



Śrī Pāpānkuṣā Ekadāsī

Issue no:121

9th October 2019

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Narada Muni said: Lord Brahma was very satisfied with Hiranyakashipu's severe austerities, which were difficult to perform. Therefore, when Hiranyakashipu solicited benedictions, he indeed complied, even though they were rarely granted.

Lord Brahma said: O Hiranyakashipu, these benedictions for which you have asked are extremely difficult to obtain. Nonetheless, O my son, I shall fulfill your desires, as a special mercy for you who have endeavoured so extraordinarily.

Then Lord Brahma, who awards infallible benedictions, departed, having been worshiped by the best of the demons, Hiranyakashipu, and praised by great sages and saintly persons. The demon Hiranyakashipu, having thus been blessed by Lord Brahma and having acquired a lustrous golden body, continued to remember the death of his brother and therefore feel enmity towards Lord Visnu. Hiranyakashipu, now empowered by Lord Brahma, became the master of the entire universe. Indeed, that great demon conquered all the planets in the three realms; upper, middle and lower. Thus he reigned over the planets of the human beings, the Gandharvas, the Garudas, the great serpents, the Siddhas, Caranas and Vidyadharas, the great saints, Yamaraja, the Manus, the Yaksas, the Raksasas, the Pishacas and their masters, and the masters of the ghosts and Bhutas. He defeated the rulers of all the other planets where there are living entities and brought them under his control. Conquering the abodes of all, he seized their power and wealth. Hiranyakashipu, who possessed all opulence, began residing in heaven, with its famous Nandana garden, which is enjoyed by the demigods. In fact, he resided in the supremely opulent palace of Indra, the King of heaven. The palace had been directly constructed by the architect of the demigods Vishvakarma and was as beautifully made as if the goddess of fortune of the entire universe resided there. The steps in King Indra's residence were made of coral, the floor was bedecked with invaluable emeralds, the walls

were of crystal, and the columns of vaidurya stone. The wonderful canopies on the beds were beautifully decorated, the seats were bedecked with rubies, and the silk bedding, as white as foam, was decorated with pearls. When the ladies of the palace, who were blessed with beautiful teeth and the most wonderfully beautiful faces, wandered in the palace, their ankle bells tinkling melodiously, they saw their own beautiful reflections in the gems. The demigods, however, being very oppressed, had to bow down and offer obeisance at the feet of Hiranyakashipu, who chastised them very severely and for no reason. Thus Hiranyakashipu lived in the palace and cruelly ruled everyone. O my dear King, Hiranyakashipu was constantly intoxicated having drunk strong-smelling wines and liquors, and therefore his coppery eyes were always rolling. Nonetheless, because he had powerfully executed great austerities in mystic yoga, although he was abominable, all but the three principal demigods Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and Lord Visnu personally worshiped him to please him by bringing him various presentations with their own hands. O Maharaja Yudhisthira, descendant of Pandu, by dint of his personal power, Hiranyakashipu, was situated on the throne of King Indra, and controlled the inhabitants of all the other planets. The two Gandharvas Vishvavasu and Tumburu, I myself and the Vidyadharas, Apsaras and sages all offered prayers to him again and again for his satisfaction.

Being worshiped by sacrifices offered with splendid gifts by those who strictly followed the principles of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, Hiranyakashipu, accepted those gifts for himself, rather than sharing the oblations with the demigods.

As if in fear of the tyrannical Hiranyakashipu, the planet earth, which consists of seven islands, delivered food grains without being ploughed. Thus it resembled cows like the surabhi of the spiritual world or the *kāma-dughā* of heaven. The earth yielded sufficient food grains, the cows supplied abundant milk, and outer space was beautifully decorated with wonderful phenomena. By the flowing of their waves, the various oceans

of the universe, along with their tributaries, the rivers, which are compared to their wives, supplied various kinds of gems and jewels for Hiranyakashipu's use. These oceans were the oceans of salt water, sugarcane juice, wine, clarified butter, milk, yogurt, and sweet water.

The valleys between the mountains became fields of pleasure for Hiranyakashipu, by whose influence all the trees and plants produced fruits and flowers profusely in all seasons. The qualities of pouring water, drying and burning, which are all qualities of the three departmental heads of the universe namely Indra, Vayu and Agni were all directed by Hiranyakashipu alone, without assistance from the demigods. In spite of achieving the power to control all directions and in spite of enjoying all types of pleasing sense gratification as much as possible, Hiranyakashipu was dissatisfied because instead of controlling his senses he remained their servant.

Hiranyakashipu thus passed a long time being very proud of his opulence and transgressing the laws and regulations mentioned in the authoritative scriptures. Therefore, he was subjected to a curse by the four Kumaras, who were great *brāhmaṇas*. Everyone, including the rulers of the various planets, was extremely distressed because of the severe punishment inflicted upon them by Hiranyakashipu. Fearful and disturbed, unable to find any other shelter, they at last surrendered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu. "Let us offer our respectful obeisance unto that direction where the Supreme Personality of Godhead is situated, where those purified souls in the renounced order of life, the great saintly persons, go, and from which, having gone, they never return." Without sleep, fully controlling their minds, and living on only their breath, the predominating deities of the various planets began worshipping the Supreme Lord Hṛṣīkeṣha with this meditation.

Then there appeared before them a transcendental sound, emanating from a personality not visible to material eyes. The voice was as grave as the thunderous sound of a cloud, and yet it was very encouraging, driving away all fear. The voice of the Lord vibrated as follows: O best of learned persons, do not fear! I wish

all good fortune to you. Become My devotees by hearing and chanting about Me and offering Me prayers, for these are certainly meant to invoke benedictions to all living entities. I know all about the activities of Hiranyakashipu and shall certainly arrest them very soon. Please wait patiently until that time. When one is envious of the demigods, who represent the Supreme Personality of Godhead, of the Vedas, which give all knowledge, of the cows, *brāhmaṇas*, Vaiṣṇavas and religious principles, and ultimately of Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he and his civilization will be vanquished without delay. When Hiranyakashipu teases the great devotee Prahlaḍa, his own son, who is peaceful and sober and who has no enemy, I shall kill him immediately, despite the benedictions of Brahma.

The great saint Narada Muni continued: When the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the spiritual master of everyone, thus reassured the demigods, they offered their respectful obeisance unto Him and returned to the heavenly planets, confident that the demon Hiranyakashipu was now practically dead.

Hiranyakashipu had four wonderful, well qualified sons, of whom the one named Prahlaḍa was the best. Indeed, Prahlaḍa was a reservoir of all transcendental qualities because he was an unalloyed devotee of the Personality of Godhead. He was completely cultured as a qualified *brāhmaṇa*, having very good character and being determined to understand the Absolute Truth. He had full control of his senses and mind. Like the Supersoul, he was kind to every living entity and was the best friend of everyone.

To respectable persons he acted exactly like a menial servant, to the poor he was like a father, to his equals he was attached like a sympathetic brother, and he considered his teachers, spiritual masters and older Godbrothers to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He was completely free from unnatural pride that might have arisen from his good education, riches, beauty, aristocracy and so on.

Although Prahlaḍa Maharaja was born in a family of *asuras*, he himself was not an *asura* but a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. Unlike the other *asuras*, he was never envious of Vai-



navas. He was not agitated when put into danger, and he was not directly or indirectly interested in the fruitive activities described in the Vedas. Indeed, he considered everything material to be useless, and therefore he was completely devoid of material desires. He always controlled his senses and life air, and being of steady intelligence and determination, he subdued all material desires.

O King, Prahlada Maharaja's good qualities are still glorified by learned saints and Vaisnavas. As all good qualities are always found existing in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they also exist forever in His devotee like Prahlada Maharaja. In any assembly where there are discourses about saints and devotees, O King Yudhisthira, even the enemies of the demons, namely the demigods, what to speak of you, would cite Prahlada Maharaja as an example of a great devotee. Who could list the innumerable transcendental qualities of Prahlada Maharaja? He had unflinching faith in Vasudeva, [Lord Krishna the son of Vasudeva], and unalloyed devotion to Him. His attachment to Lord Krishna was natural because of his previous devotional service. Although his good qualities cannot be enumerated, they prove that he was a great soul [*mahātma*].

From the very beginning of his life, Prahlada Maharaja was uninterested in childish playthings. Indeed, he gave them up altogether and remained silent and peaceful, being fully absorbed in Krishna consciousness. Since his mind was always affected by Krishna consciousness, he could not understand how the world goes on fully absorbed in the activities of sense gratification.

Prahlada Maharaja was always absorbed in thought of Krishna. Thus, being always embraced by the Lord, he did not know how his bodily necessities, such as sitting, walking, eating, lying down, drinking and talking, were being automatically performed.

Because of advancement in Krishna consciousness, he sometimes cried, sometimes laughed, sometimes expressed jubilation and sometimes sang loudly. Sometimes, upon seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Prahlada Maharaja would loudly call in full

nityam bhāgavata-sevayā

anxiety. He sometimes lost his shyness in jubilation and began dancing in ecstasy, and sometimes, being fully absorbed in thoughts of Krishna, he felt oneness and imitated the pastimes of the Lord. Sometimes, feeling the touch of the Lord's lotus hands, he became spiritually elated and remained silent, his hairs standing on end and tears gliding down from his half-closed eyes due to his love for the Lord. Because of his association with perfect, unalloyed devotees who had nothing to do with anything material, Prahlada Maharaja constantly engaged in the service of the Lord's lotus feet. By seeing his bodily features when he was in perfect ecstasy, persons very poor in spiritual understanding became purified. In other words, Prahlada Maharaja bestowed upon them transcendental bliss. My dear King Yudhisthira, despite all of this the demon Hiranyakashipu tormented this exalted, fortunate devotee Prahlada, even though he was his own son.

Maharaja Yudhisthira said: O best of the saints among the demigods, O best of spiritual leaders, how did Hiranyakashipu give so much trouble to the pure and exalted saint Prahlada Maharaja, , although Prahlada was his own son? I wish to know about this subject from you. A father and mother are always affectionate to their children. When the children are disobedient the parents chastise them, not due to enmity but only for the child's instruction and welfare. How did Hiranyakashipu, the father of Prahlada Maharaja, chastise such a noble son? This is what I am eager to know.

Maharaja Yudhisthira further inquired: How was it possible for a father to be so violent toward an exalted son who was obedient, well-behaved and respectful to him? O *brāhmaṇa*, O master, I have never heard of such a contradiction as an affectionate father's punishing his noble son with the intention of killing him. Kindly dissipate our doubts in this regard.

— *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 1: Creation
» Canto 7: The Science of God » Chapter Four » Verses: 1-46.*

THE SIGN OF A MAHĀ-BHĀGAVATA*His Divine Grace**A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

Prahlada Maharaja is the vivid example of a great person fully absorbed in Krishna consciousness. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya 8.274) it is said:

*sthāvāra-jaṅgama dekhe, nā dekhe tāra mūrti
sarvatra haya nija iṣṭa-deva-sphūrti*

“A fully Krishna conscious person, although situated in this material world, does not see anything but Krishna, anywhere and everywhere.” This is the sign of a *mahā-bhāgavata*. The *mahā-bhāgavata* sees Krishna everywhere because of his attitude of pure love for Krishna. As confirmed in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.38):

*premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena
santaḥ sadaiva hṛdayeṣu vilokayanti
yam śyāmasundaram acintya-guṇa-svarūpaṁ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

"I worship the primeval Lord, Govinda, who is always seen by the devotee whose eyes are anointed with the pulp of love. He is seen in His eternal form of Shyamasundara, situated within the heart of the devotee." An exalted devotee, or *mahātmā*, who is rarely to be seen in this world, remains fully conscious of Krishna and constantly sees the Lord in the core of his heart. It is sometimes said that when one is influenced by evil stars like Saturn, Rahu or Ketu, he cannot make advancement in any prospective activity. In just the opposite way, Prahlada Maharaja was influenced by Krishna, the supreme planet, and thus he could not think of the material world and live without Krishna consciousness. That is the sign of a *mahā-bhāgavata*. Even if one is an enemy of Krishna, a *mahā-bhāgavata* sees him to be also engaged in Krishna's service. Another crude example is that everything appears yellow to the jaundiced eye. Similarly, to a *mahā-bhāgavata*, everyone but himself appears to be engaged in Krishna's service.

Prahlada Maharaja is the approved *mahā-bhāgavata*, the supreme devotee of the Lord. In the previous verse it was stated that he had natural attachment (*naisargikīratih*). The symptoms of such inherent attachment for Krishna are described in this verse. Although Prahlada Maharaja was only a boy, he had no interest in playing. As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.42), *viraktir anyatra ca*: the symptom of perfect Krishna consciousness is that one loses interest in all material activities. For a small boy to give up playing is impossible, but Prahlada Maharaja, being situated in first-class devotional service, was always absorbed in a trance of Krishna consciousness. Just as a materialistic person is always absorbed in thoughts of material gain, a *mahā-bhāgavata* like Prahlada Maharaja is always absorbed in thoughts of Krishna.

— *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavata Purāṇa) » Canto 7: The Science of God » Chapter Four » Verse:38.*

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF BHAKTI*Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura*

“What are the specific characteristics of *bhakti* by which a seeker may recognize pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*)?”

Raghunatha dasa Babaji, “Srila Rupa Goswami has enumerated six specific symptoms of *śuddha-bhakti* in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛtā-sindhu, Pūrva*, 1.12:

*kleśa-ghnī śubhadā mokṣa-laghutā-kr̥t sukhurabdhā
sāndrāmanḍa-viśeṣātmā śrī-kr̥ṣṇā karṣiṇī ca sā*

“In the beginning, pure devotional service eradicates all material miseries and invokes good fortune for all. Pure *bhakti* next makes liberation seem insignificant and is rarely attained in this world. Finally, pure devotional service fills the heart with inexplicable joy and indeed Sri Krishna Himself is attracted by that *bhakti*.”

Vijaya, “How does *bhakti* completely eliminate material distress?”

Raghunatha dasa Babaji, “Material, distress, has three causes: sin; the seeds of sin; and ignorance which impels one towards sin.



“Sin itself has three categories: *pātaka*, basic sin; *mahā-pātaka*, great sin; and *atipātaka*, extreme sin. When *śuddha-bhakti* dawns in the heart, one naturally avoids of all these degrees of sinful activity. The seeds of sin within the heart which prompt one to revelry are expelled from the heart which is imbued with the feelings of *śuddha-bhakti*. The state when the spirit soul has forgotten his original nature is known as *avidyā* (nescience). The first stirrings of *śuddha-bhakti* enlighten the jiva with the realization that the jiva is an eternal servant of Krishna and thus evaporate illusory misidentification of the self, which is the root of *avidyā*. Therefore, all three forms of distress—sin itself, the seeds of sin and the ignorant condition which impels one towards sin—are decisively dissipated. Hence, the eradication of distress is a characteristic of *bhakti*.”

Vijaya, “How is *bhakti* known as *śubhadā*, the bestower of good fortune?”

Raghunatha dasa Babaji, “The word *śubha*, good fortune and auspiciousness, indicates that one ascends to a position of attracting the affection and respect of everyone. One has available all varieties of pleasures and comforts that bring joy, and one is adorned with all good qualities. When the heart is imbued with *śuddha-bhakti*, the four qualities of humility, compassion, pridelessness, and magnanimous respect decorate one’s character. As a result, the *śuddha-bhakta* is loved and respected by everyone in the world. All good qualities automatically manifest in the personality of a devotee. *Bhakti* is competent to bestow upon the devotee all pleasures and comforts, even material ones. Moreover, she can grant the pleasure of impersonal Brahman realization, and all the *yoga-siddhis* (mystic perfections). The pure devotees, however, are not attracted to any of these, and so *śuddha-bhakti* rewards the pure devotee with the rarest and paramount bliss—eternal, unlimited ecstasy in the service of their Lord. “

Vijaya, “How does *bhakti* evoke a feeling of disregard for liberation?”

Raghunatha dasa Babaji, “Even a touch of the ecstasy of spontaneous loving attachment for

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

the Supreme Lord, makes the pure soul disinterested in religiosity, financial gain, sensory enjoyment, and even liberation.”

Vijaya, “Why is *bhakti* described as a rarely attained goal?”

Raghunatha dasa Babaji, “This particular point requires special attention. One may perform various spiritual methods to the best of his ability for countless years, but he will never attain *śuddha-bhakti* unless his spiritual practice becomes free of any discrepancy. The Supreme Lord placates most practitioners of spiritual disciplines by offering them either tangible or intangible material enjoyment. Rare practitioners are given the liberation they seek. However, the Supreme Lord does not give *śuddha-bhakti* to anyone unless they are highly qualified.

“By cultivating impersonal *brahma-jñāna* one is sure to achieve *mokṣa* (liberation). Similarly, by performing sacrifices, charitable acts, and pious deeds, one is certainly granted earthly and heavenly pleasures. Renouncing these allurements, one must become adept in the science of Krishna consciousness, free from all other allurements for only then will *śuddha-bhakti* be granted to him..

Vijaya, “How may *bhakti* be called *sān-drānanda-viśeṣātmā*, the source of inexplicable ecstasy?”

Raghunatha dasa Babaji, “*Bhakti* is the fountainhead of transcendental ecstasy, hence it is an unlimited ocean of spiritual bliss. Neither the sensual material pleasures nor the satisfaction of impersonal Brahman realization multiplied a million times are equal to a mere drop of ecstasy from the unlimited ocean of *bhakti*. Gross material pleasure is dismally insignificant and the bliss of Brahman that one obtains by achieving liberation after negating such material pleasure is dry and bland. Both of these so-called joys are diametrically opposed to the transcendental divine bliss of *śuddha-bhakti* and hence should never be compared. The bliss of *śuddha-bhakti* is so intense and overwhelming that any other type of happiness, including that of Brahman realization, seems empty and insignificant. It is



as if a little puddle were to be compared to the vast bottomless ocean. Only the pure devotee relishing such ecstasy knows its joys, others can only speculate.”

Vijaya, “How does *bhakti* act to attract Sri Krishna?”

Raghunatha dasa Babaji, “The devotee whose heart is infused with *śuddha-bhakti* attracts the attention of Krishna—along with that of all His close associates—by the power of his love. Love is the only way to conquer Sri Krishna, no other means are viable.”

—*Jaiva-dharma, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, translated by Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Int. & Sarvabhāvana dāsa*

WHY ARE WE UNABLE TO SERVE KRISHNA?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura

It is impossible to serve Krishna without receiving the mercy of great souls. This is why it is so important to take shelter at the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states,

*mahat-kṛpā vinā kona karme 'bhakti' naya,
kṛṣṇa-bhakti dūre rahu, samsāra nahe kṣaya*

“Unless one is favored by a pure devotee, one cannot attain the platform of devotional service. To say nothing of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.” (*Madhya*, 22.51)

If one associates with those devotees who continually serve Krishna, then his natural propensity to serve Krishna will be awakened. Without the association of Krishna’s devotees, one cannot independently develop the desire to engage in the Lord’s service. Service to Hari is not an easy affair. It is dependent on the association and mercy of devotees. Simply by following in the devotees’ footsteps, one receives the good fortune to engage in the Lord’s service.

— *Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality » His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupāda Adapted and Published by Īsvara-dāsa, Touchstone Media.*

PURE BHAKTI ALONE IS INDEPENDENT

Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura

As the proper functioning of the body is solely dependent on the life force being present within it, similarly, *yoga, jñāna, karma* and so on are subservient to and singularly dependent on, *bhakti*. Another relevant point to this discussion is the fact that *karma-yoga*, is effective only when the right conditions are present: the time, place, ingredients, performer, circumstances, and so on have to be auspicious and accurately calculated. Mistakes in observing any of these regulations render fruitless all endeavour. None of these stipulations, however, govern the practice of *bhakti*.

In order to clarify this point the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* states:

*na deśa-niyamas tatra
na kāla-niyamas tathā
nocchiṣṭādaṁ niṣedhaś ca
śrī-harer nāmni lubdhakāḥ*

“O hunter, in the matter of chanting the holy name or executing other such processes of devotional service there are no hard and fast rules dependent on time, place, circumstance, etc. In fact, one can chant the holy names even in a contaminated state.”

Bhakti is able to award absolute perfection without support from any other process. The *Padma Purāṇa* declares:

*sakrd api parigītaṁ śraddhayā helayā vā
bhṛgu-vara nara-mātraṁ tārayet kṛṣṇa-nāma*

O best of the Bhrgus, if anyone unreservedly chants Lord Krishna’s name even once, whether with proper faith or in a negligent manner, the holy name will certainly award him liberation.

If while executing the process of *karma-yoga* a person commits the slightest mistake in observing its many rules and regulations it results in negative and inauspicious influences. Therefore the *smṛti* scripture warns that while performing *yajna* (ritual sacrifice), if the Vedic *mantras* are chanted improperly, or the intonations and pronunciations like *anudatta*,

udatta, and *svarita* are even slightly faulty, then a devastating result ensues.

An example of the importance of following such stipulations found in the story of Vrtrasura, wherein Tvasta Ṛṣi performed sacrifice to vanquish Indra. While chanting the *mantras* the Ṛṣi mispronounced the compound word *indra-śatruh*. Pronounced correctly the word means that the evoked personality will “the enemy of Indra”. Instead it came out to mean that “Indra, will be his enemy”. This mistake caused a completely contrary result for Tvasta,

Similarly, in *jñāna-yoga* (the cultivation of empirical knowledge), the intentions are that the *jñāna-yogi* must purify his internal senses, namely the mind, the intelligence, and the consciousness. In the case of *karma-yoga*, the *yogi* must relinquish the fruits of his labor so that his external senses are purified. At the mature stage of practice he becomes eligible to embrace the path of *jñāna-yoga*. This proves that *jñāna-yoga* in some ways is dependent upon, and subservient to, *karma-yoga*. In *jñāna-yoga*, if the *jñānī* either accidentally or deliberately has the slightest fall down the scriptures condemn him as a shameless person, likening him to someone who eats his own vomit. Although such persons as Kamsa, Hiranyakasipu, and Ravana were very erudite and accomplished *jñāna-yogis*, they are infamous characters condemned throughout history for



their moral irregularities. The slightest hint of excessiveness penalizes the *jñāna-yogi* and his spiritual preceptors then reject him.

In the case of *bhakti-yogi*, the path of pure devotional service, even if the devotee’s heart is affected by lust, greed, and other such faults he is still eligible to take up the process. Later, by the practice of *bhakti*, which is completely independent and beyond all ordinary rules and regulations, the devotee’s heart and consciousness become purified of any such defects. Therefore, the *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.33.39) explains:

*vikrīḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir idam ca viṣṇoḥ
śraddhānvito 'nuśṛṅṣyād atha varṇayedyaḥ
bhaktiṁ parām bhagavati prati labhyakāmaṁ
hr̥d-rogam āśvapahinoty acireṇa dhīraḥ*

Anyone who faithfully hears or describes the Lord’s playful affairs with the young gopis of Vrindavan will attain the Lord’s pure devotional service. Thus he will quickly become sober and conquer lust, the disease of the heart.

In this verse the Sanskrit word for “attains pure devotional service” is an infinitive verb and it is placed in the beginning of the verse. By doing so it means that, in spite of the person being afflicted with lust, he first attains *bhakti* and later roots out the material diseases.

— Madhurya-Kadambini - Śrīla Viṣvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura
Translated by Sarvabhāvana dāsa.

!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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