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Jahnava Mata, Acarya of All the Gaudiyas





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JAHNAVA MATA ACARYA OF ALL THE GAUDIYAS



His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Jahnava-mata is also within the list of Lord Nityananda's followers. She is described in the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (66) as Ananga-manjari of Vrindavan. All the devotees who are followers of Jahnava-mata are counted within the list of Sri Nityananda Prabhu's devotees. (Purport to Cc. ādi 11.22)

On Bankim Raya's right side is a deity of Jahnava, and on his left side is Srimati Radharani. The priests of the temple describe that Lord Nityananda Prabhu entered within the body of Bankim Raya and that the deity of Jahnava-mata was therefore later placed on the right side of Bankim Raya. Afterwards, many other deities were installed within the temple. On another throne within the temple are Deities of Muralidhar and Radha-Madhava. On another throne are deities of Manomohan, Vrindavan-chandra and Gaura-Nitai.



But Bankim Raya is the deity originally installed by Nityananda Prabhu. (Purport to Cc. ādi 13.61)

Prabhupada: If a woman is perfect in Krishna consciousness... Just like Jahnava-devi, Lord Nityananda's wife, she was ācārya. She was controlling the whole vaiṣṇava community.

Atreya Rishi Das: Do you have references about that in any of your books, Srila Prabhupada?

Prabhupada: I don't think. But there are many ācāryas. Maybe somewhere I might have mentioned. It is not that woman cannot be ācārya. Generally, they do not become. In very special case, Jahnava-devi was accepted, but she did not declare.

Cover: Deity of Jahnava Mata at her home in Ambika Kalna. Photo by Arjuna Bhattacharya.

Unknown photographer.



Srila Prabhupada returns from India at San Francisco airport in December of 1967. Left to right: Govinda Dasi, Saradiya Dasi, Hayagriva Das, Srila Prabhupada, unknown vaiṣṇavi, unknown male, and Malati Dasi

Atreya Rishi Das: There is a very popular topic amongst women today: they speak of liberation. Their desire to be liberated is sane, but they do not understand. I've spoken to some of these so-called liberated women, and they object strongly to Krishna consciousness, because they think we discriminate against women. So I have been taking advantage of opportunities to describe to them that the only means to liberation for men and women is through Krishna consciousness.

Prabhupada: Krishna does not make any discrimination. Whatever difference is there, it is bodily difference. But as soul, they are equal. Whatever difference we make, that is bodily difference. When one is above the bodily concept of life, there is no difference.

Why woman? Even cats and dogs. A woman is a human being. Even cats and dogs, they are the same spirit soul. So a learned scholar will see from the spiritual platform. Then there is equality. (From a conversation in San Diego. 29 June 1972.)

Professor Joseph T. O'Connell: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?

Prabhupada: Yes. Jahnava Devi, Nityananda's wife was. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why is it not possible to become guru? But not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection, *yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya* [Caitanya-caritāmṛta, madhya 8.128]. The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Krishna. Then he or she can become guru. ... In our material world, is there any prohibition that woman cannot become a professor? If she is qualified, she can become a professor. What is wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, if the woman understands Krishna consciousness perfectly, she can become guru. (Conversation in Toronto. 18 June 1976.) 🍌



The place at Ambika Kalna where it is said that Lord Nityananda married the sisters Jahnava and Vasudha

THE ENERGY OF NITYANANDA PRABHU



Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

The appearance festival of Srimati Jahnava-devi is very auspicious for the pure devotees, who are attached to the lotus feet of Sri Chaitanya. In the year 1409 or 1410 of the Śaka Era, Sri Jahnava-devi appeared at Ambika-kaln from the womb of Bhadravati, the fortunate wife of Sri Suryadas Pandit, who was a dear associate of Mahaprabhu. In due course of time, Sri Nityananda Prabhu married Sri Jahnava and her elder sister, Srimati Vasudha-devi, who were adorned with all divine qualities. In approximately 1465 Śaka, Jahnava-devi adopted as her son Ramachandra, the grandson of Sri Vamsivadananda and the son of Sri Chaitanya, and thereafter she gave him initiation. The many wonderful activities performed by Sri Jahnava-devi, who was the energy of Sri Nityananda Prabhu and who was nondifferent from Ananga-manjari, are almost unknown to the *vaiṣṇava* society. 🙏

— Śrī Bhaktivinoda Vāṇī Vaibhava. Compiled by and with questions from Sri Sundarananda Vidyavinode. Translated by Sri Bhumipati Das. 4.18. Published by Sri Iswara Das and Touchstone Media. Vrindavan. 2002.

PRAYER TO JAHNAVA MATA



Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

Kalyāna Kalpataru was the first book of songs compiled by Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode. It was published in 1881 while he was serving in Odisha as the first headmaster of Cuttack Victoria High School (known today as Bhakta Madhu Vidyapith). Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode's dikṣā-guru, Sri Bipin Bihari Goswami, was in the disciplic line of Jahnava Mata, and in the invocation of Kalyāna Kalpataru he first offers obeisances to his predecessor gurus and then prays to them for the blessings of Jahnava:

*nikhila-vaiṣṇava-jana dayā prakāsiyā
śrī-jāhnavā-pade more rākhaha ṭaniyā*

O *vaiṣṇavas*, please be merciful to me. Bring me to Jahnava-devi's feet and give me shelter there.

The following is the third song from the first chapter of the third section of Kalyāna Kalpataru:

*bhavārnave pa'de mora ākula parāṇ
kise kūla pā'ba, tā'ra nā pāi sandhān*

Having fallen into this vast ocean of material existence, my heart has become extremely worried.



Photo by Arjuna Bhattacharya

Deities at Ambika Kalna of Suryadas Pandit and his two daughters Jahnava and Vasudha

I search for the shore, but I have no idea how to reach it.

*nā āche karama-bal, nāhi jñāna-bal
yāga-yoga-tapo-dharma — nā āche sambal*

I have no strength from my previous karma nor from all my knowledge. Nor do I have any help from virtues accrued by sacrifices, yoga practice, or austerities.

*nitānta durbala āmi, nā jāni sātār
e vipade ke āmāre karibe uddhār?*

I am extremely feeble, and I don't know how to swim. Who will rescue me from this dreadful calamity?

*viśaya-kumbhīra tāhe bhīṣaṇa-darśan
kāmera taraṅga sadā kare' uttejan*

I see the horrible alligator of sense gratification present before me, and the waves of lust are constantly agitating and provoking me.

*prāttana-vāyura veḡa sahite nā pāri
kāndiyā asthira mana, nā dekhi kāṅḍārī*

I can no longer cope with the raging wind of all the bodily and mental urges accumulated in my heart due to my previous activities. I simply weep with an agitated mind, for there is no rescuer in sight.

*ogo śrī jāhnavā devī e dāse karuṇā
kara' āji nija-guṇe, ghucāo yantraṇā*

O most revered Jahnava Devi! Please show mercy to this servant today by virtue of your own good qualities, and kindly relieve all his afflictions.

*tomāra caraṇa-tarī kariyā āśray
bhavārṇava pāra ha'ba ka'rechi niścay*

By taking shelter in the boat of your lotus feet I will certainly be able to cross over this vast ocean of material existence.

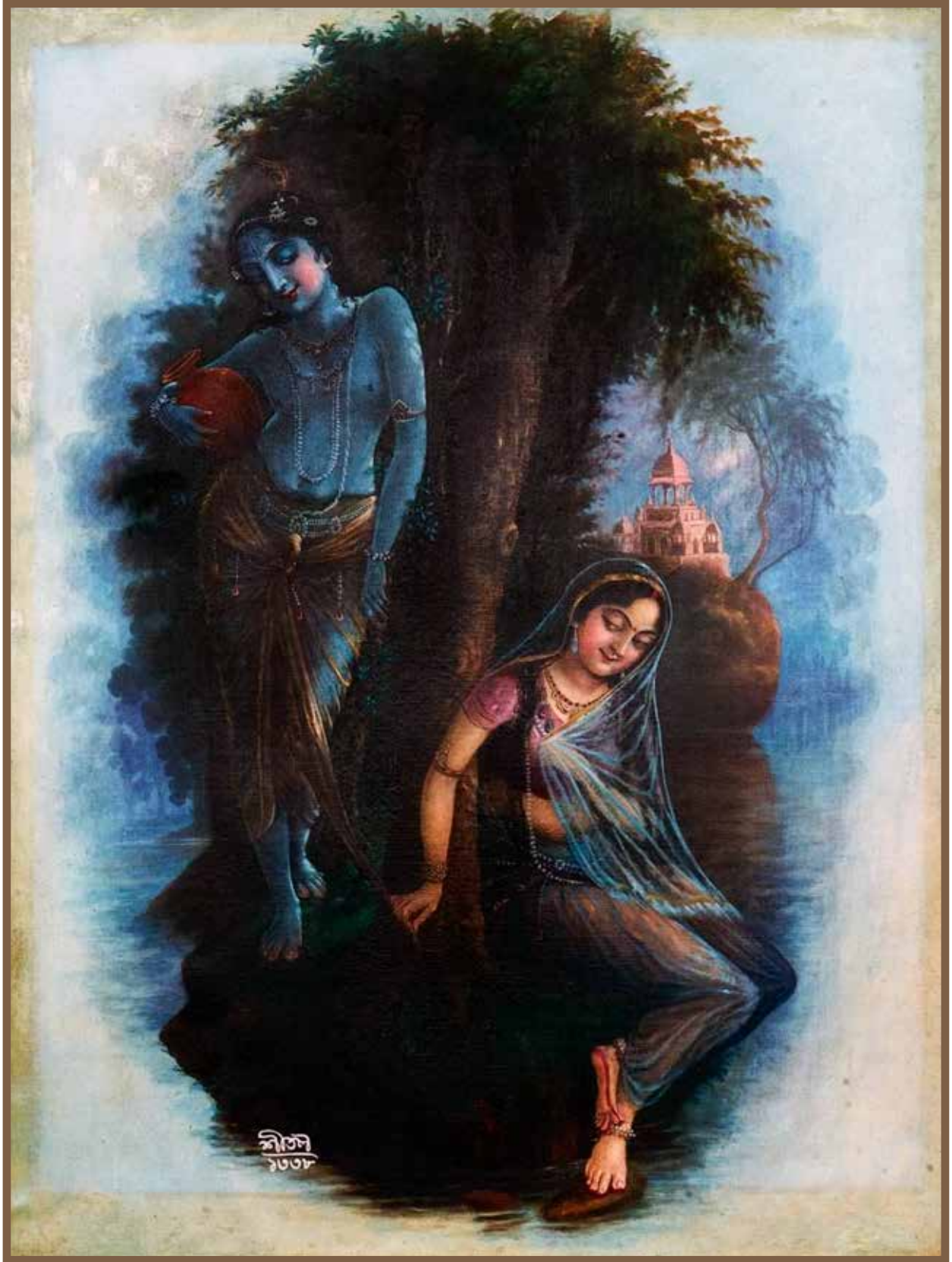
*tumi nityānanda-śakti kṛṣṇa-bhakti-guru
e dāse karaha dāna pada-kalpa-taru*

You are the potency of Lord Nityananda, and you are the teacher of devotion to Lord Krishna. Kindly bestow upon this servant the wish-fulfilling desire tree of your lotus feet.

*kata kata pāmarere ka'recha uddhār
tomāra caraṇe āja e kāṅḡāla chār*

This most wretched and shameful rogue begs at your feet today, for he sees that you are delivering many other sinners. 🍌

— Translated by Dasarath Suta Das. Nectar Books. Union City, Georgia, USA. 1988.



Painting by Sital Chandra Bandyopadhyay, West Bengal, 1931

rādha-kṛṣṇa milana
Meeting of Radha and Krishna



Photo by Vishakha Dasi.

Gurukula girls doing harinām in Seattle, Washington, 1977. Left to right:
Vrajamandala, Subhadra, Ananya, Damayanti-Tulasi, Adisvara and Tamra-Madhavi

BHAKTIVINODE IS IN THE LINE OF JAHNAVA



Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur was a *nitya-siddha-bhāgavata*, an eternal associate of Bhagavan. For preaching, *loka-sikṣa*, he accepted a guru from Jahnava Mata's line. Jahnava is the wife of Nityananda Prabhu. He had two wives, Jahnava and Vasudha. Bhaktivinode took *pañcaratrika* initiation, *dikṣā*, from Vipin Bihari Goswami, coming in that line. In 1908 he accepted *bhāgavata paramahaṁsa veṣa* — *bābajī*, not *sannyāsa* — *trīdaṇḍī-sannyāsa* was introduced by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta. But the Goswamis are all *paramahaṁsa bābajīs* — it was going on at that time. 🍌

— From a lecture in Singapore on the appearance day of Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode. 27 June 1995.

JAHNAVA MATA AND THE MISCREANTS



Adapted from Srila Narahari Chakravarti's
Śrī Bhakti-ratnākara, chapter 11, texts 30-89

When Jahnava-mata, the wife of Lord Nityananda Prabhu, went to Vrindavan, she bestowed mercy

upon everyone she met along the way. One day, arriving at a large village, Sri Jahnava saw the miserable condition of the residents and reflected upon how to make their lives glorious. Most of the villagers were *pāṣaṇḍīs*, offenders and atheists, who were accustomed to ridiculing the *vaiṣṇavas*.

That evening, the envious persons saw a group of *mahā-bhāgavatas* come to worship the lotus feet of Jahnava Thakurani. The *pāṣaṇḍīs* smiled derisively, saying, "This wife of a Brahmin has captured our attention."

One said, "These *vaiṣṇavas* are ignorant, therefore they are bowing down to a human being instead of bowing down to the demigods."

Another said, "If Chandi (Durga) gives her mercy then they will be able to understand."

Another said, "How will these fools understand? Neither this wife of a Brahmin nor the Brahmins with her have offered worship to Goddess Chandi. These *vaiṣṇavas* have committed an offense to the goddess!"

Laughing amongst themselves, the *pāṣaṇḍīs* arrogantly went to the temple of Chandi Devi. After offering obeisances again and again, they told Goddess Chandi, "This very night we will kill them. Only if they worship your lotus feet with their body, mind and words may they be saved." Saying this, the *pāṣaṇḍīs* went back to their homes and fell asleep.

Goddess Chandi indeed became angry — with the foolish demons and not with the *vaiṣṇavas*! Her eyes



Painting by Gokul Bihari Pattnaik

Jahnava Mata and her followers on their way to Vrindavan

turned red and her lips quivered in anger. Appearing in the dream of each one of those villagers, the goddess chastised them angrily with many harsh words. In roaring fury, Chandi said, “O wicked offenders! I will not tolerate your nasty activities. I will cut off your heads! You are drowning in false pride and have lost all intelligence by blaspheming the all-worshipable pure devotees of the Lord. You do not know the truth about this Brahmin’s wife. Know from me that she is the wife of Nityananda – Balaram Chandra, and is worshipable by all. Her name, Jahnava, is full of sweetness. Simply by uttering her name all material miseries are removed. She is the dear wife of Prabhu Nityananda, who is himself the manifestation of mercy, spontaneously distributing *prema-bhakti* to all the *jīvas*. There is no one who does not worship

her lotus feet. All are glorifying her and thereby destroying the miseries of this material world.”

Chandi said:

*nityānanda-priyāṁ prema-bhakti-ratna-pradāyinīm
śrī jāhnaveśvarīṁ vande tāpa-traya-nivāriṇīm*

“I worship Sri Jahnava Ishwari. She is the wife of Lord Nityananda and the giver of the jewel of *prema-bhakti*. She eradicates the three-fold miseries of material existence. [*Bhakti-ratnākara*. 11.52]

“If she bestows her mercy upon you, your life will be happy. Otherwise you will only suffer. If you surrender to her then you will escape, otherwise I will kill you all!”

After speaking in this way, the goddess disappeared. The wicked sinners at once woke up, trembling in fear. When morning arrived, with deep remorse in



Photo by Kunjabihari Das

Deity of Jahnava Mata in Ariadaha West Bengal at the place of Mahaprabhu's associate Gadhadhar Das

their hearts, they immediately went to see the exalted *vaiṣṇava mahantas* who were accompanying Jahnava-mata. With tears in their eyes, they begged forgiveness again and again, “We have committed a great offense, please excuse us. You have come only to deliver great atheists like us. Please eradicate our offenses. We take shelter at your lotus feet. Sri Ishwari, Jahnava Devi, will be pleased if we make you happy. You have the ability to both give and receive *bhakti*.” They wanted the mercy of the *mahantas*, knowing that if the *mahantas* forgave them then surely Jahnava-mata would also forgive them.

They began to pray to Jahnava Devi, “Chandi has told us that we cannot understand you in *tattva*. Please be merciful and reveal yourself to us. Otherwise how will we be able to take shelter of your lotus feet? Everyone knows that we are very wicked demons. If you deliver us then your fame will spread all over the world.” Saying this, all the *pāṣaṇḍīs* prostrated themselves at Sri Ishwari’s feet. Seeing their miserable condition, Jahnava’s heart melted, and she bestowed her mercy upon them. Receiving Jahnava’s unlimited mercy, all those *pāṣaṇḍīs* became happy. After blessing the heretics, Jahnava Devi stayed in that village for two or four days and then continued her journey. By the mercy of Jahnava-mata, all of those former *pāṣaṇḍīs* began to swim in an ocean of *bhakti*. Furthermore, those who got their association also became devotees.

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The Robbers

Continuing her journey to Vrindavan, along the way Jahnava Devi stopped at another village, a sacred place on the bank of a river. In that village were a group of *yavana* dacoits, Muslim thieves, who were very dangerous. Seeing Jahnava Devi and her associates, the thieves thought they must be carrying jewels and other valuable possessions. Deciding to rob Jahnava, they gathered different weapons and sent one of their men to find out everything about her camp. The spy reported that after finishing *nāma-kīrtana*, Jahnava Devi and her followers had all fallen asleep.

During the second half of the night the leader of the gang of bandits took many men and weapons and began running towards Jahnava’s camp. Somehow the short distance they had to cover could not be crossed, as it continually grew further and further away. Because of their wicked desires they could not understand what was happening. The distance to the camp became so far that the bandits spent the whole night running. When dawn finally began to break they became frightened. The leader of the gang was confused as to how they had run the entire night but were still in their original place in the morning.

The leader told the other thieves, “What has happened is impossible! Due to our offensive desire to steal from these *gauḍīya-sādhus*. we have run all night long for a distance that should have taken us only a few minutes. My heart is trembling out of fear, and I foresee inauspicious days ahead for us. We have committed innumerable sins and great punishment in hell awaits us. In my opinion we should beg forgiveness. Let us go to that *vaiṣṇava* woman and beg for her mercy.”

Together they gave up their bandit’s clothing and humbly approached Sri Ishwari Devi. Upon seeing the pure devotees, the dacoits received pure knowledge and were transformed. Crying, they rolled on the ground at the feet of Jahnava-mata and begged for her mercy. “We are notorious thieves. Please be merciful to us. If you will bestow your mercy on us you will be praised throughout the world.” Saying this, they became silent as tears rolled down their cheeks like rain. Sri Ishwari immediately forgave them and blessed them, and the news of her mercy towards the dacoits spread far and wide. 🌸

— Translated by Bhakti Nilachal Swami. From the Gaudiya Mission edition of *Śrī Bhakti-ratnākara*. Bagbazar, Calcutta. 1987

