

His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāja

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Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: ... service of Māyāpur, and hesitatingly he accepted that in the beginning, but to his last moment he conducted the service very faithfully. And in that matter, from the physical standpoint Kuñja Bihārī Vidyābhūṣaṇa, lately [Śrīpād Bhakti Vilās] Tīrtha Mahārāja, helped him a great deal. And gradually many scholars also came around him and with their help he started this movement. He got inspiration to preach and he did so up to the last moment of his life.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's other sons, they're not, Lalitā Prasād somewhat inclined towards Mahāprabhu's line, others indifferent mostly.

Then, when Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura passed away, Bimala Prasād, he arranged a condolence meeting in a public hall and many respectable gents were invited. Amongst them Vipin Pal, then the Principal of Metropolitan Schools, some Scottish _____ [?]

The leading personages of that time spoke very highly about Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. "He gave new thought to the society in general. His articles were of original character, not stereotyped things. His investigations about Vaiṣṇavism have exceeded all the modern Ācāryas."

Śīśir [Kumār] Ghose, "The seventh Gosvāmī. We heard of six Gosvāmīns in the time of Mahāprabhu but Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's writings have proved that he holds the seventh position amongst the Gosvāmīs. So extensive and original writings he has left for us about the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Deva."

In this way Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura left the world. And his literature, he's in his literature, present forever, systematic. On scientific basis he has delivered suitable to the modern age, his writing has given us about the teachings of Mahāprabhu and *Bhāgavat*. Our debt at his holy feet has got no end.

Prabhupāda was, though Prabhupāda took initiation from Gaura Kīśora Dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja as suggested by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, but still he held Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura as his real Guru, substantially. Formerly only by the order of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura he took Gaura Kīśora Dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja as Gurudeva. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura selected for him. But what we have found in him he knew that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is Guru from the internal consideration, we find. His outside and inside was filled with Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura not in the physical sense but in the spiritual sense.

He installed many Maṭhas with the name of the Deity as Vinode Vilāsa, Vinode Rāma, Vinode Ānanda, Vinode Pran. So he saw through his Gurudeva Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. His attempt to approach Rādhā-Govinda and Mahāprabhu is inconceivable without Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's intervention in him. He was full of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

I think I attempted to write something about Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and that was the key of his affection towards me, I thought. Because I tried to give publicity of the greatness of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's character to the public in a systematic way, so his attention was drawn to me. It is my own feeling.

One who is a little attached to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura he can give him everything for that. That was his spirit. So he thought to be indebted in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's holy life, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

So much so he saw Rādhārāṇī and Gadādhara in him, the highest ideal of Guru *tattva*. In Gaura *līlā* Gadādhara in *mādhurya rasa*; and in Kṛṣṇa *līlā* Rādhārāṇī.

He also told once, "That if we rise a little higher and look up, then we shall find Rādhārāṇī in Gurudeva. If we raise our head a little and try to find, then we shall find it is the Rādhārāṇī who is

doing the function of Gurudeva from the back, channels, position of instrumentality. But really, the source of grace, the Guru is coming from the original source of service, of love. So he used to see Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in that light.

*sāksād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair, [uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ]
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya, [vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam]*

[“In the revealed scriptures it is declared that the spiritual master should be worshipped like the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and this injunction is obeyed by pure devotees of the Lord. The spiritual master is the most confidential servant of the Lord. Thus let us offer our respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of our spiritual master.”]

[Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s *Śrī Śrī Gurv-aṣṭaka*, 7]

We are asked to see Gurudeva not opaque but transparent. Transparent to such a degree that through him in the highest end first conception of service, can be seen, can be had there, we can get there. If we are earnest then we shall find the highest link from the very source, original source. So we are requested not to see Guru as limited, limited in his ordinary personification, but transparent mediator of the highest function in his line. If only our vision is deep we can see that, according to the depth of the *śraddhā*, our vision, of the disciple, the Guru’s will, the Lord is there. The Guru *tattva* is a peculiar thing, very peculiar, very noble, very broad, wide and very deep. So we are warned against thinking Gurudeva was with mortality. So Prabhupāda used to, in his ideal conduct he has shown it to us, how much earnestness one may have for Gurudeva. We have seen in his practices and ways, advices. (Goodbye *kaniṣṭha*?) Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was wholesale awake in him, everything for Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaura Haribol. Nitāi. Nine o’clock?

Devotee: Yes Mahārāja.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Bhāratī Mahārāja: Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would openly criticise Śvarachandra Vidyāsāgar.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Yes, Vidyāsāgar, though he was a young boy. Vidyāsāgar wrote in his book, “*Īśvara-nirākāra-caitanya-svarūpa, Īśvara-nirākāra*, without any figure and He’s a mass of consciousness.”

So he went to him, the boy, he was a boy, went to him, “What have you written here? You say *Īśvara* and then say *nirākāra*. Where have you got it? *Īśvara*, the creator, the master, and He is *nirākāra*. Where have you got *Īśvara* is *nirākāra*? He has got some sort of *ākāra* [form], *cidākāra* [transcendental form], *nirākāra caitanya svarūpa*. Only mass of consciousness but without any figure, and He’s the creator. Where have you got?”

In this way challenged. But he was very young. Vidyāsāgar may not care. But still he did his duty. That was his temperament. He will give some challenge. Without that, whenever there is something wrong against the creed of Mahāprabhu, he must go and give some challenge. Otherwise he could not find peace in him.

“That I have done my duty, I have given up position. When it came to my consciousness, I have done something; that is satisfaction, that I opposed it.”

Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Bhāratī Mahārāja: No compromise.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: No compromise, protest. “Whatever you say I protest it. I represent a particular party that does not recognise your thought.”

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Rabi [Rabindranātha] Tagore wrote articles in some book, in disguise, and Prabhupāda also protested that in a name that also in disguise, protested, went on protesting his writings. Gaura Sundara. Gaura Sundara. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Bhāratī Mahārāja: Mahārāja, where did you spend most of your time with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura? You spent some time with him, personally?

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura? Yes. In the later portion of my life I got chances to live with him, now and often. Perhaps he used to like to take me with him. Many persons used to come to visit him, and to talk with them in a respectable way, to represent his teachings to them, he used to keep me with him. And when he used to, later in his life, he used to speak something, his memory faded, so some appropriate *ślokas* from the scriptures in what line he is going, saying, that should be supplied. Very few of us we could do that; one, Vasudeva Prabhu, myself, and sometimes Śrautī Mahārāja; very few. That one, he’s going on in a particular way and he’s searching some *śloka* in support of his speech. So we used to supply that, what is necessary to help his speech in the line in which he is going on. The appropriate proofs from the scripture, that is to be supplied to him. In that case Vasudeva Prabhu, then next myself could help him in that way in his later days.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaura Haribol. Gaura Haribol. Gaura Haribol. Nitāi. Nitāi. Nitāi.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura when he began the service of the *Dhāma* and Mahāprabhu, to attract the people, attract the public to accept his discovery that this is *Dhāma*, he had to do many things. Sometimes, that was a lonely place at the time, in a meadow is a temple, not temple, then the *pukha* building and there Mahāprabhu. And generally cooks, *brāhmaṇa* cooks, did not stay there for a long time. In a lonely place they were afraid, and the Mohammedans are very nearby. So to continue the service he had to undergo many undesirable things. That is this *gangica*, sometimes he had to prepare *gangica* by his own hand for the cook, *gangica*, that intoxication, he had to prepare, otherwise the cook would flee away. So many things, respectable persons had come. He had to make arrangement for their tobacco, and many other things.

Our Guru Mahārāja also did, to the extreme. When [Sir John] Anderson, the Governor [of Bengal], he was invited to Māyāpur, at that time, of course the arrangement was made with the Calcutta Hotel to bring appropriate food for him, including meats and other things. The hostel man was invited to make arrangement for the dishes of the Governor and his paraphernalia. Anyhow he had to do.

And in foreign preaching also when he told about that, I modestly protested, that the meat dishes, non vegetable dishes, if served in the Maṭha compound, then there will be a blame on the mission.

“No, No. Thousands of births ago I have decided all these things. We have to do anything and everything for the service of Mahāprabhu.” That was his answer. “*Vaikuṅṭha vṛtti*, no *kuṅṭha*, no limitation. Anything I am prepared to do for the service of Mahāprabhu, for the propagation. The grace of Mahāprabhu should be distributed in the length and breadth of the whole of the

world. And for that anything should be done. No stone unturned. Physical connection is no connection. We shall try to save our internal purity. That is all.”

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaura Haribol.

And Swāmī Mahārāja also did the same thing, took the risk of external contamination with filthy things to save so many souls from that habit of impurity, impure diet. He had to go to the place of that atmosphere, anti atmosphere, to save them. The house is on fire so if one likes to deliver them, to save them, the inhabitants, then he must take some risk, of some abscess, some boil in his body, if he wants really to save them, to enter the house which is already on fire to save the inmates of the house. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaura Haribol. Gaura Haribol. Gaura Haribol.

Akṣayānanda Mahārāja: Śrīla Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda he was also, he had a great vision for the world.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Yes. He saw in his divine eye that *prema dharma*, the religion based on divine love, that is so self evident in character. “That the intelligent people cannot keep them away from such conception of pure religion as the highest love, *prema*. The fine intellect cannot but detect the purity in the love in the religion in its highest conception. So the western thinkers if they are not much prejudiced, they cannot but appreciate the doctrine of divine love as given out by Śrī Caitanya Deva. So I’m sure that in the near future many of the western scholars they will come under the flag of Śrī Caitanya Deva.” And he delivered such lectures here and there.

One gentleman Hiran Datta, was a good scholar, a theosophist when he came to preside over a meeting in Bagh Bazaar Temple, some public meeting. When one Mr. Barchard came with [Bhakti Saranga] Goswāmī Mahārāja while returning from England, Hiran Datta was president of meeting. He told, “When we were students of City College, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura delivered a lecture there to this effect. That in near future the western scholars will come and join with the *saṅkīrtana* under the banner of Mahāprabhu. I see it plainly, clearly.” He told that, “I am the witness and I am seeing the beginning of that; that the western scholars are coming. I heard the lecture in my young days. And in my older days I saw the evidence. It is going to be true. I am very much glad for that.”

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaura Haribol. Nitāi. Nitāi.

Akṣayānanda Mahārāja: You had the *darśana* of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda at that time?

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: No. He left the world nineteen fourteen. I joined the mission nineteen twenty six. After twelve years. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

There was one Parvat Mahārāja who lived at the next house where Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in Godruma he used to pass his old age. He told there was only a partition wall between the house of Parvata Mahārāja and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura at Surabhi-kuñja at that time he was living. From about three o’clock he woke up, in his last days, and took the Name of Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, this *mahā-mantra* at the top of his voice. He told that as if he’s calling some man who is far away. He’s calling a person. With this spirit he was pronouncing the *mahā-mantra* as if he’s calling a person, calling someone. Hare Kṛṣṇa, at the top of his voice. But we could think how a human being can do such things continuously? And wandering in the garden, and there was a cement chair and when he could not stand, he took his seat there for some time. And then again walking

and chanting at the top of his voice, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, just as calling some person with such animation in the voice, life-full voice, the person he is calling, with this spirit. Not in a formal way but a material hankering he is calling for the Lord.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaura Haribol.

And I heard from another source, Rāma Gopāl Vidyābhūṣaṇa, an M.A.P.L. [?] He told, “Once we went to visit him, that a government officer, an educated man, he has become Vaiṣṇava *Bābājī*. We went to see him. And some amongst us asked him, ‘please speak something about Kṛṣṇa *Nāma*.”

He stopped for a little, “Oh, you want to hear about Kṛṣṇa. You want Kṛṣṇa *Nāma*?” In this way he continued for some time. “Kṛṣṇa! You are so fortunate. You have come to hear Kṛṣṇa *Nāma*.” Then the consequence of such inquiry had such influence on his body and mind, that as it is written by him in the poem:

[*Śrī Nāma-Māhātmya, The Glories of the Holy Name*]

(1) *kṛṣṇa-nāma dhare koto bal*
viṣaya-vāsanānale, mora citta sadā jwale, ravi-tapta maru-bhūmi-sam
karna-randhra-patha diyā, hṛdi mājhe praveśiyā, variṣoya sudhā anupam

[What power does the Name of Kṛṣṇa possess? My heart constantly burns in the fire of worldly desires, just like a desert scorched by the rays of the sun. The Holy Name, entering the core of my heart through the holes of my ears, showers unparalleled nectar upon my soul.]

(2) *hṛdoya hoite bole, jihvāra agrete cale, śabda-rūpe nāce anukṣan*
kanṭhe mora bhaṅge swara, aṅga kāṅpe thara thara, sthira hoite nā pāre caraṅ

[The Holy Name speaks from within my heart, moves onto the tip of my tongue, and constantly dances on it in the form of transcendental sound. My throat becomes choked up, my body shivers again and again, and my feet cannot remain still.]

(3) *caḅṣe dhārā, dehe gharma, pulakita saba carma, vivarna hoilo kalevara*
mūrchita hoilo man, pralayera āgaman, bhāve sarva-deha jara jara

[Rivers of tears flow from my eyes, perspiration completely soaks my body, all my skin thrills with rapture, my hairs stand on end, and my complexion turns pale and discoloured. My mind grows faint, I begin to experience devastation, and my entire body is shattered in a flood of ecstatic emotions.]

(4) *kori' eto upadrava, citte varṣe sudhā-drava, more ḍāre premera sāgare*
kichu nā bujhite dilo, more to' bātula koilo, mora citta-vitta saba hare

[While causing such an ecstatic disturbance, the Holy Name showers liquid nectar on my heart and drowns me in the ocean of divine love of Godhead. He does not allow me to understand anything, for He has made me truly mad by having stolen away my mind and all my resources.]

(5) *loinu āśroya jā'r, heno vyavahāra tā'r, varnite nā pāri e sakal
kṛṣṇa-nāma icchā-moy, jāhe jāhe sukhī hoy, sei mora sukhera sambal*

[Such is the behaviour of Him in whom I have taken shelter. I am not capable of describing all this. The Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa is independent and thus acts on His own sweet will. In whatever way He becomes happy, that is also my way of happiness.]

(6) *premera kalikā nām, adbhuta rasera dhām, heno bala karaye prakāś
īṣat vikaśī' punaḥ, dekhāy nija-rūpa-guna, citta hari' loya kṛṣṇa-pāś*

[The Holy Name is the bud of the flower of divine love, and is the very abode of astonishing mellows. Such is the power He manifests that when His Holy Name starts to blossom a little further, it then reveals His own divine form and qualities. Thus my heart is abducted and taken directly to Kṛṣṇa.]

(7) *pūrṇa vikaśita hoiyā, braje more jāya loiyā, dekhāy more swarūpa-vilās
more siddha-deha diyā, kṛṣṇa-pāśe rākhe giyā, e dehera kore sarva-nāś*

[Blossoming fully, the flower of the Holy Name takes me to Vraja and reveals to me His own love-dalliance. This Name gives to me my own eternal spiritual body, keeps me right by Kṛṣṇa's side, and completely destroys everything related to this mortal frame of mine.]

(8) *kṛṣṇa-nāma-cintāmaṇi, akhila rasera khani, nitya-mukta śuddha-rasa-moy
nāmera bālāi jata, saba lo'ye hoi hata, tabe mora sukhera udoy*

[The Name of Kṛṣṇa is a transcendental touchstone, a mine of all devotional mellows. It is eternally liberated, and the embodiment of pure *rasa*. When all impediments to the pure chanting of the Holy Name are taken away and destroyed, then my happiness will know its true awakening.]

[Thus ends *Śaraṇāgati* by Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, translated by Dasaratha-suta dasa]

Cakṣe dhārā, dehe gharma, sweat, pulakita saba carma, vivarna hoilo kalevara, mūrchita hoilo man, the mind unconscious. Pralayera āgaman, bhāve sarva-deha jara jara. Kori' eto upadrava, creating so much disturbance. Citte varṣe sudhā-drava, nectarean current in the heart, more ḍāre premera sāgare, and puts me into the ocean of ecstasy of love. Kichu nā bujhite dilo, more to' bātula koilo, could not make out anything, can't feel about the circle environment, bātula koilo. Mora citta-vitta saba hare, I lost myself in that sort of thought.

*premera kalikā nām, adbhuta rasera dhām, heno bala karaye prakāś
īṣat vikaśī' punaḥ, dekhāy nija-rūpa-guna, citta hari' loya kṛṣṇa-pāś*

more siddha-deha diyā, kṛṣṇa-pāśe rākhe giyā

*kṛṣṇa-nāma-cintāmaṇi, akhila rasera khani,
nitya-mukta śuddha-rasa-moy, nāmera bālāi jata*

“Many things I can't remember. All these stages were displayed in his body and mind. I saw

with my own eyes.” Simply he inquired. He came to hear. “You are so fortunate. You have come to hear Kṛṣṇa *Nāma* from me. Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!” In this way he entered into another domain. And so many feats and expressions came in his body and mind; convulsions, tears, all these things.”

That I heard from an eye witness.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaura Haribol. Nitāi Caitanya. Gaura Hari.
Nitāi Gaura Haribol. Nitāi Gaura Haribol. Nitāi Gaura Haribol.

Akṣayānanda Mahārāja: Before Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s appearance the Vaiṣṇava tradition was very much neglected.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Very few *śuddha* Vaiṣṇavas were to be found before Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. But he came and modernised, and adjusted the religion in a modern garb and so it was easy for many regardful students to come and accept the *śuddha* Vaiṣṇavism. It was molested, widely, in a wide way by the so called followers. The real ideal was eclipsed and so for the inquisitive it was difficult to have real entrance and real attachment for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Especially the *bābājī*, the Vaiṣṇava from any caste and they could marry. And only taking Name and no other practices or real earnestness for the truth. Anyhow dragging on with their life and mixing with no pure practices, nor pure habits as especially in the name of religion, mixing with women. That brought in return a hate for them in the society. And those *goswāmīs* that took up the initiation as their trade because they had such low connection, low association, they lost their honour in the general society of the gentleman. The *goswāmīs*, *bābājīs*, they lost their prestige in the society because of their imitative character. But Gauḍīya Maṭha came out with the real spirit of the religion and also pure practices subsequently following. So the attention of the educated inquirers after truth, their attention was drawn by Gauḍīya Maṭha and they flocked together.

Gaura Haribol. Gaura Haribol. Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gaura Haribol. Gaura Haribol.
Gaura Haribol. Nitāi Caitanya. Nitāi Caitanya.

Bhāratī Mahārāja: After one hears about great personalities like Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda we feel very insignificant. We have no existence. After hearing about his life we feel as if we have very little importance.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Which was insignificant?

Bhāratī Mahārāja: No, we feel _____ [?]

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Oh! You think yourself very insignificant?

Bhāratī Mahārāja: _____ [?]

Akṣayānanda Mahārāja: Not insignificant but useless.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja: We can utilise, we can do our might, contribute our might as much as possible for the service of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. That means the service of Mahāprabhu, and that means the service of Kṛṣṇa, and that means the service of the whole universe, wherever there is life, and that service to my own soul, my Gurudeva, everything. It includes within its

harmony, everything remains. What Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gives us, we shall find:

yasmin vijñāte sarvam evam vijñātam bhavati / yasmin prāpte sarvam idam prāptam bhavati

["By knowing Him, everything is known - by getting Him, everything is gained."]

The broadest thing, broadest conception of our duty, including myself, the whole of the world, the Lord, everything.

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