

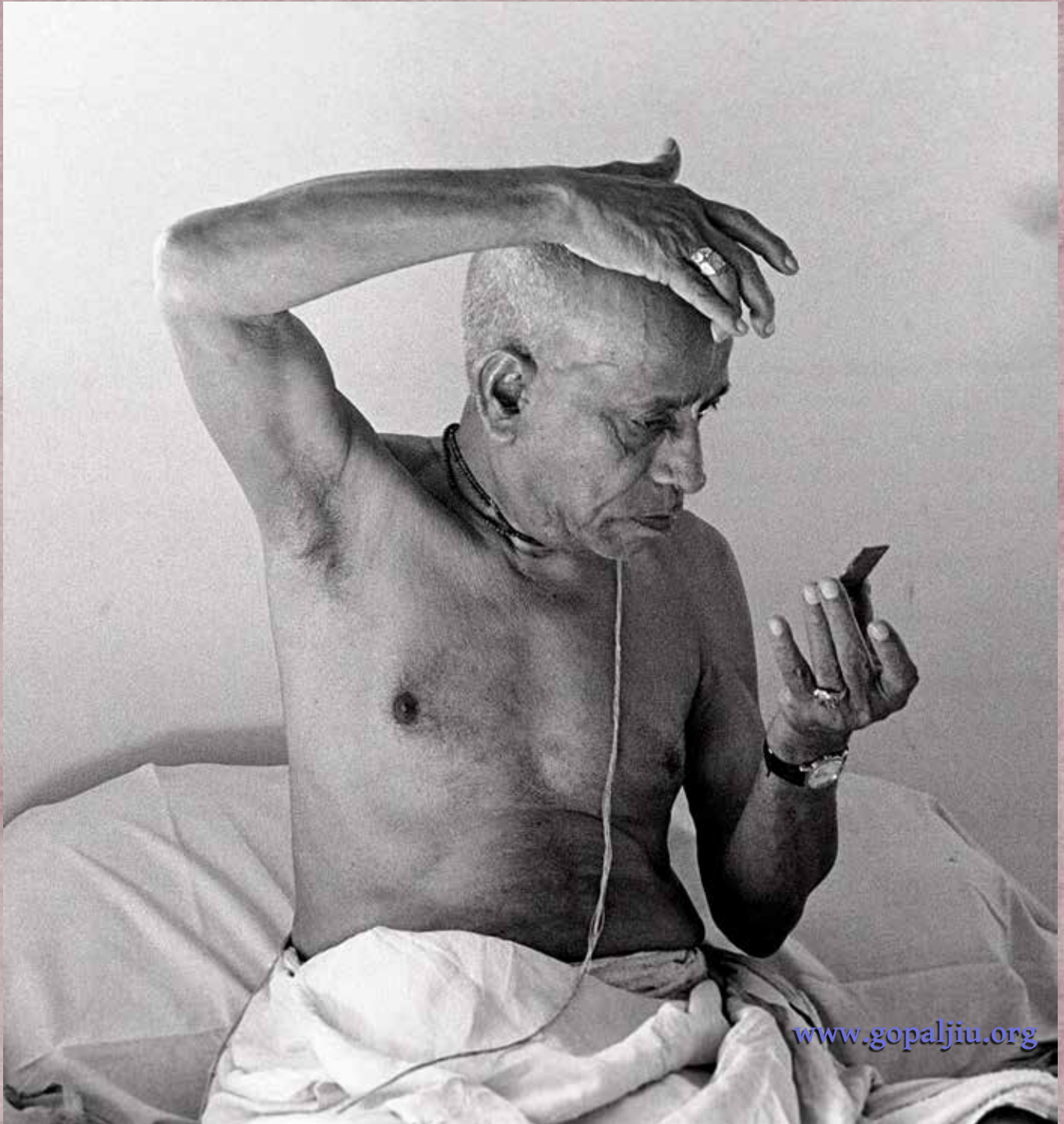
Sri Krishna Kathamrita



Bindu

Issue 571

The Glories of Vaishnava Tilaka part 1



www.gopaljiu.org



Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

Fortnightly email mini-magazine from Gopal Jiu Publications

Issue No. 571

Śrī Kāmadā Ekādaśī

19 April 2024

Highlights

• [THE IMPORTANCE OF TILAKA](#)

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• [FORBIDDEN TO WEAR TILAKA](#)

From a story told by

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• [TWICE BORN INITIATES SHOULD ALWAYS WEAR TILAKA](#)

Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur and

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

• [RADHARANI'S TILAKA](#)

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

• [THE TILAKA OF SHYAMANANDA PRABHU](#)

• [A SYMBOL OF UNSHAKEABLE FAITH](#)

• [THE TILAKA OF GOPAL GURU GOSWAMI](#)



THE IMPORTANCE OF TILAKA



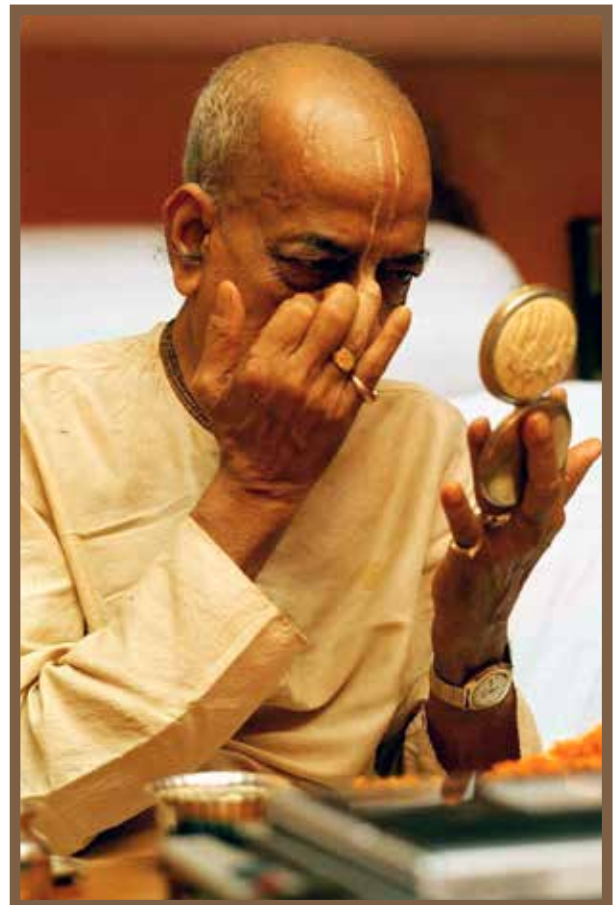
His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Every devotee should take his bath early in the morning and decorate his body with *tilaka*. In *Kali-yuga* one can hardly acquire gold or jeweled ornaments, but the twelve *tilaka* marks on the body are sufficient as auspicious decorations to purify the body. Since Dhruva Maharaja was living at that time at Badrikashram, there were other great sages there. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 4.12.28)

In our Krishna consciousness movement, fashionable persons are taught to adopt one fashion – the dress of a *vaiṣṇava* with a shaved head and *tilaka*. They are taught to be always clean in mind, dress and eating in order to be fixed in Krishna consciousness. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 6.5.14)

In other places, the following offenses are listed: ... (k) to apply *tilaka* to one's forehead in a curved way. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 7.5.23-24)



Cover: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada putting on *tilaka*. Unknown photographer.



Painting by Indra Sharma circa 1960s

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu dances before Lord Jagannath at Ratha-yātrā in Puri



The Six Goswami's of Vrindavan

One should decorate the body with *tilaka*, which is the sign of the *vaiṣṇavas*. (The idea is that as soon as a person sees these marks on the body of the *vaiṣṇava*, he will immediately remember Krishna. Lord Chaitanya said that a *vaiṣṇava* is he who, when seen, reminds one of Krishna. Therefore, it is essential that a *vaiṣṇava* mark his body with *tilaka* to remind others of Krishna.) (Nectar of Devotion chapter 6)

One should decorate the body with *tilaka*, which is the sign of the *vaiṣṇavas*. The idea is that as soon as a person sees these marks on the body of the *vaiṣṇava*, he will immediately remember Krishna. Lord Chaitanya said that a *vaiṣṇava* is he who, when seen, reminds one of Krishna. Therefore, it is essential that a *vaiṣṇava* mark his body with *tilaka* to remind others of Krishna. (Nectar of Devotion, chapter 6)

Persons who put *tulasī* beads on the neck, who mark twelve places of their body as Vishnu temples with Vishnu's symbolic representations (the four items held in the four hands of Lord Vishnu – conch, mace, disk and lotus), and who have Vishnu *tilaka* on their forehead, are to be understood as the devotees of Lord

Vishnu in this world. Their presence makes the world purified, and anywhere they remain they make that place as good as Vaikuntha. (Nectar of Devotion chapter 9)

Just as the months of the year are known according to the twelve different names of the Supreme Lord, the *vaiṣṇava* community marks twelve parts of the body according to these names. For instance, the *tilaka* mark on the forehead is called Keshava, and on the stomach, breast and arms the other names are also given. These are the same names as those given the months. (Teachings of Lord Chaitanya chapter 7)

After initiation, the disciple's name must be changed to indicate that he is a servant of Lord Vishnu. The disciple should also immediately begin marking his body with *tilaka* (*ūrdhva-puṇḍra*), especially his forehead. These are spiritual marks, symptoms of a perfect *vaiṣṇava*. (Purport to Cc. madhya 1.208)

These twelve forms constitute the predominant names for the twelve months of the year as well as the twelve *tilaka* marks on the body. Each of the four Personalities of Godhead expands into two other forms; thus there are eight forms,



Unknown artist. Early 20th century

Maharaja Prataparudra and Swarup Damodar offer prayers to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as six-armed ṣaḍ-bhūja

such as Purushottam, Achyuta, etc. (Purport to *Cc. madhya* 20.174)

When one marks the forehead with *tilaka*, he must remember Keshava. When one marks the lower abdomen, he must remember Narayan. For the chest, one should remember Madhav, and when marking the hollow of the neck one should remember Govinda. Lord Vishnu should be remembered while marking the right side of the belly, and Madhusudhan should be remembered when marking the right arm. Trivikram should be remembered when marking the right shoulder, and Vaman should be remembered when marking the left side of the belly. Sridhar should be remembered while marking the left arm, and Hrishikesh should be remembered when marking the left shoulder. Padmanabh and Damodar should be remembered when marking the back. (Purport to *Cc. madhya* 20.202)

Suppose you say, “We are Krishna conscious persons.” Some one may challenge you, “First of all, explain what do you know about Krishna?” That is quite natural. If you do not know about Krishna, you have no right to say that, “I belong to the Krishna consciousness movement.” Simply if you have *tilaka* and a *kañṭhi*, that does not mean that you belong to the

Krishna consciousness movement. Any cheater can do that. You must know the philosophy. If one challenges, you must reply. (Lecture in Los Angeles. 4 June 1976)

If you have actually tasted *bhakti-yoga*, there will be no more material attachment. This is the test. Not that artificially you are keeping a big *tilaka* on the forehead but always thinking within, “How to get money, how to get woman?” There will be no more hunger for these material things, especially woman and money. That is the test of *bhakti*. (Lecture in Vrindavan. 18 October 1972)

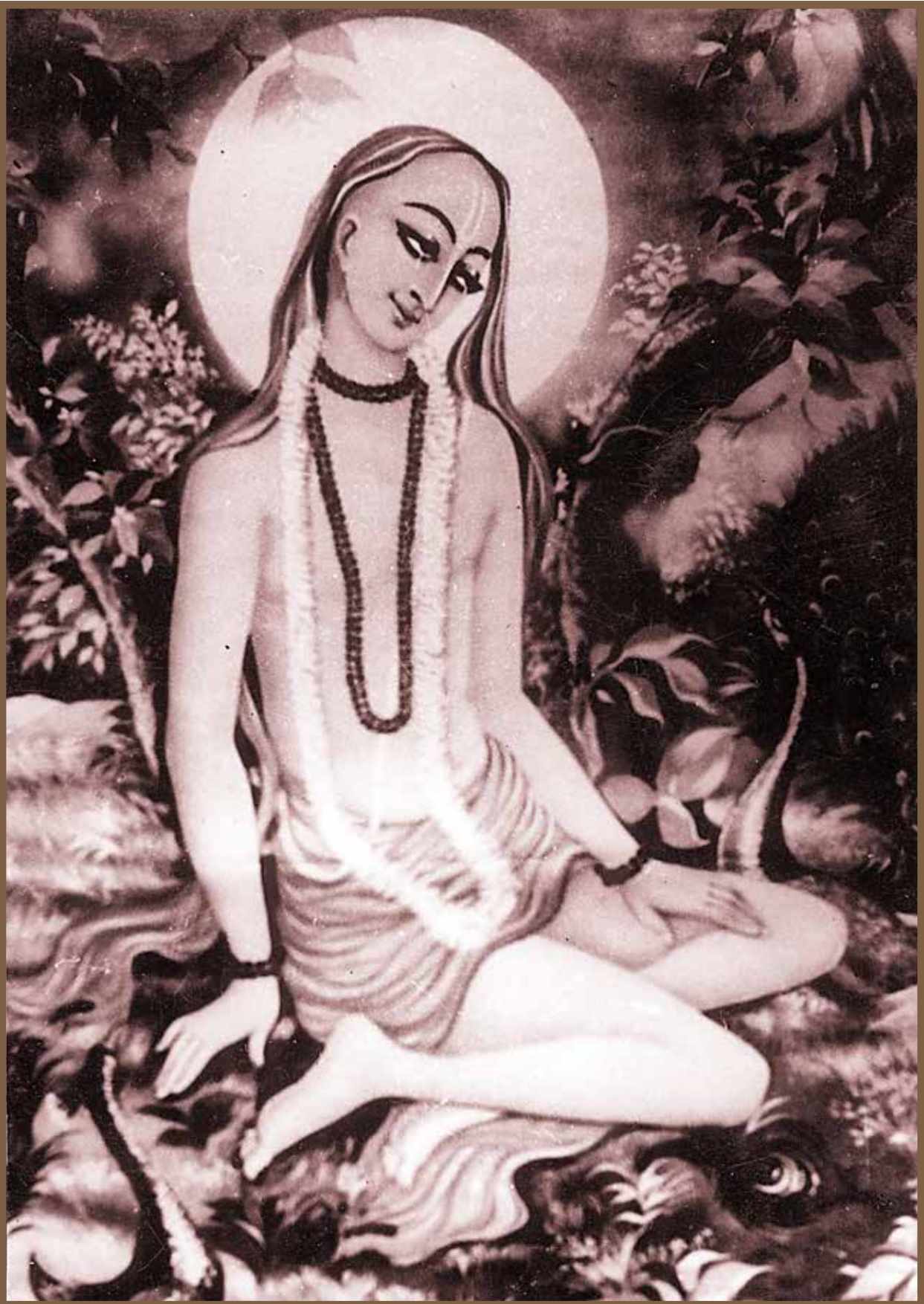
Devotee: Does Krishna wear *tilaka* like we do, Srila Prabhupada?

Prabhupada: Yes. Radharani only a red spot. (Room conversation in Japan. 22 April 1972)

In southern India, they maintain the Hindu culture. You’ll find big high-court judges, they have got *tilaka*. (Conversation in Stockholm. 5 September 1973)

Devotee: His first question was regarding *tilaka*. What is the symbolism, significance?

Prabhupada: It is just like your cross, amongst Christians. It is the temple of Vishnu. We have got twelve places: here, here, here, here, and here. The idea is being protected by Vishnu from all sides. (Room conversation in Geneva. 5 June 1974)



Unknown artist

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as a sannyāsi in Jagannath Puri



Photo by Thomas Kelly. From Wall Street Journal

Young Vaishnava sadhus with Ramanandi tilaka

Tilaka is our position. That is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's stricture. He would not see one face if there is no *tilaka*. He used to say it is cremation ground. *Tilaka* must be there. And so far dress is concerned, you can dress up to the taste of the modern people. (Conversation in Bombay 31 March 1977)

Actually, our Krishna Conscious movement is genuine Christian movement. Christ means Krishna, love of Godhead, who has his face anointed with *tilaka*. (Letter to Syamasundara. 31 August, 1969)

Tilaka means victory personified. (Letter to Tilaka Dasi. 5 July 1971) 🍀

**FORBIDDEN TO
WEAR TILAKA**



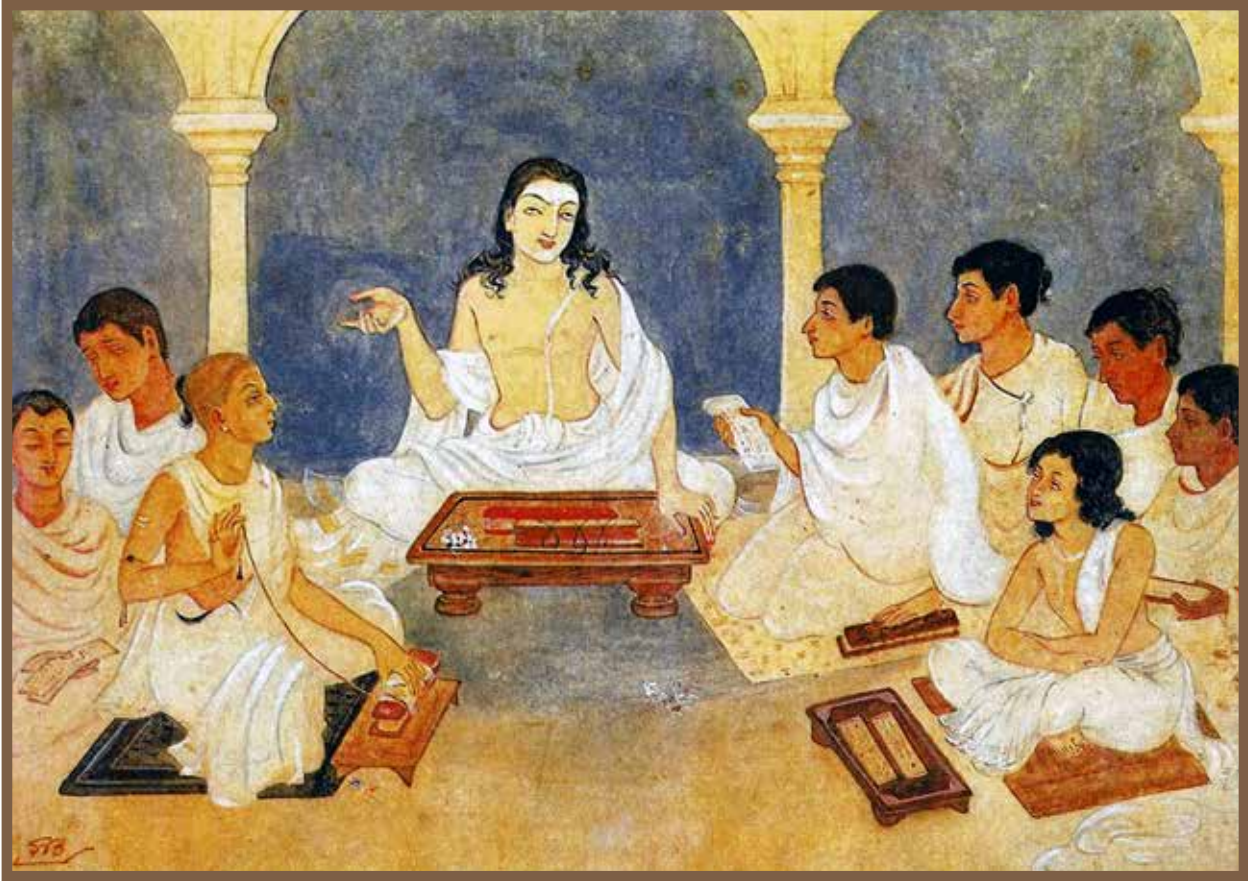
**From a story told by His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada**

There was once a factory in India where all the workers were Hindus and mostly *vaiṣṇavas*. The *vaiṣṇavas* had freedom, therefore, to wear their *vaiṣṇava tilaka* to work, and they also displayed other *vaiṣṇavas* paraphernalia. After some time, however,

the factory went to new management and the new proprietor was a Muslim. On taking over the business, the Muslim owner declared that he would no longer allow the workers to come to work wearing *vaiṣṇava tilaka*. Most of the workers obeyed, and on the given date announced by the owner, they appeared at the factory without their *tilaka*. One employee, however, thought that he would take his chances and depend on Krishna, so he went to work wearing very clear, white, *vaiṣṇava tilaka*. After seeing all the workers assembled, the new Muslim proprietor said, "This one devotee who has worn *vaiṣṇava tilaka* is very courageous. He may be permitted to continue wearing the *tilaka* to work, but all others are forbidden to wear it any more."

In this way, Prabhupada encouraged the devotees to not unnecessarily abandon the markings of a *vaiṣṇava*. Where situations forbid it, Prabhupada said that it was not absolutely necessary to wear *tilaka*, although a devotee should at least put water *tilaka* on his body in the morning and consecrate his body with the names of Vishnu. But if the paraphernalia is permitted, then a devotee should not unnecessarily do away with the dress or beads of a *vaiṣṇava*. 🍀 (Sri Prabhupada Nectar, chapter 3, number 6. Satsvarup Das Goswami. Gita Nagari Press. 2003.)

Unknown artist



Sri Gaura-chandra Nimai Pandit and his students in Nabadwip



Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur's
Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata, ādi-khaṇḍa 15.5-15
With Purports of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta
Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

Translation of texts 5-8

Mukunda Sanjaya was the Lord's servant for many lifetimes. His son was known as Purushottam Das. Gaura-chandra daily went to teach at the house of this fortunate person. The Lord arrived first and sat in the *caṇḍī-maṇḍapa*. Thereafter the students would gradually arrive there. During this period, sometimes by chance a student would forget to mark his forehead with *tilaka*.

PURPORT: The word *tilaka* refers to when a person who is initiated as a *vaiṣṇava* marks twelve parts of his body above the waist — his forehead, stomach,

chest, throat, right waist, right arm, right shoulder, left waist, left arm, left shoulder, upper back, and lower back — as temples of Hari, with *ūrdhva-puṇḍra*, two vertical lines. The forehead is one of these twelve places. In the *Nārada Purāṇa* it is stated: "A *vaiṣṇava* who marks his forehead with *ūrdhva-puṇḍra* immediately purifies the entire world." The devotees of Vishnu always apply *ūrdhva-puṇḍra tilaka*, and the devotees of Shiva, who are averse to devotional service to Vishnu, apply *tri-puṇḍra*, three lines.

The scriptures state that a king should take any initiated twice-born who does not wear *tilaka*, sit him backwards on an ass, and have him driven out of town. Therefore, every initiated *vaiṣṇava* must always wear *tilaka*. That is why the Lord, who is *jagad-guru*, the teacher of everyone, gave such instructions in his childhood pastimes. If one wants to worship Lord Vishnu, then he must accept the five *saṁskāras* related to initiation. Generally, a twice-born undergoes ten kinds of *saṁskāras*. Those who are lower than the twice-born undergo fifteen types of *saṁskāras* to become *vaiṣṇavas*. Just as a Brahmin is obliged to maintain a pure *brāhmaṇa* thread,



Painting by Kartick Biswas. Bengali school mid to late 1940s.

Nimai Pandit speaks with Keshava Kashmiri on the bank of the Ganga

an initiated *vaiṣṇava* is obliged to maintain *śikhā*, *brāhmaṇa* thread, *tilaka*, and *mālā*.

For a description on how to apply *tilaka*, one should refer to the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (4.66-98). It is stated in *Padma Purāṇa*, *uttara-khaṇḍa*: “A practitioner should decorate his body with twelve marks while chanting the names of the Lord such as Keshava.” The process for decorating the twelve parts of the body with the twelve *tilaka* marks is as follows:

*lalāṭe keśavaṁ dhyāyen nārāyaṇam athodare
vakṣaḥ-sthale mādhaveṁ tu govindaṁ kaṅṭha-kūpake
viṣṇuṁ ca dakṣiṇe kuṅṭṭhau bāhau ca madhusūdanam
trivikramaṁ kandhare tu vāmanaṁ vāma-pārsvake
śrīdharaṁ vāma-bāhau tu hr̥ṣīkeśaṁ tu kandhare
pṛ̥ṣṭhe ca padmanābhaṁ ca katyāṁ dāmodaraṁ nyaset
tat prakṣālena-toyan tu vāsudevāya mūrdhani
ūrdhva-puṇḍraṁ lalāṭe tu sarveṣāṁ prathamāṁ smṛtam
lalāṭādi krameṇaiva dhāraṇan tu vidhīyate*

When one marks the forehead with *tilaka*, he must remember Keshava. When one marks the lower abdomen, he must remember Narayan. For the chest, one should remember Madhava, and when marking the hollow of the neck one should remember Govinda.

Lord Vishnu should be remembered while marking the right side of the belly, and Madhusudan should be remembered when marking the right arm. Trivikram should be remembered when marking the right shoulder, and Vaman should be remembered when marking the left side of the belly. Sridhar should be remembered while marking the left arm, and Hrishikesh should be remembered when marking the left shoulder. Padmanabh and Damodar should be remembered when marking the back. Then one should wash with water and remember Vāsudeva while wiping the hand on the head. One should put *tilaka* on the forehead first. This is the rule. Then one should put on *tilaka* according to the above-mentioned procedure.”

If one does not decorate his body with *tilaka*, he will incur sin. It is stated by Narada Muni in *Padma Purāṇa*: “If one performs sacrifice, gives in charity, undergoes austerity, studies the Vedas, or offers oblations to the forefathers without putting on *tilaka*, then all these activities will be useless. If a person does not decorate his body with *tilaka*, he is not to be seen, because his body is as impure as a crematorium.” It is mentioned in the *Āditya Purāṇa*: “A king should put a fallen Brahmin whose body is devoid of *vaiṣṇava* marks of *tilaka*, conch, and wheel on the back of donkey and drive him out of his kingdom.” It is stated in *Padma Purāṇa*, *uttara-khaṇḍa*:

Painting by Kartick Biswas, Bengali school, mid to late 1940s.



Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu takes sannyāsa and leaves home

“A person who performs any activity like worshipping deities without putting on *tilaka* achieves no benefit. There is no doubt about it. Know for certain that a person who performs *sandhyā* without wearing *tilaka* is simply demoniac and surely goes to hell.”

Prohibition for wearing crooked or three-lined *tilaka*: It is stated in the *Padma Purāṇa, uttara-khaṇḍa*: “A person who wears three-lined *tilaka* instead of *vaiṣṇava tilaka* is the lowest of men. Because of breaking the rules for marking *tilaka* on the body, which is the abode of Lord Vishnu, such a person certainly goes to hell.” It is stated in the *Skanda Purāṇa*: “A person should not wear crooked *tilaka*, even if he is about to die, nor should he chant any names other than the holy names of Narayan. He should wear *vaiṣṇava tilaka*, using *gopī-candana* if available.” Elsewhere it is stated: “Learned persons know that there are prescriptions for the Brahmins and devotees to wear *vaiṣṇava tilaka*, and other people should wear three-lined *tilaka*. If one sees or touches a Brahmin who has put on three-lined *tilaka* rather than *vaiṣṇava tilaka*, he should take bath with his clothes on. A *vaiṣṇava* should not wear three-lined *tilaka* rather than proper *vaiṣṇava tilaka* because such an act does not please Lord Hari.” In the narrations about the month of *Kārtika* in the *Skanda*

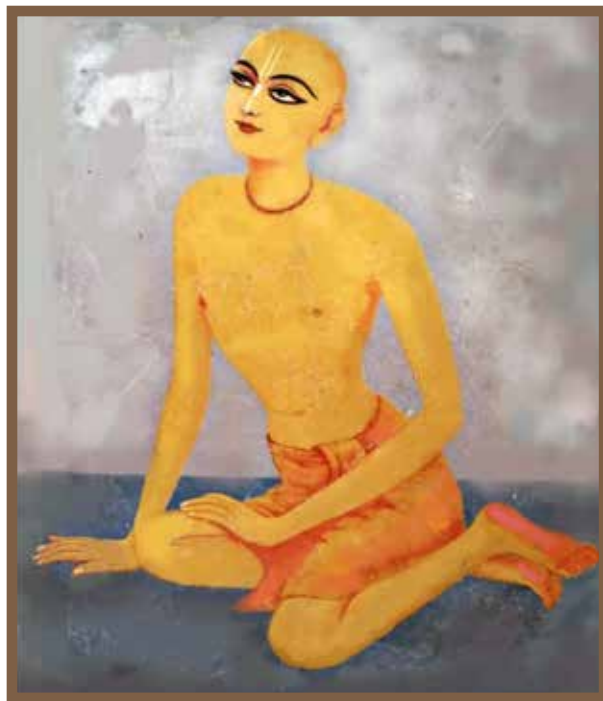
Purāṇa, it is stated: “One should not see a person whose forehead is not decorated with *vaiṣṇava tilaka*. If one happens to do so, he should immediately look at the sun, for Lord Hari and Lakshmidēvi reside within the *tilaka*.” It is stated in the *Padma Purāṇa, uttara-khaṇḍa*: “Marks of *tilaka* resembling a banyan leaf, a bamboo leaf, and the bud of a lotus are most enchanting.”

The glories of decorating the body with *tilaka* are as follows: “The beautiful vacant space within the mark of *tilaka* is the sitting place for Sri Lakshmi and Sri Janardan, the Lord of lords. Therefore, know for certain that the body marked with *tilaka* is a sanctified temple of the Lord.” It is mentioned in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*: “If a person who is impure, ill-behaved, and engaged in sinful activities, decorates his body with *tilaka* even with his mind, he certainly becomes pure forever. One should mark one’s forehead with *tilaka* while seeing one’s face in a mirror or in water, but never touch the *tilaka* with one’s fingernails.”

The rules and regulations for applying *tilaka*: It is stated in the *Padma Purāṇa, uttara-khaṇḍa*: “The most fortunate unalloyed devotees of Hari should decorate their bodies with marks of *tilaka* resembling the lotus

feet of Hari with a vacant space between the two lines. They should begin to mark from the tip of the nose up to the end of the forehead with *tilaka* or other suitable clay. The tip of the nose refers to three-quarters down the nose. One should draw two separate lines beginning from the middle of the eyebrows upwards.” The prescription for keeping space within the mark of *tilaka*: “A fallen twice-born who applies *tilaka* without keeping a vacant space between the two lines certainly abandons Sri Hari and Lakshmidēvi, who reside within that space. There is no doubt that a fallen twice-born who applies *tilaka* without keeping a space maintains the feet of a dog on his forehead. Therefore, O beautiful one, Brahmins and women should always mark their foreheads with *tilaka* resembling two sticks with a space between.”

The symptoms of *tilaka* as temples of Hari: “The mark of *tilaka* that starts from the nose and stretches up to the hair on the head with a beautiful space in between the lines is called a temple of Hari. Lord Brahma resides on the left side, Sadashiva resides on the right side, and Lord Vishnu resides in the middle of such a *tilaka* mark. One should not apply anything in the middle.” The clay used for preparing *tilaka* is described in the *Padma Purāna* as follows: “One should collect clay for *tilaka* beneath flowing waters that have bathed Lord Vishnu. One can also collect clay from the transcendental abode of Hari. One should devotedly collect clay from the Venkata Hill, from Sri Rangam, from Sri Kurma-kshetra, from Sri Dwarka, from Sri Prayaga, from Sri Nrisingha-kshetra, from Sri Varaha-kshetra, or from Sri Vrindavan [or any forest of *tulasī*] and then mix it with the water that has washed the lotus feet of Vishnu. In this way one should decorate one’s body with such *tilaka* and come before the Lord. O Maharaja Ambarish, to minimize your sinful reactions, just see one whose forehead is decorated with *tilaka* made of *gopī-candana*.” In the *Skanda Purāna*, Dhruva Maharaja speaks as follows: “If you see a person decorated with the *tilaka* marks of a conch and wheel, adorned with *tulasī mañjarīs* on his head, and his limbs smeared with *gopī-candana*, then why should you fear sinful reactions? A *vaiṣṇava* should mark his forehead with attractive *tilaka* of clay collected from the root of a *tulasī* plant. One should mark his forehead with *gopī-candana* and wear the garland that has been offered to the Lord. In this way, one should decorate one’s forehead with one of the three kinds of *tilaka*. One should also decorate his body with various shapes like Matsya and Kurma and various weapons like the wheel in order to please Lord Hari.”



Unknown artist

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu as a sannyāsi

The Vedic injunction regarding applying *tilaka*: It is stated in the *hiranyakeśīya* branch of the *Yajur Veda*: “A person who wears *tilaka* marks resembling the lotus feet of Hari becomes very fortunate and dear to the Supreme Brahman, Sri Hari. A human being who wears *tilaka* with a space in the middle becomes eligible for liberation.” In the *Kaṭha* branch of the *Yajur Veda* it is stated: “The great soul who after applying *tilaka* meditates through mantras on Sri Vishnu, who holds a *cakra*, who is the Supreme Absolute Truth, who is greater than the greatest, and who resides in the hearts of his devotees, certainly becomes pure.” It is stated in the *Atharva Veda*: “The fortunate practitioner who throughout his life decorates his body with *tilaka* marks like the wheel, certainly attains the all-pervading Lord Vishnu’s supreme abode, which is the ultimate goal of the devotees.”

Translation of texts 9-15

As *sanātana-dharma* himself, the Lord establishes the principles of religion. In order to protect people’s religious principles, he would not tolerate any transgression.

PURPORT: The very moment such a delinquent would appear, the Lord would put him to such shame that he would never again come without first completing his morning worship. The Lord would say, “O brother, why I do not see any *tilaka* on your forehead? What is your explanation? The Vedas say that if a Brahmin’s forehead is not decorated with *tilaka*, it is as good as a crematorium. I can understand

that you have not performed your daily worship. Therefore, dear brother, your morning has become fruitless. Go back home and perform your morning duties again. Then you may return to study.” In this way, all of the Lord’s students were conscientious about performing their religious duties. 🍌

— English translation by Bhumipati Das. Edited and published by Pundarik Vidyandhi Das. Vrajraj Press. Vrindavan. 2001.



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Devotee: In our temples we paint *tilaka* on Krishna’s forehead. Does Srimati Radharani also wear *tilaka*?

Gour Govinda Swami: Bhaktivinode Thakur mentions that.

Devotee: So, in our temples, on the deity forms we should paint *tilaka*?

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes, we follow Bhaktivinode Thakur. He is an *ācārya*. We are in the *Bhaktivinoda-dhara*, the line of Bhaktivinode.

Devotee: It seems to be somewhat of a controversy.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes. But Bhaktivinode Thakur mentions it. Some follow it and some don’t.

Devotee: It is also written that her *tilaka* is her good fortune.

Gour Govinda Swami: Yes. *Tilaka* is her fortune. 🍌
(From a Darshan in Bhubaneswar. 19 May 1994.)

[**Note:** In chapter 7, part 7 of *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*, and in *Jaiva-dharma* chapter 33, Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur mentions that Srimati Radharani wears *tilaka* on her forehead.]

— 19 May 1994. *Darśana* in Bhubaneswar.



Shyamananda Prabhu (1534-1630 A.D.) was an Odia vaiṣṇava who in his youth took initiation from the famous Hridayachaitanya Prabhu of Ambika Kalna in West Bengal. Hridayachaitanya named him Krishnadas and instructed him to go to Vrindavan to study śāstra under Srila Jiva Goswami. The following translation from the Bengali book, Śrī Gaura-pāṛṣada-caritāvalī, by Sri Bhakti Jivan Harijan



Unknown artist: Punjab Hills, Himachal Pradesh, Mandi, ca. 1820

Krishna puts tilaka on Srimati Radharani

Maharaja, tells the story of how Krishnadas got his special tilaka and the name Shyamananda Das.

When Krishnadas requested some service to perform, Sri Jiva gave him charge of cleaning the garden groves of Radha Krishna. From that day forward Krishnadas happily swept there. Sometimes when sweeping, tears would glide down his cheeks, while at other times as he engaged in *sankīrtana*, remembering the pastimes of Sri Radha Govinda, he would become stunned with ecstasy. Sometimes he would place the broom, which was covered with dust, on his head. The touch of that transcendental dust was desired by even Lord Brahma and Lord Siva.

Upon seeing Krishnadas’s sincerity, Lord Krishna and Srimati Radhika became very pleased and desired to appear before him. One day when he was deeply absorbed in sweeping the grove, Krishnadas suddenly noticed an extraordinarily beautiful anklet lying on the ground. Astonished, he picked up the anklet, placed it to his forehead and then tied it to his scarf. He decided to take care of it until its rightful owner came looking for it.



Unknown artist

Krishnadas finds Srimati Radharani's anklet

Meanwhile, the *gopī* friends of Sri Radha were surprised to find that Sri Radha's anklet had disappeared from her left foot. Sri Radha explained that it must have fallen off during the night when they were dancing in the grove and requested them to search for it. Visakha-devi then went to the grove where Krishnadas was cleaning and enquired about the anklet. Seeing the beautiful form of Visakha and hearing her sweet voice, Krishnadas became stunned. Visakha again enquired and Krishnadas managed to offer his respects and humbly explained that he had found an anklet, but he wanted to know her identity and whether the anklet actually belonged to her or not. Visakha-devi said that she was a dairy-maid from a nearby village and the anklet belonged to a bride of her house. She explained that while picking flowers the anklet had slipped from her feet. Krishnadas, however, insisted that the rightful owner of the anklet should personally come to reclaim it.

After some time, Sri Radha Thakurani, accompanied by Visakha-devi, approached Krishnadas and told him that

the rightful owner had come to take her anklet. Seeing the extraordinary beauty of Sri Radhika, Krishnadas became overwhelmed with bliss. He joyfully delivered the anklet to Visakha-devi, then fell to the ground crying ecstatically. Visakha said that her friend wanted to give him a gift as a token of gratitude. But Krishnadas replied that he had no interest in anything other than the dust of her lotus feet. Visakha-devi then told him to take bath in Radha kunda. As soon as he did as she requested, Krishnadas was transformed into a beautiful young girl. She then came before Visakha-devi and worshiped her lotus feet. Visakha took her before Sri Radha Thakurani, and she fell prostrate at her lotus feet. Sri Radha took her anklet and placed it on the young girl's forehead, explaining that the *tilaka* which appeared there as a result of the touch of the anklet would always remain on Krishnadas's forehead. She also said that from that day forward Krishnadas should be known as Shyamananda. With these words, Sri Radha Thakurani and her companions suddenly disappeared. When Krishnadas regained his external consciousness he



Srimati Radharani puts tilaka on the head of Kanaka Manjari (Krishnadas, Shyamananda Prabhu's eternal form)

found the bright marking on his forehead. Overwhelmed with ecstasy he cried uncontrollably for a long time. He then offered his obeisances to Sri Radha and returned to the residence of Sri Jiva Goswami.

Sri Jiva Goswami was astonished to see the bright *tilaka* marking the forehead of Krishnadas and enquired about it. Krishnadas offered his respects and tearfully explained the entire incident. Upon hearing this wonderful story Jiva Goswami was overjoyed, but advised Krishnadas not to disclose the incident to anyone.

When the *vaiṣṇavas* noticed the change in Krishnadas's *tilaka* and name they became suspicious and began to talk amongst themselves. Gradually the news reached Ambika Kalna in Bengal. When Hridaychaitanya heard the news he became furious and rushed to Sri Vrindavan. Upon seeing his spiritual master before him, Shyamananda fell prostrate at his feet. But, seeing the new *tilaka* on the forehead of his disciple, Hridaychaitanya was livid and harshly

rebuked Shyamananda again and again, until eventually the *vaiṣṇavas* managed to pacify him. Shyamananda endured the verbal assault with a smile and continued to serve his teacher as usual.

That night, Sri Hridaychaitanya dreamed that Sri Radha was chastising him severely saying, "Being pleased with Krishnadas, I have changed both his name and markings. Who dares to say anything?" Hridaychaitanya, understanding his fault, prayed to Sri Radhika to excuse him.

The following morning, he embraced Shyamananda affectionately and tearfully declared him to be extremely fortunate. Hridaychaitanya remained in Vrindavan a few more days, then before departing for Bengal he advised Shyamananda to remain with Sri Jiva Goswami for some time longer, then return to Bengal.

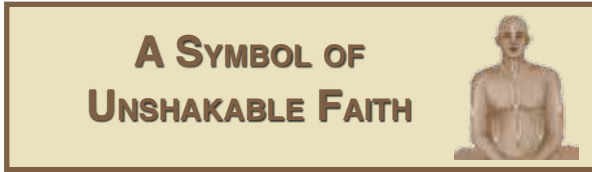
According to the tradition of the Shyamananda Parivara, the line of Shyamananda Prabhu, Hridaychaitanya called for an assembly of mahants and saints to test the authenticity of Shyamananda's *tilaka*.

He told everyone that he would only accept it as genuine if it could not be removed from his head. In front of all of the devotees, Hridaychaitanya began to intently rub Shyamananda's forehead until it began to bleed. Yet the tilaka mark was untouched and only began to glow more brightly after his efforts. Finally Hridaychaitanya admitted defeat and accepted Shyamananda's tilaka. That night it is said that Srimati Radharani appeared to Hridaychaitanya in a dream and told him that he had committed a great offense since it was she who personally gave the tilaka to Shyamananda. To compensate for his offense, she instructed him to make a feast and invite all of the devotees. Hridaychaitanya did so. That feast is celebrated to this day and is known as the guruji daṇḍotsava or, daṇḍamahotsava, the festival of guruji's chastisement. For these reasons, the followers of Shyamananda Prabhu call his tilaka, kṛpā-bindu, as it was given to him by the mercy (kṛpā) of Radharani. 🍌

Bibliography

— A. W. Entwisle. *Vaiṣṇava Tilakas*. pp. 80-82. Vrindaban Research Institute. Vrindaban. 2003.

— Bhakti Jivan Harijan Maharaja. *Śrī Śrī Gaura-pāṛṣada-caritāvali*. Bagbazar, Gaudiya Mission. Kolkata. 2006. Bengali.



The tilaka as a symbol of unshakeable faith and steadfastness appears in a few stories of saints who resisted attempts by Muslim rulers to suppress Vaishnavism. Among these is Bhagavan Das, a pupil of Yuta Khojiji and Shyamdas, who lived in Mathura. Priya Das says that the Mughal emperor, noticing that many of his subjects were wearing tilaka and mālā, which he considered to be a refutation of his authority, issued a proclamation to the effect that no one should wear them. Many vaiṣṇavas gave up wearing them for fear of losing their lives, but one devotee, Bhagavan Das, was so filled with the blissful ocean of bhakti that he dared to present himself before the emperor wearing his tilaka and mālā. The emperor was so impressed and pleased by this display of faith and courage that he permitted Bhagavan Das to continue to reside in Mathura. It is also said that the saint subsequently founded a temple dedicated to Harideva.



Unknown artist

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu crying for Krishna

A similar story is told about Biharinadeva (or Biharina Das), a follower of Hari Das, though it is not related in *Nijamatasiddhānta*, a work containing biographies of the ācāryas and saints of the sect. The emperor Akbar, who had a reputation for broad-mindedness in religious matters, decided to test the faith of the vaiṣṇavas. He summoned them all to attend his darbār, but warned that none of them must appear wearing a tilaka or mālā. Among the saints and mahantas, Biharinadeva alone decided that he would nevertheless present himself before Akbar wearing the signs of his faith. This was not on account of any egotism. It is said that Radha had appeared to him in a dream and told him not to be afraid. Accordingly, Biharinadev put on extra tulasī-mālās and enhanced his tilaka by smearing it with his thumb so that it extended down to the tip of his nose. This is how the ascetic followers of Hari Das account for their wearing of extra mālās and the fact that their tilaka is an elongated version of that of the *Nimbarka sampradāya*. At the darbār, Akbar proclaimed that Biharinadev was foremost among the vaiṣṇavas on account of his steadfastness. 🍌

— Pages 40-41 of A.W. Entwistle, *Vaiṣṇava Tilakas*; *Sectarian Marks Worn by Worshippers of Viṣṇu*. International Association of the Vrindaban Research Institute. London. 1982.

THE TILAKA OF GOPAL GURU GOSWAMI

Murari Pandit was a *vaiṣṇava* born in an Odia Brahmin family sometime in the mid-1400s. He named his son Makaradvaj. The child was later initiated by Srila Vakreshwar Pandit. As a young boy, by the blessing of Govinda, Makaradvaj was allowed to serve Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the Gambhira.

There was one devotee in Puri who was very attached to chanting the holy names. Even without any conscious endeavor, the holy names constantly appeared on his tongue. One day, as he was walking to the toilet, the young Makaradvaj saw him holding his mouth shut, as he didn't want to chant while performing an impure act. Makaradvaj questioned him, "What are you doing? Don't you know that there are no rules and regulations for chanting? The holy name is always pure and can be chanted at any time, in any circumstance."

It's said that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu overheard the boy's words and being very pleased with him, announced to all of the devotees that Makaradvaj was a guru. From that time on everyone began calling the young man, "Gopal Guru".

One of the intimate associates of Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu was Abhiram Thakur.

Srila Kavi Karnapur in his *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (126) says that Abhiram was Krishna's associate Sridama, the elder brother of Srimati Radharani in the spiritual world. Srila Prabhupada describes Abhiram Thakur in his purport to Cc. ādi 11.13:

By the order of Sri Nityananda Prabhu, Abhiram Thakur became a great *ācārya* and preacher of the Chaitanya cult of devotional service. He was a very influential personality, and nondevotees were very much afraid of him. Empowered by Sri Nityananda Prabhu, he was always in ecstasy and was extremely kind to all fallen souls. It is said that if he offered obeisances to any stone other than a *śālagrāma-śilā*, it would immediately fracture.

The book *Abhirāma-lilāmṛta*, written by Tilak Ramdas on the order of his guru Abhiram Thakur, similarly states that when Abhiram would offer obeisances to a deity, if the deity was not actually installed it would break to pieces. In the same way, when he offered obeisances to a devotee, if the devotee was not genuine then he would die.

Hearing about the glories of Gopal Guru, one day Abhiram Thakur came to see him to offer him his obeisances. When the young child heard that Abhiram had come with that purpose, Gopal Guru became frightened and ran to take shelter of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

At that time Mahaprabhu placed his lotus foot on the forehead of the boy and it made a *tilaka* mark. After that, Abhiram's obeisances had no effect on Gopal Guru. From that day on the followers of Vakreshwar Pandit and Gopal Guru Goswami have used that unique type of *tilaka* which originated from the footprint of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. — MD 🍌

Bibliography

— Bhakti Vallabha Tirtha Swami. *Sri Caitanya: His Life & Associates*. Mandala Media. San Rafael, California. 2001.

— Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. English translation and commentary by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. Los Angeles. 1975.

SRI KRISHNA KATHAMRITA BINDU

A free bi-monthly service provided by
Gopal Jiu Publications

Subscribe at our website: www.gopaljiu.org

GopalJiuPublications is a section of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Quotations from the books, letters, and lectures of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada ©Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. All other materials, unless specified, © ISKCON Gopal Jiu Publications. All rights reserved. Blanket permission is given to redistribute Bindu in electronic or print form provided no changes are made to the contents.

