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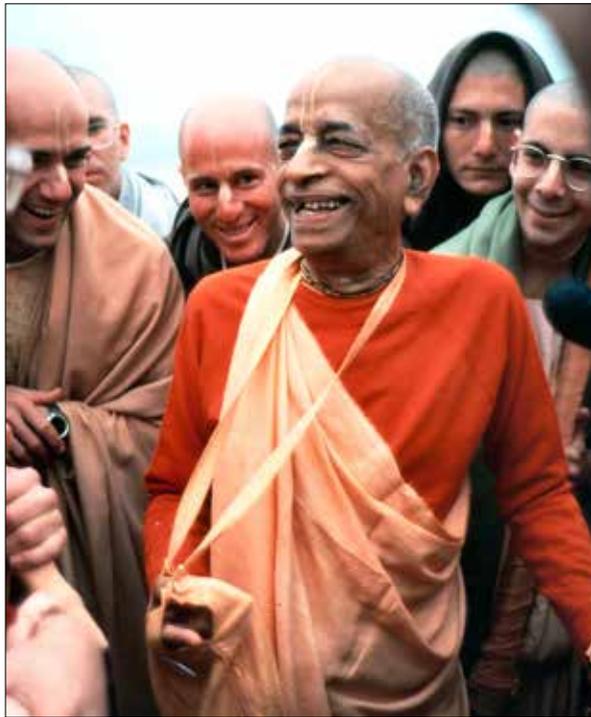
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Radhamadhava Das



“YOU SPEAK OF PURE DEVOTEE”

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

You speak of pure devotee, that he is śaktyāveśa-avatāra, that we should obey him only — these things are the wrong idea. If anyone thinks like that, that a pure devotee should be obeyed and no one else, that means he is a nonsense. We advise everyone to address one another as “Prabhu”. “Prabhu” means master. So how the master should be disobeyed? Others, they are also pure devotees. All of my disciples are pure devotees. Anyone sincerely serving the spiritual master is a pure devotee, it may

be Siddhasvarupa or others. This must be very clearly stated. It is not only that your Siddhasvarupa is a pure devotee and not others. Do not try to make a faction. Siddhasvarupa is a good soul. But others should not be misled. Anyone who is surrendered to the spiritual master is a pure devotee, it doesn’t matter if Siddhasvarupa or non-Siddhasvarupa. Amongst ourselves one should respect one another as Prabhu. As soon as we distinguish here is a pure devotee, here is a non-pure devotee – that means I am a nonsense. Why do you only want to be in the spiritual sky with Siddhasvarupa? Why not all? If Siddhasvarupa can go, why not everyone? Siddhasvarupa will go, you will go, Syamasundara will go, all others will go. We will have another ISKCON there. 🙏

— Letter to Tusta Krsna, 14 December 1972.

PURI - THE INNER CHAMBER OF SRI CHAITANYA’S HOME, PART 1

By Radhamadhav Das

To many it will come as a surprise to hear that not only Nabadwip Dham, but also Puri Dham is the home of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Because his ancestors hailed from Puri Dham, by going there from Nabadwip he was actually returning home. It may be further astonishing to hear that Jagannath Puri Dham is really the inner chamber of Mahaprabhu’s home due to it being his preferred place of bhajana.

Everything in creation sprang forth from kāma, desire. This is mentioned in the Rig Veda 129 — kāmas tad agre samavartatādhi manaso retaḥ prathamam yad āsīt. Similarly, Puri Dham could be said to be the

manifestation of the Lord's desire — in particular, the three innermost desires that Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami describes in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* 1.1.6:

*śrī-rādhāyāḥ praṇaya-mahimā kīḍṛśo vānayaivā-
svādyo yenādbhuta-madhurimā kīḍṛśo vā madīyaḥ
saukhyam cāsyā mad-anubhavataḥ kīḍṛśam veti lobhāt
tad-bhāvāḍhyaḥ samajani śacī-garbha-sindhau harīnduḥ*

Desiring to understand the glory of Radharani's love, the wonderful qualities in him that she alone relishes through her love, and the happiness she feels when she realizes the sweetness of his love, the Supreme Lord Hari, richly endowed with her emotions, appeared from the womb of Srimati Sachi Devi, as the moon appeared from the ocean.

Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami further mentions that it was particularly in Nilachal, Puri Dham, that his desires were fulfilled (*dvādaśa vatsara śeṣa rahilā nīlācale ... āsvādiyā pūrṇa kaila āpana vāñchita — Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Adi 13.39-43).

To unearth further glories of Puri, we shall first go to Bengal. My journey there also started with a desire. When my friend Bhakta Charles showed me a rare photo of the first Mahaprabhu deity, which is located in Srikona, Assam, I at once desired to travel there to have his darshan. Receiving an invitation from Ajit Das to visit nearby Imphal, my desire was fulfilled. Krishna Swarup Das kindly took me to the Naba Dhaka-dakshin temple with this beautiful Mahaprabhu deity in Srikona, a scenic little settlement near Silchar. The deity was originally worshiped in the town of Sylhet in the Srihatta district by Srimati Shobha Devi, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's beloved paternal grandmother. It was manifested from Mahaprabhu himself when he was only sixteen years old in the year 1502 AD, thus making it the first Mahaprabhu deity that we know of. It is also one of only a few deities of Mahaprabhu as a *sannyāsī* – his hands sporting the mudras of holding a *daṇḍa* and a *kamaṇḍalu*. It is also the only deity of Mahaprabhu that we have heard of who has dilated *cakā-dolā* eyes that are somewhat like those of his beloved Lord Jagannath.

Mahaprabhu's birth name was "Vishwambhar Mishra". His father was Sri Jagannath Mishra, the son of Sri Upendra Mishra of Srihatta:

*śrīhaṭṭa-nivāsī śrī-upendra-mīśra-nāma
vaiṣṇava, paṇḍita, dhanī, sad-guṇa-pradhāna*

"There was also Sri Upendra Mishra, a resident of the district of Srihatta. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, a learned scholar, wealthy, and a reservoir

of all good qualities." (Cc. ādi 13.56)

Sylhet in Srihatta was the home of Mahaprabhu's immediate forefathers, the Mishra Brahmins. After the partition of India in 1947, Sylhet became part of Bangladesh. Due to repeated threats of Islamic extremists, the worship of the Mahaprabhu deity had to be done in secret, and it was gradually forgotten. The entire residence of the Mishras was finally burned down around 1990. Fortunately, during the riots of 1971, the Mishras had already migrated to closeby Srikona in Assam, safeguarding the deity.

I had the great fortune to have darshan of this little-known deity in 2018. I also interviewed the Mishras, who are at present the 14th and 15th generation descendents of Sri Upendra Mishra. I have video-recorded and translated their interviews and tried my best to harmonize their accounts wherever they differ from each other or from other sources.

Little known to most devotees, Mahaprabhu's forefathers, the Mishras, were Brahmins who hailed from Kapileshwar in the Jajpur district of Odisha. The Gaudiya Vaishnava scholar Prof. D. Lit. Fakir Mohan Das, who researched this topic for over fifty years, wrote, "The forefathers of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu migrated from Jajpur to Srihatta ... at the time of Gajapati Kapilendradev, the king of Odisha (early 15th century) ... In 1509 Mahaprabhu traveled to Puri via Shantipur, and on the way he visited the temple of Varahadev and Viraja at Jajpur. Then he went to Kapileshwar where Kamalalochan Mishra, one of his relatives, was living.... The stone on which Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu took rest is still existing, and a *maṭha* has been built there in commemoration of the auspicious event." (*Bhakta Kavi Gopala Krishna*. 2002. Sahitya Academy, New Delhi.)

In the book *Cultural Heritage of Jajpur* there is an article by Manmath Kumar Samal called "Sri Chaitanya at Jajpur". He writes, "If we believe Jayananda's Chaitanya Mangal, his [Mahaprabhu's] forefathers lived at Jajpur of Odisha ... According to them [Dr. Fakir Mohan Das and Pramod Chandra Mohanty], on the way to Puri, Sri Chaitanya left Bhadrak for Jajpur. He first arrived at the village Gaurangapur located about 20 kms from Jajpur. He crossed the river Vaitarani at this place and came to Ganapatipur, which is now popularly known in Jajpur town as Gauradanda. Since he passed through this village amidst *saṅkīrtana*, the main road as well as the village are now known as Gauradanda ('the road of Gaura') ... The disciples and common people searched for Sri Chaitanya

Photo by Madhavananda Das



The stone in Jajpur that Mahaprabhu sat on

for several days and at last they discovered him seated on a block of stone under a peepal tree (known as *dharma-bruksha*) in the village Kapileswar. That village then came to be known as Kapila Tirtha ... The stone block is now worshiped in the premises of the Nitai-Gour Matha, located adjacent to the peepal tree.”

That Sri Chaitanya’s forefathers were inhabitants of Jajpur is seen in below genealogy collected by Pramod Mohanty.



“... Dr. Patitapaban Benerjee relates [in his article *Sri Chaitanyankara Sri Virajadarsan*, p. 7] that they [Sri

Chaitanya’s forefathers] left Jajpur and settled at Sri Hatta.” (Vyasakabi, 2005. Pp. 165-170.)

Jajpur was formerly the capital city of Odisha. According to the local tradition, the original name of Jajpur was Yajna-pur, or the place of sacrifice. It is said that this name was given when the king, Keshari Yayati, brought over 10,000 Brahmins here from North India to perform a great sacrifice. This January (2020) I travelled to Jajpur and interviewed the local seniors. The above-mentioned advocate Pramod Chandra Mohanty, who is most knowledgeable in this field, kindly took me to the pristine little village Kapileshwar and showed me all the holy places there, including the *dharma-bruksha* holy peepal tree and the stone on which Mahaprabhu sat. Jayānanda’s *Caitanya-maṅgala* as well as the senior locals’ testimony indicate that Mahaprabhu’s forefathers came from Jajpur.

The reason for the complete lack of information about Sri Chaitanya’s forefathers earlier than Upendra Mishra in all major biographies remains a mystery. This lack has led to the general assumption that they hailed from Bengal. But if we consider all points of this article, we find various threads leading back to Odisha. It is well-known among the Brahmin community that the Mishra



Deities of Gaura Nitai established 500 years ago in Jajpur

Photo by Madhavananda Das

Brahmins are not native to Bengal. In Bengal you typically find Brahmins like Chakraborty, Bandhopadhyaya and Mukherjee. The Mishras residing in Bengal were not prominent there and migrated there from their main places of prominence, namely Odisha (Utkal Brahmins) and Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh (Kanyakubja Brahmins).

Also, as we shall see, the origin of Mahaprabhu's forefathers in Odisha shines forth from the fact that their *kula-devatā*, family deity, was Lord Jagannath, the beloved Lord of the people of Odisha. It is also noteworthy that while he was in Puri, Mahaprabhu religiously went for daily darshan of Lord Jagannath. According to Śrī Caitanya-māṅgala (2.42.213), Gaurasundar went for *darśana* of Jagannath thrice a day. He didn't exhibit such devotion to any other deity, including even Tota Gopinath [Note: For more information on Jagannath as the primary deity worshiped by Mahaprabhu, see the article: "The Hidden Identity of Lord Jagannath", in Sri Krishna Kathamrita magazine issue 12.] It is interesting that his devotion to a preferred deity or *iṣṭa-deva* only took roots in Puri, not Nabadwip. One could say Mahaprabhu preferred to worship Jagannath simply because he was Mahaprabhu's ancestral *kula-devatā*. However, as expressed by Gour Govinda Swami and other *sāragrāhī vaiṣṇavas*, there is deeper esoteric significance in his preference. Why does he give more attention to Jagannath than Tota Gopinath, who is the deity embodying the highest attainment of *prema*?



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Since Mahaprabhu gave more attention to Jagannath, he must have relished a deeper esoteric relationship with Jagannath than with Tota Gopinath, not a lesser one. According to local tradition in Jagannath Puri, as described by Gour Govinda Swami in his book *Embankment of Separation*, Jagannath is Krishna's *mahābhāva-prakāśa*, the manifestation of the empathic form of Krishna when he is immersed in *mahābhāva* - the topmost ecstasy of love of Radharani.

If Jagannath, just like Mahaprabhu, is also Krishna in empathy with Radharani, what, then, is the subtle difference in their empathic immersions? Jagannath is Krishna whose heart and limbs have just started to melt in the bliss of entering into this absorption, and thus his colour is still *shyama*, and he still identifies as Krishna. Mahaprabhu is Krishna fully immersed in the mood of Srimati Radharani, and thus he is fully covered up with her golden colour and mood, often identifying himself fully with her. In the context of separation, as expressed beautifully by Gour Govinda Swami, Jagannath is *rādhā-viraha-vidura-rūpa*, separation from Radha personified, as he still identifies himself as Krishna, and Mahaprabhu is *kṛṣṇa-viraha vidura-rūpa*, separation from Krishna personified, as he now identifies himself as Radharani. The point is that while there are differences in the feelings that they are experiencing, Jagannath and Mahaprabhu are both Krishna's *mahābhāva-prakāśa*, his empathic form, the only form in which Krishna can fulfill his three internal desires. This is why Mahaprabhu gave more attention to Jagannath, because Jagannath is the form of Gopinath that is immersed in the same feelings of Srimati Radharani that he is experiencing.

Let us consider one more point here. When Mahaprabhu was staying in the Sri Rangam temple in South India for only a few months, he missed Lord Jagannath so much that he fashioned deities of Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra with his own hands, despite there being Vishnu and Krishna deities nearby. From all this it is quite clear that Jagannath was not only his *kula-devatā* but also his *iṣṭa-deva*. In this light, when his mother Sachi Devi tells him to reside in Puri, she actually tells him to return to his beloved home deity and home culture, the Jagannath culture of Odisha. Besides, for his missionary activities, compared to the then Muslim-ruled Bengal with a history of countless Hinduphobic atrocities being conducted, Odisha, being the only remaining Hindu empire in all of eastern and northern India, turned out to be far more promising, with even the king of Puri embracing and patronizing Mahaprabhu's teachings. 🙏

(To be continued)