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The Legend of Gopinath and Raghunandan Thakur



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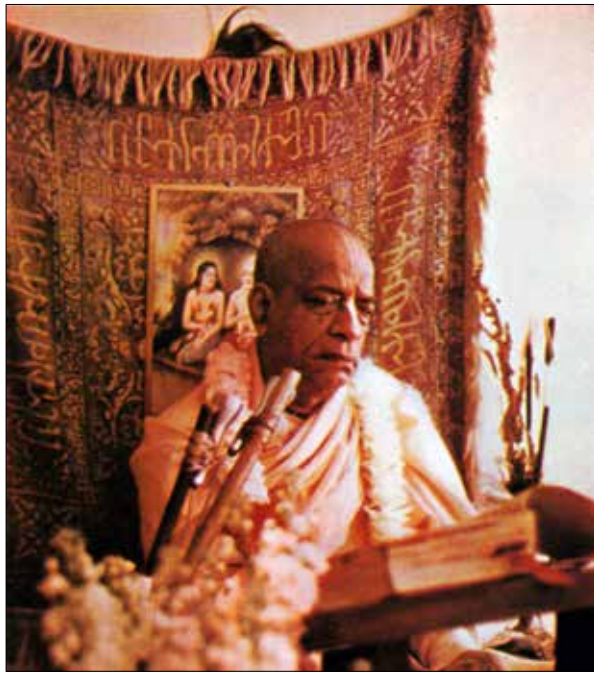
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NO QUESTION OF HATE

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

In this material world, all conditioned souls are under illusion. A doctor treats all patients, and although a patient may be delirious and insult the doctor, the doctor does not refuse to treat him. He still administers the medicine that is required. As Lord Jesus Christ said, we should hate the sin, not the sinner. That is a very nice statement, because the sinner is under illusion. He is mad. If we hate him, how can we deliver him?

Cover: Venudhari Krishna. Painting by Drdha Vrata Gorrick.

Therefore, those who are advanced devotees, who are really servants of God, do not hate anyone. When Lord Jesus Christ was being crucified, he said, "My God, forgive them. They know not what they do." This is the proper attitude of an advanced devotee. He understands that the conditioned souls cannot be hated, because they have become mad due to their materialistic way of thinking. In this Krishna consciousness movement, there is no question of hating anyone. Everyone is welcome to come and chant Hare Krishna, take *kṣṇa-prasāda*, listen to the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, and try to rectify material, conditioned life. This is the essential program of Krishna consciousness. 🍌

— From *The Path of Perfection*, chapter 3. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles, California, U.S.A., 1979.

THE FAULTS OF CONDEMNATION AND RIDICULE

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

If less-enlightened seekers are simply ridiculed and repudiated, this may close ones portal to gradual elevation. Those who become sectarian by obstinately locking themselves into dogmatic cults are soon diverted from lofty idealism, munificence, and liberality. They deride and rail at anyone who does not follow their particular methodology in religious practice. This is a serious aberration on their part. 🍌

— From *Jaiva-dharma*, chapter 11. Translated by Sarvabhavana Das. Published by Brhat Mrdanga Press. Vrindavan. 2003.

RAGHUNANDAN'S WORSHIP OF GOPINATH

Raghunandana Thakur was the son of Mukunda Sarkar (sometimes referred to as Mukunda Das). His father's brother was the famous Narahari Sarkar, who, aside from being the guru of Srila Lochan Das Thakur, is credited by some scholars as being the first biographer of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the form of the songs he wrote about Mahaprabhu's pastimes. Mukunda, along with his two brothers Narahari and Madhava Das, lived in the village Sri Khanda in West Bengal.

On one occasion, Mahaprabhu affectionately asked Mukunda:

*'tumi—pitā, putra tomāra—śrī-raghunandana?
kibā raghunandana—pitā, tumi—tāra tanaya?*

"You are the father, and your son is Raghunandan. Is that so? Or is Raghunandan your father and you are his son?" (Cc. madhya 14.113-114)

Mukunda replied, "Raghunandan is my father, and I am his son. All of us have gotten *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* from Raghunandan. Therefore he is our father."

Mahaprabhu said, "That is correct. One who awakens devotion to Krishna is guru."

What was so special about Raghunandan? Why was it that his father Mukunda considered him to be superior and senior?

According to the local tradition in Sri Khanda, Sri Abhiram Thakur, the famous devotee of Lord Nityananda, once came to offer his obeisances to Raghunandan Thakur. Raghunandan Thakur embraced him and the two began ecstatic *saikīrtana* in the house of a devotee in Badadangi. Their dancing was so ecstatic that at one-point Raghunandan Thakur's ankle bracelet came off and due to the force of his dancing it flew in the air for two or three miles and landed in a pond at the place known as Akai-hatta. From that time on the pond has been known as Nupura Kund. It is said that Raghunandan's ankle bracelet can still be seen today in a small temple in the village of Badui where it is in the custody of the local mahantas.

Lochan Das Thakur describes Raghunandan's qualities (*sūtra-khaṇḍha* 653-655):

*kṛṣṇera āveśe nṛtya jaga-manah mohe
nāhi bhinnābhinna — saba samāna-sinehe*

When the power of Lord Krishna entered him, he danced. His dancing enchanted the hearts of the whole world.



Unknown artist. From Sri Khanda

Meeting of Raghunandan and Abhiram Thakur

He did not make any distinctions, but loved everyone equally.

*sarvadā madhuravāṇī bolaye vadane
sarvakāla nā śunila umkaṭa-kathane*

The words he spoke were always sweet. He never listened to harsh language.

*cāturī, mādhurī, līlā vilāsa lāvanya
rasamaya deha tāra e saṁsāre dhanya*

He was intelligent, expert, playful, charming, and handsome. His body was like a flood of nectar. He was the most fortunate person in the world.

In another place, Lochan Das Thakur alludes to an amazing pastime that explains the reason why Mukunda considered his son Raghunandan to be the father and himself as Raghunandan's son (*sūtra-khaṇḍha* 648):



Photo by Sri Sakthicharan Das

Deity of baby Raghunandan on the lap of his mother in Sri Khanda



Unknown artist. Local painting from Sri Khanda

Mukunda sees Gopinath, Krishna, eating sweets offered by his son Raghunandan

*śrī-mūrtike lāḍu kāoyāila yei jana
tāre alpa-buddhi kare kon mūḍha jana*

He fed sweetmeats to his deity, and the deity personally ate them. What fool would dare to consider Sri Raghunandana Thakur an ordinary unintelligent person?

The famous Vaishnava poet Uddhava Das in his song beginning with the words, “*prakṛa śrī khaṇḍa-bāsa*”, has written about this pastime. Uddhava Das describes in his song that Lord Gopinath is served with great affection in the house of Sri Mukunda Das at Sri Khanda. One day, Mukunda was called away to do some work, so he instructed his son Raghunandan to perform the service to the family deity of Gopinath on that day. He told the young boy, “This deity has been in our family for many generations. He has been worshipped by my father, his father, and his father, on and on for many, many years. Just as your mother feeds you and I every day, so also Gopinath has to be fed every day.” Having admonished Raghunandan that he was entrusting him with a great responsibility for which he should carefully give his full attention, Mukunda went out.

As instructed by his father, Raghunandan collected the items for offering to Sri Gopinathji and entered the deity room. Raghunandan was barely five years old. As children are prone to do, Raghunandan imitated the way he had seen his father offer *bhoga* to the Lord. However, when he

saw the food still present on the plate after he had offered it to Gopinath, he thought that Gopinath hadn’t eaten it and he became very worried. With tears in his eyes he prayed to Gopinath, “Please eat! Please eat!” In the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* (14.29) Krishna says:

*sadā mukto `pi baddho `smi bhaktena sneha rajjubhiḥ
ajito `pi jito `ham tair avaśo `pi vaśi-kṛtaḥ*

Although I am supremely free and independent, eternally liberated and unconquerable, still I am bound up with the rope of love of my *bhakta*.

Sri Gopinath, who is *sarveśvareśvara*, *sṛṣṭi-kartā*, and *jagannātha* — the supreme controller of all controllers, the creator, and the Lord of the universe — became conquered by the simple loving request of the five-year-old Raghunandan. Thus, he stealthily ate everything without leaving any remnants.

After some time, Raghunandan’s father, Mukunda, returned and asked his son if he had done as he was told. Raghunandan replied, “Yes”, and Mukunda asked him to bring some of the *prasādam*.

Raghunandan said, “*Prasādam*? I offered everything just like you told me, and Gopinath ate it all. So what should I bring you now?” Mukunda was completely taken aback.

He thought, “This boy is not naughty and he is always accustomed to speaking the truth.



Unknown photographer

Pujari in Sri Khanda holding the deity of Gopinath, who was worshiped by Raghunandan Thakur

Moreover, I doubt if he could have eaten everything by himself. I wonder what actually happened?”

Mukunda mused over the matter for a few days. Finally, his curiosity was so strong that he again requested Raghunandan to offer *bhoga* to Gopinath. On this day, however, after leaving the house, Mukunda immediately returned another way and hid himself near the altar. Raghunandan was very happy to be able to serve Sri Gopinathji again, and he brought everything into the deity room. As before, he again very insistently persuaded Gopinath to take his meal. Again Gopinath, who is famous as *bhakta-vatsala*, one who is very affectionate to his devotees, was defeated by the earnest love of young Raghunandan and he began eating the offering. After eating half of a sweetmeat, Gopinath saw Mukunda peering out from his hiding spot. Gopinath didn't try to cover up the fact that he had eaten what he had, but neither did he take any more. Seeing all this, Mukunda became immersed in ecstatic love and

placed his son on his lap. With torrents of joyful tears streaming from his eyes, Mukunda began singing the glories of Raghunandan in a voice trembling with ecstasy. Uddhava Das concludes the story saying:

*adyāpi śrī khaṇḍa-pure arddha lāḍu āche kare
dekhe yata bhāgyavanta jane
abhinna madana yei śrī raghunandana sei
e uddhava dāsa rasa bhane*

Even today in Sri Khanda, those who are greatly fortunate can still see that half-eaten laddu in Gopinath's lotus hand. Thus, Sri Uddhav Das sings the glories of Raghunandan, who is non-different from Madan (Cupid). 🍬

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THE YAMADUTAS ARE LAUGHING

The Medieval Poet Premananda Das

For more about the poet Premananda Das, see Bindu issue 519.

*e mana! tumi vā bhulicha kise
tomāre dekhiyā, śamana-kiṅkara
hāte tāli diyā hāse*

O mind! How can you forget? Seeing you, the servants of Yamaraj clap their hands and laugh.

*rātri-dine kata, asat pacāla
śrī-hari kahite nāro
emana durlabha janama pāiye
ki sukhe e kṣepa haro*

Day and night, you go on talking nonsense, but you can't utter the holy names of Sri Hari? Obtaining this rare human form of life, for what happiness are you losing this greatest opportunity?

*dhana-jane yata āpanā balicha
ke tora yāibe sāthe
pāyera gumāne pichu nā gaṇili
thekeili śamana-hāte*

You consider your wealth and relatives as your own. But who will go with you? Being proud of your bodily strength, you didn't care for anything, and now you are stuck under the grip of the Lord of death.

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Unknown artist

Krishna hiding in a tree while watching Srimati Radharani

*dekhiye śuniye, bujhite nārili
asāre jānili sāra
āpanāra māthā āpani bhāṅgili
bale nā e doṣa kāra*

Even after seeing and hearing you couldn't understand! You thought that which is inessential is the essence. You broke your own head, now tell whose fault is that?

*ekhana takhana kakhana ki jāni
hāsīte khelite paḍi
e sukha smaribe galāya yakhana
caḍibe cāmera daḍi*

You do not know whether your body will fall now or later. You will remember all your so-called happiness once you are tied with the leather noose around your neck.

*vadana bhariyā hari hari bala
śamana taribe sukhe
kahe premānanda hari nā bhajili
kāli-cuṇa tora mukhe*

Chant the names of Hari, Hari constantly! Then only can you escape the punishment of Yamaraj. Premananda says, if you do not serve Hari then may your face turn black in shame. 🍌

— Translated by Mani Gopal Das from Premananda Das' *Manah-śikṣā*. Song 5. published by Haridas Sastri. Vrindavan. Śrī Caitanyābda 484 (1970). Bengali.