



तवकथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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• COOPERATION

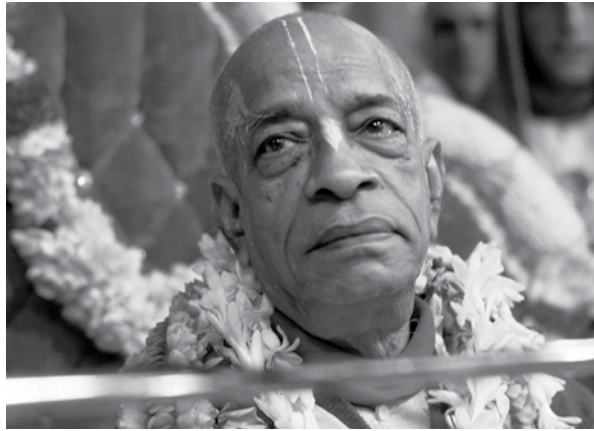
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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COOPERATION

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

You are all limbs of my body. Unless you cooperate, my life will be useless. 🙏

— Letter to Brahmananda 17 July 1968.

HEALTHY PRASADAM

A Remembrance of His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

By Nanda Kumar Das

I became an organic-based raw foodist the year before meeting devotees. As a 20-year-old living in the raw food and organic oasis of Laguna Beach, the focus was on purification and adopting the wisdom of ancient cultures, like the Vedic system of India and the Native American wisdom that was the original consciousness of North America. When Srila Prabhupada visited there, he said,

“This is a town of reincarnated yogis. There are many of them living here, and if California falls into the ocean as some people say it may, Laguna Beach will remain an island.” One of the things that we do when we’re young is that we tend to be a little fanatic about things we learn and adopt a belief in — organic food being one of them for me. It was one of the things that kept me from moving into the temple initially. I just didn’t want to change my diet, since it had such a positive effect on my life. I especially didn’t want to eat white sugar, which I had learned was poison, at least on the material level, before it was offered to Krishna and became transcendental.

When I was blessed by Lord Nityananda to be Srila Prabhupada’s cook and personal servant I managed his kitchen and could basically do whatever I wanted. At that time I returned to shopping for organic ingredients to cook for His Divine Grace. I asked him many questions about diet and health, which he always answered in a way that confirmed what I thought was true. One day I found an article about the various things that are used in inorganic farming and food production, and their other uses, such as rat poison, napalm and paint thinner, to mention a few. I asked Srila Prabhupada if I could read him that short article, and he agreed. As the facts were presented, he opened his lotus eyes very wide and said with great power, “NEVER feed me any of that!” I was so relieved to know that purity of ingredients is a bonafide question, and what I had been told about it not mattering when it was being offered to Krishna, that it would be purified by the offering, was not what His Divine Grace wanted for himself, or as our pure and perfect ācārya and

teacher by example, for us either. It was so wonderful and fulfilling to offer Srila Prabhupada the very best things that were available and see his enjoyment and satisfaction from the service he let me offer as his cook.

In my experience, Srila Prabhupada was always very attentive and careful to offer and partake of *prasādam* that was made from pure ingredients. Another question I asked him one day was whether I should pay any attention to what I was eating, ingredient-wise, or if I should simply accept *prasādam* because it was *prasādam*, and not care about the ingredients. Srila Prabhupada, in his often-jovial way, said with a stern face, “You should only take *prasādam* and not care about the ingredients.” Then after waiting for a few seconds he said with a big smile, “That is, if you are Rupa Goswami. But you are not Rupa Goswami. You are a neophyte devotee, as are all my disciples, and as a neophyte you must be very careful to eat what makes you healthy and avoid anything that makes you sick or affects your devotional service in any negative way. Eating very simply is the best diet for Krishna consciousness.”

— Adapted from an article on the Facebook account of Nanda Kumar Das (Craig Joseph).

THE STORY OF CHANDA RAY PART 1

*Adapted from chapter 18 of
Prema-vilāsa by Nityananda Das*

Nityananda Das was a disciple of Jahnava Mata, the divine consort of Lord Nityananda Prabhu. Jahnava related to Nityananda Das many stories from the lives of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu and their associates. On her order he compiled those stories into the book known as Prema-vilāsa. For more about Prema-vilāsa and Nityananda Das, see Bindus number 2, 5, and 115.

Worse Than Jagai and Madhai

Sri Raghavendra Ray, a caste Brahmin and ruler of Gaderhat, had two sons named Santosh and Chanda. Chanda Ray was a powerful man, skilled in the art of weaponry. Everyone was terrified of him. He was a zamindar and possessed eighty-four thousand coins. He became the commander of a fort which he named Rajmahal and asserted himself as the ruler there. Chanda Ray was a tyrant and he refused to pay taxes to the Muslim king. Eventually the entire village came under Chanda Ray’s control. Five thousand horses and infantry followed his commands. He began to attack many neighbouring countries and looted innumerable places. Robbing and killing people became his regular

activities and in carrying out these cruel acts he cared for no one. People would cover their ears as they could not bear to hear about the sinful activities committed by him. Locals began to leave the country in droves. Chanda Ray was a *śakti* worshiper and was accustomed to eating meat and fish. He also seduced the wives and daughters of the villagers. During the festival of Goddess Durga, he would have an image made of her and would offer for slaughter thousands of animals at her altar. Even Chitragupta, the secretary of Yamaraj, was unable to keep a proper account of the sins committed by Chanda Ray.

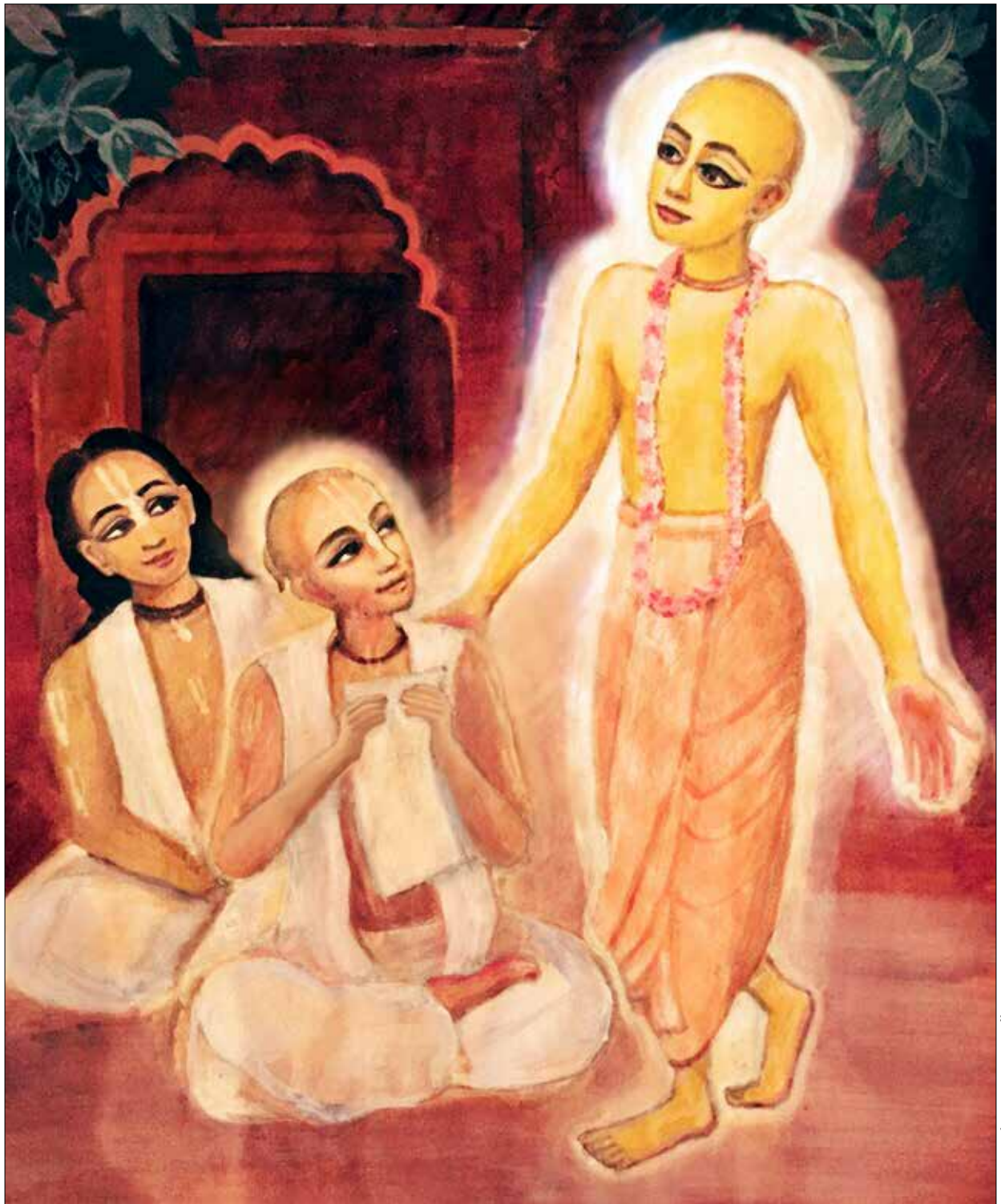
Once Chitragupta told Yama, “These two Brahmins, Chanda and Santosh, have been performing so many sinful activities that I am afraid to think of what the future holds for them. Where will they stay and how long will they suffer the punishment of hell? I remember two brothers named Jagai and Madhai who were great debauchees, but these two brothers are far more notorious than them.”

To this, Yamaraj replied, “Let them remain where they are.” Thus Chanda Ray continued his reign of terror.

A Terrible Ghost

One day, a *brahma-rākṣasa*, the ghost of a wicked Brahmin, entered into the body of Chanda Ray. That demon began to constantly beat and rebuke Chanda Ray, so much so that Chanda Ray gradually lost all his strength and was near death. His father desperately tried to save his life, calling doctors from all over the country, but to no avail. Finally, his father called on a great astrologer, who made many calculations and then concluded that the evil spirit of a Brahmin demon had entered the body of Chanda Ray and had no desire to leave him. The only possible cure was dependent on the famous Narottam Das Thakur Mahasay, the son of the zamindar of Kheturi. When the astrologer proclaimed this, the *brahma-rākṣasa* spoke up and declared his words to be true.

The father of Chanda Ray immediately requested a local pandit to write a letter to Thakur Mahasay, requesting his help. He then sent that learned Brahmin with the letter to Kheturi. The Brahmin put the message in the hand of the local *majumadāra*, a local government officer, who flatly told him that he would not send the letter to the Thakur. When Chanda Ray’s father came to know of this, he began to cry in despair, praying to goddess Durga, “O mother Durga, save my son! Who except you can do so?”



Painting by Anapayini Radha Devi Dasi

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appears before Narottam

Durga's Chastisement

That night, Durga, in the guise of an old lady, told Chanda Ray, "There is no sinful activity that has not been practised by you. I am not pleased with your so-called worship. You have neglected the Supreme Lord Krishna. No one can attain perfection without

worshiping him. Those who try to worship me without worshiping Krishna will surely lose their chance of earning good fortune in their next birth. My lord, Shiva is always absorbed in singing the glories of Sri Krishna and has dedicated everything at his feet; I am his subordinate. You and your brother have sought my favor, but there is nothing I can do for you. I only accept

the offerings of those who are by nature in goodness. I am never inclined toward those who are covered by the modes of passion and ignorance. The *sāstras* clearly state that Krishna is the Supreme Lord of this universe. Who, other than he, can bestow devotion and salvation in this world? Even Yamaraj and Chitragupta are shocked by the mountain of sins you have accumulated. So, my sons, just try to worship the feet of Govinda. You should follow the astrologer's advice to take shelter of Thakur Mahasay. Sri Govinda Kaviraj, who is now a disciple of Srinivas Acharya, was previously absorbed in exclusively worshiping me. He prayed to me for salvation but I was unable to fulfil his desires. Narottam is dedicated to Srinivas Acharya, and his devotion to Krishna has enabled him to conquer over all worldly fears. Srinivas and Narottam are identical in heart and mind, yet they appear in separate physical features for enhancing the performance of pastimes. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu appeared in this world to deliver mankind by distributing the holy name of Krishna. These two prabhus are worshiped and loved by Srinivas and Narottam. Therefore, one who surrenders at their feet is sure to attain Krishna. And conversely, he who criticizes them is sure to suffer miserably." The goddess then disappeared.

Chanda Ray was astonished. In the morning he revealed his dream to his father and brother and

requested them, "Please immediately send two Brahmins with a letter to Thakur Mahasay begging him to show his mercy upon me."

Again, a message was sent, this time in the hands of two Brahmins. They went to Kheturi and this time managed to get audience with Srila Narottam Das Thakur. They bowed at the feet of Thakur Mahasay, who heartily received them and asked where they had come from. They replied that if he read the letter they carried he would understand everything. Narottam first offered them *prasādam* and gave them a place to stay. He read the letter and came to know about Chanda Ray's problem. He then gave the letter to his dear friend Ramachandra Kaviraj to read and give an opinion.

"It's a delicate matter," Kaviraj replied. "What can I say? You are the embodiment of love — the power to deliver them is in your hands."

Mahaprabhu Appears

As Narottam pondered the situation, suddenly Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared before him and said, "Listen Narottam, it is not difficult for you to deliver these two wicked sinners. Go there and show them your mercy. They are waiting for your blessings. It is my wish that the evil spirit leave Chanda Ray's body. You have appeared in this world only for the purpose of delivering the fallen conditioned souls. Therefore go there, along with Kaviraj, and free them from their sins. When Chanda Ray is cured you should give him initiation."

After taking bath in the morning, they prepared for the journey. Before their departure, the *majumādāra*, who had come to know about the letter, arrived there and said to Thakur Mahasay, "Chanda Ray is extremely fortunate that he will be blessed with your darshan. I wish I could go with you. It is my misfortune that I must stay here, but I will hear everything when you return." After bowing at the feet of Gauranga, Thakur Mahasay, Ramachandra Kaviraj, and many other *vaiṣṇavas* started out for Chanda Ray's house. Those who could not go along with them began to cry. Thakur Mahasay pacified them, and then the party began walking, followed by the two Brahmins. [To be continued.] 🙏

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