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THE GLORIES OF ABHIRAM GOPAL

*His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

*śrī-rāmadāsa āra, gadādhara dāsa
caitanya-gosānīra bhakta rahe tānra pāśa*

Two devotees of Lord Chaitanya named Sri Ramdas and Gadadhar Das always lived with Sri Virabhadra Gosai.



PURPORT: Sri Ramdas, later known as Abhiram Thakur, was one of the twelve *gopālas*, or cowherd boy-friends, of Sri Nityananda Prabhu. The *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (126) states that Sri Ramdas was formerly

Sridama. In the *Bhakti-ratnākara* (fourth wave), there is a description of Srīla Abhiram Thakur. By the order of Sri Nityananda Prabhu, Abhiram Thakur became a great *ācārya* and preacher of the Chaitanya cult of devotional service. He was a very influential personality, and nondevotees were very much afraid of him. Empowered by Sri Nityananda Prabhu, he was always in ecstasy and was extremely kind to all fallen souls. It is said that if he offered obeisances to any stone other than a *śālagrāma-śilā*, it would immediately fracture.

Srīla Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur writes in his *Anubhāṣya*, "Ten miles southwest of the

Canpadanga railway station on the narrow-gauge railway line from Howrah, in Calcutta, to Amta, a village in the Hugli district, is a small town named Khanakula Krishnanagar, where the temple in which Abhiram Thakur worshiped is situated. During the rainy season, when this area is inundated with water, people must go there by another line, which is now called the South Eastern Railway. On this line there is a station named Kolaghat, from which one has to go by steamer to Ranichak. Seven and a half miles north of Ranichak is Khanakul. The temple where Abhiram Thakur worshiped is situated in Krishnanagar, which is near the *kūla* (bank) of the Khana (Dvarakeswar River). Therefore this place is celebrated as Khanakul Krishnanagar. Outside of the temple is a bakula tree. This place is known as Siddha Bakula Kunj. It is said that when Abhiram Thakur came there, he sat down under this tree. In Khanakula Krishnanagar there is a big fair held every year in the month of *Caitra* [March-April] on the *kṛṣṇa-saptamī*, the seventh day of the dark moon. Many hundreds and thousands of people gather for this festival. The temple where Abhiram Thakur worshiped has a very old history. The Deity in the temple is known as Gopinath. There are many *sevaita* families living near the temple. It is said that Abhiram Thakur had a whip and that whomever he touched with it would immediately become an elevated devotee of Krishna. Among his

many disciples, Sriman Srinivas Acharya was the most famous and the most dear, but it is doubtful that he was his initiated disciple. ❀

— Translation and purport to *Cc. ādi 11.13*

SRINIVAS ACHARYA MEETS ABHIRAM THAKUR

***Adapted from Nityananda Das’
Śrī Prema-vilāsa 5.28-62***

For more about Nityananda Das and Prema-vilāsa, see Bindu issues 2 and 5.

Jahnava Mata, the wife of Lord Nityananda, sent Srinivas Acharya to meet Abhiram Thakur. She gave Srinivas a letter to deliver in which she requested the Thakur to beat Srinivas at least three times with his all-auspicious whip named “Jaya Mangala”. It is said that whomever he would beat with this whip would obtain ecstatic love of God. With great reluctance, Srinivas and Ishan bade farewell to Jahnava Mata and Viracandra and started for Abhiram’s home.

When they arrived, Ishan introduced Srinivas to Abhiram and the letter was delivered. Abhiram was glad to meet Srinivas, who offered his obeisances. Abhiram thought, “Jahnava Mata has sent me this boy so that I will beat him with my whip. But first I must see whether he is qualified. Let me give him eight coins and see what he does with them. If his behavior satisfies me, then I will beat him with my whip.”

Abhiram then gave Srinivas the eight coins and instructed him to buy cooking ingredients so that he could prepare his own lunch. Srinivas bought rice, dal, and spices from the merchants, and then went to a nearby water reservoir to cook. In the meantime, Abhiram called two devotees and told them, “Go to where Srinivas is cooking and pose as guests. Arrive just after he has finished cooking and ask him to provide you with lunch.”

The two devotees arrived as instructed and requested Srinivas to feed them. Srinivas was gratified to see them. “Your coming here is my good fortune. You are *vaiṣṇavas* and I am an insignificant, fallen soul. I am glad to serve you.”

Srinivas then divided the food into two so that the devotees could eat to their full satisfaction. After eating, the devotees returned to Abhiram and said,

“Srinivas fed us rice that was as wonderful as nectar. Although there were no vegetable preparations, the food was wonderful. We were satisfied. We think that Sri Sri Radha-Krishna must have tasted his rice.”

Abhiram was pleased by the devotees’ report. He immediately called for Ishan and said, “Quickly bring Srinivas to me. Today I will bestow love of God upon him as Sri Jahnava Mata desired.” Abhiram had his whip ready. As soon as Srinivas offered his obeisances, Abhiram began to beat him. After hitting him three times with the whip, Srinivas’ heart filled with ecstatic love of God. Just then, Malini arrived and caught hold of Abhiram’s hand, saying, “My dear Gosai, do not beat him any more. This brahmin’s son has certainly been empowered by Lord Chaitanya.” ❀

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ABHIRAM THAKUR’S APPEARANCE IN KALI-YUGA

***Adapted from
Śrī Abhirāma Lilāmṛta, chapter one
by Sri Tilak Ramdas***

For more about Tilak Ramdas and his book Abhirāma Lilāmṛta, see Bindu issue 4.

The local tradition in the line of Abhiram Thakur has it that one day in Dvāpara-yuga, Krishna, Balaram and their cowherd friends were playing a game of hide and seek in the forests of Vraja. In the middle of their game, Krishna decided to go to Nadia to enjoy his pastimes there. Taking Balaram and all their friends with him, he advented himself in Nabadwip. Somehow or other he forgot Sridama, who remained in his hiding place in a cave.

*vande haṁ śrī śrī gopīnātha mahāprabhur
vijayate, yatrābhirāmo mahān gosvāmī śrī-yuta
padakamalam. mālīnī sahitaṁ śaktyāvātaram
sahagaṇa-caraṇāmbuje sadā śaraṇam iti.*

I offer my obeisances to Sri Sri Gopinath [The deity worshiped by Abhiram Thakur]. All victory to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu! I always meditate on the lotus feet of the great Abhiram Goswami, the empowered incarnation, along with his wife Malini and other associates. Again and again I take shelter of their lotus feet. (Text 1)

śrī śrī abhirāmacandrāya namaḥ

Glory to the moonlike Abhirama! (Text 6)

*jaya jaya śrī-caitanya jaya nityānanda
jayādvaita-candra jaya gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*

All glory to Sri Chaitanya! Glory to Nityananda!
Glory to the moonlike Adwaita and the devotees
of Gaura! (Text 7)

Keeping faith in the feet of the above personalities, I will describe some of the pastimes of Abhiram Thakur.

When everyone was performing *kīrtana* in Nabadwip, Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu started thinking about Sridam. Horrifying in ecstatic love, he started weeping. Saying, “Where do I go to find Sridama?” he fell unconscious. Nityananda came there and took him on his lap. Returning to external consciousness, Mahāprabhu started speaking. “Tell me where Sridam is! I will immediately go and bring him. Prabhu then told Nityananda, “He lives in Vrindavan — go there quickly! Bring Sridam to me quickly. I am feeling heartbroken in his absence.”

With folded palms, Nityananda replied, “If he is in Vrindavan, then I shall bring him to you.” Having pacified Lord Gaurasundar, Nitai set out searching, and eventually reached Govardhan in Vraja. Nityananda Prabhu had his hair tied in a knot and was wearing blue garments. Sridam was residing in a cave at Govardhan. Arriving near there, Nityananda started calling out. “Sridam!” again and again. Finally, Sridam came out of the cave to see who was calling him.

Sridam said, “What is your name? Why do you call me?”

Nityananda introduced himself as Balaram by explaining that his name was previously “Balai”.

However, Sridama had some doubt due to the different dress and appearance of Nityananda. [The residents of *Dvāpara-yuga* were much taller than the people of *Kali-yuga*.] Sridam said, “If you are indeed Balai, then you should be as powerful as him. I shall clap my hands and run. If you are really Balai, then you will be able to catch me.

Hearing this, Nitai said, “Run if you want. Let’s see how far you will be able to go.”

Clapping his hands, Sridam said, “O Balaram, you will not be able to catch me!”



The deity of Gopinathji worshiped by Srila Abhiram Thakur at Khanakul Krishna Nagar. Gopinath appeared in a dream to Abhiram and told him, “I’m buried in the ground nearby. Please take me out and worship me.”

Sridam Gopal then tied his cloth tightly between his legs in the fashion of a wrestler and began to run around Govardhana Hill. After circumambulating Govardhana Hill four times he looked back to see if Nityananda Prabhu had caught up with him. Seeing that Nitai had kept pace, he thought, “This is indeed Balaram!”

Sridama said, “You must have been hurt, my friend. Rest now. I did not see your form of Balaram and therefore I had some doubt in my heart. You went around Govardhana Hill four times! Who else but you has the energy to do that?” Then Sridama said, “Tell me, why have you come looking for me?”

Nityananda replied, “Krishna has fallen unconscious (*acaitanya*) at not being able to see you!”

Sridama asked, “Where has Kanai gone to?”

Nityananda replied, “Everyone has gone to Nabadwip. If you will now accompany me, there will be some special pastimes. Come quickly!”

Sridama said, “No, I’m not going. Going with you means that I’ll have to sit in someone’s womb there. Considering the pain, who wants to live in a womb? I will not go.”

Nityananda Prabhu said, “Anyway, let’s go and discuss the matter with Kanhaiya. You can remain for now in this dress.”

Sridama laughed, “O.K. Carry me on your shoulders! After all that running, my feet have become very heavy.”

Nitai said, “If I say no then you’ll advertise to everyone that I was not able to carry you on my back (due to the difference in our respective sizes). You are the chief amongst us cowherd boys. Please consider that you should sympathize with the happiness and distress of others.”

Sridama submitted, “Well, you and I are just the same. You know that when Krishna’s side loses I sometimes carry you on my shoulders.”

Nityananda answered, “Everyone knows that you are subjugated by Kanai’s love. None of the pastimes that happen in Vraja by day or by night are beyond your perception. All of the other cowherd boys always sing your praises. Come on. Now you



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should meet with Gauranga. All the twelve *gopālas* [twelve intimate associates of Lord Nityananda, who are considered to be incarnations of the twelve primary cowherd boys in *kṛṣṇa-līlā*] and sixty-four *mahantas* [sixty-four devotees that some authorities consider to be the most confidential associates of Mahaprabhu], being fully aware of your qualities, sing your praises.”

Sridama, hearing these words, went to dress himself in an enchanting way. The beauty of his hair was all attractive to the mind.

Very quickly, the two of them approached Nabadwip. When Sri Sachinandan saw that they had arrived, he embraced Sridama and began speaking to him, “What kind of bliss were you in that I had to dispatch Nityananda to bring you here?”

Sridama asked, “Tell me the reason for your appearance here? Why do all of you have shaven heads? Seeing your condition breaks my heart.”

Mahaprabhu explained, “Sridama, with the end of *Dvāpara-yuga*, the influence of Kali began. In this age, renunciation is proper.

Sridama said, “I don’t understand. Please explain.”

“In the mood of Krishna, Mahaprabhu said, “There are four *yugas*, *Satya*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali*. Krishna is *svayam bhagavān* in the age of *Dvāpara*, and then he incarnates again as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Now, at the beginning of *Kali-yuga*, I shall reveal this truth which is also stated in *sāstra*. You should know my form as Krishna Chaitanya to be the same as my form of Krishna. *Gaura-līlā* and *kṛṣṇa-līlā* are one. In *gaura-līlā*, I and my associates have assumed the role of devotees and are tasting the mellows of love. Now my name is Sri Krishna Chaitanya and from today you will be called Abhiram.

Nityananda Prabhu called everyone, smiled, and said, “From today, everyone shall call him “Brother Abhiram”. We have kept this name since it indicates that there is no difference between Sridama and me. [*Abhiram* = to be known as “Rama”.] ❀

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