

Dedication

This book is dedicated to those devotees who helped and inspired me in my first days of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I especially remember Prabhaviṣṇu Swami, Vicitravīrya Prabhu, Rohiṇīnandana Dāsa, Janānanda Dāsa and Kālakaṅṭha Dāsa for their good example and kindness. I should have said it long before, but anyway I'm saying it now—Thank you.

Bhakti Vikāsa Swami

Foreword

Despite his wild appearance, Śrīla Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja is a bona fide saint of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sampradāya. He was accepted as such by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. All the calendars published annually by the Gauḍīya Maṭha and its branches and sub-branches. record his disappearance day as does the calendar produced by ISKCON. However, until the publication of this book, few devotees of the western world have heard the name of Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī. It is with great pleasure then, and in expectation of

the blessings of Śrīla Vamśīdāsa Bābājī and of my readers, that I am able to present this book. I admit my inability to describe Vamśīdāsa Bābājī properly and request the readers to overlook the faults in my presentation. May Bābājī Mahārāja bless us all.

Bhakti Vikāsa Swami

About the Author

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He has written several books, including *Vaiṣṇava Śikha*, *O Sādhana* (Bengali), *Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava Padyāvalī* (Bengali-Compiler), *A Beginner's Guide to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness*, *Brahmācārya in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness*, *A Message to the Youth of India*, *Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda!* and *Vamśī Dāsa Bābājī*. His books have been translated into several languages.

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Preface

I first met Śrī Jati Śekhara Dāsa in 1986 at his home in Cuttack, Orissa. I was researching the life of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, who Jati Śekhara was initiated by. When Jati Śekhara Prabhu mentioned the name of Vamśīdāsa Bābājī, I asked him to tell me more, for I had heard of Vamśīdāsa before. For the next few hours, to my delight, Jati Śekhara Prabhu elaborated on the character and activities

of Śrīla Vamśīdāsa Bābājī. Jati Śekhara Prabhu personally saw Vamśīdāsa do and say many wonderful things and testified how he was a *mahā-puruṣa* in *vātsalya-rasa*.

Jati Śekhara Prabhu presented me with a booklet that he had written in Oriya about Vamśīdāsa Bābājī. In that book, he has described some of the travels of Bābājī Mahārāja. Jati Śekhara Prabhu was with Bābājī Mahārāja on a trip to Puri. The details of that journey were kept in a diary by Jati Śekhara Prabhu. Similar journals were kept by other devotees who travelled with Vamśīdāsa in North India. The details thus recorded have been reproduced in Jati Śekhara Prabhu's book. That booklet, plus what Jati Śekhara Prabhu told me, form the basis of this book. There are also several anecdotes told by Bhakti Bardhaka Sāgara Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who appears in this book as Ananta Viśvambhāra (his *brahmācārī* name). Like Jati Śekhara Prabhu, he had spent time with Vamśīdāsa Bābājī. The introduction is also based on a talk given by Jati Śekhara Prabhu.

I also consulted the short biography of Vamśīdāsa Bābājī given in Haridāsa Dāsa's Bengali book *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Jīvana*, but found it to be full of errors and imaginations. The few correct facts in it are so mixed up with historical and technical inaccuracies as to render it almost worthless. Some of the stories therein may be true. However, the book is generally unreliable, its author being far from the true conception of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

There is a similar book in Hindi that portrays Vamśīdāsa Bābājī as being in the so-called "Gaurāṅga-nagarī *bhāva*." This is, of course, nonsense. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura fought his whole life against *sahajiyās*, Gaurāṅga-nagarīs, purveyors of imaginary mantras, and other charlatans in the guise of Vaiṣṇavas. If Vamśīdāsa Bābājī had been a Gaurāṅga-nagarī, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would certainly not have respected him.

The actual fact is that Vamśīdāsa Bābājī was a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Although unorthodox in his practices, he never deviated from the correct *siddhānta* or became influenced by the speculations of pseudo-Vaiṣṇavas. Contrary to the misinformation given in these books, Vamśīdāsa have been taken as extreme eccentricity or mundane

madness. However, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura has confirmed that Vamśīdāsa's behaviour corresponds with that of topmost devotees as described in all Vedic literature.

It may be questioned that if liberated souls such as Vamśīdāsa Bābājī have nothing to do with the material world, then what is the reason for their coming here? Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura gives us the answer: *darśane pavitra koro, ei tomāra guṇa*, "Just by seeing a great devotee, one is purified." We cannot measure the contribution of all devotees in terms of how many temples they establish or how many disciples they make. Devotees like Vamśīdāsa Bābājī greatly benefit us just by their presence. By seeing them, one becomes purified; by hearing about them, one also becomes purified. Therefore, this book should be read by devotees with great reverence and care for the sake of purification.

Preface to the Second Edition

Since publishing the first edition of Vamśīdāsa Bābājī I was able to visit Bābājī Mahārāja's birth place at Majitpur and collect more information about him.

As a result, I have been able to include more information about Vamśīdāsa's early life in Majitpur, as given by his descendants and a local biographer. Some corrections have been made, the text has been slightly revised and reorganised, and short chapters on "Vamśīdāsa and Casteism" and "Majitpur Today" added.

Jati Śekhara Prabhu departed from this world on the 6th February 1995, the advent day of Advaita Ācārya Prabhu.

Introduction

Three *bābājīs* of Navadvīpa—Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, Śrīla Gaura-Kiśora Dāsa Bābājī, and Śrīla Vamśīdāsa Bābājī—were all absorbed in deep devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Sentiments of this kind have been described in Vaiṣṇava literature headed by *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*. As staunch devotees in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*, these great saints have shown us the importance of worshipping Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Lord Caitanya is the most merciful incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is *mādhurya-vigraha*, the embodiment of sweetness, but that sweetness is not readily accessible to conditioned souls. However, when Śyāmasundara (Kṛṣṇa) appeared as Gaurasundara (Lord Caitanya), He came as *audarya-vigraha*—the embodiment of munificence. This time He appeared especially to benefit the poor, depressed people of Kali-yuga. Kṛṣṇa is unapproachable to offenders, but in the form of Lord Caitanya, He is not so strict. If anyone says the name "Gaurāṅga" with a little faith or even with no faith, Lord Caitanya immediately overlooks all offences and makes that person eligible to receive Kṛṣṇa-prema. It is this all-merciful Lord Caitanya, along with His brother Lord Nityānanda, who our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* teach us to approach.

Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, Gaura-Kiśora Dāsa Bābājī, and Vamśīdāsa Bābājī worshipped Lord Caitanya. As *bhajanānandī sādhus*, they were not engaged in preaching work but in intense *bhajana* (worship, principally by chanting and remembering the names, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Caitanya and Kṛṣṇa). They practised austerity and renunciation at a level not imitable by ordinary persons. Being *paramahamsas* (perfect devotees), they did not observe all the rules necessary for immature devotees. They did not chant any fixed number of mantras, nor did they have *jaṇa-mālas*, nor did they wear *tilaka*, nor did they follow regulated daily programmes of *sādhana*.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura has written in his *Aiśvarya Kadambinī* that devotees on the higher level of devotional service, following *mānasa-bhajana* (devotional service performed principally in the mind) do not want any restrictions on their free flowing offering of spontaneous love to Kṛṣṇa.

This elevated level of devotional service is not to be imitated. In *Bhakti-rasdmṛta-sindhu*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvami has given us a warning:

*śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pañcarātra-vidhiṃ vinā
aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpate*

"The rules and regulations of devotional service, as given in all scriptures, are absolutely essential. If one tries to perform *hari-bhakti* without following these rules, his so-called devotion will simply cause disturbance."

However, in the same book, Rūpa Goswami gives the following instruction:

*smartavyaḥ satataṃ viṣṇur vismartavyo na jātucit
sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ syur etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ*

"Always remember Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu) and never forget Him. All rules and regulations are subservient to this one."

For a reluctant student, a disciplined atmosphere is necessary to see him through his course. However, an eager student does not need inducement or pressure to open his books. Similarly, rules and regulations are required for those who have not developed a spontaneous taste for devotional service. To devotees who have already attained the elevated stage of advanced devotion, rules and regulations serve no meaningful purpose.

Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī is a topmost *paramahansa* devotee. His character and behaviour is not easy to understand. Even reading about him may not help much in comprehending him. We should not misunderstand and make erroneous judgements based on limited experience.

The behaviour of Vaṁśīdāsa was so unusual that only the most advanced devotees, those on the same level of perfection, could clearly recognize his greatness. Had Srila Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī not informed us of the actual position of Śrīla Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, his transcendental ecstatic behaviour would probably Bābājī never associated with such deviants. Rather, he decried their activities.

From other sources also, I heard several amazing narrations of Vaṁśīdāsa, but I have not included any stories not confirmed by a reliable source.

My job has been to get the Oriya book translated, coordinate and organize my source materials, present it in understandable modern English, form the manuscript into a book, and get it published. If anyone has more information about Vamśīdāsa from authentic sources, please inform me so that I can include it in a future edition.

Jati Śekhara Prabhu says, "I am very humble, very weak and very much in the clutches of *māyā*, so I am unable to speak anything properly about him. I speak as he is merciful to appear in my mind. Please excuse me. I pray to all the Vaiṣṇavas. Please be merciful to me so that I may remember Vamśīdāsa wherever I am. *Vamśīdāsa-smarane sakala-vidhina-nāśa*: "Simply by remembering Vamśīdāsa all obstacles are destroyed. I may be far away from Vamśīdāsa, but remembering him is my *bhajana*."

Śrīla Vamśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja ki jaya!

Bhakti Vikasa Swami
Baroda, India
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Life Overview

Vamśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja appeared in this world in 1859, in the village of Majitpur (at that time part of the Mymensingh district of East Bengal, British India; now under Pakundiya police station in the Kishorganj District of modern Bangladesh).

His father was Sanātana Mallabrahma (Barman), a poor fisherman. His mother, Śrīmatī Sarvasundarī, a typical pious Hindu woman of the time, was much taken to fasts, austerities and vows for the benefit of her family members. Their first son, Bhairab Chandra, born in 1859, was later to become famous as Vamśīdāsa Bābājī. Two other sons, Kulachandra and Rajachandra, followed, along with four daughters.

As was customary for all caste Hindus, Bhairab Chandra took initiation from his family's guru, who was from the Narottama Parivāra¹ of

Jamalpur.

Like many of the fishing caste in Bengal even today, Bhairab was brought up in extreme poverty. His family survived from day to day on whatever fish they could catch. Life was rough, devoid of any comforts or niceties. There was no question of education. Young Bhairab only had to learn how to catch and sell fish. That was to be his life. Nothing more was to be expected or hoped for.

Bhairab would spend his days at the river with his father and other fishermen. But returning home at sunset, he would make his way to the Gaura-Nitāi temple in the neighbouring village of Jamalpur.ⁱⁱ² There, in the rough village dialect that was the only language he knew, he heard from a Vaiṣṇava guru, Narottama Dāsa Bābājī of Nigoya, of the temporality of material life, the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and the glories of the holy name.

It is quite probable that at this time also, Vamśīdāsa learned the songs of Narottama Dāsa that were to be the succour of his life. Indeed, Narottama's songs were deliberately composed in simple language to make the highest Vedic truths available even to the uneducated.

Then, as now, Bengal's villages were infested with bogus misrepresents of Vaiṣṇavism. Some took Vaiṣṇavism as a licence for debauchery; others made money out of cheap presentations of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Bhairab was never attracted to such pretenders, but heard carefully from his guru and kept close to his lotus feet.

Gradually, Bhairab started to spend most of the night hours at the guru's *āśrama*. Seeing his growing indifference to worldly affairs, his parents anxiously arranged for his marriage. However, Bhairab's apathy to material life continued to grow. Shortly after marriage, Bhairab left home, abandoning his young wife and six month old son to become a renunciate. He took spiritual initiation from Narottama Dāsa Bābājī, who renamed him "Vamśīdāsa." Later, Vamśīdāsa was usually referred to simply as "Bābājī Mahārāja."

Although his previous life had hardly been one of comfort, he now became severely austere. The tattered dhoti or gamcha (bathing cloth) that he was accustomed to wear was now replaced by a loincloth only. Vamśīdāsa remained in the Nigoya Akhra (*āśrama*) in Jamalpur for a few days and worshipped the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

After living for three years in a *pañcavaṭī*ⁱⁱⁱ³ in Majitpur, he set off to tour holy places throughout India. After travelling long and wide, he finally came to Navadvīpa, where he remained for most of his life. At the end of his life, he returned to Majitpur and departed the world from there.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura came to hear of the exalted position of Vamśīdāsa Bābājī. In 1903, they first had his *darśana* in Navadvīpa. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used to say that Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, Śrīla Gaura-Kiśora Dāsa Bābājī, and Śrīla Vamśīdāsa Bābājī were all close associates and are always worthy of worship by devotees. Vamśīdāsa is not known to have physically spent much or even any time with either Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī or Gaura-Kiśora Dāsa Bābājī. However, as they are all *nitya-siddha mahā-bhāgavatas*, they always associate together on the spiritual platform of service to the servants of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana.

The Character of Vamśīdāsa

Paramahansa bābājīs in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition do not follow any regulations of scripture, neither the worldly ones of the *varṇāśrama* system nor those meant for spiritual advancement by the process of *sādhana-bhakti*. Thus they are known as *avadhūtas* (devotees beyond ordinary rules), and their behaviour often appears eccentric to ordinary people.

However, even among *avadhūta* babajis, the character of Vamśīdāsa Bābājī is unique. His behaviour was so unusual that in any culture less spiritually enlightened than that of India, he would almost certainly have been considered crazy. Although physically present in this world, he had little connection with it. He was about six feet tall and strongly built. His hair and beard were uncut, matted, and dishevelled. He never took bath, and his eyes looked wild. He wore a loincloth only and nothing more.

Although Vamśīdāsa looked dirty and bedraggled, he was healthy and strong due to his direct, ecstatic contact with Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes Bābājī Mahārāja fasted for many days, not even taking water. Sometimes, when he travelled, devotees could not keep up with him even when Vamśīdāsa was more than eighty years old. Even when he was unwell, he ate foods that were liable to increase his sickness. Still, without impediment, he continued his *bhajana* and travelling. In regards to the sage Kardama Muni (who, before marrying Devahūti, also appeared unkempt), Śrīla Prabhupāda makes the following remarks:

He (Kardama Muni) looked healthy because he had directly received the nectarean sound vibrations from the lotus lips of the Personality of Godhead. Similarly, one who hears the transcendental sound vibration, Hare Kṛṣṇa, also improves in health. We have actually seen that many *brahmacārīs* and *grhasthas* connected with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness have improved in health, and a lustre has come to their faces. The comparison of the sage to an unpolished gem is very appropriate. Even if a gem just taken from a mine looks unpolished, the lustre of the gem cannot be stopped. Similarly, although Kardama was not properly dressed and his body was not properly cleansed, his overall appearance was gemlike. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.21.45, purport)

As with Kardama Muni, Vamśīdāsa's uncommon appearance could not hide his transcendental prowess.

The unconventional ways of Vamśīdāsa also remind us of Lord Nityānanda Avadhūta. The behaviour of Lord Nityānanda and His followers was inexplicable to all except those blessed by them. For example, Lord Nityānanda sometimes came to the home of Lord Caitanya completely naked. Although fully grown, he sometimes acted like an infant child and sucked the breast of Mālinī, the wife of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura. Gadādhara Dāsa sometimes forgot himself and called out loudly like a *gopī* selling milk. Murāri Caitanya used to slap tigers and stay underwater for days on end. Abhirāma Ṭhākura used to beat people with a whip named Jaya Maṅgala. Anyone touched by that whip would immediately become ecstatic in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Similarly, Vamśīdāsa often spoke in an unintelligible manner with little apparent connection between one sentence and the next. His words were rendered even more incomprehensible by his Mymensingh dialect,

which was unintelligible to the residents of Navadvīpa. However, he also understood and spoke standard Bengali. Sometimes what he was saying could fairly easily be understood. At other times the meaning could only be guessed at. Who he was talking to and what he was talking about was also often unclear. However, everything he said was related to Kṛṣṇa. Those devotees who had a little insight into his unique realizations could have some appreciation of what he was saying.

Sometimes, according to his desire, Bābājī Mahārāja narrated *līlās* of the different places in Braja Maṇḍala. Sometimes he narrated *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. At other times he heartily sang the glories of Navadvīpa Maṇḍala.

Sometimes he laughed long and loud. Sometimes he madly told stories of *gaura-līlā* and *kṛṣṇa-līlā* in a disjointed manner—jumping from one story to another without even finishing one—according to the flow of his mind. Sometimes he was completely silent for long periods.

Sometimes he talked only with his Gopāla, ignoring the presence of others. Then again he would loudly call out, “Bhakata-vatsala Hari! Prāṇa-vallabha Hari!”

Bābājī Mahārāja often sang songs of his own composition. Although these impromptu songs had no proper metre, rhyme, or tune, they issued from a heart filled with simple, pure devotion and thus were more pleasing to Kṛṣṇa than many thousands of expertly arranged Vedic hymns.

Vaṁśīdāsa hardly ever spoke with anyone except his Deities and a few intimate devotees. He would not speak to others directly. Even if they spoke to him, he would reply to them by talking to his Deities. Even with his constant associates, Vaṁśīdāsa would not talk much. He would often abuse one of his servants, calling him a “*harāma jyāda*,” which means “a big pig.”

Many people approached Vaṁśīdāsa with all kinds of offerings and religious questions, or simply to take his *darśana*. However, Bābājī Mahārāja had little interest in meeting outside people and frequently seemed to be unaware of their presence. Even if he did answer questions, his replies often seemed to make little sense. Many times such questioners would leave disappointed. Vaṁśīdāsa knew the motive and mood of everyone who came to see him. If he liked a person who came and asked a question, he would answer to his Deities and not directly to

that person. Generally, those who approached Vamśidāsa with a sincere motive would get a satisfactory reply. Sometimes devotees would go to Vamśidāsa with a question, but they might not express it to him directly—not saying it out loud. However, Vamśidāsa would speak to his Deities and answer that unspoken question. Someone else might go to him and be ignored. Thus Bābājī Mahārāja was unpredictable. Not only did Vamśidāsa shun the company of ordinary worldly people, but he also did not mix with the many pseudo-Vaiṣṇavas living in Navadvīpa at that time. Despite his apparent wildness, Vamśidāsa Bābājī was not without a keen sense of discrimination. He rigidly stuck to the principle of *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaf prātikūlyasya varjanam*: accepting everything favourable for the execution of his devotional service and rejecting everything unfavourable for it. He discerned the intention of those who approached him and was always careful to avoid bad association.

Asat-saṅga tyāga—*ei vaiṣṇava ācāra*: avoiding the association of persons uninterested in pure *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* is the first principle of Vaiṣṇava behaviour. At that time, many people belonging to *apasampradāyas* (unauthorized, deviant sects) were posing as devotees and crowding Navadvīpa with their imaginative ideas and practices. Ordinary people might accept anyone wearing *tilaka* and neck beads as a great devotee. However, pure devotees of Lord Caitanya exercise their discrimination and reject imitators. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was particularly outspoken in his deprecation of the *apasampradāyas*. Vamśidāsa often loudly called out the names of Hari. He would call out names such as “Govardhana-dhārī Hari,” “Prāṇa-vallabha Hari,” and so on. But he especially often called out, “Bhakata-vatsala Hari,” the word “Hari” being out loudly, the last syllable being drawn out plaintively. Sometimes he would go on and on, loudly calling out these names over and over again.

Bābājī Mahārāja was fond of Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura’s songs, especially “*Nitāi-pada-kamala*,” which he would sing every day in a sweet voice. He often sang or quoted, “*nitāiyer karuṇā habe, braje rādhā kṛṣṇa pābe*. By the mercy of Lord Nityānanda, one can attain to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.” From the free manner in which he quoted them, it appears that he had learned Narottama Dāsa’s *Prārthanā* and *Prema-*

bhakti-candrikā by heart. Sometimes he quoted lines from these songs and spoke out his emotions generated by those words. Then again he would quote more lines, maybe from a different song or from a different part of the same song.^{iv4}

Vaṁśīdāsa always thought of Rādhā's and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes or Mahāprabhu's and Nityānanda Prabhu's pastimes. He always sang songs about Them and always served Them with great love.

Vaṁśīdāsa saw everything in a Kṛṣṇa conscious way. For example, he might hear someone say the word "government" and he would exclaim, "Oh, Govardhana. Govardhana-dhārī." He converted everything and related it to Kṛṣṇa.

Vaṁśīdāsa never referred to himself in the first person ("I" and "mine"), but spoke of himself in the third person ("Vaṁśīdāsa" or sometimes just "Vaṁśī"). For instance, he would not say, "I had to go there," but rather he would say, "Vaṁśīdāsa had to go there."

Although living in another world, Bābājī Mahārāja was not totally unaware of what was happening around him in this world. When necessary, he expressed external consciousness. For instance, he sometimes ordered his associates to make travel arrangements. He dealt with the outside world mostly through his companions, for he seldom spoke to outsiders directly.

Even though Vaṁśīdāsa appeared to talk like a mad-man, he never said anything inconsistent with the correct conclusion of the scriptures. Everything he said was in line with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*. There are many people who pretend to be advanced devotees, but those who are actually absorbed in the spontaneous, loving mood of devotion to Kṛṣṇa never deviate from the correct philosophy. For one who is a pretender, this is not possible.

His Deities

Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja mostly stayed in Navadvīpa town, in the area of Raniganj.^{v5} He lived there in a *bhajana-kuṭīra* (a tiny cottage

made from mud and thatch) with his Deities of Śrī Gaura, Gadādhara and Nityānanda, Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, and Bāla Gopāla.^{vi6}

Vaṁśīdāsa's whole existence was simply to be with his Deities. He would talk day and night with Them, and was hardly aware of anything else. His Deities, some *kaupīnas*^{vii7} and a few odds and ends were his only possessions.

Vaṁśīdāsa was especially attached to his Gopāla Deity, who he carried everywhere in his right hand. His Rādhā-Govinda Deities were six inches high and made of *aṣṭadhātu*.^{viii8} His Gaura-Nitāi Deities were three feet high and made of wood.

Vaṁśīdāsa worshipped the Deities in his own way, with no knowledge of rules and regulations. There was no formal system of worship, no proper routine, no *siṁhāsana*, or any other such arrangement. He simply offered flowers that he collected nearby at mid-day.

Without mantras, *pūjā*, ringing of bells or any such thing, he offered food to his Deities just by giving it to Them. Sometimes he fed Them and sometimes he didn't. Sometimes he cooked and offered fried chickpeas. Sometimes he cooked kichari.

There was no set time, system, or standard. He never put the Deities to sleep, woke Them up, or anything like that.

Vaṁśīdāsa's mode of worship was simply to see his Deities, live with Them, and talk with Them in a most intimate and informal manner—sometimes laughing and sometimes quarreling with Them. He hardly spoke to anyone of this world, but would spend all day talking to his beloved Deities, especially Gopāla and Gaura-Nitāi. In the morning, on rising, he would recite the first verse of the well-known Sanskrit prayers to the guru that begin with the words, “*Akhaṇḍa-maṇḍalākaram*.”^{ix9} *Then all day he would simply be plunged in bhāva. He would talk on and on with his Deities, in his thick Mymensingh dialect. Sometimes he would stop speaking, as if to listen to what They were saying, and then he would again go on talking. He would ask his Deities such questions as, “Did you take Your food? How did You find it?” Nobody else could hear what His Deities said, and he never revealed what They said to anyone.*

Vaṁśīdāsa had no proper dress for his Deities, simply some old pieces of rag that he never changed. In winter, he covered his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa

Deities with a small cloth, but even that was torn and dirty. When travelling to Purī or Vṛndāvana, he would carry Gopāla in his hand. His servants would wrap the other Deities in a cloth and carry Them in a basket.

Even while travelling, whether on a bullock cart, in a boat, or on foot, Vamśīdāsa would go on and on talking to Gopāla. On halting, Vamśīdāsa would spend hours on end within his tent. He did not go here and there or take interest in the place he had come to or its inhabitants. He was happy to be with his Lord and did not want anything more than that. Vamśīdāsa simply loved Kṛṣṇa and knew nothing else, being ever absorbed in the mood of parental devotion (*vātsalya-rasa*). He cared for his Gopāla as a darling child, and attended to Him just as a father looks after his son. In this way, he worshipped Kṛṣṇa not with formal rituals but from his heart.

Journey to Vṛndāvana

When in Koladvīpa (Navadvīpa), Bābājī Mahārāja accepted with satisfaction the service rendered by devotees of the Caitanya Maṭha. On Monday, February 24, 1941, he started from Navadvīpa towards Vṛndāvana. Some devotees asked to go with him, and he accepted their proposal.

On his journey towards Vṛndāvana, he stayed for two days in Katwa under a big banyan tree in the place where Lord Caitanya accepted *sannyāsa*. From there he went on to Bhagalpur where he stayed for one day in the railway station and then four days on the bank of the Gaṅgā. He reached Gayā by train on March 3. In Gayā, he stayed for three days on the bank of the river Phālgū near the famous temple of Viṣṇupāda. Many people came to take *darśana* of Bābājī Mahārāja and offer him gifts. However, Bābājī Mahārāja told his servants to throw their presents in the river. Then he left that place.

Leaving Gayā on March 6, he reached Daśāśvamedha Ghāṭa^{x10} at Vārāṇasī (Kāśī) at 1:00 p.m. the next day. There he wanted to listen to

Sanātana Śikṣā. The Vaiṣṇavas of the nearby Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha went there for Vamśīdāsa's *darśana* and read out the Sanātana Śikṣā, the twentieth chapter of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā*. While listening to this reading, Bābājī Mahārāja was overcome with ecstatic love. Being moved to tears, for two hours he sat motionless and remained absorbed in hearing the reading. Vamśīdāsa's servants pitched his tent near the bank of the Gaṅgā.

From 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on March 7, he travelled by boat on the Gaṅgā and cooked for his Deities even though the strong sun-rays were beaming down on him. At 6:00 p.m. that day, he went towards Ayodhyā by train.^{xi11}

For three days in Ayodhyā he stayed on the banks of the river Sarāyu. There he worshipped his Deities and sang songs about the Lord's pastimes. Then he shifted to the shelter of an adjacent banyan tree. Next he went on towards Prayāga. After residing for ten days there, he moved on towards Mathurā on March 21.

Reaching Mathurā on March 22, Bābājī Mahārāja first spent two days on the eastern side of Viśrama Ghāṭa on the river Yamunā. Then he entered Vṛndāvana and remained there for nine days. In Vṛndāvana, he was happy to cook for his two beloved Deities of Braja, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Near the temple of Lāla Babu, under a *nīma* tree, Vamśīdāsa resided for three days. Then, under a *tamāla* tree and *keli-kadamba* tree on the bank of the Mānasa Sarovara, he remained for eight days, happily remembering the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. After crossing the river Yamunā, he stayed nine days on a sand-bank island in the middle of the river; another day on another sand-bank on a branch of the Yamunā; one day next to the Govinda temple; two days in front of a *samādhi* in Kaliya-daha; eight days on the eastern side of Sūrya Kuṇḍa in Nandagram; four days under a *pīlu* tree; and another nine days in the middle of the Yamunā opposite Vamśī-vaṭ. Not noticing the hardships of such a way of life, he simply remained happy in love of Kṛṣṇa, whom he carried with him everywhere as his inseparable companion and friend.

Return to Navadvīpa

Suddenly, Bābājī Mahārāja had a strong urge to go back to Navadvīpa. So he left on the morning train from Mathurā and reached Hathras Junction. Then he walked to Tundla. From there he reached Gayā by train. He took rest near a hill-side by Gayā station and caught a train at 5:00 p.m. On May 23, 1941, he reached Navadvīpa station. Hearing of Bābājī Mahārāja's return to Navadvīpa, many devotees from Māyāpura daily came to have his *darśana* and glorify him.

Back in Navadvīpa he said to Mahāprabhu and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, "I've been to Nanda Mahārāja's house at Nandagram, and I've seen the churning pot. I've seen Nanda and Yaśodā's house at Gokula, but I could not see Nanda and Yaśodā. Only the stones I have seen." His mood was that he was always searching for Kṛṣṇa and lamenting that he could not find Him.

Journey to Jagannātha Purī

On March 4, 1943, after spending two years in Navadvīpa, Vamśīdāsa went by boat on the Gaṅgā towards Ambikā Kālnā.^{xiii12} He took the Deities of Śrī Gaura, Śrī Nityānanda, and Śrī Advaita; Śrī Bāla-Gopāla (Laḍḍu Gopāla); and Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. From Kālnā he went to Śāntipura,^{xiii13} and then, walking and walking, reached Purī on March 31.

Jati Śekhara Prabhu, who was at that time a *brahmacārī*, accompanied Vamśīdāsa on this journey, walking with him from Navadvīpa to Purī and most of the way back. Jati Śekhara noted that in all he spent about three months with Bābājī Mahārāja, but he never once saw him pass stool or urine nor see him take bath. Jati Śekhara Prabhu noted details of his travels with Bābājī Mahārāja in his diary.

Jati Śekhara observed that as Bābājī Mahārāja passed by on the road,

people recognized him as a *mahā-puruṣa* and came with offerings such as ghee, flour and sugar. Sometimes the residents of villages he was passing through would collect all kinds of food items and arrange a festival in his honour. But Vamśīdāsa never cared for the villagers or their arrangements. He would just continue on his journey. Sometimes the devotees would stop in one village to cook for themselves, but Vamśīdāsa didn't care if they were with him or not and often went on without them..

Bābājī Mahārāja's movements were unpredictable. Sometimes he walked, sometimes he stopped, and sometimes he cooked for the Deity. There was no saying when he would start or stop. It could be at any time of the day or night. Keeping up with him was difficult.

Vamśīdāsa Bābājī cooked and ate very little and only ate what he cooked himself. He used a small clay stove and a small brass cooking pot.

Assistants brought wood and he cooked once or twice a week. Other times he would not eat. Most of the time he fasted. Another *bābājī*, Jagabandhu Dāsa, would daily offer *bālyā-bhoga* (uncooked items such as chipped rice and fruit) to Vamśīdāsa's Deities. After eating, Vamśīdāsa called the devotees and gave out the remnants of his food. But those companions never personally ate the remnants. They carefully wrapped Vamśīdāsa's remnants and sent them to Vṛndāvana and Māyāpura. The Gauḍīya mission gave three men to travel with Vamśīdāsa, mainly for the purpose of getting his remnants. After packaging his remnants (cooked rice, vegetables, etc.), one man took them to Māyāpura. All the devotees in Māyāpura eagerly awaited Vamśīdāsa's remnants. Some of Vamśīdāsa's remnants were sent to the Rādhā-Ramaṇa Gera Goswamis.^{xiv}14 The Goswamis eagerly took Vamśīdāsa's remnants—never mind that it had "spoiled." While Vamśīdāsa was staying at Navadvīpa, someone would always stay near him just to get his *prasāda* and bring it to the other devotees. This was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's instruction.

In Purī, he first lived on the beach. Then he stayed at Panchakot near Svarga-dvāra in front of the palace of the king. Once, on the beach by the sea, he said to Gopāla, "Will You take bath now in the sea?" Then he called the waves, "Come here, Come here." Big waves came near and Vamśīdāsa was able to bathe Gopāla.

On April 5, 1943, Vamśīdāsa left that place and went to stay at the western gate of the Jagannātha temple. He remained there in his usual mood of ecstatic emotion. While he was staying at the western gate of the Jagannātha temple, Śrīpad Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Goswami, at that time the head of the Gauḍīya Mission, came from the Puruṣottama Maṭha. Bhaktipradīp Tīrtha Mahārāja and some *brahmacārīs* of the maṭha performed *saṅkīrtana* with *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas*. After hearing that *kīrtana*, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “*taṭa taṭa hari khol phāte būk phaṭe na*. By chanting and meditating the *mṛdaṅga* breaks but the heart doesn’t break.” When the assembled devotees heard this, they paid their obeisances to the feet of Bābājī Mahārāja and, becoming silent, sat down there.

After staying at the western gate for some time, he moved to the banyan tree near Śrī Guṇḍicā Mandira, which Bābājī Mahārāja called “Vamśī-vaṭ.” He resided there with his Deities. However, some Shaivites there gave him trouble. These people wore only loin cloths and smeared ashes all over their bodies. In this way they posed as *sādhus* and collected donations from pilgrims. Seeing Bābājī Mahārāja’s unkempt appearance, they took it for granted that he was a similar kind of cheater. Unable to understand his exalted position, they resented his having come to “their” area. Afraid that he would interfere with their collecting business, they called Bābājī Mahārāja bad names, spoke to him harshly, and threatened him. Seeing that Bābājī Mahārāja was undisturbed, they set fire to his tent. Fortunately, at that time, some devotees of the Puruṣottama Maṭha came there to have *darśana* of Bābājī Mahārāja. With the help of the police, they drove the Shaivites away.

One day, Bābājī Mahārāja saw an elephant walking on the main road in Purī. As was the custom, people would put money in its trunk. The elephant would then pass the money to the elephant-rider on its back. Seeing this, Bābājī Mahārāja remarked, “*Se sambandha nāhi jāra bṛthā janma gelo tāra / ei paśu boro durācāra*. That elephant is serving its master but I cannot serve my master.” This was quote from the song, “*Nitāi-pada-kamala*,” which is actually written, *sei paśu boro durācāra*: “For one who has no relationship with Lord Nityānanda, his life is useless and he is a great rascal, just like an animal.” But when Vamśīdāsa saw the elephant, instead of saying, “*sei paśu*” (that animal), he said, “*ei*

paśu” (this animal), referring to himself in all humility.

At the time of Ratha-yātrā, when the chariot of Lord Jagannātha was passing by the banyan tree where Bābājī Mahārāja was camped, it came to a halt for some hours. Despite much struggle, the people could not move the Lord’s chariot. However, after Bābājī Mahārāja had some intimate conversations with Lord Jagannātha, the chariot moved again.

Bābājī Mahārāja Leaves Purī

Leaving Nilācala (Purī) by bullock cart, starting from the Guṇḍicā temple, Bābājī Mahārāja arrived at the Malatipatpur railway station (the first station after Purī) on July 8, 1943. From there he went to Khurda Road station by train. At Khurda Road, he stayed for two days under a small tree. After passing about fifteen miles by bullock cart, he arrived in the village of Mukundapur. Then, walking fifteen miles through thick, dangerous forest inhabited by tigers and lions, he stopped close to the village of Kujimahā. He remained there for four days, remembering the forest of Vṛndāvana within his heart. Many people, from tiny children to the old and infirm came to see Bābājī Mahārāja, bringing him many presents. Being pleased and showing mercy to them, Bābājī Mahārāja accepted their gifts, for which they were grateful. One gift he accepted was some simple green leaves (spinach), given by an old woman, which he cooked and offered to his Deities. Then he went by bullock cart to the place known as Mundumuhana, which is situated on the southern side of the river Kathajudi. Going on by boat, he arrived at Cuttack on July 13, 1943.

In Cuttack, he lived under a banyan tree near Badaburuje, “Sunshine Field.” His visit to Cuttack was not publicized, but even so, many people came and brought numerous gifts. It was a spontaneous reaction by the public, but Bābājī Mahārāja did not accept anything. Residing under that tree, he loudly chanted, “Bhakata-vatsala Hari!” At that time, Śyāmasundara Bābājī, Dāmodara Brahmācārī, and Jati Śekhara Brahmācārī of the Gauḍīya Mission came there to assist Bābājī

Mahārāja. They were sent by the head of the Gauḍīya Mission, to be with Vamśīdāsa on pilgrimage. Because Vamśīdāsa was oblivious to worldly matters it was considered that he needed help to go here and there. They made a new tent which was taken with Bābājī Mahārāja. It was big enough for Bābājī Mahārāja and his Deities to stay in. No one else would go inside. The other devotees would rest under trees at night. From Cuttack he shifted to the Khannagar cremation field. There the tent was put up on the western side of the field near a well. There were many flies there, and one of his servants tried to drive them out with a cloth. Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja saw this and remarked, “We are in a cowherd’s village in a milkman’s house. Milk and curd are prepared here so surely flies will come.” He saw every place as Braja. Everything reminded him of Vṛndāvana.

Seeing a train crossing a bridge, somehow or other this reminded him of Vṛndāvana. The turning of the wheels inspired him to call out, “Rasa- maṇḍala! Rasa-maṇḍala! What machine have You made, Rāi Kiśorī?”^{xv15} Even things unrelated to the holy *dhāma* reminded him of Vṛndāvana. When passing through Ranihat on the way to Chaudwar, Bābājī Mahārāja saw a telephone wire and asked whether it went to Vṛndāvana. When he saw a flower garden, he said, “Here there are fruits and flowers, but it does not reach the nose of Vamśī.” Jati Śekhara Prabhu’s explanation of this is that Vamśīdāsa Bābājī was saying that all things should be enjoyed by Kṛṣṇa. Nice scents and flowers should be offered to Him and not first enjoyed by us.

Then Vamśīdāsa reached Gadgadiya Ghāṭa, the place where Lord Caitanya sent Gadādhara Paṇḍita back to Purī.^{xvi16} When morning came he chanted the famous *Guru-vandanā* beginning with the words “*Akhaṇḍa-maṇḍalākara.*” After spending two days there, he crossed the river Mahānadī at midday on July 20. During the crossing, the devotees were counting money to pay the boatman. Seeing this, Bābājī Mahārāja shouted, “Get down! You have brought Yama (the god of death)!” Realizing the impracticality of getting out of the boat in the middle of the river, his servants hid behind Bābājī Mahārāja, who immediately forgot the whole incident. He said to the boatman, “Up ahead where a canal enters the river, there is a snake. Let me down there. In Chaudwar, the boatman stopped the boat near the canal. And there,

inside the tent, Bābājī Mahārāja took rest.

After some time a yellow snake appeared. Normally in India, when snakes come near humans, they are beaten with a stick and killed. But Bābājī Mahārāja warned, “Don’t kill that snake! He is Anantadeva!” He then told Gopāla, whom he was holding in his hand, “See! Anantadeva has come!” After a few minutes, the snake went away.

After remaining in Chaudwar for some time, Bābājī Mahārāja then went towards Balasore. On the way, he rested near Chhatia village for two days. From there he went a further fourteen miles to the village of Dharamshala. Then he spent the night in a boat moored on the bank of the river Brahmani. After that, he proceeded to Gopalpur village. Five miles further on, after crossing Khanditara Ghāṭa and the rivers Kharsukha and Patiya, he spent two nights in the village of Tikor. After that he spent two nights on a remote stretch of the river Vaitaraṇi at Mulipal Ghāṭa, five miles from Tikor.^{xvii17}

It was the full-moon night of Aśvina month.^{xviii18} Bābājī Mahārāja said there was no need to set up the tent. The moon rays were shining, reflecting on the sand. About fifty attractive women, dressed in white, came and offered obeisances to Bābājī Mahārāja. Then they left without saying anything. There were no men or children with them. The next day, the followers of Bābājī Mahārāja asked the local people if there was any nearby village. They were told that the whole area was agricultural fields with no villages for a considerable distance. Women never went to remote places such as the place where Bābājī Mahārāja had camped—even in the daytime. In those days, women never went out of the house, even in the day, without male company. The people from the adjoining villages did not know of any women who had been in that place that night. The devotees and the local people concluded that the mysterious women were demigodesses who came to offer respects to Śrīla Vamśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja.

Next, Bābājī Mahārāja went to Bhadrak on foot. From there he travelled to Soro by bullock cart and from there departed for Balasore. On the road, in the village of Markona, Bābājī Mahārāja suggested that in this village, Mārkaṇḍeya ṛṣi had visited there or that he was born there, and that because of the connection with him, the village had come to be

known as “Markona.” Seeing the Nilgiri hills from a distance, he asked if there was any route to Vṛndāvana through the mountains.

Stopping beneath a banyan tree on his way to Balasore, he gave his *darśana* to the villagers. That day, Vamśīdāsa prepared sweet rice for Gopāla. But after cooking it, he threw it down on the floor. “You have gone away from my hand,” he said to Gopāla, “Gone to Vṛndāvana and taken sweet rice made with palm-tree gur^{xix}¹⁹ in the Rādhā-Ramaṇa temple. You already took there, so why should I feed you again?” That day, the devotees sent a letter to Vṛndāvana to find out if it was a fact. The reply eventually came that sweet rice cooked with palm-tree gur was offered to Rādhā-Ramaṇa on that day at that time.

Reaching Balasore, he resided under a banyan tree near the military quarters. It was Janmāṣṭamī day. Bābājī Mahārāja told Gopāla, “You took palm fruit last year on Janmāṣṭamī. Today You will have mango.” A few minutes later, Yogendranātha Mukharjee, a high school teacher, came to the banyan tree where Bābājī Mahārāja was seated. Yogendranātha carried some mangoes he had purchased at midnight after having woken from a dream. He followed the instructions in his dream and thus was fortunate to please Bābājī Mahārāja this way. The mangoes that Yogendranātha brought were offered by Bābājī Mahārāja to his Deities, and after some moments of silence, Vamśīdāsa spoke with Gopāla. “Count one two.” The words of Bābājī Mahārāja were audible, but the words of Gopāla were, of course, only audible to Vamśīdāsa. He asked Gopāla, “From thirty letters, if we reduce three ‘sa,’ how many are left?” Like many things Bābājī Mahārāja said, the devotees couldn’t understand what Bābājī Mahārāja meant by this. Later, when they asked a leading devotee of the Gauḍīya Mission, he explained that in the Bengali alphabet there are three characters representing the three sounds of “sa.” It seems that, in the presence of the school teacher, Bābājī Mahārāja was inspired to impart some education to his Gopāla. Bābājī Mahārāja left Balasore for Kharagpur on August 26, 1943. After reaching Kharagpur, Bābājī Mahārāja told his disciples to search for Vamśī-vaṭ. Vamśīdāsa liked to stay under a banyan tree and referred to every banyan tree as Vamśī-vaṭ in remembrance of the original Vamśī-vaṭ in Vṛndāvana. Bābājī Mahārāja then took rest in the tent under a banyan tree which was in front of the station. He fasted there for two

days, not taking even a drop of water. Bābājī Mahārāja said to Gopāla, pointing to a senior railway officer, “Do you see that peon?”^{xx20} Then Bābājī Mahārāja said, “Tonight I will show You some thieves.” That night, Bābājī Mahārāja took Gopāla to the railway sidings and saw some thieves breaking open rail wagons and stealing cans of kerosene.

Instructions to a Departing Servant

From Kharagpur, Jati Śekhara Prabhu was about to leave Vamśīdāsa, having been ordered to return by the head of the Gauḍīya Mission. Jati Śekhara asked Vamśīdāsa for his mercy and blessings. Offering obeisances to Bābājī Mahārāja he joined his hands and implored him for advice about what kind of *sādhana* he should do. Vamśīdāsa then answered by speaking to Gopāla, “There was a tree on the seashore. It was sometimes on the sand and sometimes in the water. Being questioned about his situation by Nārada, the tree said, ‘I will stop the sea coming by building a dam of sand.’ Later, when Jati Śekhara Prabhu asked a leading member of the Gauḍīya Mission what this meant, that devotee explained that the tree on the seashore represents the position of the *jīvas*, the *taṭastha-śakti* of the Lord—sometimes in *māyā* and sometimes out of it. Just as it is impossible to build a dam of sand across the ocean, it is impossible to get the Lord’s mercy by just following *sādhana*—what to speak of any material means. We must get the mercy of the devotees. Then the Lord will be merciful to us and we shall be favoured. The mercy of the spiritual master is most essential. Bābājī Mahārāja continued, “Nārada once asked Kṛṣṇa a similar question. Kṛṣṇa replied, ‘Bring flowers and fruit. Then worship Me.’ Nārada then asked where he could get fruit and flowers from, and Kṛṣṇa said, ‘If you cannot get these items, then chant My name even only once at the end of each day.’”

Another Journey Towards Vṛndāvana

The next day, Bābājī Mahārāja wanted to visit Vṛndāvana again. First he wanted to go by train, but later he changed his mind and wanted to go by bullock cart. The local people asked him to travel by train, but he went instead by bullock cart. If Bābājī Mahārāja wanted to travel some distance by bullock cart, his assistants arranged for a cart with some local villagers. In those days, bullock carts were plentiful enough, and the villagers were happy enough to volunteer the use of a cart for the service of a *sādhu*.

On Upendra Maiti Road, near New Market in Mednapur town, Vamśīdāsa stayed for four days. Then he spent a day in Godapiasal village. Afterwards he went by bullock cart to Thalbani village. On arriving in Thalbani, he asked the devotees accompanying him if there was any railway station near there. Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja then went to Gomoh by train and stayed there on the station platform that night. The next day he reached Gayā by the Delhi Mail at 1:00 a.m. There, on the bank of the River Phālgū, near the Viṣṇupāda Temple, Vamśīdāsa's tent was put up on the sand. Vamśīdāsa then took rest. Many local people asked him to stay on the *dharmaśālā* veranda, but he would not. Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja spent Rādhāṣṭamī in Gayā.

Some *paṇḍās*^{xxi21} of Gayā asked Bābājī Mahārāja to give oblations there.^{xxii22} After hearing this, Bābājī Mahārāja asked them from where Gayāsura had come. The assembled *paṇḍās* answered, narrating the account of Gayāsura (this story tells the history of Gayā). They then again urged Bābājī Mahārāja to offer oblations. To support their proposal, they cited the example of Sītādevī, who had offered oblations for Daśaratha Mahārāja even during Her forest life.

Bābājī Mahārāja said, “By *dāna-dharma* (the religious duty of giving charity) people cross the Vaitaraṇi river (i.e. get free from material existence). Then where do they go? I cross the Vaitaraṇi by vehicle. They have put me outside the regulations of the Vedas. What shall I do? I neither do the activities of the Vedas, nor follow any rules and

regulations. In what way shall I offer oblations for my father and mother?” Looking to Gopāla and gesturing toward his Deities, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “They are not allowing me to do anything. Let us see what will happen.” Always anxious to get money by officiating over ceremonies, the *paṇḍās* said, “Please ask your Deities what to do and follow whatever They say.” Hearing this, Bābājī Mahārāja called out, “Bhakata-vatsala Hari! Bhakata-vatsala Hari!”

After this exchange, a professional fighter approached Bābājī Mahārāja. Taking off the Hanumān locket that he kept around his neck, he held it out in front of Bābājī Mahārāja and said, “Bābā, please take it in your hand and bless me so that Prabhu Hanumān will be merciful to me.” Bābājī Mahārāja angrily replied, “Are you coming here to take benedictions from me? Take it and go away!” Hearing this, the man took his locket and left.

From time to time, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “In Purī there are *paṇḍās* and here also there are *paṇḍās*, but here there is no *harināma*.” Indicating Gopāla with his hand, he said, “I know nothing at all. You please make the *paṇḍās* understand. I have completely given up *veda-dharma*^{xxiii23} and *loka-dharma*.^{xxiv24} Who will drink water from Your hand? Gayānātha^{xxv25} has no house, nor has Kāśinātha.”^{xxvi26} In this way Bābājī Mahārāja criticized the *paṇḍās* who had usurped all the landed property of the Deities. Obviously, Bābājī Mahārāja was dissatisfied with the behaviour of the *paṇḍās*, who, in the name of religion, were expert at taking money from people.

“*Nitāiyer karuṇā habe, braje rādhā kṛṣṇa pābe*. By the mercy of Lord Nityānanda, one can attain to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana,” said Vaṁśīdāsa. “I have proposed to go to Braja-dhāma, but don’t know whether it will be possible or not.”

Bābājī Mahārāja left Gayā and started for Kāśī on the morning of Wednesday, September 19. After passing twenty-one miles by cart, he reached Sherghat. From there he proceeded to Shivganda by cart, and his tent was set up there. On Tuesday, October 12, he reached Kāśī-dhāma. Vaṁśīdāsa’s servants set the tent up in Dvārbaṅga Rājghāṭ on the bank of the Gaṅgā, and Bābājī Mahārāja stayed there with his beloved Deities.

On October 22, Bābājī Mahārāja sang, “Oh, You were in Vṛndāvana.

You were a butter thief. So many people called You butter-thief, mind-thief.” Bābājī Mahārāja then called his followers and said, “Have you seen the house of Candraśekhara, where Mahāprabhu stayed? This is the Kāśī made of stone. We cannot find Viśvanātha here. Viśvanātha is in the cremation ground of Kāśī.” “Viśvanātha,” an epithet for Lord Śiva, is the presiding deity of Kāśī. Jati Śekhara Prabhu suggests that Bābājī Mahārāja insinuated that the *paṇḍās* take the deity to be stone and are busy making money out of that stone.

In the afternoon of October 27, Bābājī Mahārāja spoke, gesturing towards Kṛṣṇa, “He is a dacoit.” Again, pointing to Gaurasundara, he said, “He is the captain of thieves! He came to Kāśī from Gayā and again returned to Gayā. He has no landed property at all and has left his home and become a *sannyāsī*, wearing only a loincloth.” Seeing an old woman who was wearing a red (*sannyāsa* colour) cloth, Vaṁśīdāsa said, “The Doms (a very low caste) graze their pigs in a field. By mantra they make a mystic circle out of which the pigs cannot go. Somehow or other, one or two may go outside and leave the group. The conditioned souls are like that. They cannot get out of materialistic life. And if they do, they come to Kāśī. But in Kāśī there is no Viśvanātha. This is a Kāśī of stone. Viśvanātha lives in the golden (i.e. spiritual) Kāśī. Here Viśvanātha wanders in the cremation *ghāṭa*. Here they (the *paṇḍās*) keep Hara-Gaurī (the Deities of Śiva and Pārvatī) at the *ghāṭa* on a plate and collect plenty of money. I saw the same thing in Navadvīpa.”

In the afternoon of Saturday, October 30, Vaṁśīdāsa said, motioning to Gopāla, “Who prays to You, You do him harm.^{xxvii27} You give money to one and take from another. Whoever offends a Vaiṣṇava cannot be saved. How to be protected? Who will save me? Who can these things be told to and who will hear them? I could not get even a slight taste for serving Kṛṣṇa.”

Bābājī Mahārāja then prepared to go towards Patna from Kāśī. After the devotees gathered together all the items, Bābājī Mahārāja came to the boat and said, “I have not found out any difference between *tyāga* and *bhoga*. No difference between *mādhurya* and *aiśvarya*. There is no scent in flowers and fruit. One moon is better than many stars. I have not found any scent anywhere.” (Jati Śekhara Prabhu suggests that Bābājī Mahārāja was saying that in his travels he had not met a real devotee

anywhere.) The boat set out from Kāśi at 11:00 p.m. Bābājī Mahārāja remained fasting, not taking anything throughout the night.^{xxviii28} On Sunday, October 31, Bābājī Mahārāja reached the village of Meyadpur, twenty miles away from Kāśi. The tent was put under a banyan tree on the bank of the Gaṅgā. From Meyadpur, they again started out towards Patna. After going by boat throughout the night, they reached Patna on November 2, 1943. On the way, on the morning of November 2, Bābājī Mahārāja quoted the well-known Bengali verse,

*jīve dayā nāme ruci vaiṣṇava sevana
iha chāra dharma nāhi śuna sanātana*

“Hear, Sanātana! Kindness to all living beings, taste for the holy name, and service to Vaiṣṇavas—apart from these there is no other religion.” Gesturing towards Gopāla, Vamśīdāsa said, “You have seen the Gaṅgā in Kāśi and You will see the Gaṅgā here in Patna.” In the village Ghospur of district Gazipur, he ordered that the boat be tied to the bank and saw to it that milk was brought for his Deities. One person from a village on the bank of the Gaṅgā gave half of a bottle gourd (a large vegetable, sometimes sold in halves) to Bābājī Mahārāja, but he did not accept it. In the evening, he said to the Deity, “You have to live with happiness and sorrow here on the boat. Sometimes You may get delicious food and at other times You have to remain fasting. Bringing jungle leaves, I cook and give You hardly two or three morsels to eat.” On that day Vamśīdāsa offered only rice and boiled vegetables to his Deities. Then he took *prasāda*.

On Thursday, November 4, the boat stopped at Chhapra Steamer Ghāṭa at 5:00 a.m. Again the boat started, reaching Patna Engineering College Ghāṭa at 4:00 p.m. There, Bābājī Mahārāja left the boat and stayed inside the tent. On November 5, inside the tent, Bābājī Mahārāja said to his Deities, “You are now stuck in prison. Previously You have eaten a lot, but now You are only getting a handful of rice. The scent (In Bengali ‘scent’ can mean ‘atmosphere, feeling’) I got in Kāśi, the same scent is here in Patna.”

On Saturday, November 7, a devotee, after opening the door of the tent said that all the things had been eaten by mice. Bābājī Mahārāja said, “Now he is stealing. But if you give him with love he will not touch.”

After asking a *sādhu* of the Rāmānuja *sampradāya* about Harihar-chhatra, a nearby holy place, Bābājī Mahārāja decided to go there. But the next day he no longer wanted to go.

When the door of the tent opened on November 7, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “Don’t eat good food and don’t wear good clothes. Don’t eat betel. Don’t take tobacco. When will I give up the happiness of sleeping on luxurious beds and roll in the dust of Braja?”

Seeing a *sannyāsī* who was going to the Gaṅgā, Bābājī Mahārāja became happy and said, “*Śrīnāthe jānakī-nāthe abhedhaf paramātmani / tathāpi mama sarvasvaṁ rāmaf kamala-locanaf.*” In this famous verse from Rāmāyaṇa, Hanumān says, “Even though I know that Lord Rāma is non-different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Viṣṇu, still the lotus-eyed Lord Rāma is my all-in-all.”

When a man asked Vamśīdāsa how to attain God, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “The personality of Kali was extremely powerful. When Kali came, Kṛṣṇa told Nārada, ‘Now it is time for me to go.’

“Śrī Nārada asked, ‘What will be the future of the creatures in the world? Kṛṣṇa replied, ‘Those who worship the brāhmaṇas with sixteen items and feed them will attain Me.’

“Nārada again asked, ‘What of those who are too poor to serve the brāhmaṇas in this way?’ Kṛṣṇa replied, ‘Those who worship Me with flowers and *tulasī* will attain Me.’

“Nārada asked, ‘What of those who are lame from birth?’ Kṛṣṇa said, ‘If someone only one time at the end of the day calls out My name with undivided devotion, he will attain Me!’”

A gentleman from Patna asked Bābājī Mahārāja to instruct him. Bābājī Mahārāja asked him, “What advice shall I give you? The mother always thinks if her child is hungry or not. A wife always looks to see if her husband has brought money or not. Kṛṣṇa remains far away from worldly matters.”

The gentleman then asked, “How is it possible to give up worldly affairs?” Bābājī Mahārāja replied, “*Sādhus* live on the bank of the River Sarāyu, and chant the names of Sītā-Rāma. Here you will find neither worldly happiness or distress. Those on the side of Duryodhana have only distress. Those on the side of Yudhiṣṭhira have happiness and distress and their two brothers, *bhoga* and *tyāga*. Some do *bhoga*, again

others do *tyāga*.”

On November 14, after closing the tent, he loudly called out, “Hari Bol! Gaura-Nitāi Bol!” Then he said, “They say like that in Navadvīpa and Māyāpura. All around the temple in Māyāpura are houses. Under the *nīma* trees service goes on. I once went to Māyāpura with my water-pot and torn patchwork quilt. Mahāprabhu came and took my water-pot. After some time He came, returned it to me and then left. I also returned from there.”

On Monday, 15 November, he started his journey from Patna to Munger. On that day he offered only *bālyā-bhoga*^{xxix29} and then closed the door of the tent. Then he quickly cooked and took *prasāda* at 3:00 p.m. The devotees of the Patna Gauḍīya Maṭha glorified Bābājī Mahārāja and chanted the names of Śrī Pañca-tattva. The devotees sang, “*Nitāi-pada-kamala, koṭi-candra-suśītala*” and other songs which Vamśīdāsa heard with great pleasure. Then again he went to the boat with his Deities. The boat left at 4:30 p.m. from Patna. On November 16 night, the boat stopped in the village of Rupad. The next day, Bābājī Mahārāja expressed his happiness on seeing the River Gaṅgā. That day, the boat reached Munger Ghāṭa in the evening. On November 19, he went to Chandighat, a long distance from Munger, and ordered the boat to be anchored there. Sitting inside the tent he said, “*Śuniya govinda raba āpani pālabe saba / simha rabe yathā kari-gaṇa*.” This is a quote from a song by Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura that means, “On hearing the sound of ‘Govinda,’ all bad things automatically go away, just as a lion scares away even a herd of elephants by his roar.”

Vamśīdāsa sang the song and said to Gopāla, “From where I will get *panir*^{xxx30} and butter?” He did not offer *bālyā-bhoga* that day because he wanted to offer yogurt, but it was not available. He ordered the devotees to bring some spinach and then he cooked. Later that day he said that in the house of Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura there were six thieves, namely Śrī Gaurāṅga, Śrī Vallabhi-kānta, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Braja-mohana, Śrī Rādhā-kānta, and Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa; and in Māyāpura there was only one thief, namely Śrī Viśvambhāra. On November 21, at 2:00 p.m., Bābājī Mahārāja ordered the door of the tent to be opened. When it was opened, he said, quoting Kṛṣṇa, that the devotee is Kṛṣṇa’s heart. “Oh my friend, Arjuna, please listen. I eat for the second time through the

mouths of My devotees. Who eats? Who gives? I am going to the Pāṇḍava-varjita-deśa.^{xxxi31} Let's see what happens. Six goswamis, six enemies, six thieves. In Narottama Ṭhākura's house there are six thieves, and in Māyāpura there is one thief." After honouring *prasāda* in the middle of the night, Bābājī Mahārāja sang various songs.

On the morning of the November 22, being very happy, Bābājī Mahārāja sang various songs and ordered a boat to go to Bhagalpur. At 1:30 p.m., he left Chandighat for Bhagalpur. On November 23, at 12:00 a.m., the boat reached Mayaganj Ghāṭa, Bhagalpur. Along with his Deities, Bābājī Mahārāja stayed under a banyan tree near the bank of the Gaṅgā. On Thursday, November 26, he asked a person how many famous places there are on the way from Godāvāri Ghāṭa to Bhagalpur and how long it would take to go. That day, it was 1:00 a.m. in the morning by the time he finished offering *bhoga* and honouring *prasāda*. He then spoke intimately with Gopāla for a long time.

The next day, Vaṁśīdāsa saw many palm trees and became happy. Remembering Vṛndāvana, he said to Gopāla, "See the forest of palm and date trees? Let's stay here in Bhagalpur some time." Then he sang, "Talavāna, Khajurvan, Vṛndāvana, Madhuvan."

On Saturday, November 27, Bābājī Mahārāja sang to his Deities, "They offer *aṣṭaṅga-daṇḍavata*.^{xxxii32} Where there is fearlessness, there is fear. It is difficult to be fearless. Give or not give any kind of thing, I don't want jewels or wealth."

Next, he said, "Once I had Your *darśana* in the womb of my mother, Now I am searching but not getting you. Hari! Hari! When will I get your *darśana* again?"

On Wednesday morning, December 1, he said, "Antaraṅga and *bahiraṅgā*. *Antaraṅga* is within the house and *bahiraṅgā* is outside it. He reciprocates with everyone according to their attitude towards Him. Yaśodā's attitude is of *śānta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya* and up to *vātsalya*. Where are Yaśodā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana? Where are the sixteen thousand *gopīs*? Now who makes butter and yogurt?"

Seeing a nearby forest, in remembrance of Vṛndāvana, Vaṁśīdāsa sang, "Who plays the flute under the Vaṁśī-vaṭ in Bhandiravan?" On December 3, he said, "Where will I go? I am not finding any way to go. Wherever I go I will remain sitting. Who, then, will serve these Deities?"

Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura made a family with six Deities.”

On December 5, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “A dwarf has taken birth. What will happen if you push and shove him? *Māyā* (illusion) has caught us strongly. I fell in bad association and was swallowed by the *timīṅgala* fish of lust. Oh my Master! Deliver me! Becoming the servant of *māyā*, I have many desires. Rememberance of those lotus feet has gone far away. Without *sādhu-kṛpā*, the mercy of a devotee, I have no hope. Who is that *sādhu*?”

It was the morning of December 7. Śrīla Bābājī Mahārāja, remembering Navadvīpa, said that the Gaṅgā flows in the same direction here in Bhagalpur as it does in Navadvīpa. He said, “Here we can see the sand bank, just like Māyāpura looks from Navadvīpa.”^{xxxiii}³³

On Tuesday, December 14, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “I came to this land where there is no *harināma* at all. Now where will I go? The *indriyas* (senses) are controlled by the *ripus* (enemies).^{xxxiv}³⁴ What can be done?”

On the morning of December 16, he opened the gate of the tent and said, “Three days have gone now. How many days more will go? That is to be seen. One cannot pray to God if he is diseased. When there is disease, the mind will be diverted by that. Fifty-six *daṇḍa bhajana*. Four *daṇḍa* rest.^{xxxv}³⁵ *Darśana* of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in dream and *sādhu-saṅga*. ‘*Sādhu-saṅga*,’ ‘*sādhu-saṅga*’ *sarva śāstre kaya / lava-mātra sādhu-saṅge sarva-siddhi haya*. Without *sādhu-saṅga*, you cannot get the *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa. I have not got *sādhu darśana*, so how will I get Kṛṣṇa? By hearing Gaurāṅga’s sweet *līlās*, stone melts. ‘*Gaurāṅga*’ *bolite habe pulaka-śarīra / ‘hari hari’ bolite nayane babe nīra*. By chanting Gaurāṅga’s names, the hairs should stand on end and tears should flow from the eyes. Where are those hairs standing on end? Where is that flow of tears? What is? What isn’t? I am only singing. By singing there will be some pious effect. At least there is a reflection of happiness. If your mind wants happiness, give up *puṇya* and *mukti*.”

One day, some Marwaris^{xxxvi}³⁶ came and to Bābājī Mahārāja and asked, “When will the war be over?” They wanted to know for the sake of business and profits. Bābājī Mahārāja, not at all interested, said, “I cannot know all about this.” Not having their purpose fulfilled, the Marwaris left.

In Bhagalpur, Bābājī Mahārāja fell sick with a severe cold. It continued for several days, but he refused any treatment. Instead of avoiding everything that would make his cold worse, he did just the opposite. He ate sour foods such as yogurt that worsened his illness. In the morning he bathed with icy water kept from a clay pot while saying the names “Gaṅgā” and “Yamunā.” He did not wear any warm clothes but went around as usual almost naked.

On December 17, in the freezing cold morning, Bābājī Mahārāja prepared kichari, sweet rice, and other foods for his Deities. Every year in the month of Pauṣa (December-January) he would cook these preparations.

The next day, Vamśīdāsa said, “In Navadvīpa, the *sādhus* used to beg here and there. It is good to eat in another’s house, but it is bad to reside even on the veranda of another’s house.”

On Sunday, December 19, he said, “I am staying very peacefully. In the month of Jyeṣṭha, the festival of Ramakeli occurs. If I go there at that time, that will be a great pleasure to me.” In remembrance of Navadvīpa, he said, “Here you can also see, just like seeing a map of Navadvīpa. In front of us there is a sand bank, like in Māyāpura, and on the other side there is Svarupganj. Śrī Gaṅgā also flows towards south as in Navadvīpa.” Again, he became emotional in remembering Vṛndāvana and said, “Talavāna, Khajurvan, Bhandiravan, and Vamśī-vaṭ are all very nice.”

On December 25, some Marwari women came. They gave one or two paisa and went after getting the *darśana* of Vamśīdāsa. In peculiar rhyming language, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “Who I love, I come to see. They came and saw me and left. Loving me they gave one or two paisa. *Se sambandha nāhi jāra, bṛthā janma gela tāra.* His life is spoiled who has no relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Nityānanda. The Lord eats the second time by the mouth of the devotee. How will He eat the second time? Where the devotee will go? What is *madhukarī?*^{xxxvii37} Who will give it and who will do it? Which type of result do you want? Do you have the begging alms? How will you do *madhukarī?* You have kept me sitting here.”

Then Bābājī Mahārāja, in a loud voice, called the devotees serving him and said, “We will do *harināma.*” When all the devotees came, he had

them sit down and said, “I have some so-called god-brothers who claim themselves to be Vaiṣṇavas but who indulge in various bad works. To avoid bad association I am not remaining with them. I am continuing my *bhajana* and *kīrtana* in the proper way.” The next day was Wednesday, December 20, and Bābājī Mahārāja said, “*āpana bhakata saṅge prema kathā rasa raṅge*,” referring to Kṛṣṇa coming as Lord Caitanya and enjoying talks of love with His own devotees. “You are not doing *bhajana*. How you will attain prema?” Again, he said, “*Pāṣāṇe kuṭibo māthā anale paśibo / gaurāṅga guṇera nidhi kothā gele pābo*. ‘I will smash my head against the rock and enter into fire. Where will I find Lord Gaurāṅga, the reservoir of all wonderful qualities?’ If you worship Gaura you will get Nitāi, and if you worship Nitāi you will get Gaura. The snake is very dangerous, as is an envious person. But an envious person is more dangerous than a snake.”

In the afternoon of January 1, 1944, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “The senses are under the control of enemies. If you forget Gaurapāda,^{xxxviii38} what will happen? Your life will be spoiled. *Gaṅgāra paraśa hoile paścāte pāvan / darśane pavitra koro ei tomāra guṇa*. ‘After bathing in the waters of the sacred Gaṅgā many times, one becomes purified, but just by the sight of you, the fallen souls are purified. This is your great power.’ You have come through the Gaṅgā. Will you get salvation? Narottama Dāsa has said that it is better to die than to live. What will be the benefit if you live? Gauracāṅd has gone, having seen my sin. If one does not call You, then also You may appear. If You don’t want to come alone, then bring Nitāi with You. If that is not possible, then come with the devotees. Please secretly come to my heart and see me.” Then he sang, “Oh Gauracandra! Oh Gaurahari! Please come only one time!”

On Wednesday, January 5, crying in great humility, lamentation, and emotion, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “*Bṛthā janma gela tāra*. Make this *janma* useful. Make this animal good. Destiny is very strong. I never hear religious instruction. I am always bound in the noose of materialistic activities. I am tied by the ropes of my karma. How can I be protected? My life is useless. How can I make it good? Who will be merciful to this *caṅḍāla*? I have no hope at all. I have no *ānanda*. In the midst of *asat-saṅga*, how can I get *ānanda*? Without Nityānanda, how can I get *ānanda*?”

On January 23, he said, “In Kali-yuga, the importance of Gaṅgā and *tulasī* will be forgotten. Brothers will not listen to each other. The laws of the Vedas will not be followed. *Śyāma-gaurī-aṅge dibo cuwa candanera gandha / cāmara ḍulābo kabe heri mukha-candra*. I have not seen Śyāma. I only see Vairāgya (Gaurasundara). *Viṣaya chāriyā kabe śuddha habe mana*. When will I be purified by avoiding *viṣaya*? I will only be purified by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Rather, I have to wander here and there without any result.” On and on he spoke in the madness of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa.

On that same day, he ordered the tent to be taken onto a boat. At 2:00 p.m., after Bābājī Mahārāja’s belongings were stowed on the boat, they left Bhagalpur from Mayaganj Ghāṭa. At midnight, the boat anchored near Kadcha village. There, Bābājī Mahārāja cooked for his Deities, offered *bhoga*, and then took *prasāda*. From Kadcha, the boat left early in the morning. After several days, on February 4, at 3:00 p.m., the boat arrived in Gangalia Ghāṭa of Sahibganj. There, he resided for five days. That ghāṭa was meant for the British only. At first, the labourers there in the hire of the British refused to let Bābājī Mahārāja tie his tent there. But later, appreciating his transcendental prowess, they tried to serve him in various ways.

On February 11, Bābājī Mahārāja went from Sahibganj to Rajmahal. He wanted to come to Godabadi, which was near to Kheturi (the birth place of Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura), but since no boatman would agree to go such a distance, a boat was engaged to go to Rajmahal only. On that day, at 11:00 a.m., the boat left Sahibganj and reached Singhi Daraja Ghāṭa at 4:00 p.m. At Rajmahal they left the boat. At night, Bābājī Mahārāja cooked for his Deities. On February 13 at Rajmahal, he answered a British doctor’s questions. The conversation went as follows:
Dr. Hare: (Speaking in Bengali) Have you seen Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahaṁsa?

Bābājī Mahārāja: Maybe I have seen him, but I wouldn’t recognize him. I know only Māyāpura, nothing more. Nakula, Arjuna and others have already gone.

Dr. Hare: If all will go, then what is the need for *hari-bhajana*, and where have those who have left gone to?

Bābājī Mahārāja: Nakula, Arjuna, and all others are alive, but they are

not within our material vision. They are out of our sight. Where there is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you will find Nakula and Arjuna. And where Nakula and Arjuna are, you can also find Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Dr. Hare: They are out of our vision so how can we know this?

Bābājī Mahārāja: They (ordinary people) don't know. They (Kṛṣṇa and His associates) don't allow them to know. It is Their *līlā*.

Dr. Hare: Is the mind one or two—one giving directions and the other doing the work?

Bābājī Mahārāja: One is under the control of *māyā* and another is not.

Dr. Hare: The *indriyas* (senses) are the main cause of difficulty. But if you give up the *indriyas*, then how will you do *hari-bhajana*?

Bābājī Mahārāja: *Śuniya govinda raba āpane pālabe saba*. By hearing the sound of Govinda all difficulties go away by themselves (from a song by Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura). Let's see what type of sound is coming now. Now you will go to your home, take bath and food and thus feel happy. So what will you get from me? You are stuck in *māyā*.

Dr. Hare: Are your activities also material? Do you also have unhappiness?

Bābājī Mahārāja: Now I am unhappy. When I worship Gaura-Nitāi, I get pleasure. This is my *nitya-saṁsāra*. Yours is the *māyā-saṁsāra*. As the baby cries and laughs while asleep, like that you feel happiness and distress in your *saṁsāra*.

On that same day, a *sādhu* of the Rāmānuja (Śrī) *sampradāya* came, and Bābājī Mahārāja respectfully offered him a seat. That Rāmānujiya *sādhu* wanted to speak about the four *sampradāyas* and four *sampradāya ācāryas*.^{xxxix}39 However, before he could speak, Bābājī Mahārāja said, "I am not in line with any of them."

Sādhu: There may be some fault in the *sampradāya*. Still it is going on.

Bābājī Mahārāja: I am serving all four *sampradāyas*.

Sādhu: Is Nārāyaṇa here?

Bābājī Mahārāja: No, but He was here before.

Later, that *sādhu*, pointing to the Deities with his left hand (considered offensive in Vedic culture), asked about Their identities. Bābājī Mahārāja replied, "There is a *sannyāsī* of Vṛndāvana and the leader of a gang of thieves from Navadvīpa." Hearing this, that *sādhu* got up and

left. It seems that as a member of the Rāmānuja *sampradāya*, that *sādhu* could neither appreciate Bābājī Mahārāja’s object of worship—Gaura-Nitāi—or his mode of worship, which was far different from the strict observance of rules and regulations as practised by Śrī Vaiṣṇavas.

On Tuesday afternoon, February 22, at 1:30 p.m., Bābājī Mahārāja started his journey by boat from Prematali Ghāṭa.^{xi40} However, the boat had a small hole through which water was coming in. In that condition, the boat was quickly rowed and soon reached Rajshahi Ghāṭa. There, they took another boat. On the next day, at 5:00 p.m., the boat reached Goalando. On Saturday afternoon, February 26, at 3:00 p.m., the boat left Goalando Ghāṭa and reached Nasiabad at 9:00 p.m. That night the boat reached Dighi and stopped there. From there the boat again left and reached Kamala Ghāṭa on February 27. On February 29, the boat left Kamala Ghāṭa and reached Narayanganj in the morning. On the bank of the river Sitalaksha, near to Narayanganj steamer station, Bābājī Mahārāja left the boat. He ordered the tent set up and resided there. However, that place was so crowded that he had to leave.

Vaṁśīdāsa went to the river bank near Khannagar^{xii41} on Friday, March 3. Many people went there to take *darśana* of his lotus feet.

On March 5, Bābājī Mahārāja woke up early in the morning and offered flat-rice and yogurt to his Deities. Then he ordered his servant to the boat and left Narayanganj. At 2:00 p.m., the boat reached Kaliganj market. The next day, the boat left in the morning at 9:00 a.m. One Marwari and one Bengali, who both knew Bābājī Mahārāja from Navadvīpa, pretended to serve Bābājī Mahārāja. But Bābājī Mahārāja did not say anything to them. Seeing this, they left his company. When they left, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “Only to get cured from disease people come here. These two had come only for the treatment of their disease.” On March 9, at 5:00 p.m., the boat reached the village of Kapasia. On the order of Bābājī Mahārāja, the tent was fixed up under a banyan tree. Bābājī Mahārāja cooked an offering that night for his Deities.

Disappearance of Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī

Bābājī Mahārāja resided in Kapasia for nine days. On March 17, at 4:00 p.m., the boat left Kapasia and reached Majitpur the next day, March 18, 1944, at 5:00 p.m. Vaṁśīdāsa did not actually enter Majitpur, as it is the tradition that a renunciate should not go back to the place of his former family life. He stopped at Panchabati, just outside Majitpur. By the order of Bābājī Mahārāja, the tent was erected at the *pañcavaṭī* where he had spent the first three years of his renounced life. On June 5, they went from Majitpur to Jamalpur, a distance of a little more than two miles. He remained there for five days, and then again returned to Majitpur on June 9.

On the twenty-third day of the Bengali month of Śravaṇa, Śukla Caturthī, corresponding to July 23, 1944, the day of the disappearance festival of Śrīla Raghunandana Ṭhākura, at 8 p.m., Paramahansa Śrīla Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja concluded his pastimes in this world and went to Goloka Vṛndāvana to continue his service to Lord Kṛṣṇa there.

Pastimes in Navadvīpa

Arriving unknown like so many sādhus before him, Vaṁśīdāsa gradually became famous in Navadvīpa. Others may have talked of perfection or even imitated it, but Vaṁśīdāsa had clearly attained it.

In Bengal, there is a traditional practice on the day of Holi^{xlii42} of people throwing *phāgu* (coloured powder) at each other. It became known that Vaṁśīdāsa had no objections to people throwing *phāgu* on him during Holi. Many people of the town came and threw *phāgu* on Vaṁśīdāsa as a kind of worship of him. Vaṁśīdāsa sat in his cottage all day while people threw powder on him. He would not eat or drink anything, not even water, because he was fasting for Gaura Pūrṇimā. Throughout the day, thousands of people came to offer *phāgu* to him. Buried in a hill of powder, Bābājī Mahārāja sat silently and tolerated everything.

One time, Vaṁśīdāsa heard a boatman who was rowing across the Gaṅgā at Navadvīpa and singing a song by Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura. The song meant, “A spear has entered my heart. It has neither killed me nor can I

survive.” There is a deep meaning to this song that compares separation from Kṛṣṇa to be like a spear. When Vamśīdāsa heard the boatman singing this, he admonished him, “You are singing but you don’t know what it means. You are simply enjoying singing the song without any realization. But when we hear this song, our hearts are pierced. You don’t know that. You’re just singing, but my heart is breaking.”

Once a devotee asked Vamśīdāsa, “Why do you not wear *bahirvāsa* (external cloth)?” Bābājī Mahārāja replied, “I only keep the *ka*’s.^{xliii43} These three *ka*’s are the marks of actual renunciation. Mahāprabhu wears a *kaupīna*, and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are fond of *kanthā* and *karaṅga*. I have no connection with *ba*. *Bahirvāsa* gives *bahiraṅga-saṅga* (association with the external energy). My Gaurāṅga forbade me from *bahirvāsa* and *bahiraṅga*.”

One time, Vamśīdāsa was going to collect some water in his clay pot from the Gaṅgā, but due to the apparent infirmity of old age, he slipped on the bank and fell down. He was then heard saying, “Go on, go ahead. You go and bring water for washing Kṛṣṇa.”

One time, some devotees visited Vamśīdāsa, bringing some jackfruit from Māyāpura with them. But they had taken out the seeds, which is a common thing to do because the big seeds are usually kept for cooking in vegetable preparations. Vamśīdāsa said jokingly, “Oh, you gave me the jackfruit, but you kept the seeds.” Bābājī Mahārāja was often very humorous like this.

Once, when Vamśīdāsa was cooking, he said to his Deities, “Just wait, I’m still cooking.” A little later he said, “You get outside. Go outside!” While returning to his *āśrama* one evening, and still at some distance away, Vamśīdāsa said, “Gaura-Nitāi are feeling hungry,” so he got them some green, unripe eggplant. When he reached his *āśrama*, he cut that eggplant, put it inside a coconut husk with some water and a *tulasī* leaf, and then offered it to Gaura-Nitāi while he sang an *ārati* song in his Mymensingh dialect. His voice quivered and his eyes were full of tears. After the offering, he sat under a tree and took that ate that *prasāda* with great relish.

One time Vamśīdāsa asked his servant, Ananta Viśvambhāra Dāsa, “Did you hear what Gaurāṅga was saying?” to which Ananta replied, “I could see that you were talking to Him, but I could not hear what He was

saying to you.” So Vamśīdāsa answered, “He has told Vamśīdāsa, ‘You don’t go outside for begging for three days. Now you have become too old, so I will feed you.’” Vamśīdāsa continued, “This Gaurāṅga, He wants to serve me.” Then he went and fetched a stick and threatened Gaurāṅga, “You don’t go outside for serving me! If You go outside I’ll break Your leg!”

Sometimes Bābājī Mahārāja went to beg, but he wouldn’t go to all the houses. He would go to the homes of people he knew were pious devotees and had respect for him. He would simply stand outside and call out, “Gaura-Nitāi. Gaura-Nitāi!” and those people would come and give him vegetables, fruits, and other things. Many times people came to his *kuṭīra* and gave him things to eat, but he would almost always refuse, saying, “No, no. Gaura-Nitāi, They won’t eat this. You take it away.”

Sometimes Vamśīdāsa would go to the market place and find all the bad, thrown-out vegetables and take them.

In Navadvīpa, when Vamśīdāsa would go out, either to the Gaṅgā for collecting alms or whatever, he would leave his *kuṭīra* wide open. Time and again, whatever little things he had would be stolen. Repeatedly, devotees requested him to put a lock on the door. Bābājī Mahārāja would simply reply, “If the owner doesn’t watch over the house, what can Vamśīdāsa do?” Other times he would point to Gaura-Nitāi and say, “If the residents of the house are thieves, what is the use of putting a lock?” Sometimes cows would come inside Vamśīdāsa’s *kuṭīra* in his absence, turn everything upside down, and even knock over the Deities. On returning to his *kuṭīra*, Vamśīdāsa would chastise his Deities, calling Them bad names. Or he would tell his Deities, “Give everything to the local folk. Vamśīdāsa is an outsider.”

Gaura-Nitāi were the centre of his life. If anything happened, good or bad, he took it to be caused by Them. Once two brass cooking pots were stolen from his *kuṭīra*. To punish Gaura-Nitāi, Vamśīdāsa verbally admonished Them and that day did not feed Them. The next day, one pot was donated. Vamśīdāsa said, “This small pot is Nitāi’s. Today He will get food. If Gaura is to eat, He must bring His own pot.” That day, he cooked and fed Nitāi but not Gaura.

For some time Vamśīdāsa lived in a two-storey house that was next to the bank of the Gaṅgā where the flood area ends. He only used the

ground floor because he was too old to use the upper floor. One day in the rainy season, he told Pūrṇa (his servant), “In the morning there will be a great flood, so move everything out of here.” Pūrṇa moved everything, as he was told, into a house away from the flood area. The next morning, as Vamśīdāsa had predicted, the Ganges came over her banks and flooded the area, including that house. Since everything, including the Deities, was removed, they were saved from all difficulty. Another year, just before the rainy season, Vamśīdāsa was asked to leave his cottage because it was in the Gaṅgā flood area. But he said, “No, I’d like to stay here. The Gaṅgā is coming.” So his well-wishers constructed a new cottage on bamboo poles for Vamśīdāsa to stay in during the flood. Many people came to take bath in the Gaṅgā next to Vamśīdāsa’s *āśrama*, which was just by the side of the river. They would take his *darśana* and give him *pranāmī* (monetary contribution given to *sādhus* or Deities). Anantadeva was in charge of collecting that *pranāmī*. One man gave twenty-five paisa to Vamśīdāsa, which was quite a lot of money in those days. He didn’t want to give it all, so he asked for some change. Vamśīdāsa was standing there at that time. Becoming angry, Bābājī Mahārāja said, “Hari, Hari! This is stealing. If you give something to Mahāprabhu you can’t take anything back.” Then he told Anantadeva not to give him any change.

On Gaura Pūrṇimā, many people came and much *pranāmī* was given. With that money Anantadeva wanted to hold a big festival the next day and feed many people with *prasāda*. But at the end of the day, all the money was stolen. Anantadeva was lamenting that the money had been taken, but Vamśīdāsa said, “Why are you lamenting? Mahāprabhu has given it to somebody.” Then he continued, “When you shave, your hair goes away, but after some time it comes back again. In the same way, some money is gone, and after some time more will come back.”

A girl, about seven or eight years old, daily brought a pot of Gaṅgā water for Vamśīdāsa. One time she brought it during a severe storm. Bābājī Mahārāja told her not to go out again, but she did not listen and opened the door to leave. Just as she was about to stand on the doorstep, Vamśīdāsa jumped up and pulled her back inside the cottage. The next second a thunderbolt hit that very spot where she was about to step. Once a man suffering from cholera lay outside Vamśīdāsa’s *kuṭīra*. He

mourned that he would rather die than live because the pain in his stomach was so severe. He expected that Vamśīdāsa, being a *sādhu*, would heal him. After he had been there three or four days without food or drink, Vamśīdāsa came and put a *tulasī* leaf on his tongue, curing him immediately. The man then got up and went home.

Many people used to bring bananas to Vamśīdāsa. He would ask his servant to tie the bananas up to the rafters inside the roof so they could hang and ripen. Many rats daily came, digging holes in the earth next to the hut and making big piles of soil in their endeavours to get those bananas. Vamśīdāsa never tried to prevent them. Sometimes, when Vamśīdāsa saw a rat, he would point at it and say, "This is a thief." And then he would point at Kṛṣṇa and say, "He is also a thief."

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura arranged that firewood and provisions for cooking be sent daily to Vamśīdāsa from the Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura. Every day devotees would go by bicycle, crossing the Jalāngī by boat. Different devotees would go on different days. Sometimes the Baba would welcome them. Sometimes he would accept the gifts without saying a word. Sometimes he would just sit and stare. Sometimes he would take the gifts and angrily throw them in the river, or shout at them, "Who are you? Do you think you are bringing things for me? My Prabhu will send!" Some devotees, not able to appreciate Bābājī Mahārāja's transcendental mood, started to speak badly of him. When Sarasvatī Ṭhākura came to hear of this, he called those *brahmacārīs* and chastised them, warning them that they did not understand the exalted position of Vamśīdāsa. At that time he forbade his disciples to go and see Bābājī Mahārāja. However, he told Dola Govinda Brahmācārī^{xliv44} (the temple commander of the *maṭha*) that without telling the other *brahmacārīs*, he should continue bringing things to Vamśīdāsa. Sarasvatī Ṭhākura told him to leave the things at a little distance from Bābājī Mahārāja's *kuṭīra* and to go away without speaking to him. Dola Govinda continued this service for several months.

When Bābājī Mahārāja was living in Navadvīpa, sometimes he would just be gone. He would put everything, including his Deities, in an old sack and he would be gone. No one could say where he had gone or when he would be back.

Associates, Servants, and Followers

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī had great respect for each other. Vaṁśīdāsa would refer to Sarasvatī Ṭhākura as Jagannāther Bimalā, because when he was younger his name was Bimalā Prasāda, which means the son born as the mercy of Bimalā Devī, the Deity of Durgā in the Jagannātha temple at Purī. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura sometimes visited Vaṁśīdāsa at his *kuṭīra* in Navadvīpa town. Seeing him coming, Vaṁśīdāsa would exclaim, “Oh, a *mañjarī* has come, so won’t Rādhā come also? She will come. She will come!” He was referring to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as being a *mañjarī*.^{xlv} 45 When visiting Vaṁśīdāsa, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta warned his disciples to sit silently and not make any offence, lest they misunderstand his wild appearance and eccentric behaviour.

It is said that Vaṁśīdāsa had two disciples. However, they were not formally initiated disciples but followers who used to travel with him. One was called Dāmodara and the other was Bihari. They came with him from his home district of Mymensingh. When he went back to his native place, they also went with him. They were both from Mymensingh. One of them was from the same village as Vaṁśīdāsa. Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī had a close circle of servants and followers. He was careful about who he associated with, talking with a select few only. These devotees were alternately with Vaṁśīdāsa, serving him in different ways such as cleaning, sometimes bringing food, helping him when he went outside. Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī only allowed a few people to intimately associate with him. Dāmodara and Tulasī Bābājīs from Vṛndāvana used to travel with Vaṁśīdāsa from time to time. Another follower of was Pītambara Dāsa. Other followers were Pūrṇa and Suren Kundu. Dāmodara Dāsa and Tulasī Bābā were with Vaṁśīdāsa for about five years each.

Suren Kundu was a prosperous cloth merchant, but after Vaṁśīdāsa left this world, he lost everything. He constructed a two-storey building for Vaṁśīdāsa in Navadvīpa. Bābājī Mahārāja stayed in it for some time and

then gave it up. Now that building has been destroyed by the changing course of the Gaṅgā.

Sometimes Vamśīdāsa would angrily tell Dīna Bandhu Dāsa Bābājī, one of his associates, “Put Kṛṣṇa out. Get Him out from here!” This was at his *kuṭīra* in Navadvīpa.

After the passing away of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Ananta Viśvambhāra Dāsa (a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura) approached Vamśīdāsa for guidance and shelter. Vamśīdāsa was always cautious about having anything to do with anyone, but he gradually allowed Ananta Viśvambhāra into his small circle.

Ananta Viśvambhāra describes how he, along with one wealthy man, gradually approached Vamśīdāsa. They were both anxious to get the remnants of his *prasāda*. They would crouch down and hide behind a flower bush just outside his *kuṭīra*. After taking his meal, Vamśīdāsa would come outside and wash his mouth out with water. When he went away, the two of them would search for the tiny pieces of *mahā-mahā-prasāda* remnants. If they couldn’t find anything, they would just see where the grass was wet from the water out of his mouth and suck that grass with great satisfaction. They would do this in such a way that Vamśīdāsa wouldn’t see them after he went back into the *kuṭīra*. After this went on for some time, Vamśīdāsa gradually noticed. Slowly, they were allowed into his company.

Sometimes Vamśīdāsa would ask Ananta Viśvambhāra to read *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* to him. During the dry season, Ananta Viśvambhāra would often read to Vamśīdāsa in a solitary place on the bank of the Ganges. There was a large area next to the river that remained an open field for most of the year. As it flooded during the four months of the rainy season, no one would build anything there. Vamśīdāsa especially liked to hear Lord Caitanya’s conversations with Rāmānanda Rāya. Listening to this, tears would profusely flow from his eyes.

Once, Vamśīdāsa was singing a song about how love for Kṛṣṇa sometimes burns like fire, yet is sometimes cold like ice. But he changed it from the original Bengali into his Mymensingh dialect. Ananta Viśvambhāra, who was cooking at that time, heard this, and in a corrective way, sang it in the original Bengali. Vamśīdāsa became angry, picked up a stick from the fire with which Ananta Viśvambhāra was cooking, and threatened

to beat him.

Many people visited Vamśīdāsa. They brought offerings such as fruit and vegetables that sometimes accumulated into large quantities. of with them. A black cow would come to eat the extra vegetables. Once, in Māyāpura, a beautiful papaya was growing on a tree. Ananta Viśvambhāra watched it gradually ripen until it was perfect. Then he carefully climbed the tree using a ladder, took the papaya down, and brought it in a bag to Vamśīdāsa in Navadvīpa. Bābājī Mahārāja put it along with the other vegetables and fruits brought by other people. Shortly afterwards, that black cow came and started eating. Just as it was about to eat the papaya, Bābājī Mahārāja snatched it away. Vamśīdāsa knew that Ananta Viśvambhāra had put much love and devotion into bringing it and didn't want the cow to eat it.

Once, around 1942 or 1943, one Sānta Mahārāja came, carrying his *tridaṇḍa*. Vamśīdāsa said to his Deities, “Who is this coming here? Who is this carrying a *daṇḍa*? The *daṇḍa* must be carried by my Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, my Prabhu Gaurāṅga.”

Akiñcana Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Bābājī, a disciple of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who took to bābājī life after the passing of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, lived in Vṛndāvana and was a friend of ISKCON Founder-Acharya A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. As a young man, Akiñcana Kṛṣṇa Dāsa was learning *bhajan*s and *mṛdaṅga* beats. Whenever he learned something new, he recited it for the first time before Vamśīdāsa, who gave his assent and blessings by nodding his head and holding up his hand in benediction.

Majitpur Today

Majitpur is a beautiful, peaceful and pleasing village, typical of rural Bangladesh. At one side of the village flows a small branch of the mighty Brahmaputra river. Both the *pañcavaṭī* where Vamśīdāsa first stayed after renouncing the world, and the *āśrama* of his guru in nearby Jamalpur, have been lost in course of time. All that is to be seen now is

Bābājī Mahārāja's *samādhi*.

After passing away of Vamśīdāsa, his brother Rajachandra renounced the world, was initiated as Rāmananda Dāsa Bābājī, and became the first priest at the *samādhi*. Vamśīdāsa Bābājī's deities were worshipped next to his *samādhi* until they were stolen. The next priest was Govinda Dāsa Bābājī. In 1968 the *samādhi* building was rebuilt with bricks to replace the previous mud structure. After Govinda Dāsa, there was no fixed priest for some time, but now Gaura Dāsa Bābājī, a great grand son of Vamśīdāsa, has taken up the responsibility.

Both Hindus and the now predominant Muslims of Majitpur take pride in the *mahā-puruṣa* (great saintly person) who took birth in their village. Together they cooperate to celebrate festivals at Vamśīdāsa's *samādhi*. Especially on the disappearance day of Vamśīdāsa, a great festival is held.

Notwithstanding the remoteness of Majitpur, its lack of facilities to accommodate visitors and the tremendous difficulties of travel in Bangladesh during the rainy season, not less than twenty thousand pilgrims assemble from far and near to celebrate a two day festival. The first day passes with twenty-four hour non-stop kirtana, and is followed by a day of religious speeches.

The local people are eager to develop Vamśīdāsa's *āśrama* so as to properly receive so many pilgrims who come for *darśana*. But Majitpur is a poor village and funds are scarce. Readers may send their contribution by check or demand draft made out to Chaitanya Cultural Society, Account no. 18-6041051-01, Standard Chartered Bank, Dhaka.

Post to: Chaitanya Cultural Society,
S Chandra Mohan Basak St.,
Dhaka 1203,
Bangladesh.

A covering letter should be included explaining the purpose of the donation.

Vamśīdāsa Bābājī and Casteism

Vaṁśīdāsa never offered any special respect to anyone for their so-called high birth, nor seemed to be aware of his own condemned background. Indeed, his genuine saintliness attracted the respect of all, even those who according to caste considerations would have been expected to consider him untouchable.

That those of high caste could even dream of begging blessings from a fisherman was previously unimaginable in Hindu society. For thousands of years, most Hindus, being *śūdras* or lower, had been kept at a distance from the upper castes. They were despised and rejected for their sinful birth. Yet they were kept in their position and were not allowed to make either material or spiritual improvement, even if they wanted to. They were forbidden to recite, hear or discuss the scriptures. They were not considered pure enough to worship Lord Viṣṇu; they could only worship minor deities, ghosts and spirits.

Their only hope for redemption, so they were told, was to serve the higher castes—from a distance. By virtue of such servility they might, after several lives, be blessed with birth in a higher caste. Only then could their religious life begin.

At the time of Vaṁśīdāsa, such biased, stifling, malicious casteism had already been infiltrated by the mercy of Lord Caitanya, who said,

*nīca-jāti nahe kṛṣṇa-bhajane ayogyā
sat-kula-vīpra nahe bhajanera yogyā*

"A person born in a low family is not unfit for discharging devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, nor is one fit for devotional service simply because he is born in an aristocratic family of brāhmaṇas." (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya 4.66*)

The genuinely open spirit of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is appreciated by the people of Bangladesh, most of whom come from so called "untouchable" backgrounds. Vaṁśīdāsa Bābājī is a modern example of this unstifled spirit of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Although he is not widely known outside Kishorganj district, at least people of that area take pride in the saint who was born among them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks About Vamśīdāsa

“You have heard the name of Vamśīdāsa Bābājī. So sometimes, when his things were stolen, the disciples will cry that ‘It is stolen.’ So he said, ‘Why you are bothering? One thief gives. Another thief takes. That’s all. Who gave the money, he is also thief, and who has taken away, he is also thief. So why you are bothering?’ One thief gives. Another thief takes. (Morning Walk, Māyāpura, March 13, 1976)

If you think this (the Deity) is a brass-made idol, then it will remain a brass-made idol to you forever. But if you elevate yourself to higher platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then Kṛṣṇa, this Kṛṣṇa, will talk with you. This Kṛṣṇa will talk with you. There is a Vamśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, he was talking with his Deity. (Lecture at Los Angeles Deity installation, July 16, 1969)

Two Songs About Vamśīdāsa Bābājī

Composed in Oriya by Śrī Jati Śekhara Prabhu Bhakti-kumuda

*kebe ḍāke vamśīdāsa jamunā kūline
ḍāke gadagada svare “kṛṣṇa candra” rātridine*

*ḍāke vamśī ucca kari “bhakata-vatsala hari”
se svara jhankara vamśī antarak āse thori*

*kebe ḍāke gaṅgātīre navadvīpara prāntare
se ḍāka rūpa dhare prema bhāve vibhāvare*

*bhakata-vatsala hari bhakata-vatsala hari
se apluta āhvāne ki mamatā achi bhari*

*mahodadhi taṭe taṭe nīlācale paṭhe paṭhe
ḍāke vaṁśī hāta ṭeki jagannātha dekhi rathe*

*bhakata vatsala hari bhakata lāgi sinā
mohari nāhita' kehi tumari bhakata vinā*

*kara prabhu dṛṣṭīpāte e bhakti kumude thare
tava ḍāka anusare puni tava saṅga dhare*

(1) Sometimes Vaṁśīdāsa calls out on the bank of the Yamunā. Day and night he calls out, “Kṛṣṇacandra,” in a faltering voice.

(2) Calling out loudly “*Bhakata-vatsala Hari*,” that sound echos within his heart and makes it tremble.

(3) Sometimes he calls out at the edge of Navadvīpa.^{*xlvi}46 That sound takes the form of ecstatic feelings for Kṛṣṇa.

(4) How Vaṁśīdāsa is filled with affection as he calls out “*Bhakata-vatsala Hari! Bhakata-vatsala Hari!*”

(5) On the sea shore and on the paths of Nilācala, Vaṁśīdāsa calls out. Seeing Jagannātha on His *ratha*, he raises his arms and calls out.

(6) “*Bhakata-vatsala Hari* is certainly only for the sake of His devotees. I don't have anything but Your devotee.”

(7) Jati Śekhara Prabhu says: “O my master (Vaṁśīdāsa), please glance once only towards this *bhakti-kumuda*. When again will I get your association and again hear you calling out?”

*avadhūta cuḍāmaṇi vaṁśīdāsa guṇamaṇi
śrī gaurasundara pāriṣada,
bimalā bhakati devi śrī caraṇa sadā sevi
tuccha kale jogi-jñāni-pada*

aṭharaśa aṇaṣaṭhi pūruba baṅga deśaṭhi
kiśoragañja majidapura,
śrī bhairaba candra nāme janmile sei dhāme
parijana kheda kale dūra

sanātana hela pitā sarva-sundari je mātā
kaulika guru śrī nāma dātā,
nigoyai narottama kale tanka dīkhā kāma
kṛṣṇacandra kele trātāpātā.

tīrtha buli navadvīpe ranagañjara samīpe
nitāi gadāi kale sevā,
siddha-deha lābha kari sāttvika bikāra dhari
mahābhāva sevā-kale jebā.

ṭhākura bhaktivinoda vaṁśīdāse atimoda
śrī jagannātha, gaura-kiśora,
tanka saṅge prabhupāda vaṁśī dekhe pūre sādha
gaura preme hele je bibhora.

vṛndāvana dhāme jai kuñje kuñje buluthai
navadvīpe āse tīrtha kari,
tahi līlā kari kete gale nīlācala pathe
śrī gopāla ṭhākuranku dhari.

mahodadhi helā dhanya śrī gopāla kale snana
jagannatha ratha-yātrā dekhi,
cali cali pheruthanti baṭ mūlare rahanti
chāpiacchi tanka līlā lekhi.
vaitaraṇi nadī tīre śrī śarat pūneire
kete devī āse daraśane,
kāhā saha kathā nāhi sadā gopāle anai
kahuthanti kathā tanka sane.

gayā kaśī tīrtha thile guru-pīṭhe pāhuñcile
unnaiśa caurāliśa sāle,
hele prabhu aprakaṭa gale gaura sannikaṭa
śrāvana śuklā caturthi kāle.

raghunandana ṭhakura śrī tirobhāva tithira
samāveśa hela sehi dine,
bhakati kumuda raṅge tini māsa thilā saṅge
ebe kanduacchi tuma bine.

(1) Śrīla Vamśīdāsa Bābājī is a gem of transcendental qualities, the crest-jewel of *avadhūtas* (liberated souls who are beyond scriptural regulations), and an associate of Lord Caitanya.

(2) By constantly serving the lotus feet of Bhakti Devī, who is spotless (being free from all contaminations such as *jñāna* and *yoga*), Vamśīdāsa made the position of *jñāna* and *yoga* insignificant.

(3) Taking the name “Bhairab Chandra,” he was born in 1859 in Majitpur, Kishorganj, in East Bengal, thus removing afar the troubles of his family members.

(4) After wandering about the holy places, he came to Navadvīpa. There, near to Raniganj, he served Lord Caitanya along with Lord Nityānanda and Gadādhara Paṇḍita.

Śrī Vamśīdāsa Smarane

(5) Attaining a *siddha-deha* (spiritually perfect body) in which there were transformations of transcendental ecstasy, he served the Lord at the topmost level of ecstatic service.

(6) Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, Gaura-Kiśora Dāsa Bābājī, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura were very pleased with Vamśīdāsa. With their association, Prabhupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura fulfilled his desire by seeing Vamśīdāsa Bābājī and became filled with love of Lord Caitanya. (But actually only went to see Vamśīdāsa with Bhaktivinoda;

this is allegorical.)

(7) Vamśīdāsa went to Vṛndāvana and wandered in the forest groves there. Then he came back to Navadvīpa, visiting holy places on the way. After exhibiting pastimes in Navadvīpa for some time, he went on the path to Nilācala, holding the Deity of Śrī Gopāla. The sea there became fortunate by bathing Gopāla. Seeing Jagannātha Ratha-yātrā, Vamśīdāsa returned, walking back. He would stay under a banyan tree at night. Thus I write and print his pastimes.

(8) On the bank of the Vaitaraṇi River, on the full moon night in the autumn season, many demigoddesses came to see him. He would not speak with anyone. Always looking at Gopāla, he would talk with Him only. After visiting Gayā and Vārāṇasī, Vamśīdāsa returned to the place of his guru, and in 1944 he left this world to go back to Lord Caitanya. He departed his world on the disappearance day of Śrīla Raghunandan Ṭhākura, the fourth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Śravaṇa. There was a great gathering on that day. Bhakti Kumuda (Jati Śekhara Prabhu) spent three months happily with him. He says, “Now, without you, I am simply crying.”

ⁱA family line of gurus descending from disciples of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.

ⁱⁱNot to be confused with the town Jamalpur, formally within Mymensingh district and now a separate district town.

ⁱⁱⁱA *Pañcavaṭī* is a grove of five kinds of sacred trees, previously maintained in every Hindu village as a place for meditation and prayer.

^{iv}An attempt has been made in this book to translate some of these emotional outbursts into English, although even in the original Bengali they are not easy to understand. Maybe they are understandable only by Vamśīdāsa Bābājī and Kṛṣṇa. I have sometimes translated loosely because literal translation would have rendered the text even more awkward and unintelligible.

^vA part of Koladvīpa, according to the spiritual division of Navadvīpa into nine islands.

^{vi}Also known as Laḍḍu Gopāla; a form of Kṛṣṇa as a crawling baby holding a laḍḍu (sweet). This form of the Lord is popularly worshipped in India—more so on family alters than in established public temples.

^{vii}Loincloth, or simple cloth underwear commonly used in India, especially by *sādhus*.

^{viii} A mixture of eight metals commonly used in making Deities.

ixakhaṇḍamandalākaram vyapta yena carācaram

tat padam darśitam yena tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ

^x A *ghāṭa* is a bathing place or landing place for boats on the bank of a river.

^{xi} Even today in India, *sādhus* who are obviously without financial means are allowed to ride trains free.

^{xii} A holy place twelve miles south of Navadvipa that is intimately connected with the pastimes of Lord Caitanya, Lord Nityānanda, and Their dear devotee Gauridāsa Paṇḍita

^{xiii} The place of Advaita Ācārya, on the other side of the river from Kālnā.

^{xiv} Rādhā-Ramaṇa Gera is the residential quarter around the Rādhā-Ramaṇa temple in Vṛndāvana. The Rādhā-Ramaṇa Gera Goswamis are the members of families that worship Rādhā-Ramaṇa and who live in Rādhā-Ramaṇa Gera.

^{xv} “Rāi Kīśorī” is an affectionate name for Rādhārāṇī.

^{xvi} Gadādhara Paṇḍita had taken the vow of *kṣetra-sannyāsa*, or the vow to stay in a holy place and worship the Lord. Gadādhara Paṇḍita was worshipping Ṭoṭā-Gopinātha, the Deity that Caitanya Mahāprabhu merged into at the end of His manifest pastimes. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī has varified that Gadgadiya Ghāṭa, just outside Cuttack, is the actual place where Lord Caitanya sent Gadādhara Paṇḍita back to Purī. (c.f. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā*, Chapter 16.)

^{xvii} The village of Tikor is two miles from Jajpur. Jajpur was formally an important place of pilgrimage for those following the *karma-kṛṣṇa* section of the Vedas. It is the abode of the demigods. There are innumerable temples of demigods there.

^{xviii} The full-moon night of Aśvina month is known in Orissa as Kumāra Pūrṇimā. On that night, unmarried girls worship the moon with the intention of getting good husbands.

^{xix} Semi-processed sugar.

^{xx} A peon is a lowly messenger.

^{xxi} Brāhmaṇas at holy places who guide pilgrims and help them to perform rituals.

^{xxii} Offering oblations to benefit one’s departed forefathers is the main religious duty in Gay.

^{xxiii} Conventional religious duties.

^{xxiv} Traditional rites.

^{xxv} The presiding Deity of Gayā, Lord Viṣṇu.

^{xxvi} The presiding Deity of Kāśī, Lord Śiva.

^{xxvii} Vamśīdāsa quoted the Bengali version of the *Bhāgavatam* verse in which Kṛṣṇa says that He takes away the wealth of those He favours. The original verse in the

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.88.8) is as follows: *yasyāham anugrṇāmi hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ / tato 'dhanam tyajanty asya svajanā duḥkha-duḥkhitam.*

^{xxviii}It appears at this point Bābājī Mahārāja changed his mind about going to Vṛndāvana, for by going towards Patna he changed direction and headed back towards Bengal.

^{xxix}*Bālya-bhoga* is a morning offering to Lord Kṛṣṇa, usually of uncooked food such as fruit.

^{xxx}A kind of fresh, uncured cheese common in India.

^{xxxi}Pāṇḍava-varjita-deśa is a country rejected by the Pāṇḍavas. Prior to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājāsūya sacrifice, his four brothers went out to conquer the world. Those places they did not visit, thinking them to be impious or inauspicious, are called the Pāṇḍava-varjita-deśa.

^{xxxii}Obeisances offered by prostrating fully on the ground.

^{xxxiii}In Navadvīpa, when Vamśīdāsa would go for his daily bath, he would see the sand banks of Māyāpura on the other side of the river.

^{xxxiv}The six enemies are lust, anger, greed, illusion, madness, and envy.

^{xxxv}*Daṇḍa*: a measurement of time. There are sixty *daṇḍas* in a day.

^{xxxvi}Marwaris are members of a community originally from Rajasthan. They are generally religious, fond of *sādhus*, and expert in business.

^{xxxvii}*Madhukarī* is a system of begging a little food from several people, practiced by highly renounced *sādhus*.

^{xxxviii}A name of Lord Caitanya.

^{xxxix}By taking up this topic for discussion, it appears that the Rāmānujiya *sādhū* wanted to attack the validity of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*.

^{xl}Prematali is just next to Kheturi and is another important place of *līlā* connected with Narottama Dāsa. It is near Rajshahi, now in Bangladesh. Vamśīdāsa did visit Kheturi, but we have no information of that visit.

^{xli}A different Khannagar to the one in Orissa previously mentioned.

^{xlii}Also called Dola Yātrā, Gaura Pūrṇimā, or Phālgua Pūrṇimā.

^{xliii}The three ka's are *kaupīna* (loincloth), *karaṅga* (water pot), and *kanthā* (patchwork quilt).

^{xliv}Later well known throughout Orissa as Dola Govinda Shastri.

^{xlv}*Mañjarīs* are the young girl assistants of the *gopī* assistants of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

^{xlvi}* Vamśīdāsa Bābājī's *āśrama* was at the edge of the town.