us return

to Navadvipa. As you and me are the same, I don't want to return to Navadvipa alone."

Being unable to avoid the request of Sri Caitanya, Abhirama told him, "Oh my friend, it is impossible for me to disobey your request. Your happiness is mine. When in the Dvapara-yuga, you had left me without my knowing, I used to remain absorbed in your dedication from that day. Oh Gauranga, now you are the united entities of Radha and Krsna and you are now grown up enough. But I have not got my Vrndavati as yet I shall stay in Vrndavana until I find Vrndavati."

Caitanyadeva replied, "If Radha-Krsna in one feature had appeared in this world for teaching divine love to loveless mankind of Kali-yuga, then Vrndavati, the foremost sakhi of Sri Radha also had appeared in this world. Go with me and I am sure you will get Vrndavati in Vangadesa."

Abhirama said, "Oh my friend, let me see through mediation where is my Vrndavati now. In the meantime you go to Navadvipa. Very soon I shall meet you there."

Caitanya said, "No it cannot be!"

Abhirama said, "Gauranga, you should not waste your time here. It will hamper your sport there. You won't be going alone because Ramadasa, a great Krsna devotee will go with you. This Ramadasa is empowered by me. Accepting him due to hearing to his advice, Caitanyadeva with Ramadasa Mahanta left Vrndavana and after a few days reached Navadvipa.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Appearance of Vrndavati

Caitanyadeva started for Navadvipa and Abhirama sat for his meditation. In his trance, he came to know that Vrndavati had taken her birth in Kazipura vilage of Vangadesa. Nowadays Kazipura is known as Khanakula in the Arambag jurisdiction of Hoogly district. Some of the Vaisnava poets have written that after attracting Vrndavati in this world Abhirama had empowered her and made her a beautiful woman by his power of Godhead. Then he used to put her into a wooden box and threw in to the wave of Yamuna which at last reached the bank of Triveni near Hoogly. Here Ganga has been divided into three courses and began to flow towards the sea. That wooden box floating in the river Sarasvati at last reached at a flower garden on the side of the river near Kazipura.

As soon as the wooden box touched the land of the garden, all the dry branches of the trees began to bloom into leaves and flowers. Their fragrance used to fill the air of that place. The sudden change of the trees made everyone started. The gardeners ran to the garden and saw the miraculous scene. They became overwhelmed in joy and thought that perhaps a certain saintly person had come to their place and had done all these things.

They began to search in the garden but had not got anything. Then one of them in searching went to the river side and found wooden box. He became overwhelmed in awe and began to tremble. Suddenly he fell on the ground being unconscious. The other men came running to him and helped him to come to sense. The former person attracted their attention towards the wooden box. He said "This wooden box has done all these. Come on and carry this to our home."

They all agreed and did that gladly. Then they opened the box and found a beautiful woman in it. They took her as a Deity and paid the respect. That

beautiful woman sat near the door. Her glittering beauty lightened the whole atmosphere.

That gardener with his family bowed to her feet. The women of the gardener class washed her feet and drank that water with all their family members. Then the housekeeper asked her with folded hands, "Oh mother, have you come on this place to favor us all? As you are kind enough to us, then please tell me who you are."

Hearing this humble question of the gardener, Vrndavati in sweet smile said, "You are a very pure-hearted man. I shall stay at your home like your daughter. You all will call me as Malini. I haven't ate a long time. Oh my father, give me some food soon. After eating I will give my identity." The gardener became very pleased and gave her different varieties of food and sweets. Malini first of all offered all those food to Krsna and after saying "Jai Abhirama" began to eat.

After taking her food, she said to the gardener, "Father, I am the Sakhi of Sridama, the friend of Krsna. Sridama had appeared in this world for distributing love for Krsna to mankind. He will come here soon taking the name Abhirama. To help my Prabhu, I have come here in a wooden box floating in the streams of Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati. On my coming your dry garden has become full of flowers. Now I am completely under your control. Please look after me until I get the darsana of Abhirama."

The gardener became very glad to get the sakhi of Sri Radha as his daughter and began to look after her very carefully. With her touch all miseries and poverty of the gardener vanished. The villagers became very jealous at this prosperity of the gardener and went to the Kazi and explained everything to him. They also revealed their suspicion that she must be a magician and for some forbidden cause she used to take shelter in the house of the gardener.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Kazi Listens to the Report on Malini

The Kazi became very astonished to hear these reports on Malini. He sent his armed men to bring the gardeners to him as prisoners. That person who lead the team of armed men went to the house of the gardener, "You all should go at once with us as it is the order of His Highness Kazi Sahib. If you show any reluctancy, then we shall take you binding with ropes. So don't make delay and go with me."

The gardeners became very frightened at this and became at a loss what to do. The man harshly asked them what they would do. Otherwise they would be taken as prisoners. Then the head gardener asked them in a trembling voice, "Mahasay, the order of Kazi Sahib is all to us but please explain the real charge against us." That man replied loudly that he did not know anything about the charge. If they made delay anymore, they would be taken as prisoners. Saying so, he started walking and the gardeners began to follow him without any word. After some time they reached to the Kazi's place. The gardeners bowed before the Kazi in trembling bodies and politely submitted to him. Kazi asked them whether they had got any golden box full of precious stones, jewels and ornaments which they had kept hidden in the houses. They replied submissively that his charge was correct but that box was wooden and not golden and it did not have any precious thing what he had been asking.

The Kazi became furious and ordered his men to bind them by chains. Out of anger he ordered them to speak the truth. Otherwise he would behead them. Then the gardeners tried to establish their truth and began to describe what they

had found in it. So they described the episode of Malini and from her auspicious appearance, all their miseries had gone. After a long time of listening to the story, the mind of the Kazi became soft and his heart became full of devotion. He at once released the gardeners and told them politely that he had become ashamed of his misbehaviour. Now he requested them to bring that goddess lady before him. He is very eager to meet her. The gardeners told him, "This cannot be possible because you are a Muslim. How can you accept a Hindu goddess whom we used to worship. We cannot do this by any means." "Apart from this, if you take her as an ordinary Hindu woman and feel an infatuation for her, then mind that you will be perished with your family. So leave that desire. We can show you that box only."

The Kazi became very sorry to hear this and told them, "I have become very sorry to hear this. I have become very much eager to see the goddess because hearing about her episode my mind has become full of devotion. I want to gratify myself by seeing her. I am sinner as I have possessed so many misconceptions about her. Please bring her to me and I shall look after her as my own daughter. God never thinks of caste discrimination. I am sure when she will hear all these, she will be agreed to see me."

The gardeners became very happy and took to their heels to report everything to Malini. Malini had already understood the mind of Kazi and told them that God had appeared in this earth in a human form to distribute divine love to all whether they belonged to high or low castes. She also told, "As I have appeared as the power of Abhirama, then I cannot ignore the prayer of the Kazi who has become a devotee. But one of you first go to him and tell him about certain rules which he should take into mind. I won't take any other things to eat except sweets and won't live anywhere except in the room where cows used to live."

One gardener went to the Kazi and informed him about the conditions of Malini. He directed the Kazi to clean the room of the cows by his own hand. The Kazi became very glad and accepted all the conditions. That person returned to Malini in singing the glory of the Kazi. He reported her about the devotional qualities of the Kazi and told her that they all had understood that it was all her grace that had made the Kazi to behave like that.

CHAPTER NINE

Malini Went to the House of the Kazi

So Malini agreed to go to the house of the Kazi. The gardener father went with her. The wife of the gardener began to cry in grief. Malini consoled and blessed them all. She assured them that from time to time she would meet them.

While Malini had been going to the house of the Kazi, the whole circumference used to be glittering by the brightness of her body. A huge crowd used to assemble on both sides of the road to observe her going. The women of the village used to throw their pranamas, shower flowers on her and blow the conch. The whole of Kazipura became full of joyful sounds.

So long Kazi had been waiting eagerly for her. When he saw that she was advancing to his house, his heart leaped in joy. He at once advanced forward with a beautiful chariot to welcome her. He saw in the way that a huge crowd was going with her. He almost ran to her and fell on her feet. The big crowd began to make sounds of ovation. Malini lifted the Kazi very affectionately by holding his arms. The Kazi with his knee folding told her, "I am very fortunate as today I have your darsana. Be merciful to a sinner like me." Malini devi became very pleased and told him, "Criticising or torturing the saintly persons is a terrible sin because the saints have come on this earth

to do good to mankind. Those who try to oppress them become very displeasing to God. Now with the feeling of devotion in you, you have become free of all guilts. Now for your misbehaviour to the wise gardener, you must ask for his mercy."

The Kazi at once held the feet of the gardener by his hands and begged his mercy. Everyone present there began to praise the Kazi. The gardener also felt very awkward at this.

Then Kazi requested Malini devi to forgive him for all his sins and cast a favorable look at him. Malini Devi got on the chariot but there was so big crowd on the road that the chariot could not advance a step forward. Then due to the transcendental power of Malini Devi, the chariot climbed up in the sky. Everyone became startled at this when the chariot vanished in the sky, all of them began to shout in sorrow. The condition of the Kazi became out of any saying. He began to behave like a mad man. When he tried to cut his own head by his sword, suddenly the chariot came down and Malini appeared before him. Observing her lightening-like beauty, he fell on the ground in a trance. All the people began to sing loudly the glory of the Devi.

Devi hurriedly got down of the chariot and lifted the Kazi from the ground and put him into the chariot. She began to chant the name of Krsna and gradually the Kazi came back to his sense. He saw as if a goddess mother had been sitting by his side singing the name of Krsna which had began to shower nectar into his ears. He became ecstatic and his eyes began to shed tears. After a long time he controlled himself and began to sing the eulogy of Malini Devi.

The chariot reached the gate of the Kazi's house. He took her to the dwelling place of the cows. The gardener and others also accompanied them. Kazi welcomed them properly and offered seats. Kazi sent somebody to call the sellers of sweets. But he met the sweetmakers in the way who had been coming to the Kazi's house with many buckets of sweets. The sweetmakers came to the Kazi and told him, "Oh lord, why have you sent a person to us? We have already heard about the coming of a devi in your house and for her we have brought so may sweets." Kazi told them, "Today my life has become successful. You should bring sweets every day in my house for her eating. I will reward you." They told him, "Today we won't take any price for these sweets because they are for the devi. From tomorrow, do as you please." Saying so they all bowed to the feet of devi. Devi blessed them and asked them to take their seats. Then the gardener father offered the sweets to Malini for eating. After her eating they all took the prasada. In this way Malini Devi very happily began to spend her days in the house of the Kazi. The villagers used to stay there by giving up their eating and drinking. The whole of Kazipura became full of bliss.

CHAPTER TEN

Abhirama Came to Virbhuma and Manifested His Transcendental Powers

After leaving Vrndavana, Abhirama alone advanced towards Bengal and at last reached the western frontier of Bengal (i.e. in Virbhuma). He saw there all the people absorbed in irreligious activities. They were practising all sorts of illegal ways of life. Observing all these tortures toward the eternal Hindu religion, the soft heart of Abhirama began to ache. A strong desire to correct these ill-acted people arose in his mind. He became determined to use his supernatural powers for the sake of attracting the devotion of the people because he realised that this would be the suitable way to fulfill his desires.

Being guided by this judgement, Abhirama, a highly powerful man began to visit

all the Deities of Virbhuma. But all the idols began to crack by his single glance. He explained to the overwhelmed people that all these idols had become powerless. So there was no use of worshipping these idols. The ordinary people took him as a superman and a deity. They lost every faith on those idols. On the contrary they became very devotional minded towards Abhirama. They began to ask questions to Abhirama on religion. So the desire of Abhirama became fulfilled. He started sowing seeds of devotion in their minds. Their devotionless hearts began to be soaked in nectar-like Krsna nama.

Abhirama began to teach religion indiscriminating to high and low castes. He did not bother about caste or creed. The untouchable class was all along hated by the high caste people. No one had ever tried to correct them and bring back into a devotional life. Now finding Abhirama as a superman, they began to worship him as a God and became fully devoted to him.

The transcendental activities of Abhirama Gosvami might not be accepted by the modern people but as Sri Caitanya Deva, an incarnation of Krsna, needed the help of Abhirama in completing his sport, then Abhirama can not be an ordinary person. It is also to be noted that the Hindu devotees would be very much shocked to deny the supernatural powers of Abhirama who was a friend of Krsna in Vraja-lila and who could live 4 thousands years at a stretch.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Abhirama Visits Village Kenduvilva, the Birthplace of the Vaisnava Poet Jayadeva

Due to Abhirama's efforts, the neglected castes of the Hindu society began to feel gratified by Abhirama and the hatred of the high caste towards the low caste began to vanish from the country. The principle of fraternity again was established in the country. The people began to worship Abhirama as god and Abhirama also began to spend his days very gladly in doing nama sankirtana with them. People from various parts of the country began to come and observe Abhirama in crowd.

One day, some Vaisnava from Kenduvilva village came to see Abhirama and began to sing sweet songs from Gita Govinda. Hearing those beautiful songs based on the love of Radha Krsna, Abhirama became ecstatic and went to faint again and again. He began to think as if he had been with his dear friend Sri Krsna and he had been sending Suvala to Sri Radha to inform her about grievous condition of Shyama caused by her separation. As if hearing the news of the condition of her lord, she took to her heels and jumped into the love ocean of her lover.

On hearing Gita Govinda, Abhirama in an ecstatic mood began to visualise the divine Radha Krsna lila. He also began to visualise the rasa-lila in his mind. He was observing that all the tree creepers had been undulating in soft spring breeze. The trees had been burdened by fully blossomed flowers and the cuckoos had been cooing being covered by the flowers. Their cooing had created a nectar-like atmosphere there. In this beautiful weather, Rasabehari Krsna had been engaged in his rasa sport. On seeing Krsna sporting with other sakhis, Radha became very much hurt and had entered into a flower grove to show her huff. Her moon-like face had become wet in tears and her soft body had been shivering in the fire of separation. While thinking about her Shyama, she sometimes fainted and sometimes began to laugh hysterically. Sometimes she used to wear the dresses of Krsna and thought of herself as Krsna. Again she used to fall unconscious.

The lover of His devotees, Rajraj Krsna understood everything and by leaving

the gopies, he had been searching Sri Radha earnestly. Then coming to Radha, Krsna began to say, "Oh my beloved, please give up your meaningless huff on me and look at my face by lifting your moonlike face. Your beautiful white teeth can destroy the darkness of my mind. My love, you are my ornament, you are my life." Radhavallava saw that his so many words failed to break the ice-like huff of Srimati. Then he used to take the feet of Radha in his hands and put them on his head. Observing this, Abhirama cried out saying, "You are great Srimati. Your devotion-like love is uncomparable in this world." "And you, the God Himself, what am I to say to you? It is quite impossible for an ordinary man like me. Insulation, rebuking, negligence of a devotee are more desirable to you than the eulogies of Vedas." Devotee and you are same and so also you and Sri Radha."

Then Abhirama addressed the singers of Gita Govinda by saying, "Oh the great devotee Vaisnavas, I am very glad to hear your songs. Now please disclose to me the life history of that great devotee Jayadeva." The singers very humbly began to describe that Jayadeva, the writer of the Gita Govinda was born in Kenduvilva village in a brahmana family. In his boyhood, this poor son of a brahmana took an ascetic life and went to Purusottama (Puri) Kshetra without a penny and began to live under a tree. God Jagannatha also became very favorable on him.

One day a brahmana offered his daughter to Jagannatha for he had to fulfill his vow of doing so to Jagannatha. Jagannatha ordered the brahmana to dedicate her daughter to his great devotee Jayadeva. So did the brahmana and told his daughter that from now on due to the order of Jagannatha Deva, he (Jayadeva) was her husband. So after leaving her there, the brahmana went away. The beautiful girl Padmavati remained sitting there in front of Jayadeva. When Jayadeva ordered her to go away, her lotus-like eyes became full of water. She told him, "Oh my prabhu, my father has left me here due to the order of Jagannatha and offered me in your hands. Now you are my husband. You may leave me but I cannot evade? for my life's sake."

So helpless Jayadeva married her and began to live in a cottage. He employed his wife in the worship of his Radha Madhava. At that time Jayadeva had written his beautiful book Gita Govinda on the love of Radha Krsna. The love poetry is uncomparable in this world. Jayadeva once began to hesitate to write a pada when he reached that part of the episode where Krsna had been holding the feet of Radha on His head. So he left the duty of writing and went for a bath. In the meantime Sri Krsna in the form of Jayadeva finished the unfinished line of the verse that is "dehi padapallavamudram" and disappeared. After some time Jayadeva came back from his bathing. His wife Padmavati astonishingly told him, "You have just come to home to complete the line of your book. How do you come back from your bathing in such a short time?" Being very astonished on hearing her, Jayadeva hurriedly opened his book and what he saw was enough to make him mad in the love for Krsna. He began to cry ecstatically and by holding the feet of Padmavati said, "You are great Padmavati, your life is precious because in a short while ago whom you have seen in my form was Krsna Himself. He is your real husband. He is the husband of the world."

So Abhirama took Jayadeva as a great devotee and wanted to visit his place. The Kenduvilva dwellers gladly became the guide of Abhirama in his visit to Kenduvilva. Abhirama, whose life is Krsna, became overwhelmed to observe the beautiful feature of Jayadeva. He sang the glory of Jayadeva in various ways and paid his homage to Jayadeva regarding him as a master. Formerly the idols of the deities used to be cracked by the bowing of Abhirama, but now the idol of Radha Madhava of Jayadeva became very bright by the bowing of Abhirama. That idol became alive and all the people witnessing the sight fell to the ground in devotion. The nectar-like Radha Krsna nama began to be uttered in millions of mouths filling the atmosphere in sublime bliss.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Visit to Visnupura and Darsana of Deity Madana Mohana

From Virbhuma, Abhirama came to Bankura. The people of this place became overwhelmed to observe the devotion and supernatural power of Abhirama and became very devotional in their minds. The king of Visnupura heartily welcomed Abhirama and requested him to impart religious lessons to his subjects.

One day Abhirama with some of his devotees started Krsnanama sankirtana and advanced towards the temple of Madana Mohana. Before entering into the temple, his whole body began to tremble in ecstasy. He with his devotees started going round the temple in singing sankirtana. When he bowed his head on the door of the temple, the whole temple began to tremble as if an earthquake had been started.

Abhirama with a thrilling heart entered into the temple. He began to feel a divine joy to see the deity as a dear friend and used to feel like when he met his dear friend after a long time. He wanted to show to the people whether there was any power in the deity or not. So by his first bow the deity remained as usual but by his second bow the deity in the pretext of return bow, mimicked a little bit. Everyone became startled to see it and bowed to the feet of Abhirama Gosvami.

Abhirama told everybody, "To deliver the mankind of Kali-yuga, Sri Krsna has appeared in Navadvipa. In this life he will be a great example of Krsna devotee and will show this to the whole world. Due to his wish, I have also come here in Bengal. To show you that the idols of Krsna are not only lifeless I am doing all these miraculous activities. All of you become devotees of Krsna, sink into the depth of love of Krsna and all your miseries and agonies will be gone. Your lives will be full of bliss and you will be able to obtain the favor of Krsna."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Darsana of Krsna Raya of Vagadi (Vaguda)

By living in Visnupura for some days Abhirama maddened the people of that place in love of Krsna. Then he went to Vagadi to see the deity of Krsna Raya. Abhirama began to sing the glory of Krsna Raya by standing before the beautiful idol. The whole body of Krsna Raya became sweaty. Then Abhirama told everybody in shouting, "Look, my dear friend's beautiful body has become sweaty. He is smiling sweetly. It seems my friend has become very tired after grazing his cattle and is now standing under a tree in his usual threefold posture. I feel as if my friend is calling me helplessly. Please give me a fan and I shall fan my friend to take away his tiredness." The devotees hastily gave him a fan. Abhirama was then in complete trance and in that condition he began to fan his friend. The devotees observing this beautiful scene began to sing Harinama loudly. Everyone came to know that Abhirama was truly a friend of Sri Krsna.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Visit to Bayada

Then Abhirama Gosvami came to Bayada. At that time Bayada had been ruled by a

powerful sakta King Ranajit Raya. He used to dig a big lake and tried to build a huge "Maljat" (a pillar made of iron) in the middle of the lake. Many strong persons were employed to do this job but they could not even pick it up by their strength.

Endowed by supernatural power, Abhirama in the meantime had been passing by that place. He became queer to know what had been going on there and so he halted for sometime on the bank of the lake. When he saw that those strong persons could not even pick up that pillar, Abhirama wished to do the job by himself. When Abhirama expressed his desire to the king, the latter agreed to his proposal. Then the friend of Govardhana lifter, Krsna, Abhirama, very easily lifted the pillar and threw it into the lake. Everyone began to appreciate his strength. King Ranajit became so happy that he began to pat on the back of Abhirama.

Abhirama became very much annoyed at this and looked at the king angrily. Though his glance had even pierced the stone idols of different deities, yet this time the king could bear his look and this very much astonished Abhirama. Then through deep meditation, he came to know of the supernatural power of the king. He now realised that the king was a great sakta and some supernatural power was always protecting him. He also realised that being overpowerful the king had become an upstart. So kind man Abhirama for the good of the earth, decided to correct the king by exacting all his powers.

The king had been able to establish a vast kingdom due to the grace of Devi Sakti. Being an ordinary Hindu Zamindar, he was able to defeat the Nawab's armies and became a well known hero in Bengal. None of the then kings were a match to him. All these powers and fame had made him a very proud person. He just forgot the grace of the supernatural power by which he had become so powerful king and was about to misuse that power. He became indulged in material pleasure like an ordinary human being and for this reason God decided to curb his person and sent Abhirama to carry out His plan. A great powerful man Abhirama without doing any harm to Ranajit only had exacted his supernatural power. Then Abhirama left Bayada and advanced towards Krsnanagara. On the way all persons being impressed by his simplicity, kindness, love and transcendental powers became his great admirers and devotees.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Abhirama Meets Malini

Abhirama reached the outskirts of Kazipura village near Krsnanagara. One day in the morning he had been on morning walk on the bank of the river and saw that Malini Devi was bathing with her companions on the other bank of the river. Abhirama became very glad to see his life-like lady love Malini and being overwhelmed he addressed her. Malinidevi also saw him and at once jumped into the river and swam across it to come to him. All the female companions of Malini devi became stunned to see her swimming across the river and stood like wooden dolls. They could not even speak a word.

Malini devi reaching to him, fell flat on the feet of her love. The great lover Abhirama lifted her by holding her hands and then they began to walk elsewhere in talking to each other. When the companions saw that she had gone with an unknown saintly man they rushed to the home and reported everything to the Kazi.

After hearing all the incidents, the Kazi became very angry. He at once called his armies and went across the river to search her. He reached the village named Villoka and after searching for some time, he got her sitting with a

saintly man on the bank of the river. This scene broke his patience and he burst into anger. The sword in his hand began to dazzle. With a view to beheading the saint, he advanced towards them. But as soon as he looked at the dazzling eyes of the saint, all his powers seemed to be destroyed. His body began to lose its balance and his head began to reel. He became very afraid. He then put his sword in its case and advanced towards them slowly. He told the saint in a scolding tone "You are a sannyasi, you have given up all material pleasures, then why do you want the company of a woman? If you are not satisfied even then enter into family life again and marry. Don't spoil the sanctity of asceticism by accepting an unknown woman."

With an awed heart, the Kazi went on scolding Abhirama but the latter kept on sitting like a dumb. In the meantime the villagers came to speculate the incident. They all began to criticise the sannyasi. They decided to oust the sannyasi from their village. While everyone began to criticise Abhirama the latter began to think of demonstrating the transcendental power of Malini before them. While thinking in this way, he saw a huge piece of wood fallen on the bank of the river. He knew that all the persons gathered there could not lift that wood. Abhirama at once went to the river bank and lifted the wood and he addressed all of them to lift it by their hands. The people in wondered gaze had been observing his strength. They began to think that this sannyasi must be a very powerful person whose strength had been God gifted. They all surrendered to Abhirama. The Abhirama addressed Malini to do the job. Malini devi understood Abhirama and walked up to him slowly and lifted the piece of wood at ease. Everyone became startled to observe her strength and thought that this woman was not an ordinary human being.

Abhirama understood the pulse of the people and easily transformed the huge piece of wood into a small flute. Then he with Malini sat under a tree and began to sing Radha Krsna nama with the flute. The people became so astonished that they began to listen to the nama forgetting everything and in a short time they became ecstatic in emotion. They also began to sing Harinama kirtana and at last fell to the feet of Abhirama and Malini devi. They repeatedly asked for their mercy for thinking otherwise of them.

The Kazi also in folded knees before Malini Devi began to ask for her mercy and favor. Malini Devi told him that he was fortunate enough that she had come to his house. Now he had been fully purified and eligible to lead a life of a devotee. She assured him that from now on her powers would always protect him from any kind of misfortune and miseries. This Kazipura would be known as Khanakula. The Kazi became very glad but he asked Malini Devi why she had changed the name of the village. Then Malini Devi smilingly explained the incident by saying, "Among the food which you used to offer me, I sometimes used to reject some kinds regarding them as impure and used to dig them on the bank of the river. As "Khana" (means food) used to be dug in the ground on the "Kula" (bank) of the river, so the name became "Khanakula." Now go to your home."

Then Kazi leaving Malini Devi there returned to his house with a disheartened mind. But since then he became a completely changed man. He gave up all Muslim rituals and became a Vaisnava. He used to be absorbed in Radha Krsna nama all the time. Peace now began to overrule his heart by filling it with nectar-like devotion.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Keeping Malini in a Hidden Place at Khanakula, Abhirama Gosvami Came to Navadvipa and Met Caitanya

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Their voices rose with the sun. It was early morning in an Indian village school. The boys sat in neat rows behind palm-leaf manuscripts, committing their lessons to memory. As they chanted their grammar rules, their rhetoric lessons, and their logic aphorisms, each boy chanted loud enough to hear himself over his neighbour, resulting in a blend of high-pitched voices.

This school, attended by Baladeva early in the eighteenth century, closely resembled village schools that existed in India for thousands of years. The system had endured because it was effective, producing brilliant and disciplined scholars, and Baladeva was among the best of them.

Before coming to school, Baladeva, the son of a merchant, had lived for several years near the Orissan town of Remuna. From there he had gone to study with the group of panditas at this school, situated idyllically on the bank of the Cilkahrada River. The lush Orissan forests and fertile fields provided ample fruits, vegetables, and grains for a wholesome, varied diet. The boys studied hard, played hard, and grew lean, healthy, and discerning.

When Baladeva graduated from school, he did not want to return home to work in his father's shop. He wanted to be a scholar -- not an ordinary scholar but a true acarya, one who could teach divine wisdom. A pandita had to master logic, philosophy, medicine, or cosmology, but an acarya had to know the scriptures that impart the deepest wisdom. Baladeva decided to study philosophy and theology. He would become a Vedantist, an authority on the ancient Vedic books of knowledge. He could not think of any greater way to benefit himself or others.

In search of a preceptor, Baladeva went on pilgrimage to the tirthas (holy places), where he would meet monks and scholars. In Mysore (now Karnataka), in southwestern India, he came upon a hermitage of holy men who were also called Tirthas, followers of the saint and scholar Ananda Tirtha (A.D. 1197-1273), who was known formally as Madhva Acarya. In the monastery, or matha, Baladeva studied Vedanta and mastered the arts of debate and rhetoric. These talents would serve him well in a challenge he would later face while still a young man.

The challenge Baladeva would meet is of critical importance to the history of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, the spiritual school to which the modern day Krsna consciousness movement belongs.

The Gaudiyas in Vrndavana

By the time Baladeva was born, the Gaudiya Vaisnavas, or followers of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, were well established in Vrndavana, the town in northern India where Lord Krsna had enacted His childhood pastimes some five thousand years earlier. But life in that area was often insecure. For thousands of years the Vrndavana-Mathura district had been periodically invaded and pillaged. Yet despite these calamities, Mathura had thrived as a centre of trade and culture. Every ancient religion of northern India considered Mathura an important city.

In 1512 Lord Caitanya arrived in Mathura. He found that the places where Krsna had enjoyed pastimes were now obscured, so He spent two months locating and identifying them. Wanting to reconstruct Vrndavana and rededicate it to Krsna, He sent Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami, two of His chief disciples, to the holy city.

Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami accomplished Lord Caitanya's mission in Vrndavana. Not only did they rebuild the sacred places of Krsna's life, but they also wrote books that presented Lord Caitanya's doctrine in a way suitable for both scholars and laymen. Srila Jiva Gosvami, their nephew and disciple, continued their work. He supervised the construction of magnificent temples for the worship of Krsna, wrote exhaustive philosophical treatises on the philosophy of Krsna consciousness, and distributed the religious manuscripts of the Vrndavana Gosvamis throughout the Vaisnava world. Largely due to Jiva Gosvami's efforts, the Gaudiya Vaisnavas succeeded in establishing Vrndavana as the principal seat of Vaisnavism in northern India.

Vrndavana had always been a holy pilgrimage site, but under Gaudiya patronage it flourished as a powerful religious centre for 150 years. Gaudiya gurus and temples held sway in Vrndavana, even at the time of Baladeva's arrival in the early eighteenth century.

Govinda Leaves Vrndavana

Unfortunately, the peaceful leadership of the Gaudiyas could not last. In 1669 the Mogul ruler Aurangzeb decreed that Hindu temples and carved images, or Deities, should be destroyed. Deities, priests, and pilgrims were in danger, and faithful devotees of Krsna stopped visiting Vrndavana. Many of those who had the courage to express their faith were beaten or killed.

Subsequently, the Vaisnava priests appealed to the Hindu dynasties of Rajasthan for protection for themselves and their Deities. Protection was guaranteed, and gradually the Deities migrated east, to settle in Mewar and in Amber, the old Jaipur capital. But without Deities, brahmanas, and pilgrims, Vrndavana-Mathura lost much of its glory.

One of the principal Deities of Vrndavana was Govinda, a twenty-four-inch black marble image of Krsna in His original aspect as a cowherd boy. Srila Rupa Gosvami had found Him while excavating the holy places of Vrndavana. Later, warned that Aurangzeb's army would seek to demolish Govinda's splendid seven-story temple, the priests secretly moved the Deity to Radha-kunda, a sacred pond widely known as one of the holiest places in the Mathura district.

After a year at Radha-kunda, the priests transferred their divine refugee to Kaman, a fortified city in the Mathura district, where a suitable complex could be built for Govinda. For more than thirty years He and two other Deities, Gopinatha and Madana-Mohana, remained in Kaman. But most pilgrims avoided the area because of danger from the ruling Moguls and a clan of people called the Jats, who had risen up against the Moguls.

The Rajput kings of Amber found themselves at the pivot of the conflict between the Moguls and the Jat guerrillas. The kings allied themselves with the Moguls against the Jats but patronised the Vrndavana Deities, whom the Moguls wanted to destroy.

Ram Singh, the king of Amber, had ordered in 1671 that Govinda be transferred to Kaman, which was then under the jurisdiction of Amber and Jaipur although it was in the Mathura district. It is said that the transfer was meant to be temporary: the Deity would return to Vrndavana when the political turmoil subsided. But Govinda did not return to Vrndavana. After thirty-three years in Kaman, He made another trip, this time to Amber.

The Ramanandis' Challenge

Govinda's new home had little in common with the forest of Vrndavana, where He had lived so grandly. In Vrndavana, a Vaisnava holy place, Govinda was the unchallenged Supreme Lord. His priest, who stood in the direct line of Rupa

Gosvami, the acknowledged leader of the Vaisnavas in Vrndavana, had enjoyed unchallenged authority on questions about the philosophy and practice of bhakti, devotional service to Krsna.

In Amber, however, not all the Vaisnavas worshiped Krsna. During the reign of Prthviraj Singh (1503-1527), a devotee of Lord Ramacandra named Payahari Krsnadasa had settled in Galta, a valley near the present day city of Jaipur. Payahari was a grand-disciple of Ramananda, the fourteenth century North Indian reformer of the South Indian sampradaya (lineage) of Ramanuja. Payahari worshiped Sita-Rama, not Radha-Krsna.

Payahari had settled in a cave in the Galta Valley. He had converted Queen Balan Bai to Ramanandi Vaisnavism, and she in turn had convinced her saintly husband, King Prthviraj, to sponsor the establishment of a Ramanandi monastery in Galta. Thereafter, Galta had become the northern headquarters for the Ramanuja sect.

For six generations the Ramanandi mahantas (temple heads) had enjoyed a privileged position in the Amber kingdom. But Govinda's arrival in Amber and His popularity with the royal family challenged the Ramanandi hegemony.

To Jai Singh the arrival of Govinda was especially significant. Despite the presence of so many Hindu sects in his kingdom, despite his own royal obligations to maintain Vedic and Puranic ritual sacrifices, and despite the unchallengeable authority of the Ramanandi priests, Jai Singh was ultimately a devotee of Govinda. The arrival of Govinda in his kingdom was a high point in his personal spiritual quest.

The Ramanandi priests soon realised that if Govinda became the favoured Deity of the king, the Gaudiya priests would assume religious authority in Amber. What would become of the Ramanandis' ascendancy?

The Ramanandis then approached Jai Singh with a complaint about the Gaudiyas. They questioned the Gaudiya lineage. In India, much is made of one's parentage. If one cannot prove natal legitimacy, one may be cast out as a bastard. The same social standard applies to religious organisations. If a religious group can not prove its descent from one of the recognised traditions, it risks being dismissed as illegitimate.

Jai Singh wrote to the mahanta of the Gopinatha temple, Syamcaran Sarma, asking him to clarify the matter by explaining the lineage of the Gaudiya devotees. Syamcaran replied with a letter in Sanskrit, quoting various scriptures and other authorities. He explained that the Gaudiya lineage had begun with Lord Caitanya, who was the Supreme Godhead. After all, a spiritual lineage originating with God is unassailable.

Predictably, the Ramanandis were not satisfied. They said, "There are only four sampradayas, not five. Scholars have ascertained this on the basis of the Padma Purana." It is here that our story brings us back to Baladeva.

The Nurturing of Baladeva

Before the Ramanandis had complained in Amber, young Baladeva, living in Mysore, had been instructed in the Vedanta-sutra by the followers of the great Vedantist Madhva Acarya.

The word Vedanta consists of two words: veda (knowledge) and anta (end). So Vedanta is the culmination of Vedic knowledge. The Vedas are the oldest of the traditional Sanskrit writings compiled by Srila Vyasadeva. Vyasadeva later composed the Vedanta-sutra, which contains in terse codes the essence of the Upanisads (the philosophical hymns of the Vedas). Because the Vedanta-sutra is

written in aphorisms, one needs a commentary to understand it. The oldest and most famous extant commentary is that of Sankara Acarya (A.D. 788-820).

Sankara was a monist; he believed in the ultimate oneness of the jiva (living being) and God, and he interpreted the Vedanta-sutra accordingly. After Sankara, four learned Vaisnavas stepped forward over the course of several hundred years to write Vedanta-sutra commentaries. These Vaisnavas wrote to establish the duality of the jiva and God and thus refute the monistic teaching of Sankara.

These four Vaisnava preceptors -- Sri Ramanuja Acarya, Sri Nimbarka, Sri Madhva Acarya, and Sri Visnusvami -- established the four acknowledged Vaisnava sampradayas. Subsequently Vaisnava religious leaders belonged to one of these sampradayas and were thus considered legitimate. Ramananda claimed that his lineage originated with Ramanuja.

We recall again that Baladeva, in Mysore, had stayed in a matha of the Madhva-sampradaya and studied the Vedanta-sutra commentary of Madhva. He had enjoyed his education, but he enjoyed even more the application of his learning. He was exhilarated by debates; no challenge was too great for him. And he was eager for the opportunity to enlighten others. Now after becoming a skilled lecturer and debater, Baladeva left Mysore and went to Puri, in Orissa, where he again took up residence in a Madhva matha.

At Puri, Baladeva met Radha-Damodara Dasa, a Brahmana from Kanyakubja (now Kanpur), in north central India. Radha-Damodara was the grand-disciple of Rasikananda, a seventeenth-century preacher who had established the Gaudiya movement throughout Orissa. Radha-Damodara, a scholar of Gaudiya philosophy, explained to Baladeva the position of Lord Caitanya, supporting his points with quotations from Mahabharata and Srimad-Bhagavatam.

Radha-Damodara said, "Sri Krsna Caitanya is the Supreme Godhead Himself. He came to flood the world with Krsna-prema, love of Krsna. Sri Caitanya was not interested in study of many commentaries on Vedanta-sutra, for He considered Srimad-Bhagavatam, written by the same author -- Vyasa -- to be the natural commentary. So from the Bhagavatam and by His own example, He taught that we must serve the Supreme Lord, Krsna, and absorb ourselves in hearing about Him. Sri Caitanya Himself was always absorbed in Krsna-prema. Thus He saw no need to write any books."

Radha-Damodara advised Baladeva to study the Bhagavata-sandarbha, by Srila Jiva Gosvami. For days Radha-Damodara and Baladeva met and discussed Jiva's work. Baladeva noted that Jiva did not significantly differ from Madhva. Indeed, the philosophies of Jiva and Madhva agreed on most essential points.

Still, Jiva's treatise developed Vaisnava philosophy in an elegant and logical way that deeply impressed Baladeva. Now convinced that the Gaudiya perspective was true, Baladeva asked Radha-Damodara to initiate him into the Gaudiya-sampradaya. Baladeva, however, was an already initiated Vaisnava, so Radha-Damodara performed not a formal initiation but a ceremony in which Baladeva agreed to accept and serve Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu as the Supreme Lord. Thus Baladeva became a member of the Gaudiya sampradaya.

Mastering Gaudiya Philosophy

Baladeva then decided to travel to Vrndavana, the spiritual centre of the Gaudiya sect. But first he went to Navadvipa, where he met the Vaisnavas there and discussed philosophy with them. They all told him to study under Visvanatha Cakravati Thakura in Vrndavana. Because Baladeva was so eager to meet Visvanatha, he stayed only a short time in Navadvipa before setting out on foot to travel the eight hundred miles to Vrndavana.

Arriving in Vrndavana, Baladeva soon met Visvanatha Cakravati, introduced himself, and explained his background and the story of his meeting with Radha-Damodara in Puri. Visvanatha was gratified that Baladeva had come to study Srimad-Bhagavatam, and he suggested a suitable day for them to begin their studies. He also decided that Baladeva should study the rasa-sastras, texts of advanced devotion, with another scholar, Pitambara Dasa.

Baladeva's appetite had been whetted by reading Jiva Gosvami's Bhagavata-sandarbha in Puri. From Pitambara, Baladeva learned the esoteric meaning of bhagavata philosophy, as found in the rasa-sastras. He then studied the Caitanya-caritamrta, Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami's biography of Lord Caitanya. The Caitanya-caritamrta is an advanced text for those who have fully studied other Vaisnava scriptures. By completing his study of this culminating work, Baladeva qualified himself for a brilliant future as a Gaudiya scholar.

Meanwhile, in Amber the Ramanandis continued to wage ideological war against the Gaudiyas. The Ramanandis did not accept the answer that the Gaudiya mahantas had given to King Jai Singh -- that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was the Supreme Lord Himself and that His sampradaya was therefore beyond doubt. The Ramanandis insisted on the principle of sampradaya catvarah, "there are only four sampradayas," implying, of course, that the Gaudiyas constituted an unauthorised fifth lineage.

Jai Singh prepared himself for the religious confrontation he knew was inevitable. He collected and studied the writings of the Gaudiya sect and compared it with the writings of other Vaisnava sampradayas. He studied the Bhagavata Purana and its commentaries by Sridhara Swami, Sanatana Gosvami, and Jiva Gosvami. He pored over the Vedanta-sutra and its commentaries by Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, and Nimbarka. He explored the works of Sanatana Gosvami, Rupa Gosvami, Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, Jiva Gosvami, and Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, the principal theologians of the Gaudiya school. And he read Jayadeva's Gita-govinda, the poetry that had often evoked expressions of ecstatic love in Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Jai Singh wanted to reconcile the differences between the principle sects of Vaisnavas. He felt that these differences had no philosophical basis, so continual wrangling could serve no purpose. Having completed his research, he composed a thesis called Brahma-bodhini, advocating the unity of the Vaisnavas.

The king's attraction to Krsna had been sparked during his first visit to Vrndavana, as a child of seven. He had been called there by his father, the military commander of the district, who had been deputed to protect the caravans between Agra and Mathura. From that young age, Jai Singh had considered himself a devotee of Krsna. Now his study of the writings of the Vrndavana Gosvamis crystallised his sentiments. But his devotion to Radha and Krsna would be tested by the Ramanandis.

"The Gaudiyas should not worship Radha and Krsna together," the Ramanandis told him. "Radha and Krsna are not married. There is no precedent for Their being worshiped together! Sita and Rama are together, and Laksmi and Narayana, because they are married. But Radha and Krsna are not married."

Now the Ramanandis were escalating the quarrel. They not only criticised the Gaudiyas' lineage but also found fault with the Gaudiya method of worship. The Ramanandis demanded that Radha be removed from the main altar and be placed in another room, to be worshiped separately.

Jai Singh sent word to the mahantas (religious authorities) of the Gaudiya temples. "You must prepare a response to the criticisms voiced by the Ramanandis of Galta Valley. I am sympathetic to your philosophy and practice,

but your response must be adequate to silence the Ramanandi panditas, or I shall be forced to separate Radharani from Krsna."

The mahantas of the four major Gaudiya temples of Amber submitted their response in writing. They explained that Rupa, Sanatana, and Jiva Gosvamis shared the same opinion about Radha and Krsna: They could be worshiped either as married (svakiya rasa) or unmarried (parakiya rasa), since both these pastimes (lila) are eternal. Worship of Krsna in either lila is adequate to establish a devotee's eternal relationship with the Supreme.

The Ramanandis rejected these arguments. Fighting for their religious and political power, they again approached Jai Singh. Because Radha and Krsna were not married, the Ramanandis complained, worshiping Them together condoned Their questionable relationship. The Ramanandis also criticised the Gaudiyas for worshipping Krsna without first worshipping Narayana.

To appease the Ramanandis, Jai Singh told them he would ask the Gaudiyas to place the Deity of Radharani in a separate room. He would also ask them to explain their breach of Vaisnava etiquette in neglecting Narayana worship, and he would ask them to prove their link with the Madhva sampradaya.

Visvanatha Deputes Baladeva

Visvanatha Cakravati, a scholar of great repute, lived in Vrndavana at this time. Visvanatha had been born in 1646 in a Bengali village named Saidabad, where he had spent the first years of his life. Like other aspiring young renunciants, Visvanatha had faced problems with his family, who had betrothed him at a young age to tie him to domestic life. As a married youth, Visvanatha had studied extensively, and while living with his family in Saidabad he had written brilliant commentaries on Vaisnava scripture.

During his life in Saidabad, Visvanatha had taken initiation from Radharamana Cakravati and studied the Srimad-Bhagavatam and other Vaisnava scriptures with Radharamana's father, Krsnacarana Cakravati. Radharamana was three generations removed from the main preceptor in their line, Narottama Dasa Thakura.

Eventually Visvanatha had left his family and gone to Vrndavana, where he had lived at Radha-kunda. He formally accepted the dress of a renunciant and was then called Harivallabha. He continued writing and preaching, and eventually he became the leader of the Gaudiya community in Vrndavana.

By the time Govinda moved to Rajasthan in 1707, Visvanatha was more than sixty years old. The aging scholar followed the Amber developments with interest. How would Govinda and His priest's fare in that pluralistic environment, at the vortex of the young king's devotion, the Ramanandis antagonism, and the threatening presence of so many sects?

Visvanatha regularly communicated with the mahantas of the Vaisnava temples in Amber. Although he had expected trouble from the Ramanandis, the quarrel had stewed for years before threatening the Gaudiya priests or affecting the Deity worship. Now, he knew, they despaired over the growing antagonism of the Ramanandis.

Visvanatha called for Baladeva. "We must refute the points of the Ramanandis," Visvanatha told his protege. "It will not be easy, but we can defeat them."

Baladeva was outraged by the presumptuousness of the Ramananadi critics. "Why must we establish the legitimacy of our lineage?" He demanded. "The Supreme Lord, Sri Krsna, appeared as Lord Caitanya to establish the true religion for this age of quarrel. When God Himself originates a religious tradition, who may dare question its legitimacy?"

"The Ramanandis do question it" Visvanatha replied, "and they rest their criticism on the statement in Padma Purana that in this age there are four sampradayas, or lines of disciplic succession. The Purana says:

sri-brahma-rudra-sanaka
vaisnava-ksiti-pavanah
catvaras te kalau bhavya
hy utkale purusottama

The meaning is that the four Vaisnava sampradayas--Sri, Brahma, Rudra, and Kumara--purify the earth."

"Yes," replied Baladeva, "I know this verse. And the Ramanandis say that the words utkale purusottama mean that these four sampradayas have their monasteries in Orissa, in Purusottama-ksetra, the town of Jagannatha Puri.

"But the real meaning is that the Supreme Lord, Purusottama, is the quintessence of these four sampradayas. And when He appears in Kali-yuga, He lives in Jagannatha Puri as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So the Gaudiya lineage is not a fifth sampradaya but the essence of the four."

Visvanatha and Baladeva spent the night discussing the Ramanandis other points of contention about Lord Caitanya's movement. They developed the strategy by which they would defeat the Ramanandis.

Visvanatha sent Baladeva with Krsnadeva Sarvabhauma to Amber. Baladeva's arrival there was unheralded. He was new to the Gaudiya community, unknown even among the Gaudiya mahantas of Amber. And he was young. No one, even of his own tradition, suspected that a philosophical giant lived within the unpretentious form of this Gaudiya holyman from Vrndavana. Baladeva had difficulty gaining audience with the king. And when he was finally able to do so, the Ramanandis in the court were ready for him.

"Sir," Baladeva said to the king, "I have come to resolve doubts about the Gaudiya-sampradaya and its methods of worship."

"Your Highness," a Ramanandi pandita broke in, "we request to speak to him directly!"

Jai Singh turned to Baladeva. "You may speak," the king said, confident that if Krsna were indeed the Supreme Lord, Krsna would arrange for His own defence.

The Ramanandis opened with an offensive they felt sure would guarantee their authority. "The problem," they told Baladeva, "is that you do not belong to a proper sampradaya. Therefore we cannot accept the literature written by your panditas."

"I am from the Madhva-sampradaya," Baladeva asserted confidently. "I have been initiated in Mysore by a Tirtha of the Madhva order. But Radha-Damodara Gosvami and Visvanatha Cakravati of the Gaudiya-sampradaya are also my gurus. They have taught me Bhagavata philosophy."

The Ramanandis were surprised. Baladeva's Madhva initiation meant that they had to accept him as a qualified sannyasi and pandita of an authorised lineage. But they hoped his youth might indicate a lack of skill. They rallied themselves. "You may be from the Madhva-sampradaya, but the other Gaudiyas are not!"

Baladeva retained his dignity and produced a key piece of evidence. "That is the Gaura-ganoddesa-dipika, written by Kavi Karnapura more than one hundred years ago. This manuscript details our lineage from Madhva." Baladeva presented the manuscript for inspection.

The Ramanandis again argued, "If the Gaudiyas claim descent from Madhva, then you must base your arguments on Madhva's Brahma-sutra commentary. We know the

Gaudiyas have no commentary of their own."

Baladeva thought. The Gaudiyas had never written a commentary on Vedanta-sutra, because they accepted the Srimad-Bhagavatam as the natural commentary. Vyasa is the author of both of these works, and Lord Caitanya taught that when the author comments on his own work, his opinion is the best.

Baladeva knew that the Ramanandis would reject this argument. But he also knew that if he used Madhva's commentary he would have problems, for Madhva's commentary would not justify the style of worship practiced by the Gaudiyas. So Baladeva decided he would need to write a Gaudiya commentary himself. This commentary is based on Madhva's, but could have some allowable differences. "I will show you our commentary," Baladeva said. "Please allow me to bring it."

"Indeed, send for it," granted the Ramanandi spokesman. "That won't be possible," replied Baladeva. "It will require several days to write it." The Ramanandis were stunned. Could Baladeva produce a commentary within a few days? How audacious! But if Baladeva could indeed produce it, the Ramanandis position might be threatened. Should they grant him the time he required?

Before they could speak, King Jai Singh interjected. "Yes, the time is granted. Prepare your commentary and notify us when it is ready. You should know that unless you present a suitable commentary, we shall accept the criticisms of the Ramanandis as valid. But I shall not act on any of their demands until you have had an opportunity to present your commentary and your arguments."

Govindaji Inspires Baladeva

Baladeva left the assembly, followed by Krsnadeva Sarvabhauma. Baladeva saw himself a puppet in the hands of the Lord. He had spoken boldly in the assembly, but would the divine puppeteer guide his pen?

Baladeva went to Govindapura. Presenting himself before Govinda, he knelt and prayed. "O Govinda, Your devotee Visvanatha has sent me here to defend You and Your devotees, but I cannot do it! I am just a soul fallen in ignorance. If You wish, You may empower me to write a Vedanta-sutra commentary that will glorify You. If You wish, I shall write the truths I have learned from Your devotees and Your scripture. And I have faith that by Your mercy these truths will appear most logical."

Then Baladeva began to write. Pausing scarcely to rest, he wrote and prayed and wrote again. Days passed and nights, but he did not stop. Some historians say he wrote for one month. Others say it took him only seven days.

In any event, Baladeva soon returned from Govindapura. By now, keen expectancy had been aroused in all the various parties. Jai Singh, hoping to see the Gaudiyas vindicated, was especially eager to see the commentary. The Ramanandis, however, awaited the commentary with some trepidation, hoping they could defeat it readily.

Baladeva entered the court of debate convened in Galta. He stood on one side with the Gaudiya mahantas. Facing them were the Ramanandi panditas. King Jai Singh presided, and an audience of nobles and scholars was in attendance.

With the king's permission, Baladeva rose. "This commentary," he said, putting forward his work, "is based on Madhva's, but there are some important differences. If you examine it, you will find that it upholds the Gaudiya philosophy taught by Lord Caitanya." A Ramanandi pandita stepped forward and received Baladeva's commentary. "Who is the author of this work?" He asked. Baladeva replied, "The name of the commentary is Govinda-bhasya. Govinda has inspired this work. I have given the direct meanings of the sutras according

to the wish of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. And my comments are based on the teachings of my gurus." The learned members of the Ramanandi contingent examined the first portion of the bhasya to determine whether it was as Baladeva had claimed.

A spokesman conceded, "The influence of Madhva is certainly demonstrable in this commentary, but we should examine some of the differences."

Baladeva then addressed each of the Ramanandis' objections to Gaudiya worship. "I have expounded on every aspect of Gaudiya practice in chapter three," he said. "Since your criticisms concern our style of worship, you should turn to chapter three to see how Vyasa, the author of Vedanta-sutra, has provided for our worship.

"You object to our worship of Radha with Govinda on the superficial grounds that They are not married. In verses forty through forty-two I have presented the true position of Radha in relation to Krsna. Radha is the eternal energy of the Krsna and is never separated from Him. Their relationship may be parakiya or svakiya, but that does not affect the eternality of Their union. The separation of Radha and Govinda you have effected is artificial and therefore offensive to the Lord, who holds deep affection for His female energy.

"You have criticised our predilection for worshiping only Krsna, neglecting the worship of Narayana, Visnu, which you say is mandatory for all Vaisnavas. I have addressed that point in my comments to verse forty-three. According to the Vedanta-sutra, Narayana may be worshiped in any of His forms, including Krsna. No scriptural injunction prohibits the worship of Govinda exclusive of Narayana."

Baladeva continued speaking while the Ramanandis stood defenceless. He spoke eloquently and exhaustively. A rebuttal from the Ramanandis never developed.

At the end of Baladeva's presentation, King Jai Singh waited, weighing the evidence. The Ramanandis' silence confirmed his own opinion.

He delivered his decision in a brief but conclusive statement. "The evidence supporting the Gaudiya legitimacy is unassailable. Hereafter, the Gaudiyas shall be recognised and respected as an authorised religious sect. I order the reunion of Radha with Govinda."

The Gaudiya mahantas in Amber, free at last from condemnation by the Ramanandis, celebrated by building a temple of victory on the hill overlooking the Galta Valley. The temple Deity was appropriately named Vijaya Gopala, "Victorious Gopala."

At The Feet of Govinda

Baladeva returned to Vrndavana, where he assumed leadership of the Gaudiya community. He continued to write. Faithful to Jiva Gosvami and devoted to Lord Caitanya, he produced commentaries on ten principle Upanisads and nine works of the Vrndavana Gosvamis. He also wrote original works on grammar, drama, prosody, and poetics. He remained the unquestioned authority on Vaisnava theology until his death. (The date of Baladeva's demise is unknown. His last known written work, Stavamala, was dated 1764.)

With Baladeva's victory over the Ramanandis, Jai Singh was satisfied. He had found the synthesis of Vaisnava religions. And Radha had been reunited with Govinda on the altar, as She is in eternity. Jai Singh dedicated himself to Govinda and passed a long, and productive life as a king and scholar.

In 1714 Jai Singh moved Govinda to the Jai Nivasa Gardens and installed Him in

a garden house, where He was worshiped for twenty-one years. In 1735 the king built a temple for Govinda within the Jaipur palace compound. Jai Singh later installed Govinda as the king of Jaipur and accepted the position of minister for himself. From that time his royal seal read, sri govindadeva carana savai jai singh sarana: "Lord Govinda, at whose lotus feet Jai Singh takes refuge."

Stories about Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Maharaja Prabhupada

Padma Purana predicted Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati: a very elevated, pure and learned personality would appear in Purushottama-ksetra to spread the glories of Lord Jagannatha all over the world. His activities would be very unique.

Appeared Feb. 6 1874. Father was deputy magistrate of Puri, had been for three years. Bhaktivinode Thakur had been concerned that the pure teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu would be usurped by unauthorized persons, who were members of 13 apasampradayas. Bhaktivinode Thakura had started his mission for LC late in life. He was also very busy with his profession. But he wrote profusely, and wanted someone to preach boldly to establish these pure teachings.

When he was 6 months old, the Rathayatra was held. The cart stopped in front of SBV's house (which was on the main road between the temple and the Gundica mandira. The cart stayed there for 3 days. On the 3rd day, Bhagavati devi (ma of SBS) brought out the child and the pujaris picked him up and put him on the cart. He crawled to the base of Lord Jagannatha, and touched His lotus feet. Simultaneously a garland fell from the neck of the Lord and landed around the child. The pujaris exclaimed that this boy is particularly blessed by Lord Jagannatha. Annaprasa festival (rice ceremony), first grain taken by kids, so for SBS the first grain was Jagannatha Prasada. Vimala devi is offered the prasada after Jagannatha takes; hence his name Bimala Prasada. Bhagavatam and gold coins - took SB.

When he was five his father had become senior deputy magistrate: only three of these in all of India under British Raja. Mango incident happened at this time. Never again took ripe mangos. But he took green mango chutney offered by his disciples; this was a favorite of his.

When SBS was 7, Bhaktivinode Thakura moved to Calcutta, where the "Bhakti Bhavan" house was build. While digging foundation they found Deity of Lord Kurma. SBV initiated his son into the worship of Lord Kurma. He was doing this every single day without missing. Admitted into school. Was very expert student. Studied books of SBV, but never fell behind in school - he remembered everything after hearing it once. Teachers were astonished, father pleased.

SBV had taken initiation from Bipin Bihari Goswami, who came in the line of Gadadhara Pandit. When BBG was visiting SBV, SBV paid obeisances and BBG placed his foot on SBV's head. SBS saw this and was surprised. He thought this was a dangerous thing for BBG to do. When SBV left the room, SBS asked him a question: "You are my father's guru. But do you know who he is?" BBG was taken aback at this 7-year-old's question. SBS continued, "My father is a nityasiddha, an eternal associate of the Supreme Lord. Do you have sufficient spiritual potency to place your foot on his head?" SBV returned at this time, so the conversation was interrupted. BBG said, "Your son is bold to the point of being rude." Later on, SBV found this out and used to tell this story to his disciples.

As a boy, Bimala Prasada delivered his oldest brother Acyutananda from an offense he'd made in his last life. Acyutananda had a nervous disease, and once became very sick. Bimala Prasada took karatals and chanted the Hare Krishna mantra constantly for 6 days without eating. Then Ramanuja-sampradaya tilaka appeared on Acyutananda's forehead. He said, "I am a Ramanuja Vaishnava. I committed an offense to a Gaudiya Vaishnava in my last life and therefore had to take this birth. Now I am relieved." Then he left his body.

SBV is Kamala(man?)-manjari, and SBS is his eternal assistant. At age 13 he started higher education. Once SBV returned from Puri with Tulasi and initiated his son into chanting HK and he also took Nrsingha mantra

initiation.

During this time he invented a shorthand script called Vikanta.

Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati used to "install" the printing presses that were acquired by the Gaudiya Matha for literature publication. SBV, after seeing the wonderful vision of a golden mandira, began begging door to door for funds to establish the Yoga Pitha. At 18, SBS entered Capital Sanskrit College affiliated with Calcutta University. Within a short time mastered the 6 limbs of Sanskrit studies: shiksha, jyotish, chanda, alankara, etc.

When SBS was 22 he left college to avoid taking householder life. He took up work under the king of Tripura. Tripura had been turned to a Vaishnava state by the king of Manipur, who was a disciple of Narottama dasa Thakur. So SBS became Raja Pandit there for 3 years. He retired with full pension, which SBS accepted for a few years and stopped.

Around this time he took initiation from Gour Kishore dasa Babaji. GK had been a grain merchant before taking babaji vow. He'd gone to Vrindavana and did bhajana for a long time. Then he came to Navadvipa. By this time SBV had retired and had built a bhajana kutir in Navadvipa (Godruma). He gave SB class there every day. GK used to come to these classes. SBV told SBS to accept GK as initiating guru. SBS approached GK, asking "Please give me your mercy." GK answered, "Mercy is not mine to give. It is the property of Lord Chaitanya Himself. I'll ask Him, and if He agrees, I can give you."

Second time they met, SBS inquired, "Did you ask Him?" "No, I forgot." Third time same thing happened. SBS said, "You worship that great cheat, Krishna, Who is cheating everyone. And so you are also cheating me. But if you continue in this way, I will simply give up my life, because my life is useless without receiving you mercy." Then GK gave initiation to SBS as Varshabhanavi-devi dasa. Then SBS gave up all other activities to chant 194 rounds daily for 7 years. He had a kutir but did not spend the time to repair the roof; he just used an umbrella if it rained.

One disciple of SBV who wanted to continue the mission came looking for SBS in Nabadwipa at this time, knowing him to be as powerful a personality as his father. He went around asking the locals if they knew of a sadhu matching SBS's description, but they all answered, "We don't know of a sadhu, we only know of one madman. We see him moving here and there, crying aloud and sometimes rolling on the ground." So he went searching for him in the jungle next to the Ganga, where they said he sometimes could be seen. Suddenly he heard SBS crying "Krishna Krishna Haribol! Nitai Gour Hari Bol!" He saw him burst out from the forest and plunge, fully dressed, into the Ganga. He kept on shouting in the water, splashing about. Then he came out. The disciple of SBV then approached him, requesting him to come to Calcutta to head up the sankirtana mission there. SBS answered, "Sankirtana? Can you not see the wonderful sankirtana mission of Sri Caitanya right here in the holy dham of Navadvipa? Is it not wonderful? Sri Pancha-tattva are chanting and dancing in ecstasy, surrounded by all their associates. Can you not see this?" Then SBS ran off, again shouting "Haribol" in great ecstasy. As it was sunset by this time, that man took his bath in the Ganga, and mentally renounced the idea of organizing the sankirtana mission.

But later on, in 1918, SBS appeared at his door in Calcutta, in sannyasi robes with danda, freshly shaven, and ordered, "Now we are founding a Society, the Sri Gaudiya Matha. Draw up the papers immediately and have it registered. Though he'd arrived at 4 p.m., the work was done before that same afternoon was ended.

Even before 1918 he decried the Jati Gosai/brahmana monopoly of giving initiation only to born brahmins. He preached very boldly against them. The

brahmins challenged him, "where does the Gaura mantra appear in any authorized scripture as a Gayatri?" (Because the Gaudiya Vaishnavas would take this mantra as a pancharatriki mantra for brahminical initiation.) They said, "Sri Chaitanya claimed only to be a devotee. Why do you say he is the SPOG and use His name in place of authorized scriptural names and mantras?"

SBS cited Chaitanyopanishad from the Atharva-veda, discovered by Srila Bhaktivinode, 19 verses glorifying Lord Chaitanya. In another assembly he directly attacked the brahmins and Jati Gosai. He initiated the movement to take back the teachings of Lord Caitanya from the hands of such unauthorized persons. Srila Visvanatha, Baladeva, his disciple Uddhava dasa Babaji, his disciple Madhusudana dasa Babaji, were all saintly renounced souls: after Baladeva there was no one to strongly represent the pure teaching of LC and preach them boldly. During SBV's time, Gaudiya Vaishnava meant Baul, Aula, Sakhi Bheki, Jati Gosai, etc. who were all degraded. The Vaishnavas got no respect. At this time the shaktas became strong from RamaKrishna-Vivekananda, and this put further obstructions for the establishment of pure Vaishnava dharma. SBS preached against all of this nonsense.

When GK left the planet, the babajis wanted to do the samadhi rites. He'd said he wanted to have his body dragged through the streets by his "disciples." Babajis had gathered to do that, they'd tied a rope around the neck. SBS crossed over to Navadwipa from Mayapura and stopped them, saying "None of you are his disciples." GK had only 2 disciples, one SBS, the other was Vamsivata dasa Babaji Maharaja, who was an avadhuta. "I am the right claimant to perform these last rites." They said, "But he was a babaji, and you are not." SBS answered, "GK does not come in babaji line. He was initiated by Nimai Chand Goswami, who was a Nityananda Parivat, coming in the line of Lord Nityananda. He received his Vesha (babaji dress) from Bhagavata dasa Babaji Maharaja, who is an initiated disciple of Jagannatha dasa Babaji." Before SBS, from time of LC, param-bhakta Vaishnavas would get Vesha (white knee length cloth, kaupin, waterpot and bead-bag) initiation, not tridandi sannyasa. "Bhaktivinode Thakur also took Vesha from Jagannatha dasa Babaji. SBV, though diksha initiated of BBG, received siksha and vesha from JDB. And GK got siksha from SBV. Mahaprabhu's line is Bhagavata Parampara, not seminal line." So he challenged them to show that any such line came from Rupa or Sanatana Goswami. Rupanuga means coming in Bhagavata Sampradaya. Rupa told of Advaita's rejecting His own son Madhusudana because he accepted LC only, but not LN.

"If you are Babajis, then you are fully sense controlled. So the one of you who has not engaged in any illicit activities in the past 1 year, come and do the last rites." No one stood up. "One month? One week? 24 hours?" No one stood up. SBS then placed GK's body in samadhi.

So after finishing with the smartas, Jati Gosais, he took on Babas. Then in 1918 he opened his first center in Ultadanga Road in Calcutta. He was then 44. Kunjabihari Vidyabhusana (Bhakti Vilasa Tirtha Maharaja) was his main manager and a prominent devotee in the Matha. SBS had made a vow after taking sannyasa that he would never touch money. Everything was arranged by his disciples. Many of them took up jobs, e.g. Kunja Babu became a postmaster. SBS did nagara kirtana with disciples and was invited to programs by the King of Burdwan or the King of Kooch Bihar; everywhere he established Lord Caitanya's teachings as the most excellent spiritual philosophy.

He knew all Vaishnava philosophies most expertly. He brought out books on their darshans, e.g. Madhvacharya's arguments against Mayavadis. And Ramanuja. In the temple he established in Mayapur he built 4 small temples in honor of the 4 sampradayas. He put the deities of the 4 founders.

He started the Gaudiya Mission in the midst of war and national liberation agitation. He was uncompromising in his disregard of such mundane concerns.

"The most important thing is to invoke the spirit of devotion to the Supreme Lord; this concern lies far above any material consideration." Many leaders objected, but he continued. In this period SP visited SBS on the rooftop at Ultadanga Road; SP was adherent of the national liberation movement, but SBS convinced him in one sitting of the vital necessity of Lord Caitanya's mission over everything else.

SBS's sannyasa: happened in 1918. He could have taken babaji. Many babajis wanted to initiate him, as he'd shown himself to be such a powerful exponent of Vaishnavism (e.g. his 3-day debate with caste brahmins attended by Vaishnava scholars, in which he resoundingly defeated caste pretensions and established the Vaishnava view of brahminical status by quality of work, not birth). When he gave himself tridandi sannyasa (or had taken sannyasa from a picture of GK), this was a shock to even his supporters, including disciples of SBV. The controversy was over varnashrama; they thought he was returning to the VAD that LC had rejected in his talks with Srila Ramananda Raya. But he was establishing Daivi-varnashrama. Prabhodananda, Lokanatha Goswamis were great Gaudiya sannyasis of the past. Prabhodananda Saraswati converted a great smriti acharya, Gopal Bhatta Ghosh, and gave him tridandi sannyasa. Gadadhara Pandita was also tridandi sannyasi. Without establishment of DVAD, babaji (supposedly paramhansa) will become a farce. Order of LC to Nityananda to take up grhastha.

Then he went to Vrndavana and challenged the authority of the babajis. He sent 3 disciples to west, and he gave 10 westerner initiation. They protested that this was unauthorized. He said, "Everything I am doing can be supported by scriptural reference, but nothing you do can be. You take young boys who don't even know how to clean themselves after passing stool and giving them 'sakhi rupa.' I am giving samskara to reform the fallen souls, and this samskar is the Hari Nama, which Lord Chaitanya gave as the siddha pranali. No rules of caste or creed bind this Harer Nama diksha."

They said SBS was not properly initiated in an established line. He disproved this. GK was initiated in line of Nityananda, but he did not accept that line. But SBS rejected that line from Nimai Jati Goswami (line of Nityananda, Jahnvi, Bir Chandra Prabhu. SBS stressed Bhagavata Sampradaya, and didn't care for seminal line. "Rupanuga virrudhapa siddhanta": any conclusion against the precepts of Rupa Goswami is to be rejected immediately.

He gave a heavy class on detachment from material life. Later, while writing, he observed a monkey stealing bananas from the godown, which was just next to his study. He ran out with a stick to chase the monkey away, overturning his writing table and spilling ink on the pages of his manuscript. When the cook saw this, he inquired, "Today you told that one must be detached. How to understand your behavior just now - for two bananas you jumped from your writing to chase a monkey, and even ruined your work in the process?" Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati answered, "These bananas belong to Srimati Radharani, because they are to be used in Krishna's service."

He went to take a bath in a pukkur, and when he was seven steps above the surface of the water, the water rose seven steps and touched his lotus feet. Then all the brahmacharies jumped in, to bath in the carinamrta.

At the Yoga Pith temple was a cook who was very passionate. He fought with every devotee there except for Srila Bhaktisiddhanta himself. Then he died. After the funeral ceremony was completed, the Gaudiya Matha brahmacharies were sitting together and talking about how much trouble they'd had with the cook - each was telling stories about the fights he'd had with him. Suddenly Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati appeared at the doorway and said, "He always washed his dhoti nicely and was very clean." From then on nobody dared say anything negative about that cook.

When one mayavadi sadhu was preaching his oneness philosophy in the presence of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati and his disciples while they were riding on a train from Calcutta to Puri. Bhaktisiddhanta ordered his brahmacaries to feed the sadhu some rotten mangos which had been donated to his party earlier (they were ripe when donated, but got rotten because Bhaktisiddhanta would not take them due to his vow, and therefore no disciple would take either). After being obliged to eat four mangos, that sadhu fell at Bhaktisiddhanta's feet and swore he'd never preach oneness again.

His kirtana procession (with him personally at the head) would stop all traffic wherever it went in Calcutta; in Puri even the brahmins accepted his nam-sankirtana as fully authorized.

He would raise his danda to strike his opponent if he didn't accept his preaching.

He stayed in Puri in his last days. He lectured for some days at the place known as "Govardhana" in Puri, and before and after his talk he would recite prayers praising Govardhana Hill and requesting shelter in some corner there. He would sometimes comment to his disciples, there's not much time left. They could see something was going to happen soon, but weren't sure what.

He got very sick ten days before he left his body. Two days later he wrote his last instruction: "Somehow we must become qualified to attain the shelter of Rupa and Raghunatha. Always chant Hare Krishna, always preach Krishna consciousness, and stay away from Vaishnava-aparadha. In this way become qualified to get the shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Rupa and Raghunatha." Two days after that he wrote his letter to Srila Prabhupada (Abhaya Charanaravinda).

All the big intellectuals of Calcutta had a memorial gathering upon hearing word of his death. One (an atheist), in eulogy, said: "Who will we argue with now?"

Excerpts of the lilas from GVA

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Sanatana Gosvami (glories of SB)

One morning, Sanatana Goswami, saw a dream in which one brahmana was presenting the Srimad Bhagavatam to him. Suddenly he woke up, but seeing that no one was there, he felt sad. Later on, in the morning after he had finished his bath and performance of puja, one brahmana came to his house and presented him with the Bhagavata, instructing him to study it very thoroughly. Having received it in this way, he was beside himself with bliss, and from that day, considering the Bhagavata to be the essence of all scriptures, he began its thorough study.

"My only constant companion, my only friend, guru, wealth, that which has delivered me, my great fortune and the source of my good luck, the form through which I taste pleasure, my obeisances to you, Srimad Bhagavatam." [Sri Krsna-lila stava].

Raghunatha dasa Gosvami (Radhakunda renovation, necessity of bhajan-kutir,
----- overeating in meditation

Around this time one very wealthy Seth underwent great austerity by walking to Badarikasrama in the Himalayas. Arriving there he very reverently worshiped Sri Badrinarayana and offered much wealth at His lotus feet. That night as he slept there, he had a dream in which Sri Badrinarayana instructed him to proceed to Vraja, where he should present all his wealth to Sri Raghunatha Dasa Gosvami, who was residing at Aritgram. "If he declines to accept it, then you can mention My name and remind him about renovating Radha-kunda and Syama-kunda."

That Seth was very happy to have seen such a wonderful dream and after returning to his home he very joyfully set out for Vraja. There he met Raghunatha dasa Gosvami and related all of these events to him. Dasa Gosvami was somewhat taken aback to hear this news, but then immediately gave his consent. Thus Sethji began to work of re-digging the two kunds.

On the banks of Radha-kunda, the five Pandavas were residing in the form of trees. As the work was proceeding it was decided that on the following day these trees would have to be cut down, but that night the five Pandavas appeared in a dream of Raghunatha dasa and forbade the cutting of those trees. Today they are still residing there. When the work of beautifying the kundas was complete, the devotees bliss knew no bounds. Nearby the kundas, the kunjās of the eight gopis were also constructed. Seeing all this, Raghunatha dasa forgot himself in ecstasy.

Raghunatha dasa Gosvami lived on the banks of Radha-kunda without any fixed residence, staying under a different tree every night. Sometimes he would stay on the banks of the Manasa Ganga. At that time these areas were jungles filled with ferocious animals. One day Sanatana Gosvami came to the banks of Manasa Ganga to meet Gopala Bhatta Gosvami. Before accepting his noon meal at Gopal Bhatta's bhajan kutir, he went to take bath at the Pavan ghat of Manasa Ganga. From there he saw two tigers come to the kund and after drinking some water saunter off. Just near that spot Raghunatha das Gosvami was sitting under a tree absorbed in his bhajana. Sanatana Gosvami was startled to see this but even more so when he saw Sri Krsna standing at some distance observing everything. He then requested Raghunatha to do his bhajana within a hut.

On another occasion, Raghunatha dasa, who still hadn't bothered to have a kutir constructed, was sitting in the noon day sun absorbed in his bhajana. Srimati Radharani happened to pass that way at this time and, seeing that the sun was

beating down on Raghunatha's head, she stood behind him and held the end of her sari to shield him from the sun's rays. Then one of the Gosvamis came along and saw this heart-rending scene, while profuse perspiration continued to flow from Srimati Radharani's transcendental body. This time when he was again requested to do his bhajan in a kutir, he immediately agreed to comply.

Raghunatha dasa Gosvami used to always serve Sri Sri Radha-Govinda in his mind. One day in his meditation he cooked sweet rice and offered it to Sri Sri Radha and Krsna. In great pleasure they accepted the offering and the other sakhis also relished this prasadam. Then Raghunatha himself honored the remnants of their prasadam and in great ecstasy, due to the pleasure of having been able to satisfy Sri Sri Radha-Govinda and Their loving attendants, he ate a little more than was his custom.

In the afternoon Raghunatha dasa used to speak about Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. However, this day when the devotees came in the afternoon to hear him speak, they found that the door to his kutir was closed. They waited for some time but when it appeared that there was no movement inside they became a little anxious and called out, "Gosvamiji, are you all right?" Sri dasa Gosvami answered, "My body is not well."

The devotees became concerned and immediately sent word to Sanatana Gosvami in Mathura. At that time Sri Sanatana Gosvami was staying with Sri Vallabhacarya's son Sri Vithalnathji, who immediately sent two physicians to Radha-kunda to examine Sri dasa Gosvami. After checking his pulse, the doctors concluded that, "due to eating a combination of rice and milk his body is feeling very heavy."

Hearing this diagnosis everyone was struck with wonder. That Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, who subsisted on only a little buttermilk each day, should fall ill from eating too much sweet rice was astonishing, especially because it was eaten only in meditation.

Raghava Pandita (Panihati kadamba flowers miracle)

At that time Nityananda told Raghava, "Bring me a garland of kadamba flowers." Raghava Pandita asked, "Prabhu, where will I get kadamba flowers? It isn't the rainy season now." Nityananda told him, "Go and look in the garden." Raghava Pandita went into the garden and saw a miraculous sight. On a lemon tree were many kadamba flowers in full blossom. Thus he became completely subdued by ecstatic love and his external consciousness receded. He at once picked all the flowers and strung a beautiful garland. Bringing this garland to Nityananda Prabhu, he placed it on His shoulders while the devotees roared with ecstasy. Seeing the glories of Nityananda Prabhu, the devotees were completely transported to the world of utter amazement.

Then Nityananda Prabhu revealed to their eyes even further transcendental pastimes. At one point, as all the devotees were sitting down, the room became pervaded with the scent of a flower called Damanak. (donna?) Nityananda asked them, "Now which flower scent do you smell?" Everyone replied, "Damanak."

Nityananda Prabhu told them, "I will explain to you this mystery. Today Caitanya Gosai has come here from Nilacal, being attracted by your kirtana. On his transcendental body is a garland of damanak flowers, all picked from one tree. Thus this room has been filled with the ecstasy of that scent. Simply due to your ecstatic dancing and chanting, Mahaprabhu has come here from Nilacala." [C.B.Ant 5/294-297]

Hearing His words the devotees became filled with wonder.

Devananda Pandit (glory of SB)

"What purport will that rascal explain? Not in any of his births has he understood the meaning of even one verse of the Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Bhagavatam is the avatara of Sri Krsna in book form. Devotion is the only subject it teaches. The four Vedas are like yoghurt and the Bhagavatam is like butter. Srila Sukadeva Gosvami did the churning and Maharaja Pariksit ate that butter. Sukadeva Gosvami is very dear to Me. He knows very well that the Srimad-Bhagavatam is meant to describe the truth about Me according to My own likings. Whoever sees any difference between Me, My own devotees and the Srimad-Bhagavatam simply brings destruction upon himself." [C.B. Mad 21.13]

Mahaprabhu made these statements in a voice loud enough for Devananda to hear. Then He turned to go back to His home. The devotees following Him begged for more mercy. He continued, "All the scriptures state that the Srimad-Bhagavatam enunciates the highest realization. Without having understood any of this, simply for the sake of name and fame as a religionist and a scholar, he poses himself as a teacher of this great book. But he doesn't know the purport.

"Only one who has understood that the Srimad-Bhagavatam is verily the inconceivable intelligence of the Supreme Lord Himself knows that the only meaning of the Bhagavatam is devotion. In order to understand the book Bhagavata, one has to serve the devotee-Bhagavata."

Mahaprabhu replied, "Now hear Me, O brahmana, and know that the only way to explain the verses of the Bhagavatam is in terms of bhakti. In the beginning, middle and end of the Srimad-Bhagavatam there is only one teaching: devotion to Visnu, which is eternally perfect and which is never destroyed or diminished."

"As Krsna's various incarnations such as Matsya and Kurma appear and disappear in this world by Their sweet will, in the same way, the Srimad-Bhagavatam is not made or composed by any person. It makes its appearance and disappearance by its own sweet will. Due to the appearance of devotion, the Bhagavatam blossomed forth from Vyasadeva's mouth, by the mercy of Sri Krsna.

"As the truths regarding the Supreme Authority are inconceivable, so are the truths of Srimad-Bhagavatam. Many may pretend to know its meaning but they have no real grasp of the evidence the Bhagavatam presents. But whoever who simply remembers the Srimad-Bhagavatam while admitting himself to be ignorant can understand the real meaning.

"The Bhagavata, which is saturated with loving devotion for Krsna, is an expansion of Krsna Himself and contains descriptions of His most confidential pastimes." [C.B. Ant. 3.505-516]

"Now you should beg forgiveness by catching hold of Srivasa Pandit's feet. The book Bhagavata and the devotee Bhagavata are not different. If the devotee Bhagavata is merciful to us, then the book Bhagavata manifests its true meaning."

Paramesvara das Thakur (resurrected fox)

One day, near Sri Rampur, at Akna Mahesh (the Sripat of Kamalakara Pippalai), there was a festival of nama-sankirtan going on within the temple of Lord Jagannatha there. Paramesvara was present and was dancing in a completely God-intoxicated state. At that time some miscreants passed by there, and seeing a dead fox lying on the road, they picked it up and threw it into the midst of the sankirtan party.

The highly exalted Vaisnavas present didn't feel any anger towards those

ignorant fools, but Paramesvara felt sad to see the unfortunate dead fox, and so by his merciful glance he brought it back to life. Then that fox trotted out of the nat-mandir (kirtan hall) to the utter bewilderment of those miscreants, who then immediately fled from the spot.

Paramesvara dasa Thakura accompanied the Deity of Radharani that Sri Jahnava-devi sent to Vrindavana for Sri Govinda. He was the very dear servant of Sri Jahnava Mata.

His disappearance is on the full moon day of the month of Vaisakha. On that day the khunti (a symbol carried on a staff preceding the kirtana party) that he used in sankirtan is placed next to his samadhi mandir.

Supposedly its history dates from the time when the Kazi gave his promise that no one would ever disturb the sankirtan parties again. This was an emblem of the Kazi, and its presence in front of the sankirtan party indicated that the party was sanctioned by the Kazi and thus no one should disturb them. Today it is decorated with eyes, tilak, flower garlands and cloths, and worshipped as a manifestation of Mahaprabhu Himself.

Raghunandan Thakur (physically eaten offering)

Sri Mukunda Das, Madhava Das and Sri Narahari Sarkar Thakur were three brothers who lived in the village of Sri Khanda. Raghunandan was the son of Sri Mukunda Das.

"In the house of Sri Mukunda Das, who lives at Sri Khanda, Lord Sri Gopinath is served with great devotion. One day Mukunda was called out to do some work, and then he instructed his son Raghunandan to worship the deity and asked him to serve the Lord Gopinath that day. He explained to him that this deity is in our family for many generations and thus He has been worshipped by my father and his father and his father on and on, in this way for many years. Just as your mother feeds you and I everyday, so also He has to be fed everyday. Having explained to Raghunandan that this is a very big responsibility and he should be very careful to give his full attention to this service, Mukunda went out. Raghunandan meanwhile having been instructed by his father, collected the items for offering to Sri Gopinathji and entered into the deity room. Raghunandan was at that time barely 5 years old and therefore, when he saw that Gopinath hadn't eaten the offering after he had imitated how his father offered the bhoga, he became very worried. Ultimately he simply requested Gopinath with tears in his eyes: "Please eat! Eat!" Gopinath became completely subjected by Raghunandan's simple request, which was made entirely in love, and thus he stealthily ate up everything without leaving any remnants.

After some time Raghunandan's father, Mukunda, returned and asked his son if he had done as he was told. When his son replied "Yes", then Mukunda asked him to bring some of the prasadam. Raghunandan replied, "Prasadam? I offered everything just like you told me, and Gopinath ate everything; so what should I bring you now?" Mukunda was completely taken aback. "This boy is not naughty and is always accustomed to speak the truth. I doubt if he could have eaten everything. I wonder what actually happened?"

"Musing on this matter in this way for some time, on another day his curiosity was so stirred that he again requested Raghunandan to offer the bhoga to Gopinath on that day. On this day however, having gone out of the house, he again came in by another way and remained hiding in one place. Raghunandan was very happy to be able to serve Sri Gopinathji again and brought everything into the deity room. As before, he again very insistently persuaded Gopinath to take his meal. As Gopinath had eaten half of a laddu, he espied Mukunda peering out from his hiding spot. He didn't try to cover up the fact that he had eaten what

he had, but neither did he eat anymore. Seeing all this Mukunda was completely immersed in ecstatic love and picked up his son and put him on his lap. He extolled his virtues in a voice trembling with ecstasy, all the while torrents of tears of joy falling from his eyes. Even today, those who are greatly fortunate can still see that half-eaten laddu in Gopinatha's lotus hand. Thus Sri Uddhava das sings the glories of Raghunandan, who is non different from Madan (Cupid)."

Gauridas Pandit (four Gaura-Nitai Deities, Gaura Purnima celebration)

Across the Ganges from Santipur, in a small town called Ambika Kalna, which is within the present district of Bardhamana, is where Gauri dasa Pandita's temple is located. His worshippable Deities Sri Sri Gaura-Nityananda are still residing in all their splendor there. There is a railway station at Ambika Kalna on the Howrah-Navadvipa line. From there one can proceed by rickshaw to Mahaprabhu Mandira. In the temple is an old copy of the Bhagavad-gita on palm leaves which is supposed to have been written by the hand of Mahaprabhu Himself. There is also an oar from a boat which has an interesting story behind it.

One day, the two Lords Caitanya and Nityananda came to Kalna from Santipur by boat, paddling it themselves. Lord Caitanya kept the oar in His hand, and when He entered Gauri dasa's house He gave it to him, saying, "With this you should cross over the ocean of material existence, taking all the living entities with you."

Gauri dasa Pandita's older brother, Surya dasa Sarakkali, had two daughters, Sri Vasudha and Jahnava Devi. He gave them in marriage to Nityananda Prabhu. Near the conclusion of His Navadvipa pastimes, when Mahaprabhu desired to accept sannyasa, He came to Kalna to bid farewell to Gauri dasa. At that time Gauri dasa became extremely afflicted by separation. Hereafter is a nice song which describes what occurred at that time.

"In the Thakur Pandit's house, Lord Gauranga was dancing ecstatically, revolving around and around, while Lord Nityananda chanted 'Hari! Hari!' Gauri dasa, however, was crying very piteously and incessantly. He fell at the Lord's feet and begged Him, 'Please don't ever go away from here! Just honor this one request: stay here in Ambikanagar - this is my last submission at your lotus feet. If You go away, surely I'll die. Don't try to trick me like You did the gopis, giving some high philosophy about Your 'Bhava-murti' (or anything like that). I must keep You here in such a way that I can see You. You two brothers just stay here with me, thus everyone will become liberated. Again I am petitioning You, don't leave me 'Gaura Hari'. Then I'll know that You are the deliverers of the fallen."

"Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu replied, 'Gauri dasa! Give up this idea. You can just serve My Deity form, for I am personally present in that form also. You should know this to be a fact. Just accept what I am telling you as the truth."

"Hearing this, Gauri dasa simply let out a deep sigh and continued to cry piteously. Again the two brothers tried to console him but his heart refused to be pacified.

"Dina Krsna dasa is praying at the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya, that these two brothers might remain there. Thus the two of them were bound by the love of Gauri dasa and therefore the Lord is known as bhakta-vatsala or one who is affectionate to His devotees.

"Seeing that Gauri dasa was extremely distraught, Mahaprabhu spoke to him very gently, 'All right, We'll stay with you. Know in all certainty that We two

brothers will stay in your house.'

"Consoling him in this way the two Lords came before him in the company of two Deities. Seeing the four of them standing before him, Panditji was astonished, and though tears continued to flow from his eyes, now it was not out of sadness. The Lord again spoke to him, 'Whichever two you choose, you can keep in your room. Whichever two you can recognise as Us will stay with you and depend on you to feed Us. Know this to be the truth of truths within your heart.'

"Having heard Mahaprabhu speak these words, Gauri dasa immediately began to cook. He fed all four of them sumptuously and then offered them nice cloths and garlanded them with garlands of lotus flowers. Then he offered pan and betel nuts for chewing and smeared sandalwood paste on Their bodies. By serving them in various ways, he gradually regained his former composure and at the same time decided which two he would keep in his house. Due to the Pandita's pure love, two Lords remained with him and asked him to feed them when they were hungry, while the other two went to Nilacala Puri. Gauri dasa Pandita served his two Lords according to Their whims and enjoyed many pastimes with Them.

"Praying at the lotus feet of such a rare devotee as Pandita Gauri das, Dina Krsna dasa concludes his song. Becoming subservient to Gauri dasa' love, Sri Sri Gaura-Nityananda accepted the arca vigraha form and remained with him to enjoy sporting pastimes."

One day the two Lords smilingly spoke to Panditji "Gauri dasa! Previously you were our friend, Subal. Don't you remember how we used to play and frolic, enjoying different pastimes on the banks of the Yamuna?" Speaking in this sweet way, suddenly they took the form of Krsna and Balarama. Dressed like cowherd boys, They held buffalo horn, cane and flute in Their hands. Their heads were decorated with peacock feathers and around their necks were garlands of forest flowers, and their lotus feet were decorated with ankle bells. Gauri dasa also assumed his previous appearance and in this way they enjoyed some fun together. After some time, Gauri dasa calmed himself, and the two Lords again sat down on the simhasana.

Every day, Gauri dasa used to cook many varieties of vegetables and offer them to Their Lordships. He was always absorbed in their service and never perceived his own bodily discomfort. As the years went by, gradually he attained a ripe old age. Nevertheless he continued to serve his Lordships as before, cooking many various preparations for Them. Seeing that he was having to exert himself so much to do so much cooking, one day Sri Sri Gaura-Nityananda feigned anger and refused to eat. Panditji was in turn hurt by this and said, "If You get happiness by not eating, then why do You have me cook in the first place?" After saying this he became silent.

Lord Gauranga smiled and replied softly, "Your cooking is no small accomplishment. You prepare rice and so many varieties of vegetables. You won't listen if We request you not to make so much but We can't bear to see your hard labor. Whatever you can prepare easily that would be best."

Hearing Their statement, Gauri dasa replied, "Anyway, whatever I have prepared today, please accept that. From tomorrow I won't feed You with so many preparations. I'll just put some sak on Your plate." Having heard the reply of Gauri dasa, the two Lords laughed and began to eat.

Sometimes Gauri dasa desired to decorate Their Lordships with ornaments. Coming to know of this, Sri Gaura-Nityananda put on various ornaments and exhibited themselves in Their full opulence. When Panditji entered the temple, he smiled with wonder. "Where did so many ornaments come from?" He was simply astonished in ecstasy. In this way Sri Sri Gaura-Nityananda began to manifest Their opulences through various sporting pastimes in Gauri das's house.

Gauri dasa's dearest disciple was Sri Hridayananda. One time, on the occasion of Lord Gaurasundara's birth anniversary, Gauri dasa went to visit some of his disciples. At the time of going he left Hridayananda in charge of worshipping the Deities, which Hridayananda began to do in full love. Gradually the appearance day of Mahaprabhu drew very near. When there were only three days remaining, still Gauri dasa hadn't returned home yet. Hridayananda deliberated for some time about what should be done and finally, being prompted on his own, sent out invitations to all the devotees and disciples to attend the festival.

Just after that, Gauri dasa returned. Hridayananda informed his gurudeva that he had written out invitations and had then sent them to the devotees. Within himself, Gauri dasa was very pleased by Hridayananda's service, but externally he feigned great anger and said, "Even in my presence you show so much independence, sending out invitations hither and thither. Anyway, whatever this upstart has done is done, but he won't be able to remain here."

Hearing this, Hridayananda offered his obeisances and went to sit underneath a tree on the banks of the Ganga. Shortly thereafter, a rich man passing by in a boat hailed Hridayananda, wishing to make a donation. But instead of accepting the donation himself, Hridayananda sent him to his guru. However, Gauri dasa sent the man back to Hridayananda and told him to accept the donation and with it to hold a festival on the banks of the Ganga.

As per the order of his guru, Hridayananda began to make the necessary preparations. Gradually, the people that he had sent invitations to began to arrive, but upon hearing that a festival was being held on the Ganges riverbank, they proceeded there first. In the company of the many devotees, Hridayananda chanted and danced ecstatically. The sankirtan was so blissful and attractive that Their Lordships themselves, Sri Sri Gaura-Nityananda, came to take part in the dancing and singing. Hridayananda was very fortunate to see all of this.

Meanwhile, Gauri dasa was also holding a festival in his house. When the time came for making an offering, the pujari, Boro Ganga dasa Pandita entered the Deity room only to find that there were no Deities. He immediately informed Gauri dasa. Gauri dasa could understand the matter very well and, smiling, he picked up a stick and proceeded towards the kirtana festival on the banks of the Ganges. Arriving there, he saw the two transcendental brothers engaged in ecstatic dancing. Sri Sri Gaura-Nityananda also saw Gauri dasa approaching in an angry mood with a stick in his hand, and they quickly and silently entered the temple of Hridayananda's heart. Seeing this Gauri dasa couldn't restrain his tears of ecstasy. He forgot his anger and ran towards Hridayananda with his arms outstretched. Firmly embracing him he said, "You are so fortunate! From today your name is Hridayaitanya."

Gauri dasa began to bathe him with his tears as Hridayaitanya fell at his lotus feet. Then Gauri dasa took Hridayaitanya and all of the devotees to his courtyard where intense chanting and dancing continued. The assembled Vaisnavas filled the day with the vibrations of "Hari! Hari!" In this way the birth anniversary celebration of Gaurasundara was observed. Thereafter Gauri dasa appointed Hridayaitanya as the sevaka of the Deities.

Abirama Gopala Thakura (Krsna-lila in Gaura-lila)

Sri Abhirama Thakura was known as Abhirama Gopala and also as Rama dasa Bhirama dasa. "Who was previously known as Sridama, a gopa during Krsna-lila, is now renowned as Abhirama or Rama dasa. He was the favorite of Nityananda Prabhu.

One day, Krsna, Balarama and their cowherd friends were playing a game of hide

and seek. In the middle of Their game, Krsna decided to go to Nadia to enjoy His pastimes there, and so, taking with Him Balarama and all Their friends, He advented Himself in Navadwipa. Somehow or other, He forgot Sridama, who remained in his hiding place in a cave. After a while Krsna noticed that Sridam had been left behind and sent Balarama as Nityananda, Who found Sridam and told him: "Come on! We've all gone to Nadia to play there!"

Sridama asked, "Who are You?"

"I'm your Lord Balarama. Can't you recognize me?"

"You can't be my Lord Balaram. You're too small." [In Kali yuga the measurement of the body is 3.5 hands, whereas in Dwapara-yuga it is 7 hands.]

"If you don't believe Me, then take off running. If I can't catch you within ten paces, then you'll know I'm not Balarama."

"All right! Catch me if You can!"

Sridama took off running, but Nityananda Prabhu immediately caught him. But now Sridama told Him, "Now look here, You dudes left me behind, so I ain't goin' to yer Nuddia or whatever the joint is called."

Nityananda Prabhu kept coaxing him but Sridama was adamant. Finally he manifested an expansion of himself, Rama dasa, who agreed to go. But Sridam still wanted to remain behind as his feelings were greatly hurt.

Rama dasa was also dissatisfied and very prone to anger. When Nityananda Prabhu's first child was born, Abhirama Thakura came to offer his obeisances to the child, who died on the spot. In this way, seven of Nityananda's children had to depart from this world just after taking birth. Finally a daughter, Ganga-devi, was born to Nityananda Prabhu and Vasudha devi. When, after offering his obeisances to the child, Abhirama Thakur saw that the baby was unaffected he exclaimed, "This time we haven't been deceived!" Then he immediately composed one hundred verses in praise of Ganga-devi. When Viracandra Prabhu took his birth, Abhirama again came to offer his obeisances. When he saw that Viracandra was unaffected, he composed Sri Virbhadrastakam.

If Abhirama Thakura would offer his obeisances to any stone other than a salagram-sila, that stone would crack. One time, Abhirama Thakur came to Sri Khanda, wanting to meet Raghunandana Thakura. Mukunda dasa was aware of his reputation and thus told the Thakura that Raghunandana wasn't there. Feeling disappointed, Abhirama departed. When Raghunandana heard that Abhirama Thakura had come to meet him, he ran to catch up with the Thakura. Finally he met him at Bor Danga, where they danced together in ecstasy. When Raghunandana was dancing his nupur (ankle bracelet) came off and fell down at Akaihat, where Kaliya Krsna dasa used to do his bhajan. This nupur is still being worshiped along with Kaliya Krsna Thakura's Deity at Karvi, not far from Katwa.

Gopala Guru Gosvami was also similarly tested by Abhirama Thakura when he was only a small boy living with Mahaprabhu in Puri. By the mercy of Mahaprabhu, Who invested His potency in Gopala guru, the boy emerged unscathed.

Murari Gupta (Varaha-lila of Lord Caitanya, position of Lord Nityananda)

Sri Murari Gupta used to worship Sri Sri Sita Ram. One day, Mahaprabhu suddenly arrived in Murari Gupta's house. Roaring in the mood of Varahadeva he picked up a water pot in His teeth, while Murari Gupta fell down on the floor to offer his dandavats, being dumbstruck with wonder at having seen this divine form. Then Mahaprabhu said; "Murari! Just sing some hymns in my praise." Then Murari recited some slokas at which Mahaprabhu became very happy and thus addressed

him, "Murari! I am just speaking this truth to you. I am the essence of all scriptures. I have come to engage in Harinam sankirtan Myself, as well as to induce others also to chant My Holy Names. I cannot tolerate malice towards my devotee. If someone tries to harm my devotee, even if he is my son I will tear off his head. The proof of this is Narakasur." After telling Murari so many secret things about Himself, Mahaprabhu returned home.

During the time when Mahaprabhu exhibited for 21 hours His transcendental existence as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He was calling His various devotees and bestowing various blessings to them. He next called Murari:

"Murari! For so many days you couldn't recognize who I am? Just see My divine form." Then Murari saw Mahaprabhu as His most worshipable Deity, Lord Raghunatha, His body the colour of green grass. Sitting in the virasana, his legs folded beneath His body, and holding a great bow in His hand, Lakshman and Janaki were seated on each side of Him. In all directions the chiefs of the monkeys were reciting prayers and hymns. Then when he saw himself amongst those monkeys in his original form, he fainted straight away. Mahaprabhu called him: "Murari! Get up! Just see My divine form. Have you forgotten who set Ravana's Lanka on fire? It was you, Hanuman! Get up and gaze on the form of Laksmana, who is the very embodiment of your life. Offer your obeisances to that one for whose sadness you cried so much (Sita devi)."

Hearing Mahaprabhu's voice Murari regained his consciousness and seeing that form again he offered his dandavats again while crying in ecstatic love. Seeing this divine display of the Lord's infinite mercy towards Murari, the devotees filled the sky with the sounds of "Hari! Hari!"

One evening, Mahaprabhu & Nityananda Prabhu were sitting in the courtyard of Srivas Pandit when Murari Gupta arrived there. First he offered his obeisances to Mahaprabhu and then to Nityananda Prabhu.

Mahaprabhu told him: "Murari! You have made a mistake. You offered your obeisances in the opposite order."

Murari: "Prabhu! As you have inspired me, so I have done."

Mahaprabhu: "All right. Go home now and later you will be able to understand everything."

Murari Gupta went to his house and after having his meal, lay down to take rest. That night he saw a dream. In his dream he saw the chief of the Mahabagavat; Lord Nityananda, his cloth tied up behind in the fashion of a wrestler, proceeding in front. Above his head was a great, many-headed serpent. In his hands were a plow and club. Nityananda Prabhu appeared just as Balaram. Following behind, with a peacock feather on his head, was Sri Visvambhar. [C. B. Mad. 20.14]

Lord Nityananda is none other than Haladhar, the manifestation of Anantadeva, and the greatest devotee. Now Murari could understand who is greater.

Mahaprabhu, smiling sweetly called him, "Murari! Now have you understood? If you breach proper conduct then how will it look?" Murari Gupta, in the depth of his dream began to call out "Nityananda! Nityananda!" with tears in his eyes. His wife then called out "Krsna! Krsna!" and woke him up. Murari Gupta could understand the greatness of Nityananda Prabhu's position now. It is he who reveals Lord Gauranga. Without his mercy one cannot get the mercy of Lord Caitanya.

Acyutananda (eternal relationship with the Lord)

On the order of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Acyuta set out on a pilgrimage and

returned after a long journey. During that journey Acyuta, being profoundly influenced by Lord Caitanya, formed a Sankirtana (Rahasa) party and preached the name of Sri Krsna in different provinces of India. The account of his Sankirtana party is discussed in an unpublished manuscript called Baranacharita-grantha.

Lord Caitanya and Acyuta had a very cordial relationship and are certainly eternal associates. The description in chapter ten of Sunya Samhita reveals that Acyuta was not only associated with Lord Caitanya during the period mentioned, but he was also a companion in previous births. The story indicates that Sri Krsna informed Sudama that He was going to descend to the earth. Krsna said: "Go thou Sudama, we shall meet again in Kaliyuga. I shall reveal myself in the form of Buddha, and you will bear the name Sundarananda. Later I will manifest in Navadvipa as Sri Caitanya and preach the name of Hari from door to door. At that time you will stay with us, and will be known by the name Acyuta. You will save the cowherd class."

In another passage of Sunya Samhita, Sudama, Subala and others asked Krsna how and when they would meet again. Krsna replied that they would be born as Panchasakhas in the Kaliyuga at Nilacala, and King Prataparudradeva would serve them.

Once Lord Caitanya came to Cuttack and the king desired to perform a religious festival. Lord Caitanya advised the king to bring the Panchasakhas. Thus the Panchasakhas came to Cuttack to join the party and the Lord embraced all of them. In the Chourasi Ajna it is described that Lord Caitanya sat in the Muktimandapa along with His five associates, the king, and Sarvabhauma. The Lord declared that the five associates were the followers of Krsna in every age. The associates replied that they were but five branches (panca sakha) of one tree. Lord Caitanya called them to his side and asked them to give a demonstration of their occult powers. He handed over the seed of a jackfruit to Jagannatha Dasa, and Acyutananda ripened the fruit.

Bhagavan dasa Babaji (snake, cat, prasadam, goat)

One day a snake was found inside the asrama and one of the devotees picked it up and threw it away at a safe distance. When Bhagavandasa came to know about it he was very annoyed and ordered the devotee to leave the asrama and stay away. It is said that the snake happened to be an elder brother of Nama-Brahmah in one of its earlier births. Bhagavandasa would not take prasada until the snake had taken a portion of it.

Bhagavandasa regularly took his evening meals after his daily bhajana recitals. On some days he was so absorbed in bhajana that he forgot about his meal, which was usually kept close to his seat. One pet cat of the asrama regularly shared prasada with Babaji, thus when Bhagavandasa remained absorbed in prayer till late, the cat would mew repeatedly, going around and around Babaji to attract his attention. Bhagavandasa would lift the lid of the bowl of prasada, allow the pet to help itself and then replacing the lid, continue with his bhajana.

On occasions when Bhagavandasa failed to derive the inspiration desired from his bhajana, he would advise his devotees to take their meals and on pretext of his own illness, he refrained from eating. If the devotees tried to convince him to eat, Babaji would simply reply: "In that case let us all retire to bed without any meal." Thus the devotees would reluctantly take their meals.

He was a virtuous man both in his practices and behavior. He did not allow any prasada received as offerings, to be placed on the floor unless the devotees mopped the place clean. If a devotee failed to do so, Babaji would pull him up

and call him a Mussulman. When flowers or garlands were offered to Bhagavandasa, he touched them to his forehead with care, making sure the flowers did not come in contact with his garments.

One of his disciples, Visnudasa, came down with a fever for three continuous days. When Bhagavandasa advised his disciple to take medicine the latter said that there was no need to do so as he would be cured by the grace of Nama-Brahmah. Bhagavandasa angrily remarked that, "A man suffers illness as a part of his penance and should act upon a doctor's advice, rather than pass the responsibility for the disease, and also its cure, to Nama-Brahmah. After all, it is a doctor's job to provide aid to a sick person." Visnudasa promptly took some medicine and was cured.

One day while Bhagavandasa was absorbed in bhajan, he was heard to shout "go away". It came to be known later that he was shouting to scare away a goat which was chewing the leaves of a Tulasi plant in the courtyard of the Govinda temple, far away in Vrndavana. On that same day the Maharaja of Burdwan, having heard about the powers of Bhagavandasa, came to Nama-Brahmah Asrama for darsana. It so happened that Maharaja entered the asrama at the same time that Bhagavandasa shouted, "go away". Naturally, the Maharaja thought that Babaji, for some reason, wanted Maharaja to leave the premises. Thus, in disappointment, he left Nama-Brahmah Asrama.

Afterwards the devotees told Babaji of Maharaja's arrival and why he had left without getting Babaji's darsana. Bhagavandasa immediately sent a messenger requesting the Maharaja to visit Nama-Brahmah again. When the Maharaja again visited the asrama Babaji begged forgiveness and explained the circumstances which had led to the misunderstanding on Maharaja's previous visit. The Maharaja was understanding, but skeptical as to whether Bhagavandasa Maharaja actually possessed the power to see something which was taking place in Vrndavana. To satisfy his own curiosity the Maharaja sent a telegram to Vrndavana to verify the truth of the incident. The reply corroborated the statement made by Bhagavandasa. From that time Bhagavandasa was known as Siddhababa Bhagavandasa Babaji Maharaja.

Gurakisorā Siromani (glory of SB - gauravandana between its lines, humility)

Venimadhava Thakura was a Vaisnava saint who enjoyed perfect bliss through Istagosthi. At his request, Gurakisorā Siromani once gave a daily three-hour recital of the sloka "Janmadyasya" for thirty-five days. Hearing his recitation, Venimadhava commented that Gurakisorā was certainly been blessed by the grace of the six Gosvamis.

Once Gurakisorā and his troupe paid a visit to the residence of the Banerjee family of Badogramā, near Burdwan, to recite from the Srimad Bhagavatam. When they arrived in the village at around 2 pm. they found out that the village had neither a Visnu temple nor did anyone there follow the tradition of offering worship to Salagramā. Immediately Gurakisorā went to the brahmana Zamindar of the village and expressed his reluctance to even take a drink of water from a village where Visnu was not worshiped. Many came forward to try to change the mind of Siromani, fearing that the departure of the whole group of starving Vaisnavas would be inauspicious for their village. In utter helplessness, a messenger was sent on horseback to a village ten miles away with a note requesting the Zamindar's cousin to bring a Salagramā to the village. When the Salagramā was brought and food offered to it, Gurakisorā partook of Visnu prasada.

Once, in order to test the Vaisnava merit of Gurakisorā, some tantric brahmanas of Kagramā in the district of Mursidavad invited him to give a recital from the Srimad Bhagavatam in their village. After the recital had gone

on for several days, the evil-minded brahmanas arranged to have animals slaughtered on the occasion of Kalipuja on the very same site as the Srimad Bhagavatam was recited. On receiving this news late in the evening, Siromani was greatly distressed and prayed desperately to Gaura Govinda. Thus when the slaughters attempted to sacrifice an animal with one strike, they were unsuccessful; they needed two strikes for all of the animals. The frightened slaughterers tried to invoke the grace of the goddess. Later the goddess chastised the priest in a dream saying: "All of you have humiliated a devotee of Visnu, hence you will be severely punished." Hearing this the mischievous persons rushed to the feet of Gaurakisora Siromani. Gaurakisora asked them first to take a dip in the Ganges and later converted them into Vaisnavas.

Meanwhile the long standing debate regarding the respective status' of the Gosvamis and the Vaisnavas continued to ensue. Eventually they decided that if Siromani would intervene and mediate between them, his verdict would be accepted by both sides. After Siromani listened to both sides of the argument he replied: "Please take me as your son; when a son becomes an adult then he is not expected to be present where his parents are quarreling. It should also be noted that marital love attains a new depth when the couple differs from each other." These words softened the hearts of both the disputant sides; they forgot their differences and chanted the holy name together.

The following is an excerpt about Siromani extracted from Sadgurusanga vol. 2 written by Kuladananda brahmacari: "Siromani was the senior-most pandita of the country; he had a sound command over the six systems of Indian philosophy, Smrti, and Purana. Once, in his native village, he attended a Srimad Bhagavatam recital held in the house of a brahmana villager. A large number of reputed brahmana panditas were also present for the session. The devotee brahmana who recited from the Srimad Bhagavatam first invoked the vandana of Lord Gauranga before beginning his recitation. This had been the prevalent custom everywhere, however, Siromani flew into a rage upon hearing Gauravandana. He called the brahmana reader to him and said, "What's the matter sir? Is this what is called Bhagavata-recital? You are ready to give a recital from Srimad Bhagavatam which lies open in front of you, directing your attention to the book, how come you go on chanting the glories of Lord Gauranga? Being in the presence of a gathering of brahmana panditas and keeping the Salagrama in front of you, you pledge to recite from Srimad Bhagavatam then you speak on an entirely different topic. Can you justify your action?"

The devotee humbly replied with folded hands, "Revered Sir, please believe me, I am truthfully reciting from Srimad Bhagavatam. Whatever I have chanted so far can be found in Srimad Bhagavatam. I have not told a single lie."

Siromani sprang from his seat and rushing towards the reciter demanded, "Look here, please show me where the verse "Anarpitacarim" is found in Bhagavatam?" The brahmana pointed his finger, indicating the blank space between every couple of lines. Siromani retorted, "What do you mean? You are pointing to blank white spaces."

The brahmana then spoke, "You don't have the right vision, how do you expect to see what I am showing you? Better cleanse your eyes first and then have a look."

Siromani was enraged, "How dare you insist on telling a lie in an unruffled manner in front of a Salagrama, and while touching the Srimad Bhagavatam, and in the presence of brahmanas?"

The brahmana at last firmly replied, "Please hold your tongue. In this gathering of brahmanas, while touching Srimad Bhagavatam, I swear that whatever I have said is truth. I can see Gauravandana written in the intervening space of every two lines of Srimad Bhagavatam. I advise you to first take diksa from a competent venerable Vaisnava saint, then practice for a week exactly as I

direct you and then come here on the eight day. If you then fail to see the writing of Gauracandrika in the intervening spaces of the Srimad Bhagavatam, then I promise in front of everyone present here that I shall chop off the tip of my tongue."

Siromani was a deeply spiritual person and thus immediately approached Siddha Caitanya dasa Babaji for diksa. Then he contacted the brahmana reciter and received instructions, which he practiced diligently for seven days. On the eighth day he came before the brahmana reciter demanding that he be shown the script of Gauravandana in Bhagavatam. The reciter promptly opened the Srimad Bhagavatam and called Siromani to have a look. As soon as Siromani looked at the book he saw Gaura-vandana written in bright golden letters on the blank spaces preceding every couple of lines. With tears flowing incessantly from his eyes, Siromani rolled on the ground in repentance. Immediately he renounced everything and left for Vrndavana on foot. Since then he has been staying here. He can really be called a genuine Vaisnava."

During his stay at Katoa Siromani would give oral recitation from the holy texts, but he stopped doing this in Vrndavana. Only in the afternoon hours would he give lessons on Srimad Bhagavatam to Vrajavasi Vaisnavas. One day Siromani was giving a class on the fourth canto; the episode of Daksayajna, when a question came up from the students as follows: "How could Mahadeva possibly have danced, carrying the corpse of Sati which is stated to have been reduced to ashes by the sacrificial flames?"

Siromani waited awhile, wondering how to present a proper reply. Meanwhile, one Vaisnava listener, seated by the side of Siromani, who was regularly present at this class, looked up at the inquiring students and said, "Would you like a demonstration of the situation or would you be satisfied with an explanation?"

The students chorused, "Who cares to listen, when a demonstration is available?"

"Then come here and look", the Vaisnava said. He sat facing north in a yoga posture and passed into a state of meditation chanting "Jaya Gauranga". Shortly afterwards a speck of fire rose from the big toe of his right foot and soon his entire body was covered with raging flames. Siromani screamed, lamenting what had happened. The students tried to put out the fire by pouring water from the Jamuna but it was over by then. From that day Siromani gave up teaching Srimad Bhagavatam and resorted to more austere bhajan.

A number of well-known Vaisnava saints lived in Vrndavana during the time when Siromani was there; Srila Brahmananda Gosvami of Srngarvata, Srila Nrisimhananda Prabhu, Srila Nilamani Gosvami-descendant of Advaita Prabhu, Srila Haracandra Gosvami, Haradhan Maitra, the Zamindar of Talanda in Rajasahi (Bangladesh)-Gangaprasada Ray, the Zamindar of Tadas in Pabna (Bangladesh) with his family, Hajra Mahasaya-the reputed kirtana singer who was also the caretaker of Sri Madanamohana Temple, Vaisnavacarana dasa-the well-known kirtana singer, Sri Krsnadasa, Sri Gauradasa, Pranavandhu Nandi etc. All of the above mentioned persons showed great respect for Siromani.

Once Srila Brahmananda Prabhu invited Siromani to partake of prasada in his house at Govindaghat. Brahmananda offered prasada such as rice and various other dishes served in silver plates and vessels in front of a special seat for Siromani to sit on. Siromani felt extremely embarrassed and refused to sit at the arranged place and asked that prasada be served to him on a leaf plate and leaf bowl. He urged Brahmananda to take prasada on the special seat instead of himself. Brahmananda was aware of Siromani's noble lineage and referring to that repeatedly requested Siromani to accept the food and the special seat. Siromani replied as follow: "Prabhupada (Brahmananda), if you think you have invited me here because of my social background, in that case I shall surely

lose my caste-status if I partake of prasada with you here. But you are my "prabhu" and I am your "dasa"-this relationship of ours is highly adorable." Saying this Siromani made Brahmananda sit on the special seat and himself took prasada on a leaf plate. This incident occurred prior to Siromani's embracing bheka.

Siromani knew perfectly well how to uphold the dignity of bhakti. He showed respect to infants in the same manner as he would to the descendants of acaryas and those senior to him. During his stay at Thaura, he arranged for a chosen reciter to give daily classes on sastra. One day in the midst of such a session, Siromani suddenly stood up; giving everyone the impression that some distinguished acarya descendent had appeared there. What had actually happened, however, was that a certain disciple of Siromani was standing in the corner carrying the infant daughter of Radhikanath Gosvami, the descendant of Advaita Prabhu. When that disciple with the child was asked to sit down, Siromani also sat down.

The following is an extract from Sadgurusanga: "One day Sridhara, a disciple of Vijayakrsna Gosvami, went to Siromani's kutir to have darsana. Upon arriving he found Siromani asleep, thus he offered his obeisances keeping some distance from the feet of Siromani. To his surprise, the devotee noticed that Siromani's feet turned to another direction. Every time Sridhara tried to offer his obeisances the same thing happened. Sridhara finally left the place in bewilderment. No one could ever touch the feet of Siromani or offer their humble obeisances. Even when Siromani was at a distance no one could offer his pranamas before Siromani had offered them first. He would offer dandavats lying prostrate to one and all. In fact it was a problem to walk on the road with Siromani, because along the way he repeatedly offered dandavat pranamas to cats, monkeys, cows, women, men and deities on both sides of the road. All the men and women of Vrndavana revered Siromani as a venerable saint. Thakura (Vijayakrsna Gosvami) said that one should meet Siromani in order to realize the true meaning of the verse "trinadapi".

For twelve years Madhyageha Bhatta would regularly travel the eight miles north from his village of Belle to Udupi. There at the Anantesvara temple he would pray for a son. One day a devotee in a trancelike state climbed the temple flagpole and announced that to reestablish the purest principles of religion, a male child, an incarnation of Vayu, the demigod in charge of air, would soon be born. Madhyageha understood within his heart that this would be his own child. Soon his wife, Vedavati, gave birth to a son. The happy couple named him Vasudeva.

From infancy Vasudeva showed extraordinary intellect, so much so that he was given brahminical initiation at age five, three years early. Whatever he heard or read, even just once, he could remember. His body was unusually strong, lustrous, and beautiful. At age eleven, Vasudeva left home for Udupi, to live with Acyutapreksha, an ascetic widely respected for his scholarship and saintly character. After one year, despite strong protests from his father, Vasudeva renounced the world. Acyutapreksha named him Purnaprajna.

Less than forty days after taking sannyasa, Purnaprajna defeated Vasudeva Pandita, a famous wandering scholar, in public debate. The pandita was known for his hair-splitting dialectical ability, but he was no match for the young Purnaprajna. The pandita spoke for three days and then dared anyone to refute his conclusions. Purnaprajna shocked the crowd when he accepted the challenge. First, to show he had a full grasp of the issues, he repeated almost verbatim the pandita's arguments. Then, one by one, he smashed them all. His victory was the talk of Udupi. Acyutapreksha gave him the title Anandatirtha, in recognition of his mastery of Vedanta.

Word spread far and wide about the debating skill of the young ascetic in Udupi. Challengers and admirers converged on the town. Buddhisagara and Vadisimha, two Buddhist monks who had converted many to their fold, challenged Anandatirtha. After a day-long skirmish, they promised to return the next day. That night, however, they secretly fled from Udupi.

Anandatirtha went on a tour of South India. The most notable events on this tour were two encounters with Vidyasankara Swami, the lineal successor to Sripad Sankaracarya, who was the original propounder of the monistic theory of the Absolute Truth. Some basic tenets of Sankaracarya's philosophy are as follows: God and the soul are identical; the formless, senseless, impersonal Absolute is the only reality; all else is illusion; and the incarnations of God are all products of illusion. Anandatirtha was toughly familiar with this philosophy, so he knew all its weak points. With firmness and courage he challenged the venerated Vidyasankara, and a fierce debate ensued. Vidyasankara could not defeat his opponent, yet he refused to accept defeat. They met again, in Ramesvaram, during the monsoon season, at which time Vidyasankara taunted and harassed Anandatirtha. But the young saint tolerated the abuse.

On his return journey, while addressing an assembly of learned men, Anandatirtha stated that every Vedic utterance conveyed a triple meaning, that each verse of the Mahabharata had ten meanings, and that each of the thousand prominent names of Lord Visnu had a hundred meanings. When the astonished assembly demanded he prove his statement, Anandatirtha explained a hundred meanings of Visva, the first name of Visnu. Before he could proceed further, however, they begged him to stop, admitting they did not have the intelligence to comprehend his elaborate explanations.

Back in Udupi, Anandatirtha, who was now known as Madhva, wrote a commentary on Bhagavad-gita and gave a copy to Acyutapreksha for his approval.

Madhva's next tour was to Badarinatha, high in the Himalayas. In

Badarinatha he met Srila Vyasadeva, the author of the four Vedas and their voluminous supplementary literature. In preparation for this meeting, Madhva had observed complete silence and complete fasting for forty-eight days. He learned the full meaning of the Vedanta-sutra, the distilled essence of the Vedic wisdom, from the transcendental author himself and promised to write a commentary on the sutras, one that would be faithful to Srila Vyasadeva's original intent and purport. By the time he came down from the Himalayas, his commentary, Sutra-bhasya, was completed. He sent a copy ahead to Udupi for Acyutapreksha's approval.

On his return trip, Srila Madhvacarya converted Sobhana Bhatta and Sami Sastri to Vaisnavism. They later became successors to Madhva, as Padmanabha Tirtha and Narahari Tirtha. Madhva refused to let Narahari take sannyasa, ordering him to remain in his high government position, in return for which he was to obtain the Deities of Mula Rama and Sita, lying in the King of Kalinga's treasury. For many years Narahari remained in that service, until finally, just three months before Madhva's departure from this world, Narahari brought the ancient images of Sita-Rama to his guru. These were the original Deities of Rama and Sita, worshiped by Maharaja Iksvaku and then by Maharaja Dasaratha, the father of Lord Rama. Then during the time of Lord Krsna's advent, the Pandavas gave them to the Gajapati kings of Orissa. Eventually the Deities were kept in the kings' treasury.

While still in his twenties, Srila Madhvacarya undertook a second tour to Badarinatha, this one after he had founded Sri Krsna Matha in Udupi. On the way, a tyrannical king pressed Madhva's party into digging a reservoir for the city of Devagiri. Madhva, however, persuaded the king himself to take part in the digging and then left with his party. The pilgrims had many other hardships and adventures, but Madhva always saved them with his quick thinking and mystic powers. In Badarinatha, Madhva again heard from Vyasa, who gave him eight sacred Salagrama stones.

On the return trip Madhva stopped in Goa, where he enacted an amazing gastronomical feat. Previously he had eaten a thousand bananas in one sitting. But in Goa, he outdid his earlier record. He ate four thousand bananas and then drank thirty pots of milk. When asked to prove that plants indeed respond to music, Madhva took a few seeds in his hand and began singing in his melodious voice. The seeds sprouted, Madhva continued singing, and the plants grew, swaying to the melody. Madhva continued singing. The plants grew into full maturity and yielded fruits and flowers. News of this feat spread everywhere.

From Udupi Madhva travelled south again. In Visnumangalam he debated with Trivikramacarya, a logician and grammarian of remarkable skill, who was able to make the Sanskrit language convey any meaning that suited his purpose. The debate lasted fifteen days, and in the end Trivikrama surrendered at Madhva's feet. A full account of that debate is given the Madhva-vijaya, written by the son of Trivikramacarya. News of Trivikrama's conversion brought hundreds more men and women into Madhva's fold. His life's mission thus became firmly rooted in India.

Srila Madhvacarya wrote thirty-nine books clarifying the tenets of Vaisnavism and showing Vaisnavism to be the true Vedic religion. In many of his works he attacked the monistic creed of Sankaracarya's followers, exposing their doctrine as subversive to genuine spiritual understanding. Unable to defeat Madhva by argument, certain groups of monists conspired to impede Madhva's mission by less honourable means. They tried to defame him, declaring him to be a heretic and all his followers outcastes. They even stole his writings and his valuable collection of ancient books, thinking that without literature his mission would be finished. Somehow, King Jaya Simha of Visnumangalam acquired the books and returned them to Madhvacarya.

Madhva had appeared in two other incarnations. During the time of Lord Krsna's appearance on the earth he appeared as the warrior Bhima, one of the five Pandava brothers. During the time of Lord Rama, he incarnated as the beloved Hanuman, the ideal servant of the Supreme Lord. And, as in those incarnations, Madhva performed many feats of strength and displayed mystical perfections. As a child he would appear suddenly in one mighty leap from anywhere in response to his mother's call. In school he cured a friend's headache by blowing into his ear. To help his father out of debt he turned tamarind seeds into money. On two occasions he made seeds sprout into plants by singing. An enormous rock in Ambu Tirtha, requiring at least fifty men to move it, bears an inscription stating that Madhvacarya placed it there with one hand. Many times Madhva made small quantities of food increase for distribution to hundreds of people. At the age of seventy-nine, his mission well established, Srila Madhvacarya passed away. His devotees say he went to Badarinatha to join Srila Vyasadeva.

SRI SRI PUNDARIKA VIDYANIDHI VILASA

Sri Caitanya Deva, Who is adept in the art of dancing, is the crest jewel produced from the churning of the ocean of all wonderful and auspicious qualities. Though I am completely unqualified and without any means to acquire such a rare gem, Providence has nevertheless placed in my hand this remarkable touchstone, which can fulfil all desires.

All glories to Sri Gaurasundar, the life of all that lives. All glories to Sri Nityananda and Sri Advaita, the abodes of pure love. All glories to Sri Jagadananda and Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi, who are very intimately connected with Sri Gauranga Raya, who is their life and soul. Sri Vidyanidhi, known by the name Pundarika, is the dearest of Sri Krsna. The tract of land in the east, called Catigrama, became most fortunate when the Lord caused the blessed descent of Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi there. Now please hear the description of Sri Vidyanidhi's arrival in Navadvipa.

When the Lord Sri Gaurasundar began to manifest His pastimes as the Supreme Personality of Godhead in Nadia, He felt sad to see that Sri Vidyanidhi was not present, and thus he sighed very deeply. One day, after engaging in His ecstatic pastimes of dancing in the circle of devotees absorbed in the congregational chanting of the holy names of Sri Krsna, He seated Himself and while shedding profuse tears, called at the top of His voice, "Pundarika! Father! Pundarika is My father, My dearest friend. When will I see him again?!"

Such a recipient of the Lord's affection was Sri Vidyanidhi and thus did the Lord reveal this fact to His devotees. Crying and crying, He called again and again for Pundarika but none of the devotees could understand who was He calling. They thought that Pundarikaksa is a name of Krsna, so He must be feeling separation from Krsna and calling to Him. But then again hearing the name Vidyanidhi, they thought that He must be calling one of His dear devotees; however none of them was familiar with a devotee by that name. When the Lord regained His external consciousness they submissively inquired, "Please just tell us for whom are you crying? We will become blessed to make the acquaintance of such devotee as dear to You as he must be. Where is he from and what are his activities? Please tell us the truth of this matter."

The Lord replied, "You are all very fortunate in desiring to hear about this particular devotee. His characteristics are exceptionally wonderful. Simply by hearing his name the worlds become purified. He covers his real self in the guise of an enjoyer of worldly pleasures and thus no one can recognise that he is a Vaisnava. The place of his birth is known as Catigrama. He is a learned scholar and brahmana and in the execution of his religious duties he is highly esteemed by all classes of men. He remains continually floating in the ocean of devotion to Sri Krsna which is evidenced by the ecstatic symptoms in his body - tears in the eyes, quaking and horripilation (standing on end of the hairs of the body). It is seen that he does not take bath in the Ganges due to fear of touching Mother Ganges with his feet, but he regularly takes darsana of the Ganges at night, just to purify himself. To see the indecent activities of the people in general while taking their baths in Mother Ganges (rinsing their mouths in the water, brushing their teeth and combing their hair) causes him much pain. For this reason he makes it his regular practice to only go to the Ganges at night. Before performing worship of his Deities he sips some Ganges water for purification, and only after first doing so will he engage in Their service. Thus by his activities scholars are made to understand the actual process of religion.

As well as having his estate in Catigrama, he also has a house here in Navadvipa (*), on the bank of the Ganges. He is coming here very soon and thus you will get the chance to meet him. At first glance no one can recognise him and they suppose him to be a materialistic sense enjoyer. I, however am very

restless for want of his association, therefore all of you please attract him here by your minds' desire." While talking of the super excellent qualities of His devotee, Sri Gaurasundar became absorbed in ecstatic love and again began to shed incessant tears, all the while calling, "Pundarika! Father!" Who but the omniscient Lord Himself can fully know the hearts of His devotees and knowing such, He wept very loudly, feeling separation from Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi.

Being forcibly attracted by his Lord, Sri Vidyanidhi thought to come to Navadvipa and thus with a large retinue of brahmanas, disciples and servants, as well as a vast stock of personal possessions, he began the journey. Arriving in Navadvipa he kept his real self concealed under the guise of an enjoyer of worldly pleasures. Except for Mukunda, no one in the Vaisnava community could understand who he was. As Mukunda's birthplace was also at Catigrama and since he was previously acquainted with Sri Vidyanidhi, he was however aware of the actual situation. Realising that Premanidhi had come, Sri Gaurasundar could not contain His elation, nevertheless He did not disclose to anyone the real truth and therefore the Vaisnavas could not recognise Sri Pundarika, thinking him to be like a sense enjoyer. Only the two brothers from Catigrama, Sri Mukunda and Vasudeva Datta, knew to some extent of the exalted state of his devotion and depths of his ecstatic emotions.

Pandita Gadadhara was extremely dear to Mukunda, who always remained as his companion. Coming to see him one day, Mukunda related the latest news, "Today one very extraordinary Vaisnava has arrived in Navadvipa. Listen to me carefully. As I know you are very much interested to have the association of Vaisnavas, today I will introduce you to a most exceptional Vaisnava, and I only ask in return that you will always remember me as your servant." Hearing this cheerful news Gadadhara was delighted and they set out immediately, taking the name, "Krsna, Krsna!"

They very quickly arrived at Vidyanidhi's house where he was seated in the midst of many persons. Gadadhara paid his obeisance and was in turn seated and offered a cordial reception. Sri Pundarika inquired from Mukunda, "What is this nice boy's name and where is he from? By the effulgence in his person his devotion to Lord Visnu is evident, and such a pleasant demeanour and bearing he has." Mukunda replied, "His name is Gadadhara, and his father's name is Sri Madhava Misra, but by dint of his good fortune he is averse to family life since his very childhood. He is the object of affection of all the Vaisnavas. He treads very strictly the path of devotion and prefers to keep company only with devotees. Hearing your name he has come to meet you."

Receiving this introduction Sri Vidyanidhi was very pleased and he made every effort to extend a warm welcome to his guests. Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi looked very elegant, resembling in appearance a prince crowned with victory. He was seated on an excellent bedstead, stained deep vermilion and embellished with brass filigree. Above the bed were three fancy, coloured canopies and the bed sheets were of the finest cloth. On all sides he was surrounded by pillows covered with first-class silken cloths. Five to seven water pots of various sizes and with decorated spouts were placed here and there. Sitting on the bed next to him was an ornamented brass box containing pan leaves, betel nuts and spices for chewing, and on each side, on the floor, were two brass spittoons. Seeing in the mirror that his lips had become red from chewing pan, he laughed. Standing behind him on both sides were two servants holding beautiful peacock fans, who fanned him all the while. His forehead was decorated with tilaka made from gopi candana mixed with sandalwood and a red dot adorning the centre. What can I say about the care with which his hair was dressed? The scent of oil of myrobalan (amalaki) was pervading the room.

Actually it was due to the potency of his devotion that his body was appearing like another Cupid, but those who could not recognise his real self thought

him to be like a prince. In the front of the room was a swing in which one could lie down, as though it was a bed. Really, his behaviour was just like that of a worldly pleasure seeker. Upon seeing that this personality was enjoying himself as though he was a demigod, Gadadhara felt some doubts arise within himself. Since Gadadhara was unattached to material life practically from the time of his birth, he was quite apprehensive towards Vidyanidhi Mahasaya. "What a fitting Vaisnava is this, all dressed up to enjoy the pleasures of worldly life! Enjoying the finest in life in such excellent accommodations, and with his hair perfumed so sweetly. Hearing about him from Mukunda I naturally felt some admiration but upon seeing him whatever I previously felt has now vanished."

Sri Mukunda could understand very well what Gadadhara was thinking to himself and therefore he decided to reveal the actual personality of Sri Vidyanidhi. Gadadhara was especially favoured by Krsna, Who is master over illusion, in that the truth of all matters was made known to him, thus he was always free from misconceptions (illusion). Mukunda was a very accomplished singer of Krsna's glories and so he proceeded to narrate the glories of devotion in a very sweet voice. Reciting some verses he described that, "Putana was a cruel and fiendish demoness who delighted in drinking the blood of young children. Smearing deadly poison on her breasts she came to kill the Lord, Who in turn accepted her as His mother. Only the dull-headed persons will not worship such an all merciful Lord as this."

"Alas, how shall I take shelter of one more merciful than He, Who granted the position of mother to a she-demon (Putana) although she was unfaithful and she prepared deadly poison to be sucked from her breast?" (SB. 3.2.23)

"Putana was always hankering for the blood of human children, and with that desire she came to kill Krsna, but because she offered her breast to the Lord, she attained the greatest achievement." (SB. 10.6.35)

Simply by hearing this much description of the glories of the path of devotional service, Sri Vidyanidhi began to shed tears. An unprecedented shower of tears began to flow from his eyes as though Mother Ganges had again advented herself. All of the ecstatic symptoms: tears in the eyes, shivering, perspiration, fainting, horripilation and loud roaring were present in his body simultaneously. In a thundering voice he cried, "Say more! Say more!" Not being able to contain himself he fell to the ground and as his legs thrashed about. All of the articles in the room were broken to pieces.

Where went that excellent bedstead, those pan and betel nuts, where did all the water pots go? Where have those fine bedsheets fallen to, being kicked and dragged to the floor? Maddened by ecstatic love his fine clothes have been torn in two. What happened to his hair which was so exquisitely dressed and perfumed? Everything has fallen into the dust on the floor and become muddy by the shedding of incessant tears.

"Krsna is my Lord, He is my life, He is everything to me. Still he treats me as though I was simply stone or wood." In a loud voice Sri Pundarika repented, "Such an infinitely merciful Lord as this still chooses to deprive me of His mercy." Rolling here and there on the ground, all the while crying very loudly, all of the articles in the room were knocked down and fell to the ground broken. All those present began to consider, "His bones will be pulverised if this continues much longer." Such were the transformations produced in his body due to ecstatic emotion. Although ten men tried to hold him, still they could not. His clothes, the bedding, waterpots, spittoons, all of his possessions were reduced to nothing by the furious movement of his legs. Though all the servants tried to restrain him, they were forced to retreat in the face of such overwhelming ecstasy.

In this way the transformations and manifestations of his ecstatic love

competed with one another for some time until finally his emotions reached the level at which external consciousness ceases to exist. At that time there was not even the faintest expression in his body. He had drowned himself in the ocean of ecstatic love.

Seeing all of this Gadadhara became completely stunned and astonished. Feeling quite perplexed he began to wonder, "I have disrespected such an extraordinarily high-souled saintly person as this. As I came here with good intentions how have such inauspicious circumstances fallen upon me?" Feeling extremely indebted to and pleased with Mukunda, Gadadhara took him in his lap. As Mukunda was being sprinkled by the tears of ecstatic love falling from Gadadhara's eyes, he said to him, "Mukunda, you have treated me as a true friend. By your mercy I have been so fortunate as to witness such uncommon devotion as that possessed by Vidyanidhi Bhattacharya. Can any other Vaisnava like this exist anywhere else in the three worlds? The whole universe becomes purified in the presence of such a rare devotion as this. I was heading into a critically dangerous position, but as you have brought me here today, I have been able to avoid that pitfall.

Seeing Sri Vidyanidhi Mahasaya dressed as a sense enjoyer, I supposed that he was a materialistic devotee. But you were able to understand my mind and therefore you so kindly caused his devotion to dawn, just as the sun rises in the east in the morning. As long as I continue to make mistakes you should always remain diligent to point out to me the errors in my thinking. All those who take up this path of devotion accept a spiritual guide. But I have not as yet accepted anyone as my preceptor. I should get myself initiated by this great personality. If I can do that then the fault of whatever contempt I felt will be reduced."

Thinking like this Gadadhara revealed his desire to Mukunda to accept Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi as his guru. Mukunda was very happy to hear this proposal and commended his idea again and again. After six hours Sri Premanidhi regained his consciousness and seated himself, being perfectly calm and composed. Gadadhara Pandita could not restrain the flood of tears from his eyes and thus his whole body became wet. Vidyanidhi Mahasaya was very pleased and took Gadadhara in his lap, accepting him as his own heart and soul. Gadadhara remained very reverential and submissive as Mukunda expressed his (Gadadhara's) heart's desire to Premanidhi - "Seeing that in demeanour you had assumed a position almost like that of a god, Gadadhara found some fault in his mind. But now he wishes to rectify his mistake by accepting initiation from your good self. He is a devotee of Lord Visnu, he is very materially detached and since his childhood he is very mature in his thinking, unlike most young boys who frivolously waste their time playing. He also comes from a good family, his father being Sri Madhava Misra. Since childhood he is a constant companion of our Lord Sri Gaurasundar. I think that there is no one besides yourself as fit to be his guru, nor anyone like him as fit to be your disciple. Considering when is an auspicious day, you can decide when to initiate him with the appropriate mantra in the service of your worshipable Deity."

Hearing these words of Mukunda, Pundarika Vidyanidhi smiled and said, "Providence has awarded me a rare gem in the person of Gadadhara. Certainly I will accept him as my disciple. To get such a disciple as he is the result of many lifetimes accrurement of good fortune. On the next twelfth day of the bright fortnight there is an auspicious conjunction in the constellations. On that day his desire will be fulfilled."

Hearing this Gadadhara was very happy and smiling broadly he offered his obeisances. Taking leave of Mukunda, Gadadhara came to see Sri Gaura Raya. Hearing the news of the arrival of Premanidhi, Sri Visvambhara felt unlimited joy within Himself. That night, Sri Vidyanidhi came alone and unnoticed to see

Mahaprabhu. Upon seeing the Lord of his life, before he was even able to offer his dandavats, he fell unconscious to the ground. Regaining consciousness after a few moments, he began to curse himself roaring very loudly, "Krsna, You are my life and soul, my only own, my father; but seeing that I am sinful You only give me sorrow. He who is the father of all worlds has delivered every living entity within the universe. But You have deprived me alone of Your mercy."

Though none of the devotees present were acquainted with Sri Vidyanidhi, upon hearing his sorrowful lament, they also began to cry. Sri Visvambhara, who is very affectionate to His devotees, reverentially picked Premanidhi up and took him on His lap. Saying, "Pundarika! My father!", the Lord began to cry. "Today I see again the object of my vision." Now all the devotees could understand that the Pundarika Vidyanidhi for whom the Lord had previously cried had now arrived, and as such they all continued to shed tears.

This scene was so touching that I am unable to properly describe it. Holding Pundarika to His chest, Sri Gaurasundar began to sprinkle his body with the tears of His love. Knowing him to be one of the dearest servitors of the Lord the other devotees looked upon him with affection and awe, accepting him now as their very own. The Lord could not release His arms and continued to hold Premanidhi tightly to his chest, and thus it appeared that the two bodies became one. Sri Gaurasundar remained motionless for one prahar (3 hours) after which time he regained his external consciousness and called out, "Hari! Today I have attained the fulfilment of my innermost heart's desire."

Mahaprabhu brought Premanidhi amongst all the other devotees and they performed together congregational chanting of the names of Sri Hari. Then, to introduce him to all the Vaisnavas, Mahaprabhu announced, "His title is Pundarika Vidyanidhi, and he has been dispatched by Providence to distribute loving devotion to the Supreme Lord Krsna." In this way, continuing to describe Premanidhi's wonderful qualities, Sri Gaurasundar called out loudly, "Hari!", raising His two arms in the sky as he did so.

"Today is such an auspicious day for Me as I knew it would be so. When I awoke this morning I could see Premanidhi face to face." At this time Premanidhi gradually regained his external consciousness, and recognising the Lord, he offered his obeisances, first to Mahaprabhu and then to Advaita Acarya. Thereafter he greeted all the other devotees in a manner befitting his relationship with them. The devotees all merged in bliss to see such a devotee as Premanidhi Pundarika. Actually, only Vyasadeva is qualified to describe the sentiments of loving devotion which appeared at that moment. Thereafter Gadadhara began to solicit the order of Mahaprabhu to take initiation from Sri Pundarika. He confessed, "Not understanding his incomprehensible nature, there was some disregard towards him in my mind. Now I wish to become his disciple. Certainly the guru will tolerate the faults of his disciple."

Hearing Gadadhara's speech Mahaprabhu was quite satisfied, and told him, "Do it quickly! Do It quickly!" Thus Gadadhara became the initiated disciple of Sri Pundarika Vidyanidhi and was very satisfied within himself. What more can I say about the glories of Sri Pundarika, Premanidhi. Can there be any limit of devotion in one who has Gadadhara Pandita as his disciple?

Thus I have tried to describe something about Sri Vidyanidhi. In doing so I have one desire to fulfil, which is that I may one day see him. These two, Pundarika and Gadadhara, being so dear to Sri Krsna Caitanya, are each one supremely qualified in relationship to each other (guru to disciple and disciple to guru).

Whoever recites or hears of the meeting of Pundarika and Gadadhara will receive the treasure of Love of God.

Thus sings Vrndavana dasa of the glories of Sri Krsna Caitanya and Nityananda Candra. (Sri Caitanya Bhagavata Madhya-lila Ch. 7)

PART TWO

All glories, all glories to Sri Gauracandra, who is nondifferent from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Narayana, who bears the mark of Srivatsa on His chest. All glories to the Son of Mother Saci, who eternally embodies the principles of the eternal religion. All glories to Gauranga Gopala, to whom the congregational chanting of the name of Sri Hari is so dear. All glories to He who is so dear to the gentle and all glories to this morbid, malignant, vile and vicious Kali (because it is in this age that Mahaprabhu has appeared).

All glories to Sri Gauranga in the midst of His family of loving devotees. Whoever hears the pastimes of Sri Caitanya Candra attains unalloyed devotion to His lotus feet. In the form of a sannyasi, He appears as the hero of Vaikuntha, sporting with His followers ecstatic pastimes.

One day, Sri Gadadharadeva came to Mahaprabhu and told Him of some difficulty he was having concerning the mantra he received from his guru at the time of initiation. "As a result of telling this mantra to someone I am no longer able to meditate on it properly as I did before. Again You should give me the mantra and thus its clear expression will naturally be reawakened, and my mind can again become calm and happy."

To this Mahaprabhu replied, "Gadadhara, take heed, you are treading on dangerous ground. As you have your guru, to accept the mantra from Me would be an offense to your Gurudeva. It is a fact that this mantra invigorates and sustains our soul, but as long as you have your gurudeva you cannot expect to solve this problem by transgressing his authority in this matter."

However, Gadadhara implored Him, "But he is not here now. In his stead You can do the needful." Mahaprabhu replied, "Your guru is Sri Vidyanidhi. Why are you being unfaithful? Providence can very easily arrange that you meet him again soon." The omniscient Lord, who is completely aware of everything, continued, "Sri Vidyanidhi will come to Orissa very soon. In fact, he should be here within ten days or so. I am always thinking of Sri Vidyanidhi and he is coming here just to see Me. Now however I can understand that he is actually being attracted here by your desire."

When Sri Vidyanidhi arrived in Puri, the Lord, by His omniscience was internally aware of this, and as soon as He became conscious of this fact, He came out to meet him. Seeing Sri Vidyanidhi He began to laugh, saying, "Father has come! Father has come!" Premanidhi became overwhelmed in ecstatic love, and his heart began to overflow with loving mellows. The Supreme Lord, Sri Gauracandra, who is very affectionate to His devotees, clasped Premanidhi to his chest and began to cry. At that time, the devotees, who surrounded them on all sides, also began to cry, but this crying was actually a genuine manifestation of the real form of happiness in Vaikuntha. Upon seeing Premanidhi, the love and affection of the devotees for him increased continually.

Svarupa Damodara was previously acquainted with Premanidhi as his intimate friend. In the presence of Mahaprabhu they were delighted to see each other once again. Each one wanted to take the dust of the feet of the other and thus, as they tried to simultaneously catch the feet of one another but at the same time avoid having their own feet caught hold of, quite a scuffle ensued. Neither one was successful in his attempts as they were both quite strong, but they nevertheless caused everyone to laugh and Sri Gauranga Himself took great pleasure in their sporting activities.

As they all gradually regained their external consciousness, Mahaprabhu requested Sri Vidyanidhi, "You should remain at Nilacala for some time." Hearing these words Premanidhi was very satisfied and considered himself very fortunate to be able to stay near Mahaprabhu. In great love, Sri Gadadhara at this time again accepted initiation from his Gurudeva in the mantra of his worshipable Deity.

What more can I say about the glories of Sri Premanidhi. Can there be any limit of ecstatic love in the guru of Gadadhara Pandita? His glories are sung by Murari and Haridasa, and by Advaita and Srinivasa. In fact there is not any devotee who does not praise him - with their bodies, mind and words they always eulogise him. There is not the slightest hint of self-conceit or vanity in him. I cannot understand the extent to which the Lord Sri Caitanya has showered His mercy on him.

I should now like to write of something which I have heard directly from the lotus mouth of Sri Gadadhara, concerning how dear Premanidhi was to Sri Krsna. Near His own residence Mahaprabhu arranged for Sri Vidyanidhi's accommodation at Yameshvara, on the shore of the ocean. Sri Premanidhi was extremely dear to Svarupa Damodara, and the two of them used to go together to take darsana of Lord Jagannatha. They were both on the same level of advancement in Krsna consciousness and thus their mutual exchange of nectarean topics on the mellows of Krsna's pastimes was very tasty and relishable.

By and by it was announced that the festival of 'Odan sasthi' would be observed, during which time Lord Jagannatha puts on His new clothes. On this day the Lord is dressed in new, starched garments. As the Lord desires to be served so His servants serve Him. As a great tumultuous sound, produced by the blowing of conches and the beating of seven different types of drums resounded from within the temple, Sri Gaurasundar arrived along with His devotees to observe the festival. The new clothes which are offered to the Lord on this day are used by Him until the end of the month of Magh (Jan-Feb). Floating in ecstatic love, Mahaprabhu and His associates saw the Lord dressed in various new garments which He continued to wear up until the end of the night.

Lord Caitanya Himself is the worshiper as well as the worshiped (Lord Jagannatha). Without His mercy, who can understand His mind? In the form of a sannyasi He worships Himself (Lord Jagannatha) with devotion.

Fine silken cloths of various colours (white, yellow, and blue) and embroidered with pearls and gold adorned the Lord's blackish body. He was also decorated with various ornaments such as bangles, necklaces, and a crown, all fashioned out of flowers. After performing His worship with the sixteen different articles (sandalwood, flowers, incense, lamps, etc.) He was offered a wide variety of foodstuffs. Observing the festival, Mahaprabhu then returned to His residence all the while feeling great joy and, taking leave of His devotees, He began to contemplate His own bliss in the seclusion of His room. All the devotees then returned to their respective quarters.

Sri Vidyanidhi and Svarupa Damodara enjoyed some friendly discussion as they proceeded along the way to their residence. Sri Vidyanidhi was doubtful as to why Lord Jagannatha had been dressed in starched garments, and so he inquired from Svarupa Damodara on this point, "As knowledge of the scriptures is current in this part of the world, I am perplexed as to why starched clothes which have not first been washed were offered to the Lord?"

Svarupa Damodara replied, "That is simply custom here. Why do you consider this to be such an important point? You should not see any fault in this. Just because one is conversant with all scriptural rules and regulations does not mean that he will follow them at all times and in every way or manner. This festival has been observed in this way for a very long time. If it is contrary to the Lord's desire then why has not the king put a stop to it?"

Sri Vidyanidhi continued, "That's all right, the independent Supreme Lord can do whatever He pleases. But why should his servitors think that they can do likewise? The priest who offers the puja, the pujari who dresses the Deity, the superintendent of the temple, the bearers; how is it that they are all handling this cloth which is impure? Lord Jagannatha is the Supreme Personality of Godhead; everything is possible for Him. But does that mean that everyone should imitate Him? After touching starched cloth, only by washing one's hands do they become purified. If all of these servitors are supposed to be conscientious in their duties, then why don't they do that? The king's ministers are simply dull-headed if they don't consider these things. I suppose the king also wears starched cloths on his head?"

Svarupa Damodara replied, "My dear brother please hear me. As far as I can understand, there is no fault in the observance of this festival. Lord Jagannatha is an incarnation of the Supreme Absolute Being. He is under no obligation to consider what respects the prescriptions and edicts of the scriptures."

Vidyanidhi continued, "That is not my point. I accept that Lord Jagannatha is in every way the Supreme Absolute Being; and there can be no fault in Him even if He does cross some of the regulations and prohibitions. But have these others also become situated on the absolute plane just by living in Nilacala? Why have they also rejected the codes of standard behaviour? I think that everyone here must have become an incarnation of the Supreme Absolute Being!"

Thus the conversation went as they walked along the path laughing and laughing at the faults in the conduct of the servants of Lord Jagannatha. No one knows the influence of all these servitors, but Krsna knows, based on their attachment to Him. Sometimes Krsna causes His servitors to commit some mistake, but thereafter He Himself rectifies the mistake, because by nature His heart is full of compassion. Therefore it was actually Krsna who caused the erroneous thinking in the mind of Vidyanidhi and it was Krsna who rectified the situation by His unlimited mercy.

Now please hear about how He very wonderfully accomplished that. The two friends (Svarupa Damodara and Pundarika Vidyanidhi) joked with one another in this way, and then, as they each had some service to render to Krsna, they parted company and returned to their respective residences. After completing his duties, Sri Vidyanidhi retired for the evening.

Prabhu Caitanya Gosai, who knows everything, took the form of Lord Jagannatha and went to pay a visit to Premanidhi in the land of dreams. There, Vidyanidhi Mahasaya saw that Lord Jagannatha and Lord Balarama were very triumphantly approaching him. Lord Jagannatha, who was in a very angry mood, caught hold of Sri Vidyanidhi and slapped him in the face. Then the two brothers teamed up and began to slap him on both of his cheeks. They slapped him so hard that Their fingers and his cheeks became swollen.

Feeling afflicted Vidyanidhi began to call out, "Krsna save me! Please forgive my offense!" Saying this he fell at Their lotus feet crying, "What offense have I committed for which you are beating me so, Gosai?"

The Lord replied, "There is no limit to your offenses. Neither I nor my servants are designated by any particular caste, thus We are not subject to any of the creeds which are meant for other classes of men. You know all of this but nevertheless you continue to harp on the same point. You are persistent in trying to disgrace My servitors and thus attach some stigma to their lineage. If you want to save your own face you had better return to your own country right away. The way in which I have ordained that My festival should be observed, you consider to be against the scriptures. Saying that I am the Supreme Absolute Being, but then criticizing My servitors you find some

fault in the starched clothes that were offered to Me."

Feeling very fearful Vidyanidhi began to cry and clasped his head to the Lord's lotus feet. "I'm sorry. I did not mean to hurt anyone. Please forgive the offenses of this sinner, my Lord. You have properly punished that mouth which laughed at Your servants. Today is the most auspicious day for me. You have made me the most fortunate person by slapping my face with Your lotus hands."

The Lord replied, "Because I consider you also to be My dear devotee, I have shown you this special favour."

Just to show Their love for him, the two brothers, Ram and Hari, came to see Pundarika Vidyanidhi in his dreams. Seeing this dream, Vidyanidhi woke up, and feeling that his cheeks were still smarting, he began to laugh. By the slaps of the Lord's lotus hands his cheeks were quite swollen. Seeing this he said, "This is very good. This is wonderful. Because I committed some offense the Lord had very kindly rectified that by punishing me. Actually the punishment I received is light considering the weight of my offense."

Just see the exalted position of Sri Vidyanidhi. He has received the topmost limit of the Lord's mercy. The Lord never beats His own son Pradyumna like this, even for the purpose of instructing others. Sitadevi, Rukmini, Satyabhama - not even to the Lord's near and dear ones has He shown such favour. Though of course the Lord sometimes personally chastises the miscreants, never before has it been seen that He bestowed His mercy in the form of punishment awarded in a dream. Even if someone is punished for his sins or gains some wealth in a dream, when he wakes up he sees that there is nothing. Rather than chastising in a dream, if the Lord were to have punished that person openly then others would also come to know of his crime. Therefore there cannot be anyone more fortunate than that person who has received such mercy as to have been chastised like this.

In dream the non-devotees cannot say anything, whereas if they had been present, they would have passed their judgement. These Yavanas, who are accustomed to slander and tease others, get no opportunity to carry out their activities in dreams. What to speak of the Yavanas, even the virtuous brahmanas, if they find fault with a devotee, will simply subject themselves, as well as that devotee, to further grief. The non-devotees and sinners are deprived of the benefits of instructions imparted in dreams. Whoever the Lord instructs in a dream should know that he is the most fortunate person, but at the same time he can remain humble as others need not necessarily know of what has transpired. Thus it happened that in a dream the Supreme Lord Himself came to punish Sri Premanidhi by beating him. When Premanidhi awoke in the early morning he felt how swollen his cheeks had become with his two hands.

Everyday Svarupa Damodara would come to Sri Vidyanidhi's house and then the two of them would go to take darsana of Lord Jagannatha. As on every day Svarupa Damodara arrived that morning. Seeing Premanidhi he said, "You always go with me to see Lord Jagannatha, why are you still lying in bed?!" Vidyanidhi replied, "Come inside. I will tell you everything. Just come here and sit down." Svarupa Damodara came in and saw that Premanidhi's two cheeks were quite swollen and bore imprints of very large fingers.

Damodara Svarupa inquired, "What is this? Your cheeks are so swollen; are you in pain!?" Vidyanidhi Mahasaya, laughing, told him, "Svarupa, today all my doubts have been destroyed. Remember how I criticised the use of starched cloths in Lord Jagannatha's worship? Just see the reaction to that offense in my two cheeks here. In a dream, Lord Jagannatha and Lord Balarama came to me, and for almost an hour They beat me severely without any rest. They asked me, 'Do you have anything more to say about Our new clothes?' and saying thus They both continued to slap my face. As They beat me the rings on Their fingers

struck me, but I could not make any proper reply. In my present embarrassment I don't want to meet anybody. When the swelling goes down then I'll be able to go out again. I think that this is not fit to speak of to anyone else but I nevertheless feel in my heart I am very fortunate. I have received a fitting punishment for my offense. If it were not for this act of the Lord's mercy I would have fallen into hell."

Hearing this description Svarupa Damodara was elated at seeing the Lord's affection for his friend. As someone feels jubilant to see that his friend has acquired some possession, in this way Svarupa Damodara delighted in his friend's good fortune and the two of them laughed together in great joy.

Damodara Svarupa told him, "My dear brother, I have never heard that the Lord personally comes in a dream to chastise someone, but I am seeing that He does when I look at you."

Thus the two friends felt supremely satisfied. In their discussions of the mellows of Krsna's pastimes they forgot whether it was night or day.

By the influence of Pundarika Vidyanidhi's devotion Sri Gauracandra called him 'father.' Out of fear of touching Mother Ganges with his feet he does not bathe in her waters but regularly comes to see her and sips her water for purification. Taking this devotee's name the Lord Gauranga would shed incessant tears, crying all the while, "Pundarika! Father!"

Whoever hears of the wonderful character of Pundarika Vidyanidhi will undoubtedly attain the shelter of the lotus feet of Sri Krsna.

Thus sings Vrndavana dasa of the glories of Sri Krsna Caitanya and Nityananda Candra.

Thus ends the Sri Caitanya Bhagavata Antya-lila chap. 10

Sri Gaura Ganoddesa dipika (Trans. Kusakratha Dasa)

text 54

The same person who was formerly known as Maharaja Vrsabhanu in the district of Vraja appeared in Lord Caitanya's pastimes as the great personality Pundarika Vidyanidhi.

text 55

When he was afflicted by the feelings of Srimati Radharani's intense love in separation from Lord Krsna, Lord Caitanya would address Pundarika Vidyanidhi using the word "Father".

text 56 & 57

Lord Caitanya was very pleased with Pundarika Vidyanidhi and the Lord would address him by the name Premanidhi. Because Pundarika Vidyanidhi was a direct disciple of Madhavendra Puri, the Lord would treat him with great respect, as if he were the Lord's own spiritual master.

Maharaja Vrsabhanu also appeared as Sri Madhava Misra. Ratnavati devi, Pundarika Vidyanidhi's wife, is considered by the learned devotees to be the incarnation of Kirtida devi, the wife of Maharaja Vrsabhanu.

(*) It was in vogue at that time for eminent scholars from various countries to open their own private schools in Nadia.