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NON-SECTARIAN

His Divine Grace A. C.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

ISKCON (the International Society of Krishna Consciousness) is a non-lucrative organization whose purpose is to promote the well-being of human society by drawing its attention to God. We are a non-sectarian society, and our members include people from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, as well as Hindu faiths. The aim of ISKCON is not to found a new religious sect but to invoke the living entity's dormant love of God, and thus provide the human society of all faiths with a common platform of clear theistic knowledge and practice. Members of ISKCON may retain their own respective religious faiths, as ISKCON is meant to establish a clear, practical common formulation of the common ideal of all theists, and to defeat the unnecessary dogmatic wrangling that now divides and invalidates the theistic camp. This common ideal of theism is to develop love of God. ❀

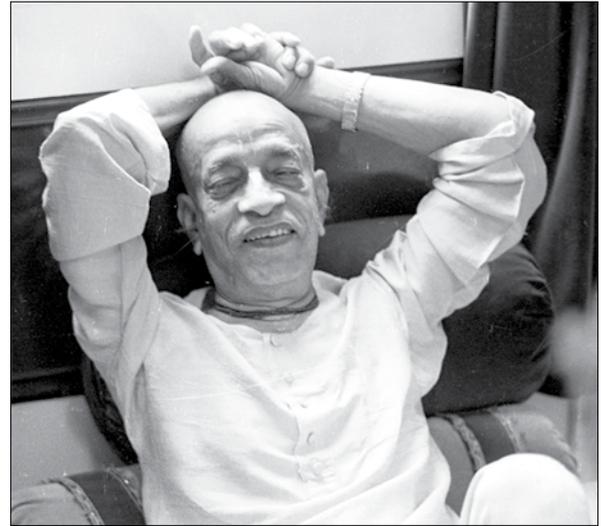
— Letter to Roland Michener, Governor-General of Canada. 24 August 1968.

JAGAD-GURU JESUS CHRIST

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta

Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

Question: If Jesus Christ was a *jagad-guru* and his instructions are capable of bringing us deliverance, why do we need a spiritual master?



His Divine Grace A. C.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada:

We accept both the universal spiritual master and the initiating spiritual master. By accepting only the *jagad-guru*, we may face many *anarthas*. If at present we want to follow Christ's orders by accepting him as *jagad-guru* and we think we do not require an initiating spiritual master, we will certainly face doubt about how well we can follow Christ's orders. The Supreme Lord or universal *jagad-guru* delivers his instructions about the absolute truth only through the disciplic succession. As I sit on the bank of the Ganga in Nabadwip, far from the Himalayas where



Sri Sri Gaura Nityananda worshiped by Srila Govinda Datta

the Ganga originates, and am able to touch her water here, the initiating spiritual master similarly brings the Ganga of pure devotional service, which emanates from the lord's lotus feet, and places it in my hand and on my head. Because I am an ordinary, powerless, poor person, I am not able to climb the Himalayas to touch her water there. Similarly, if the flow of the Ganga from the Himalayas is interrupted on the way, I would have to face the danger of accepting a polluted flow instead of the pure Ganga. If the instructions Jesus Christ gave two thousand years ago do not come to us through disciplic succession, or if we have to sort them out from books, then perhaps we may create a blunder and accept a perversion of the truth taught in the name of Christianity. We may even come to accept something opposite from what he taught, thinking it his actual philosophy.

The initiating spiritual master is also *jagad-guru* because he is a manifestation of the original *jagad-guru*. Out of his causeless mercy he delivers the message of the original *jagad-guru* through the

disciplic succession. He does not cheat or flatter the disciple, nor does he yearn for any material gain. He is simply a messenger of the absolute truth. ❀

— *Amṛta Vani*, p. 44. Touchstone Media. Mumbai. 2004.

THE GAURA NITAI DEITIES OF SRILA GOVINDA DATTA

In Orissa and Bengal there are many little-known temples and deities that date back to the time of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his associates. The village Sukhchar, situated between Khadadaha and Panihati on the bank of the Ganga in West Bengal, is the birthplace of Srila Govinda Datta and is still home to his deities.

Little is known about Srila Govinda Datta. Srila Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami has described him as a dear associate of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the twenty-sixth branch of the Chaitanya tree, and a principal singer in Lord Gaurasundara's *kīrtana*. [*Cc. ādi* 10.64.] Govinda Datta was one of the devotees who took part in Sri Gaurahari's *kīrtana* in front of



Mahaprabhu meets his mother in the house of Advaita Acharya

Lord Jagannath's *Ratha-yātrā* cart. [See *Cc. madhya* 13.37 and 73. Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur also mentions Govinda Datta in his *Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavata*, *antya* 8.17, as a *kīrtana* leader at the Puri *Ratha-yātrā*.]

According to the book *Baṅgābhāṣā O Sāhitya*, his father's name was Girisvar. Haridas Das in his *Gauḍīya-vaiṣṇava-abhidhāna* cites a song composed by Govinda Datta in which he mentions Girisvar's name.

The deities of Gaura-Nityananda pictured at the top of page two were worshiped by Srila Govinda Datta. According to Haridas Das, these deities were personally installed by Govinda Datta. However, according to the local tradition in Sukhchar, the deities were installed by Lord Nityananda Prabhu. The local tradition in Sukhchar states that Govinda Datta was a close associate of Srila Raghava Pandit. Neither Raghava Pandit nor Govinda Datta ever married. It is said that upon reaching old age, Govinda Datta left for Vrindavan, entrusting his deities, Gaura-Nityananda, to his followers. Some of the features on these deities are unique to the era of Govinda Datta and are rarely found today — the curly hair on both Gaura and Nitai's heads,

and their feet — Mahaprabhu's are in the position of Krishna's feet when he stands in the three-fold posture known as *tri-bhaṅga*, while Lord Nityananda is standing in a straight posture. ❀

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MAHAPRABHU'S FIRST MANIFESTATION OF ECSTATIC LOVE *Adapted from Srila Lochan Das Thakur's Caitanya-maṅgala, madhya 1.17-34*

One time, as Gauranga lay sleeping in his own home, he wept in the ecstasy of love for Krishna.

*rādhābhāve vyākula ha-iyā prabhu ḍāke
māthura-virahe hātha māre nijabuke*

Overcome with the love Radha feels, the Lord called out, "Now that he has gone to Mathura, a weapon is plunged into my heart. Now I am dead. (Text 18)

*are re akrura! mora kṛṣṇa laṅā geli
ihā bali kānde prabhu karilā vikuli*

“Wretch Akrura! It was you who took my Krishna away!” Speaking in this way and weeping, the Lord was overcome with feelings of ecstatic love. (Text 19)

*kubjā kutsita-mati kṛṣṇa nila mora
śaṭharati lampaṭa yuvatī-mana-cora*

“Wicked-hearted Kubja, you took my Krishna away! Ah! Krishna was always a rake, a cheater, and a thief of young girls’ hearts!” (Text 20)

Speaking in this way, the Lord wept. His weeping was like a great rumbling roar. The hairs of his body stood erect. Astonished, Mother Sachi asked her beloved Vishwambhar, “Dear, why do you weep? Why are you unhappy?” The Lord heard his mother’s words, but gave no reply. He only wept. He was overcome with ecstasy.

In her heart, Sachi Devi thought, “By Krishna’s mercy he manifests the symptoms of ecstatic love.” Fortunate Sachi knew all the truths of spiritual life. Facing her son, she sweetly said:

*śuna śuna āre bāpa! mora soṅāra suta
jagata-durlabha tora dekhoṅ adbhuta*

“Listen, listen, my dear golden son! I see that you have something very wonderful, something very rare in all the worlds. (Text 26)

*yathā tathā yāo tumi pāo ye vā dhana
āniñā āmāra ṭhāñi kara samarpaṇa*

*gayāte pāile kṛṣṇa-prema hena dhana
devatā-durlabha vastu amūlyā ratana*

“Whatever wealth you find in your journeys you always bring to me. In Gaya you found a great treasure of ecstatic love for Krishna, a treasure more valuable than priceless jewels, a treasure even the demigods cannot attain. (Text 27-28)

*āmā prati kabhu yadi dayā thāke cite
deha kṛṣṇa-prema-dhana — ḍarāṅ cāhite*

“Though I’m afraid to ask, if you have any kindness in your heart, please give me the treasure of ecstatic love for Krishna!” (Text 29)

His heart melting, the Lord gazed at his mother and said:

*vaiṣṇava-prasāde prema pābe mātā tumi
niścaya jāniha kathā kahilāma āmi*

Mother, by the mercy of the *vaiṣṇavas* you will attain that ecstatic love. Please know this for certain. What I say is the truth.” (Text 31)

Hearing these words, Sachi became very joyful at heart. That moment she attained ecstatic love and devotion. The hairs on her limbs stood erect. Her body trembled. An endless flood of tears flowed from her eyes. With a joyous heart she called out, “Krishna! Krishna!” In this way, Lochan Das describes the first time Lord Gaura manifested ecstatic love. ❀

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