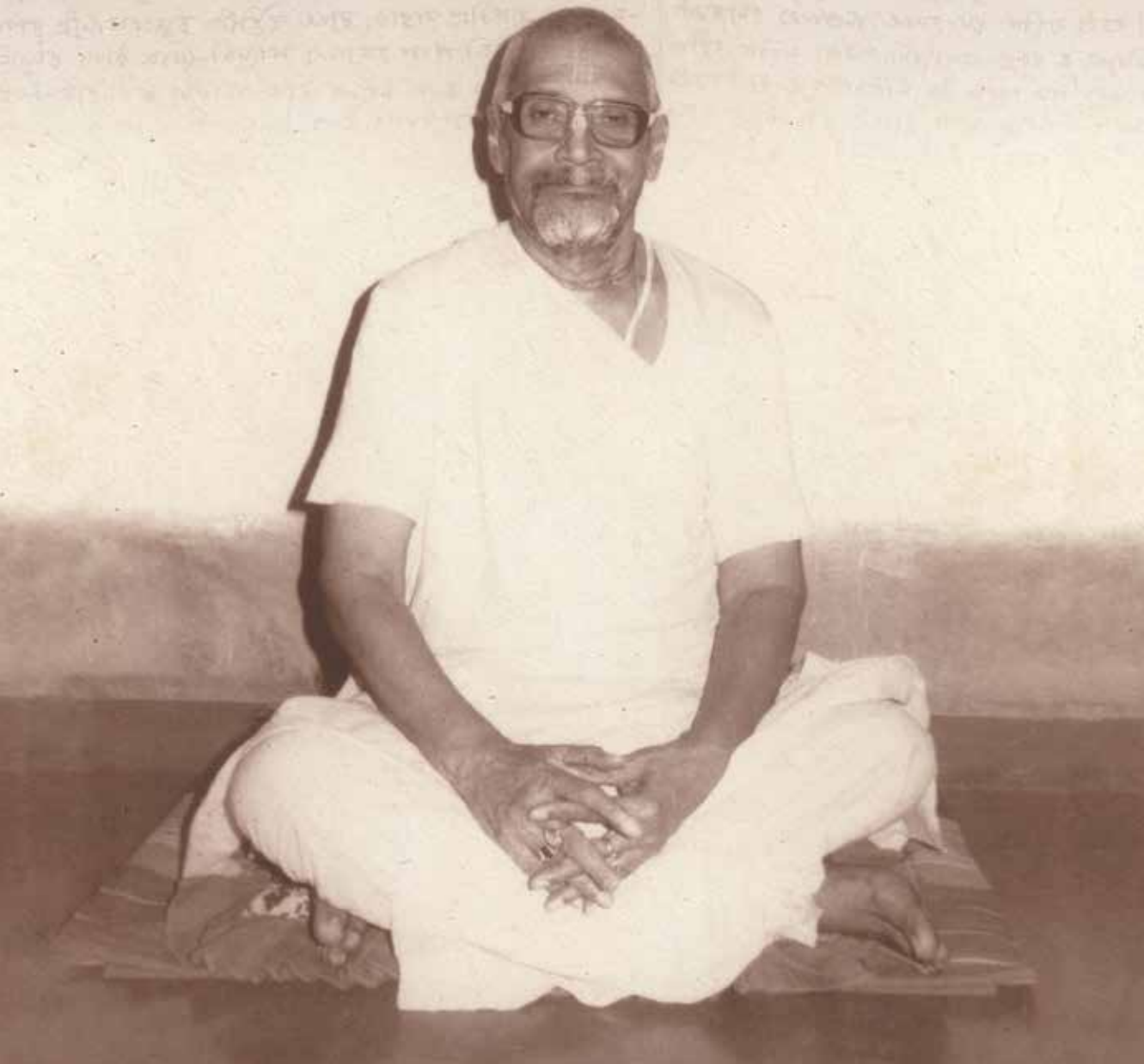


A TRUE SERVANT A TRUE MASTER



Letters from
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja



A True Servant, A True Master presents a treasury of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava conceptions. The letters were composed by a pure Vaiṣṇava, an exemplar of the elevated ideals he imparts, and therefore carry spiritual potency. They are more than just words or advice.

A true saint is unphased by any manner of situation and predicament presented to him, and with genuine concern, he imparts spiritual guidance to elevate and inspire. Transcendental wisdom and even humour flow through the author's pen from his heart, in letters containing such nuanced understandings of the authentic path to pure *bhakti* that the serious practitioner can revel in a wealth of life changing understandings.

A TRUE SERVANT A TRUE MASTER

Letters from

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Letters from Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja
A True Servant, A True Master

ISBN 978-1-63316-205-1

First printing: 1000 copies

Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja Centennial, 28 December 2021

Printed at Spectrum Printing Press Pvt. Ltd. (New Delhi, India)

© 2021 Gaudiya Vedanta Publications. Some rights reserved.



EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE NOTED, THE TEXT (NOT THE DESIGN, PHOTOS, ART, ETC.) IN
THIS BOOK IS LICENSED UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION--SHARE ALIKE 4.0
INTERNATIONAL LICENSE.

To view a copy of this license, visit

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at

www.purebhakti.com/pluslicense or write to: gvp.contactus@gmail.com

Photos of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda on page xx © Bhaktivedanta
Book Trust International, Inc. Used with permission. www.krishna.com

It is with the kind donations of Śrīmatī Umā Dīdī, Karṇikā dāsī (Towle), and
another generous, long-term donor that GVP presents this book of letters from
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

WWW.MYGVP.COM

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

A TRUE SERVANT A TRUE MASTER

Letters from

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Rays of The Harmonist



VRINDAVAN • NEW DELHI • SAN FRANCISCO

CONTENTS

The Bhāgavata-guru-paramparā	xx
Foreword	xxiii
Remembering nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja	
Editors' Preface.....	xliii
Letter 1.....	1
Only <i>mahājanas</i> can deliver one from <i>aparādha</i> • Material currency can never procure the supramundane • One can only attain service of the transcendental word through simplicity • Without surrender, knowledge of scriptures is only scholarly arrogance	
Letter 2.....	5
Writing can be a form of <i>bhakti</i> • One can associate with saintly personalities through their words • Chanting a fixed numbers of rounds daily is crucial • The teachings of the <i>Gītā</i> are to help us chant • One must combine every aspect of one's life with <i>bhakti</i>	
Letter 3.....	8
A Vaiṣṇava's affection is constant • Whatever we experience is the result of our own doing • What it means to truly seek forgiveness • The real purpose of education	
Letter 4.....	13
No one can keep everyone happy • Love is resilient and does not require one to compromise one's integrity • The deluding power of <i>māyā</i> • The inception of <i>āroha</i> and <i>avaroha-vāda</i> • The panacea for material existence	
Letter 5	17
Descriptions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are the perfection of literature • The effects of <i>kīrtana</i> • The importance of acting according to one's <i>adhikāra</i> • The power of chanting a <i>lāḥa</i> • The contribution of Vaiṣṇavī saints • The meaning of the name Umā • The power of association with Vaiṣṇavas	
Letter 6.....	21
The nature of the conditioned soul • Gaining worldly convenience cannot be called real mercy • The <i>viśrambha-sevaka</i> utilizes all conveniences in the service of Bhagavān • The home of a devotee who is exclusively dedicated to <i>guru</i> is a <i>maṭha</i> • Revealing a semblance of his <i>svarūpa</i> via humor	
Letter 7.....	26
Perfection is attained by a combination of effort and mercy • A genuine <i>guru</i> does not make anyone his disciple • Devotion is the essential component of any offering • Knowledge and good fortune arise by the mercy of Śrī Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas	

Letter 8.....	30
It is imperative to beg for mercy • For a servant, there is no break from service • Service is better rendered internally • Śrī Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas surely accept our offerings	
Letter 9.....	32
The glories of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas are indescribable • If one can give up ego and deceit, one can attain the mercy of Vaiṣṇavas • Anthropomorphism and apotheosis • The transcendent nature of Bhagavān's devotees • Service of <i>vāñī</i> , the divine word • How to be clever about <i>bhajana</i>	
Letter 10.....	36
What is <i>dīkṣā</i> ? • Different types of <i>dīkṣā</i> • The purpose of <i>saṅkalpa</i> • Deliberations on demigod worship • Vaiṣṇavas are the real, pure <i>śāktas</i> • The importance of performing <i>arcana</i> with the aid of <i>kīrtana</i> • An uninitiated person's <i>arcana</i> is like playing with dolls • The importance of chanting on beads • <i>Prema-bhakti</i> and <i>vaidhi-bhakti</i>	
Letter 11.....	43
Desiring to visit the <i>dhāma</i> • Chanting without offences • <i>Guru</i> has more love and affection for his daughters because he is <i>śakti</i> • Our guardians favor their youngest and most foolish • The characteristics of the genuine <i>guru</i> and disciple • The scriptures are always uniquely accessible	
Letter 12.....	46
<i>Śāstrīya sādhu-saṅga</i> makes the heart resolute • Akrura's longing to see Kṛṣṇa • The merit of prayer • It is impossible to control the mind without taking shelter of a <i>guru</i> • The characteristics of <i>sādhu</i> according to <i>Bhāgavatam</i> • The glory of <i>guru-tattva</i>	
Letter 13.....	50
Śrī <i>guru</i> and Bhagavān's incomparable mercy • The power of humility • The detriment of pride • Giving up bad association and offences • Deliberations on <i>guru-tattva</i> • The speciality of <i>madhura-rasa</i>	
Letter 14.....	55
The real purpose of fasting • The superiority of <i>bhakti</i> • The difference between Hinduism and Vaiṣṇavism • The power of <i>sādhu-saṅga</i> • How to recognize true <i>sādhus</i>	
Letter 15.....	60
Nothing is possible without Bhagavān's will • Direct and indirect service are the same • The special power of Bhagavān and His devotees • <i>Bhakti</i> cannot be attained by artificial means • The importance of taking care of one's body	
Letter 16.....	63
The significance of Vijayā Daśamī • <i>Guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas overlook the flaws and errors of the <i>kaniṣṭha</i> • The definition of friendship • Gaurī (Pārvatī) is non-different from Śrīmatī Rādhikā • Disposing of the written holy name is an offence	
Letter 17.....	66
Etiquette between Vaiṣṇavas • Devotees are not afflicted by fear or suffering • Śrī <i>guru</i> and Bhagavān are our only shelter • Their mercy rids us of offences and grants us the necessary qualification	

Letter 18.....	69
The eternal connection between <i>guru</i> and disciple • The speciality of the Śrī Rūpānuga Gauḍīyas' process of <i>bhajana</i> • Our only resort is to pray for mercy • The transcendent nature of <i>śrī guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • The speciality of inner mood and service • The mercy and punishment of Vaiṣṇavas are equally beneficial • The meaning of <i>pāda-sevana</i>	
Letter 19.....	74
How Bhagavān tests the devotee • Making one's life a success • Seeing through hearing is better than seeing directly • The roles of <i>guru</i> and disciple • The definition of <i>bhakti</i>	
Letter 20	78
Special prayers to <i>śrī guru</i> • Realizing the true form of <i>śrī dhāma</i> • Advice on chanting rounds • Standards for accepting food prepared by others • There is no real happiness in this world • No one is destined for family life • Deliberations on standards of purity	
Letter 21.....	85
If we have one-pointed conviction, all the paraphernalia for service will be provided • Simplicity and sincerity are the real qualifications of a disciple • Service to other conditioned souls is only a cause of bondage • Reassurances for the practising devotee	
Letter 22.....	88
The harsh reality of this world and how to transcend it • Living at home can be the same as living in the temple • The purpose of Śrī Nārāyaṇa- and Nṛsinha-kavaca • Discussing the glories of the <i>dhāma</i> constitutes living in the <i>dhāma</i> • The <i>mahā-mantra</i> consists of sixteen names, thirty-two syllables, and sixty-four qualities • Seeing by heart and seeing by the eyes • Special exceptions to <i>vrata</i> rules	
Letter 23	91
Appreciating <i>śrī guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • Proving oneself through <i>sādhana-bhajana</i> • Developing humility and freedom from envy • The transcendent existence of the Vaiṣṇavas • The power of steady practice • Without tolerance, there is no auspiciousness • The importance of <i>yukta-vairāgya</i>	
Letter 24.....	94
Dedication to <i>śrī guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas is essential • Bhagavān fulfills the desires of his devotees, but one must make an effort • The teachings of <i>sādhū</i> , <i>guru</i> , and <i>śāstra</i> exist to ensure the quality of one's surrender to Bhagavān • Devotees are focused only on service • The teachings of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī • Pampering the body interrupts the search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa	
Letter 25	98
The importance of Paurṇamāsī-devī • Service is the life of the servant • Christ and Kṛṣṇa are not one, as the father is not the son • The definition of <i>śrī vigraha</i> • Those who help us advance in <i>bhajana</i> are our real friends and relatives • The generosity of the devotees • The perils of considering demigods to be equal to Bhagavān	
Letter 26.....	102
The importance of following Ekādaśī • Instructions on steadily performing <i>nāma-bhajana</i> • Fashioning a life of service to Bhagavān • The pure devotees' dreams are <i>samādhi</i> and eternal truths • Devotees do not care for public opinion • Time management is essential for the <i>sādhaka</i> and <i>sādhikā</i>	

Letter 27.....	106
A sense of a lack of time provides enthusiasm to perform <i>sādhana-bhajana</i> • There is no rest in the <i>dharma</i> of service • Being the object of criticism can be a preaching opportunity • The complementary nature of meeting and separation • Mistakes and redemption go hand-in-hand • Next to Kṛṣṇa, all wealth is trivial • By His will, all that is unfavourable becomes favourable	
Letter 28.....	109
The incomparable affection and importance of <i>sad-guru</i> • The difference between <i>śabda-brahma</i> and ordinary sound vibration • Deliberations on Bhagavān's effulgence and that of His devotees • The mysterious nature of dreams • Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the supreme, worshipful object of amorous love	
Letter 29.....	114
The ability to offer prayers comes from Bhagavān • The means of transcending <i>saṁsāra</i> • Instructions on daily <i>sādhana</i> • Bhagavān is more merciful to the fallen	
Letter 30.....	118
It is not proper to hear <i>hari-kathā</i> from <i>prākṛta-sahajiyās</i> • Books bereft of the topics of Bhagavān are unreadable • Our goal is to be neither an enjoyer nor a renunciate, but rather the bearer of <i>śrī guru</i> 's footwear • It is imperative to limit attachment to material enjoyment • The truth and falsehood of the material world are both meaningless • The association of <i>sādhus</i> is the ultimate remedy for material existence • A note on <i>Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa</i>	
Letter 31.....	122
The interconnected mercy of Bhagavān and His devotees • Insights on <i>yukta-vairāgya</i> • The purpose of the <i>maṭha</i> and <i>mandira</i>	
Letter 32.....	125
Cautionary words about various dogmas and corrupt practices • Calamity affords us the opportunity to take full shelter of Kṛṣṇa • Special instructions for a <i>sādhikā</i> of <i>madhura-rasa</i>	
Letter 33.....	128
Two types of knowledge: <i>parā</i> and <i>aparā</i> • The difference between sincere inquiry and egotistical debate • Concern for bodily comforts must not hinder <i>sādhana-bhajana</i> • The necessity of taking shelter of a bona fide <i>guru</i> • The golden opportunity of hearing <i>hari-kathā</i> during <i>dhāma-parikramā</i> • The glories of Tulasī-devī • Serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa satisfies everyone • The ego of race and family hinder <i>hari-bhajana</i> • The habits and beliefs of <i>bhoga-vādīs</i> • The power of chanting <i>śrī nāma</i> and <i>gāyatrī</i> • The meaning of the word <i>darśana</i> • The nature of exalted personalities	
Letter 34.....	135
Faith and determination afford one forgiveness for one's offences • You are never alone • The meaning of <i>sarva-dharmān parityajya</i> • The six enemies of the soul • The use of <i>mṛdaṅga</i> and <i>karatāla</i>	
Letter 35.....	138
The soul is stronger than the body • The difference between <i>Īśvara</i> and the <i>jīvas</i> • The meanings of the word <i>māyā</i> • Śrī Bhagavān is never subject to <i>māyā</i>	
Letter 36.....	141
Rest is as necessary as service, but should not detract from it • Śrīpāda Trivikrama Mahārāja • The transcendent love and compassion of the Vaiṣṇavas • Heartfelt endeavour and simplicity vanquish <i>aparādha</i>	

Letter 37	143
Bhagavān's dear associates are, like Him, incomparable • Offences to the holy name are vanquished by chanting • The means of severing material attachment • A family centred around Kṛṣṇa aids in the performance of <i>hari-bhajana</i> • Bhagavān's potency flows through <i>sad-guru</i> • The devotee does not crave <i>mukti</i> • <i>Sad-guru</i> and his message are non-different • Bhagavān is never devoid of mercy • Balanced diet and recreation is necessary for <i>hari-bhajana</i> • What Vijayā Daśamī means for pure devotees • Service and chanting <i>nāma</i> are not different • The qualification to receive the instructions of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • In <i>vātsalya-rasa</i> , it is essential to serve the deity • The <i>sādhaka</i> must learn <i>pūjā</i> and <i>arcana</i> • The <i>sādhaka</i> must rise early • <i>Sādhana</i> yields different results depending on one's <i>adhikāra</i> • Remembering Bhagavān and His devotees destroys obstacles to devotion	
Letter 38	152
The corruptive power of ulterior motives • Two types of donors: one motivated, the other sincere and selfless • The worst fate for the <i>sādhaka</i> is to be cheated of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas' mercy • Wholehearted service versus the logic of Padmā	
Letter 39	156
Taking advantage of the opportunity for <i>dhāma-parikramā</i> • The power of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas' mercy • The grace of <i>guru</i> is everything • The power of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas' appearance days • Repentance is the best atonement • The heart must melt when performing spiritual practices • A bona fide <i>guru</i> 's potency can help us forget our worldly endeavours	
Letter 40	160
Only the one-pointed devotee is truly concerned for the future • He has no focus other than meditating in separation from Kṛṣṇa • We want to be indebted to <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • Inner <i>śraddhā</i> is the real offering • If you chant a fixed number of <i>śrī nāma</i> , Śrī Bhagavān reveals His <i>svarūpa</i> • Paramagurudeva's finesse in generosity	
Letter 41	164
Those who chant <i>nāma</i> and <i>gāyatrī</i> have no need for demigod amulets • “Do not be lazy about <i>siddhānta</i> ” • A philosophical conclusion is only to be accepted if favourable to <i>bhajana</i> • Refuting misconceptions is <i>guru-sevā</i> and not contrary to genuine humility • Performing <i>kīrtana</i> of <i>hari-kathā</i> is imbued with life and changes hearts	
Letter 42	167
Establishing Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha • “If one is not impartial, one cannot defend the principles of true religion” • Different types of charity • Instructions from <i>Bhāgavatam</i> on building temples • Kṣīracorā Gopīnātha • Realizing Bhagavān's mercy requires the strength of <i>sādhana</i>	
Letter 43	170
The service-ethic of a true servant • Better to live at a distance from the <i>dhāma</i> than risk making offences • The joy of service is the devotee's sole motive • The beauty of <i>yukta-vairāgya</i> is lost on impersonalists • Thinking one is unworthy to serve grants one the qualification to serve • <i>Parokṣa</i> (indirect) <i>darśana</i> versus <i>pratyakṣa</i> (direct) <i>darśana</i> • Worrying about the well-being of one's soul is appropriate selfishness	
Letter 44	175
The feeling that <i>guru</i> and Bhagavān are always with us and will protect us from all dangers and difficulties • The unimaginable pain of separation from Bhagavān and His devotees • The introspection of the surrendered devotee • The power of Vedic astrology and the corruption of modern astrologers • Patience bears sweet fruit • Determination on the path of <i>sādhana</i> • Performing <i>kīrtana</i> of <i>hari-kathā</i>	

Letter 45.....	179
The childlike reliance of <i>śrī vigraha</i> on Their devotees • The difference between the elevationist and the devotee • The purpose of <i>āśramas</i> and temples • The nature of Kali-yuga • “What God wills, no frost can kill”	
Letter 46	182
Kṛṣṇa’s name is the medicine, <i>mahāprasāda</i> is the diet, and <i>sad-guru</i> is the doctor • The worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa entails full surrender • Unavoidable difficulties are overcome by the mercy of Nāma Prabhu • The fruit of real <i>darśana</i>	
Letter 47	185
The most valuable treasure for a <i>sādhaka</i> • <i>Śrī guru</i> and the Vaiṣṇavas are our only true kin • A glimpse into the inner natures of the devotees and Bhagavān • <i>Śaraṇāgati</i> is not possible without <i>sambandha-jñāna</i> • Those who are constantly criticizing others fall down very quickly • Avoiding worship of himself on his <i>vyāsa-pūjā</i> • How to become free from the fatal flaw of <i>aparādha</i>	
Letter 48	188
A true inclination to serve is the real fortune of the living entity	
Letter 49	189
The character of a real <i>ācārya</i> and <i>guru</i> • If a <i>sādhaka</i> craves prestige and poses as a liberated soul, he will ultimately fall down • If one follows <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas’ teachings, one can live with <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas always • Connection with <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas is not based on any mundane exchange • The <i>sādhaka</i> and <i>sādhikā</i> have nothing to call their own	
Letter 50	192
Service to <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas is the core focus of <i>bhajana</i> • It is impossible to attain <i>bhagavad-bhakti</i> without serving <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • Real <i>sādhana</i> begins upon attaining a taste for <i>śrī nāma</i> • Those who cherish Śrī Bhagavān as their husband have no need for a husband of this world • Without the mercy of <i>sādhū</i> and <i>guru</i> , the restless mind cannot be tamed	
Letter 51	195
The austerities of travelling and preaching • The pull of the heart makes the impossible possible • How to witness Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in one’s dreams • <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> is the subject of study for those free from envy • Always remember that we are never alone • <i>Hari-kathā</i> helps the disturbed mind regain patience and enthusiasm • One must remember <i>śrī nāma</i> constantly to attain its real fruit	
Letter 52.....	198
Fulfilling our duties in life depends on an unseen power • Birth and death are as insubstantial as a dream for those keen on performing <i>hari-bhajana</i> • The customary contamination period following a death in the family does not apply to initiated devotees • The <i>bhakta</i> never becomes distressed by worldly losses • The character of resilient <i>sādhakas</i> and <i>sādhikās</i>	
Letter 53.....	201
Finding peace by envisioning <i>śrī guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • Surrendering one’s mind and spirit is the best donation • Love cannot be revealed before everyone, nor can <i>bhajana</i> • <i>Guru</i> , Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are in our heart, so our prayers are always heard	

Letter 54	205
Instructions on chanting the holy name • The bliss derived from chanting cannot be explained to anyone • The mercy of Śrī Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas is essential • The qualification to perform <i>nāma-kīrtana</i> • Praying to be absorbed in meditating on Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda	
Letter 55.....	208
The power of living in the <i>dhāma</i> • Being embarrassed about receiving worship • Real <i>pratiṣṭhā</i> is being a devoted disciple	
Letter 56.....	210
Requirements on the paths of <i>bhājana</i> and life • Who are our real relatives and who are real human beings?	
Letter 57.....	211
Real service is giving one's love • You do not need wealth to chant <i>harināma</i> ; you need patience, enthusiasm, faith, determination, and devotion • Practical instructions on education and the value of struggle • The drawback of European instruments • Duties in the month of Kārtika	
Letter 58	213
Adopting the temple as one's own • A comparative analysis of <i>goṣṭhānandis</i> and <i>bhajanānandis</i> • There is life in giving oneself to service and preaching • The importance of guidance and expertise in frugality in service	
Letter 59.....	215
Praising the tranquillity of Baidyanath and <i>parikramā</i> with Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja • Performing <i>parikramā</i> of Vraja unseen on the transcendental plane, but still hoping for direct <i>darśana</i> in Navadvīpa	
Letter 60	217
Praises of Baidyanath and surrounding area • How to deal with physical illness • The fortune of associating with Vaiṣṇavas • Śrīla Mahārāja's natural humility • Assertions of individual free will in a political situation • Unheeded warnings about taking on the service of deities • Harsh words about a devious <i>pūjārī</i>	
Letter 61.....	220
Heartbreak at the passing of Śrīmān Sundarānanda Prabhu • The soulful service of Śrīmān Sundarānanda Prabhu • Memorial services for him	
Letter 62.....	222
The eternal service of Śrīmān Sundarānanda Prabhu • Like Bhagavān, the <i>bhaktas</i> are controlled by love • The true servant conquers the heart of his master with love • The servant is honoured and cherished • Awareness of one's true relationship with another enables an eternal connection with them • Glorifying the sacrifice of motherhood to mediate between a mother and daughter	
Letter 63.....	226
This world is moulded from sorrow • Openly expressing one's personal challenges to <i>guru</i> increases one's conviction in <i>bhājana</i> • Confession is part of <i>sanātana-dharma</i> • The only atonement for <i>aparādha</i> is to pray for forgiveness • Simplicity is the only way to attain God • The glory of forgiveness • How to deal with injustice • Accepting responsibility for one's actions is the only way to find peace	

Letter 64	229
We must maintain our <i>bhajana</i> despite the disturbances of the world • Real <i>darśana</i> of the <i>dhāma</i> is not possible without its mercy • True saints have no desire for money • The significance of wearing three strands of <i>tulasī</i> neckbeads • The dietary preferences of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura • Living always in Vaikuṇṭha, aspiring for Goloka Vṛndāvana	
Letter 65.....	232
Honesty and simplicity are the best testament of Vaiṣṇavism • Going to school in Māyāpura in the 1930s • Disinterest in making disciples • Chanting brings one face-to-face with Kṛṣṇa • The connection between <i>guru</i> and disciple is eternal	
Letter 66	234
Even Bhagavān will not interfere with a living entity's <i>karma</i> • Accept hardships to be tests from Śrī Giridhārī-gopāla • Unbreakable faith will establish you at the pinnacle of prosperity • Be wary of demigod worshippers who conjure 'rapture' and contradict <i>siddhānta</i> • Proper etiquette for <i>sannyāsīs</i> and <i>brahmacārīs</i> in regard to weddings	
Letter 67.....	236
Why Vaiṣṇavas never grieve • Poorness of mind is true poverty • The servant's inclination to serve is his true achievement • The fruit of seeing Śrī Jagannātha • We cannot experience Śrī Bhagavān by material perception • Exclusively devoted servants never meet with adversity	
Letter 68	238
How to make a success of this human birth • Patience, tolerance, and simplicity make the impossible possible • Obstacles in <i>bhajana</i> increase our eagerness and focus • We must be eager for service • Śrīman Sundarānanda Prabhu's attainment of eternal service	
Letter 69.....	240
Accepting whatever situation Śrī Bhagavān puts us in • A home that is full of <i>hari-kīrtana</i> is Goloka-Vṛndāvana • We obtain the service and proximity of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas by remembering them • If one performs <i>bhajana</i> , gender makes no difference • All living entities are <i>śakti</i> , or female	
Letter 70.....	243
How to deal with prestige in the renounced order of life • Youth and beauty cannot help you attain Bhagavān • Only Bhagavān and His devotees are omniscient, not demigods or human beings • Hankering for mundane profit, worship, and prestige makes a person subhuman • Without humility, the heart becomes like a thunderbolt	
Letter 71.....	246
Resolve and conviction in <i>sādhana</i> are our only aids in attaining our goal • On the liberated platform, everything is practical • <i>Sevā</i> is eternal, everlasting, and dynamic • <i>Guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas are omniscient and test us directly and indirectly	
Letter 72.....	248
Vaiṣṇavism does not acknowledge any spiritual difference between men and women • If you see your job as a limb of <i>bhajana</i> , no peril will befall you • Whatever you do, strive to do it properly, in relation to Kṛṣṇa • Śrī <i>guru</i> and Bhagavān are more loving than any mother and father • The purpose of the <i>sādhaka's</i> or <i>sādhikā's bhajana-sādhana</i> is to fulfil the desires of <i>śrī guru</i> and Gaurāṅga	

Letter 73.....	252
We require the blessing of Śrī Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas at all times and in all circumstances • “Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead” • The development of <i>prema</i> • The glories of Śrīmatī Rādhikā	
Letter 74.....	255
The meaning of the word “Mā” • <i>Guru-tattva</i> • Śrī Bhagavān offers <i>guru-śakti</i> to His dear devotees • One whose heart is exclusively established in <i>śuddha-sattva</i> (pure existence) is worthy of being <i>dīkṣā-guru</i> • As long as the hankering for enjoyment remains prominent, it is impossible for <i>bhakti</i> to bloom • The nature of great personalities	
Letter 75.....	258
Encouraging people to preach on the Indian mainland • The supremacy of <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> • The difference between Śrī Buddha-deva and Siddhārtha Buddha • Transgression of etiquette is contrary to <i>trṇād api sunīcena</i> and creates obstacles in chanting • The influence of <i>prākṛta-sahajiyā-vāda</i> on the Gauḍīya Mission	
Letter 76.....	261
In the perfected stage, one chooses when to die • Two Kapilas • <i>Pañca-roga</i> (five illnesses) • Attaining transcendence of the senses • Śrīman Mahāprabhu's mind is non-different from Vṛndāvana • Following in the footsteps of Śrī Gaurasundara	
Letter 77.....	264
Singing the glories of Śrī Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas is the root-fibre of <i>sādhana-bhājana</i> • There is real happiness and peace in renunciation • We need the blessings of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas at every moment in life	
Letter 78.....	266
Gratitude for the sacrifice that is preaching • The devotees are patient, for all their joys and sorrows are related to service • Counselling a senior devotee, encouraging cooperation and conflict resolution • Leaving the <i>maṭha</i> and rejecting <i>guru</i> 's service is akin to suicide • Studying the qualities of a saint described in <i>Bhāgavatam</i> subdues hatred, violence, and envy • Magnanimity means to cultivate the good qualities of others within oneself	
Letter 79.....	269
<i>Bhakti</i> can only appear if one engages all one's senses in Bhagavān's service • Avoid those devotees of the <i>maṭha</i> who are prone to enmity and violence • The misconceptions of the <i>prākṛta-sahajiyās</i> • The material body does not become transcendental • Attaining a transcendental body and serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa	
Letter 80	272
“I am fully indebted to each and every <i>sevaka</i> and will remain so” • Plain living and high thinking come naturally in the course of <i>sādhana</i> • Every soul is a blossomed flower fit to be offered to Śrī Bhagavān • Studying the path of <i>sādhana</i> (a recommended book list) • The two Kapilas	
Letter 81.....	275
Having reservations about the state of society and wanting to lead a solitary life • The opinion of Kuntī-devī • We must try to make the environment favourable for service • Leaving civilization to live in the forest or jungle is not a solution • Studying <i>Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi</i> , <i>Śrī Maṇaḥ-sikṣā</i> , and <i>Śrī Upadeśāmṛta</i> every day gives strength of mind	

Letter 82.....	277
Gratitude between Bhagavān and His devotees • Service and chanting are synonymous and simultaneous • The importance of patiently and enthusiastically engaging others in service • The special virtues required of a temple manager • Only those who are deprived of the service of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas are petty gossipers	
Letter 83.....	280
The mercy of <i>guru</i> • The glories of <i>Daśa-mūla-śikṣā</i> • The rarity of a genuine disciple • <i>Mantra</i> is directly <i>guru</i> , and <i>guru</i> is Hari Himself • Śrī Kṛṣṇa is <i>sarva-śaktimān</i> (the possessor of all potencies), and <i>śrī guru</i> is <i>pūrṇa-śakti</i> (full potency) • <i>Śrī guru</i> alone is our protector, maintainer, and nurturer • Qualities of a true <i>sādhikā</i>	
Letter 84	283
Maintaining a link with <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas allows us to render real, practical service • Answers to questions about various <i>kīrtanas</i> (<i>Maṅgala Ārati</i> , <i>Sarvasva Tomāra</i> , <i>Śrī Guru-caraṇa-padma</i> and <i>Hari Haraye Namaḥ Kṛṣṇa</i>)	
Letter 85.....	285
Ultimate well-being lies in transcendental love and attachment • Real simplicity is being able to introspect • Glorification and encouragement of a disciple's motherly love and service	
Letter 86	287
The mercy of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas is constant • Duties during <i>ūrja-vrata</i> • The importance of reading <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> • Your guardian is always protecting you • Only by simplehearted introspection does one obtain <i>tattva-jñāna</i> • The supreme object can never be relinquished in exchange for worldly convention	
Letter 87.....	289
A respectable person never injures another person's dignity • Being doubtful of others is the cause of distress • The necessity of selfless renunciation • Only if we can relinquish our individual selfishness and be tolerant of suffering can we find auspiciousness • One should never test <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas	
Letter 88	292
Do not pray to that loving Bhagavān for anything of this earthly world • The lamentation of the devotees attracts Bhagavān's mercy • Those with simplicity can gain the mercy of <i>guru</i> and Bhagavān • The mercy of Bhagavān and His devotees is limitless • The only good fortune is <i>hari-bhajana</i>	
Letter 89.....	295
If we can offer our lives in the service of <i>śrī guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas, we are blessed • <i>Śrī guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas may be invited but not bade farewell • Those who gossip experience a scarcity of happiness and peace • Our duty is to lead a life of service until our last breath • Comparative analysis of Śrī Nārāyaṇa's, Śrī Rāmacandra's, and Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra's qualities • It is not proper to distribute <i>unnatojjvala-rasa</i> to unworthy candidates	
Letter 90	298
Developing affection and attachment for <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • The trust and forgiveness that takes place between mother and child • <i>Guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas make arrangements for us to work out our <i>karma</i>	
Letter 91.....	301
Language that conveys transcendental sentiment is the aid to attaining realization of transcendental substance • The fortune of being born in a devotee family • Things to be rejected in the course of <i>sādhana-bhajana</i>	

Letter 92.....	303
Chanting <i>śrī nāma</i> and weeping leads to perfection • Bhagavān's grace dispels the devotee's obstacles in <i>bhajana</i> • In <i>sādhana-bhajana</i> , concern for social opinion is surely rejectable • Those who do not love Vaiṣṇavas are always rejectable	
Letter 93.....	305
<i>Guru-pādapadma's</i> omniscience • Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī is more glorious than Śrī Kṛṣṇāṣṭamī • Kamalā Mañjarī's prayers to serve Śrī Rādhā • Śrī <i>guru's</i> position as an intimate associate of Śrī Rādhā is what makes him <i>guru</i>	
Letter 94	307
The glories of Haridvāra • The glories of <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> • The early, historic recitations of <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> • The difference between a <i>tīrtha</i> and a <i>dhāma</i>	
Letter 95.....	310
The surrendered devotee accepts whatever situation Bhagavān puts him in • Discussing <i>guru's</i> and Vaiṣṇavas' teachings is the only way to maintain a connection with them • Śrī <i>guru-pādapadma's</i> exclusively surrendered followers always carry the memory of him in their hearts • Meditation on <i>guru</i> and Bhagavān's qualities aids us in truly seeing them • It will not do to chant half a lakh • Special qualification in serving Bhagavān comes from chanting one lakh	
Letter 96	313
Special qualification is required to remember Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's intimate pastimes • <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> provides the authoritative word on Bhagavān's incarnations • What is commonly observed as Buddha Pūrṇimā (May full moon) pertains to Siddhārtha Buddha • Viṣṇu or Sugata Buddha is different from Gautama or Siddhārtha Buddha • Viṣṇu Buddha appeared on the <i>śukla dvitīya</i> of Jyēṣṭha (second lunar day of the bright fortnight of May-June)	
Letter 97.....	317
One who longs for his master's <i>prīti</i> (pleasure) is <i>priya</i> (dear to him) • The mercy of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas dispels the conditioned soul's <i>anarthas</i> and <i>aparādhas</i> • Any function is made a success by heartfelt love and attachment • Remembering verses from <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i> maintains one's composure	
Letter 98	320
<i>Pūjā</i> is real and directly interactive, though considered indirect from a general perspective • Both <i>sādhakas</i> and <i>siddhas</i> engage in <i>pūjā</i> and <i>arcana</i> • All material lust and desires are subdued through sincerity • The harsh truth of this world is that all the world's people together cannot satisfy a single person • If you keep going with patience and enthusiasm, you will not experience any inconvenience	
Letter 99	322
To love <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas, you have to equally employ your faithful devotions towards their various godbrothers and your own godbrothers • In the kingdom of service, there is no such thing as taking revenge • Serving as <i>guru</i> instructs is more pleasing to him than serving of one's own accord	
Letter 100.....	324
Instructions for a surrendered <i>brahmacārī-sevaka</i> • Following the orders of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas is the greatest service and responsibility • <i>Vaiṣṇava-dharma</i> is the <i>dharma</i> of being under guidance • <i>Sevakas</i> are soldiers	

Letter 101	326
One must repay the debt of love with love • The real result of full surrender, or submission of the soul • Transcending the good and bad perceived in dreams • Attachments within the realm of <i>māyā</i> will not trouble you if you perform <i>bhajana</i> as per the orders of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • Exemplary <i>grhasṭhas</i> only want to serve Bhagavān and His devotees • Concessions for those who cannot fast due to high <i>pitta</i> • The importance of caring for the body as a means of <i>sādhana-bhajana</i>	
Letter 102	330
Duties of a <i>maṭha</i> resident • <i>Vaiṣṇava-dharma</i> is the <i>dharma</i> of <i>ānugatyā</i> • Chanting a fixed number of rounds out loud removes <i>anarthas</i> and laziness • How a renunciate should perform <i>bhikṣā</i> • The dangers of finding faults in others • Service to <i>guru</i> and service to Vaiṣṇavas are of the same calibre	
Letter 103	333
Śrī <i>guru-pādapaḍma</i> is truly the embodiment of love • Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas are the only essence • We must keep our hearts resolute and absorbed in Bhagavān in the midst of everything • The relationship of the <i>viśrambha-sevaka</i> with śrī <i>guru</i> and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa	
Letter 104	335
The <i>sādhaka</i> only gains qualification for <i>bhajana</i> through the mercy of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • One should not go on pilgrimage without Vaiṣṇavas • Those whose hearts are anxious to have <i>darśana</i> of <i>guru</i> can control even Bhagavān • The system and strategy of <i>sādhana-bhajana</i>	
Letter 105	337
Never be discouraged by anyone's negative criticism	
Letter 106	339
How <i>guru-pādapaḍma</i> serves as a <i>mañjarī</i> under the guidance of the <i>sakhīs</i> • Description of Mother Yaśodā • Realization of one's <i>svarūpa</i> happens internally • One should be tenacious in asking questions of <i>guru</i> • The meaning of the name Revā • How to solve all conflict in relationships	
Letter 107	342
Worldly prowess is wholly defunct in the realm of spirituality • How to go through crises with fortitude and faith • It is never possible to have any conflict of opinion with one who wishes you eternal auspiciousness • Only the foolish, crazy, absentminded, and simple find auspiciousness in the company of <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • Love and affection is mutually reciprocated even from thousands of miles away • Śrī Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas are our greatest friends in this world	
Letter 108	345
True fortune is having love and affection for <i>guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas • Śrī <i>guru-pādapaḍma</i> does not see any fault, so he can forgive all mistakes • Only the individual can evaluate whether or not he is cheating or failing in <i>sādhana</i> • Real wealth, knowledge, and fortune is attaining <i>bhakti</i> to Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa • Attaining <i>nitya-rāsa-sthālī</i> Vṛndāvana through the guidance of <i>saṅkīrtana-rāsa-sthālī</i> Navadvīpa • The cheap policy of opportunists and the naked form of selfishness • Prayers from Śrī Yāmuna-bhāvāvalī • Only by full surrender is completeness achieved	

- Letter 109..... 349
 Instructions for residents of the *maṭha* • The qualities of those who really want to perform *sādhana-bhajana* • “One should not give distress to any living being physically, mentally, or verbally, and one should forego one’s own happiness to help others” • The instructions in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s song “*Āmāra Jivana*” are vital aids to *bhajana*
- Letter 110..... 351
- Letter 111..... 353
 As pursuing a career and education takes time away from *hari-bhajana*, safeguarding one’s *hari-bhajana* should be prioritized • The perils of selfishness and opportunism • Guardians must maintain a balance between affection and discipline • There is no difference between a renounced *sevaka* and an exemplary *gṛhastha* if both are devoted to the *dharma* of serving Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas • The special service of collecting rare *granthas* • Performing *parikrama* by mind
- Letter 112..... 356
 How to attain *darśana* of one’s worshipful object • Becoming *gurudevatātma* • Associating with Vaiṣṇavas is a golden opportunity and the result of special *sukṛti* • How to deal with the *anartha* of anger • How to deal with worldly society • Studying Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhu’s *Śrī Upadeśāmṛtam* helps solidify one’s *sādhana* • *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are omniscient, as Kṛṣṇa dwells in their heart and inspires them • Praying to Gaura-dhāma for residence in Vraja-dhāma • *Śrī guru*’s cultivation and preaching of *śrī nāma-bhajana* • The oneness and multiplicity of *guru-tattva* under the guidance of Śrīmatī Rādhikā • The glories of Śrī Gopāla • The relationship between householder and renounced *sādhakas* • The guardian’s indifference towards a fallen servant
- Letter 113..... 362
 The importance of taking care of one’s physical and mental health • Praying for the mercy of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, Bhagavān is the only way to eliminate *aparādha* • Observing Ekādaśī and other fasting days is imperative, but when physical illness arises, one is bound to resort to provisional alternatives • We must perform *bhajana* in all conditions of life, whether we are healthy or sick • We must accept all the arrangements of Bhagavān • Service to Hari is the main purpose of staying alive • *Śrī nāma-yajña* is greater than all other *yajñas*
- Letter 114..... 365
 Give honour to others, even at the expense of your own suffering • Occupy yourself with *bhajana* and avoid bad association • *Śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān quickly show mercy to one who has humility in his heart • Without humility, the heart becomes like stone • Following Śacīnandana Gaurahari’s teachings even slightly will result in auspiciousness for the soul
- Letter 115..... 367
 A home bereft of *bhajana* is not fit for residence • The meanings of *śrī guru* and *gaura-mantra* • Where to find explanations of *kṛṣṇa-mantra* and *kāma-gāyatrī* • *Saraṇāgati* comes from firm conviction in Bhagavān and relying on Him • Service in a mood of *aīśvarya* is not relevant to those who accept Kṛṣṇa as the Absolute Truth • One cannot serve the *āśraya-vigraha* in *madhura-rasa* • The guardian must be both tender and harsh • Serving the pure devotees gives one the ability to perform *bhajana* properly

- Letter 116.....371
 One who is clever in *bhajana* never meets with defeat • One can only develop attachment for Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas if one offers one's heart and soul to them • Those who really want to perform *hari-bhajana* have no time to waste • To perform *bhajana* in Gauḍa-maṇḍala on the banks of the Gaṅgā is a matter of great fortune • “Do not speak of your own *bhajana* here and there” • One has to discern between good and bad to perform *hari-bhajana*
- Letter 117.....374
 Nothing is out of reach for those who are *akiñcana* • All qualification is attained through simple faith and conviction • As life is uncertain and time is short, it is imperative to study *śāstra* and seek out its essence • Gossiping about others causes fearsome damage to *sādhana-bhajana* • Be the honeybee, not the fly • *Guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān grant qualification to those who have none • The speciality of Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva • The importance of freedom and intimacy in being able to render service fully
- Letter 118.....378
 Using the words of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas for one's own purposes is a grave offence • There is no room for the *sevaka* to be hopeless in awaiting the arrival of the *sevyā* • One-pointedness (*ekāntikatā*) is having no other duty but transcendental *bhajana* of the Divine Couple • There is no chance of inauspiciousness for those who chant *śrī nāma* in a regulated manner, are eager to study *śāstra*, and are diligent in their *sevā*
- Letter 119.....380
 Only *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas can gauge our progress in *sādhana-bhajana* • *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are always guiding their surrendered followers, both perceptibly and imperceptibly • To gain the transcendental love of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, we must develop the necessary spiritual qualities • No one should object to education, especially if it is engaged in spiritual well-being • Let yourself become a magnet drawn to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • The very core focus of *sādhana-bhajana* is to appreciate within our hearts the presence and causeless compassion of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān • A suggested routine for *sādhana-bhajana* • How to balance the expression of emotion with refined, concise language
- Letter 120.....387
 Following the instructions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is more beneficial than their direct *darsana* • If possible, it is best to follow *kārtika-vrata* in the *dhāma* • Installed deities must be offered full meals, not just dry snacks and fruit • We have no refuge in this material existence besides *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān
- Letter 121.....390
 Requesting Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja to give *harināma* and *dīkṣā* on his behalf • Calling for the expulsion of those attempting to instigate a rift between him and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja • The purpose of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti is to preach the message of Śrī Rūpa and Raghunātha
- Letter 122.....392
 There is no harm if life is short • Auspiciousness lies in rendering service • *Śrī gurudeva*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are our *samsāra* • Lending selfless assistance is characteristic of the saintly • Do not be angered by anyone else's adverse mentality or bad behaviour • For those absorbed in *bhajana*, blasphemy and praise are equal

Letter 123	395
Both Bhagavān and His devotees are ill-disposed towards those intoxicated with pride • If one's practices are unfavourable for <i>bhakti</i> , the inclination to stay under Bhagavān's guidance does not remain • In <i>bhajana</i> , it is necessary to carefully protect the sanctity of one's practice • We should not oppose the desires of another if we seek integrity in every aspect of life • <i>Śrī guru</i> , Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān do not cater to anyone's mind, but give reassurance to foster patience and enthusiasm	
Letter 124.....	398
As the body is the root of <i>bhajana</i> , <i>sādhakas</i> and <i>sādhikās</i> know not to neglect it • They maintain their lives by the transcendental love and affection of Śrī Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas • One should not neglect the service of <i>śrī viṅraha</i> to come to the <i>dhāma</i> for <i>darśana</i> • Nothing should detract from the fullness of service • Nothing can stop one from living in Vṛndāvana constantly via inner vision • A bona fide <i>guru</i> is not biased or swayed by public opinion	
Letter 125	401
Conveying his good wishes on the occasion of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's first journey to Western countries for the purpose of preaching the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu	
Letter 126	403
“A Heartly Welcome” – written on the occasion of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's return to India from preaching the message of Śrī Gaura in Eastern countries.	
Letter 127.....	406
A Cordial Reception to His Holiness <i>parivṛājakācārya tridaṇḍī-svāmī</i> Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja	
Letter 128	408
No matter where we must reside, we will perform <i>śrī nāma-bhajana</i> in the proximity of Śrī Hari, <i>guru</i> , and Vaiṣṇavas • Advice on living in the <i>maṭha</i> • <i>Śrī guru</i> and Vaiṣṇavas are seers of past and future • <i>Sādhana-bhajana</i> requires Himalayan-like patience and tolerance	
The Sublime Life and Qualities of nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja	410
The Full Embodiment of a Vaiṣṇava's Twenty-Six Qualities	420

The Bhāgavata- guru- paramparā

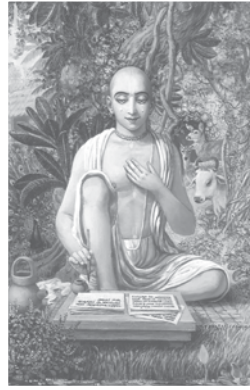
(from the 15th century
to the present)



The Six Gosvāmīs:
Śrī Rūpa, Sanātana, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Śrī Jīva, Gopāla-bhaṭṭa, Raghunātha dāsa



Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrīnivāsa Ācārya,
and Śyāmānanda Prabhu



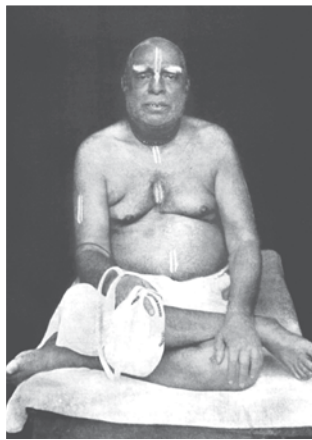
Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī
Ṭhākura



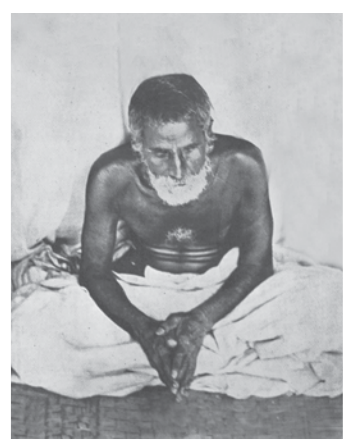
Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa



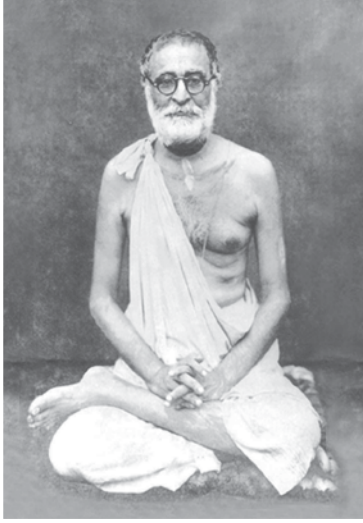
Śrī Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī



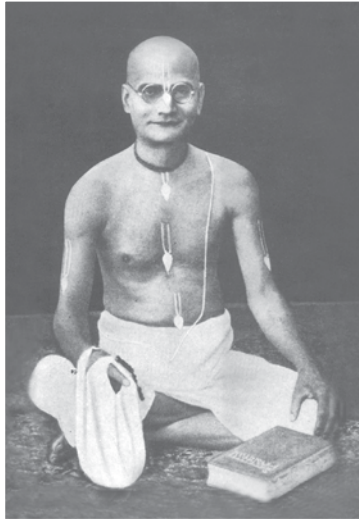
Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura



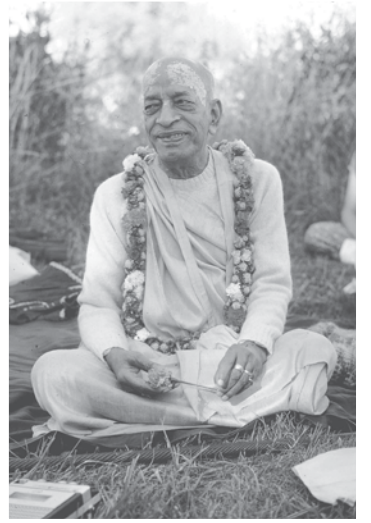
Śrī Gaura-kīśora dāsa Bābājī



Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Prabhupāda



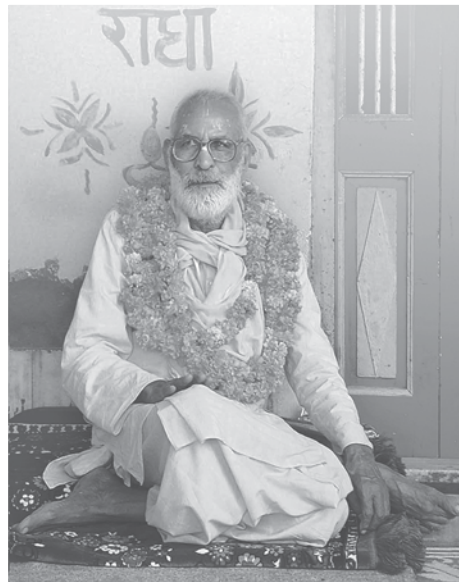
Śrī Śrīmad
Bhakti Prajñāna Kēśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja



Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja



Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja



Śrī Śrīmad
Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja

FOREWORD

Remembering nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

[Compiled from *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's lectures on the appearance day of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, given on 29 December, 1991, and 6 January, 1994.]

What is vyāsa-pūjā?

What is *vyāsa-pūjā*? In a general sense, the full moon day that comes in the month of Āṣāḍha (June–July) is called *Guru Pūrṇimā* and it is the appearance day of Śrī Vyāsadeva, so everyone offers *puṣpāñjali* at his feet on that day. This is observed in our *sampradāya* and in many other *sampradāyas* as well.

In our *sampradāya*, those who sit upon the seat of Śrī Vyāsadeva and preach and practise the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are *ācāryas*. On the *ācārya*'s appearance day, the worship he himself performs of his own *guru* and the *guru-paramparā* is called *vyāsa-pūjā*. *Vyāsa-pūjā* does not mean that the *guru* seeks to accept worship from his disciples and followers. Rather, on his birthday, he worships his own *gurudeva* as well as the Vaiṣṇavas, the *guru-paramparā*, and his worshipful deities, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is called *vyāsa-pūjā*.

Look at the example of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, or more recently, as you all must have seen, our worshipful *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārājajī. On his appearance day, he would worship all the Vaiṣṇavas and Vrajavāsīs who came. He would give them garlands, *tilaka*, and fresh clothes. He would even give garlands, and so much honour to those who are on the level of his disciples, the disciples of his god-brothers like myself.

If this manner of conduct is not taught, then as we see today, people just think, “Oh, *guru-pūjā*, *vyāsa-pūjā*, means my disciples will worship me.” This is the opposite of *pūjā*, this is not *pūjā*. Surely, even if the disciples see this misdirected sort of *pūjā*, they will at least learn to worship their *guru*. They should certainly perform *pūjā* of their *guru*, otherwise problems will come. But if the *guru* himself does not set an example of worshipping his own *guru* and his *guru-varga*, then what kind of *pūjā* will his disciple learn to perform?

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.17.27), it has been said, “*ācāryam mām vijānīyān* – know the *guru* to be Me, My own *svarūpa*.” Kṛṣṇa Himself is saying this. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his commentary that even the ordinary fruitive worker (*karmī*) is advised to see his *guru* [also a fruitive worker] as the form of Bhagavān, so what then to say of pure Vaiṣṇavas? In regard to them, we have statements like “*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo*” and “*śākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvayata eva sadbhiḥ*.” They are the *āśraya-vigraha*. We have two main *āśraya-vigrahas*: one is Śrī Baladeva Prabhu and the other is Śrīmatī Rādhikājī. Both issue forth from Kṛṣṇa, one in the form of *sandhinī-śakti* and the other as *hlādinī-śakti*. Kṛṣṇa Himself is *cit-svarūpa*, from where both issue forth and then come together. One channel comes from Baladeva Prabhu and the other from Śrīmatījī. One who serves Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa under that guidance and teaches how to attain that service is an *ācārya*. A *guru* who does not teach service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is not really a *guru*.

If one has *bhakti* for Bhagavān, it does not even matter if one does not have full knowledge of *śāstra*. If one is expert in all the scriptures but has no realization of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-anubhūti*), then he is not an actual *guru*. Realization of Bhagavān is essential. If Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are not in a person’s own heart, how can that person seat Them in the hearts of others, his disciples? How can he do that? Therefore, to be equipped with realization of Bhagavān is the main characteristic of *guru*, while knowledge of scripture and other things are secondary characteristics. Many people go in the direction of scriptural knowledge and do not give attention to realization of Bhagavān. In such cases, even though such persons are referred to as *guru*, there is not much real benefit to be had in becoming their disciple. The primary characteristic of having *gurutva* is to have realization of Bhagavān. And what sort of *bhagavad-anubhūti* should that be? This is where the speciality of our *sampradāya* lies. If a person is fully ripened, matured in his understanding of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s conceptions and if he has that kind of realization of Bhagavān, then he is truly a *guru* within our *sampradāya*.

The greatest ambition

Service to *guru* must be performed in a way that is *viśrambha* (endowed with perfect intimacy and trust). In order to become *viśrambha*, we have to rise to the level that our *gurudeva* is on. In order to perform *pūjā* of Bhagavān, one must become like Bhagavān, as said in the Tantras: “*devo bhūtvā devam yajet*¹ – one must obtain divine status to worship that which is divine.” So, to serve *guru*, we must come very close to his conceptions (*vicāra*). We will have to understand

¹ *Gandharva-tantra* (9.2): “*nyāsas tadātmako bhūtvā devo bhūtvā tu tam yajet*.”

his conceptions and what he wants. That is why it is said that one cannot worship a *deva* (godly personality) if one is not a *deva* himself. Likewise, without comprehending the conceptions of *guru*, one cannot truly serve *guru*.

Hence, if one can serve in that *viśrambha* manner [with intimacy and trust], then *guru* becomes pleased. And then what happens? What do the members of our *guru-varga* want? They want to attain the service of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's foot dust. This is the highest aspiration. Others may want to cross over this ocean of material existence. Some want *mokṣa* (liberation), some want *Vaikuṇṭha*, some *Dvārakā*, etc. Some want to follow Subala and Śrīdāma, some want to follow Yaśodā and Nanda Bābā, and some want to follow in the footsteps of the *sakhīs*. What did Prabhupāda Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura say all the time? “*Ādadānas tṛṇam dantair idam yāce punaḥ punaḥ, śrīmad rūpa-padāmbhojau dhuliḥ syām janma-janmani*² – clutching a straw between my teeth, I repeatedly pray to become but a particle of dust at the lotus feet of Śrīmad Rūpa, birth after birth.”

It is my understanding that for the *jīva*, this is the most beautiful and topmost desire, and it surpasses even prayers to attain the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. There cannot possibly be any greater ambition than this.

What does it mean to be *rūpānuga*?

Among all *sampradāyas*, our Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya* has one speciality, expressed by the words “*nikuñja-yunor-rati-keli-siddhyaiḥ, yā yālibhir yukti apekṣanīya, tatrāti-dakṣyād-ativallabhasya* – *śrī guru* is very dear [to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa] because he is very expert among the *sakhīs* in arranging the pastimes of the Divine Couple in the groves of Vṛndāvana.” There is not such extensive and variegated service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in any other *sampradāya*. The *guru*'s *gurutva* (quality of being *guru*) depends on this alone. Look at earlier verses of *Gurvāṣṭaka*, like *mahāprabhor kīrtana nṛtya-gīta*. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura takes us through a steady progression. *Guru* also personally performs *arcana* and *pūjana* of Ṭhākurajī – *śrī vighrahārādhana nitya nānā*. It starts there and ends up at *nikuñja-yunor-rati-keli*. This is the *gurutva* of *guru*. One who cannot give these teachings cannot be called a *rūpānuga* Vaiṣṇava or *guru*.

What does *rūpānuga* mean? By the inspiration and mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, *Vidagdha-mādhava*, and *Lalita-mādhava*. Those who follow what he wrote are not necessarily *rūpānuga*. They may be *rāgānuga*. They may be in the moods of *dāśya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and even *mādhurya*, but

² Śrī Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi (175) and *Muktā-carita* by Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

what does it mean when we say *rūpānuga*? Who is Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī internally? Externally, he is the associate of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, and internally, he is Rūpa Mañjarī, the eternal companion of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. What is Rūpa Mañjarī's personal service? How does she serve the Divine Couple? She serves as a *prāṇa-sakhī*, a *mañjarī*, as one who is *rādhā-pakṣīya* (favouring Śrīmatī Rādhikā). She serves Yugala-kīśora, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa both, but where is her absorption? Where is her inclination? It leans towards Śrī Rādhājī. Kṛṣṇa will also summon Rūpa Mañjarī. Both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa will be standing there and calling to Rūpa Mañjarī, but who will she go to? Straight to Śrīmatī Rādhikā. This is Rūpa Mañjarī. If Kṛṣṇa loses a game, all the *sakhīs* clap, but she is the first to clap for Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and she teases Kṛṣṇa. This is why Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī sings praises with verses like “*tvaṁ rūpa mañjarī sakhi prathita pure 'smin* – O Rūpa Mañjarī, you are well known in the town of Vraja...” (*Vilāpa-kusumāñjali*, verse 1).

So, what does *rūpānuga* mean? One who follows Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *ācāra* (conduct) and *vicāra* (conceptions) exclusively, who knows the service he renders in his eternal *svarūpa* (his *svarūpa-gata-sevā*), and who grants his disciples the desire, or aspiration, to serve in that same way is a *rūpānuga ācārya*. This is our *sampradāya*.

First, long ago, Śrī Nāradaḥ came and gave service in the mood of *dāsyā-rasa*. Other great *ācāryas* have also come, even incarnations of Bhagavān have come, but they could not even approach the vicinity of what Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave. And Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, in a natural and spontaneous manner, infused Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's heart with all of what He came to give. Where did He do this? In Prayāga first, and then in Purī. One who can take those moods of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu into his heart and convey them to the hearts of his followers is truly one of our *rūpānuga* Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*.

It is for this reason that Śrīla Prabhupāda referred to Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura as *mahā-mahā-vadānya*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is *mahā-vadānya*, but Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura distributed what He came to give on a brand-new golden platter. What, then, is Śrīla Prabhupāda like? What did he do? He revealed Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, as well as the whole *guru-paramparā*, Śrīman Mahāprabhu, and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Those who reveal to us a personality such as Śrīla Prabhupāda are truly revered. We are so fortunate to have taken birth close to the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda's associates. I came not long after, yet it is my misfortune that I could not take what Śrīla Prabhupāda gave. All his associates took that. *Pūjyapāda* Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja is one of those associates. Our fortune is that we could have the association of those who received Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction. If we can

grasp their conduct and conceptions and enter the realm of *bhagavad-bhakti*, then we will be greatly fortunate.

Pūjyapāda Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja's early life in the maṭha

Śrīla Prabhupāda was in this *rūpānuga guru-paramparā* and he had many associates. In a very short time, they preached throughout the whole world the message that was practised and preached by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Of them, my *gurudeva*, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja was foremost, and he [Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja] is his foremost disciple. Some identify with their families, with their mothers and fathers, but his identity was as a disciple of our *guru mahārāja*. His mother was a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Her name was Śrīmatī Bhagavatī-devī. His father was a disciple of our *guru mahārāja*. Almost everyone else in his family – his brothers, his father, and most of his uncles – was a disciple of Guru Mahārāja. His mother, however, had taken shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda before any of them. She entrusted *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja into the care of our *guru mahārāja* at a very young age.

Guru Mahārāja was like his father, and Śrī Narahari Prabhu, known as the mother of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, raised and nurtured him. Even if some of the boys wet their beds at night, Narahari Prabhu would clean it up. He would make sure they all got to bed on time, and then he would wake them up in the morning and bring them to *maṅgala-ārati*. He fed them and taught them how to read and write. He took care of everyone very lovingly. That is why there were so many people in the *maṭha* back then. People will only be attracted to *guru* if he gives them more love than they receive from their families and the rest of the world. Therefore, *guru* has to be loving like this. Then he can attract everyone.



Śrīmatī Bhagavatī-devī with her son Santoṣa who later became known as Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

Pūjyapāda Vāmana Mahārāja's childhood name was Santoṣa. He was originally from the Khulna district, but he was raised here in the Gauḍīya Maṭha. Guru Mahārāja enrolled him in the Bhaktivinoda Institute. Guru Mahārāja taught him everything. He would give Santoṣa a “lemon juice” (candy) for every verse he memorized, so he would memorize up to a dozen verses or more a day. He lived in the *āśrama* [at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha] and went to school there [at the Bhaktivinoda Institute next to Yogapīṭha]. There were many other boys who went to school with him, but none of them remained *brahmacārīs* or took *sannyāsa*. Most of them left. A few remained.

From childhood, *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja had a profound love of learning, but he also served. He would set plates for everyone, set their *āsanās*, put salt and lemon on their plates, sweep and clean up after *prasāda*, bring everyone drinking water for the day, and also cut and prepare the vegetables for cooking. This is one of the main services in a Vaiṣṇava temple – cutting vegetables. He was so quick at cutting vegetables, you cannot imagine. You would look away for a moment, and chop, chop, chop, he would be done, and every piece would be the exact same size, none too big or small.

Accepting dīkṣā

After Śrīla Prabhupāda entered his unmanifest pastimes, conflicts ensued amongst the devotees of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. The opposing party filed false charges against our most worshipable *śrīla gurudeva* and forty of Śrīla Prabhupāda's senior, respectable disciples, including Śrī Narahari Sevā-vigraha Prabhu, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Kuśala Narasimha Mahārāja, *pūjyapāda* Paramahansa Mahārāja, and *pūjyapāda* Hṛṣīkeśa Mahārāja, and had them all thrown in prison. It was Śrī Santoṣa who would bring the case files to the lawyer and go to court, as well as cook *prasāda* and bring it to the jail for all forty devotees.

Guru Mahārāja imparted *dīkṣā-mantras* to him at that time and gave him the name Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī, but he could not perform his *upanayana-saṁskāra*, or sacred thread ceremony. *Pūjyapāda* Yāyāvara Mahārāja performed Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī's *upanayana-saṁskāra* some time later at Śrī Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Medinipur. Some say that Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī accepted *harināma* and *dīkṣā* from *pūjyapāda* Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Mahārāja, but the truth is that he received *harināma* from *jagad-guru nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata-śrī* Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī and *dīkṣā* from my *guru-pādapadma*, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Refuting misconceptions about the sampradāya

Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī also lived for some time in Śrī Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha. Śrī Ananta-rāma Brahmācārī (later *pūjyapāda* Śrīla Bhakti Jīvana Janārdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja) was also there. Around that time, some serious controversy arose in Vṛndāvana, as some so-called Gosvāmīs and Bābājīs were saying that there are more than four *sampradāyas*, that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not in the line of Madhvācārya, and that He established the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* Himself.

In order to compose a proper essay refuting these claims, the references for two particular verses were needed. One of these verses was “*sampradāya vihinā ye mantras te niṣphalā matāḥ, ataḥ kalau bhaviṣyanti catvaraḥ sampradāyinaḥ* – unless one has been initiated in a *sampradāya* by a bona fide guru, the *mantra* received will have no effect, and in the age of Kali, there will only be four bona fide *sampradāyas*.” This is found in *Prameya-ratnāvalī* (1.5), quoted from *Padma Purāṇa*. The other verse, “*janmanā jāyate śudraḥ saṁskārād hi bhaved dvijaḥ, veda-pāṭhāt bhavet vipraḥ brahma-jānātī brāhmaṇaḥ* – By birth, everyone is a *śudra*. One becomes a *dvija* (twice-born) upon receiving spiritual purification (*saṁskāra*) from a spiritual master. By studying the Vedas, one becomes a *vipra*. The real *brāhmaṇa*, however, is one who knows *brahma*.” This verse is originally from the *Atreya-saṁhitā* but is also found in the *Skanda Purāṇa*.

In order to find the proper references for these two verses and write that crucial rebuttal, the two *brahmācārīs*, Śrī Sajjana-sevaka and Śrī Ananta-rāma, went to the local king’s impressive library in Mahishadal near the town of Medinipur. They stayed there for several days combing through many books until they found the required references. While there, they took the opportunity to also read a great many Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scriptures, as well as various Upaniṣads and Purāṇas that were available in that library.

His exceptional life as a brahmācārī

In 1940, some years after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, my *guru-pādapadma* established Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti at Bosapada Lane, Kolkata. Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī was there at that time, as was Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja. And in 1943, when Guru Mahārāja established Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma, Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī was with him there also. He performed all types of service for Guru Mahārāja, including cooking for him. And when Guru Mahārāja would leave to preach in the cities and towns on either side of the Gaṅgā, Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī would accompany him as his prominent assistant and servant.



Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmācārī

Once, some Vaiṣṇava guests arrived at the Samiti centre in Kolkata. *Pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja had a fever of 104°, but there was no one else to cook for them. Guru Mahārāja woke him up. “What? You are sleeping? You have a fever? Get up quickly!” Vāmana Mahārājaji came and cooked with a fever of 104°. Guru Mahārāja told him, “Do everything you have to do here first, then rest.”

If some guests arrived here, right now, would anyone [who was ill with high fever] do this? No one else would have been able to get on his feet in that condition.

During our *guru mahārāja’s* time, Vāmana Mahārājaji and I stayed with each other a lot. We and one or two others used to go preaching together with Guru Mahārāja, in Medinipur, Chaubis Pargana, and so many other places, so we had time to get to know many things about each other. *Pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja told us how he got stuck in the flood in Māyāpura. He had taken a boat out into the river, when suddenly, a strong current came and swept his boat and him away. It was a very precarious situation. Somehow or other, he caught hold of a tree and brought the boat over to it. But then he noticed that the tree was full of snakes. They had no place to go, so they had sought refuge in the tree. There were snakes everywhere. It was very risky, especially since one could have fallen on him. Nevertheless, he said he had to just cling to the tree, chanting Bhagavān’s names, and after a while, some people spotted him and rescued him.

He used to wear wooden shoes. If he had to pick flowers from a tree, he would climb the tree wearing his wooden shoes. He could even climb bael trees in them. I used to wear wooden shoes too when I first came and would walk four or five miles in them, but he was more accustomed to it than I. He would go back and forth to Kolkata in those shoes.

People nowadays cannot imagine how austere we lived then. We would be engaged in service day and night. And all the responsibility for the *maṭha* was on *pūjyapāda* Vāmana

Mahārāja. Guru Mahārāja would be out preaching. Vāmana Mahārājajī was put in charge of the press in Chunchura and started printing *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* (Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti's monthly magazine). On Guru Mahārāja's order, he printed many books, like *Jaiva-dharma*, *Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga*, *Gauḍīya-gīti-guccha*, *Navadvīpa-śatakam*, *Navadvīpa-dhāma Parikramā*, and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

As I mentioned, *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja came to the *maṭha* at a very young age, during Śrīla Prabhupāda's time, in 1930. I came at the end of 1946, when Vāmana Mahārājajī had already been serving Guru Mahārāja for sixteen years and hearing his teachings. *Pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja is very senior. He is like Kākabhūṣuṇḍī³.

I have been under the shade of his feet for the last forty-five years. Everything I needed, he provided. He was the *bhāṇḍārī* (storehouse manager) then. He cared for me in every respect, supplying me with cloth and whatever else I needed. He always showed me much affection and I came to regard him as my *śikṣā-guru*.

Taking sannyāsa

Later, in 1952, *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja took *sannyāsa*, along with *pūjyapāda* Trivikrama Mahārājajī and me. At the time, all three of us expressed that we did not feel qualified to take *sannyāsa*. First, Vāmana Mahārāja was asked, or perhaps it was Trivikrama Mahārāja, as he was the eldest. Trivikrama Mahārāja was asked if he would take *sannyāsa* and he said no. When asked why,



his reply was: "Look how learned Śrīla Prabhupāda was and also his disciples, what a great scholar Nemi Mahārāja is, how learned Śrauti Mahārāja is, and Guru Mahārāja is. We see them all, what exalted, learned scholars they are." When Vāmana Mahārāja was asked, he too said he

³ An immortal sage and devotee of Śrī Rāmacandra who accepted the form of a crow and witnesses Bhagavān's pastimes across infinite eons.

would not accept, so when I was asked, I also said I would not take. Then Śrīla Narasimha Mahārāja [Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's uncle] came to me and asked, "You will not take *sannyāsa*?"

"No," I said.

"Why?"

"Because I am not qualified."

"Are you going to decide whether or not you are qualified or is your *gurudeva* going to decide that?" he asked. "Is your not wanting to take *sannyāsa* for your own sake or will you take it to serve your *gurudeva*? What should happen – what your *gurudeva* wants or what you want? If it's what you want, then why didn't you stay in family life?"



He was very persuasive. He got it into my head, so I said, "Fine, I will take, whatever happens. If Gurudeva wants me to be naked, I will be naked. If he gives me *sannyāsa*, then I will take *sannyāsa*. If he gives me red cloth, I will take that. Whatever he says, I will do. I will not do anything of my own accord."

So, then it was decided that just I, Gaura-nārāyaṇa, would take *sannyāsa*. Guru Mahārāja said, "Yes, it will just be him. No one else is ready to take."

Later, as the *sannyāsa* preparations were being made, *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja and Trivikrama Mahārāja also agreed that if Guru Mahārāja wanted them to take *sannyāsa*, then they should also take. This is how the three of us were the first to take *sannyāsa* [in Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti]. The kind of *sannyāsa* I am seeing nowadays shows the standard has fallen. People who have no knowledge of *siddhānta* and no comprehension of *Bhāgavatam* are taking *sannyāsa*. The real qualification for *sannyāsa* is a willingness to serve *śrī guru*, as exemplified by the service *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja rendered from such an early age.

His shy nature

Pūjyapāda Vāmana Mahārāja is of a very shy disposition. He hardly speaks to anyone and when he does, he speaks very little. Once, I remember we went preaching somewhere, and Guru Mahārāja told Vāmana Mahārāja to give class. He was so anxious about how he was going to do

so. He took a volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and started reading a verse. His pronunciation was very beautiful. He then read the translation and went on to read another verse and that verse's translation. Somehow, like this, he got through the class.

Guru Mahārāja saw this shy nature of his and tried to change him gradually. Vāmana Mahārāja was then in charge of publishing *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* and did whatever was required to get it published. Then Guru Mahārāja told him to go preaching and the responsibility for publication work was given to someone else. Vāmana Mahārāja was very sad. He felt he was being sent away from the *maṭha*, from Chunchura. Although rather unhappy to go preaching, when he came back, he had changed completely.

After that he started giving lectures and explanations of *śāstra* that would go on for hours and hours. We can manage half an hour, three quarters of an hour, maybe an hour, but he carries on explaining complex *tattva-siddhānta* for hours, and in simple, understandable language, because he has such masterful command of the Bengali language and Gauḍīya *siddhānta*.

Also, he has his own unique way of refuting the misconceptions of others. He does not refute people in a way that is so apparent to them. In very polite and humble language, he lays out every aspect of the issue, but people do not understand that he is refuting them.

Expertise in relating to everyone

However people approach him, he reciprocates accordingly. I saw him in Chunchura one time, sitting with the neighbourhood children, telling them a ghost story, an experience he had once travelling late at night in a remote region of the Chaubis Pargana. He had encountered a marriage party of ghosts in the middle of the night in a desolate cremation ground. He told the children that the only way he had escaped the macabre festivities that night was because he had *tulasī* beads on his neck and his *japa-māla* with him and was chanting *harināma* loudly. The children would then come every day to hear stories like this.

Another time, while out preaching somewhere, I saw *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja sitting with some children.





This was after he had taken *sannyāsa*. They were asking him, “Can you read palms?”

“Yes,” he said, and they started showing him their hands. He said, “Look, your mind is restless and you have stomach problems.” You can actually tell this just by looking at a person, especially if they are really skinny. “Your health is not good, you have a stomach problem, and you cannot focus on your studies. Your mind is restless.” Just by looking at them, he could tell something about them. People would be impressed and say, “He has mystic powers.” In this way, he interacts with everyone on their level, and if true spiritual seekers come, he deals accordingly with them.

Guru Mahārāja’s biographer and flawless scribe

Pūjyapāda Vāmana Mahārāja’s power of memory is extraordinary, and he is a very eloquent speaker and writer. What a prolific writer he is! After Guru Mahārāja’s disappearance, Vāmana Mahārājaji compiled the history of Guru Mahārāja’s transcendental life. He had regularly noted down Guru Mahārāja’s activities and pastimes and so he compiled this information into a biography covering Guru Mahārāja’s entire life, from his appearance to his disappearance. It includes accounts of Guru Mahārāja’s accepting the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda, serving the Gauḍīya Maṭha, his *niṣṭhā* in Prabhupāda, his developing Māyāpura, his establishing Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, and then preaching all over India, his *parikramās* of various *dhāmas* and *tīrthas*. The book also describes the pilgrimages we went on with Guru Mahārāja to places like Śrī Jagannātha Purī, Kāśī-dhāma, Ayodhyā-dhāma, Vasūkīnātha, Naimiṣāraṇya, Vaidyānātha-dhāma, Bhadrācalam, Prayāga, Mathurā-maṇḍala, Vraja-maṇḍala, Dvārakā, Raṇa-choḍajī, Kurmācala, Panna Narasiṃha, Jiyāḍa Nṛsiṃha, Rameśvaram, Kanyā-kumārī, Ahovalam, Trivandrum, Uḍūpi, Venkaṭeśvaram, Śrī Raṅgam, and so many other places. Most importantly, the book presents Guru Mahārāja’s conceptions in a truly marvellous way.



For the articles in *Śrī Gaudīya Patrikā* and various books that Guru Mahārāja wrote, he would give dictation just once and not have to review it, because *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārājajī would take care of everything else. Vāmana Mahārāja would compile the *Patrikā*, collecting material from various sources. Guru Mahārāja would provide one essay, while Vāmana Mahārājajī would see to everything else, and in those days, there were no cassettes or recorders.

When Guru Mahārāja would give lectures, *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja would take notes. He could write very fast. Once, in a single month, in thirty days, Guru Mahārāja gave lectures at over forty different places. Whenever Guru Mahārāja spoke, Vāmana Mahārāja

would quickly note down what he was saying. All of those lectures were published in the *Gaudīya Patrikā*. He would travel everywhere with Guru Mahārāja. It would be the middle of *parikramā*, and Guru Mahārāja would be dictating to him, nonstop, without pausing. There would be so many people around, but Vāmana Mahārājajī would not miss a thing.

When I came, I did not know him or anyone else. I only knew *pūjyapāda* Madhusūdana Mahārājajī, whose name then was Narottamānanda Brahmācārī, so, I would write to him, and he would give my letters to Guru Mahārāja to respond to. Guru Mahārāja would then have Vāmana Mahārāja write the responses. That is when Guru Mahārāja started addressing me as Tiwarijī; it was first by letter. When I came [to the *maṭha*], I did not know Vāmana Mahārājajī, but I had received many letters from him on Guru Mahārāja's behalf, so I knew only his handwriting. When I left everything and came to the *maṭha* in December of 1946, I arrived at the station in Navadvīpa and saw someone carrying a lantern looking for me. He came up to me and asked, "Are you Tiwarijī?"

I said, "Yes. Who are you?"

"I am the one who has been writing you letters on behalf of Guru Mahārāja."

"But how did you know I was coming?" I asked.

“Guru Mahārāja said you would be coming tonight,” he said. I had not, however, written anything about coming. I had just left suddenly, arriving there in the middle of the night, around eleven, via Katwa and Bardhaman. When I got there, I did not know where to go. That’s when I saw him, and he took me to the *maṭha*.

Guru Mahārāja’s deep affection for him

One time, in Chunchura, when he was entering some corrections after proofreading, his hand was badly injured in the press. There was no one else there to enter the corrections. He was by himself. He had started up the press and began feeding the paper into it when somehow the press crushed his hand. His finger was badly injured. Guru Mahārāja, with tears in his eyes, took him straight to Kolkata, to the medical college there. Guru Mahārāja kept him there for two or three days for treatment and did not leave his side till he was better. Guru Mahārāja was visibly shaken, disturbed. He was crying for him. Normally, Guru Mahārāja was a very grave and composed person. He was never seen to be in such an emotional state. Another time, also, when *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja fell ill, Guru Mahārāja dropped everything he was doing to take him to Shimla for treatment.



The encyclopedia of Gauḍīya siddhānta

Pūjyapāda Vāmana Mahārāja is very much a *śruti-dhara* (one who remembers everything he hears). He only has to hear something once to remember it, even big, long verses. The rest of us will recite a verse repeatedly, trying to memorize it, trying to grind it in and make it stick, and still we forget half the verse. I see that he is like the encyclopedia of the Gauḍīya Maṭha *siddhānta*. He can produce references from everywhere. He can recite *Bhagavad-gītā* all the way through, without pause. He can do the same with *Vedānta-sūtra* and all the main verses of *Bhāgavatam*.

Guru Mahārāja once took five *sannyāsīs* and ten to twelve *brahmacārīs* preaching in Assam. We came to the village of Baripada, which was largely populated by the disciples of Śaṅkaradeva, who had written the so-called “Thirteenth Canto” of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. His followers worshipped Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but they also ate meat, fish, and other such foodstuffs. In a large gathering, Guru Mahārāja declared that the mouths of those who perform *bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa while eating meat and fish and drinking alcohol are like sewers full of stool and urine. Upon hearing this, Śaṅkaradeva’s many followers began to attack the devotees on stage with sticks and stones. It was chaos and people were scattering. But Guru Mahārāja remained still and calm. “If you want to fight,” he said gravely, “We too can take up sticks and stones. You should calm down and listen. Those with questions or doubts are welcome to present them.”

In the course of the following discussion, the followers of Śaṅkaradeva declared Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to be an ordinary person, not an incarnation of Bhagavān, and requested evidence of His supreme position. Guru Mahārāja then motioned to *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja, who promptly stood up and quoted around thirty-five verses, one after another, starting with *kṛṣṇa varṇam tviṣākṛṣṇam* and *channa-avatāra*, to prove that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is indeed Bhagavān. The audience was astonished and silenced. In this way, the preaching programme turned out to be quite a success.

Special qualities

Pūjyapāda Vāmana Mahārājaji has one very special quality, which is that he never praises himself. We, somehow or other, find a way to praise ourselves, but I have never seen this in him. If I am present, he will not speak. He will just keep telling me, “You speak, you speak.” And I will say, “No, please, you speak.” The audience has to just sit there for ten minutes, watching us go back and forth like this. If I say something wrong when I speak, he will not correct me. Even after the class is over, he will not say anything. Once, when we were at the Śyāmasundara temple in Vṇḍāvana, I said that Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa had established the temple, but it’s Śrī Śyāmānanda Prabhu’s temple. Several days later, he finally mentioned that the temple had actually been established by Śyāmānanda Prabhu, not Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. He will never directly correct or contradict me, and whenever I am with him, he will always ask me to speak. He has this manner of giving respect to me and to everyone. This is the nature of a Vaiṣṇava, to always give honour to others.

Although *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja is the *ācārya*, he is completely devoid of the pride of being an *ācārya* and throughout his life he has always remained under the guidance of

his god-brothers. During Navadvīpa *parikramā*, before he gives initiations, he comes to Śrīla Trivikrama Mahārāja and me and says, “O Mahārāja, please give me permission to give initiations.”

I once sent *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja a letter requesting him to come to Mathurā, because many people there wanted to take *harināma* and *dīkṣā* initiation. He wrote back, saying, “I told you long ago, and I am telling you again, that you yourself should, without hesitation, give *harināma* and *dīkṣā* initiation. My health is not good. If you do this, it will save me from having to travel, and the preaching there will not be hindered.”

How rare it is to find a Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* like him who, with trust and magnanimity, instructs his god-brother to give *harināma* and *dīkṣā*. These days, so many quarrels take place over this issue.

Pūjyapāda Mahārāja is also very discrete in how he gives money to people. No one knows what or how much he gives or to whom. After Guru Mahārāja’s disappearance, I was doing some renovation work in Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha. We were not receiving many donations as we were not really acquainted with anyone in Mathurā at that time. I did not know I was going to manage. *Pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja found out and without telling anyone, very discretely, gave 5,000 rupees towards the project. That was how the renovations started, and slowly, we



were able to do all this. *Praṇāmī* comes to him, but he does not advertise what he gives and to whom. You should give with one hand in such a way that your other hand does not know.

And do not even ask about his affection for his disciples. He has so much affection for them. He speaks so affectionately with each of them that each disciple feels he loves him or her the most. He loves them so much. I do not know how to love so much. He really knows how to love. And though he has this affection for his disciples, he is still very detached.

[The following is from a written glorification on the first anniversary of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's disappearance, presented in *Rays of The Harmonist*, Kārtika, 2005.]

Advocating bhajana in the mood of rādhā-dāsyam

Sometimes, especially during Navadvīpa *parikramā*, *pūjyapāda* Trivikrama Mahārāja and I would have loving quarrels. They would even take place on the stage, in public. He would cut my arguments and I would cut his. Once, in the course of one such quarrel, I presented *mādhurya-rasa* according to the conception of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. My point was that on the strength of their service to Śrī Rādhā, Her maidservants do not even care to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I quoted the *śloka* “*na pārāye ’ham niravadya-saṁyujām*” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.32.22) wherein Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying, “O *gopīs*, even if I lived as long as Lord Brahmā or any other demigod, I would not be able to repay My debt to you.” I also quoted *Gīta-govinda* (10.19.8), where Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “*smara-garala-khaṇḍanam mama śirasi maṇḍanam dehi pada-pallavam udāram* – My beloved! Offer the fresh buds of Your enchanting feet as an ornament upon My head.”

From the perspective of *tattva*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, but due to the excellence of *āśraya-jāṭīya-prema* (the *prema* experienced by devotees), He becomes indebted to Śrīmatī Rādhikā and begs for Her forgiveness.

Pūjyapāda Trivikrama Mahārāja then refuted my statements and established the *bhagavattā* (Godliness) and importance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In this way, there ensued sweet debates between us. *Pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja, the chairman of the assembly, witnessed our loving quarrels and spoke his conclusion: “‘*rādhā-pakṣa chāḍi*’, *je-jana se-jana, je-bhābe se bhābe thāke, āmi to rādhikā pakṣa-pāti sadā*⁴ – I am forever in the group of Śrī Rādhājī. Whoever is not a part of Rādhā's group can be and do as they like.’ This is the conception of the followers of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

“Performing *bhajana* with the inclination to serve Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the best type of *bhajana*. It cannot be said that no one is qualified to perform this kind of *bhajana*. In this world,

⁴ *Saraṇāgati* and *Gītāmālā*, *Vṛṣabhānu-sutā* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura



there is always a *rūpānuga* Vaiṣṇava who is capable of doing such *bhajana*. Past, present, and future – there will always be someone with this qualification. To say otherwise is incorrect, because the world would face destruction if it lacked the presence of such a qualified person.” His philosophical perspective made a substantial impression on the audience.

Absorption in vipralambha-bhajana

After the disappearance of our *guru mahārāja*, *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja was always absorbed in performing *bhajana* in a mood of

With Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Jīvana Janārdana
Gosvāmī Mahārāja (left)

deep separation (*vipralambha*), so much so that when disciples came to him to discuss any issue, especially in relation to management, he would say, “Go to Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and he will address your problem.”

For two or three years before his disappearance, he completely withdrew from the external world, absorbing himself internally in *nāma-bhajana*. Sometimes, he was overwhelmed with ecstasy and would call out, “O Ṭhākuraṇī, have mercy on me! Ṭhākuraṇī! Have mercy, have mercy!” He would even cry this out as he slept.

Disappearance and samādhi

In 2004, some days before his disappearance from this world, *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja was staying on the bank of the River Gaṅgā at a place called Baidyabati, a short distance from Kolkata. Even though his health was poor, he journeyed to Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma to observe *kārtika-vrata*. And in that month of Kārtika, on the day of *gaura-tṛtīyā*, he entered into Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s eternal pastimes.

On this day, I was at Śrī Govardhana performing our annual Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* with a thousand or so participants. When I heard the news, I went to Navadvīpa-dhāma. I had been informed of a scheduled time for his *samādhi* ceremony, but it was performed ahead of schedule, before I arrived. This was quite disconcerting for me and for some of my god-brothers. Nonetheless, I went there and, accompanied by *kīrtana*, performed worship and *parikramā* of his *samādhi*.





I lived with *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja for almost sixty years and had the opportunity to closely observe and understand him. He possessed all the qualities that are inherent in a Vaiṣṇava. By nature, he was simple, grave, humble, tolerant, overflowing with *guru-niṣṭhā* and inclined to serve the Vaiṣṇavas. This situated him on the highest level of *bhakti*. His *guru-niṣṭhā* was astounding. With his life in his hands, he would step forward and offer himself in the service of Guru Mahārāja. *Guru-niṣṭhā* is the backbone of *bhakti*. I have seen many *guru-sevakas*, but *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja's service to Guru Mahārāja with his body, mind, words, and sentiments was extraordinary. In this world, such a *guru-sevaka* is rare. We pray to him that while engaged in the eternal service of Śrī Gurudeva and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, he be merciful upon us all so that we can also perform *guru-sevā* with *niṣṭhā* like him and thus dedicate our lives to *śrī guru* and his mission. ॐ

Editors' Preface

This presentation of the English rendering of a hundred and twenty-eight handwritten letters of *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja* is being published on the occasion of his centennial appearance (December 28, 2021). It is the result of Śrīla Gurudeva Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's utmost reverence for his beloved god-brother, whom he regarded as his *śikṣā-guru* and who dedicated his whole life and soul to their *guru mahārāja, nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja*. The Foreword contains Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's fond memories and profuse glorification of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and Letters 121 and 125–127 reveal something of the sweet affection and encouragement Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja showered upon Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. The intimate bond of trust and affection these two personalities shared has long been a source of inspiration for devotees around the world. By his sweet remembrances and continual glorifications of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja has sowed the hearts of his own disciples and followers with an ever-growing desire to learn more about this extraordinary personality and his exemplary life and teachings.

Nourishing that seed and our appreciation is Śrīmatī Umā Dīdī, who has provided the more recent inspiration and blessings that have made this collection of letters a reality. A simple and humble Vaiṣṇavī, she does not advertise her depth of spiritual realization or the great fortune she has had since 1970 to associate with and serve both Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, her *dīkṣā-guru*, and Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, her *śikṣā-guru*. But she wanted to share with others the wealth of spiritual encouragement and guidance she has long treasured and cultivated. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja wrote over thirty letters to her between 1970 and 1987. Since many devotees know Umā Dīdī and have personally witnessed her devotion to her *gurus* and her impeccable *sādhana*, we have included her name at the start of those letters. That lengthy correspondence offers some of the most beautiful teachings and examples of the loving relationship between *guru* and disciple. Otherwise, most of the names in these letters were redacted in their original Bengali publications and were therefore unavailable to us.

In preparing these letters for publication, we were struck by the subtle and vital discernments Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja offered in regard to the

practical execution of devotional service. How much importance is to be given to external activities versus inner meditation and mood? Where must the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* draw the line between their personal needs, especially their physical and psychological requirements, and the demands of life, society, and the institutions they inhabit? How are they to balance their spiritual lives with their material responsibilities while living in the world? How should they deal with their own minds, their feelings of sadness or anger? How should they deal with conflict and criticism that arise in this volatile age of Kali?

We were charmed to see that in answering these and countless other questions, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja delivered his advice not from the lofty, inaccessible pedestal of a spiritual leader, but as a servant, as a loving son, and sometimes as a doting father or brother, openly writing of what may appear to be his own personal vulnerabilities, as he shares aspects of his own experiences. He has a uniquely subtle and enigmatic manner of communication, padding the occasional mild chiding between layers of wit, humour, and deep affection. With a plethora of intriguing proverbs and idioms at his disposal, he also entertains, yet tempers that playfulness with the gravity of a relentless flow of scriptural quotes. The fact he was known as the encyclopedia of Gauḍīya *siddhānta* will come as no surprise when reading these letters and it is no exaggeration to say that they contain the essence of the Vedas, Purāṇas, Upaniṣads, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, as well as the songs of Vaiṣṇava *mahājanas* like Śrī Narottāma Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and countless other sacred literatures.

Within this authoritative yet relatable delivery is the wisdom of an astute sage and the devotion of a humble servant whose plain and coherent message focuses on the importance of being simple-hearted and respectful of all, while taking full shelter of *harināma*, praying fervently for the mercy of Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, having full conviction in them, and offering heart and soul to their service. His lifelong aspiration was to lead a low-profile life absorbed in the service of his beloved *gurudeva* and his *guru-varga*. Only a *sat-śiṣya*, a genuine, surrendered disciple or servant, can become a *sad-guru*, a genuine *guru*. “One who adopts the instructions of *śrī guru* is illuminated by divine knowledge,” he himself says, with full conviction, “... and it is serving *guru* that satisfies Kṛṣṇa, to which end one is to offer one’s whole heart and soul” (Letter 12). What is conveyed herein is thus the essence of a genuine master’s lifetime of sincere and humble service.

A noticeable feature of these letters is the author’s equal usage of masculine and feminine forms with word pairings like *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* or *sevaka* and *sevikā*, rather than a standard

masculine form for all, as per the writings of our other *ācāryas*. In addition to this inclusiveness, the author has taken special care to hearten and embolden the Vaiṣṇavīs coping with a highly oppressive patriarchal culture, stressing the equality of men and women, particularly in the performance of *sādhana-bhajana* and, in several places, highlighting the beautiful *siddhānta* of *Bhagavad-gītā* that declares the femininity of all souls as manifestations of Bhagavān's *śakti*.

Another special feature of these letters is the abundance of clear and practical instructions for *grhastha* devotees practising their spiritual lives amid the bustle of worldly obligations. Here too he repeatedly stresses equality between the *grhasthas* and the renunciates, insisting that in terms of *bhajana*, the two kinds of *sevaka* are non-different. As the *ācārya* of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, he was regularly available in person for the *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*, but he dedicated a great deal of time to reaching out to the *grhastha* devotees, travelling extensively throughout the rural regions of Bengal, visiting the homes of poor and simple *grhastha* devotees, and offering them his unparalleled love and affection, spiritual guidance, and even financial support.

Other unique features of this collection's presentation require explanation. For example, Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's original opening and closing words to each letter have been retained. This is because their poetic charm and elegance is lost in the lengthy translation required to properly convey them. These terms are as follows:

Snehāspadāsu/Snehāspadeṣu* and *Kalyāṇīyāsu – Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja begins most of his letters with the formal yet affectionate *snehāspadāsu* or *snehāspadeṣu*. The word *sneha* means “affection, love, tenderness, kindness” and *āspada* means “place, seat, station, abode, object of”. The suffix *āsu* is used to address a female, whereas *eṣu* is used for a male. Sometimes, he uses the slightly more formal *kalyāṇīyāsu*. *Kalyāṇī* means “auspicious, lucky, one who brings good, happiness, fortune, etc.” *Kalyāṇī* is also used to refer to goddesses like Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, and Pārvatī, and this mode of address is a common feature of Bengali culture, wherein even little girls are affectionately referred to as Lakṣmī Mā (Mother Lakṣmī).

The other forms of opening address used herein are (1) *sādara-sambhāṣaṇa-pūrvikēyam*, which means “addressing you with utmost respect or adoration” and (2) *śrī vaiṣṇava-carāṇe-daṇḍavan-nati pūrvikēyam* – offering my prostrated obeisances at the feet of the Vaiṣṇava(s).

“**Iti**” – As in most of the letters of our *ācāryas* (Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja) every letter herein concludes with the word “*iti*”, which means “in this manner” or “thus”. In Sanskrit, *iti* serves the function of quotation marks and

is used to refer to what has been said or thought, laying stress on what precedes it. A possible equivalent is “amen”, as used by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Letter 127, which he wrote entirely in English.

Underlined words – Whatever portions of the text are underlined were originally penned in English by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Verse translations – Translations of quoted verses appear within quotation marks along with the corresponding Bengali or Sanskrit text. These translations were not in the original Bengali.

Parentheses – Parentheses are used herein either to provide a Sanskrit term or to translate a Sanskrit term. Whatever few phrases Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja put in parentheses are also in parentheses in this rendition.

Square brackets – Square brackets have been used throughout to indicate insertions made by the editors to clarify various obscure points.

Footnotes – References for most of the verses quoted herein have been provided as footnotes, though some references simply could not be found. Explanatory footnotes have been provided for various Bengali idioms, proverbs, and other obscure points. We apologize for any error or shortcoming in successfully conveying Bengali idioms.

The process of translating, fidelity checking, editing, proofreading, and layout has been rendered by a dedicated team of devotees to the best of their abilities, fully depending upon the causeless mercy of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja himself and that of Śrīla Gurudeva Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. Whatever is of merit herein is due to their causeless mercy.

We are presenting this collection of letters into the lotus hands of our Śrīla Gurudeva Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, praying that he submit this humble offering to his beloved god-brother Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja on the occasion of his centennial appearance. In this way, we can be sure our meagre offering will be accepted. We seek the causeless mercy of both of our *gurus*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, praying that they bless us with spiritual strength so that we can embrace the extraordinary teachings of these letters in our lives and mould our lives accordingly. We also seek the blessings of the readers and hope that they will derive exceptional spiritual guidance from these letters, each

of which is like a lamppost lighting the way so that any and all obstacles that appear on the path of *sādhana* may be easily overcome.

Praying for the particle of blessings of *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas,
The Publication Team 

on the Centennial Appearance Day of
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

The Publication Team

Translation consultants: Śrīmatī Umā Dīdī, Amala-kṛṣṇa dāsa

Translation: Śrīvāsa dāsa

Translation Fidelity-check: Madhukara dāsa

Editors: Vaijayantī-mālā dāsī, Vicitra dāsī

Proofreading: Śāntī dāsī, Rṣabhadeva dāsa, Vraja-kīśorī dāsī, Rūpa Mañjarī dāsī

Layout: Kṛṣṇa-kāruṇya dāsa

Corrections entry: Gaurarāja dāsa, Om Prakāśa dāsa

Cover design: Kamalā dāsī

Bengali consultants: Candraśekhara dāsa, Dalia Bhaṭṭācārya, Paramānanda dāsa (Kolkata)

Letter 1

Only *mahājanas* can deliver one from *aparādhā* • Material currency can never procure the supramundane • One can only attain service of the transcendental word through simplicity • Without surrender, knowledge of scriptures is only scholarly arrogance

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha,
Tegharipara, P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
14/6/1968

Śrī vaiṣṇava-carāṇe daṇḍavan-nati pūrvikēyam—

(Offering prostrated obeisances at the feet of the Vaiṣṇavas)

Śrīpāda Rasika-rañjana Prabho! I promptly received your letters dated 12/4/68 and 28/4/68. These days I have become rather prone to laziness. At the same time, physical illness and various fateful difficulties have only served to fuel this. The truth is that since Śrī Dhāma Navadvīpa *parikramā*, many have been kind enough to think of such a wretch as me and write me letters, but I have not had the social decency to respond by letter to even one of them. For this, I find myself deeply sad and particularly ashamed before the Vaiṣṇavas. In your case, I repeatedly acknowledge my fault in this regard.

I cannot quite understand what offence you made in not being able to see me before you returned to your district after Navadvīpa *parikramā*. Who is to decide whether or not an offence was even committed? Who has the capacity to decide that a Vaiṣṇava has made an offence? “Vaiṣṇava’s offence” – this pairing of words is erroneous. It is as contradictory as “a gold stone bowl” or “mango preserve that is made of jackfruit”. And how offences are cleared is also a mystery to me. If you say that a cleansing like that of the Guṇḍicā temple is needed, then what would that be like? Only one personality

**“Only one personality
in our *guru-varga*
has introduced himself
as having the kind of
qualification needed
to clean the
Guṇḍicā of the heart.
He was *saccidānanda*
om viṣṇupāda
Śrīla Bhaktivinoda
Ṭhākura.”**

in our *guru-varga* has introduced himself as having the kind of qualification needed to clean the Guṇḍicā of the heart. He was *saccidānanda om viṣṇupāda* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. He revealed himself to be the sweeper of *nāma-haṭṭa*, the marketplace of the holy name. All such *mahājanas* [of this calibre] are capable of delivering the living entities from the mire of *aparādha* that is *asat-tṛṣṇā* (hankering for material enjoyment), *hṛdaya-daurbalya* (weakness of heart), *kuṭināṭī* (duplicity), and *lābha-pūjā-pratiṣṭhāśā* (the hopes for profit, adoration, and distinction). They are real benefactors, the intimate associates of the foremost of all glorious benefactors, Śrī Gaurasundara. They are *śrī gaura-śakti-svarūpa*, the embodiments of Śrī Gaura's potency.

By buying those *granthas* for you, I have created a huge *anartha*.¹ Can *granthas* (the incarnation of the transcendental Parabrahma as word) be procured in exchange for currency? Can a transcendental “*amūlya sampat* (invaluable treasure)” be acquired by material currency? “*Aprākṛta vastu nahe prākṛta gocara*”² – transcendental substance is imperceptible to the mundane.” This is the best testament in this regard. When the Mahārāja of Kasim Bazaar attempted to procure a piece of land in Navadvīpa, Śrīla Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja chastised that king, saying: “How much wealth and riches does Mahārāja have that he can afford even one grain of sand in transcendental Navadvīpa-dhāma, which is made of *cintāmaṇi*?” But I can believe the notion that you have become worthy of the invaluable treasure that is those *granthas* by the strength of *bhajana-sādhana*, by your own Vaiṣṇava virtues. It is by the virtue of your natural simplicity, a state of being that comes from a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa*'s inherent disposition, that you have the opportunity to serve the *vāṇī-vigraha* (the Lord's form as word). What you have written is true: “Without the causeless mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, it is an extremely difficult task to extract the essence of the scriptures and *granthas*.” This eternally truthful statement is also applicable to me. Despite living in the *maṭha* for a long time, studying many books, chanting lakhs of *harināma*, and making a pretext of much service, I am like the incompetent boatman stuck at his own ghat along the Gaṅgā. I have seen and heard a Bhatiali³-style song of the Gaṅgā boatmen that comes to mind:

¹ Rasika-rañjana Prabhu remembers: “I had once given *pūjyapāda* Mahārāja one hundred rupees to buy some *granthas*. He brought me *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Tenth Canto, *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, *Dāmodarāṣṭakam*, and several other books from Kolkata that I cannot now recall. I thought, “These books surely cost more than a hundred rupees.” I wrote him to find out the actual cost. His loving response is above.”

² *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya-līlā 9.194)

³ Bhatiali songs are Bengali folk songs, traditionally sung by boatmen, laden with existential pathos.

*mana-mājhi le tora baiṭhā le, āmi āra bāite pāralāma nā
o guhin gāṅgera nāiyā, bāite bāite janama gelo bāiyā*

Mind, boatman, take your oar. Take it! I cannot row anymore. O boatman of the deep river, rowing and rowing, life has flowed past.

Though we know various statements of scripture and the *mahājanas* such as “*ataḥ śrī kṛṣṇa nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam-indriyaiḥ, sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*”⁴ – that Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name, and so forth, cannot be grasped by the senses; they only manifest themselves upon the tongue that is inclined towards service”, “*nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyaḥ*”⁵ – the Lord cannot be attained by erudition” and other similar statements, there is [on our part] a lack of submission. The authors of scripture have set to writing statements like “*vidyā-made dhana-made vaiṣṇava nā cine*”⁶ – deluded by knowledge and wealth, a person fails to recognize a Vaiṣṇava” and “*paṇḍita kulīna, dhanīr baḍa abhimāna*”⁷ – scholars, aristocrats, and the wealthy are vastly arrogant” specifically for arrogant persons such as me who think they are scholars. Furthermore, they have provided instructions on how to study the scriptural texts:

*jāha bhāgavata paḍo vaiṣṇavera sthāne
ekānta āśraya karo caitanya-caraṇe
caitanyera bhakta-gaṇer nitya karo saṅga
tabe ta jānibā siddhānta-samudra-taraṅga*⁸

Go, read *Bhāgavatam* with a Vaiṣṇava. Take exclusive shelter of Caitanya’s feet. Forever keep the company of Caitanya’s devotees. Then you will fathom the waves of the ocean of spiritual truths.

Hence, in each and every case, surrender, inquiry, and service are indispensable tendencies or common factors for those who wish to reap an increase of *bhakti*.

My “nasal trouble” has gotten better. Śurpanakhā’s nose was cut off and my nose was broken. Anyway, I figure that having a broken nose is better than having your nose cut off

“In each and every case, surrender, inquiry, and service are indispensable tendencies or common factors for those who wish to reap an increase of *bhakti*.”

⁴ *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.234)

⁵ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.23), *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.3)

⁶ *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* (*Madhya-khaṇḍa* 9.240–241)

⁷ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya-līlā* 4.68)

⁸ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya-līlā* 5.131–132)

[meaning “having little shame”] or having both your nose and ears cut off [meaning “being totally shameless”]. If your nose and ears are cut off [“if you have no shame at all”], then people rub your nose on the ground [as punishment]. However, if one’s nose is broken, then people sneer. Also, many tend to scrunch their noses when they see snub-nosed people. Anyway, with my broken nose (*nāka*), the surgeons didn’t deny (*nākaca*) my pleas, so I won’t be distressed for long (*nākāni-cubāni khāoyā*), and they didn’t harass (*nākāla*) me. I had thought that after breaking my nose perhaps my nasally voice would change significantly, but alas! it just got twice as bad. At present, my fear is that people will hear my nasally voice, my donkey melodies, and think I am a *nākeśvarī* and kill me. A *nākeśvarī* is a cheetah. I could put on my *tilaka* and be sitting there and someone could think I am a cheetah. Or, those against putting on *tilaka* could dispatch me to the abode of death.⁹

Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja came to this region after *parikramā*. After 10–12 days, he returned to Mathurā. Now he has taken full responsibility for the Mathurā *maṭha* and is living there in good health. Śrīpāda Trivikrama Mahārāja stays in Siromani and comes to stay at the Kolkata and Chunchura *maṭhas* from time to time. Viṣṇudaivata Mahārāja is doing his *bhajana* at Hulor Ghat, at Āśrama Mahārāja’s *maṭha*. From time to time, he comes to the *maṭha*. *Iti—*

Servant of the servant of the Vaiṣṇavas,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁹ During Śrīla Guru Mahārāja’s manifest presence, one of our god-brothers who was living in the *maṭha* in Navadvīpa, although young, was partially blind. He had saved a plate of *prasāda* for *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja, who was to honour *prasāda* and then go somewhere for some specific task. This god-brother was guarding it from dogs. The fence around the *maṭha* had not been fully completed, so from time to time, dogs would come. Meanwhile, Vāmana Mahārāja came and started taking *prasāda*. This partially blind god-brother asked, “Who is it? Vāmana Mahārāja?” Mahārāja was eating and absorbed in some thought, so he did not hear anything. The god-brother, however, decided that surely a dog had come. In anger, he found a piece of firewood and swung it. It hit Mahārāja in the nose and a terrible stream of blood gushed out. That god-brother heard an “ooff!” sound and could understand that he had done something awful. Everyone became busy treating Mahārāja’s nose. Guru Mahārāja [Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja] then had that god-brother’s eyes treated. Śrīla Vāmana Mahārāja suffered for many days. In a letter, I asked about his nose, and to this day, when I read his response, I cannot control my laughter. —Rasika-rañjana prabhu

Letter 2

Writing can be a form of *bhakti* • One can associate with saintly personalities through their words • Chanting a fixed number of rounds daily is crucial • The teachings of the *Gītā* are to help us chant • One must combine every aspect of one's life with *bhakti*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tegharipara, Navadvīpa (Nadia)
21/9/1970

*Snehāspadāsu*¹⁰—

Mā Umā! A special memorial issue of the *Patrikā* entitled *Śrī Ācārya-viraha-sankhyā* is being published and will include an account of our worshipful Śrīla Guru-pādapadma's extraordinary life, as well as essays, poetry, and eulogies contributed by various writers. It will be coming out this upcoming 28th of Aśvina, on the occasion of his holy disappearance day. I will stay here for a month for this work. You too will be sent a copy of the issue. Are you on the *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* subscription list?

If it is possible for you, you should quickly write a very nice poem or a small essay and send it. As time is very short, only if your submission reaches the *Patrikā* office soon will it get a spot in this special edition. The article you submitted earlier for editing was sent to me by post while I was preaching in Assam. I am sad to inform you that, due to a mix-up at the post office, it did not make it into my hands. If you have a draft rough copy of it, try to write it again and send it.

Submitting articles to the *Patrikā* is also *bhagavad-anuśilana* (cultivation of devotion to the Lord) and service, because writing such articles necessitates studying and memorizing the many fundamental truths and conclusions of scripture. The various sacred texts are like bouquets of flowers from which you will have to fashion the garlands of essays and poems as you please. You need to have a working knowledge of prosody, grammar, rhetoric, and aesthetic taste. But that alone is not the ultimate subject of poetry, prose, etc. The core focus of a composition should be introspective, focused on *bhakti*. If *bhakti* to Bhagavān is not the

¹⁰ A form of address for a female, meaning “object of my affection”.

express topic of a composition, then it falls in the same category as other devotionless works of mundane poetry. The connoisseurs of transcendental poetry cannot find full satisfaction and contentment in that. There is extensive proof in this regard within the king of sacred literature, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I will gradually be able to acquaint you with all those topics as

I write to you.

“The lives and words of exalted personalities are synonymous.”

If there is difficulty in receiving teachings and instructions from *sādhū* and *guru* in person, scripture grants the provision of associating with *sādhū*s in the form of sacred texts. The lives and words of exalted personalities are synonymous. Should the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* study and discuss them, they reap the ultimate welfare for their souls.

Study scriptural texts on a regular basis. Read *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā*, *Jaiva-dharma*, *Śrīman Mahāprabhuḥ Śikṣā*, *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇī*, and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s anthology of essays in a patient and steady mood. Learn *bhajan*as and *kīrtan*as from *Śrī Gauḍīya-gīti-guccha* and sing them softly to yourself, doing *kīrtana* like that. Read *Māyāvāder Jīvanī* and try to understand it.

It is imperative to complete a fixed number of rounds every day without offences. Śrī Bhagavān shows disinterest in accepting the offerings of a servant who does not chant *lakṣa-nāma* (one lakh, or 100,000, names) daily. One who completes a lakh of *nāma* every day without fail has been referred to by Śrīman Mahāprabhu as a *lakṣeśvara* (“lakh master”). “*Dekho, nāma binā jena dīna nāhi jāya*¹¹ – see that not a day goes by without *nāma*.” It is our duty to follow this instruction of His properly.

The *bhakti-sādhikā* will be tenacious in her worship of *śrī nāma* with conviction and sincerity, in a mood of heartfelt anguish. That is when she obtains Śrī Nāma Prabhu’s mercy. She, the chanter of *śrī nāma*, will then be able to realize that Śrī Bhagavān and His form as *śrī nāma* are one entity. It is only through the medium of the holy name that it is possible to come face-to-face with Bhagavān.

It is not possible for the living entity to attain perfection in *sādhana* without weeping before Śrī Bhagavān and humbly supplicating Him. Although the restless mind is scattered here and there during the chanting of *śrī nāma*, one

“It is only through the medium of the holy name that it is possible to come face-to-face with Bhagavān.”

¹¹ *Prema-vivarta* by Śrīla Jagadānanda Paṇḍita

must draw it back and steady it. By *abhyāsa-yoga* (the yoga of practice), this becomes possible and, along with that, it is necessary to practice some *vairāgya-yoga* (the yoga of renunciation) or in other words, regulation of one's diet and leisure and maintaining self-restraint. A natural distaste for things unrelated to Bhagavān is referred to as *vairāgya*. The injunctions Śrī Kṛṣṇa imparted in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* to His dear friend Arjuna to help him control his mind are imperative for our spiritual practice. As a supreme devotee absorbed in divine love, Śrīla Nāmācārya Haridāsa Ṭhākura bestowed upon the world the perfect methodology and instructions to perform *śrī nāma-sādhana*. Those constitute the ideal of our lives.

Even in the midst of adverse circumstances, you will strive to cultivate a favourable mood of devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Reject what is unfavourable for *bhajana* and be particularly careful to “internally maintain your convictions while outwardly conducting yourself suitably in the world – *antara-niṣṭhā karo, bāhye loka-vyavahāra*¹².” Always avoid bad company that is opposed to *bhajana* and try to create an environment that is favourable to *bhajana*. Take every opportunity you have to combine all aspects of your life – your conduct, beliefs, habits, lifestyle, attire, and adornments – with a mood of devotion. Seeing this example of yours, other people will be inspired. Only by profusely chanting *śrī nāma* and performing *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* of *hari-kathā* will the blemishes of the heart, such as *asat-tṛṣṇa* (a thirst for that which is temporary) and *hṛdaya-daurbalya* (weakness of heart), be dispelled and all your offences eradicated. If you genuinely devote your soul to the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, you will reap true benefit. This is my auspicious wish for you. Śrī Bhagavān will surely have mercy on you. The mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is our strength, or wealth, in the performance of *sādhana*. Please accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹² *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya-līlā 16.239)

Letter 3

A Vaiṣṇava's affection is constant • Whatever we experience is the result of our own doing • What it means to truly seek forgiveness • The real purpose of education

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Urukrama Dāsādhikārī
Chandni Para, P.O. Suri (Birbhum)
22/10/1970

Sādara-sambhāṣaṇa-pūrvikēyam—

By the causeless mercy of my most venerable *śrīla guru-pādapadma* and Śrī Śrī Gaurasundara, in one sense I am well. You have inquired about my well-being. I could not decide what to write in response. Since I could not ascertain whether it is my physical, mental, or spiritual well-being you want to know about, I have informed you only about my physical well-being. A soul bound by illusion cannot maintain even physical and mental health, what to speak of spiritual health. Liberated souls maintain the perfect well-being of their souls at all times, and therefore, their physical and mental well-being is automatic. The most important question for every embodied living entity pertains to the well-being of their soul; everything else apart from this is counted as secondary.

**“The supra-
mundane
affection of
Vaiṣṇavas is
never artificial;
it is a truth
that endures
across all
threefold time.”**

You have sought forgiveness for an offence. In my opinion, you have made neither an offence nor a mistake. And I am not displeased with you. Still, some unseen hand is interfering with my loving watchful eye over you. I do not hold you responsible for this, and I have always kept myself free from such liability. The question of forgiving you does not even arise, because I do not take you to be at fault in any way. The affection I have always had for you – that mood – is still intact, but you are unable to understand this. The supramundane affection of Vaiṣṇavas is never artificial; it is a truth that endures across all threefold time. At the moment, you seem to be really forcing your imagination to try to ascertain the medium of that affection.

I know very well, however, that in all my life I have never consciously thought to harm anyone, so if people still have misunderstandings [about me], I will neither be held responsible by *guru* and Bhagavān nor will I have to answer to them. I do not doubt anyone's

integrity, but I also wish to see that no one misunderstands me. What I am saying is that I am forever exempt from this condition, this deep crack you are trying to explore in the nest of my affection for you. For me, this [my affection] is “*yathā pūrvam, tathā param* – as it was, so it will be.”

Why was your mind so disturbed about having gone to — Prabhu’s house? I never said anything that could disturb your mind so. I only said: “If I have time, after my work is done, I will try to go. I am not angry at you in any way. Your father is the one who barred me from going by forbidding — and — from going; I do not see any fault of mine in this.”

I was especially delighted to receive your letter. I was even more overjoyed to see that you “could not live without writing a letter”. The affection I have always had for you will stay the same for all time. Though I am far away, my loving gaze will never be lacking. Even if you talk critically of me with your companions, the indwelling Lord within all beings will never be satisfied to keep me at a distance from you. I could see your state of mind reflected in your letter. With the expression of your heart’s natural simplicity, you have given yourself to me. You are very intelligent, and I see you know very well how to attract affection.

Saying that the birth of a daughter is the birth of sin is not true. You wrote: “A mother and father suffer such detriment for the sake of a daughter!” I say, “The daughter tolerates so much misery for the sake of her parents!” You are not the reason your parents have misgivings about me. They have created those misgivings on their own. Perhaps they will understand this someday. You have written that if not for you, there would not have been all these troubles. This is not logical. No one can answer for anyone else. Whatever human beings experience in this world is a result of their own individual actions. To facilitate the experience of these karmic reactions, Śrī Bhagavān has created me to hear people’s criticism; meanwhile, He has also sent others into this world to do the criticizing. Souls in this world are always seen in either of these positions. Some follow the example of the *tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu* mendicant, “remaining equanimous and fixed on the Supersoul – *etāṁ samāsthāya parātma-niṣṭhān*¹³” [because] “man reaps the fruit of his actions – *sva-karma-phala-bhuk pumān*¹⁴”, and they tolerate everything. Others resort to thinking “I am God, I am the enjoyer; I am perfect, powerful, and happy – *īśvaro ’haṁ ahaṁ bhogī siddho ’haṁ balavān sukhī*¹⁵” and become arrogant and deluded. This world is a school for human beings whose consciousness has not awakened. Only if they can learn their lessons while dwelling here can they gain auspiciousness. Otherwise, misfortune will fall on their shoulders.

¹³ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.23.57)

¹⁴ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 2.163)

¹⁵ Bhagavad-gītā (16.14)

Instead of saying someone else has made a mistake, it is much easier to simply accept “It is I who have made a mistake.” This way, in most cases, we see less of a likelihood of getting embroiled in arguments and quarrels with others. The practitioner *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* (neophyte devotee) can never benefit by judging *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas to be at fault and make

“Instead of saying someone else has made a mistake, it is much easier to simply accept ‘It is I who have made a mistake.’ This way, in most cases, we see less of a likelihood of getting embroiled in arguments and quarrels with others.”

them stand trial as the accused. If one does so, one has no other destiny but to fall from the practice of *bhajana* and thus welcome the most heinous condition.

Sādhakas and *sādhikās* endeavour to accomplish excellence in *hari-bhajana* by ceasing all offences to *śrī nāma*, the *dhāma*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Merely uttering the word “forgiveness” does not amount to truly seeking pardon. If inner repentance and regret do not appear, the living entity’s soul does not become purified. The fire of remorse can incinerate all mistakes and transgressions within a moment and free the *sādhaka* of all sins and offences.

This is called begging for forgiveness. The fidgety antics of *sahajiyās* cannot be called humility or begging for forgiveness. If such an inclination truly comes, the heart melts, the mind becomes overwhelmed, and a frenzy is created in the heart. It has very specific signs, which have been extensively described in scripture. Mechanical habits cannot be called *śraddhā-bhakti* (faithful devotion), nor is *bhakti* emotional. It is the instinctive compulsion of the soul.

In responding to your letter, I wrote about a number of irrelevant things, as implied by the proverb “*dhāna bhānte śiver gīta gāhilām* – I sang a song to Śiva to husk the rice.”¹⁶ I am replying to your first letter, so perhaps all the emotions of my heart are finding their way into my words. Despite its manner, maybe you will find a rhyme in it. I will not be surprised if you cannot understand it, if you mistake my remarks for poorly conceived ramblings, because the discernment of good and bad is inseparable from the human psyche.

—— is very deceptive, but even if she avoids you, you cannot escape her. She has said that she will concede to becoming my disciple when she is old. That way she will not be deprived of affection in any way. That

“The fire of remorse can incinerate all mistakes and transgressions within a moment and free the *sādhaka* of all sins and offences.”

¹⁶ Singing hymns to Lord Śiva is rather irrelevant when it comes to husking rice.

is what this logic and scheming of hers are for! For now, she has spicy snack mix with fried peanuts; in her middle age, she has deep-fried sweet pastries and dumplings; and for her old age, she has made the best arrangements for eating: condensed milk and sweetened cream.¹⁷ If, as I am sitting and eating, I bite my cheek suddenly, then naturally I think someone dear to me is thinking of me. But I can never figure out if it is — or —. You are all sitting there with sullen faces, like your cow just died, and I cannot understand when I will be able to draw laughter from your faces. Upon assuming the responsibility Bhagavān has placed upon me, I have called out to Him for help: “Please save me, O Madhusūdāna!” I cannot determine when Śrī Bhagavān will give me the chance to be reunited with you. What I do know is nothing happens by my will. “*Kṛṣṇa icchā binā tāhe phala nāhi dhare* – without Kṛṣṇa’s will, one’s efforts will not bear fruit.”

I am delighted to know that you have successfully passed your midterms. Next, as soon as you pass your degree exam successfully, there will be even more cause for delight. But maintain focus: “Do not let your *upādhi* (degree) become a *vyādhi* (disease).” This is the Vaiṣṇava resolve. Unless the soul relinquishes its material designation (*upādhi*), its natural ego as the servant of Kṛṣṇa does not arise. “*Jīva kṛṣṇa-dāsa, e viśvāsa, karle to’ āra duḥkha nāi*”¹⁸ – once the soul believes himself to be the servant of Kṛṣṇa, he experiences no further misery.” It follows that one must honour one’s spiritual designation or *vaiṣṇavī-pratiṣṭhā* (Vaiṣṇava status). Worldly status is the glamour wrought by illusion, whereas Vaiṣṇava status entails the soul’s welfare. The success of being able to read and write is in attaining *bhakti*, otherwise, it is just fruitless toil.

“*Paḍe kena loka?—kṛṣṇa-bhakti jānibāre, se jadi nahilo tabe vidyāya ki kare?*”¹⁹ – Why should people read? To know devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Without that, what use is there for knowledge?” “*Vidyā-bhāgavatāvadhiḥ* – knowledge finds its ultimate expression in *Bhāgavatam*.” “*Sā vidyā tan-matir-yayā*”²⁰ – knowledge is that which increases one’s absorption in Him.”

Only if one has a sense of attachment to Śrī Bhagavān is there significance and fulfilment in reading and writing. Nowhere is there a better perspective than that given by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. That is why one must become thoroughly established in the conceptions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the king of devotional literature, the essence of all Vedānta, and the natural commentary on the *gāyatrī-mantra*. This is the object of ultimate aspiration for the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*. May you become *bhakti*-

¹⁷ Śrīla Mahārāja seems to be comparing different food types to different materialistic preferences in different stages of life.

¹⁸ *Gītāvalī, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Bol Bol Bolo Re Sabāi* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktvinoda Thākura

¹⁹ *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Ādi-khaṇḍa 12.251)*

²⁰ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.29.49)

matī (imbued with devotion). May you be exemplary wives. These are my affectionate blessings and wishes. May Śrī Bhagavān bring you auspiciousness.

Only if your father's and mother's views change will it be possible for you to communicate everything. This is not really in my hands. Now that you have received and read my letter, surely your doubts have been dispelled. I may go to Sundarban sometime in the middle of Pauṣa (January–February). I hope everyone at home is well. *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 4

No one can keep everyone happy • Love is resilient and does not require one to compromise one's integrity • The deluding power of *māyā* • The inception of *āroha*- and *avaroha-vāda* • The panacea for material existence

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Jagannātha Mandira
105, Netaji Subhash Road
Behrampur (Murshidabad)
10/11/1970

Sādara-sambhāṣaṇa-pūrvikēyam—

If someone writes me a letter, be it sooner or be it later, I always respond. Even now I have not earned that particular infamy. But in your father's case, I have broken this lifelong rule of mine, having been compelled to do so. All the letters he sent have come into my hands. I refrained from responding, being at a loss as to how, but I did not fail to resort to another means [of response].

During our worshipful Śrīla Guru-pādapadma's manifest presence, he had to deal with way too many difficulties to make arrangements for the preaching party that visited your region to observe *ūrja-vrata*. That meant that he, and I too, had to face profuse criticism. This is not unknown to your father. During Gurudeva's time, he [Gurudeva] did not arrange to have a permanent preaching party there. In his absence, last year, — Mahārāja and — Mahārāja went to Kashi Nagar. This year too — Mahārāja is in Navadvīpa. If he wants, he could go there with two or three *brahmacārīs* prior to the start of the *vrata*. I sent a letter to Navadvīpa to send people. I wrote another letter to Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja in Mathurā asking him to send — Mahārāja to go to Kashi Nagar. Later, I came to know that neither — Mahārāja nor — Mahārāja want to go to Kashi Nagar. Being so far away, what can I do from here? It costs the mission between Rs. 300 and Rs. 500 for a single party to sit idle for a month. Given the current economic situation, this too is something to consider carefully. I am appealing to the good people of Kashi Nagar to consider this issue. Besides this, there are many other matters to consider as well.

It is very happy news that you were delighted to read my letter. Amid the delight, you have submitted a few woeful matters. This too is not so bad. Someone can get a letter and feel sad; this is not an uncommon situation. Because “no one can adore each and every heart – *sarva citta*

**“No one on
this Earth has
the capacity
to satisfy
everyone.”**

nāri ārādhite.” No one on this Earth has the capacity to satisfy everyone. I too am certainly not exempt from this. There was no reason for you to fear when you saw I was in a grave mood. There can be reason to fear if there is a tiger, bear, or some other sort of carnivorous animal, but what I am to do if, for no reason, you misunderstand a well-intentioned friend? You could have explained my quiet mood quite well as “silence implying acceptance – *maunam sammata lakṣaṇam.*” In other words, you

could have just expressed that you were hankering for affection. Did you insist on taking me to your house? If your father came to ——— Prabhu’s house just once, all this conflict would be mitigated. But for whatever reason, that solution has not been adopted. I know fully well why this has not happened; that is why you do not see any change in my unyielding state of mind. I may not be omniscient, but I am well-versed in mental speculation. There are very few people who can dupe me in this regard.

Once you receive my letter, if you find your courage on the rise, then, instead of “crying like a clueless baby”, make your appearance in verbal combat with me! I will not take offence even if you hurl insults at me in your letter, but the cutting words of a sensible person are intolerable. To misbehave and to condone misbehavior are the same thing. I am not inconsiderate, nor am I merciless or unsociable, and I am not uncivilized. However, I am incapable of accepting obeisances from those who are deceitful and think themselves well-versed in scripture. This is what the scriptures call *nirāpekṣatā* (indifference). Though this conduct of mine is harsh, there is loving possessiveness concealed within it, a fact you will only take to heart if you introspect deeply. What I have wanted to convey by “exploring a deep crack in the nest of affection” is “an occasion or case for contempt or criticism of one’s object of worship.” “*Maṇi-maya mandira-madhye pipīlikā paśyati chidram* – ants see cracks even in temples made of jewels.” Surely you have heard this proverb. That is precisely what is being done to me in this case. This is what I want to say.

In your father’s opinion, “he did not do anything wrong.” This much I have understood. And I have abundant examples of this too. So, when there is no chance of someone doing anything wrong, of making any mistakes or errors, how is it possible for said person to ask for *kṣamā* (forgiveness) or *māpa* (measurement, pardon)? “*Mīyate anayā iti māyā* – that which can

be measured is *māyā*.” “*Mā-yā-māyā* – that (*yā*) which is not (*mā*) is *māyā*.” This measuring mentality is itself the work of *māyā*. The tendency to measure [judge] *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas on the strength of our empiric knowledge and intellect, by our measuring sticks or scales, is precisely what gives rise to the dogma of *āroha-vāda* [assuming one can ascend the spiritual path solely by one’s own prowess]. It was to contradict this that *avaroha-vāda* [the doctrine that descending grace is the only resort] was created. In *tarka-śāstra* (dialectic scriptures), deliberations are made from both deductive and inductive perspectives. Regardless, logical fallacies want to ignore both of these considerations and determine something that is not real! “*Murāres-trṭīya-panthāḥ* – Murāri has yet a third way.” By this logic, real and unreal can be discarded and a fanciful realm conjured, but it will never take form in reality.

It is true that your father went to Navadvīpa, but when he had been invited to Navadvīpa, then cleverly and skillfully, he deliberately rejected the invitation. This is the understanding held by the managing committee of our Samiti. I do not know how that helped him, but we see it matches the proverb “After death comes the doctor.” Now it is too late to manage the situation. This is the current situation. Even now, if the personal advice and intervention of the Samiti’s unpaid political messengers of bad news are stopped, I believe the mutual misunderstanding will cease shortly. I always nurture an optimistic view in this regard. An optimist just wishes auspiciousness for the world; he is a believer in policies of coexistence.

The Kṛṣṇacandra-pura incident is part of the pre-existing stalemate, so there is no use worrying your mind over that. “Act, act in the living present.” This is today’s progress. This sort of conduct does not prove a lack of love and attachment for you; believe me, that is still very much intact. “Who is the omniscient Lord upset with?” That, I am struggling to understand. However, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*’s notion of “*tat te ’nukampām*” is the best and greatest medicine for those afflicted by the disease of material existence. To call it a panacea is not an exaggeration. Once humans can understand their own mistakes, then humility, compassion, modesty, and respect for others manifests in their hearts. This is the very cause of their ultimate well-being; this is how their hearts are purified. There is no point in any other sort of penance. “Patience is bitter, but its fruits are sure.” This is the real truth-talk. Therefore, when the time is right, arrangements to communicate can be reinitiated. However, declaring *jihad* on one’s god-brothers, who are Śrīla Gurudeva’s wealth and splendour, and taking an inimical stance will not allow for any sort of settlement or compromise. I hope you have been able to follow what I am trying to say. This is precisely what I have wanted to communicate to you as a sort of “paradigm shift”.

There is no reason for you to be sad. Even from over a million miles away, I can understand what you are dealing with. You do not need to worry about that. But know that my ability to predict the future and my powers of foresight are much more extensive than yours. I am not saying this out of ego. If Śrī Bhagavān gives you the *sukṛti* someday, then you will be able to understand. Just because someone with jaundice sees the world through yellow lenses does not mean that is what things actually look like. It is only through the eyes of faith and devotion that the divine and godly devotees behold true reality for all eternity and worship that. Only that kind of vision engages the *sādhaka* in the service he aspires for. That is the object of supreme longing for those who are fully versed in the Vedas.

Sending my love and blessings to you. Please convey my regards to your mother and father. What more? *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 5

Descriptions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are the perfection of literature • The effects of *kīrtana* • The importance of acting according to one’s *adhikāra* • The power of chanting a lakh • The contribution of Vaiṣṇavī saints • The meaning of the name Umā • The power of association with Vaiṣṇavas

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Jagannātha Mandira
105, Netaji Subhash Road
Behrampore (Murshidabad)
11/11/1970

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā, I read the poem you wrote. It will be good if you edit it. “Poetry is the outburst of a single inspired moment.” For poets, novelists, and litterateurs, discussions on the nature of God constitute the utmost limit of their pursuits. If connoisseurs of literature and lovers of poetry do not accept the subject of God as the focus of their deliberations, theirs is a fruitless toil. Hence, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the king of sacred scriptures, says: “That discourse or literature, no matter how eloquent, which never extols the glories of Vāsudeva, sanctifier of universes, is likened by scholars to a place of pilgrimage for crows.”²¹ This is because saints who abound in Parabrahma, the Supreme Being, take no delight in such discourses. In the kingdom of mundane pleasures, conditioned souls read and promote books concerned with gross sensuality. Transcendental poets and litterateurs adept in *bhagavad-rasa* display only disinterest in this mundane poetry and literature, knowing it all to be but fleeting ventures averse to the service of Hari. On the other hand, utterances that extol Bhagavān’s glorious *śrī nāma* may not maintain perfect tune, beat, tempo, and metre at every progression, but those utterances destroy people’s sinful tendencies. That is all that saintly personalities hear, recite, and remember daily, thus reaping ultimate benefit for their souls. Utterances that do not describe Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes – the various topics bereft of Bhagavān’s glories that are propagated around the world – offer nothing for the scrutiny of any intelligent person.

²¹ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.10)

Kīrtana extolling the glories of Śrī Bhagavān and His devotees has the capacity to evaporate the fathomless ocean of sorrows that afflict mankind and is supremely delicious and charming in newer and newer ways. Discussion of topics that are bereft of Kṛṣṇa submerge the consciousness of the soul in an ocean of sorrow, whereas singing the glories of Bhagavān, instead of invoking a sense of lacking (*abhāva*), establishes the living entities in their true natures (*svabhāva*), endowing their souls with eternal auspiciousness. Without devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the experience of life is meaningless to the soul. Therefore, scripture says:

**“Without
devotion
to Śrī Kṛṣṇa,
the experience
of life is
meaningless
to the soul.”**

*vidyā-vayo vā kavitaṃ ca śobhā, sundara-rūpaṃ viphalatvam eva
śrī kṛṣṇa-bhaktiṃ vinā narāṇāṃ, sindura-bindura-vidhavā-lalāṭe*

To be learned and of esteemed age, quoting poetry and flaunting luxury and beauty is all fruitless for a human being without devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, like sindur and a bindi on a widow.

Without devotion to Bhagavān, the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*’s knowledge, maturity, poetry, affluence, and vanity prove fruitless. Those who have unconditional devotion to Śrī Bhagavān are heir to the sum total of all desirable attributes. Where are the dignified qualities of souls opposed to Śrī Hari? They are constantly chasing evil whims, choosing only ultimate misfortune. But even in regard to singing the glories and pastimes of Śrī Hari, *sādhakas* or *sādhikās* have different qualifications. The neophyte *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*’ worship of Bhagavān is outlined from *śānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhyā*, up to *vātsalya-rasa*. Only supremely liberated personalities are deemed qualified for *unnata-ujjala mādhyura-rasa*. Should a person who has not controlled his or her senses discuss that [mood] improperly, he will end up regarding the Divine Couple (*cil-līlā-mithuna*) Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda to be a mundane hero and heroine and thus become a *prākṛta-sahajiyā*. Aside from the designations of the thirteen deviant *apa-sampradāya* sects, the names *kiśorī-bhajā*, *ghara-pāgalā*, *gr̥hī-bāulā*, *smaraṇa-panthi*, *yugala-bhajanānandī*, etc., are also used to refer to such persons. Therefore, it is necessary for the *sādhaka* to proceed in *bhajana-sādhana* having made a special effort to assimilate these considerations of varying levels of eligibility.

When you have time, read *Jaiva-dharma*, *Prema-pradīpa*, *Śrīman Mahāprabhuḥ Śikṣā*, *Māyāvāder Jīvanī*, *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-prema-taraṅgiṇī*. Memorize the *dainya* (humility) and *viñāpti* (confession) prayers from *Śrī Gauḍīya-gīti-guccha* and practice those *kīrtanas* in a soft, melodic voice. Try to study books that glorify Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma. Read

the *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* articles and other offerings in a patient and steady fashion. Parts that seem unintelligible will become simple and easy with repeated study. And if you are still having trouble, then let me know, and I will try my best to curb your doubts. Try to make the best use of your time. Never waste your time out of laziness. If you are living at home, you have people to look after and tend to. In the midst of all that, you have to maintain the practice of taking some time out from that to complete your daily worship and study of various books. These activities have been referred to as the limbs of *bhakti*. Of the sixty-four limbs of *bhakti*, it is only by the cultivation of *navadhā-bhakti* – *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, *smaraṇa*, etc. – that one can attain *bhakti-prema* for Śrī Bhagavān. This is the verdict of saints, scriptures, and *guru*.

Every day, without fail, you must complete your vowed number of utterances of *śrī nāma*. As per Śrīman Mahāprabhu's directive, you will have to chant *lakṣa-nāma* and become a *lakṣa-pati*. Only then will Bhagavān directly accept the water and grains you offer. Everything we do in this material world is so we can chant *śrī nāma*, so you must tailor your environment in such a way that you can properly execute the vow of chanting *śrī nāma*. Uttering *śrī nāma* without offences and having direct vision of Bhagavān are synonymous.

If, with strong conviction and one-pointed focus, you dedicate yourself to performing *sādhana-bhajana*, Śrī Bhagavān will surely have mercy on you. Why would you be a wretched, helpless, fallen, unworthy daughter? By Śrī Gaurasundara's blessing, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita's housemaid went from being called Duḥkhī (sad) to Sukhī (happy). The royal princess Mīrābāi worshipped Giridhara-Gopāla and became renowned throughout the world as a most dignified woman and saint. If you study *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata*, you will behold the example of the divine lives of Sītā Ṭhākuraṇī, Mālinī-devī, Vasudhā and Jāhnava Mātā, Lakṣmī-priyā, Viṣṇu-priyā and other personal potencies of Viṣṇu, as well as Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāminī, Hemalātā Ṭhākuraṇī and other glorious and learned Vaiṣṇava ladies. If you study all that in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature, you will be able to properly grasp the contribution that the lives of these devotee women made.

A, u, m – these three letters have given rise to the sacred syllable *om*. The letter *a* represents the one true hero of all the worlds, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as He Himself stated in the *Gītā*: [10.33]:

**“Everything
we do in this
material world
is so we can
chant *śrī nāma*,
so you must
tailor your
environment
in such a way
that you can
properly
execute the vow
of chanting
śrī nāma.”**

“*akṣarāṇām a-karo ’smi*”. The letter *u* represents Śrī Rādhā, whom Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta refers to as “*nāyikā-śiromaṇī* Rādhā Ṭhākuraṇī, the crowning jewel of all heroines”. The letter *m* refers to the living entities who in this material world are differentiated as male and female and identified as *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*. Hence, the living entities can attain the omnipotent Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa through *sādhana* by worshipping the syllable *om* and Śrī Nāma-brahma. Joining the character *u*, representing Śrī Rādhikā, with the letters *mā* produces the name Umā. Even though this then entails Śrī Rādhārāṇī being envisioned as Mother of the Universe, it does no harm to Her personal identity or mood as divine paramour. By worshipping Śrī Rādhikā, who is Kṛṣṇa-mayī (Kṛṣṇa-imbued), Parā-devī (the Supreme Goddess), Sarva-lakṣmī-mayī (the reservoir of all goddesses of fortune), Kṛṣṇa-mana-mohinī (the enchantress of Kṛṣṇa’s mind), along with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is Her *prāṇa-nātha* (the Lord of Her life), you will attain *bhakti* to Them. Your name Umā will then be successful.

Only the company of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas can foster auspiciousness for the soul, for no matter where they are, that place becomes Śrī Vṛndāvana. That is why Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has sung: “*jathāya vaiṣṇava-gaṇa, sei sthāna vṛndāvana, sei-sthāne ānanda aśeṣa* – wherever the Vaiṣṇavas are, that place is Vṛndāvana, and in that place, the bliss is endless.”

You have been able to hear the glories of Śrī Hari from the shining, beautiful faces of the Vaiṣṇavas and you have the opportunity to see them all the time. This is a matter of great good fortune. Should Śrī Bhagavān give me the time and opportunity to go to Chunchura, I will try to fulfil your request. Eagerness for hearing and chanting topics pertaining to Bhagavān will surely propel you along the path of devotion. “*Dainya, dayā, anye māna, pratiṣṭhā-varjana, cāri-guṇe guṇī hai’ karaḥo kīrtana*”²² – humility, compassion, respect for others, and shirking of prestige; develop these qualities and perform *kīrtana*.” This was Śrī Gauracandra’s special order and instruction. If, in accordance with these instructions, one becomes exclusively dedicated to performing *bhajana* of *śrī nāma*, then along with *śrī nāma*, Śrī Nāmī, who is Śrī Hari Himself, will appear to you. Perform *bhajana* of Hari without any worries and your spiritual well-being (*kalyāṇa*) will be assured. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²² *Gītāvalī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana Jādī (7) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 6

The nature of the conditioned soul • Gaining worldly convenience cannot be called real mercy • The *viśrambha-sevaka* utilizes all conveniences in the service of Bhagavān • The home of a devotee who is exclusively dedicated to *guru* is a *maṭha* • Revealing a semblance of his *svarūpa* via humour

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Shri Krishna Prasad Dasadhikari
Shri Nimananda Cloth Stores
Ukilpara, P.O. Raiganj
(West Dinajpur) North Bengal
5/5/1971

Śrī vaiṣṇava-carāṇe daṇḍavan-nati pūrvikēyam—

—— Prabho! Your letter dated 5/3/71 came into my hands in good time in Navadvīpa. I could not understand the cause for concern when you do not receive news of me or a letter from me for many days. I did not know there was someone to worry about me. When I received your letter, I came to know I will not simply perish in a field somewhere “or along the banks of the Gomati River – *marāṇaṁ ca gomatī tīre*.” I will not have to lose my life, which is worth at least five rupees, in a *gobhāgāḍa* [a place where cow carcasses are thrown]. After two months, I am reading and replying to the letter you sent on 5/3/71. Surely this counts as a “gracious letter”. Despite, in an era of independence, all the touting of the slogan “This freedom is false”, what presently passes for “mercy” is letting people be whimsical and do as they please. If a person or persons experience some joy from receiving a letter drenched in such mercy, then what objection can I have? I have managed a checkmate for cheap. This is my special gain.

You wrote to Nava-yogendra to find out where I am preaching. He did not provide the address, or he could not. How can a *parivrājaka* (roaming mendicant), or *bhavaghura*, as the slang goes, have a definite address? It is to attain the state of “finding meals here and there and sleeping in the marketplace – *bhojanam yatra tatra śayanam haṭṭa-mandire*” that he has been designated a *bhavaghura*. The Nava-yogendras, the Catuḥsana (four Kumāras), Nārada, and others, and even Bhagavān have no purpose in finding a home in this *bhavāṭavī* (forest of material existence). “*Devāḥ na jānanti, kuto manuṣyāḥ* – the demigods do not know; what

to speak of men?” Nowadays, from time to time, I have a great desire to live out a solitary life, which is why I put a veil over my head and attempt to live incognito. But when there is a shortage of food at the prominent haunts, the vigilance of the C.I.D. Co. (Criminal Investigations Department) increases. That is when they agitate the winds of the sky, track down my hidden outpost, and I get caught and arrested by them like a “defendant under investigation”. There is no escaping their clutches; they steal everything I have and cast me far away in a helpless condition. This is my ultimate predicament! To whom will I convey this woeful tale, and who will hear? There is no one in this world to listen or lend an ear to my pitiful crying. I had such hope that “hearing of my woes, the Vaiṣṇava master will profusely petition Kṛṣṇa for me – *śuniyā āmāra duḥkha vaiṣṇava ṭhākura, āmā lāgi’ kṛṣṇe āvedibena pracura.*” However, “*se āśā viphalā, se jñāna durbala, se jñāna ajñāna jāni* – that hope did not bear fruit and that knowledge was weak; I know that knowledge to be ignorance.”²³

**“Man creates his own
fortune himself.
Through sincerity and
firm conviction, that
good fortune arises.
If the *sādhaka*
makes no effort and
blames everything
on his luck and the
fruits of his *karma*,
he will not attain
perfection in his
sādhana.”**

One person makes a *saṅkalpa* (oath) to perform Śrī Dhāma *parikramā* or, in other words, attempts to pull up the anchor of material attachment, while another gives more credence to the attachments of *saṁsāra* and says, “I did not have the good fortune [to go on *parikramā*].” He then becomes averse to engaging in the limbs of *bhakti*. Man creates his own fortune himself. Through sincerity and firm conviction, that good fortune arises. If the *sādhaka* makes no effort and blames everything on his luck and the fruits of his *karma*, he will not attain perfection in his *sādhana*. This cycle of *saṁsāra* is fearsome. This is a definite truth. Yet it is only through Kṛṣṇa’s *saṁsāra* that one attains the well-being of the soul. “*Kṛṣṇera saṁsāra karo, chāḍi anācāra*”²⁴ – engage in Kṛṣṇa’s *saṁsāra* and give up misconduct.” This is a positive instruction. Knowingly, though having heard

this, the *jīva* transgresses and drinks poison. This is the symptom of the conditioned soul. It is because the *baddha-jīva* cannot understand what is *śreyah* [ultimately good for him] and

²³ Quoting from two different songs from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru* and *Śaraṇāgati* – *Kabe Śrī Caitanya More Koribena Dayā* (5) and *Vidyāra Vilāse* (2) – Śrīla Mahārāja is expressing his humility and the excruciating separation he feels from the Vaiṣṇavas. He is not, in any way, suggesting that Vaiṣṇavas are liable to disappoint those who seek their aid.

²⁴ *Gītāvalī, Nadiya Godrume* (4) by Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

what is *preyaḥ* [immediately palatable], that he thinks good to be bad and holds fast to what is bad for him, thinking it to be good. If man had a proper grasp of good and bad, if he were established in the discernment of truth and falsity, then he would never be able to make mistakes. One who has seen the truth is a pure living entity utterly devoid of the four flaws of *bhrama*, *pramāda* (the tendency to commit mistakes, become illusioned), and so forth. He is a self-realized *sādhaka*, entirely perfect, an eternally perfected *mahāpuruṣa* (great personality), a saint who sees all to be equal. If the *baddha-jīva* earns such a personality's mercy, then and only then is he blessed, his life made a success.

By the mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, you have been transferred to a convenient situation. This is without a doubt good news, but can it be called *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' genuine mercy or not? Whether or not getting good employment, winning a suit or court case, having one's unhappiness or misery alleviated, and other such achievements are to be called "mercy" is a matter to ponder. Western materialists keep saying, "God, give us our daily bread." Certain classes of India's merchants utter the words "*delāy de rāma* – give to me, Rāma" and hanker for their livelihood from Bhagavān. Some even worship "Ruṭi Bhagavān (the Bread God)" and have thus taught faith in God. In truth, these are all champions of apotheosis [attaining a so-called divine status]. *Śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas do not hanker for earthly objects from Bhagavān. He is only to be prayed to for unconditional devotion. Praying for wealth, followers, etc. from the Supreme Father, Śrī Bhagavān, does not earn the title *pitṛ-bhakti* (devotion to the father) or *bhagavad-bhakti*. Rather, it comes in the category of mundane lust and hankerings.

A *viśrambha-sevaka* (intimate servant) of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, however, who is exclusively dedicated to their service, obtains every advantage, convenience, and necessary qualification in the course of his *sādhana*. Without praying to Śrī Bhagavān, he obtains all these things, and because "his every endeavour is for Kṛṣṇa's sake – *kṛṣṇārthe akhila ceṣṭā-viśiṣṭa*", everything he obtains proves favourable for *bhakti*. Therefore, he does not, like the *karmī* (elevationist) or *jñānī* (salvationist), invoke gross and subtle gratifications. He knows "one who is devoid of attachment yet endowed with relationship (*sambandha*) sees Mādhava as the source and sum of all objects of the senses – *āsakti rahita, sambandha sahita, viṣaya samuha sakali mādḥava*."²⁵

***Śrī guru and
Vaiṣṇavas
do not hanker
for earthly objects
from Bhagavān.
He is only to be
prayed to for
unconditional
devotion.***

²⁵ Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's song "*Duṣṭa mana tumi*".

That *viśrambha-sevaka*'s vow is this: “*tomāra dhana, tomāya diye, tomāra haye rai* – I deliver Your wealth unto You and remain Yours.” Such a person is a soul offered in submission, free from all material possessions, exclusively surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, and fixed in the *dharma* of giving respect to all and expecting none in return. True benefit is reaped from serving that devotee whose exclusive life goal is *bhagavad-bhakti*. He alone is *jagad-guru* (spiritual master of the world).

When the construction work on the house begins on the day of Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā, then surely it will manifest as the seat or temple of the followers of Vyāsa. May the schools of thought that oppose Vyāsa not be honoured in that place and may the *pūjā-pañcaka*²⁶ be forever conducted there. If the *jīvas* can follow the example of Śrī Vyāsa-guru, they can attain their true well-being. It is indicative of conviction in Śrī Vyāsa-guru to be inspired in that regard and enlighten others. The endeavours involved in establishing a *pīṭha* (place of worship) of *śrī guru* executed by devotees who are exclusively dedicated to the service of *guru* are surely praiseworthy. *Guru-pīṭha* means an *āśrama*, *maṭha*, or *śrī mandira*. Therefore, though the topic of *gr̥ha-praveśa* [a ceremony performed upon entering a new home] has been proposed, it does not pertain to the *gr̥hamedha* or blind well of a *bhogī* (sense enjoyer) or the physically engrossed (*dehārāmī*), which is all about sense enjoyment and leads to hell. Rather, it has to be referred to as *maṭha-praveśa* (entering a new temple) because spiritual students dwell forever in an *āśrama* or *maṭha*, keeping themselves engaged in the service of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and their minds absorbed in *sādhana-bhajana*. There is only one duty that has been ordained for every *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*, regardless of whether they are in the *brahmacārya-āśrama*, *gārhasthya-āśrama*, or *sannyāsa-āśrama*. Hence, in this case, the *gr̥ha*, or home, is a *maṭha*, and the *maṭha* is a home – they mean the same thing, being set up to achieve the same purpose.

Will Śrī Vāmana obtain one cottage for rest and *bhajana-sādhana* at the Dhādikā Āśrama in alms? Of course, I will not seize the whole *āśrama* and everyone in it on the pretext of begging three paces of land. This much I can swear before noon. Surely, I will not be cheated of gaining assistance, since I am the *dāsī* of Vanamālī Śrī Hari. I accept the leadership of Śrī Tulasī, the dearly beloved of the golden-complexioned Śrī Rādhārāṇī and the crown jewel of connoisseurs, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and I strive to realize the real *tattva* about Them. If I have a little place to stay, there will be no trouble in collecting everything else. I will have lemon and salt with me. All I will have to ask the *gr̥hasthas* for is rice, dahl, vegetables, spices, and whatnot. There

²⁶ Worship of seven groups of five: *vyāsa-pañcaka*, *kṛṣṇa-pañcaka*, *sanakādi-pañcaka*, *pañca-tattva-pañcaka*, *upāśya-pañcaka*, *ācārya-pañcaka*, and *guru-pañcaka*.

should be a *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, toilet facility, built alongside the *āśrama*. This is indispensable for everyone, be they renunciates or householders. If I have the opportunity to go to Dhadika in the month of Śrāvaṇa–Bhādra, I will have a chance to test everything in person.

[First, I was in] Siuri [Bengal] and, afterwards, Ranibahal, and then Asanbani [Jharkhand], where I met with ——— Prabhu and talked with him. U—— Prabhu also came to Ranibahal and met with me; he told me about his misfortune. When I think of his condition, I have compassion for him, but everything is a lesson from Śrī Bhagavān. The sad thing is that now, in his old age, he is having to work the oil mill of material existence by himself. The amazing thing is that even in such conditions, we do not feel any disinterest [in material life]. *Samsāra* is a battlefield and a school. We all will have to take lessons from this world; there is no end to these lessons. Those who can see the example of others and then be cautious themselves are the most intelligent. Such persons are truly expert at *bhajana*. Attaining *bhagavad-bhakti* is their ultimate success.

[My] body is really not well. Still, I have to go out travelling a lot. All these places are about five miles from the Pakistan border [East Pakistan, later Bangladesh]. Two or three days ago, a great many people were injured by Pakistani gunfire and admitted to the local hospital. There is no benefit to fearing for one's life. Please accept my *daṇḍavats*. *Iti—*

Servant of the servant of the Vaiṣṇavas,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 7

Perfection is attained by a combination of effort and mercy • A genuine *guru* does not make anyone his disciple • Devotion is the essential component of any offering • Knowledge and good fortune arise by the mercy of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vāsudeva Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Basugaon (Goalpara) Assam
12/6/1971

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! ... It is natural for the heart to become anxious when one does not receive news of a dear one. ... As long as this body made of five elements endures, its health and illness will persist. Striving to improve the health of the embodied soul that dwells on the foundation of the body is the only thing indicative of intelligence. “*Yāvat jīvo nivasati dehe, kuśalam tāvāt prcchati gehe*²⁷ – as long as the soul inhabits the body, people inquire of his well-being at home,” but the living entities bound by *māyā* cannot know or understand what the soul’s well-being is. Those who are absorbed in that cultivation of the soul are the real scholars and seers of truth.

Guru and Vaiṣṇavas’ merciful gaze is always focused upon the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*. By their blessings, all that is impossible becomes possible, the lame gain the ability to scale mountains

**“Guru and
Vaiṣṇavas’
merciful gaze
is always
focused upon
the *sādhaka*
or *sādhikā*.”**

and the mute become talkative. If one is always ready to engage in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas in a mood of simplicity and is performing *bhajana* of *śrī nāma* at every moment, then all *anarthas* will be dispelled. It is by daily chanting the holy name with honour and care, regularly studying the *bhakti* scriptures, and taking opportunities to hear *hari-kathā* that one makes advancement on the path of devotion. Faithfully performing *pūjā* and *arcana* purifies one’s consciousness and steadies the restless mind. Just becoming filled with pride in one’s own efforts will not afford one proximity to the

²⁷ *Bhaja Govindam* (6) by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya

Absolute Truth. In addition [to one's effort], the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is necessary. It is when endeavour and grace are unified that perfection is attained. This is what was proven in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *dāma-bandhana-līlā* [pastime of being bound by Mother Yaśodā].

The *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* is considered eligible for the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas if a mood of humility enters his or her heart. The magnanimity of great souls is a truth known to everyone. The twenty-six qualities of saintly personalities are radiant examples of that. Though the *sādhus'* mercy, generosity, compassion, and respect for all without expectation of respect in return are exemplary for the people of this world, the *sādhus'* exclusive surrender to Kṛṣṇa is their foremost quality. Only he who is himself fully reliant on the grace of the Lord and who is the personified emblem of the six limbs of surrender can impart instructions on the *dharma* of service to the Lord and His devotees; only he is called a Gosvāmī. Such a bona fide *guru* sees all inhabitants of the world as servants of the Lord, and even those he favours and who have taken exclusive shelter of him, he knows to be opulence meant for the service of Bhagavān. He does not make anyone his disciple, as the desire to become a disciple himself is the only thing that fills his heart. One who [arrogantly] thinks his disciples deserve chastisement is conceited. Never is he worthy of being called a *guru*. One who is a true Vaiṣṇava and a *guru* to the world has the ability to be harsher than a thunderbolt and softer than a flower (*vajrād api kaṭhorāṇi, mṛduni kusumād api*) concealed within his natural disposition of respecting all without any expectation of respect for himself (*amānī-mānada-dharma*) and regarding himself as more insignificant than a piece of straw (*tṛṇād api sunīcena*). By obtaining the mercy of that sort of great soul, even those who are devoid of *bhakti* and who are sinful and godless attain ultimate auspiciousness. "Even the demigods do not have the capacity to recognize a Vaiṣṇava – *vaiṣṇava cinite nāre dever śakati*." This I have heard from the lips of saints, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. The Vaiṣṇava *mahājanas* have informed us how to behave toward someone who exercises envy toward those bona fide *gurus* and Vaiṣṇavas: "*vaiṣṇava-caritra, sarvadā pavitra, jei ninde himsā kari; bhaktivinoda nā sambhāṣe tāre, thāke sadā mauna dhari*"²⁸ – Vaiṣṇavas are always of pure character. Bhaktivinoda never converses with those who maliciously criticize them. Instead, he always remains silent." This is precisely what is called *asat-saṅga tyāga* (giving up bad association).

**“A bona fide *guru*
does not make
anyone his disciple,
as the desire
to become a
disciple himself
is the only thing
that fills his heart.”**

²⁸ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Kabe Mui Vaiṣṇava Cinibo* (6) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Only that which is imbued with devotional faith or mood is acceptable to devotees, whereas common people revere formality or social niceties. The words formality and frankness have two completely opposite meanings. People of the world love this worldliness, also known as “civilization”, which has been mockingly defined as “barbarian”. And nowadays, the word simplicity is used to mean stupidity. Thus, there is a difference of heaven and hell between the material and the spiritual worlds. If you consider the “*yā nīṣa sarva-bhūtānām*” verse from the

“*Bhakti* is the mood or language of the heart.

Whatever word or phrase it inhabits proves meaningful.”

second chapter of the *Gītā* in this context, you will understand this point clearly. *Bhakti* is the mood or language of the heart. Whatever word or phrase it inhabits proves meaningful. Without devotion, a stanza’s poetic eloquence or skillful speech is meaningless, like a place of pilgrimage for crows. “*Bhakti-puṣpa kothā pāi, bhakati candana nāi, ki diye pūjibo āmi?* – where to find flowers of devotion? There is no sandalwood of devotion

either. What will I use for worship?” This [prayer] itself is the faithful offering (*arghya*) to the Lord’s lotus feet by the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* who hankers for *bhakti*.

Linguistic knowledge and speech manifest by the causeless mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Dhruva, upon attaining the audience of the lotus-eyed Śrī Hari, desired to offer prayers to Him, so the Lord touched His conch, which is imbued with all the knowledge of the Vedas, to Dhruva’s cheek, who then found the words and proceeded to sing praises of Śrī Hari to his heart’s delight in an unstoppable flow. This is why great Vaiṣṇava personalities have sung thus at the end of their compositions: “*tathāpi mūkerā bhāgya manera ullāsa, doṣa kṣami’ mo-adhame karo nija dāsa*²⁹ – still this [glorification] is the fortune of a person as dumb as I and is my mind’s delight, so please forgive my flaws and make this wretch your servant.” Moreover, “the lotus feet of *śrī guru* are the treasure house of unalloyed *prema-bhakti*; I worship those lotus feet with great caution – *śrī guru-caraṇa-padma, kevala bhakati-sadma, vandō mui sāvadhānamate*³⁰,” and “by glorifying *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, the living entity is delivered from material existence – *guru-vaiṣṇava guṇa gāna, karile jīvera trāṇa*.”³¹ It is natural for everyone to be eager and want to sing of those glories, but “offenses should not occur” for this is the flaw of those who are dumb and foolish³². This is precisely why it is imperative to employ caution. However,

²⁹ *Vaiṣṇava-vandanā* (10) by Śrī Devakīnandana dāsa

³⁰ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā* by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

³¹ *Śrīla Prabhupāda-vandanā* (18) by Śrī Gopāla-govinda Mahānta

³² The *mūka*, or mute, commits offense by refusing to glorify the Vaiṣṇavas, whereas the *mūrkhā*, or fool, seeks only to feed his own pride by glorifying them – “*tamo buddhi doṣe mui dambha mātra kari.*”

guru and Vaiṣṇavas do not take to heart any offence, fault, or shortcoming of simple-hearted persons. This constitutes our sole hope and confidence. Being omniscient, Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas imbue the heart of the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* with inspiration. There is no reason to doubt this. To submit the moods of one's heart with utter sincerity constitutes full surrender and adherence to following in their footsteps. That is what makes life truly blessed, giving the living entity fulfilment. The very assurances of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas lift the Lord's *sevaka* or *sevikā* to the summits of *sādhana-bhajana*. It is conviction in *sādhana* that evokes grace, and that is what rises in the sky of the living entity's destiny as good fortune. It is only in the light of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa's grace that one gains a glimpse of Them. This is why patience and steadfastness are required.

“*Guru and Vaiṣṇavas do not take to heart any offence, fault, or shortcoming of simple-hearted persons. This constitutes our sole hope and confidence.*”

“*Nitāiyer caraṇa satya, tāhāra sevaka nitya*³³ – Nitāi's feet are eternal truth, and His servitors are eternal.” Similarly, the relationship between *guru* and disciple is an eternal truth. In the relationship between the one-pointed servant and his master, the following sort of interaction can be seen:

sei bhakta—dhanya, je nā chāḍe prabhur caraṇa
sei prabhu—dhanya, je nā chāḍe nija-jana
durdaive sevaka jadi jāya anya sthāne
*sei prabhu dhanya, tāre cule dhari' āne*³⁴

[Blessed be the devotee who never leaves the feet of his Lord. Blessed be the Lord who never abandons those who are His own. If, by ill fortune, the servant strays, blessed be the Lord who drags him back by the hair.]

Iti—

Your eternal well-wisher,
 Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³³ *Prārthanā, Nitāi-pada-kamala* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

³⁴ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.46)*

Letter 8

It is imperative to beg for mercy • For a servant, there is no break from service • Service is better rendered internally • Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas surely accept our offerings

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Gaura-Govinda Maṭha,
Gosai Road, Dinhata (Koch Bihar)
12/8/1971

“If a *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* takes full shelter of the feet of a genuine *guru* and duly engages in *bhajana* of Śrī Hari, no disqualification of theirs can create obstruction on the path of their *sādhana*.”

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā, I understand that you were greatly overjoyed to receive my letter and read the ramblings of a mad person. In doing so, you have praised your own good fortune, and at the same time, your natural humility has been revealed. If a *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* takes full shelter of the feet of a genuine *guru* and duly engages in *bhajana* of Śrī Hari, no disqualification of theirs can create obstruction on the path of their *sādhana*. Certainly, it is very true that in addition to performing *sādhana*, it is imperative to beg for mercy. This is the only way one attains perfection in *sādhana*. Only the eternal, pure, primeval, and transcendental soul is capable of attaining the transcendental object of *bhajana*. This is only possible, however, by *bhūta-suddhi* (purification of the physical elements) and *bhāva-saṁsuddhi* (purification of mood and intent). Objects of similar composition naturally mix. That is why, by performing *sādhana*, the unborn eternal soul can attain proximity to Śrī Bhagavān, who is Adhokṣaja (beyond the reach of the senses), and become absorbed in the bliss of service. ...

Now it has been five months that I have been preaching outside of Navadvīpa, during which I have had nothing that can be called rest. But then, for a servant, there is no such thing as a break from service. In the field of service, there is neither concession nor commission; service is the only fruit of service. Even supreme, liberated personalities continue to worship Śrī Bhagavān and are preoccupied with service. Hence, under no circumstance can the *sevaka* or *sevikā* take a holiday

“Under no circumstance can the *sevaka* or *sevikā* take a holiday or break from service.”

or break from service. But taking shelter of Śrī Bhagavān's beautiful lotus feet, which are the abodes of fearlessness, immortality, and freedom from sorrow, is true rest, and that is what the Vaiṣṇava *mahājanas* have prayed for: “*aśoka-abhaya, amṛta-ādhāra, tomāra caraṇa-dvaya, tāhāte ekhana, viśrāma labhiyā, chāḍinu bhavera bhaya*”³⁵ – I have now found solace at Your feet, which are free from sorrow and fear, being the foundations of immortality; thus I have given up all fear of worldly existence.” ...

I am trying to pacify you because I understand the reason you are experiencing regrets in your heart. Did you not offer summer fruits like mangoes and lychees to your deities during this time? If you are offering these items, then the fruit of direct service is yours. Therefore, it is not right for you to be sad that you cannot offer things in service. Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas certainly accept what is offered to them. It is on the basis of this faith that the scriptures have ordained the conventions of deity worship. It is therefore proven that I have accepted [offerings] both tangibly and intangibly. Just as one can properly behold the Lord's beautiful form through the ears, so too the service and worship of Śrī Hari and *guru* is better executed when performed internally. When the *yajña-patnīs* expressed their desire to stay in close proximity to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He told them: “Rather than staying close to Me, you should cultivate your absorption in My names, form, qualities, and pastimes from a distance. Therein lies the greatest auspiciousness for you.” In this instance, the mood of separation is superior to that of meeting. This is what Śrī Bhagavān wanted to convey to the wives of the *brāhmaṇas*.

Those who have direct *darśana* often risk a misunderstanding. The proverb “Too much familiarity breeds contempt” is proof of that. Though proximity to *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas has not been forbidden because of this, the statement “*vando muñ sāvadhāna-mate*—I worship *śrī gurudeva* with utmost caution” is a matter to be carefully pondered. So, it is necessary to carefully consider whether *pratyakṣa* (direct) or *parokṣa* (indirect) *darśana* is more beneficial. The words of *sādhū*, *guru*, and *śāstra* provide the best evidence in this matter. Their discernments are applicable to everyone at all times. By indirect service, you have achieved the same result as performing direct service. Of this, there is no doubt. Do not let your mind be disturbed over this. I hope you have been able to grasp what I am trying to say. *Iti*—

“The service and worship of Śrī Hari and *guru* is better executed when performed internally.”

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁵ *Śaraṇāgati, Ātma-nivedana* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 9

The glories of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are indescribable • If one can give up ego and deceit, one can attain the mercy of Vaiṣṇavas • Anthropomorphism and apotheosis • The transcendent nature of Bhagavān’s devotees • Service of *vāñī*, the divine word • How to be clever about *bhajana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Govinda-candra Dāsādhikārī
Gram + P.O.—Shripati-nagar
24 Pargana
4/1/1972

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! The supremely merciful Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas are always anxious about dispelling the conditioned souls’ antagonism and are full of affection. It is solely the conditioned soul’s efforts to turn toward Bhagavān that prove his sincerity and make his *sādhana* successful. Every human being has gained worthiness and competence through this *sādhana-bhajana*,

**“It is solely the
conditioned soul’s
efforts to turn
toward Bhagavān
that prove his
sincerity and
make his *sādhana*
successful.”**

while any state of being contrary to that [*sādhana-bhajana*] is defined in scripture as unworthiness or incompetence.

The minute, mortally entangled soul truly cannot describe the transcendental glories and qualities of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. “*Brahmāṇḍa tārīte śakti dhare jane jane, ei veda-purāṇe guṇa gāya jebā śune. Tathāpi mūkera bhāgya manera ullāsa, doṣa kṣami’ mo-adhame kara nija-dāsa*³⁶ – Each and every Vaiṣṇava has the power to deliver the whole universe. Such are their qualities as sung about in the Vedas and Purāṇas. Even though I am inept, it is my great fortune and delight [to try to glorify them]. Kindly forgive the faults of this wretch and make me your servant.” The Vaiṣṇava author of this poem has thus expressed his natural humility. The pure name of Bhagavān can only be uttered by a tongue composed of pure consciousness, as it is not something that can be grasped by the gross senses. That

³⁶ *Vaiṣṇava-vandanā* (11–10) by Śrī Devakīnandana dāsa

transcendental *śrī nāma-brahma* is attentively served by senses that are inclined toward service and personally manifests itself to the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*. “*Ananta rākhilo nāma anta nā pāiyā*³⁷ – he is called Ananta because He has no end.” Thus, that divine object is limitless and beyond the grasp of the senses. If the seven seas were the ink, the Himalaya’s Mt. Gauri the quill, and the Earth herself the paper, it would still be impossible to describe the glories of *guru* and Bhagavān properly. They are resplendent in their own glory, to reveal which they do not require any other medium. As soon as the Sun and Moon appear, so does their splendour. They too are like that.

Only he whose heart is free from deceit and who has offered up his soul will realize and experience the mercy of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. “*Hari, guru, vaiṣṇava—tinera smaraṇa; tinera smaraṇe haya vighna vināśana*³⁸ – remembrance of Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas destroys all obstacles.” Only he who yearns for the happiness of serving these three eternal truths gains mental and spiritual peace and supreme bliss. “*Prasīda paramānanda, prasīda parameśvara*³⁹ – be pleased with me, O reservoir of bliss; be pleased with me, O Supreme Lord.” “*Yat-krpā tam ahaṁ vande paramānanda mādham*⁴⁰ – I venerate that Mādhava, who is the abode of bliss and by whose mercy I may attain said bliss.” By these prayers, one can attain *nityānanda* (eternal bliss) or *premānanda* (the bliss of divine love). “*Ātma-nivedana, tuwā pade kari, hainu parama sukhi; duḥkha dūre gelo, cintā nā rahilo, caudike ānanda dekhi*⁴¹ – having offered my soul at Your feet, I have become sublimely joyful. My distress has gone far away, no worries remain, and I see bliss in all four directions.” It is this that constitutes the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*’s full degree of surrender, or the one-pointed offering of their soul. If one can relinquish mundane ego, if one can become free from deceit, one can truly acknowledge oneself as wretched and bereft, thereby earning eligibility for the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas. You should strive to progress along the path of your life strictly in this mood.

**“If the seven seas
were the ink,
the Himalaya’s
Mt. Gauri the quill,
and the Earth
herself the paper,
it would still be
impossible to
describe the glories
of guru and
Bhagavān properly.”**

³⁷ *Śrī Kṛṣṇer Aṣṭottara-śata-nāma* (14) by Dvija Haridāsa

³⁸ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 1.21)

³⁹ *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad*

⁴⁰ Śrīdhara Svāmī’s *maṅgalācaraṇa* to *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*

⁴¹ *Śaraṇāgati, Ātma-nivedana* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

The fundamental truth, or *tattva*, of *śrī guru* is a singular indivisible (*akhaṇḍa*) vision of the truth. “*Gurute manuṣya-buddhi nā karo kakhana* – never consider *guru* an ordinary human being.” This is anthropomorphism, or imposing the prohibitions of mundane perception onto that which is supramundane. To see the worshipful *śrī śālagrāma-śīlā* as an ordinary rock, to judge Vaiṣṇavas by their race or caste, to think of the water that has washed the feet of Viṣṇu or the Vaiṣṇavas to be regular water, to think the *mantras* that contain the names of Śrī Viṣṇu to be ordinary sounds, and to equate the God of all gods, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with the presiding demigods and goddesses, are all specific instances of a blatant offence that consists of superimposing the qualities of inert matter onto consciousness. The opposite sort of assumption has also been condemned in scripture. For example, to think that this inert body composed of five elements is the soul, to think that a blood relative is one’s true relative, to think regular dirt is worthy of worship, and to think material rivers are holy is apotheosis, or elevating inert matter to the status of conscious divinity, and is also an *aparādha*. *Śrī gurudeva* is not a *kuṇapa*, a bag of bones and flesh, a body made of five elements. He is not engaged in mundane pursuits like the *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, and *yogīs*.

Guru-tattva has been deliberated in its ontological aspect. As such, *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are related, like limbs to a body, and they are situated on the transcendental platform. That is why when Śrī Bhagavān appears in this earthly realm, the arrival of His devotees is also witnessed. Precisely like Śrī Bhagavān Himself, His devotees have no mortal birth, death, or bondage in *karma*. Those who have taken shelter of a bona fide *guru* and absorbed their minds in performing *bhajana* of Śrī Hari are, without a doubt, most fortunate. Why would they be unfortunate? They have nothing that can be called misfortune. “*Durdaiva āmāra, se nāme ādara, nā hailo dayāmaya; daśa-aparādha, āmāra durdaiva, kemone hoibe kṣaya*⁴² – my misfortune, O merciful Lord, is that I do not have honour for Your holy name. The ten offences to the holy name are my misfortune. How will I get rid of them?” This is what is defined in scripture and other places as the misfortune of mankind, of the conditioned souls who are averse to Kṛṣṇa. ...

When you get the chance, write articles and send them. I was very delighted to see one of your poems published in our *Śrī Patrikā*. Send in a good article for our first issue of the year, the *Patrikā* published in the month of Phālguna. I will edit and submit it. Know this too to be *vāñī-sevā* (service of the divine word). “*Sarasvatī—kṛṣṇa-priyā, kṛṣṇa-bhakti tārā*

⁴² *Saraṇāgati, Hari He! Tomāre Bhuliyā* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

*hiyā, vinodera sei se vaibhava*⁴³ – Sarasvatī is the dearly beloved of Kṛṣṇa; devotion to Kṛṣṇa is her heart and she is the splendour of Vinoda.” It follows that by this means, one gains the opportunity to serve Śuddhā-Sarasvatī (the pure Goddess of Knowledge), Siddhānta-vāṇī (the message of conclusive spiritual truths or that of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda), and Vinoda-vāṇī (the message of divine bliss or that of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura). By service to *śrī nāma*, *śrī dhāma*, and *śrī gaura-kāma*, that is, by fulfilling Śrī Gaurasundara’s innermost desire, one can attain His unparalleled compassion. In a regulated fashion, you should observe your vow of chanting *śrī nāma*, study the sacred books, and serve *Śrī Patrikā*. If you write articles and poems, you will surely have to study and discuss various scriptures. Always follow this method of service.

If you proceed while always safeguarding a singular focus and firm conviction, you will meet with good fortune. Truly spiritual persons do not reject the social and conventional world. “*Antara-niṣṭhā karo bāhye loka-vyavahāra, acirāt kṛṣṇa tomāy kariben uddhāra*⁴⁴ – internally, keep your conviction; externally, be sociable, and shortly Kṛṣṇa will effect your deliverance.” Śrīman Mahāprabhu only directed this teaching toward Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī in order to impart it to the whole world. “*Anukūla-kṛṣṇānuśilana* – favourable absorption in Kṛṣṇa” is the goal, and so it is necessary to keep unfavourable situations under control as much as one is capable. Only he who can take everyone along with him [be considerate of everyone and encourage them] will have his dignity and glory endure in the world. Therefore, one has to pass one’s time in this world, this place of tough trials, with a proper understanding of morphology and ontology. Only those who are unwavering and immovable in these concepts are truly clever. Being clever about *bhajana* is what proves the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*’s worthiness. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁴³ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Mana re Keno Karo Vidyāra Gaurava* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁴⁴ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya-līlā 16.239)

Letter 10

What is *dīkṣā*? • Different types of *dīkṣā* • The purpose of *saṅkalpa* • Deliberations on demigod worship • Vaiṣṇavas are the real, pure *śāktas* • The importance of performing *arcana* with the aid of *kīrtana* • An uninitiated person's *arcana* is like playing with dolls • The importance of chanting on beads • *Prema-bhakti* and *vaidhi-bhakti*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Navadvīpa, Nadia (WB)
4/2/1972

Sādara sambhāṣaṇa pūrvikēyam—

Mā! Your mind was disturbed after we left ———pura. This is due to the natural pull of your affection. I have no love, infatuation, or possessiveness, so what chance is there of my mind being disturbed. Nonetheless, the way you have written your letter, what doubt is there that even a very stone-like heart will be overcome with affection? The fact that you have developed a via media [medium of communication] in your heart is likely only possible by the inspiration of the Supersoul. “*Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd-deśa ’rjuna tiṣṭhati*”⁴⁵ – O Arjuna, I, the Supreme Lord, dwell in the hearts of all living entities.” This is the verified word of scripture. Even if you had not prayed to Śrī Bhagavān, you would have received a timely response to your letter. But you had to endure great mental anguish because there was a delay in my receiving the letter. Even if you are not on my mind, you will make yourself forever memorable to me. I have entrusted you with this responsibility.

The relationship between *guru* and disciple, the connection between the served and the servant, is eternal. The Vaiṣṇava *mahājānas* have sung: “*nitāi-caraṇa satya, tāhāra sevaka nitya, dharo nitāir caraṇa dukhāni*”⁴⁶ – Nitāi’s feet are truth, his servant is eternal, hold fast to Nitāi’s two feet.” *Guru* and disciple are connected through the medium of *dīkṣā*. The verse “*divyaṃ jñānaṃ yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya saṁkṣayam; tasmād dīkṣeti sā proktā deśikais-tattva-*

⁴⁵ *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.61)

⁴⁶ *Prārthanā, Nitāi-pada-kamala* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

*kovidaiḥ*⁴⁷ explains the word *dikṣā*. The process by which divine knowledge is obtained and sin is fully destroyed is referred to by scholars who are seers of *tattva* by the word *dikṣā*. “*Dikṣā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpaṇa, sei-kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kare ātma-sama; sei deha kare tāra cidānanda-maya, aprākṛta dehe kṛṣṇer caraṇa bhajaya* – at the time of initiation, the devotee surrenders his soul and Kṛṣṇa then makes him like Himself; He makes the devotee’s body transcendental, and with that spiritual body, the devotee worships Kṛṣṇa’s feet.” If you study *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, you will come to know in depth the explanation of this.

Without *dikṣā* one cannot obtain the qualification to perform *pūjārcana*, ritual worship, of the *śrī viṅraha*. *Dikṣā* is of two types: *vaidikī* (of the Vedas) and *vedānugā* (following the Vedas). In the age of Kali, as there are no candidates for *vaidikī-dikṣā*; it is only *vedānugā-dikṣā* that has been instituted. *Vedānugā-dikṣā* is also of two types: *paurāṇikī* and *pāñcarātrikī*. *Paurāṇikī-dikṣā* involves accepting an unqualified person as qualified, whereas in *pāñcarātrikī-dikṣā*, an entry qualification is bestowed upon a person in consideration of their faith in *sādhana-bhajana*, with the hope that they will attain the necessary qualification in the future. Just as through various alchemical processes bell metal turns to gold, by the ceremony of *dikṣā* any human being can attain the status of a *vipra* or *dvija* (*brāhmaṇa*). No matter what family a man is born into, once he receives *dikṣā* in *viṣṇu-mantra*, he attains the status of a *brāhmaṇa*. *Gītā*, *Bhāgavata*, *Mahābhārata*, the Upaniṣads, and various commentators have accepted and proven this.

I will answer, in sequence, all the questions you had. I will, as time permits, attempt to provide suitable answers. You have prepared a notebook. I am delighted to know that you will write down and keep all the answers. It is a very good practice to keep a note of unknown spiritual instructions and the various considerations, arguments, and evidence of *śāstra* regarding *tattva-siddhānta*. This is the bearer and vehicle of future upliftment. I am giving brief answers to all your many questions:

(1) The purpose of the *saṅkalpa* (vow, intention) made during *pūjā* is *bhagavad-bhakti*. Any *saṅkalpa* or invocation that is devoid of the desire to please Bhagavān is meaningless. The word *saṅkalpa* also means vow. Whatever the undertaking, how will one attain any result if one does not have the firmness and conviction or the patience and steadiness to believe “I will be successful”? You can say that *saṅkalpa* also means will force. All undertakings of action that are bereft of service to the Supreme Lord are fruitless. And all undertakings that are linked with *bhakti* are true success. Every *vastu* (entity or object) has two aspects: *sat* (real) and *asat* (false), or *su* and *ku*. Śrī Bhagavān is *saccidānanda-maya vastu*, that reality which is comprised

⁴⁷ Quoted in *Bhakti-sandarbhā* (283) from *Viṣṇu-yāmala Tantra*

of truth, knowledge, and bliss; and *māyā*, or *avidyā*, is *asat* (untrue), *acit* (unconscious), and *nirānanda* (non-blissful).

The development or progress that occurs in exclusion of *tattva-vastu* is the world of *māyā*, the kingdom of the darkness of ignorance. It is in reference to this negative idea, or the Godless conception, that the *sātvata-smṛti* texts have, in one place, in the *saṅkalpaṃ ca tathā dānam* verse, forbidden *saṅkalpa*. “To offer *arghya* with one-pointed focus in the worship of the deity” and *sat* [virtuous] *saṅkalpa* are synonymous. Would giving Śrī Bhagavān an order be part of *sat-saṅkalpa*? “*Āmāra hṛt-kamale bāme hele, dāndīye bājāo bāṅsarī* – in the lotus of my heart, lean to the left, stand and play the flute.” Is this not covert *bhogavāda* (doctrine of sense gratification)? Śrī Bhagavān is neither my gardener nor my tenant that I can order around. Hence, for the servant, this sort of *karma-kāṇḍīya* (reward-seeking) invocation only increases the quantity of his offences.

(1a) Those who love engaging in *bhakti* to Mā Kālī are worshipping the various presiding demigods or giving preference to them. Their faith is not being offered in the right place. Hence, in this case, it is not a matter of faith or no faith. Śrī Bhagavān is the abode of divine love and the Lord and King of kings. His service is the only thing to be desired by the living entities, and this is *nirguṇā-śraddhā* (faith that is beyond the three modes of material nature). In the *Gītā* [17.4], faith, charity, diet, and other things are divided by *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika* differences: “*yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣa-rakṣāṃsi rājasāḥ, preta-bhūta-gaṇās cānye yajante tāmasāḥ janāḥ* – those in the mode of goodness worship the demigods; those in the mode of passion worship demons and nature spirits; those in the mode of ignorance worship spirits, ghosts, ghouls, and whatnot.” This statement determines the candidates of different levels of faith. Hence, to think that one will have to regard everyone’s whimsical faith as topmost is not an impartial viewpoint. It is this that is made perfectly clear in the verse *ye ’py anya-devatā-bhaktāḥ*; “*te ’pi mām eva kaunteya, yajanty avidhi-pūrvikam* – they too worship Me alone, but in an unsanctioned manner.”⁴⁸ Those who are abandoning the prescribed process of attaining liberation and are displaying their faith in other gods and goddesses or taking shelter of them, despite knowing that Viṣṇu alone is the giver of liberation, have a flawed conception.

It is not written in any scripture that one should disobey or disrespect any demigod or goddess, but the supreme worshipful object is only one: “*ekam evā dvitīyam*”⁴⁹ – one without

⁴⁸ O son of Kuntī, those who worship other demigods with faith actually worship Me alone, but in a way that is unauthorized. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 9.23)

⁴⁹ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.2.1)

a second.” *“Ekam eva saccidānanda-rasādi-rūpaṁ tattvam”*⁵⁰ – [He is] the one truth, the form of knowledge, eternity, bliss, and all *rasa*.” Remember the verse *“harir eva sadārādhyah sarva-deveśvareśvaraḥ, itare brahma-rudrādyā nāvajñeyo kadācan”*⁵¹ – Hari alone is forever worshipful, the Lord of all lords of the gods. On the other hand, one should never disregard Brahmā, Rudrā, and others.” When someone does not have a certain capability, it does not matter how much you entreat them with heart and soul. Without a capacity like that of the master, how can the employees have the authority to grant benedictions or fulfil cherished desires? What you said to answer your friend’s question was correct. *“Tasmin tuṣṭe jagat tuṣṭaṁ prīṇite prīṇitaṁ jagat.* – If Kṛṣṇa is satisfied, the whole world is satisfied. Pleasing Him pleases the world.” *“Yat pūjanena vibudhāḥ pitaro ’rcitās ca, tuṣṭā bhavanti ṛṣi-bhūta-saloka-pālā, sarve grahās-taraṇi-soma-kūjādi-mukhyāḥ.”* *“Govindam-ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi.”* You should study these verses in this context.

(1b) When I was lecturing in your house, I said that Vaiṣṇavas are the real *śāktas*. A person initiated with a *viṣṇu-mantra* is a Vaiṣṇava, and one who has initiation with a *śakti-mantra* is a *śakta*. This is the general rule. In order to follow the rules, you have to accept the exceptions also. “Exception proves the rule.” When it comes to merits and demerits or *anvaya* (concordance) and *vyatireka* (discordance), only examination of these two aspects side by side can reveal excellence and all-around beauty. The foundation of the *tattva-vastu* depends on accepting the positive and the negative, both states of its being. When we speak of *śakti*, we are referring to *antarāṅga*, *bahiraṅgā*, and *taṭasthā* – these three main *śaktis*. *Antarāṅga* is *svarūpa-śakti*, *bahiraṅgā* is *māyā-śakti*, and *taṭasthā* is *jīva-śakti*. Only those who accept Rādhā, She who bewilders the mind of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and are following the guidance of that *hlādinī-śakti*, the embodiment of *mahābhāva*, are truly under the shelter of the *svarūpa-śakti* and are therefore the true *śāktas*. Those who do not know that Durgā-devī, who is worshipped in this material realm and is the presiding goddess of this Devī-dhāma, is *māyā-śakti* and offer her their faith as the *mūlā-prakṛti*, or root force of nature, are *biddha-śāktas*, or *śāktas* only in name. One person is subservient to the empress and the other is fit to be punished by her maidservant. The hankerings for wealth, resources, and worldly pleasure and affluence are the causes of bondage. The people of the world worship Māyā-devī by the names Durgā and Kālī. *Cit-śakti* is Kṛṣṇa’s *svarūpa-śakti*. Māyā is Her shadow. The *jīva* who is averse to Kṛṣṇa lusts for worldly sense objects from this material Māyā and thereby becomes cheated. Hence, there is

⁵⁰ From Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī’s commentary on *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.233)

⁵¹ *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.116)

no difference between the *viśuddha-śākta* (immaculately pure worshipper of energy) and the Vaiṣṇava. Those who do not take shelter of *cit-śakti* and have faith only in *māyā-śakti*, are not Vaiṣṇavas, though they are *śāktas*. In other words, they are simply blinded by infatuation with the objects of the senses.

(2) After receiving *dīkṣā*, the initiated person is qualified to perform *arcana* (worship) of Śālagrāma and other forms of the deity. For the *kanīṣṭha-adhikārī* (neophyte), *arcana* is prescribed, and the *mahā-bhāgavatas* perform *bhāva-sevā* (internal service by moods of the heart). Through *arcana* and by the influence of good association, a person of delicate faith gradually attains an elevated life. In the age of Kali, no matter which limb of *bhakti* one performs, one must perform *bhakti* characterized by *kīrtana*. That is to say, one must perform *pūjā* and *arcana* in tandem with *kīrtana* of the *mahā-mantra*. In regard to the duties of a person who has received *dīkṣā*, scripture states: “*ādau guru-padāśrayas tasmāt kṛṣṇa-dīkṣādi-śikṣaṇam, viśrambhena guroḥ sevā sādhu-vartmānuvartanam*”⁵² – first, after taking shelter of a bona fide *guru* and taking initiation in *kṛṣṇa-mantra*, the disciple must obtain instruction in all that is expected of him, render sincere service to *śrī gurudeva*, and proceed on life’s path, on the path of *bhajana-sādhana*, according to the words of *sādhu*, *guru*, and *śāstra*.” Serving the *arcā-vigraha* (deity form) via sixteen types of offerings and with *maryādā*, or great reverence, is called *arcana*. This *arcana* is one particular limb of *navadhā-bhakti*. Though there are many ceremonial aspects of *arcana*, *mantra* is predominant. *Arcana* without *mantra* is fruitless, and *śrī nāma* is the main subject of *mantra*. *Śrī nāma-kīrtana* alone is advised for the performance of all types of undertakings of service. Hence, *śrī nāma* is the topmost and the supreme perfection. Mandates are given for the initiated individual to observe proper Vaiṣṇava etiquette and render special service on Hari-vāsara [Ekādaśī] and other holy days.

(3) Śrī Bhagavān cannot rightfully accept the *pūjā* and *arcana* of an uninitiated person. It can be compared to an unmarried girl not having the qualification to serve her future husband before their wedding. The non-Vaiṣṇava does not have *dīkṣā*, and a person who has *dīkṣā* from a *guru* who is not a Vaiṣṇava does not have the qualification to worship Viṣṇu. Persons initiated by a bona fide *guru* according to *pāñcarātri*ka guidelines are qualified to perform *arcana* of Śrī Śālagrāma-śilā, regardless of whether they are a male or female, born of any of the four castes, born of intercaste, or even an outcaste pedigree. According to the *śāstras*, a person who is initiated with a *viṣṇu-mantra* attains the spiritual status of a *brāhmaṇa*. Each and every person who has *dīkṣā* is surely required to engage in *pūjā*, etc. of the *śrī arcā-vigraha* with faith.

⁵² *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.74)

For persons who are agitated, *pūjārcana* and chanting *gāyatrī*, etc. prove particularly fruitful in reigning in the mind. *Pūjārcana* performed prior to accepting *dīkṣā* is mere play, like little boys and girls playing with dolls, having the dolls get married or dressing them up, having them cook, etc. Still, this sort of practice does establish them in the real thing, so its utility has been somewhat accepted. In the preliminary stages, they are immersed just in that imaginary play, and even though they do not meet with the intended people, they do find a certain mental peace. An uninitiated person's faith and *pūjā* remains at this level.

(4) Chanting *japa* on beads is also a type of *abhyāsa-yoga* (the *yoga* of practice) and is therefore important. It is not proper to give up chanting on beads because other thoughts occur when one sits to chant. How can one whose mind has not given up restlessness chant *śrī nāma* in their mind at all times? How can one whose heart is full of thoughts of sense objects obtain the inspiration to chant Bhagavān's name? *Śāstra* does not advise that one should first make the mind very steady and then chant *Śrī Bhagavān's* name. What has been said in *śāstra* is that if one performs *japa* of *śrī nāma* on one's beads or sits on an *āsana*, or seat, and performs *japa* or chants *śrī nāma* in any sort of condition, then the mind will become calm and steady. “*Nāmāparādha-yuktānām nāmāni eva haranti agham*”⁵³ – only the holy name can remove the stain of offences to the holy name.” This is the immaculate conception and proper policy. *Śrī nāma* alone destroys all sins, faults, and blunders. *Śrī nāma* alone is the *sādhana*, or practice, and the *sādhya*, or goal. Those who object to chanting on beads (*mālā-japa*) are misguided and opportunistic. “*Mālā-jape śālā, karo jape bhāi, je man man jape, usko balihārī jāi* – you are chanting on your beads, *śālā*? You are chanting on your fingers, brother? But to whoever chants in his mind I say bravo!”

They believe in this sort of proverb. In other words, they are not in any way reliable. Islam and Christianity also have the practice of chanting on beads. It is absent only from the nihilist and pantheist traditions. Worshipers of the five Hindu deities (*pañcopāsakas*) and those who believe in many gods are also counted in this category of opportunists.

(5) By practicing the process of *vaidhī-bhakti*, one attains *prema-bhakti*, which is beyond rules and regulations. If one does not observe *vidhī*, where is the possibility of attaining *prema-bhakti*? Rule, rite, and ritualism are referred to as *vidhī*, and free spontaneous attachment to Godhead is called *rāga*. There remain differences between the categories of *kaniṣṭha*-, *madhyama*-, and *uttama-adhikārīs*, which one will surely have to accept. *Prema-bhakti* does not follow *vaidhī-bhakti*; it is not subservient to it, but *sādhākas* and *sādhikās* must cross through

⁵³ *Padma Purāṇa*

and surpass this stage. One does not complement the other. But in the preliminary stage, one must proceed according to the rules. *Vidhi* has no place in *prema-bhakti* or the *rāgānuga-rāgātmika* path. There, the soul's inherent, natural attraction takes shape and manifests. This state of being is the *jīva*'s ultimate aspiration. The way the *gopīs* of Vraja worshipped Kṛṣṇa is the pure form of service.

(6) Writing “Hare Kṛṣṇa” in your notebook is also a form of *anuśīlana* (cultivation). It has been instructed that one engage each and every sense in the service of Bhagavān. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [9.4.18–20], the example of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja's life has proven that. The “*sa vai manaḥ kṛṣṇa-padāravindayoḥ*” verse explains how to serve Hṛṣīkeśa Śrī Kṛṣṇa with all of one's senses. Writing is also a part of *abhyāsa-yoga*. Everyone must proceed according to the traditions of their own *sampradāya*. Writing articles, studying scripture, chanting *śrī nāma*, and hearing *hari-kathā* – these are among the limbs of *bhakti*. I will instruct you as to how you may proceed along the proper path. Śrī Bhagavān will surely fulfil your innermost desires. Whether or not you need to take the permission of your mother and father in this regard is something only you know.

Try to come to Navadvīpa and bring your mother with you. You will have the opportunity to take profuse amounts of *prasāda*. Gaurī [Pārvatī] becomes Vimalā-devī in Śrī Kṣetra and distributes Śrī Jagannātha's *prasāda*. Why would you not obtain that qualification too? Go to Navadvīpa with everyone you can bring prior to Dola (Gaura Pūrṇimā). Today this is as far as I will go. Please accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Servant of the servant of the Vaiṣṇavas,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 11

Desiring to visit the *dhāma* • Chanting without offences • *Guru* has more love and affection for his daughters because he is *śakti* • Our guardians favour their youngest and most foolish • The characteristics of the genuine *guru* and disciple • The scriptures are always uniquely accessible

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
7/4/1972

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! The ability to pacify the mind by any means possible is the definition of determination and steadiness.⁵⁴ Know for certain that herein lie surrender and auspiciousness. Who does not have a desire to hear the glories of holy places and *śrī dhāma* and visit them in the company of *sādhus*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas? Therefore, both nurturing this fine desire and lamenting the obstacles to its fulfilment are favourable for the performance of *bhajana*. In the future, your *sukṛti* (spiritual merits) and good fortune will grant you the opportunity to behold *śrī dhāma* in the association of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, so do not let your mind be disturbed.

The unconditional mercy of *sādhū* and *guru* amounts to all the provisions the soul requires. Souls bound by *māyā* turn toward Kṛṣṇa by the mercy of *guru*. Simplicity of heart and freedom from offences enable one to appreciate the grace of Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Not becoming inclined toward *bhajana* is the greatest misfortune and the worst of luck. Śrīman Mahāprabhu taught the world when he expressed His humility to Prakāśananda Sarasvatī:

*guru more mūrkhā dekhi karilo śāsana
mūrkhā tumi, tomār nāhi vedāntādhikāra
kṛṣṇa-nāma japa sadā,—ei mantra sāra*⁵⁵

[My *guru* saw that I was a fool and chastised me, saying: “You are a fool; you are not qualified to study Vedānta. Chant Kṛṣṇa’s name always – this is the essence of all *mantras*.”]

⁵⁴ Śrīmatī Umā Dīdī: “He had promised to take me to Purī, but could not, due to considerations of etiquette.”

⁵⁵ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 7.71–72)

Thus this is the greatest nectar of instruction and blessing for the souls of this world. “*Niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana*⁵⁶ – if one chants the holy name without offences, one will attain the treasure of divine love.” To perform *kīrtana* of a fixed number of the *mahā-mantra*, consisting of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables, utterly free from offence is the greatest of all instructions.

You are pained that you would be able to render more service to me directly if you were not my daughter but my son! The words son and daughter are used because there are two fields [roles] in which specialities of service exist. And if the soul of the living entity is proven by scripture to be a form of *śakti*, feminine potency, then what objection can one have about being a daughter? “*Gītā-śāstre jīva-rūpa śakti kari’ māne* – in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the form of the soul is deemed to be that of *śakti*.” This you have read in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [*Madhya-līlā* 6.163]. The possessor of infinite potencies, *līlā-puruṣottama* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the sole enjoyer, and as His potencies, all souls are His maidservants, to be enjoyed by Him. *Śrī gurudeva* is also *āśraya-jātiya-vigraha*, Śrī Bhagavān’s beloved maidservant. Hence, though as *guru-tattva* he has fatherhood imposed on him, because he is *śakti*, he has more love and affection for his daughters. As long as gross misidentification with male or female genders persists, it is not possible to serve the ever-fresh Cupid, Śrī Gopīnātha, in person. Only if the soul can relinquish from its core, *yoṣit-bhāva* (the attachment between man and woman), does Śrī Bhagavān bestow upon the soul the qualification for His service, wherein there is no predominance of mundane masculinity or femininity. You will attain the fruit of direct service by means of *parokṣa*, or *bhāva-sevā* [indirect service via an inner mood], which makes *bhāva-sevā* a practical or tangible phenomenon. Scripture has accepted the eternity of the object of service, the servant, and service itself – all three. “*Nitāyer caraṇa satya, tāhāra sevaka nitya*⁵⁷ – the feet of Nitāi are truth and His servant is eternal.”

If the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* can grasp the matter of their own ineligibility, it means the possibility of their well-being has revealed itself. This is a proven fact. Mundane egotism and duplicity are the crucial hindrances to performing *sādhana-bhajana*; they make the soul blind with delusions, which jettisons him far from the path of *bhakti*. You have written, calling yourself my only “ineligible child”. That is precisely why I am so worried and concerned about how you can become qualified, how you can maintain your existence in this earthly world and in the spiritual world. “*Je jata patita haya, tava dayā tata tāya*⁵⁸ – the more fallen one is, the more merciful You are.” This statement proves that nurturing, caretaking teachers and guardians favour their

⁵⁶ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya-līlā* 4.71)

⁵⁷ *Prārthanā, Nitāi-pada-kamala* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

⁵⁸ *Śrī Bhajana-rahasya* (3.13) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

youngest, most foolish children and keep a sharp, watchful eye on them. Expressing the feelings of the heart does not require a different sort of language. A toddler's incoherent babbling is the language of his heart, and that is how he draws everyone's attention.

Scripture allows for one to employ a tactic of indifference toward those who are malicious. Neglect of those who bear malice toward Bhagavān and His devotees is their due punishment. Disciplined persons accept such punishment in a positive way and are worthy of the title “disciple”. A real, bona fide *sad-guru* does not make anyone his disciple; he sees them as the opulence of Śrī Bhagavān, who is the supreme object of his service. Śrī *guru-pādapadma*, who is Kṛṣṇa's beloved, has conveyed his eternal form to be that of an “*ayogya-kinkarī* – unworthy maidservant”. In the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Chapters 80–81, in the story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā, Guru Śrī Sāṅdīpani defines the duties of a bona fide disciple as follows: “A disciple's discipline is to follow the *guru*'s orders without question, and full surrender is the measure of accepting that discipline.” It is by affectionate punishment that the heart is surely purified. Each and every genuine *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* wants only to advance along his or her life path according to *śrī guru-pādapadma*'s orders, directions, instructions, and wishes.

The delay in responding to your letter is not indicative of your misfortune. The soul's independence and self-determination are only ever auspicious if they are subservient to Śrī Bhagavān's will. Śrī Bhagavān is supremely compassionate, and attaining His causeless mercy is indicative of good fortune. His pastimes are infinite and His glories are infinite; it is only by the light of His mercy that we can truly behold Him and realize His glory. By the grace of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, dumb men become talkative and cripples gain the ability to scale mountains. “*Kākere garūḍa kare aiche dayāmaya*”⁵⁹ – so merciful is He that He turns crows into eagles.” Even if you are ignorant, you will gain knowledge, and as per my wish, you will try to write articles and poems on many topics. Study *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* routinely. Read *Śrī Caritāmṛta*, *Jaīva-dharma*, *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, *Upadeśāmṛta*, *Śaraṇāgati*, and *Śrī Gauḍīya-gīti-guccha* routinely. In the absence of face-to-face company with *sādhus*, there is *sādhū-saṅga* via scripture, which, in other words, means that the study of authoritative scriptures is something that is always uniquely accessible. In order to become acquainted with *sat-siddhānta* (pure conclusions) it is imperative to study the various sacred texts in a calm and steady fashion. This is what will solidify the proclivity for *bhakti*. ... *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁵⁹ See *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 12.182)

Letter 12

Śāstrīya sādhu-saṅga* makes the heart resolute • Akrura's longing to see Kṛṣṇa • The merit of prayer • It is impossible to control the mind without taking shelter of a *guru* • The characteristics of *sādhu* according to *Bhāgavatam* • The glory of *guru-tattva

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Goloka-gaṇja Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Golakganj (Dhubri), Assam
6/6/1972

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! Quite a long time ago, I received a letter from you containing several questions. Due to the pressure of numerous other tasks, I could not give a prompt response to your letter, so please do not be disturbed. Please forgive me for this unintentional error. Meanwhile, I have tried twice to send *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* to you, but I could not communicate properly with you. I thus have sufficient proof on my end that I have been thinking of you. When you demand said proof, I will produce it.

I hope that you are studying and discussing *Śrī Patrikā* and other sacred literatures on a regular basis. It is by the power of *sukṛti* accumulated in previous births that one obtains good association and thereby the awakening of *tattva-jñāna* and the attainment of *bhagavad-bhakti*. The instruction that one should take advantage of *sādhu-saṅga* in the form of sacred *granthas* is given for when obstacles are created in hearing and reciting *hari-kathā* in direct *sādhu-saṅga*. If one does not take advantage of it, one will be compelled to be deprived of this sort of opportunity. By doing so, one's heart becomes resolute, and as one-pointed conviction arises, the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*'s longing to perform *bhagavad-bhajana* greatly increases. To have this sort of conviction in the service of their beloved and supremely worshipful Śrī Bhagavān is the cherished ambition of each and every *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*. By hearing, chanting, and remembering the name, form, pastimes, etc. of Śrī Bhagavān, one's attachment to Him increases exponentially. That is why there is the instruction of performing *anukūla-kṛṣṇānuśīlana* (favourably cultivating love for Kṛṣṇa).

In *Bhāgavatam* (10.38), we find the topic of Śrī Akrura's hopeful meditations upon Kṛṣṇa. Longing for *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa, he says, "Shortly, I will surely be able to behold in tangible form the *guru* and refuge of all saintly persons, the supremely charming and greatly delightful Śrī Hari, the origin of Lakṣmīpati Nārāyaṇa. As soon as I see Him, I will prostrate myself at His beautiful lotus feet, which are the abode of freedom from sorrow, fear, and death, and before the cowherd boys alongside Him. Then, upon my head, which will be laid at His feet, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will offer those lotus hands of His which grant fearlessness to all mankind. Indra and Balirāja gained authority over the three worlds by offering *arghya* (scented water) into these lotus hands. That all-seeing Supersoul, the Supreme Lord, will cast His merciful glance upon me and, in that moment, I too will be freed of all sins and become sanctified."

If one does not offer such moods of devotion unto Puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one's birth is fruitless and meaningless. Śrī Bhagavān does not have favourites, friends, enemies, people He does not like, or people He neglects; nevertheless, whatever you pray for from a *kalpa-vṛkṣa* tree is what you will get. In *Śrī Gītā* [9.29, 4.11], Śrī Bhagavān has conveyed this by saying: "*samo 'haṁ sarva-bhūteṣu, na me dveṣyo 'sti na priyaḥ* – I am equal to all living beings; I do not have enemies or favourites" and "*ye yathā mām pradyante, tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham* – as all take shelter of Me, I reciprocate accordingly." These sorts of hopes and longings of the *premika-bhakta* who has attained *anurāga* for Śrī Bhagavān transport him to the highest levels of *bhajana*.

Of the various qualities of the devotee who wishes to ascend the levels of *prema*, the topic of *māna-śunya*tā (freedom from pride) and *samutkaṇṭhā* (intense eagerness) has been described. Śrī Akrura says: "What austerities have I performed, what pious works have I undertaken, and what charity have I given to which exalted recipient that has enabled me to attain the *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa today. Just as the recitation of the Vedas is impossible for those deluded by sensual pleasures, for *śūdras* and fallen *brāhmaṇas*, it is a highly unlikely prospect for me to come face-to-face with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then again, though I am fallen, it is not impossible for me to obtain Kṛṣṇa's *darśana*. Just as sometimes one of many blades of grass caught in the current of a river can come upon its banks, sometimes one of the living entities being swept along by time as per the dictates of *karma* can cross over the ocean of material existence. Today all my inauspiciousness has been destroyed and my birth has become a success, because I have attained the opportunity to bow at the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān, which are contemplated by exalted *yogīs*."

And so, it is with this sort of hope and burning aspiration that one must maintain one's steadfastness in performing *bhajana-sādhana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, the Lord of life itself. It has

been taught that one take shelter of a bona fide *guru* to perform this sort of *anuśilana* and *sādhana-bhajana*. The necessity of accepting a *guru* is made explicit in these words: “*āśraya laiya bhaje, tāre kṛṣṇa nāhi tyaje, āra saba mare akāraṇa*”⁶⁰ – Kṛṣṇa does not abandon those who take shelter of the Vaiṣṇavas and worship Him; all others perish for no reason.”

Those who attempt to subdue the horse of the mind, which is difficult to tame even for the immortals and those who have conquered their senses, without the shelter of the feet of a *guru*, are ignorant to the means of their own spiritual development. They are suffering and afflicted by hundreds and hundreds of obstacles. Thus, they reap only sorrow in this ocean of material existence, like a merchant at sea without a captain. If the refuge of all, the supremely blissful and omniscient *guru*, is present as one’s protector, then there is no purpose in having relatives, a body, wealth, home, land, vehicles, etc. Human beings who are unacquainted with these transcendental matters and absorbed in the pleasures of *māyā* cannot, by nature, contribute bliss to the ever-perishable and inessential world of material existence. Those prideless saints who are known as the destroyers of all sins because they hold Śrī Bhagavān’s beautiful lotus feet in their hearts serve the Earth’s many holy places and *śrī dhāma*. Because they absorb their heart in the eternal blissful Śrī Bhagavān, they do not serve the blind well of family life, which robs one of discernment, steadiness, tolerance, peace, and other positive tendencies. Persons whose hearts are absorbed in Śrī Bhagavān do not probe the virtues and flaws of their sinful and pious activities. Because their bodily identification and false ego are wholly absent, they are even above all injunctions and prohibitions. It is because such persons are constantly singing the pastimes of Bhagavān that individuals who do not know anything of the Truth can grasp said recitations of Bhagavān’s qualities and ultimately attain the shelter of Śrī Bhagavān, who embodies their own truest welfare. By imparting this sort of instruction on the subject of *ātma-tattva* (the truths of the soul) and conferring unto Nārada Ṛṣi *ātma-jñāna* (knowledge of the soul), Śrī Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi revealed the esoteric truth of all the Vedas and Purāṇas and illustrated the necessity of accepting a *guru* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87).

One who adopts the instructions of *śrī guru* is illuminated by divine knowledge, following the instructions of Bhagavān in the form of *guru* is the only means to cross over the ocean of material existence, and it is serving *guru* that satisfies Kṛṣṇa, to which end one is to offer one’s whole heart and soul. On the topic of attaining all perfection and real peace by pleasing *guru*, it has been stated (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.80): “The mother and father from whom one

⁶⁰ *Prārthanā, Ṭhākura Vaiṣṇava-pada* (1) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

takes human birth in this realm are one's first *guru* of the worldly sort. Thereafter, one who gives this person the sacred thread and instructs him in the Vedic scriptures is the second *guru*. And one who grants those in all *āśramas* knowledge in the form of *dīkṣā* into the *viṣṇu-mantra* is the topmost *guru*; he is said to be *bhagavat-svarūpa*, the form of God Himself." In this realm of men, those among the followers of *varṇāśrama* who adopt the instructions of Śrī Bhagavān in the form of *guru* happily cross over the ocean of material existence. As the Supersoul situated within all living beings, Śrī Bhagavān does not gain from the observance of *gr̥hasṭha* or *brahmacārī* vows the kind of satisfaction He derives from a person's dedicated service to *guru*. Disciples offer their bodies, minds, and words in every respect with devotion for the sake of *gurudeva*, thereby offering the whole of their hearts to said bona fide *guru* and proving their full-fledged surrender. If that bona fide *guru* is satisfied, all the disciples' ambitions reach perfection and, by his gracious blessings, knowledge of the Vedas manifests in their hearts. Many topics remain to be discussed in relation to *guru-tattva*. Take my hearty blessings.

Write and send me your questions once again. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 13

Śrī guru and Bhagavān’s incomparable mercy • The power of humility • The detriment of pride • Giving up bad association and offences • Deliberations on guru-tattva • The speciality of madhura-rasa

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Goloka-gaṅja Gauḍīya Maṭha
Golakganj, (Dhubri) Assam
6/6/1972

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Śrī guru, the Vaiṣṇavas, and Śrī Bhagavān – these three are omniscient. They are seers of the truth and speakers of the truth. The causeless compassion they extend to the conditioned souls in ways that are unfathomable to them is truly incomparable to anything else in this world. A soul who possesses sufficient spiritual merit can grasp something of their unsurpassed compassion. Śrī guru and Bhagavān see into the heart. To unfold the inner

“To unfold the inner love and devotion of the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*, śrī guru and Śrī Bhagavān fulfil their desires in ways known and unknown and, in this way, solidify their conviction in *sādhana-bhajana*.”

love and devotion of the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*, śrī guru and Śrī Bhagavān fulfil their desires in ways known and unknown and, in this way, solidify their conviction in *sādhana-bhajana*. If one does not become exclusively dedicated to *bhajana*, where is the chance one will reap any real result? “*Uttama haiyā āpanāre māne tṛṇādhamā*⁶¹ – an exalted person deems himself more insignificant than a piece of straw.” This mentality itself is the qualification or criterion for obtaining the mercy of śrī guru and Bhagavān. If the inclination for devotion fails to arise, is there any scope for unsolicited mercy? Unconditional mercy is not subject to stipulations, but in a state bereft of devotion, it is not attainable. “*Yogyatā vicāre kichu nāhi pāi, tomāra karuṇā sāra*⁶² – when I consider my eligibility, I find nothing; your compassion is essential.” This is the prayer of *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* expressing

their humility. Though established in full qualification to attain śrī guru and Bhagavān’s grace,

⁶¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 20.22)

⁶² Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Kṛpā-bindu Diyā (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura

the devotee is accustomed to expressing such natural humility; and that is his virtue or wealth [that he has accrued] from spiritual practice, and it is this that is the devotee's prowess.

As long as mundane conceit and egotism remain, causeless mercy is something one fails to realize. That is what inhibits the fulfillment of one's longing to serve, and one fails to feel [śrī guru and Bhagavān's] omniscience. It is when the conditioned soul is gripped by mundane vanity that he becomes trapped in foolish arrogance, like the frog that puffs itself up till it bursts, thinking its little earthen dish is the whole of the Earth. Those who have found shelter, however, overcome all obstacles and adversities on the strength of *bhakti* and shine with the divine, unsurpassable compassion of śrī guru and Bhagavān. “*Aśoka-abhaya, amṛta-ādhāra, tomāra caraṇa-dvaya; tāhāte ekhana, viśrāma labhiyā, chāḍīnu bhavera bhaya*⁶³ – having found solace now at Your two lotus feet which, being the foundations of immortality, rid one of sorrow and fear, I have shed my mortal terror.” This is the ardent prayer of a devotee who is resolute in his conviction to serve. “*Śrī guru-vaiṣṇava-bhagavān—tinera smaraṇa, tinera smaraṇe haya viḡhna vināśana*⁶⁴ – remembrance of śrī guru, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān destroys all obstacles.” Extolling their qualities cleanses the heart and eradicates all the vices and impediments related to *bhajana*. Those who are sincerely absorbed in hearing, chanting, and remembering the glories of śrī guru and Bhagavān cannot retain any vanity or egotism. Initiated into the *dharma* of honouring all others with no expectation of respect, they have already abandoned all these adversities to *bhajana*. This is a conclusive fact. “*Vaiṣṇavera guṇa-gāna, karile jīvera trāṇa* – singing the Vaiṣṇavas' glories delivers the living entity.” According to this statement, it is essential to offer prayers, praises, and hymns to śrī guru and Vaiṣṇavas, even though they are “equipoised and content in their own achievements – *svenaiva lābhena samam praśāntam*⁶⁵”. Those who have taken shelter at the feet of a genuine guru have already deserted bad company, because only by establishing themselves in proper conduct could they have proceeded to accept a guru. Once strong conviction in *bhajana* comes, one abandons all types of bad association – no matter how near and dear those persons may be, knowing them to be “*svajanākhyā dasyu* – dacoits calling themselves relatives”. If you are to walk the

**“As long as
mundane conceit
and egotism
remain,
causeless mercy
is something
one fails
to realize.”**

⁶³ *Ātma-nivedana* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁶⁴ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 1.21)

⁶⁵ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.9.22)

**“If you are to
walk the path
of *bhajana*,
you must
certainly be
wary of
offences,
but retreating
will not do.”**

path of *bhajana*, you must certainly be wary of offences, but retreating will not do. “*Aparādha-śunya haiyā laho kṛṣṇa-nāma* – be devoid of offences and take the name of Kṛṣṇa.” This is Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s instruction. “*Niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana*⁶⁶ – if one utters the holy name without offence, one attains the wealth of divine love.” “*Prema-dhana vinā vyartha daridra jīvana*⁶⁷ – without the wealth of divine love, this life is worthless and destitute.” This is why it is instructed that one stay far away from the blasphemy of saintly persons, the scriptures, and *guru*. Although in preliminary stages one may be chanting the holy name with some offences, by the grace of Śrī Nāma Prabhu, all offences are dispelled.

“*Guru mātā, guru pitā, guru hana pati*⁶⁸ – *guru* is mother, *guru* is father, *guru* is husband.” There is nothing in this statement of the *mahājanas* that is opposed to the established philosophical conclusions or flawed by any improper sentiment of *rasābhāsa*. *Gurudeva* is *āśraya-vigraha* (the personified abode of divine love). He is Śrī Bhagavān’s beloved maidservant. The principle of *śrī guru* is that of *śakti* (potency), or *prakṛti* (divine feminine nature). Teaching others to serve Śrī Bhagavān is his natural function. He is a *gopikā*, one eligible to serve under the direction of the *sakhīs*. In the pastimes of Śrī Bhagavān, who is the supreme enjoyer and *viśaya-vigraha* (personified object of divine love), he is a beloved, highly adept in amorous service. “*Choḍata puruṣa abhimāna, kinkarī hailū āji kāna; varaja-vipine sakhī-sātha, sevana karabū rādhānātha*⁶⁹ – abandoning my male ego, today I have become Your maidservant, O Kāna. In the forest of Vraja, in the company of the *sakhīs*, I will serve You, O Rādhānātha.” This is the natural position of perfected souls. Outwardly, though garbed in male form, they are *sakhīs* (girlfriends) or *dāsīs* (maidservants) who have achieved the mood of *gopīs*. Facilitating the love sports (*līlā-vilāsa*) of the transcendental, ever-fresh Cupid is their sole service.

**“The principle
of *śrī guru* is
that of *śakti*
(potency).
He is a *gopikā*.”**

One must know *śrī gurudeva* to be *bhagavat-svarūpa* (the form of God) but, when Śrī Bhagavān Himself descends in the form of *guru*, then He is resolutely *viśaya-vigraha*. Though

⁶⁶ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.71)

⁶⁷ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 20.37)

⁶⁸ Āśraya Kariyā Vandō (7) by Śrī Sanātana dāsa

⁶⁹ Śaraṇāgati, Choḍata Puruṣa Abhimāna (1–2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

He acts like the *āśraya-vigraha*, He is in truth the supreme enjoyer and object of all service. In that case, why would it be wrong to address *guru* as *pati* (protector)? *Guru* is one indivisible principle, but in discerning that principle, there are different specialities or wondrous features. There are various designations, such as *antaryāmī* (Supersoul), *caitya-* (inner guide), and *mahānta-guru* (the saint or religious figure). Thus, if one is addressing that indivisible total principle, there is no fault in referring to that *viśaya-vigraha* Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, who is Puruṣottama, the supreme male, as *pati*, even when He manifests His pastimes as the *āśraya-vigraha*. The Vaiṣṇava stalwarts have written the above verse after thorough deliberation of all the various aspects of *guru-tattva*.

Furthermore, the love shared by a husband and wife is quite different from the nurturing affection a mother and father have for their child. No matter how old a son or daughter gets, in the eyes of the mother and father, he or she will always be the beneficiary of their affection or, in other words, junior. Between a husband and wife, however, there is a level field – they are the same. The equality among friends, even though they are like “one life, one soul”, still retains a sense of inequity. In *vātsalya-bhāva* also, there is a sense of younger and older, one party being the dependent, the other being the caregiver. But in conjugal love, there is no intervening distance, even though some rules and restrictions are imposed on it. “*Sevya-sevaka sambhoge dvayor-bhedaḥ kuto bhavet? vipralambhe tu sarvasya bhedaḥ sadā vivardhate*⁷⁰ – in the union of master and servant, where is the difference between them? In separation, however, there is an ever-increasing disparity.” This verse substantiates the intimacy and equality that exists between husband and wife. This is why when we offer *tulasī* leaves at the feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s form that is embraced by Śrī Rādhā, we are offering *tulasī* at Śrī Rādhārāṇī’s feet⁷¹, but when Their forms are separate, Śrī Rādhā cannot accept *tulasī* at Her feet. On the other hand, you see, in this mundane world, there are differences between male and female. In Goloka-Vṛndāvana, Puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only male and all others are His

**“This is why when
we offer *tulasī* leaves
at the feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s
form that is embraced
by Śrī Rādhā,
we are offering *tulasī*
at Śrī Rādhārāṇī’s feet,
but when Their forms
are separate,
Śrī Rādhā cannot
accept *tulasī*
at Her feet.”**

⁷⁰ *Rādhā-vinoda-bihārī-tattvāṣṭakam* (2)

⁷¹ In other words, the only time we offer *tulasī* leaves at the feet of Śrīmatī Rādhikā is when we offer them at Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s feet.

śakti or *sevikās* (female servants). The *Gītā* scripture states that the *jīva* is *śakti* and is therefore an abstract noun or, in other words, a characteristic, or function, of Śrī Bhagavān; hence, it is never possible for the *jīva* to be the enjoyer. In the material world, a woman or wife experiences three stages of life: as daughter, as wife, and as mother. Each of these three stages has specialities and differences. As daughter and mother, there are the exchanges of parental affection, and as a wife, the advent of amorous love. The mood of servitude exists within each type of *rati*, in *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *madhura*, yet each *rasa* has its own unique speciality. So, in the case of *akhaṇḍa-pūrṇa guru-tattva* (the indivisible, complete principle of *śrī guru*), if one were to use the word *pati*, it must be understood to be directed strictly towards the *viṣaya-vigraha*. Full submission of the self is the exclusive aim of every *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*. If fullness does not come in *sādhana*, Bhagavān will be very far away. Draupadī as well as the Vraja-kumārīs are evidence of this.

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 14

The real purpose of fasting • The superiority of *bhakti* • The difference between Hinduism and Vaiṣṇavism • The power of *sādhū-saṅga* • How to recognize true *sādhū*s

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Brahma-Mādhva Gauḍīya Maṭha
Bongaigaon (Assam)
26/7/1972

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! From today, this full moon day, *cāturmāsya-vrata* starts. Bearing in their hearts the memory of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, the Śrī Keśava-Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas always observe this *vrata*. I hope that you too are ready to follow in the footsteps of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta and observe this *vrata* with one-pointed focus. You are already acquainted with the rules and prohibitions for observing *cāturmāsya-vrata* and have also become accustomed to following it. Needless to say, you should definitely give up greens in the month of Śrāvaṇa, yoghurt in the month of Bhādra, milk during Āśvina, and *āmiṣa*⁷² during Kārtika. Besides these items, bottle gourd, eggplant, basella (vine spinach), pointed gourd, asparagus beans, lima beans, split red lentil, black gram, and water spinach are totally forbidden for all four months. *Sādhakas* and *sādhikās* who desire to attain *bhakti* make every endeavour to please Kṛṣṇa by relinquishing all of these foodstuffs during this *vrata*.

**“The core
purpose of
observing fasts
and holy days
is the pleasure
of the Lord.”**

The core purpose of observing fasts and holy days is the pleasure of the Lord. Śrī Bhagavān does not accept any sort of service from either *bhoga-tyāgīs* [who artificially reject enjoyment] or from *tyāga-tyāgīs* [who neglect their vows of renunciation]. The *bhakta* is neither a *bhogī* nor a *tyāgī*. The *ku-karmīs*, *ku-jñānīs*, and *ku-yogīs* [*ku* meaning corrupt or misguided] are incapable of appreciating and beholding the transcendental efforts

⁷² *Āmiṣa* means meat, especially raw flesh, but can also refer to high protein foods, like *urad dahl* and sesame seeds, or to greasy, delectable foods as well.

devotees make in service of Bhagavān and the beauty of their *bhakti*. In a life of service, the devotees' every act and behaviour, every move they make, every habit and prudence, even everything they wear and adorn themselves with are considered favourable to *bhakti*. The purpose of *karma* is *bhakti*; the purpose of *jñāna* is to experience what one has heard about one's cherished objective or, in other words, *bhakti*; the purpose of *yoga* is to be utilized and united in the service of Śrī Bhagavān, which is *bhakti*. *Bhakti* and service – the two are synonymous. That is why only the devotees of Bhagavān are established in the genuine *dharma* of service. The service to living entities that the *ku-karmīs* invoke is a deceit born of unrealistic fantasy. The terms *jīva-sevā* (service to other entities) and *jīva-prema* (eternal love for other entities) are fictions, contrary to conclusive truth, and are illogical. One will never attain the result of service to Śrī Bhagavān by serving the conditioned souls' gross senses and becoming a regular purveyor of their bodily and mental demands. One can never attain a transcendental life of service by serving that which is inert or loving the illusory objects produced by *māyā*.

The soul bound by *māyā* and deprived of Bhagavān's service is preoccupied with serving inert objects, whereas the devotee of Viṣṇu, centred on Śrī Bhagavān, is ascendant on the path of *bhakti*. One individual indulges in the results of his actions; the other endeavours only to please Kṛṣṇa and is favourably absorbed in Kṛṣṇa. Living within *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*, the devotee of Bhagavān takes refuge of *sanātana-dharma*, whereas the non-devotee is devoid of devotion to Viṣṇu and identifies as a *pañcopāsakī* (worshipper of the five main Hindu deities), a pantheist, a nihilist, or a *māyāvādī*. Ordinary human beings earn themselves the designations Hindu and Smārta by regarding Śrī Bhagavān, who is beyond the three modes of material nature, beyond *māyā*, and beyond time itself, as just another entity who, although special, is nonetheless bound by the fruits of action. That is why the scriptures have noted two types of human society, namely, *daiva* (godly) and *asura* (demoniac). Demoniac persons, who are evil, foolish, abominable humans whose knowledge has been stolen by illusion and are absorbed in atheism, do not accept the shelter of Śrī Bhagavān, and they degrade themselves by ridiculing and disregarding the devotees of Viṣṇu.

In order to propagate these various truths and philosophical conclusions, scripture is recorded in *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika* versions, thus accommodating for and substantiating

**“The terms
jīva-sevā
(service to other
entities) and
jīva-prema
(eternal love for
other entities)
are fictions.”**

the behavioural differences between devotees and non-devotees. In some regions of India, due to the prevalence of certain demoniac forms of *varṇāśrama*, *pañcopāsana*, etc., the infrastructure of spiritual society has suffered decline, but the difference and speciality of *sanātana sāvata-smṛti* (eternal spiritual tradition) versus *jada-smṛti* (mundane tradition) is well established. Instead of considering the welfare of society, those who are bereft of devotion to Viṣṇu and uncivilized have created a mess in the world by propagating the notion of impersonal monism. They have attacked the pure conduct of Vaiṣṇavas, which must be followed by the devotees, and therefore, the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* who founded the authentic philosophical schools (*sat-sampradāyas*) have had to give special consideration to the welfare of spiritual society. By propagating proper devotional conduct and distributing bona fide spiritual texts, they have kept Vaiṣṇava philosophical conclusions intact. The sole motive in observing fasts for such *vratas* is devotion to Bhagavān. *Yoga* (connection with Bhagavān) is accepted as having greater significance than simply honouring a specific holy day. Only fasting – abstaining from food and drink – does not constitute the observance of *vrata*. Properly hearing and reciting *hari-kathā*, studying and discussing *Śrī Bhāgavata* and other *sāvata*⁷³ scriptures, chanting a fixed amount of *śrī nāma*, and engaging in Bhagavān's service and other such activities favourable to *bhakti* comprise the exclusive aim and duty of observing *cāturmāsya-vrata*. It is by cultivating these activities that one attains the actual fruit of observing the *vrata*.

“The sole motive in observing fasts for such *vratas* is devotion to Bhagavān.”

Compelled by the egotism of “I” and “mine”, souls enamoured with *māyā* undergo endless suffering in this material existence. Many, becoming selfish, whimsical, immoral, and lawless, are creating chaos in the world. Meanwhile, those of mankind who have turned towards God, becoming desperate for Śrī Bhagavān's mercy, adopt the path of negation and, by means of the *yoga* of renunciation, develop a fervour to serve Hṛṣikeśa (the Lord of senses) with all their senses, in a mood of propitious devotion. Simple-hearted *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* who believe in the words of *sādhū*, scripture, and *guru* are able to take to heart the super-excellence of *bhakti*. *Ku-karmīs*, *ku-jñānīs*, and *ku-yogīs* can never arrive at an adequate philosophical conclusion or determination via theoretical logic. Only those who, with the help of faith, perform *bhājana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with all their heart and soul are *bhakti-yogīs*, and only to them is the truth of Bhagavān

⁷³ Prior to the now popular designation of “*vaiṣṇava*”, various sects who held Viṣṇu as the supreme deity were referred to as “*sāvata*”, drawing on traditions of the Yadu dynasty itself, of whom one Sāvata, son of Devakṣatra, was a renowned king. Kṛṣṇa Himself is also known as Sāvata.

self-manifest. By the effect of genuine saintly company, one gains experiential understanding of the truths of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*. Besides the association of *sādhus* and the mercy of a bona fide *guru*, there is no other path by which one can obtain immaculate knowledge

**“For the souls
trapped in
māyā, the
association
of *sādhus* is
the greatest
medicine.”**

of the Truth. The flaws of previous impressions and education account for the different proclivities perceived in man.

For the souls trapped in *māyā*, the association of *sādhus* is the greatest medicine. Yet if a person is seen to have no eagerness for that association, it is indicative of particular misfortune and the worst of luck. If spiritual merit is lacking, there occurs a delay in attaining the company of genuine *sādhus*. For those who have performed *sādhana* in previous lives or in this life, it is easily obtainable. *Sādhus* and saintly personalities are always present in the world; if they are not present, the wheel of this world cannot revolve in its orderly fashion. Only if one makes the effort does one become eligible to behold them and attain their mercy. “*Viśvāse milāya vastu tarke bahu dūra* – through faith, one finds real substance, while doubt and debate put it very far away.” And: “*kaṣṭa karile-i kṛṣṇa mile* – only through struggle can one attain Kṛṣṇa.” In other words, only by practice does perfection come within reach.

Living entities caught up in *māyā* like lost travellers invoke and have regard for ideas like “This is good, this is bad, this is all a mistake,” thus becoming fraught with worry. The influence of *sādhū-saṅga* drives away all their doubts and uncertainties, and then they become capable of deciding which path they truly should follow. Contemplation of the sense objects and the thirst to collect such objects is the cause of bondage in *māyā*. *Sādhū* and *guru* can protect one from that very bondage posed by the objects of senses. “*Māyāre kariyā jaya chāḍāno nā jāya, sādhū-guru-kṛpā binā nā dekhi upāya*⁷⁴ – it is not possible to conquer and give up *māyā*; I see no other solution than the mercy of *sādhū* and *guru*.” Ignorance is only negated in *sādhū-saṅga* as *śraddhā*, *rati*, and *prema-bhakti* arise.

When one reads spiritual texts on one’s own, often one does not attain the real result of hearing and reciting *hari-kathā*. That is why it remains imperative for one to hear the sounds issuing from the mouths of *sādhū* and *guru*. Only within a *siddha* (perfected) *mantra* is all potency manifest, and only that yields special results. Hence, there is more benefit and welfare contained within *hari-kathā* issuing from the mouths of the devotees [than from spiritual texts]. Dry skeptics who are bereft of *sādhū-saṅga* are incapable of appreciating the necessity and attracting potency of *sādhū-saṅga*. That is why it is stated in *śāstra*: “*sādhū-saṅga, sādhū-saṅga—sarva-śāstre kaya, lava-*

⁷⁴ *Prārthanā*, Ki Rūpe Pāibo Sevā (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

*mātra sādhu-saṅge sarva-siddhi haya*⁷⁵ – all of the scriptures say that association with *sādhus*, association with *sādhus*, even a fraction of a second in the company of *sādhus*, affords all perfection.”

Who is a *sādhū*? This needs to be determined. If you call someone a *sādhū*, but it turns out they are *asat-saṅga* (bad company), then instead of auspiciousness, you will reap ruin. The words *sādhū*, *guru*, *Vaiṣṇava*, and *bhakta* are synonymous. A saint’s saintliness is not always proven by external traits; only their inner characteristics are the real measure of their being a *Vaiṣṇava*. Therefore, out of twenty-six qualities, only *kṛṣṇaika-śaraṇatā* (exclusive surrender to Kṛṣṇa) is the chief characteristic of *sādhū* and *guru*. To call a saint a rogue and a rogue a saint is a significant offence to the holy name: “*tattva nā bujhiye, jñāne vā ajñāne, (jadi) asate e-saba (dāna-pratigrahādi) kari; bhakti hārāinu, saṁsārī hainu, sudūre rahile hari; kṛṣṇa-bhakta-jane, e saṅga-lakṣaṇe, ādara karibe jabe, bhakti-mahādevī, āmāra hṛdaya-āsane basibe tabe; yoṣita-saṅgī-jana, kṛṣṇābhakta āra—dūhu saṅga parihari, tava bhakta-jana, saṅga-anukṣaṇa, kabe vā haibe hari*⁷⁶ – If, not understanding the truth, I reciprocate with those who are not true devotees, knowingly or unknowingly, then I will lose devotion, become a materialist, and Hari will remain far away. When I honour these interactions with real devotees of Kṛṣṇa, the great goddess of devotion will situate herself on the seat of my heart. I relinquish both the company of men who are obsessed with women and those who are not devotees of Kṛṣṇa. O Hari! When will I have the association of Your devotees at every moment?” This is the irrevocable vow and prayer of one who is chanting the holy name without offences. Only if one abandons the mundane attachment to one’s friends and family members who are absorbed in material enjoyments and knows only *sādhū*, *guru*, and *Vaiṣṇavas* to be one’s soulmates and supreme relatives, can one attain the actual fruit of *sādhū-saṅga*. Studying and cultivating *bhagavat-kathā* under the guidance of a *sādhū* is real *sādhū-saṅga*. *Bhakti* only happens when one engages in hearing and reciting *kṛṣṇa-kathā* with full faith: “*śraddhāvān jana haya bhakti-adhikārī*⁷⁷ – a faithful person is eligible for devotion.” *Iti—*

“There is more benefit and welfare contained within *hari-kathā* issuing from the mouths of the devotees [than from spiritual texts].”

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁷⁵ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.54)

⁷⁶ Śaraṇāgati, Hari He! Dāna-pratigraha (2–4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁷⁷ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.64)

Letter 15

Nothing is possible without Bhagavān's will • Direct and indirect service are the same • The special power of Bhagavān and His devotees • Bhakti cannot be attained by artificial means • The importance of taking care of one's body

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nirmala-Kānti Ghosh,
Bhagalpura Road (Dumaka), Bihar
4/10/1972

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Mankind has the right to engage in action but does not have the right to the fruits of those actions. This is the declaration of *Gītā* and *Bhāgavata*. Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and Trivikrama Mahārāja accepted extensive physical and mental exertion to make arrangements for a pilgrimage to the South, but ultimately, all of it was in vain and not put to use. We can

**“Mankind has
the right to
engage in action
but does not
have the right
to the fruits of
those actions.”**

make our efforts, but without Śrī Bhagavān's auspicious wish, it is not possible to reap their fruits. “*Kṛṣṇa-icchā binā tāhe phala nāhi dhare* – without the will of Kṛṣṇa, they will not bear fruit.” Remember this fact and you will console your mind and refrain from negative thoughts.

I had an earnest desire to go to Śrī Puruṣottama-dhāma, but in this impoverished state, how can I go there? At present, I need at least five thousand rupees to clear the debt to the Pāṇḍājī there and pay for the renovation work. I have not been able to collect even half of that; that is why I went out preaching to this region of Bihar (Dumka) on 15/9/72. But despite coming here, there has not been any significant result; *bhikṣā* collection is not happening as I had hoped, and on top of that, everyone is busy with the upcoming Durgā-pūjā.

You want to know when I will go to Chunchura. Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja contacted me by letter yesterday, wondering if I will go to Mathurā or not. Yet they have also asked me to be present in Navadvīpa for Śrīla Guru-pādapadma's disappearance day festival. If I am to fulfil both of these wishes, I have to go to Mathurā after the *virahotsava*. He (Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja) also wrote that I should go for at least a fortnight, because he too has a particular need to work on the *maṭha*. Did you and your mother not express a desire to observe *ūrja-vrata* in Mathurā? If you have time, you should take advantage of the opportunity.

I understand you were very upset that you were not able to use the goods you brought to Howrah station in service. What is your misfortune in this? Surely things like this do not happen because of bad luck or *sevā-aparādha*. *Pratyakṣa* (tangible) and *parokṣa* (intangible) service are both referred to as service, are they not? If you accept the eternity of service, then you must say that both direct and indirect service are qualitatively the same. “*Prāṇair-arthair-dhiyā-vācā śreya ācāraṇam sadā*⁷⁸ – one must pursue the highest good at all times, giving of one’s life, wealth, intelligence, and words.” According to this statement, which of these should be accepted in the *parokṣa* (indirect) way: one’s life, wealth, intelligence, or words? Then again, when in the verse “*kāyena vācā manasendriyair-vā buddhyātmanā vānusr̥ta-svabhāvāt*⁷⁹” it is instructed to render service by body, words, mind, senses, intelligence, and thoughts, which is superior and which is inferior? Service is accepted in a variety of mediums, but the bliss of service is incessant, eternal, and true, and it forever reveals itself to the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* in newer and newer ways. Another word for service is *bhakti*, and therefore, it is referred to as *nityā* (eternal), *sanātani* (primeval), *śāśvatī* (enduring), *śubhadā* (auspicious), *sudurlabhā* (extremely rare), and *śrī kṛṣṇākārṣiṇī* (attractive to Śrī Kṛṣṇa). Only that which is executed solely to and for the *sevyā* (the object of service) and offered to Him is counted as direct service. Even then, there are differences in eligibility. In order to obtain that eligibility, the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* must perform *sādhana-bhajana* and *īśopāsanā* (worship of the Supreme Lord).

“If you accept the eternity of service, then you must say that both direct and indirect service are qualitatively the same.”

Guru and Vaiṣṇavas are supremely benevolent. Their causeless mercy and selfless affection have the capacity to elevate the conditioned soul into the realm of *bhajana*. Their compassion and blessings are special treasures for mankind in the practice of spiritual life. The verse “*tad-aśma-sāraṁ hṛdayaṁ batetat*⁸⁰ – surely such a conditioned soul’s heart is the essence of stone (metal). . .” describes that the acceptance of *śrī nāma* eradicates the thunderbolt-like hardness of the stone heart; it also describes the eight ecstatic transformations and other symptoms as special characteristics of those who have taken shelter of *śrī nāma*. Scripture has referred to Śrī Bhagavān as *payo-da* and *vāri-da* (giver of water). He can shower the water of His mercy even in a barren salt desert and transform it into fertile ground. This is His *bhagavattā* (Godhood) or special capability. His devotees, the *sādhus*, are also capable of making certain infertile lands hospitable

⁷⁸ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.22.35)

⁷⁹ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.36)

⁸⁰ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.3.24)

**“As long as one
has not taken
shelter of
performing
sādhana-bhajana,
bad thoughts are
natural, but by
steadiness and
enthusiasm,
one will drive
them away.”**

by showering them with the water of their compassion. As long as one has not taken shelter of performing *sādhana-bhajana*, bad thoughts are natural, but by steadiness and enthusiasm, one will drive them away. Gradually, by performing *sādhana*, one will gain eligibility for the full host of all conducive good qualities. “*Dainya, dayā, anye māna, pratiṣṭhā-varjana, cāri-guṇe guṇī hai karaho kīrtana*”⁸¹ – develop the four qualities of humility, compassion, honour for others, and rejection of prestige and perform *kīrtana*.” This alone is the best means and the worthiness to attain the qualification to perform *sādhana*.

In the matter of *bhajana*, it is imperative to have firm conviction in the words of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Simplicity and firm faith are special limbs of *sādhana*. *Bhakti* is not attained by artificial means, which would entail the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* becoming a *karma-jaḍa-prākṛta sahaṁjīyā* [pseudo-spiritualist engrossed in mundane activities]. If one does not rise above this, the path of *bhajana* becomes obstructed and, as a result, one becomes an offender of *śrī nāma*, the *dhāma*, and *sevā*. Only by devout, intimate service (*viśrambha-sevā*) can one properly appreciate the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and it is not a matter of the servant’s prowess, but dedication to the performance of *bhajana*.

A daughter must always be protected and nurtured. Responsibility for your ultimate, spiritual welfare is and always will be mine. It is also my duty and responsibility to ensure that your body and mind, which is meant for *bhajana*, stay healthy. “*Nara-tanu bhajanera mūla*”⁸² – this human body is the root of *bhajana*.” Remember this. “*Śarīram-ādyam khalu dharma-sāadhanam*”⁸³ – the practice of *dharma* starts with the body.” Consider this instruction as you proceed. If the body is healthy, the execution of *dharma* is possible, but in doing so, it is not proper to become lazy and indulgent in bodily pleasures. It is one’s duty to follow all rules and regulations properly. Please accept my auspicious wishes and blessings. What more can I say? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁸¹ *Gītāvalī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kīrtane Jādī* (7) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁸² *Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Āna Kathā Nā Śunibo* (6) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhakura

⁸³ *Kumārasambhava* by Kālidāsa

Letter 16

The significance of Vijayā Daśamī • Guru and Vaiṣṇavas overlook the flaws and errors of the *kaniṣṭha* • The definition of friendship • Gaurī (Pārvatī) is non-different from Śrīmatī Rādhikā • Disposing of the written holy name in fire or a river is an offence

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha
Kanstila (Mathurā)
12/11/1972

Sādhara sambhāṣaṇa pūrvikēyam—

Dear —! ... You conveyed “auspicious Vijayā *praṇāma*”. You will have to tell me in person which Vijayā that is or (what exactly is) the history or account of this auspicious day. How has the significance of Vijayā Daśamī been popularized throughout the world and whom does it commemorate? Think, and reflect on that. We honour it because the scriptures say that it is Śrī Rāmacandra Vijayotsava. On this day, *maryādā-puruṣottama* (the moral exemplar for humanity), Śrī Rāmacandra, defeated Rāvaṇa in battle. Once Daśānana (“the ten-faced”) was slain, Bhagavān declared His victory and established ethics and ideal conduct in the world. Also, on this day, the *ācārya* of the Śrī Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*, the incarnation of Hanumān and Bhīma, Śrīman Madhva Muni, appeared, and it was he who definitively refuted *kevalādvaita-nirviśeṣa-vāda* (the doctrine of impersonal monism) by establishing *śuddha-dvaita-vāda*, thereby ensuring the infinite spiritual welfare of the souls of this world. Hence, for Mādhva-Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, this Vijayā Daśamī is a highly regarded and important day. The immaculately pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are not part of the *karma-jāda smārta-sampradāya* (orthodox *brāhmaṇas* engrossed in fruitive ritualism) nor are they *biddha-śāktas* (adulterated worshippers of *śakti*). The Vaiṣṇavas are the real *śāktas* because they accept the simultaneous existence of *śakti* and *śaktimān* (potency and the potent). The “*śakti-śaktimator-abhedah*” aphorism of the Uttara-mīmāṃsā school of Vedānta philosophy is the dazzling proof of that. Śrī Bhagavān is not subject to *jāda-māyā*, the material energy. He is enveloped in Yogamāyā; He is the Absolute Truth, endowed with the superior energy of *hlādinī-antarāṅga* (His internal bliss-giving energy). Those who are deluded regarding *tattva* are completely ignorant of this unborn, immutable position of the Supreme Lord.

From time to time, I go to Navadvīpa, but I do not have the convenience of staying there for any specific period of time. The fact that you have wished to abandon the endeavour for perceptible or governable knowledge (*pratyakṣa-* or *ādhyakṣika-jñāna*) and take shelter of *adhokṣaja-jñāna* (knowledge beyond the purview of the senses) is an auspicious sign. “*Yam eva eṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ*⁸⁴ – he is attainable by those whom He chooses.” “*Īśvarera kṛpāleśa hayata jāhāre, sei se īśvara-tattva jānibāre pāre*⁸⁵ – only one who has a fraction of the Lord’s

“Sādhus and guru do not accept any of the *kaniṣṭha*’s mistakes or blunders.”

mercy can know the truth about Him.” This is the *avaroha* (descending) path, or *śaraṇāgati* (surrender). But remember, as much as *sādhana* is indispensable for the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*, Bhagavān’s mercy is likewise something to be prayed for dearly. Only when effort and mercy unite is perfection attained.

You have asked for forgiveness because of your delay in writing your letter. If there has been no fault or mistake, then what scope is there for forgiveness? You did not do anything wrong, hence I am certain there is nothing to forgive. *Sādhus* and *guru* do not accept any of the *kaniṣṭha*’s mistakes or blunders. This is their magnanimity and kindness; everywhere, they are endowed with a vision of love and are established in the *dharma* of expecting no honour for themselves and giving honour to all others. *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are *adoṣa-daraśī* (they see no faults). They are optimists. They do not have a pessimistic view, which makes them supremely empathic and equanimous.

A friend or comrade is one who endeavours for your attainment of spiritual welfare and shares in your joys and sorrows. If friends can share one life and one soul, then their friendship is authenticated. Real friendship turns into sharing the same *dharma*. If that is transgressed, a lack of friendship is obvious. You have agreed to forgo something for your friend; this is your generosity, but having understood your heart, he too should have fulfilled some [of his] obligation to you. Can those who are not sensitive to us be called friends or comrades?

“Real friendship turns into sharing the same *dharma*.”

Śrī Bhagavān will surely fulfil your desire to see Navadvīpa. He attracts everyone and bestows the bliss of *prema*, which is why His name is Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra. Śrī Gaurahari, who is non-different from Vrajendra-nandana, will surely draw you to His *śrī dhāma*. Do not even worry about this. May your devotion to Śrī Bhagavān increase day by day by the blessings

⁸⁴ *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.3)

⁸⁵ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 6.83)

of *śrī guru* and Gaurāṅga. Mā Gaurī is Vaiṣṇavī (the potency of Viṣṇu) and Sanātānī (the goddess of eternity); then again, as Bhagavān’s internal potency, She is Herself *svarūpa-śakti* Śrī Rādhārāṇī. Another name for the *prema*-imbued *Sevā-rāṇī* (queen of service), Śrī Rādhikā, is Gaurī, as in “*ratana-simhāsane baiṭhalo gaurī* – upon the jeweled throne sat Gaurī”.

What is the use of writing the *tāraka-brahma-nāma* in a notebook and then disposing of it in the Gaṅgā? If *śrī nāma-brahma* (God’s name), which is *nāda-brahma* (God in sound form), or *śabda-brahma* – and *nāmī* Parabrahma (God Himself) – are identical principles, can Their forms, both like wish-fulfilling gemstones, whole, pure and eternal substances, be summoned or disposed of? The practice of writing *śrī nāma* is part of physical, verbal, and mental austerity. But to dispose of that in the Gaṅgā or offer it as an oblation in the sacrificial fire is an offensive practice. Devotees of Bhagavān worship that eternal, beautiful form of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. There is no invoking and dispatching in their *bhajana-sādhana*. Accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

**“Another
name for
the *prema*-
imbued
Sevā-rāṇī
(queen of
service),
Śrī Rādhikā,
is Gaurī.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 17

**Etiquette between Vaiṣṇavas • Devotees are not afflicted by fear or suffering •
Śrī guru and Bhagavān are our only shelter • Their mercy rids of offences and
grants us the necessary qualification**

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tegharipara, Navadvīpa (Nadia)
25/12/1972

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! As those who are *guru-tattva* do not possess bodies composed of the five gross elements, their illness has been referred to as a performance. The custom of inquiring about the welfare of someone's body, mind, and soul is in accordance with proper etiquette. This customary exchange of information regarding these three types of well-being with all those who are objects of our affection and honour is popular in the society of *sādhus* and *bhaktas*. In letters and other forms of correspondence between Vaiṣṇavas, prayers for their “physical and spiritual well-being” or “all-round well-being regarding *bhajana*” are made. Even though one asks about said three aspects of well-being, one does not assume any mundane quality in *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas or declare them to be tainted by such flaw. Therefore, in this regard, there is no chance of perceiving the transcendental as material and thus committing offence. Who is not upset to hear that a loved one is sick?

Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura has written: “*jata dekho vaiṣṇavera vyavahāra duḥkha, niścaya jāniho seho parānanda sukha*”⁸⁶ – whatever ordinary distress one perceives in a Vaiṣṇava, know with certainty that it is actually the utmost ecstatic bliss.” One who is imbued with *bhakti* – whether he is a householder or a *sannyāsī*, a scholar or a fool – is a Vaiṣṇava. In the course of carrying out their embodied sojourns, even Vaiṣṇavas can experience various ordinary forms of physical and mental distress. But for *bhaktas* it is momentary and ultimately brings happiness. Indulgent and attached to mundane sensory objects, the non-devotees' perishable lives are everything to them. So, when physical and mental afflictions befall them, even to a

⁸⁶ Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 9.240)

small degree, they are easily overwhelmed. To mitigate that suffering, it is not beyond them to even give torment to others. “*Jīvana yantraṇā-maya, maraṇete sadā bhaya*⁸⁷ – life is full of suffering and there is constant fear of death.” This is the dire finale of those engrossed in material pleasures. And those who have dedicated their lives to the service of Śrī Hari, guru, and Vaiṣṇavas are not afflicted by fear of death or by suffering; they are composed and steadfast. A devotee’s life is without disturbance, and he is never the cause of another’s sorrow or difficulty. “*Jīvana-nirvāhe āne udvega nā dibe, para-upakāre nija-sukha pāsariḥ*⁸⁸ – do not give distress to anyone in the course of maintaining your life; forego your own happiness for the welfare of others.” They are thoroughly established in this mentality. Giving up worldly comforts and riches like tipping water from their palm, the devotees do not waste their time, remaining perpetually fixed in their *bhajana*. Therefore, they are fearless, undaunted, intent on the worship of eternal truth.

“A devotee’s life is without disturbance, and they are never the cause of another’s sorrow or difficulty.”

Śrī guru and Bhagavān are the sole shelter and resort of the shelterless. This is why the practising devotee says, “*nirāśrayaṁ mām jagadīśa rakṣa*⁸⁹ – I am without shelter, O Lord of the Universe, so please protect me,” and takes refuge at those sublime feet. “*Nirāśrayera āśraya prabhu, akūlera kūla, śokete sāntvanā tumi, tumi bhāṅga bhula* – You are the shelter of those without shelter, my dear master; You are the shore for those adrift, the solace of those in distress; and You are the one who rectifies mistakes.” Many pray in this manner also. Śrī

“Guru and Bhagavān are our friends for eternal time.”

guru and Bhagavān are affectionate to those who take shelter of them; they take care of those who are surrendered to them. Towards those who are under their guidance, their supramundane affection is natural and spontaneous. “*Āmi vijña sei murkhe viṣaya kene dibo? sva-caraṇāmṛta diya viṣaya bhulāibo*⁹⁰ – I am wise. Why would I give that fool sensory pleasures? I will give him the nectar of My feet and make him forget these pleasures.” This is what defines their divine parental affection. The

responsibility guru and Bhagavān accept in regard to the lives of those surrendered to them is not temporary. This connection is eternal and everlasting. They are our friends for eternal

⁸⁷ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Āmi Ati Pāmara Durjana* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁸⁸ *Gītāvalī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kīrtane Jadī* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁸⁹ *Suprabhāta-stotram, Śrī Ananta-saṁhitā*

⁹⁰ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.39)*

time: “*cakṣu dāna dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei*⁹¹ – he who has given me the eyes to see is my master birth after birth.”

Those living entities still in the clutches of unwanted habits (*anarthas*) tend to make offences when they are in the stage of *sādhana*. Only their mundane speech and mind are active. “*Nāmāparādha-yuktānām nāmāni eva haranty-gham*⁹² – the holy name alone gradually dispels all the transgressions of those chanting with offences.” This, for them, offers total and certain solace. If one is anxiously eager regarding *sādhana-bhajana*, Śrī Bhagavān, as the indwelling Supersoul in everyone’s heart, resolves all matters. “*Kākere garuḍa kare aiche dayāmaya* – He is so merciful that He can turn a crow into Garuḍa.” There is no comparison to His compassion and generosity. Even to those who are unqualified, He grants the eligibility to perform *sādhana-bhajana*. *Iti—*

**“If one is anxiously
eager regarding
sādhana-bhajana,
Śrī Bhagavān,
as the indwelling
Supersoul in
everyone’s heart,
resolves all matters.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁹¹ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Śrī Guru-caraṇa-padma* (3) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhakura

⁹² *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.3.32)

Letter 18

The eternal connection between *guru* and disciple • The speciality of the Śrī Rūpānuga Gauḍīyas’ process of *bhajana* • Our only resort is to pray for mercy • The transcendent nature of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • The speciality of inner mood and service • The mercy and punishment of Vaiṣṇavas are equally beneficial • The meaning of *pāda-sevana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śrī Nātha Dāsādhikārī
Shitalkuchi, P.O. – Gosair Hata Bhandar
Mathabhanga (Kochbihar)
4/1/1974

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Although I promptly received all three of your letters, dated 27/2/73, 11/4/73, and 17/11/73, I am sad that I was unable to give any response by letter all this time. You wrote three letters: one after Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā, one after Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*, and one after the South India pilgrimage. Timewise, it has not been over a year since you wrote them, but counting by year, we have entered a new year. As it is always the eternal present in the transcendental realm, there is no place for the past or future. There, Śrī Bhagavān is eternal, His servant is eternal, and so too is service to Him eternal. As the connection between *guru* and disciple is eternal, there is no intervention of material time and space in their exchanges. Therefore, in that domain there is not even a question of a swift, delayed, or immediate response. Anyways, “better late than never”. It is my firm belief you recalled this proverb and maintained your composure, and you will do so in the future too.

**“As the connection
between *guru*
and disciple
is eternal,
there is no
intervention of
material time
and space in
their exchanges.”**

“*Hari-guru-vaiṣṇava—tinaṇa smarāṇa, tinaṇa smarāṇe haya vighna-vināśana*⁹³ – remembrance of Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas destroys all obstacles.” In

⁹³ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.21)

Chunchura, a spiritual *saṅghārāma* (centre for practising and preaching pure devotion) is very close to you [to where you live], and you have gained the opportunity to hear recitations of *hari-kathā* from the mouths of pure devotees. Know that this itself is Śrī Bhagavān's special

“The speciality of the Śrī Rūpānuga Gauḍīyas’ process of *bhajana* is that when living in Vraja, they are thinking of Navadvīpa-dhāma at every moment, and when living in the Nava-vana [nine forests] of Gauḍa-bhūmi, they remain immersed in remembering the forest of Vraja.”

favour upon you. Hearing and reciting the glories of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas bears infinite auspiciousness for the conditioned souls. That is why *sādhus* and *śāstra* instruct: “*vaiṣṇavera guṇa-gāna karile jīvera trāṇa*⁹⁴ – singing the Vaiṣṇavas’ qualities effects the deliverance of the conditioned soul.”

The speciality of the Śrī Rūpānuga Gauḍīyas’ process of *bhajana* is that when living in Vraja, they are thinking of Navadvīpa-dhāma at every moment, and when living in the Nava-vana (nine forests) of Gauḍa-bhūmi, they remain immersed in remembering the forest of Vraja. Therefore, Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura have sung verses such as: “*śrī gauḍa-maṇḍala bhūmi, jebā jāne cintāmaṇi, tā’ra haya vraja-bhūme vāsa*⁹⁵ – those who know that land of Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala to be touchstone attain residence in the land of Vraja,” and “*baḍo kṛpā kari, gauḍa-vana-mājhe, godrume diyācho sthāna, ājñā dilā more ei vraje basi’ harināma karo gāna*⁹⁶ – having great mercy on me, he has given me a place in Godruma, and ordered me to sit in this Vraja and sing the

names of Hari.” Meditation on service is *bhajana*; and wherever you have the opportunity to do so becomes Śrī Vṛndāvana or Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma. “*Jedina grhe bhajana dekhi, grhete goloka bhāya*⁹⁷ – the day that I see *bhajana* in my home, it becomes Goloka.” ...

Besides the sincere yearning to serve *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, there is nothing else we should pray for. It is only by the power of their mercy that all the *anarthas* and *aparādhās* in our hearts are eradicated. Our only resort

“Weeping pitifully is the only means to attain causeless mercy.”

⁹⁴ *Śrīla Prabhupāda-vandanā* (18) by Śrī Gopāla-govinda Mahānta

⁹⁵ *Prārthanā, Gaurāṅgera Du’ī Pada* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

⁹⁶ *Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Baḍo Kṛpā Kari* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁹⁷ *Śaraṇāgati, Śuddha-bhakata* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

is to beg for the mercy of the devotees and Śrī Bhagavān. Weeping pitifully is the only means to attain causeless mercy. “*Karuṇā nā ha’le kādīyā kādīyā, prāṇa nā rākhibo āra*”⁹⁸ – if you do not have mercy on me, I will not maintain my life anymore.” “O Lord! Whether You punish me or have mercy on me, I have no refuge but You in this material existence. Whether You hurl hundreds of millions of thunderbolts upon me or grant me the purest water, this devotee will wait anxiously and eagerly like a swallow for the water of Your mercy.”⁹⁹ This is the mood and language of one who is praying for mercy. Causeless mercy and unconditional surrender are interconnected, like a body and its parts. Spiritual practice and mercy – both are necessary, simultaneously. If one is lacking, it is impossible to attain perfection.

**“Causeless
mercy and
unconditional
surrender are
interconnected,
like a body and
its parts.”**

To regard *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas as mortals is the attitude of the offensive and hell-bound. *Śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas never reap the results of *karma*. Souls who are enamored with *māyā* see that their behaviour resembles that of mortal beings and lose their faith. Scripture therefore utters this cautionary message: “*jata dekho vaiṣṇavera vyavahāra-duḥkha, niścaya jāniho seha parānanda-sukha*”¹⁰⁰ – know that whatever distress you observe in Vaiṣṇavas is surely the most blissful happiness.” They are not overwhelmed by the transience of heat, cold, rain, etc., like those aggravated by the threefold miseries of this realm, and they tolerate it all with a smile on their face. Because they are not absorbed in material objects, they have equal regard for friends and enemies, and consider praise and insult to be equal. However, when the *sevaka* or *sādhaka* is serving and worshipping *śrī guru* and Bhagavān, he draws on his personal *bhāva-sevā*, or feelings of service. By preparing meals and designing dresses and ornaments suitable for winter or summer, his heart’s natural, simple inclinations manifest. This fosters moods of *sneha* (tender affection), *mamatā* (possessive attachment), and *vātsalya-bhāva* (parental instincts). In the absence of beholding the Lord face-to-face, the *bhakta* attains eternal vision of Śrī Bhagavān through the transcendental moods of *dāsyā*, *sakhyā*, *vātsalya*, etc. Know that both *pratyakṣa*- (direct) and *parokṣa-darśana* (inner vision) are eternal. There is a difference of heaven and hell between the union and separation of this world and the corresponding

⁹⁸ *Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Kṛpā-bindu Diyā* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁹⁹ Untitled prayer from *Stavamālā* by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī beginning “*viracaya mayi daṇḍam...*”

¹⁰⁰ *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 9.240)*

transcendental phenomena of *sambhoga*- and *vipralambha-bhāva*. Vaiṣṇava philosophers have accepted that of the two, the experience of separation is sweeter and superior to that of meeting. Such truths cannot be grasped if there is egotism, lack of faith, and hypocrisy.

“The mercy and punishment of śrī guru and Vaiṣṇavas are synonymous.” *Antaryāmī*, the indwelling Supersoul, reserves the right to deal mercy or punishment by revealing or concealing Himself. The mercy and punishment of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are synonymous. That is why the terms *sneha-śāsana* (loving chastisement) and *kṛpā-daṇḍa* (merciful punishment) have been used in scripture. Those whose very lives are for the welfare of all souls and whose constant predispositions are that of acute empathy for the suffering of others have the same intent, whether offering discipline or pronouncing a curse. Differences in service and competence dictate the differences in how the truth appears in the hearts of the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* in different ways. This is *tattva* and *siddhānta* (a fundamental truth and conclusion). If one accepts one’s *adhikāra* (individual level of competence), then there is no further reason to fear anything; therefore, there is no question of rousing discontent. Only in the case of souls who have not sought shelter is there a place for fear and offence, because they have not accepted their *adhikāra*.

You are truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to visit holy places in the company of *sādhus*. Many people visit holy places, but the fact that “the fruit of going to a holy place is the company of *sādhus* – *tīrtha-phala sādhu-saṅga*¹⁰¹” is a matter unknown to many. It is only as a result of saintly company that one becomes acquainted with the differences and specialities between *tīrthas*, or holy places, and *śrī dhāma* (the Lord’s own abode). Indulgent and sportive, mankind fancy themselves globetrotters in the greed to satiate their senses, whereas the devotees embrace environments that are favourable to the performance of *bhajana* and thereby become blessed. “*Gaura āmāra, je saba sthāne, karalo bhraṇaṇa raṅge, se saba sthāna heribo āmi, praṇayi bhakata saṅge*¹⁰² – in the company of loving devotees, I will see all the places that my Gaura cheerfully roamed.” This is what constitutes the *pāda-sevana* limb of *bhakti* for those keen on performing *bhajana*. Should they perform *parikramā* of *śrī dhāma*, the conditioned souls are released from their bondage of illusion, and transcendental attachment for

“This is what constitutes the *pāda-sevana* limb of *bhakti* for those keen on performing *bhajana*.”

¹⁰¹ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Mana, Tumi Tīrthe Sadā Rata* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

¹⁰² *Śaraṇāgati, Śuddha-bhakata* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Śrī Bhagavān is born. “*Viṣaye je prīti ebe āchaye āmāra, sei-mata prīti hauk caraṇe tomāra*”¹⁰³ – may I have the kind of love I have for the objects of the senses for Your lotus feet.” This is what the devotees who are circumambulating *śrī dhāma* pray for.

There is no need for any sort of wisdom or knowledge in writing a letter. The mind’s natural, simple expression manifests through the medium of the letter. Mood and language are the letter’s vehicle. They do not depend on any sort of academic qualification. Moreover, for a father, his child’s half-garbled babbling is most delightful. In that, neither flaw nor quality is taken into account. Therefore, there is no criterion by which to determine qualification or disqualification in this regard.

How do I gain auspiciousness? In order to know and understand this, one seeks guidance or the acceptance of *śrī guru*. This is what is called submission. If this sort of mood stays in the heart, a person can attain ultimate benefit. Your sincerity and firm conviction in service will fortify you in life. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 19

How Bhagavān tests the devotee • Making one's life a success • Seeing through hearing is better than seeing directly • The roles of *guru* and disciple • The definition of *bhakti*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Keśava Gosvāmī Gauḍīya Maṭha
Shaktigarh, P.O. Siliguri
13/1/1974

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! I have received your letter, which was dated 25/12/73, on this past date of 11/1/74. At present, I am fully healthy. You all ought not to worry for me in the slightest. By your love and good wishes, I was able to regain my health very quickly.

It is natural to shed tears in the absence of a loved one, but no one can stay with anyone in direct physical presence forever. It is through crying that human beings find the joy and peace of seeing and meeting. This crying shows them the path to composure and peace. The indwelling Supersoul surely fulfils the devotee's selfless prayers for exclusive service and devotion to Śrī Bhagavān. Keep the faith that *śrī guru* and Bhagavān are *vāñchā-kalpa-taru* (wish-fulfilling trees) and *bhakta-vatsala* (affectionate to the devotees). There is nothing they cannot give. When Bhagavān is finished testing the devotee, He shows him His undeceiving grace. Prior to that, the devotee must remain under examination. “*Kṛṣṇa jadi chuṭe bhakte bhukti-mukti diyā, kabhu bhakti-dhana nā den rākhen lukāiyā*¹⁰⁴ – Kṛṣṇa can leave the devotee with material enjoyment or liberation. Sometimes He does not give the wealth of devotion and keeps it hidden.” This is the test. [Kṛṣṇa says] “I know better. Why would I give that fool sense enjoyment? I will give him the nectar of My feet and have him forget the objects of the senses – *āmi vijña sei mūrkhē viṣaya kene dibo? sva-caraṇāmṛta diyā viṣaya bhulāibo*¹⁰⁵.” This is the causeless mercy shown towards the devotee who has passed that test. Whatever aspirations you have will surely be fulfilled in due time. Why would you have to cry your whole life? The instruction is given in scripture to serve Śrī

¹⁰⁴ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 8.18)

¹⁰⁵ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.39)

Hari, guru, and Vaiṣṇavas with faith, conviction, devotion, love, and attachment. This is why the devotee, or servant, empties his heart to render service.

Parabrahma and śabda-brahma are synonymous; śrī nāma and nāmī are identical. That śabda-brahma, or Absolute Sound, dances in the worshipful mouths of the eternally perfected great souls, the bhāgavata-paramahamsas. That is why that sound is like nectar and captivating to the heart. This is why Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam has manifested the verse “bhidyate hṛdaya-granthī chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ¹⁰⁶ – (transcendental sound vibration) pierces the knot of the heart and severs all doubts.” As śrī nāma is identical to nāmī, the Vedas describe that sac-cid-ānanda entity as “raso vai saḥ”. Hence, that Nāma Prabhu delights infinite universes. If one can go on hearing, chanting, and remembering Śrī Bhagavān’s name, form, and qualities, and the narrations of His pastimes, then this rare human birth is worthwhile. Sādhū-saṅga (associating with saintly personalities), śrī nāma-kīrtana (chanting the holy name), śāstra-śravaṇa (hearing the scriptures), dhāma-vāsa (living in the Lord’s holy abode), and śrī mūrti-pūjārcanā (worshipping the Lord’s deity form) – these are referred to as the five greatest limbs of sādhana. If a human being can, over the course of his life, spend his memorable days in this cultivation, then he knows his life was a success. There is no greater recreation than this, nor can there be. In a world of materialists, the criticism of spiritualists will go on forever. One will have to not lend an ear to that and instead proceed along the path of one’s own sādhanabhajana. When you are considered undesirable by the people of the world, then and only then should you know that “some convenient advantage has come for performing hari-bhajana,” and you should hold on to that. This notion has been displayed in the “yā niśā sarva-bhūtānām” verse of the Gītā [2.69]. You should study this well.

When there is a lack of direct sādhu-saṅga, then the provision of sādhu-saṅga in the form of granthas has been made available. You will have to keep that all-worshipful Absolute Truth on the path of your memory at all times. It is essential to have this sort of attitude in order to progress along life’s path. One has to perform sādhana of one indivisible Supreme Truth via moment-to-moment anuśīlana (devotional cultivation), or abhyāsa-yoga. Then you will find bliss and peace in every condition – and no one can snatch away that bliss, that profound peace.

“There is no greater recreation than this, nor can there be.”

“You will find bliss and peace in every condition – and no one can snatch away that bliss, that profound peace.”

¹⁰⁶ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.20.30)

I have understood in my heart the cause and reason you sent your friend to Navadvīpa at the time of Dola. I understood that because you cannot personally be present in *śrī dhāma*, you are trying to make up for the lack of *darśana* through hearing. Also, the reality is that separation,

**“Seeing
through
hearing
is better
than seeing
directly.”**

or the mood of *vipralambha*, is full of more sweetness than meeting. Seeing through hearing is better than seeing directly. In seeing directly, often mundane notions come and cause errors and oversights [in one’s perception].

There are no divisions of mundane time in the transcendental realm. That transcendental world is beyond time and space. In that place, there is no time but the eternal present. Therefore, *līlā* has been accepted as eternal.

“*Adyāpiha se līlā kare gaura-rāya, kona kona bhāgyavān dekhībāre pāya*¹⁰⁷ –

Even today, Gaura Rāya performs those pastimes. Some fortunate souls are able to see them.” This is the speciality of Śrī Bhagavān’s incomparable pastimes. And so there surely remains the possibility that you will gain some peace from hearing about *śrī dhāma* and various *darśanas* from your friend’s mouth.

You have made much progress on the path of spiritual life. Your job is to present the field of your heart, while the bona fide *guru*’s job is to sow the seed of the *gāyatrī-mantras*. By watering it with the water of hearing and chanting, the seed of the vine of *bhakti* will grow, become a huge tree, and reach its destination: Goloka-Vṛndāvana. The *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* become blessed upon obtaining instructions on how to perform *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* from a bona fide *guru*. In this matter, the mercy of *guru* is imperative. What you wrote is true: there is a huge difference between those who are sheltered and those who are not. However, I have full responsibility for you spiritually and you have my limitless affectionate blessings.

May you have the kind of conviction and exclusive dedication to Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra that Śrī Hanumānjī has for Śrī Rāmacandra. I bless you thus, so that you can say from your heart, “*tatrāpi mama sarvasvaḥ śrī kṛṣṇaḥ śyāmasundaraḥ* – nevertheless, my all-in-all is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śyāmasundara.” The word *bhakti* signifies service to Hṛṣīkeśa Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the master of one’s transcendental senses, via one’s senses which are inclined to serve. This tendency of *bhakti* is beyond the functions of body and mind. *Bhakti* is that easy and simple inclination of the heart that is devoid of the filth of *karma*, *jñāna*, etc. [One who has] a mind that has been conquered and that follows the guidance of the soul is eligible to attain *bhakti*. The Soul of the soul is Paramātmā, and only if the soul can attain Śrī Bhagavān, who is the fullest manifestation of

¹⁰⁷ *Bhakti-ratnākara* (1.57)

that Paramātmā, does it attain its true destination. That is only possible by service. If one is an anarchist, there is greater chance that one will be interned. ...

Give your full attention to your studies. You will have to pass with good marks. Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 20

Special prayers to śrī guru • Realizing the true form of śrī dhāma • Advice on chanting rounds • Standards for accepting food prepared by others • There is no real happiness in this world • No one is destined for family life • Deliberations on standards of purity

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Kṛṣṇapada dāsa
Vill/P.O.—Kedarpur
31/1/1974

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! Your letter just arrived by post. I am leaving Sundarban within two or three days to go elsewhere. I will return to Navadvīpa around the 15th of Feb. ...

I was especially delighted to know that you will be doing and are currently doing as I said. It is imperative to auspiciously begin all activities by remembering Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas and conclude those activities in the same way. In this world, who is a greater friend than *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas? This is why a certain Vaiṣṇava *mahājana* has sung, “*śrī guru-kṛpāya bheṅgeche svapana, bujhechi ekhona tumi-i āpana; tava nija-jana—parama bāndhava, saṁsāra-kārāgāre*¹⁰⁸ – by the mercy of *śrī guru*, the dream has broken and I understand now that only You are my own. It is Your intimate associate who is my best friend in this jail of material existence.” For the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*, *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are the meditation and the knowledge itself – they are everything. Hence, we offer the following prayer of longing for our cherished ambition:

*śrī guru-vaiṣṇava-pada, sei mora sampada, sei mora bhajana-pūjana
sei mora prāṇa-dhana, sei mora ābharāṇa, sei mora jīvaner jīvana
sei mora rasa-nidhi, sei mora vāñchā-siddhi, sei mora vedera dharama
sei vrata sei tapa, sei mora mantra-japa, sei mora dharama-karama*¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Ohe! Premera Ṭhākura Gorā (6)

¹⁰⁹ See Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī-pada (1–2) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

I understood that if your body is fit, you will surely come to Navadvīpa during the month of Phālguna. But why come only once? You will have to nurture the desire to have *darśana* of *śrī dhāma* again and again, and internally, you will have to take a vow to always behold *śrī dhāma* and dwell there. No matter where you are, gaining a *sphūrti* (glimpse) of the transcendental *śrī dhāma* is the priority. “*Gauḍa-vraja-vane, bheda nā heribo, haibo varaja-vāsī; dhāmera svarūpa, sphuribe nayane, haibo rādhāra dāśī*¹¹⁰ – I will see no difference between the forests of Gauḍa and Vraja and I will become a resident of Vraja. The form of the Lord’s holy abode will manifest before my eyes and I will become a maidservant of Śrī Rādhā.” This constitutes realization of *śrī dhāma*’s true form. If this sort of mood arises in the heart, one attains eligibility to have *darśana* of the Absolute Truth, Śrī Vrajendra-nandana, and perform Their [Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s] *nāma-kīrtana*, calling out “Hā Rādhē, Hā Kṛṣṇa!” Your sole prayer to the *icchāmaya* (Bhagavān, who is composed of desire) is to forever have full conviction in these names.

I am certainly well. If I do not stay well, how can I carry on? If I become unwell, then who knows what kind of terrible condition you all might be in? When I think of that, I realize I have to stay healthy all the time. The *jīva*’s true and healthy condition is to always chant *śrī nāma*. Worrying about someone’s physical illness and thinking about *śrī guru* and Bhagavān’s name, form, qualities, etc. are not the same. Feelings and concern for a dear one who is not of this earthly realm have been referred to in *sāstra* as *sādhana* and limbs of *bhakti*. Meditation on *śrī guru* is included among the limbs of *sādhana* for the disciple.

**“The *jīva*’s
true and
healthy
condition
is to always
chant
śrī nāma.”**

Whenever you find the time, you should chant a fixed amount of *nāma* on your *śrī mālīkā* (*japa-mālā*). Often there is no opportunity to perform *mālā-japa*. At such times, you should simply chant the *mahā-mantra* verbally. By this, you obtain the fruit of chanting *śrī nāma*, but you do not fulfil your vow to chant a fixed number of rounds on your *śrī mālīkā*. That *japa* you will have to complete separately. It is to be part of your daily routine and certainly to be considered one of your special duties. “*Basiyā śuiyā tomāra caraṇa, cintibo satata āmi*¹¹¹ – whether sitting or sleeping, I will think of Your feet constantly.” If you utter the *mahā-mantra* even in your leisure time, while going here and there, special results will arise. The rule for *mantra* and *gāyatrī-japa* is that they are to be performed in solitude, while sitting on a sanctified seat. No such rules or prohibitions apply to *kīrtana* of the *mahā-mantra*. This makes it the *śrī nāma* that is the deliverer (*tāraka*) and the saviour (*pāraka*) of the age of Kali.

¹¹⁰ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Kabe Gaura-vane* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

¹¹¹ *Śaraṇāgati, Sarvasva Tomāra* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

If sometimes you go to a close relative's house, you can use the pots they do not cook meat in, but you should have no doubt about that prior to using them. There is a difference of heaven and hell between using someone's vegetarian pots and eating foodstuffs cooked by others. Who are you referring to as a "chaste widow"¹¹²? There is no fault in eating foodstuffs prepared by the hands of a person who belongs to the same *sampradāya* as you, is a disciple of the same *guru*, or is initiated with a *viṣṇu-mantra* and follows proper conduct. But if you accept food from the hands of someone initiated in another sort of *mantra*, from a non-Vaiṣṇava, from someone who partakes of paan, tobacco, tea, etc., or from one who worships demigods or goddesses, then by their touch, the foodstuff is contaminated. This is based on a foundation of highly scientific traditions. Any such risk of contamination is highly prohibited in the *smṛti-śāstras* and in medical science. The refulgent proof of this matter is found in the statement "ālāpād gātra-saṁsparśāt niḥśvāsāt sahabhojanāt, sañcaranti hi pāpāni puṇyāny api tathaiva ca"¹¹³ – conversing, engaging in physical contact, breathing air exhaled by others, and sharing meals with them can spread the results of sinful activities even to those who are pious." *Śāstras* that deal with matters of health instruct everyone to always keep away from any risk of contagion and disease. On the other hand: "kṣaṇam-ihā sajjana-saṅgātir-ekā bhavati bhavārṇava-taraṇe naukā"¹¹⁴ – even a moment of association with saintly personalities can prove to be the boat to ferry one across the ocean of material existence," and "bhakta-pada-dhūli āra bhakta-pada jala, bhakta-bhukta-avaśeṣa—ei tin sādhaner bala"¹¹⁵ – the dust of the feet of the devotees, the water that has washed their feet, and the remnants of their food – these three give strength to perform *sādhana*." These too are the prescription of *śāstra* for *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*. And so it is that one must simultaneously follow the instructions to give up unfavourable association and to adopt good association.

I know you will not willfully transgress your faith in proper conduct and regulations, but if your aunt can help arrange what you need to cook, then you should cook with your own hand. This sort of diligence is accepted in all *sanātana-dharma sampradāyas*. Going to the homes of

112 A person may be devoted or "chaste" to various demigods or goddesses, but if they have no connection to Bhagavān, they are like a widow.

113 Though very similar verses appear in *Śrī Nārada-pañcarātra* (2.6–7) and *Vāyu Purāṇa* (Revā-khaṇḍa 132), this particular iteration appears in *Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's Śrī Gauḍīya-bhāṣya* of *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* (Ādi-khaṇḍa 14.87), which references *Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's Gaura-gaṇa-candrikā* as its source.

114 *Bhaja Govindam* (13) by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya

115 *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya-līlā 16.60)

relatives is part of worldly social interaction, but to keep one's spirituality intact, one must become the object of some materialistic criticisms. You should never deviate from the path of truth because of this. In worldly settings, there is a certain discipline to be followed by widows. Aside from that, many young men and women have *sāttvika* tastes in regard to their diet at home. Their guardians have to make independent, separate arrangements at home for them.

You do not like an environment in *samsāra* that is full of envy, violence, and criticism. This is natural. In material existence, man engages in various activities in hopes of terminating his sorrows and gaining peace and happiness, yet ultimately, he gains only sorrow in greater amounts. Often, he sees results opposite to what he wished for. Just as misery comes even when one does not want it, happiness also comes automatically, according to what the individual living entity has in store. What we call happiness in this world is a momentary lapse of misery, and we try to hold on to that. This is not real happiness and peace. Mahā-māyā's jail, this world-fortress, is made of misery. Here, unadulterated bliss and eternal peace are never possible. This is why the Vaiṣṇava *mahājanas* have sung: “*bhāviyā dekhaho bhāi, amiśra ānanda nāi, je āche se duhkhera kāraṇa; se-sukhera tare tabe, keno māyā-dāsa habe, hārāibe paramārtha-dhana*”¹¹⁶ – Reflect and see, brother, [here] there is no undiluted bliss. Whatever there is only causes sorrow. Why, for that sort of happiness, would you then become a servant of illusion and lose the treasure of the ultimate object (*paramārtha*)?” Mundane attachment to that which is inert is referred to in scripture as *samsāra*. In the words of *sādhū*, *sāstra*, and *guru*, we find the following: “*kṛṣṇera saṁsāra karo chāḍi' anācāra, jive dayā, nāme ruci—sarva-dharma-sāra*”¹¹⁷ – Conduct your worldly affairs in relation to Kṛṣṇa and give up sinful activity. Compassion for living entities and taste in the holy name is the essence of all religion.” In that sort of *samsāra*, there is no condition of material bondage. The eternal husband, the Lord of life itself, the aggregate form of all *rasa*, the root foundation of all power, Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the master of this *samsāra*. This environment is built up around Him at the centre.

An abode where many people who are engrossed in enjoying their senses live together is called *samsāra*. In that sort of situation, you must be like an eel [hard to catch]. *Samsāra* is

“To keep one's spirituality intact, one must become the object of some materialistic criticisms.”

“What we call happiness in this world is a momentary lapse of misery, and we try to hold onto that.”

¹¹⁶ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Ore Mana, Bhālo Nāhi Lāge E Samsāra* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

¹¹⁷ *Gītāvalī, Nadiya Godrume* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

**“If, in your
mind and heart,
you do not
have any desire
to embroil
yourself in
mundane
attachments,
then you
will surely be
protected
from that.”**

a school. As long as you live, there is no end to the lessons. You will have to live in the midst of this and perform *bhajana-sādhana* of Śrī Bhagavān.

No one is destined for family life. Of their own free will, living entities who are inclined toward enjoyment choose such a pitiable condition. This is the opinion of *śāstra*. By *sādhana-bhajana*, this condition is nullified, just as using an umbrella deflects the heat of the Sun. The living entity endeavours only to roam the path of instinct and urges (*pravṛtti-mārga*), but *śāstra* has given the indication that peace is found only on the path of restraint (*nivṛtti-mārga*). The fetters of marriage and other such matters are part of worldliness. In the *Gītā* verse (5.22), “*ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogāḥ... na teṣu ramate budhaḥ*”, this is made abundantly clear. If, in your mind and heart, you do not have any desire to embroil yourself in mundane attachments, then you will surely be protected from that. Your simplicity and conviction will keep you engaged in *sādhana-bhajana* and always protect you, and you will develop more and more understanding of *tattva* and *siddhānta*. Your faith and belief will never lessen. This is my heartfelt blessing to you, my darling daughter.

What you wrote was very true: “A child’s guardians and teachers surely try their best for the welfare of the child.” The responsibility that the spiritual teacher, or *śrī gurudeva*, has for those who have taken shelter of him is not only for this life. Rather, this relationship endures birth after birth. “*Cakṣu dāna dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei, divya-jñāna hr̥de prakāśita*”¹¹⁸ – he who has given me my eyes is my master birth after birth, for he has manifested divine knowledge in my heart.” The relationship between *guru* and disciple is eternal. “*Nitāi-carāṇa satya tāhāra sevaka nitya – Nitāi’s feet are truth and His servant is eternal.*”

You wrote: “Why can one not touch the deity when one is impure? If the mind is clean, then why would the fault of contamination remain?” One who is constantly chanting Śrī Bhagavān’s name is forever pure. Such a person is supremely sanctified and forever bathed. Purity does not come from bathing at the three junctures of the day but will be gained from chanting *gāyatrī* at said three junctures. Even after bathing, the *mantra* “*om apavitraḥ pavitra vā sarvāvasthām*

**“One who is
constantly
chanting
Śrī Bhagavān’s
name is
forever pure.”**

¹¹⁸ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Śrī Guru-carāṇa-padma* (3) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

gato 'pi vā, yaḥ smaret puṇḍarikākṣa sa bāhyābhyantaram śuciḥ"¹¹⁹ is recited. The *smṛti-śāstra* has revealed the considerations of pure and impure according to time, place, and circumstance. If for some reason one becomes impure, the method of purification has been given in *śāstra*. If a person's mind remains pure, or clean, then surely he is situated beyond mundane purity and impurity. Where is the possibility of such a person becoming contaminated? But one who has not advanced to this level will certainly have to follow general rules and restrictions. The street-sweeper or drain-cleaner does filthy work, but once he bathes and puts on clean clothes, he is allowed to enter the temple and see the deity. If he wants to enter the temple with his broom in hand or with a bucket of night soil, that would never be allowed.

By "impure" you may be referring to women's monthly menstrual period (*ṛtu-kāla*). That is a temporary restriction and part of a general stricture. From the beginning of creation, this is a state that girls have had to accept. Call it an assignment of fate. During a specific time and age, in order to assist the material creation, women have to welcome this state. At the time of the original creation, they did not experience this impure state, but later, when Indra murdered the priest of the demigods, Viśvarūpa, and began to experience the implications of the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*, then, in order to mitigate said implication, he divided this sin into four properties and gave them to the earth, water, trees, and to the female gender. Women graciously accept a quarter of this sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*. This sin is seen in womenkind every month as their period. This is why, during their period, women are impure, and after their *ṛtu-snāna*, or period bath, they become pure and clean. This story is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Sixth Canto, Ninth Chapter. For this time, women cannot serve or worship the deity, but there is no obstruction to their chanting Śrī Bhagavān's name. When one gives up [dependence on] *vidhi* rules and regulations and gains entrance into *rāga-mārga*, then there is no more room for general observance of such *vidhi*. At that stage, because the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* have fully offered their souls, they have no personal consideration of good or bad. Readiness to serve and please Kṛṣṇa is their only focus then. With a word from Śrī Nārada, the *gopīs* gave their foot-dust because it would make Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of their lives, well. This is the symptom of unadulterated *prema*. Therein all endeavours are directed to Śrī Bhagavān, even to the point of disregarding one's own well-being. If your mind remains pure, then even if you have no Gaṅgā water, you too can invoke the *tīrthas* and use that purified water.

With firm faith, you should feed Śrī Bhagavān and accept His *prasāda* yourself. You will learn *pūjārcana* of *śrī vigraha* from *Arcana-paddhati*. Maintain steadiness in your regulated

119
Garuḍa Purāṇa

**“Maintain steadiness
in your regulated
bhajana-sādhana,
but do not maintain
an obsession
with purity.”**

bhajana-sādhana, but do not maintain an obsession with purity. Accept my affectionate blessings. Convey as befitting my respectful greetings and good wishes to everyone else in your home. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 21

If we have one-pointed conviction, all the paraphernalia for service will be provided • Simplicity and sincerity are the real qualifications of a disciple • Service to other conditioned souls is only a cause of bondage • Reassurances for the practising devotee

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Goloka-gaṅja Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Golakganj (Dhubri), Assam
5/8/1974

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! My body, at present, is more or less the same as before. Maybe for you this will be the main news. I arrived at the Golakganj *maṭha* for the occasion of Jhulana-yātrā via Malda, Raiganj, Jalpaiguri, Dhubri (Assam), Bilasipara, Abhayapuri, Barpeta Road, Bongaigaon, Basugaon Maṭha, and Sapatgram. Now I am travelling with a party to Koch Bihar. I will stay there for eight to ten days and then go to the Siliguri *maṭha*. From Siliguri, after the first month of Bhādra (August–September), I will go to Dumka (Bihar).

The mercy of a *sad-guru* and one-pointed Vaiṣṇavas is the greatest wealth in life. Only if one can rely on them will one's life be successful. It is by the wish of Bhagavān that the opportunity to find a *sad-guru* and *sat-saṅga* comes. Vehicles and homes, gardens and orchards – everything favourable to *śrī vigraha* depends on one-pointed conviction in service. With that, there is no shortage of flower gardens, temples, and even musical instruments. By the mercy of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān, there is never shortage of any paraphernalia that stimulates Bhagavān's pastimes.

There is no specified time for performing *sādhana-bhajana*. Its auspicious commencement is signalled the moment one becomes aware of its necessity. “*Sāmarthyā thākite kāya, hari nā bhajinu hāya, āsanna kālete kibā kari*¹²⁰ – When my body had the capacity, I did not worship Hari. Alas! Now, in my final days, what

**“By the mercy
of *śrī guru*
and Bhagavān,
there is never
shortage of any
paraphernalia
that stimulates
Bhagavān's
pastimes.”**

¹²⁰ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Āmi Ati Pāmara Durjana* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

am I to do?” It follows that it is not possible to perform *bhagavad-bhajana* at life’s closing hour. Time that passes does not return. “Time and tide wait for none.”

It is essential to practice hearing and chanting *bhagavat-kathā* from childhood. Whatever is practised then will make an impression for the rest of one’s life. That is why it is a matter of great good fortune to obtain an environment in which one can practice. Do not analyze the difference between those who are *āśrita* (sheltered, or initiated) and *anāśrita* (unsheltered, or not initiated) and thus think yourself lowly. Though nothing ceremonial has happened, you are fully nourished by the heartfelt affection and merciful blessings of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. In the spiritual domain, the inferiority of your inner qualification will not be accepted. Simplicity and sincerity are what is real. Any state of being that is contrary to that is a falsehood and proves one’s unworthiness. It is only on the *śrauta-patha* (path of hearing) that everything achieves excellence. Ceremonial affairs do not always achieve prominence. Acquainted with this truth, you should dispel all disturbance in your mind.

One cannot serve Bhagavān just by serving other *baddha-jīvas* (conditioned souls). This fact is in accordance with truth and philosophical conclusion. There is ample proof of it. An example is Rṣabhadeva’s eldest son, Bharata Mahārāja, and his mundane delusion and attachment to a fawn. As a result of Bharata Mahārāja’s serving and contemplating a *baddha-jīva* at the time of death, he had to take birth as an animal. By serving liberated personalities and great, perfected souls – that is, by serving *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas – service to Śrī Bhagavān is surely achieved, because they have forever maintained direct connection with Śrī Bhagavān. Since *baddha-jīvas* have no memory or knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, everything from serving and helping them to demonstrating one’s sympathies for them turns into a cause of material bondage. The word *sevā* (service) cannot be used for *baddha-jīvas*; the word *sevā* is only applicable in relation to Śrī Bhagavān, who is the worshipful object of all, of even supremely liberated personalities. Likewise, one cannot have *prema* for *baddha-jīvas*; the words *dayā* (compassion) and *sahānubhūti* (sympathy) are used for them. Only Śrī Bhagavān, the supreme object of *prema*, warrants our use of the word *prema*. How can a home that is disconnected from the powerhouse have power? Hence, no one can ever attain his soul’s welfare by serving *baddha-jīvas*. Rather, such activities lead to an inferior destination.

“No one can ever attain his soul’s welfare by serving *baddha-jīvas*.”

Even if your days pass you by, you will attain a good destination. There is no cause to be particularly worried about that. Bhagavān, who is *bhakta-vatsala* (affectionate to His devotees), will most certainly accept that devoted man or woman who can make all manner of worldly pleasure trivial for the sake of loving Śrī Bhagavān and who can strictly follow *sadācāra* (proper conduct). The *sādhaka* and *sādhikā's bhakti-dharma* can never be damaged by the ridicule of the people of the world. What you wrote is true: “There is no guardian other than *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. They are the only friends in the jail of material existence.” Please accept my affectionate blessings. What more can I say? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 22

The harsh reality of this world and how to transcend it • Living at home can be the same as living in the temple • The purpose of Śrī Nārāyaṇa- and Nṛsiṃha-kavaca • Discussing the glories of the *dhāma* constitutes living in the *dhāma* • The *mahā-mantra* consists of sixteen names, thirty-two syllables, and sixty-four qualities • Seeing by heart and seeing by the eyes • Special exceptions to *vrata* rules

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Goloka-gaṇja Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Golakganj (Dhubri), Assam
5/8/1974

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I had promptly received the letters you wrote previously. Quite some days have passed since you sent the inland letter card, dated 19/8/1974. It was redirected from Navadvīpa to here, Śrī Goloka-gaṇja Gauḍīya Maṭha, where I received them in the middle of the Jhūlana festival.

**“*Sādhakas* and
sādhikās have
no extraneous
mundane
hankerings,
hopes, or
aspirations,
and so they
are worry-free
and devoid of
agitation.”**

What you wrote is very true: “This world is an unknown land. Here there is no one to call one’s own.” This *samsāra* is a special jail. Human beings come here to reap the fruits of their *karma*. This is the harsh reality. What is going on here is mutual harm motivated by mundane self-interest. Everyone misunderstands everyone else and harbours misgivings towards them. But those who are *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* have no extraneous mundane hankerings, hopes, or aspirations, and so they are worry-free and devoid of agitation. The contemplation of the soul’s welfare with their every breath, their wealth, intelligence, and words is the purpose of their lives.

Even if one does not have the convenience of living in the *maṭha-mandira* or *āśrama*, if one lives at home and follows the instructions and orders of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, one surely gains the fruit of living in the *āśrama*. Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas’ causeless mercy is also necessary in this regard. Like the other three *āśramas*

(stages of life), *gārhaṣṭhya* (family life) is also a special *āśrama*; it will not do to forget this. It must be given the esteem of an *āśrama* and it is proper to protect its sanctity in all respects. One will have to fulfill one's responsibility to one's *guru* by chanting *śrī nāma* while sitting at home, engaging in saintly association, studying the *śāstras* and *granthas*, and performing various other services. If one does that, then surely one will gain the fruit of living in the *maṭha*, or *mandira*.

The main thing is to execute the limbs of *bhakti*, like chanting *śrī nāma*, and thereby perform *bhajana-sādhana*. By doing so, all manner of agitation in the home and various miseries like illness will be dispelled. So you can even keep the *kavaca* flowers or there is no harm in putting them in the Gaṅgā also. Śrī Nārāyaṇa-kavaca and Śrī Nṛsiṃha-kavaca dispel all the obstacles in the realm of *bhajana* for the *bhakti-sādhaka* and *-sādhikā*. Hence, they are not ordinary like the *nava-graha kavacas* [talismans of the nine astrological deities]. Śrī Bhagavān and His *śrī nāma* are never to be put to work or used. That beckons *sevā-aparādha* and *nāma-aparādha*. Only by serving Śrī Bhagavān's *śrī mūrti* and His *śrī nāma* does the *jīva* become blessed.

“All of the *sad-guru*'s concern for spiritual welfare is focused on those who follow his instructions and orders with their heart and soul.”

Those who live at home and discuss the glories and distinction of *śrī dhāma* and the residents of the *dhāma* are also residents of the *dhāma*. “*Je dina grhe bhajana dekhi, grhete goloka bhāya*¹²¹ – the day I see that *bhajana* is performed in my home, Goloka appears there.” These are the words of the *sādhū-mahājanas*. Taking shelter of a bona fide *guru* and obtaining the association of Vaiṣṇavas truly occurs solely due to great good fortune. It is by this that human beings become successful. “*Vaiṣṇava saṅgete mana, ānandita anukṣaṇa, sadā haya kṛṣṇa paraṣaṅga*¹²² – in the company of Vaiṣṇavas, the mind is blissful at every moment, for the topics of Kṛṣṇa are always being discussed.” All of the *sad-guru*'s concern for spiritual welfare is focused on those who follow his instructions and orders with their heart and soul. Most *baddha-jīvas* are children in regard to spiritual teachings, yet through *śraddhā-bhakti*, they too are capable of becoming wise. I will not be miserly in any way about granting you helpful instruction. In the

“If one lives at home and follows the instructions and orders of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, one surely gains the fruit of living in the *āśrama*.”

¹²¹ *Śaraṇāgati, Śuddha-bhakata* (6) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

¹²² *Prārthanā, Ṭhākura Vaiṣṇava-pada* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

case of followers who are like sons and daughters, none of their faults is even taken into account; they are forgiven for even grave misdeeds.

Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra is the possessor of sixty-four transcendental qualities, and His *śrī nāma* (the *tāraka-brahma mahā-mantra*) is the aggregate of sixteen names and thirty-two syllables. That, however, reveals the truth of *śakti* and *śaktimān*. Only by utterance of these sixteen names is a proper result reaped. The rule that uttering *śrī nāma* just once [delivers one from material bondage] pertains to the independent and primary *śrī nāma*, such as Kṛṣṇa, Mukunda, Govinda. The *baddha-jīva*, full of *anarthas*, can never reap the fruit of uttering the direct form of *śrī nāma-brahma* itself simply by uttering the syllables of *nāma*. The *jīva*'s life only becomes successful by uttering the transcendental *śrī nāma* that is *saccidānanda*, with a tongue composed of pure consciousness. But he will never be worthy of possessing

**“*Bhāva-darśana*,
or *darśana*
[of Bhagavān]
through one's
transcendental
sentiment,
is more real
than the vision
of the eyes.”**

Puṇṇabrahma (the full manifestation of Godhead) Śrī Bhagavān's sixty-four qualities or gaining competence equal to His.

I understood your mind was disturbed because you did not know where I am and how I am. Inner vision is possible by contemplation alone and *bhāva-darśana*, or *darśana* [of Bhagavān] through one's transcendental sentiment, is more real than the vision of the eyes. This is why *viraha* (separation) is superior to *milana* (meeting). This is something to be realized. You stare in hope of getting a single drop of water, but the thirsty *cātaka* bird surely gains the mercy-water from the clouds of compassion – *śrī guru* and Bhagavān – having its thirst quenched and life blessed. Despite knowing that a thunderbolt may fall upon it, it must appeal to the cloud. It is not possible to attain *tattva-vastu* (the true reality) without wholehearted reliance and surrender.

Although in *smṛti-śāstra*, consumption of milk is forbidden during the month of Āśvina, there will be no fault if you take it. For you, a special injunction has been given. If someone's life depends on a particular *sāttvika* foodstuff, it is acceptable to not give it up for what is a temporary period [of prohibition]. Our Janmāṣṭamī will be in Koch Bihar this time. I am well. Accept my affectionate blessings. Convey my good wishes to your mother and father. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 23

Appreciating śrī guru and Vaiṣṇavas • Proving oneself through sādhana-bhajana • Developing humility and freedom from envy • The transcendent existence of the Vaiṣṇavas • The power of steady practice • Without tolerance, there is no auspiciousness • The importance of yukta-vairāgya

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Amūlya-ratana Gaṇa

P.O. Jaramundy

(Sāotāla Paragaṇā) Bihar

28/8/1974

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! ... The debt owed to śrī guru and the Vaiṣṇavas for their unlimited compassion and supramundane affection can never be repaid. If a person performs *hari-bhajana*, he gains an appreciation for that debt and his life becomes blessed. The living entity can prove his eligibility only if he performs *bhagavad-bhajana*. Only if the living entity can love the supreme object of love, Śrī Bhagavān, does his life meet with success. If one gains an inclination to perform *sādhana-bhajana*, one develops confidence in *amānī-mānada-dharma* (the *dharma* of relinquishing pride and honouring others). When one considers oneself unworthy and degraded, the condition of humility appears. The qualification for a particle of the mercy of guru and Vaiṣṇavas comes only by this. It is natural for everyone who thirsts for *bhakti* to gain more and more eagerness and enthusiasm upon seeing the service of others or their pining for *bhakti-dharma*. In the *dharma* of service, there is patience (*dhairya*) and excitation (*uddīpanā*), but there is no place for envy and violence. As envy is useless on the path of *bhakti*, it has been wholly rejected. *Sādhakas* and *sādhikās* who are inclined to perform *bhajana* only become blessed if they attain the delight of service. ...

**“As envy is
useless
on the path
of *bhakti*,
it has been
wholly
rejected.”**

Vaiṣṇavas reside only in the transcendental Vṛndāvana. No matter where they are, even if they are seemingly situated within the material world, wherever they are is the highest attainable abode of Śrī Vraja-dhāma. Therefore, Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has sung: “*jathāya vaiṣṇava-gaṇa, sei-sthāna vṛndāvana, sei-sthāne ānanda aśeṣa* – wherever the Vaiṣṇavas

are, that place is Vṛndāvana, and in that place is unlimited joy.” *Sādhus*, who see all as equal, remain overwhelmed by transcendental emotion and see and accept any circumstance and any environment as favourable for their *bhajana*. Such a state of being is attained only by

extraordinary good fortune. It is then that one is delivered from mundane reclusiveness and duplicity.

**“One must be
steady and
unperturbed
and possess
Himalaya-like
fortitude.”**

What you have conveyed of your sorrows brings to mind a worldly proverb: “The operation was successful, but the patient died.” By chanting *śrī nāma* as prescribed, performing worship of the deity, studying scripture, and hearing *hari-kathā* from the mouths of *sādhus*, all the living entity’s *anarthas* are dispelled. But because that has not happened in your case, you think that you “lack sincerity”. *Abhyāsa-yoga* (the *yoga* of practice)

is not mastered in a short time; it is something that takes time. For that reason, one must be steady and unperturbed and possess Himalaya-like fortitude. Dependence on Śrī Bhagavān’s mercy has been described as the special characteristic in the domain of surrender. Only by *abhyāsa-yoga* does steadiness of heart and soul come in chanting *gāyatrī* at the junctions of the day and performing one’s *japa*. One then has realization of the meanings of the *gāyatrī-mantras*. A person who can understand his own faults and shortcomings endeavours to rectify them within a very short time. Auspiciousness occurs only when one closely studies the words emanating from the holy mouths of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. This is what has been delineated in the *sūtra* of *Vedānta* [4.1.1] “*āvṛttir-asakṛt upadeśāt*”. This has also been echoed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [10.33.39], the natural commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*, in the verse: “*śraddhānvito ’nuśṛṇuyād atha varṇayed yaḥ ... hṛd-rogam āśv apahinoty acireṇa dhīraḥ* – one who faithfully hears and later describes such pastimes ... has the heart disease of lust quickly dispelled and becomes peaceful.” One who stays in the shelter and under the guidance of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas has no fear; one who thinks he knows everything ends up becoming an atheist. We must always pray to the residents of *śrī dhāma* for mercy. Their dedication to service is exemplary. Only by the power of their mercy does one attain realization of the transcendental *dhāma* and of Dhāmeśvara, the Lord of that *dhāma*. ...

For living entities who are attached to material pleasures, detachment is an exceedingly difficult matter. Those foolish individuals who are engrossed in identifying the body as the self require instruction and saintly association. Even Brahmā and the demigods, when confronted with adversity, seek the shelter of Śrī Bhagavān, the one true friend of all souls. Only in this human form is the living entity capable of searching for *bhagavat-tattva* (the truth of God), via

direct and indirect inquiries. For this reason, the scriptures describe the human form as the foundation of *bhajana*.

Compelled by desires, the living being accepts the guidance of the demigods, who fulfil desires, and therefore he has to suffer the threefold miseries. It is from there that malice, envy and the like arise. In the absence of Śrī Caitanya's teachings, the intolerant living entity wants to find peace by adopting the tendencies of enjoyers and renunciates. If we do not have tolerance, our auspiciousness will never arise. Wanting auspiciousness for himself and others is characteristic of a *sādhū*. Selfishness makes the living entity intolerant. Everything created by Bhagavān is an ingredient for Śrī Bhagavān's service. If we do not develop this understanding, we have no possibility of attaining auspiciousness. The living entities who indulge in mundane enjoyment end up deprived and destroyed because they think the world is for them to enjoy.

“If one indulges in the comforts of the mundane body and home, one cannot accept sense objects in a detached manner and engage in the service of Bhagavān.”

Without becoming tolerant like a tree, *hari-bhajana* is not possible. That is why Śrīman Mahāprabhu taught the *ṭṛṇād api sunīcena* verse.

By accepting those commodities that are essential for maintaining one's life, one's mind does not become disturbed. “*Yathā-yogya bhoga, nāhi tathā roga, anāsakta sei, ki āra kahabo*¹²³ – Where only those sense objects necessary to maintain the body are accepted, there is no disease [or pitfall]. What else can be said about such detachment?” This is *yukta-vairāgya*, as approved by exalted personalities. Devoid of *bhakti* and compelled by arrogance, mankind wishes to dominate all that exists. That can never be the superior path. The restless individual, becoming subjugated by the five sense-objects, nurtures hope for peace and happiness, but that is precisely what topples him into ultimate suffering. Having attained freedom from the urges of body and mind, it is best to strive for self-realization. If one indulges in the comforts of the mundane body and home, one cannot accept sense objects in a detached manner and engage in the service of Bhagavān. That is why we find the instruction: “*yathā-yogya viṣaya bhuñja anāsakta haiyā*¹²⁴ – accept without attachment whatever sense objects are necessary for your maintenance.” *Iti—*

“Everything created by Bhagavān is an ingredient for Śrī Bhagavān's service.”

Wishing your eternal welfare,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmāna

¹²³ *Duṣṭa Mana Tumi Kiserā Vaiṣṇava* (11) by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda

¹²⁴ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 16.238)

Letter 24

Dedication to *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is essential • Bhagavān fulfils the desires of His devotees, but one must make an effort • The teachings of *sādhū*, *guru*, and *śāstra* exist to ensure the quality of one's surrender to Bhagavān • Devotees are focused only on service • The teachings of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī • Pampering the body interrupts the search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
23/6/1976

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Even if I do not have a chance to reply to your letter in a timely fashion, I have no cause to object to your writing me letters. Rather, since writing letters entails expressing the moods of the heart, writing them is beneficial for everyone. Those who always have the opportunity to hear, chant, remember, and behold Śrī Bhagavān's transcendental name, form, qualities, pastimes, and so on are surely blessed. One must try to control the wicked and

“One must try to control the wicked and unruly mind by telling oneself that true auspiciousness can only come from following *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' orders and instructions.”

unruly mind by telling oneself that true auspiciousness can only come from following *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' orders and instructions. “I have not been able to perform *bhajana* of Hari.” “When will He have compassion on me?” “Surely Śrī Bhagavān will have mercy on me.” These sorts of lamentations and hopeful expectations push the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* further in *bhajana*. “*Tava nija-jana, parama bāndhava, saṁsāra-kārāgāre* – Your close associate is my supreme friend in this jail of material existence.” “*Vaiṣṇava dekhiyā, paḍibo, caraṇe hṛdayera bandhu jāni*¹²⁵ – when I see a Vaiṣṇava, I will fall at his feet, knowing him to be my heart's friend.” This is a matter of personal realization. Only a person whose heart overflows with bliss when they behold *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is a truly peaceful and desireless devotee.

¹²⁵ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Kabe Āhā Gaurāṅga Boliyā* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

To convey obeisance to someone else in a letter addressed to Śrī Guru-pādapadma or to ask him to convey said regards is contrary to proper etiquette. It seems like an order or instruction instead of a request and would indeed be offensive.

Bhaktas are called “*vāñchā-kalpa-taru* – wish-fulfilling trees” because Śrī Bhagavān Himself fulfils their desires. It is because you had a strong wish to behold Śrī Dhāma Mathurā-Vṛndāvana and other places that Bhagavān granted you such an opportunity. “I am going to hide in my house, sit here, not making any effort, and say, ‘If the Lord does not drag me to the *dhāma*, how can I behold it?’ ” These are the words of an atheist. If the heart is anxious and overwhelmed, Śrī Bhagavān surely offers His assistance and mercy. If He does not see my effort, why would He show sympathy and mercy?

**“Their
transcendental
affection is the
only support for
the *sādhaka* or
sādhikā.”**

All the darkness of ignorance in the heart is eradicated by the mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas; the delusions of *māyā* affecting the soul are eliminated. Their transcendental affection is the only support for the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*. Sincerely offering one’s heart and soul to Śrī Bhagavān is itself the attainment of the ultimate fruit of *sādhana*. It is to ensure the excellence of this [surrender] that the instructions of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru* exist. *Śāstra* has given instructions specifically about loving and serving *sādhū*, *guru*, and Bhagavān, because “the root cause of the birth of devotion for Kṛṣṇa is the association of saintly personalities – *kṛṣṇa-bhakti janma-mūla haya sādhu-saṅga*.”

People of the world are preoccupied with mundane comforts and sorrows. Those who desire the welfare of their souls have no use for this duality of good and bad. They are forever concerned only with *sevyā* (the master), *sevaka* (the servant), and *sevā* (service). The *bhaktas* never invoke topics that have nothing to do with Śrī Bhagavān, the *bhaktas*, and *bhakti*. Minding which matters serve them no purpose, they keep far away from such unfavourable entanglement at all times. Their only consideration is the health of their soul and they derive delight only from said cultivation. If one cannot perform *sādhana-bhajana*, then what is the benefit of feeding and providing for the body and mind? It is forever accepted that the speciality of someone who is keen on the welfare of his soul is that his body and mind, everything, is aimed

**“If the heart is
anxious and
overwhelmed,
Śrī Bhagavān
surely offers
His assistance
and mercy.”**

**“Those who
desire the welfare
of their souls
have no use for
this duality of
good and bad.”**

at the joy of service. That is precisely why the pursuit of *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga*, and so on has been curbed, to create a field of inquiry into *brahma* and inquiry into *bhakti*.

It is a matter of great fortune that you had the opportunity to sit in Allahabad, or Prayāg, and remember topics of Bhagavān. It is considered a special duty to discuss the teachings to Śrī Rūpa in Prayāg. Without the grace of Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana, the truths of *sambandha* and *abhidheya* cannot be realized. If one is to make a rule to read the teachings given to Śrī Rūpa from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* every day while in Prayāg, one will gain so much peace of heart. The specific glories of each and every *tīrtha* and *dhāma* that is bathed in the mercy of the devotees and Bhagavān have been extensively documented. You gain greater results by discussing topics relevant to where you are. This fuels and aids *bhajana*.

“Even vicious creatures become non-violent by gaining the association of devotees.”

Sundarban is home to tigers, boars, snakes, and other such deadly and cunning creatures. If you stay there for too long, you will naturally become influenced by such violence and enmity. Nevertheless, even vicious creatures become non-violent by gaining the association of devotees. There is plenty of proof of this in scripture. The lives of devotees are dedicated to the welfare of others: “*janma sārthaka kari’ karo para-upakāra*¹²⁶ – make your life a success by helping others.” This is something only a devotee can understand. The greatest aid is aimed

at the welfare of the soul. Therefore, devotees are never uncharitable; to the best of their abilities, they grant everyone the opportunity to serve. One must remain eager to obtain that opportunity to serve.

In his nectarean instructions, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda has conveyed, “*guru-padāśrayas tasmāt kṛṣṇa-dīkṣādi-śikṣaṇam, viśrambhena guroḥ sevā sādhu-vartmānuvartanam*¹²⁷ – the preliminary limbs of *bhakti* are taking shelter of *guru*, receiving initiation and training pertaining to Kṛṣṇa, serving *guru* with deep affection, and following the path of the saints.” The necessity of taking shelter of a bona fide *guru* and receiving *śrī nāma* and *dīkṣā* initiation is taught in scripture. “*Brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva, guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*¹²⁸ – wandering throughout the universe, some fortunate souls, by the mercy of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, attain the seed of the creeper of

“If someone wants to attain this seed, Śrī Bhagavān grants that person every facility and fulfills said desire.”

¹²⁶ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 9.41)

¹²⁷ *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.74)

¹²⁸ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya-līlā 19.151)

devotion.” This is what one receives when accepting *śrī nāma* and *dikṣā*. If someone wants to attain this seed, Śrī Bhagavān grants that person every facility and fulfils said desire. What more doubt can there be in this? A person more concerned with the welfare of others than with his own is said to be exceedingly magnanimous. You are particularly concerned for your friend, and I am satisfied to see how content you are in the success of her ambitions.

None of you should be worried about my poor health. This material body is always going through a process of genesis, subsistence, and disintegration. You can deliberate on “*mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya*”, “*dehino ’smin yathā dehe*”, and other *Gītā* verses in this regard. “*Ei dehera kriyā, abhyāse karibo, jīvana-jāpāna lāgi*”; *śrī kṛṣṇa-bhajane anukula jāhā, tāhe habo anurāgi*¹²⁹ – I will fulfil the functions of this body out of habit and thus spend my life becoming attached to that which is favourable to the performance of *bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” This should be our ideal. If we start pampering our body, we will become indulgent in bodily pleasures and deviate from our practice of *sādhana-bhajana*. Our eternal truth, the search for devotion to Kṛṣṇa, will be interrupted. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹²⁹ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Hari Hari! Kabe Mora Habe Heno Dina* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 25

The importance of Paurṇamāsī-devī • Service is the life of the servant • Christ and Kṛṣṇa are not one, as the father is not the son • The definition of śrī vighraha • Those who help us advance in bhajana are our real friends and relatives • The generosity of the devotees • The perils of considering demigods to be equal to Bhagavān

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
Orissa
24/6/1975

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! Since I have not replied to your letter for many days, perhaps you are dissatisfied with me and have stopped sending me letters for what, today, is a month and a half. I am truly very embarrassed and sorry that I could not respond to your letter. Anyway, do not be angry about this. Send letters like before. The test of your patience is finished, and since you have passed, I too have sat down [as one sits for an exam] to write you a letter.

Śrī Bhagavān can attract any sinful person to His *śrī dhāma*, but He never shows mercy to an *aparādhī-jīva* (a soul who commits grave offences). Therefore, we have to be careful of *nāma-aparādhā*, *dhāma-aparādhā*, and *sevā-aparādhā*, otherwise, there is no real chance of us advancing in *bhajana-sādhana*.

Pūrṇimā, or Paurṇamāsī, is Gaurī; she can approve us and assist us in the worship of Śrī Gaura-Kṛṣṇa. Without her, it is not possible to advance in *bhajana-sādhana* in any manner, much the way that none of Śrī Bhagavān's *līlās* are stimulated without the potency of Yogamāyā, who is *līlā-vistāriṇī* (she who expands the pastimes). I give thanks to Śrī Bhagavān for fulfilling your long-held aspiration, or ambition. But in the spiritual world, there is no such male enjoying ego. It is compulsory to be well aware of this. Hence, the mundane ego of male or female is an affair distinctly of this mundane world alone.

You have conveyed to me a request that I take rest for a good few days. *Sevā* is the life of a *sādhū-bhakta*; *sevā* is rest. The servant's *sevā* to the Lord is his life (*jīvana*), vows (*vrata*),

chanting (*japa*), austerity (*tapa*) – everything. For a servant to be separate from his *sevā* means there is a lack of sincerity in him. It creates impediments in his *bhajana*. *Sevā* is the fountain of the servant's life and the hub of his life airs. *Bhakti* and *sevā* – these two are one. Those who conceive of *sevā* and *bhakti* separately are mistaken. It is certainly not proper to use the word *sevā* here and there. There is only no contradiction of *tattva* if it is used appropriately. You are all praying to Śrī Bhagavān for my good health, but will this not cause Him trouble? Only the desire for His pleasure is called *sevā* or *bhakti*. If this prayer is for the purpose of service, then there is no fault.

**“*Bhakti*
and *sevā* –
these two
are one.”**

I understood that your mind was disturbed when you went to the *maṭha* at the time of Janmāṣṭamī and were not able to see me. I have been right here all along. Why were you not able to see me? If you had made a proper effort to see, you would have seen me everywhere. You were all delighted by taking *prasāda*. It is to distribute this *prasāda* that Bimalā-devī lives in Śrī Kṣetra near Śrī Jagannātha-deva. Persons of little piety do not have faith or belief in this *mahā-prasāda*. The arousal of faith in *śrī mahā-prasāda*, the *vigraha* of Govinda, *śrī nāma*, and the Vaiṣṇavas comes by the effect of many, many lifetimes of *sukṛti*. You have earned that *sukṛti* and become blessed.

“*Khrṣṭe āra kṛṣṭe kichu bhinna nāi re bhāi* – Christ and Kṛṣṇa are not different, brother.” These are Anthony Firingee's words. This is not the *tattva* or *siddhānta* of any *śāstra*. The verdict or conclusions of *śāstra* are called universal truth or axiomatic truth. That is the real truth; it never changes or stretches. In the Christian religion, the doctrine of the “Fatherhood of Godhead” has been accepted. The son will one day be a father, but to believe there will be no difference between father and son – all there is in this sort of doctrine is an improper oneness, plus chaos and arbitrariness. The *śrī mūrti* or *śrī vigraha* is not some figment of our illusory imagination. If we paint it with our imagination, it becomes earthen. That is called a doll. That can never be worshipful. The transcendental sweetness of Śrī Bhagavān's form that the devotee sees with spiritual eyes is what is manifest or reflected in *śrī vigraha*. That is what is called the *śrī mūrti*, and He is the object of worship.

**“*Śrī vigraha*
is not some
figment of
our illusory
imagination.”**

In the future, you will be able to proceed along the path of your life with patience, enthusiasm, and tolerance; there is no doubt about this. People who enable one to progress on the path of spiritual life or lend their assistance in this regard are very rare in this world.

There is no value to a life that has made its all-in-all material knowledge, which is bereft of *bhagavat-siddhānta* (truths pertaining to the Lord). Only those who can propel us on the path of *dharma*, who can give us indication of the real truth, are our real friends and relatives, our own. We will have to stay forever surrendered to them. The debt we owe them can never be repaid. Those who are engaged in *bhagavad-bhajana* are never trapped by any sort of debt. Only by performing *hari-bhajana* is one freed from all manner of debts. If Śrī Bhagavān shows His mercy, then all darkness of ignorance will be dispelled, and one will be able to be illuminated by the light of knowledge. This is no problem at all. Man, with his limited knowledge, cannot remove any difficulty by *cintā* (contemplation or worry). If he is totally reliant on Śrī Bhagavān, who is *cintāmaṇi* (a wish-fulfilling gem), then he becomes supremely worry-free.

Your last inland letter showed some envy towards various devotees in Barddhman. The fortune of the devotees is always wide open. If you all can become devotee *cātaka* birds, then surely, one day, the water of mercy will be showered upon you. This is the natural function of devotees who are like rain clouds. They empty out their hearts and ungrudgingly distribute their every last resource. Those who think “how will I survive?” and seek out their own self-interest can never become *vadānya* (magnanimous). Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s devotees are supremely generous. They are *mahā-mahā-vadānya*. Their gift is incomparable. There is no gift in this world that can equal its value. Giving food to the starving, giving clothes to those who have none, giving medicine and treatment, giving knowledge – none of it can equal that. It has been accepted, via the statements of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and Bhagavān, that enlightening one person in the matter of *ātma-dharma* is a duty millions of times greater than [opening] millions of hospitals in the world. An intelligent seer of the truth realizes this by his perception of the soul.

**“The whole
can never be
the part,
and the part
can never be
the whole.”**

Śrī Nārāyaṇa and Mahādeva are, respectively, the whole and a part. According to the considerations of *tattva*, the whole can never be the part, and the part can never be the whole. The king and the citizen, the boss and the employee, the master and the servant are not one. On the path of *vidhi*, or *maryādā*, differences in authority will always be there. The foundation and what it supports cannot be one. Each and every thing will always have

**“Śrīman
Mahāprabhu’s
devotees
are supremely
generous.
... Their gift is
incomparable.”**

its unique speciality. Śrī Bhagavān loves the devotee, and the devotee is devoted to Bhagavān. Hence, the devotee does not become the conductor of cosmic creation, existence, and annihilation, and Bhagavān's omnipotence is not hampered by His affection for the devotee. To lump the God of all gods, Śrī Bhagavān, together with the presiding gods and goddesses or, in other words, His employees, is to commit an offence at His feet. Philosophical consideration dictates this is a fatal sort of offence. It is one thing to accept Brahmā, Śiva, and other demigods as Vaiṣṇavas, and something very different to imagine that any one of them is independently the Supreme Controller. Should the *jīva*'s good fortune arise, all of these *tattvas* manifest in his heart and he gets a sense of the real truth.

This world of *māyā* is full of impurities. It is beyond comprehension just how many types of prisoners and defendants there are in this jail of Mahāmāyā Durgā-devī. As long as the *jīva* fails to mold his life in correlation with the conclusions of scripture, he will always end up following the wrong path. Only the supremely merciful omniscient Śrī Bhagavān can, as *caitya-guru* [one's inner *guru*, or conscience], turn him around.

If you all stay well, I can be without worry. Please, all of you, accept my affectionate blessings. If there is time, try to come to Ratha. I hope everyone else is well. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 26

The importance of following Ekādaśī • Instructions on steadily performing *nāma-bhajana* • Fashioning a life of service to Bhagavān • The pure devotees' dreams are *samādhi* and eternal truths • Devotees do not care for public opinion • Time management is essential for the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
Orissa
26/6/1975

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! Many days ago, I received one of your inland letters. After that, I did not receive any other news, so I am worried. Even if you cannot find the time to respond to my letters, do not forget to write. And at the same time, if I cannot respond to your letters, then why do you think that means I am very far from you? Whenever you need a solution, I will be right with you and will settle the problem, or else you yourself will find a solution to this problem. I am always with you and accept meals from you every day. Why can you not see that? If only you would reflect deeply, you would have internal realization and gain *darśana*. I am very delighted to know that you have left everything up to me and have been able to become free from worry. I am not troubled by accepting responsibility for you in this life and the next, to bear your weight. I will only be extremely happy, however, when you endeavour to follow my love-filled instructions and orders.

I am extremely pleased to know of your acceptance of a renounced lifestyle and to see that you are firm in your determination. Be sure to follow Ekādaśī and other fasts with utmost conviction. Know that this is a limb of *sādhana*. “*Mādhavī tithi, bhakti-jananī, yatane pālana kari*”¹³⁰ – Mādhava’s holy day is the mother of devotion; I observe it diligently.” In the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā’s bhajana-sādhana*, this is the acceptance of favourable conditions and it is indicative of firm conviction. Associating with saintly personalities, performing *kīrtana* of *śrī*

¹³⁰ *Śaraṇāgati, Śuddha-bhakata* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

nāma, studying the scriptures, living in *śrī dhāma*, performing *pūjārcana* of the deity – these five *āṅgas* of *sādhana* are topmost. The other *āṅgas* are contained within them and remain inseparable from them. And furthermore, among *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and *smaraṇa*, *kīrtana* is the topmost.

I became very happy to know you are chanting a fixed number of *śrī nāma* every day. Try to gradually increase the amount of *śrī nāma*. In regard to chanting *śrī nāma*, there is the instruction to become *eka-lakṣa* (one who chants a lakh, one hundred thousand names daily) or *eka-niṣṭha* (one-pointed in one's conviction). Read the sacred text *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi* again and again, with special attention. By doing so, your heart will gain profound peace and bliss. Know that if you can gain rapt absorption in *śrī nāma*, that is total perfection. “*Niḥśvāse na hi viśvāsaḥ* – there is no certainty in breath.” Time carries on. Using this time properly is imperative. Who said you have not fully surrendered or offered your soul? This *adhikāra* comes without the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*'s awareness, and it is beyond their capacity to measure the wealth of their *sādhana*. Śrī Bhagavān, as the in-dwelling Supersoul, rectifies all the faults and errors of His devotee and mercifully dispels all lust, desires, greed, and delusion. This is why it will not do to lose patience. If one does not have profuse enthusiasm, perseverance, and tolerance, a delay occurs in attaining results.

**“Read the
sacred text
*Śrī Harināma-
cintāmaṇi*
again and again,
with special
attention.”**

If one follows the instructions and ordinances Śrī Bhagavān has installed in the scriptures to the best of one's ability and fashions a life in accordance with them, then one's attraction to Him increases. He alone is Bhagavān, the abode of *prema*. All the world's affection, attachment

**“The valuation
and success of
what one does
all day long
depends on
whether it is
done for the
sake of that
Supreme Lord.”**

and love have Him at their centre. If one can keep that *prema-maya* Bhagavān near oneself at all times, one attains the good fortune of service to Him. The valuation and success of what one does all day long depends on whether it is done for the sake of that Supreme Lord. Know this as your service within Kṛṣṇa's *samsāra* (household). Your *karma* (actions) are not even slightly different from your *sva-dharma* (*sādhana-bhajana*). Keep this in mind. The speciality of the *bhakta* is to live a life devoted to the service of Bhagavān and this is what makes him a *bhakta*. As long as the soul dwells on the foundation of the body, one will have to assist it in a regulated manner in matters of sustenance and rest. Though the *jīva* soul does not engage in any enjoyment of

this sort, it is imperative for him to attend to the gross and subtle bodies so as to orchestrate and preserve them. The *bhagavad-bhakta*'s eating, recreation, survival, sleeping, and dressing is solely to serve Śrī Hari. Bhagavān is satisfied by this performance and that is precisely why

“What the devotee witnesses through the *samādhi-yoga* of dreaming are the names, forms, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Bhagavān.”

the devotee desires to maintain his life. If the devotee cannot serve Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, he does not even want to live. Every one of his inhalations and exhalations is solely due to a desire to please Bhagavān and it is this that is the success of his life.

Dreams are mostly false and illusory. Philosophical texts have therefore used words like *svapnopama* (resembling a dream), *māyopama* (like an illusion), *avidyā* (ignorance), and *māyā* (illusion). But in the case of the *bhakta*, dreams turn into reality. You are very fortunate that you have obtained the opportunity to have *darśana* of Śrīla Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīpādas and their places of *bhajana*, even in your dreams. “*Svapne śrī rādhā-govinda dekhe*¹³¹ – he sees Śrī Rādhā-Govinda in his dreams.” This is the wealth of *bhajana*. In this case, the dream is not false; it has transformed into a reality. Generally speaking, what shows up in dreams are the objects of the senses that the gross and subtle sensory faculties have grasped and processed. However, what the devotee witnesses through the *samādhi-yoga* of dreaming are the names, forms, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Bhagavān that he remembers due to *sevonmukhī-sukṛti* (spiritual merit accrued as a result of his inclination to serve). One is unreality, the other is an eternal, true affair.

Poets write much poetic literature focused on mundane meeting. But Bhagavān's transcendental meeting or union with the devotee is not a matter to be understood by the general public. The soul's direct meeting with Bhagavān is the soul's *pariṇaya* (marriage). Knowledge of the meeting between consciousness and the supreme consciousness is *sambandha-jñāna* (knowledge of relationship). Philosophical texts have explained the *tattvas* of *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana* in this manner. The instructions of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān have the same meaning and the same purpose. The main thing is that by trying to preserve one's worldly stature, one's *bhagavad-bhajana* does not develop. For that reason, in striving to worship God, the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* have abandoned the worldly involvement of caring what what people say into the far distance. Mīrā Bāi had no such concern for what people thought. Śrīla Nārada Gosvāmī said: “*parivadatu jano yathā tathā vā, nanu mūkharo na*

¹³¹ *Kothāya Go Prema-mayī* (15) by Śrīla Gaura-kīśora dāsa Bābāji Mahārāja

*vayaṁ vicārayāmaḥ*¹³² – let the foolish world say what it wants; I will chant *śrī nāma*, undergo the eight ecstatic transformations, and always end up rolling on the ground.” This is firm conviction, a vow as solid as a thunderbolt, in the matter of chanting *śrī nāma*.

Gradually, you should strive to perform every activity with conviction. Śrī Bhagavān will surely assist you. Time management is a special virtue particular to the devotees; they inhale and exhale to the pace of the ticking clock and practice *śrī nāma*. In the *aṣṭa-kālīya yāma-sevā* (service throughout the eight periods of the day), this has been specially explained. You should gradually learn *pūjā* and *arcana*. You will become expert at it if you practise it for some time.

“Time management is a special virtue particular to the devotees.”

You should take the opportunity to go to *śrī maṭha* often to listen to class and *kīrtana*. That will be of particular benefit to your *sādhana-bhajana*. Direct *sādhū-saṅga* is so much rarer than *sādhū-saṅga* in the form of sacred *grantha* texts, and it gives greater results. If I were to forget you, there would be no saving me and I would have to answer to Śrī Bhagavān. Since this responsibility has come to me, I will try to fulfil it to the best of my ability. In the midst of all my work, I consider writing letters a special duty. You have Śrī Bhagavān and you have *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Why are you thinking yourself to be alone?

Try to fulfil the demand of material existence to the best of your ability, while preserving your *svadharma* [your own *sādhana-bhajana*]. “*Nije bācale bāper nāma* – if I save myself, I can be [called] a father.” [In other words, self-preservation is the first law of nature.] Therefore, keeping *bhajana-sādhana* intact, take care of your family and relatives and maintain them. You are bound to take responsibility for their care and maintenance in a way that is favourable to serving Bhagavān. You have my blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

.....
132 *Padyāvalī* (73)

Letter 27

A sense of a lack of time provides enthusiasm to perform *sādhana-bhajana* • There is no rest in the *dharma* of service • Being the object of criticism can be a preaching opportunity • The complementary nature of meeting and separation • Mistakes and redemption go hand-in-hand • Next to Kṛṣṇa, all wealth is trivial • By His will, all that is unfavourable becomes favourable

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Rādhe Śyāma Vasāka
Ukilpara, P.O. Rayganj
(W. Dinajpur) N. Bengal
7/9/1975

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! After bidding you farewell that day, I reached Malda auspiciously, without any obstacle. Even though the journey was during *tryaha-sparśa*¹³³ and *aśleṣā*¹³⁴, because of your well-wishes, it was auspicious and successful.

I was only in Malda for three days. That was the programme because time has become short. “*Goṇā dina phurāiyā gelo* – my days, numbered, have been exhausted.” Even though the time to feel this has not come, from time to time the cautionary words or warnings of Śrī Bhagavān, who is insurmountable destiny itself and the subduer of death, play like an alarm signal in our ears. That ear-splitting warning enters our hearts and creates an unspoken burning sense of awareness. “*Uṭho re uṭho re bhāi, āra to’ samaya nāi*¹³⁵ – get up, get up, brother. There is no more time.” This statement echoes forever in the ears of our consciousness. Then the high-pitched call to advance on the path of spiritual life rings in our hearts, stubbing out the murmur and ruckus of the social, materialistic world. Hence, giving up all worldly duty and responsibility, we must move on to the path to Nava-vana, to Vraja-vana.

My body is not particularly well. I am taking medicine. The doctor has advised two or two and a half months of complete rest, but I cannot say if there is rest to be had in my life. And

¹³³ *Tryaha-sparśa* (touching three) refers to a lunar day that spreads across three solar days, beginning before one sunrise and ending after the next sunrise.

¹³⁴ *Aśleṣā* (the embrace) is ninth of twenty-seven lunar mansions and falls within the constellation of Cancer.

¹³⁵ *Śrīla Prabhupāda-vandanā* (15) by Śrī Gopāla-Govinda Mahānta

is there any rest at all in the *dharma* of service? This is something to contemplate. There can never be any pause or break in *sevā* as it is eternally progressive. It is in the eternal present.

I have understood that several members of your family went for a trip to Kolkata and other places for about a fortnight and came back, but only due to a fear of criticism, you have no desire to go to any of your relatives' homes. If people criticize you, reason and argument help you validate your point of view, and in the case of spiritual matters, a special convenience and opportunity for preaching presents itself. Honest criticism deserves respect. Do you not like that? This world is a place of criticism and learning. That is precisely why the poets have sung: “*emani kare hṛdaye āmāra tīvra dāhana jvālo*”¹³⁶ – this is how severely you burn my heart.” It is impossible to lead a solitary life in the world. Even a dumb mute has enemies. This has been proven.

“There can never be any pause or break in *sevā* as it is eternally progressive.”

It has been many days since you have seen me, which is why you have become upset, and I have understood that you are looking forward to seeing me. Even now, there are still some present in this world who love us. If you relish nectar all the time, you cannot properly understand the effects of poison. Therefore, if the heart is corroded by the poison of *adarśana* [not being able to see Bhagavān], a desperation and eagerness to relish nectar increases. Disconnection, or separation, accelerates meeting. It is observed that after a person suffers from an illness, he desires to get better and strives to regain his health. Hence, *adarśana*, or separation, is the only link to *darśana*, or meeting. This is the conclusion of scripture. Where there is increase, there is decrease; where there is rise, there is fall; where there is life, there is death; where there is meeting, separation is waiting nearby, and these all function as mutually complementary to each other. Philosophy takes into account both the positive and negative.

“*Adarśana*, or separation, is the only link to *darśana*, or meeting.”

Man's life is full of errors and mistakes, but man's redemption is that there are means, or arrangements, to rectify them. To give pain and to get pain – the two are not the same thing. Who gives pain to whom and why indeed does man receive pain? A profound philosophical truth is hidden in this. Man performs actions and receives results of those actions. A fair grasp of this comes if you study the cause and effect theory. When it comes to errors, misconceptions, faults, and mistakes, whatever was meant to happen happened. One

¹³⁶ *Ei Karecho Bhālo* by Rabindranath Tagore

**“The Supersoul
will understand
your heart
and make all
arrangements at
the right time.”**

therefore must adopt caution, so that they do not happen again. Only then are they not repeated.

Those who do not perform *bhajana* of Parabrahma Śrī Bhagavān and have no concern for the well-being of the soul are poor, needy, and miserly. Why would you be poor? If you strive to become rich with the wealth that is Kṛṣṇa, you will understand all earthly wealth to be trivial. Why have you called yourself “a nonsense” and expressed a mood of inferiority? When exactly it is that you will gain the qualification to render direct service to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is something you will be able to recognize in your heart. “My time is very short.” One with this concern has surely experienced the commencement of his auspiciousness. The Supersoul will understand your heart and make all arrangements at the right time. Have faith in this.

Try to maintain your patience amid all sadness, trouble, and mental unrest. If you have perseverance and conviction, you will be able to transcend all predicaments. You will find a solution to all difficulties by dint of your personal strength. If Śrī Bhagavān is fully pleased, all problems will surely be solved. All unfavourable situations will proceed in a favourable manner with His assistance, sympathy, and participation. This is my well-contemplated opinion. Carefully study the verse “*arir-mitraṁ viṣaṁ pathyaṁ adharmam dharmam-ucyate, suprasanne hr̥ṣīkeṣa viparīte viparyayaḥ*”¹³⁷ – when Bhagavān Hṛṣīkeṣa is pleased with a person, that person’s enemies become his friends, poison becomes medicine, and irreligion becomes religion.” With this understanding, you will gain patience, perseverance, and steady intelligence.

For you all, I am taking care of my body. I am taking medicine. Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

**“If Śrī Bhagavān
is fully pleased,
all problems will
surely be solved.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹³⁷ *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (1.109)

Letter 28

The incomparable affection and importance of *sad-guru* • The difference between *śabda-brahma* and ordinary sound vibration • Deliberations on Bhagavān's effulgence and that of His devotees • The mysterious nature of dreams • Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the supreme, worshipful object of amorous love

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Hari-gopāla Chaudhuri
School Road, P.O. Rayganj
South Dinajpur
8/9/1975

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! I received your long letter almost two months ago. I hope that by Bhagavān's mercy, all is well. Though there may be a delay in my responses, do not forget to send letters. ...

What you wrote was very true: "Ordinary conditioned souls do not have the language to convey their faith to the *aprākṛta-tattva* (transcendental reality)." That unsurpassable *tattva* is truly incomparable. "*Man-nāthaḥ śrī jagannātho, mad-guruḥ śrī jagad-guruḥ* – my master is the master of the universe, my *guru* is the *guru* of the universe." This is the definition and analysis of *para-tattva*, the Supreme Reality. For those who have taken shelter of him and are following his guidance, the *śrī sad-guru*, the supreme friend in the jail of material existence, the cause of benefit to the world, and one who is saddened by the sorrows of others, can and does tolerate all manner of trouble. "*Jīvera duḥkha loi muī kari naraka-bhoga, sva-caraṇāmṛta diyā prabho, ghucāo edera bhava-roga*"¹³⁸ – I would endure hell to save the living entities from their suffering. Give them the nectar of Your feet, Lord, and eradicate their disease of material existence." This is the parental affection of the saintly, noble, and exalted personalities who are oceans of mercy for the devotees and those who have taken shelter of them. For the welfare of the living entities, they are prepared to endure all manner of sorrow and pain. Śrī Bhagavān has also taken *sad-guru* to be His

**“For those
who have taken
shelter of him and
are following his
guidance,
the *śrī sad-guru*
... can and does
tolerate all manner
of trouble.”**

.....
¹³⁸ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 15.162–163)

own associate; he is His intimate beloved. That devotee who is drenched in His mercy is known in the world as *sad-guru*. “*Kṛṣṇa-bhakte kṛṣṇer guṇa sakali sañcāre*”¹³⁹ – all of Kṛṣṇa’s qualities are invested in His devotees.” According to these words, the devotees develop conduct, dealings, moods, language, talents and everything like that of Bhagavān.

“By the unsolicited touch of his [sad-guru’s] auspicious hand, one obtains the divine gem, the magical touchstone of direct darśana.”

Even in the course of receiving the most severe blows in life, there are ample lessons to be learned. If, in endeavouring for the welfare of the soul, one can search and weep madly, like a crazy person, then the door to his ultimate well-being has opened. There is no doubt in this regard. It is Śrī Bhagavān Himself who, in the form of *guru*, points out the true path. He, as the Supersoul, grants inspiration to the hearts of the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*. This is how one attains *sad-guru* and, under his shelter, discovers the real destination. By the unsolicited touch of his [sad-guru’s] auspicious hand, one obtains the divine gem, the magical touchstone of direct *darśana* of the two-armed bearer of the *muralī* flute, Śyāmasundara Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra. As one attains divine knowledge, one can ascend the steps of the *sādhana* path and gradually arrive at an elevated stage. The *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*’s everything, their sole support, is that *sad-gurudeva*, who is fully realized in *śabda-brahma* and Parabrahma. Without him, *sādhana-bhajana* turns into a fruitless pursuit. Therefore, *Bhāgavata* [11.20.17]

says, “In this rare human birth, the human form is the basis of *bhajana* and a most suitable ship. The bona fide *guru* is its captain and it is propelled by the favourable winds of Bhagavān’s mercy.” Hence the statement: “*āśraya laiya bhaje, tāre kṛṣṇa nāhi tyaje, āra saba mare akāraṇa*”¹⁴⁰ – Kṛṣṇa does not discard those who worship Him under the guidance of the Vaiṣṇavas; all others perish without cause.” This highlights the qualifications and contrasting results of those who have taken shelter and those who have not. Therefore, the staircase of *sādhana*, or means of progress on the path of *sādhana*, is *sad-guru*, the embodiment of the Supreme Truth. Without his assistance, those who thirst for *bhajana* cannot move even a single step. In a word, *guru-tattva* is the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*’s *bhajana-sādhana*, their worship and ceremony, their life’s all-in-all, their guide to the true path, their protector and supreme friend.

The *śabda-śāstra* (scripture of divine word) is infinite, without shore. It is never possible for an ordinary human being to lay claim to that. *Śabda* is divided into two categories: *śabda-sāmānya* (the ordinary word) and *śabda-brahma* (God as word). Those who are attached to

¹³⁹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.75)

¹⁴⁰ Prārthanā, Ṭhākura Vaiṣṇava-pada (1) by Śrī Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

temporary sense objects exercise *śabda-sāmānya*, whereas the *tattva-darśīs* (seers of the Truth) worship only *śabda-brahma*. Every word is defined as per an unenlightened usage (*ajñā-rūḍhī-vṛtti*) and an enlightened usage (*viññā-rūḍhī-vṛtti*). Words have *lakṣanā*- and *abhidhā-vṛttis*, or secondary [or imagined] and primary [definitive] meanings. *Śabda-sāmānya* is created by moving the air of this material world, and it merges into mundane nature, while *śabda-brahma* is *vaikuṇṭha-vāṇī*, Absolute Sound. It incarnates from the spiritual realm into the mortal realm and, after completing its tasks, it once again withdraws. *Śabda-brahma* appears much the way Śrī Bhagavān advents, or appears.

I conveyed to you earlier that Śrī Bhagavān's qualities are invested in His devotees. *Bhaktas* easily obtain the four types of liberation like *sārūpya* (attaining a form like that of the Lord), but they never want *sāyujya* (merging with the Lord's form), which is an inclination that is harmful to the soul, a suicidal policy. Śrī Bhagavān is the luminous *puruṣottama-tattva*. Devotees also obtain a divine radiant lustre, which manifests as a result of *sādhana-bhajana*. To only discuss *jyoti* (divine effulgence) is meaningless because it is an inadequate perception of Absolute Reality, only an incomplete aspect of it. Inadequate vision of *tattva-vastu* is called *brahma*, partial vision of it is called *Paramātmā*, and complete vision of *tattva-vastu* is known as Bhagavān. These represent successively positive, comparative, and superlative degrees. Whenever *jyoti* is acknowledged, the question of whose *jyoti* it is, the question of the Absolute Truth, immediately arises. That is precisely what has been described in the Vedas and Upaniṣads: “*jyotir-abhyantare rūpam-atulaṁ śyāmasundaram, dvibhujam śyāmasundaram* – within the effulgence is the incomparable dark-complexioned form, a two-armed, dark-complexioned form” and “*parambrahma narākṛtiḥ* – Supreme God in human form.” That Śrī Bhagavān is the possessor of all potency, replete with all six opulences, the ocean of all nectarean *rasa*, and the supremely worshipful *para-tattva vastu*. Hence, the matter of His devotees' effulgence and their assuming divine bodies is eternal.

In philosophical texts, the word *svapna* is used to convey the unreal, illusory, imaginary, etc. Philosophers have wanted to demonstrate what falsehood is with the words *svapnopama* (like a dream) and *māyopama* (like an illusion). Also, they have analysed the deep mysteries of the *yoga-sāstras*, i.e., *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇā*, and *samādhi*, through the words *jāgrat* (awake), *svapna* (dreaming), and *suṣupti* (deep sleep). *Svapna* does not, in all cases, mean unreal, illusory, or imaginary. In some special cases, dreams become reality and reveal the nature and form of the *tattva-vastu*. The *svapna-darśana* (dream visions) of some perfected *mahātmās* can be discussed as an example of this. They are seers of reality, which is why they have *darśana* of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's love-filled forms.

Often a future event will be glimpsed in a morning dream. This is possible by the special mercy of Bhagavān or the *bhaktas*. [Sometimes] news of a devotee's arrival is foretold that very morning in the heart of his disciples. Often such devotees grant *darśana* in dreams and bestow enthusiasm and advice about maintaining patience. In this way, people also receive instructions [via dreams]. One devotee dreamed a thief had come to steal things. He woke up and saw that a thief had actually entered his house, but because the *gṛhasṭha* had woken up, the thief ran away. Many such events happen, for which there are real explanations but not people to explain or understand them. In our day-to-day, work-filled lives, there are many examples like this, the answers to which we do not seek out. Even if we notice something, we often do not have a chance to verify it or we lose interest. But even from general instances, we can obtain special lessons. How we behave day-to-day in our life journeys, what we practice, and what we think and feel, is usually examined in the form of dreams. However, often we dream of things we have never even thought of. Although we may not have experienced those things in this life, the conclusion of scripture is that they happened in previous lives. Dreams are a film relay of our actions in the course of our lives. The reproductions of what we grasp on the subtle platform with our mind, intelligence, and ego are referred to as dreams.

The possessor of all potency, that Supreme Principle, is the foundation of all *rasa*. He is the presiding deity of the five *rasas* and is worshipped according to the various propensities of His devotees. The devotees serve Him according to the five *rasas* of *śānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, and *madhura*. He is the Lord of lords, the Supreme Lord, the supremely worshipful deity of all the demigods and goddesses who preside over the material creation, the husband or maintainer even of husbands or maintainers – the *parama-pati*, or Supreme Husband. He is superior to all the greatest things in the illusory world, in other words, superior to *māyika-vastu* (objects of the illusory realm), which are connected with the three modes, subject to decay, and destructible. He is beyond *māyā*, beyond the modes; He is Parabrahma – the superlative of the superlative degree or, in other words, the *parātpara-tattva*. He is the *parama-pati* (supreme maintainer), *viśva-pati* (maintainer of the world), *prāṇa-pati* (maintainer of life), and *prāṇeśvara* (the Lord of life). The *gopīs* chose Him as their *svāmī* (lord) and established the glory and superiority of *unnatojjvala-rasa* in the world. Even though they had families, they knew Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone to be the Lord of their lives. The unmarried girls of Vraja worshipped Kātyāyanī and prayed to her to obtain that *para-tattva* as their husband: “*kātyāyanī mahāmāye mahā-yoginy adhīśvarī nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devī patim me kurute namaḥ*.”¹⁴¹ You are fortunate; you have received the indication to perform *bhajana*

¹⁴¹ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.22.4)

of that *para-tattva* in *madhura-rasa* under the guidance of the Vraja maidens. This is not the result of any meagre austerity. Never reveal this dream to anyone. That will disrupt your well-being and everyone may misunderstand you. Because ordinary *sādhikās* do not have real knowledge of all these matters, there may be grounds for misunderstanding or a chance they may criticize.

May your faith and *sādhana* increase exponentially. I offer this prayer to *maṅgala-maya* (the Auspicious One). *Ātma-samarpaṇa* (fully offering one's very self) is first worldly, then later, final full surrender comes. The *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* can realize this internally as he or she progresses on the path of *sādhana*. Another name for *śaraṇāgati* is *ātma-samarpaṇa*. It is sixfold, and it is of two types: positive and negative. One must simultaneously give up bad association and accept saintly association. “*Tato duḥsaṅgam-utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhimān.*”¹⁴² This is the ideal of *Bhāgavatam*. Prohibition of the unfavourable and acceptance of the favourable has been instructed in all scriptures, one being secondary and the other primary.

Try to chant a fixed amount of *śrī nāma*. You must practice *śrī nāma* amidst all the tasks you have. “Does someone who cooks not tie up their hair?” Consider this principle and go forward. In life, every activity is complementary to another, which is why there is no way to stop doing any activity. *Sandhyā* (prayers at the junctures of the day), *upāsana* (spiritual practice), rest, exercise – all of it is necessary. With all that, one must abide by a routine. Routined life is human life and the cherished ideal of the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*. In the midst of this, you have to do your tutoring and chant *śrī nāma* in a regulated manner. If one is not regulated, where is the auspiciousness? One is to conduct one's life in a regulated way and perform *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and *smaraṇa*. Everyone's time is short. It is with an understanding of this that we must proceed. If you go to the *maṭha*, if you hear *hari-kathā*, you will brush up on the teachings. If that which is real settles in the mind, that which is false automatically goes away. Once the door of mundane sense objects closes, one experiences transcendence, composed of pure knowledge, eternity, and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda*) or obtains the bliss of divine love (*premānanda*). I am responsible for all of you. Perform *bhajana* of Hari without worry. Everything will be possible. *Iti—*

**“Routined life is
human life and
the cherished ideal
of the *sādhaka*
or *sādhikā*.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹⁴² Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.26.26)

Letter 29

The ability to offer prayers comes from Bhagavān • The means of transcending *samsāra* • Instructions on daily *sādhana* • Bhagavān is more merciful to the fallen

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

% Śrī Rādhē Śyāma Vasāka
Nimānanda Cloth Stores
Ukilapara, P.O. Raya-Ganj
(West Dinājpur)
9/9/1975

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! “*Āpana icchāya jīva koṭi-vāñchā kare, kṛṣṇa-icchā binā tāhe phala nāhi dhare* – the living entity’s personal desires are such that he harbours millions of hankerings, but without

**“Man’s desires
and ambitions
have no end;
they simply cannot
be fulfilled.
However, because
Śrī Bhagavān
fulfils the
devotees’ wishes,
He is called
“*bhakta-vāñcha
kalpa-taru.*”**

Kṛṣṇa’s will, none bear fruit.” Man’s desires and ambitions have no end; they simply cannot be fulfilled. However, because Śrī Bhagavān fulfils the devotees’ wishes, He is called “*bhakta-vāñcha kalpa-taru* – the desire-tree that fulfils His devotees’ every wish” and His devotees also earn this title. I understand that you could not come to Navadvīpa because of your mother’s illness. Your mother is a great Vaiṣṇavī and by nature inclined to devotion; she has unshakeable faith and is profoundly devoted to Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Therefore, you will have to accept some sacrifice in order to serve and care for her. Even though she does not expect you to serve and tend to her physical needs, you must certainly perform that duty, especially since it is an activity that is favourable to *bhakti*. ...

“*Śariram-ādyam khalu dharma-sāadhanam* – maintaining the body is certainly the first step in accomplishing one’s religious duties.” On one hand, this statement is true, for who can perform *dharma* if their body falls ill? On the other hand, becoming indulgent on the pretext of taking care of the body will inevitably lead to trouble too. Therefore, it is the crucial duty of an intelligent person

who longs to perform *hari-bhajana* to reconcile both elements. You are intelligent; I think it unnecessary to write anything more on this topic.

I understand you were very pleased to receive the letter I wrote to you from Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha. Only the meek, destitute, and wretched are worthy of attaining mercy. “*Dīnera adhika dayā karen bhagavān; paṇḍita, kulīna, dhanīr, baḍa abhimāna*”¹⁴³ – Bhagavān is more merciful to the meek. Scholars, priests, and the rich are very arrogant.” Therefore, only those who are blessed with the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas in the form of their teachings and instructions are fortunate. We truly do not have the words to express our gratitude to *śrī guru-pādapadma* or Śrī Bhagavān. If they furnish us with the sentiments and language, then everything is possible. When Dhruva, a five-year-old boy, obtained a glimpse of that lotus-eyed Śrī Hari, he wanted to praise Him with hymns and prayers. An illiterate, uninitiated person does not obtain *darśana* of Bhagavān except by the mercy of *śrī guru*, and the ability to offer prayers and hymns to Bhagavān comes by His own special mercy. This is a fact, or *siddhānta*. It is Śrī Bhagavān alone who is inspiring the heart of each and every soul; it is He who has given them speech. Does a toddler’s garbled language not attract the love of his mother and father or do his superiors judge the purity or impurity of his language or speech? Rather, they become delighted and overjoyed by it.

Go to the *śrī maṭha* on a regular basis and take advantage of hearing and contemplating the *hari-kathā*, classes, and *kīrtanas*. If you hear from the worshipful mouths of the Vaiṣṇavas,

**“Vaiṣṇavas
are adepts
and veritable
encyclopaedias
of the essence of
all Bhagavān’s
instructions.”**

then you will readily understand whatever you do not understand in your reading. This is because their words and utterances retain a special potency. Scripture recommends seeking the company of the *sādhus* through their literatures only when one is bereft of direct *sat-saṅga*. *Sādhu*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas carry Śrī Bhagavān in their hearts. The *sādhus* are Bhagavān’s heart, and Bhagavān is the *sādhu*’s heart. Therefore, Vaiṣṇavas are adepts and veritable encyclopedias of the essence of all Bhagavān’s instructions. It is very true that becoming

**“We truly do not
have the words
to express our
gratitude to śrī
guru-pādapadma
or Śrī Bhagavān.
If they furnish
us with the
sentiments and
language, then
everything is
possible.”**

¹⁴³ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.68)

too entrapped in this mundane existence, or too attracted to it, creates impediments to the practice of *bhajana*. That is why we are specially instructed to remain in the proximity of Vaiṣṇavas, or *bhaktas*. Attachment to the mundane objects of the senses is called *saṁsāra*; Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the transcendental *viṣaya* (object), and the purpose of *sat-saṅga* is to heighten our attraction to Him. Thus, there is a difference of heaven and hell between the *jaḍa-viṣaya* (mundane objects of our senses) and the *aprākṛta-viṣaya* (the transcendent object), or between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and *saṁsāra*. If one serves the mundane *saṁsāra*, a dismal nadir of a destination awaits, whereas in Kṛṣṇa's *saṁsāra*, there is always auspiciousness and elevation. Therefore, scripture teaches: “*kṛṣṇera saṁsāra karo chāḍi' anācāra; jīve dayā, nāme ruci—sarva-dharma-sāra*”¹⁴⁴ – Engage in Kṛṣṇa's *saṁsāra* and give up improper behaviour. Compassion for all living entities and taste in the holy names is the essence of all religion.” *Guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān, being omniscient, eradicate the devotee's anguish. If the devotee becomes anxious to attain a glimpse of Bhagavān, then Bhagavān will surely fulfil the devotee's longing. That is why His name is Bhakta-vatsala [“He is who is partial, like an affectionate parent, to His devotees”].

In the early hours, once you have cleansed yourself, bathed, and completed your *ahnika*, it creates auspiciousness to read and recite devotional songs and hymns or prayers. When that is finished, it is imperative to chant *śrī nāma* on your beads. Prayers, expressions of humility, and entreaties to *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān can be found amid the collections of songs by the *mahājanas*, our great predecessors, and there is also *Gurvaṣṭaka*, *Ṣaḍ-gosvāmyaṣṭaka*, *Nityānanda* and *Gaurāṅga Aṣṭaka*, *Daśavatāra-stotra*, and various *praṇāma-mantras* that can also be recited. These are also counted as limbs of *bhajana*, by which one's faith in Śrī Bhagavān flourishes.

“*Je jata patita haya, tava dayā tata tāya*”¹⁴⁵ – the more a person has fallen, the more compassion You have for him.” This statement is found in the words of the *mahājanas*. “I am bereft of devotion and faith.” If we can say this from our hearts, certainly Śrī Bhagavān will dispel all our shortcomings and grant us service to His feet, which are the abodes of fearlessness. That is when the opportunity comes to make the human form of life successful. In that case, there is no question of the worthiness of one's sentiments, devotion, or language, because Śrī Bhagavān's mercy is causeless; it has no precondition. “*Yogyatā vicāre kichu nāhi pāi, tomāra*

¹⁴⁴ *Gītāvalī, Nadiya Godrume* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

¹⁴⁵ *Gītāmālā, Hari He! Agre Eka Nivedana* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

*karuṇā sāra, karuṇā nā ha'le kādīyā kādīyā, prāṇa nā rākhībo āra*¹⁴⁶ – when I try to discern my qualifications, I find none. Your mercy is essential. If you are not compassionate, I will weep and weep, and no longer maintain my life.” Also, “*vicārite ābahi guṇa nāhi pāobi, kṛpā kari choḍata bicāra*¹⁴⁷ – upon ceaseless deliberation, I find no good qualities in me; therefore, please have mercy on me without consideration.” These are the *sādhaka*’s or *sādhikā*’s anguished prayers and are measures of his or her qualification or eligibility. *Iti—*

Always aspiring for your welfare,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹⁴⁶ *Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Kṛpā-bindu Diyā* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

¹⁴⁷ *Prabhu He! Śuno Mora Duḥkhera Kāhinī* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 30

It is not proper to hear *hari-kathā* from *prākṛta-sahajiyās* • Books bereft of the topics of Bhagavān are unreadable • Our goal is to be neither an enjoyer nor a renunciate, but rather the bearer of *śrī guru*’s footwear • It is imperative to limit attachment to material enjoyment • The truth and falsehood of the material world are both meaningless • The association of *sādhus* is the ultimate remedy for material existence • A note on *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha,
P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
28/9/1975

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I wrote you a letter from Raiganj. I hope you received it. Send letters when you have the time and opportunity. Pay special attention to caring for your body. Never stop being regulated. Eat and rest on time. If the body is not healthy, how will you do *sādhana-bhajana*? For that purpose, it is proper to take care of the body.

There is no need to hear the lectures or explanations of paid *prākṛta-sahajiyā* and *jāti-gosvāmī* lecturers or speakers. Often, they will contain erroneous teachings. This is forbidden in the scriptures, also: “*avaiṣṇava-upadiṣṭena mantreṇa nirayaṁ vrajet*¹⁴⁸ – a *mantra* imparted by a non-Vaiṣṇava leads one to hell.” “*Avaiṣṇava-mukhodgīrṇaṁ pūtaṁ hari-kathāmṛtaṁ, śravaṇaṁ naiva kartavyaṁ sarpocchiṣṭaṁ yathā payaḥ*¹⁴⁹ – it is never proper to hear *nāma*, *mantra*, and *hari-kathā* imparted by a non-Vaiṣṇava; these are to be rejected because, like milk touched by the lips of a serpent, they act as poison.” Hence, you should not go here and there to hear such *rasa-kīrtana* or explanations of *rāsa-līlā* and other *līlās*. In that, there is a chance you will make the error of thinking that Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, the embodiments of all nectarean divine *rasa*, are a mundane hero and heroine. To superimpose mundane intelligence on to the transcendental is, in the philosophical world, a great offence and leads the soul to a degraded condition. The *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* should remain especially vigilant in this regard.

¹⁴⁸ Śrī Nārada-*pañcarātra*, quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (4.144)

¹⁴⁹ *Padma Purāṇa*

It is not right to have high regard for any activity other than contemplation of Bhagavān. The right thing to do with books that do not contain anything about Bhagavān is to discard them, knowing that they are not to be read. Scriptural evidence in this regard is as follows: “*yasmin śāstre purāṇe vā hari-bhaktir na dṛśyate, na śrotavyaṁ na mantavyaṁ brahmā yadi svayaṁ vadet*¹⁵⁰ – one should not hear or have faith in any scripture or Purāṇa that does not discuss devotion to Hari, even if it is spoken by Brahmā himself.”

When you find the chance, memorize *kīrtanas* from the *mahājana padāvalī* (songs of great devotees), sing *kīrtana* in soft, gentle tones, and recite *stavas* and *stotras*. With special effort, cultivate and practice the *kīrtanas* venerating *śrī guru* and other songs conveying humility or glorifying *śrī nāma*. On the whole, maintain strictness in your spiritual practice.

It is a special virtue to be satisfied with what one has. This is where *yuktāhāra* (moderate eating habits) and *yukta-vihāra* (moderate recreation) has been advised. If one does too little or too much of either, often one is compelled to drift far from the highest object. Scripture does not teach us to become either a *bhogī* (indulger) or a *tyāgī* (renouncer). The greatest wish and desire is to obtain *śraddhā-bhakti* (faithful devotion) and become bearers of the footwear of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. The Upaniṣadic statement “*nālpe sukhamaṣṭi* – there is no joy in the finite” prohibits mundane lust and desires. “*Bhūmaiva sukhamaṣṭi*¹⁵¹ – only in the infinite is there joy.” This is the positive side of the matter. Śrī Bhagavān is without borders, without end, the form of eternity, knowledge, and bliss, the condensed form of divine love. Worship of Him is also without borders and without end. His servants are also established in the *dharma* of eternity. This is because the served, the servant, and service are inspired by a single current of emotion.

In the case of *sādhana*, the instruction has been given to limit attachment to mundane enjoyment. By that, the mind is naturally subdued and attracted to God consciousness. As long as the soul remains bound by material attachment to enjoyment, sense objects and materialism, his love and attraction to the transcendental, supremely worshipful object cannot come. Therefore, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has manifested the verse “*tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta*¹⁵² – [As long as one is not satisfied by fruitive activity,] one should engage in action.” As long as the conditioned soul is not enamoured with topics of Bhagavān, he will continue to roam the platform of mundane enjoyment. Till then, he becomes a *ku-karmī*, *ku-jñānī*, and *ku-yogī* and holds profit, worship, and prestige in high regard. He thinks good to be bad, and holds fast

¹⁵⁰ *Mahābhārata*, quoted by Śrīman Mahāprabhu in *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 1.196)*

¹⁵¹ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.23.1)

¹⁵² *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.9)

to that which is unjust, thinking it to be just. If *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas show their mercy, he obtains the ability to discern and discriminate true from false.

“The truth and falsehood of the material world are both meaningless because they are not aimed at [attaining] Bhagavān.”

The truth and falsehood of the material world are both meaningless because they are not aimed at [attaining] Bhagavān. We can only find auspiciousness if we accept what Śrī Bhagavān or the *bhaktas* have determined to be true or false. The policies of the mundane are immobilized in the transcendental realm. On the other hand, the transcendental realm is devoid of mundane principles; it is beautifully resplendent, beyond all mundanity. If one cannot pass beyond inert nature, one cannot obtain ultimate auspiciousness. “*Man-nimittam kṛtam pāpam api dharmāya kalpate, mām anādṛtya dharmo 'pi pāpam syāt mat-prabhāvataḥ*”¹⁵³ – by the effect of My influence, if one engages in sin for My sake, it becomes religious activity, whereas even religion

that disregards Me becomes sin.” This establishes the superiority of transcendental principles. Rejecting mundane principles and accepting transcendental principles is the meaning of this verse. Hence, for *dharma*, for the betterment of the soul, desirous to please Bhagavān, bad becomes good. On the other hand, if Hṛṣīkeśa becomes displeased, opposite results are observed. “*Tasmin tuṣṭe jagat tuṣṭam prīṇite prīṇita jagat*”¹⁵⁴ – if He is satisfied, then the world is satisfied; if He is pleased, then the world is pleased.” This is realization of the Truth (*tattva-darśana*) or the perfect conclusion (*sat-siddhānta*).

Śrī guru and Vaiṣṇavas are present at all times as your protectors and teachers. Only if you can appreciate this will there be auspiciousness. The moment you become cheated of their guidance, their shelter, then and there, total destruction arrives. The moment the *jīva* soul whose consciousness is pure forgets Śrī Bhagavān – His names, form, qualities, and narrations of His pastimes – he welcomes a degraded condition. If you can see *guru* and Bhagavān as your guides at every moment, there is no more chance of fear. The fear of birth, death, etc. presents itself when one becomes absorbed in an illusory second object that is separate from Bhagavān. This is the detrimental result of forgetting Bhagavān. If, on the other hand, by the influence of good association, one develops an

“If you can see *guru* and Bhagavān as your guides at every moment, there is no more chance of fear.”

¹⁵³ *Padma Purāṇa*, quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (10.263)

¹⁵⁴ *Matsya Purāṇa* (238.38)

inclination to perform *bhajana* as per the instructions and orders of a bona fide *guru*, then the opportunity to rectify the blunder of being averse [to Kṛṣṇa] since time immemorial presents itself. “*Sādhū-saṅge kṛṣṇa-nāma—ei-mātra cāi, saṁsāra jinite āra kona vastu nāi*¹⁵⁵ – all I want is the association of *sādhū*s and the name of Kṛṣṇa; there is nothing else that can defeat this material existence.” This is the ultimate powerful remedy to eradicate the fear of material existence.

Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa is not written by some Vidyāvinoda. It is one of the eighteen *Purāṇas* composed by Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa. It contains many stories, some *tāmasika*, *rājasika*, and *sāttvika*. You must accept the essential portions; the rest is to be dismissed. Know you have my affectionate blessings. What more? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹⁵⁵ Śrī Prema-vivarta (6.13)

Letter 31

The interconnected mercy of Bhagavān and His devotees • Insights on *yukta-vairāgya* • The purpose of the *maṭha* and *mandira*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
21/11/1975

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! If you do not have patience, enthusiasm, hope, and eagerness, you will not reap proper results from anything. But the root of everything is to always nurture a special taste in *kīrtana* of śrī nāma. “*Je-rūpe laile nāma prema upajaya*¹⁵⁶ – chant in such a way that gives rise to divine love.” We have to adopt that means and move forward, towards the ultimate attainment.

Śrī nāma and nāmī and Bhagavān and His *bhaktas* are transcendental truths. If śrī nāma is merciful, then nāmī Śrī Bhagavān’s compassion is easily achievable; and if one receives the mercy of the devotees, the capacity develops to attain Śrī Bhagavān’s causeless mercy. The love,

**“The love,
compassion,
empathy, and
mercy that
the *bhaktas*
and Bhagavān
have are truly
not of this
earth and
are beyond
comparison.”**

compassion, empathy, and mercy of the *bhaktas* and Bhagavān are truly not of this Earth and are beyond comparison. The attributes and glories of the *bhaktas* and Bhagavān are also immortal and eternal. With senses composed of matter, it is impossible to describe the glories and pastimes of the *bhaktas*, who are *ananta-mahimā* (infinitely glorious), and of Bhagavān, who is *ananta-līlā* (the performer of infinite pastimes).

At present, I am healthy. The mind, which identifies with the gross body, sometimes conceives of itself as healthy and sometimes as unhealthy. The soul’s health, however, is an eternal fact. As long as the *jīva* imposes the idea of “I” and “mine” on the gross body, he suffers pain, sorrow, and difficulty. “*Dehe ātma-buddhi haya vivartera sthāna*¹⁵⁷ – belief that the body is the self is where *vivarta* (delusion) takes place.”

The predominance of the mental functions is observed where vision of

¹⁵⁶ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 20.20)

¹⁵⁷ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 7.123)

the real truth (*tattva-darśana*) is lacking. “*Ei bhālo, ei manda,—ei saba bhrama*¹⁵⁸ – this is good, this is bad – all of this is delusion.” Judging what is auspicious or inauspicious or what is good or bad on the material platform is inherently flawed. If the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* gain a respite from that, they have a chance at well-being. “*Yathāyogya bhoga, nāhi tathā roga*¹⁵⁹ – appropriate subsistence does not yield disease.” If I idealize this view and in the name of taking care of my body end up becoming a *dehā-gehārāmī* (someone who indulges in the pleasures of body and home), then where is the path of *bhajana-sādhana* or of real auspiciousness? Many strike up a chorus of “*śarīram-ādyam khalu dharma-sāadhanam* – the successful performance of *dharma* starts with the body” and end up imitating or following the atheist Cārvāka. “*Ādhikye nyūnatāyām ca cyavate paramārthataḥ*¹⁶⁰ – [the devotee] does not accept too much, nor too little, as neither would serve his ultimate welfare.” This is the measure of *yuktāhāra-vihāra* (balanced consumption and recreation). Whatever little we need to accept or consume to maintain the health of this body, which is suited to performing *bhajana* of Bhagavān, is referred to in scripture by the words *yathāyogya* (suitable) or *yukta* (appropriate). This usage establishes a proper understanding of attachment and detachment; it also makes the difference between pure *bhakti* and gross sensualism very clear. ...

A *paramāsthika-saṅghārāma* (centre for spirituality) is called a *maṭha*. It can also be referred to as a hospital dedicated to treating the disease of material existence. It is a place of learning and was founded for spiritual teachers and students of both genders. The ultimate sovereign Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, who is *līlā-puruṣottama* (the Supreme Person and conductor of divine pastimes), is the supreme object of worship, and *bhakti* is the only medium to attain Him. The soul is capable of attaining that transcendental object of service by *prema* or *prīti*, through the means of *sādhana*. These are the teachings the *śrī maṭha-mandira* imparts, as it is a *bhakti-pīṭha-sthāna* (devotional establishment). Besides the association of *bhaktas*, there is no other way to attain *bhakti*. By the mercy of devotees, the seed of the vine of devotion, *śraddhā*, is attained. In the beginning, middle, and end of *sādhana*, good association is an absolute imperative, because *bhakta*, *bhakti*, and Bhagavān are eternal and synonymous. The *bhakta* is absorbed in the service of his adored deity, and Bhagavān, satisfied with that service, always resides in his heart. As the *bhakta* is without lust, Bhagavān never leaves the throne of his heart. *Bhakti* is such that it makes even Bhagavān subservient to the *bhakta*. Therefore,

158 Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.176)

159 Duṣṭa Mana, Tumi Kisera Vaiṣṇava? (12) by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda

160 Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.108)

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said to Parīkṣit Mahārāja: “*bhagavān-bhakta-bhaktimān*¹⁶¹ – the Lord Himself has devotion for His devotees.” If you study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* you will be able to realize all of these things. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹⁶¹ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.86.59)

Letter 32

Cautionary words about various dogmas and corrupt practices • Calamity affords us the opportunity to take full shelter of Kṛṣṇa • Special instructions for a *sādhikā* of *madhura-rasa*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tegharipara, Navadvīpa (Nadia)
11/7/1976

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Even if you have nothing – no wealth, no education, or intelligence – just having your mind and life will suffice. *Sevā-vṛtti* (the inclination to serve) does not depend on the exchange of any material object. It is perfect in itself, independent. You cannot use any material object as currency to gain the inclination for *bhakti*. Mind, intelligence, and ego – each have their *vidvat-rūdhī-vicāra*¹⁶². However, it is seen that even an imitation of the eight external symptoms of transcendental ecstasy (*aṣṭa-sāttvika-vikāra*) includes trembling, horripilation, tears, and so on. Considering all this, the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* must tread the path of *bhajana* with great caution. We must be cautious to not become condoners of *prākṛta-sahajiyā-vāda*¹⁶³, *karma-jāda-smārta-vāda*¹⁶⁴, or *cid-jāda-samanvaya-vāda*¹⁶⁵ and thus end up secretly idealizing various mentalities that are antagonistic to *bhakti*.

***“Sevā-vṛtti
(the inclination
to serve) does not
depend on the
exchange of any
material object.”***

How shall I define a state of liberation from the bondage of mundane existence? It is in the midst of worldly calamity that the souls have the greatest opportunity to accept Śrī Bhagavān's

¹⁶² *Rudhī* means “direct, primary” and *vidvat* (learned) qualifies this term to mean “the esoteric direct meaning”.

¹⁶³ The various *sahajiyā* cults, which originated largely in medieval Bengal, draw on Buddhist, “Vaiṣṇava” and Islamic mysticism, or *tantra*, to ritualize sex as a means of enlightenment, recklessly blurring necessary distinctions between the divine and the mundane, reality and fantasy, and ultimately, pure love and mundane exploitation, thereby causing havoc in civilized society.

¹⁶⁴ The ideology of *smārta-brāhmaṇa* ritualists who subscribe to Advaita Vedānta impersonalism, yet worship five main Hindu deities, ritualistically and for material gain, claiming non-sectarianism.

¹⁶⁵ A doctrine rampant in many new so-called religions that lack solid philosophical foundation and seek to homogenize spirit and matter.

**“It is in the
midst of worldly
calamity that
the souls have
the greatest
opportunity
to accept
Śrī Bhagavān’s
holy name.”**

holy name, and so forth. And only in such a state does their one-pointed focus, anxiety, and desperation manifest. In this world, whatever situation people find themselves in, they have to strive for the welfare of their souls: “*yena kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇa niveśayet*”¹⁶⁶ – one way or another, by any means, absorb your mind in Kṛṣṇa.”

Feigning being a sinner and a fallen person will not make you a worthy recipient of mercy. If really, truly genuine humility comes, you will receive causeless mercy, or compassion. That is what Śrīman Mahāprabhu has expressed in the verse “*na me prema gandho ’sti* – I do not have even a scent of *prema* in Me.” It would be a mistake to include something that is simply an over-sentimental predisposition to be among the eight transcendental ecstatic symptoms. That sort of thing ultimately reveals itself to be nothing more than vanity.

As long as the mind remains absorbed in contemplating mundane sense gratification in the form of man or woman, where is the possibility that transcendental love will arise? Then again, there are those who externally carry on obeying worldly customs and regulations even after attaining a state in which they are fully overwhelmed by transcendental *bhāva*. If you study the third section of *Jaiva-dharma* and if you also study *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* thoroughly, you will be able understand all these topics. It is just a matter of realization and experience.

If you keep getting sent there to improve your health, you ought to pay more attention to doing so. Your mother is devoted to *bhajana* and wants what is best for you. If, unintentionally, you are at fault or make some mistakes in dealing with her, she will certainly forgive you. Therefore, it would have been fine even if you had not accepted your self-imposed punishment to leave home. Then again, having to accept any punishment your seniors give you to improve yourself can only result in auspiciousness, not inauspiciousness.

Even from afar, by mind and mood, you should string together floral ornaments for Mahāprabhu and send them to Him. He will accept them. Once the Guṇḍicā of the heart is thoroughly cleansed,

**“Once the
Guṇḍicā of
the heart is
thoroughly
cleansed,
Śrī Jagannātha
Kṛṣṇacandra
happily finds
a place to
settle there.”**

¹⁶⁶ See *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.1.32)

Śrī Jagannātha Kṛṣṇacandra happily finds a place to settle there. *Mādhurya-rasa* maintains its superiority to that of *aiśvarya*, as Śrī Jagannātha-deva journeys to Śrī Vṛndāvana from Dvārakā or Kurukṣetra. This is the purport of Ratha-yātrā.

“*Varaja-vipine sakhi-sātha, sevana karabū, rādhānātha; kusume gāthabhū hāra, tulasī-maṇi-maṇjarī tāra*¹⁶⁷ – In the forests of Vraja, I will serve with my girlfriends, O Lord of Rādhā. I will string flowers together to make a garland, with *tulasī-maṇjarīs* for gems.” As long as the heart is not raised to this transcendental state, one will not catch a glimpse of all these things. Carry on, day in and day out, maintaining your service and vows. This will satisfy Śrī Bhagavān and He will shower profuse blessings upon you. Try to be content with whatever situation He has put you in. What more can I say? Know that you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

.....
¹⁶⁷ *Śaraṇāgati, Choḍato Puruṣa-abhimāna* (2–3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 33

Two types of knowledge: *parā* and *aparā* • The difference between sincere inquiry and egotistical debate • Concern for bodily comforts must not hinder *sādhana-bhajana* • The necessity of taking shelter of a bona fide *guru* • The golden opportunity of hearing *hari-kathā* during *dhāma-parikramā* • The glories of Tulasī-devī • Serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa satisfies everyone • The ego of race and family hinders *hari-bhajana* • The habits and beliefs of *bhogavādīs* (materialists) • The power of chanting *śrī nāma* and *gāyatrī* • The meaning of the word *darśana* • The nature of exalted personalities

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Sundara-gopāla Dāsādhikārī
P.O. Maheshpur Raj
(Santhal Parganas) Bihar
23/7/1976

*Kalyāṇīyāsu*¹⁶⁸—

Dear ———! I received your inland and enveloped letters dated 1/10/75, 16/10/75, 27/10/75, 8/12/75, and 15/1/76, 27/2/76, 4/3/76, 1/7/76 in a timely fashion. But I am very embarrassed and sorry that I could not respond promptly to these. Nevertheless, as per the proverb “better late than never”, I am trying to rectify all my mistakes, even though I am responding late. I hope you do not hold on to this unintentional error or lapse of mine and instead try to understand the essence of what is written in this letter.

“If everyone cannot share the same purpose, real kinship is hindered.” This statement of yours is true and prudent. Knowledge is of two types: *parā* (superior) and *aparā* (inferior). That knowledge (*vidyā*) by which one becomes attached to Śrī Bhagavān is *parā*, and that by which one gains value, respect, and prestige in the world is referred to as *aparā-vidyā*. If one equates Śrī Bhagavān with His personnel [the demigods and goddesses], *nāma-aparādha* presents itself, and one can never obtain the real fruit of chanting *śrī nāma*. According to philosophical considerations, this is called anthropomorphism, or thinking an ordinary soul

¹⁶⁸
A form of address for a female meaning “object of my good wishes”.

to be God; the opposite of this is called apotheosis, or the mistake of imposing on to God the qualities of a living entity. Only if *śrī guru* and Bhagavān show their special mercy can the *jīvas* enamoured by *māyā* be protected from the clutches of this sort of misconception. If, as the indwelling Supersoul, Śrī Bhagavān shows special mercy, the conditioned soul's philosophical contradictions or misunderstandings of *tattva* cease.

I was delighted to know that you are studying *śāstra* deeply in order to participate in *tarka* (debate). Dry debate only increases the hardness of the heart. That is why Upaniṣadic statements give instruction like “*tarkā ’pratiṣṭhānāt*¹⁶⁹ – dry debate is inclusive” and “*naiṣā tarkena matir āpaneyā*¹⁷⁰ – knowledge cannot be reached by dry debate.” The process of sincere inquiry that is aimed at comprehending *tattva-siddhānta*, however, has its benefits and utility. It would be a mistake to think of that as *tarka*. As man comes to know or learn something, *tattva-jijñāsā* arises, which is defined as an honest inquiry after truth. If such questioning does not arise, if there is no inquiry, then there remains no chance of becoming acquainted with *tattva*. Such a tendency [to question] should thus be called a virtue, not a fault. [But] arguments or questions that are presented to test the knowledge and intelligence of *sādhū*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas are considered part of pointless self-centrism and mundane ego as they do not address the welfare of the soul. *Sādhakas* and *sādhikās* who want to obtain *bhakti* will always stay away from these sorts of argumentative tendencies.

Is there any chance of attaining auspiciousness if we stop *hari-kathā* and *kīrtana* and tend to our body? If this body, which is composed of the enjoying propensity, perishes in the course of performing *kīrtana* of Śrī Bhagavān's name, then and only then will the *jīva* find auspiciousness. If we become preoccupied with worrying and thinking about the body to the exclusion of *sādhana-bhajana*, then we will become *dehārāmī* (persons content with pleasures of the body). We will go very far away from *hari-bhajana*. That is why, even though my body was not well that day, I became occupied discussing *hari-kathā* with Śiva-nārāyaṇa Bābū. The sad thing is that despite spending time with Śiva-nārāyaṇa, Harihara, and others in *bhagavad-anuśīlana* (devotional endeavours), they were not able to follow anything about the convergences, differences, and specialities of Śiva and Nārāyaṇa and Hara and Hari. I noticed the reek of *cid-jāda-samanvaya-vāda* (belief in the conjunction of matter and spirit) and *jīva-brahmaika-vāda* (belief that the soul and God are one) in Śiva-nārāyaṇa [Bābū]. If people do not come under the shelter of *sad-guru*, they do not gain knowledge in matters of *tattva-vicāra*

¹⁶⁹ *Brahma-sūtra* (2.1.12)

¹⁷⁰ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.2.9)

and *siddhānta*. As a result, the flaws of *siddhānta-virodha* (philosophical contradiction) and *rasābhāsa* (incongruence of mellows) will consume them and they will be propelled down the

**“If guru and
Vaiṣṇavas
show their
mercy,
even the
impossible
becomes
possible.”**

wrong path. Everyone tries to comprehend the conclusions of the scriptures according to their qualification and they reap the results accordingly. What more can there be said in this regard?

For persons endeavouring to perform *bhajana*, there is certainly benefit in having *darśana* of *śrī dhāma* and going on pilgrimage to holy sites. During this time, they have the opportunity to hear profuse amounts of *śrī hari-kathā*. Such a golden opportunity is not available at other times. If *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* show their mercy, even the impossible becomes possible. The dumb become voluble and the lame gain the ability to cross mountains. During the period of *cāturmāsya-vrata*, and especially during *niyama-sevā* [Kārtika], it is crucial, every day, to engage in a regulated manner in the performance of *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, etc. of Śrī Bhagavān’s name, form, and qualities, and in the narrations of His pastimes. *Śāstras* have given specific instruction to hear *hari-kathā* from the mouths of one-pointed *Vaiṣṇavas* whose conduct is pure. Otherwise, one cannot obtain the proper result of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*.

Tulasī is Śrī Bhagavān’s beloved maidservant. We have the right to utilize her in service to Him. Tulasī-rāṇī is only satisfied if she is offered at Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. *Bhaktas* can only accept that Tulasī which has been offered to Śrī Bhagavān. No unoffered item is fit to be accepted by the *bhaktas*. That is why *sakhā* Uddhava said to Śrī Kṛṣṇa: “*tvayopabhukta-srak-gandha-vāsālaṅkāra-carcitāḥ, ucchiṣṭa-bhojino dāsās tava māyām jayema hi*¹⁷¹ – We, Your servants, conquer the illusory energy of *māyā* by wearing Your remnant garlands, perfume, garments, ornaments, and by eating Your remnants.”

It is written in the *Bhāgavata* regarding the conduct of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja: “*śrīmat-tulāsyām rasanām tad-arpite*¹⁷².” He would partake only of Tulasī offered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Though *Ayurveda* and other *śāstras* recommend the decoction of herbal plants as remedies to alleviate various ailments, one-pointed devotees of Bhagavān have never accepted juice of *tulasī*, or *ossimum sanctum*, that is not offered, nor will they ever do so.

**“One-pointed
devotees of
Bhagavān have
never accepted
juice of Tulasī
or *ossimum
sanctum* that
is not offered,
nor will they
ever do so.”**

¹⁷¹ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.6.46)

¹⁷² Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.4.19)

Śrī Tulasī is a worshipful deity manifested as a plant; that is the reason for this special ordinance. The nectar of Bhagavān's feet [or water that washed His feet] and that of His devotees gives special results. It has been stated in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta [Antya-līlā 16.60]: “*bhakta-pada-dhūli āra bhakta-pada jala, bhakta-bhukta-avaśeṣa—ei tina sādhaner bala* – the dust of feet of the devotees, the water that has washed their feet, and the remnants of their food are the three things that give the strength to perform *sādhana*.” One can also attain *bhakti* by drinking the water that has bathed Śrī Tulasī.

**“If you
perform
bhajana of
Śrī Kṛṣṇa,
you will
satisfy
everyone.”**

“If you perform *bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you will satisfy everyone.” This is the statement of *sādhu*, *śāstra*, and *guru*. It contains philosophical truths. “*Tasmin tuṣṭe jagat tuṣṭam prīṇite prīṇita jagat*.” This statement has the same meaning [as above]. “*Mūlete siñcile jala, śākhā-pallavera bala, śire vāri nāhi kāryakara*¹⁷³ – watering the roots strengthens the branches and leaves; watering the top of a plant does not work.” This is a matter to be carefully considered. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's statement “*yathā taror-mūla-niṣecanena...tathaiva sarvārhanam-acyutejyā*¹⁷⁴” has corroborated this supreme truth. In verses like “*hari-bhakti āche jāra, sarva-deva bandhu tāra*¹⁷⁵ – all the gods become a friend to one who has devotion to Hari”, “*yat-pūjanena vibudhā* – He who is worshipped by all the demigods”, and “*govindam-ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi* – I worship the original personality, Śrī Govinda”, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been propounded as the supremely worshipful object, the all-worshipful *tattva*. You cannot get food for the soul from someone who is not acquainted with Truth, which is why the Vedas instruct: “*sa gurum-evābhigacchet śrotṛiyam brahma-niṣṭham* – one [who wants to advance in knowledge] should approach a *guru* who is adept in scripture and devoted to God.” God-willing, you will have a “library of your own” and will have the convenience of studying various texts as you please.

Nowadays, many have dressed themselves up as “*Ṭhākura*” *avatāras* (incarnations of God), but they are birdcall mimickers, tittering *apasiddhānta* and *kusiddhānta* (wrong or false conclusions) like sparrows. The rules of mundane *varṇāśrama-dharma* do not define the spiritual realm. One cannot obtain the well-being of one's soul via worldly conduct and behaviour. Where is the possibility of ever beholding the soul if one acts according to the considerations of mundane race and family? Racism and orthodoxy cannot bring about the

¹⁷³ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Mana, Tumi Baḍai Pāmara* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

¹⁷⁴ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (4.31.14)

¹⁷⁵ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Mana, Tumi Baḍai Pāmara* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

“If one cannot discard ego in regard to family and race, one cannot perform *hari-bhajana*.”

living entities’ supreme benefit. “*Dinere adhika dayā karen bhagavān, paṇḍita, kulīna, dhanīr baḍai abhimāna; jei bhaje, sei baḍa, abhakta—hīna chāra, kṛṣṇa bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi vicāra*¹⁷⁶ – God has more mercy for the fallen than for scholars, aristocrats, and the rich, who are too arrogant. That person who worships is superior. The non-devotee is destitute and detestable. There is no consideration of race and family in the worship of Kṛṣṇa.” It is only those who do not have the fortune to hear this who bluster on about considerations of mundane race and family. This is intolerance and a type of deceit. If one cannot discard ego in regard to family and race, one cannot perform *hari-bhajana*. That is the reason for the invocation of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s verse “*nāhaṁ vipro na ca narapatiḥ ... gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayoh dāsa-dāsānūdāsaḥ*¹⁷⁷”. “*Jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nitya dāsa*¹⁷⁸ – the constitutional identity of the living entity is as Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant.” This is the inauguration of the [soul’s] true identity. *Sad-guru* infuses and sows this bona fide conception into the hearts of his disciples and followers. That is called *dīkṣā*. “*Dīkṣā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpaṇa, sei kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kare ātma-sama; sei deha kare tāra cidānanda-maya, aprākṛta dehe kṛṣṇer caraṇa bhajaya*¹⁷⁹ – At the time of initiation, the devotee surrenders his soul, and Kṛṣṇa makes him the same as Himself, in that He makes the devotee’s body spiritual and blissful. In that transcendental body, the devotee worships Kṛṣṇa’s feet.” This is the outcome of the provision of *dīkṣā*. Trivial problems, worldly affairs like marriage – nothing can declare jihad in opposition to transcendental injunctions, nor do they have the right.

The people of the world are *bhogavādīs* (materialists), those who tread the course of impulse (*pravṛtti*). Any thought of the path of restraint (*nivṛtti*) or renunciation does not even enter their minds. Their belief is that only if you can become obsessed with what you eat and wear and where you live, do you fulfil your duties as one of the world’s extroverted population. They cannot think about the path of spiritual life, which is why they have earned the title “animal-killing hunters”. Indulgent persons are busy putting Bhagavān and His *bhaktas* to work. The fruit of accepting *dīkṣā* is not the temporary health of the material body and hundreds of resultant material desires. Those who strive for such fruits are more or less offenders. Putting

¹⁷⁶ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.68–67)

¹⁷⁷ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 13.80)

¹⁷⁸ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 20.108)

¹⁷⁹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.192–193)

guru and Vaiṣṇavas to work for the fulfilment of one's own pleasure and self-interests is considered *nāma-aparādha*, *vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, and *sevā-aparādha*. The heart of the living entity who is bound by *māyā* is naturally prone to enjoyment. Those who want to fuel that are profoundly foolish and the most wretched of mankind; they are characterized by evil deeds, their knowledge is swindled away by illusion, and they are endowed with a demoniac nature. This type of bad association is certainly to be discarded.

I am delighted to know that your own rental home is more favourable for your *sādhana-bhajana* than your elder sister's house. It is a matter of joy that you are finding the opportunity to chant one lakh of *nāma* every day with firm conviction. Although you are a new student, if you have enthusiasm and patience, you will find auspiciousness. Śrī Bhagavān is full of auspiciousness. That is why He has tactfully sent you to your own rented space for the convenience of your *śrī nāma-bhajana*. "The Lord accomplished five or seven tasks with one act – *eka kārya karen prabhu kārya pāñca-sāta*."¹⁸⁰ If we contemplate every event in the world with a calm mind, we can realize Śrī Bhagavān's causeless mercy. Whether it is partial mercy, full mercy, or causeless mercy, because it is transcendental, it is full. Even half of His causeless mercy will have to be considered full, because the inseparable portion of the whole is also whole. Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: "*ānyera hṛdaya—mana, mora mana—vṛndāvana, mane vane eka kari jāni; tāhe tomāra pada-dvaya, karāho jadi udaya, tabe tomār pūrṇa kṛpā māni*"¹⁸¹ – other people's hearts and minds are the same, but My mind is Vṛndāvana. I know My mind and the forest are one, and if Your two feet would appear there, I would consider that Your full mercy." Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name and Kṛṣṇa's *mantra-gāyatrī* are both whole and complete. Still, "*kṛṣṇa-mantra haite habe saṁsāra-mocana, kṛṣṇa-nāma haite pābe kṛṣṇera caraṇa*"¹⁸² – by Kṛṣṇa's *mantra*, you will be freed from material existence, and by Kṛṣṇa's name, you will attain Kṛṣṇa's feet." This is *tattva* and *siddhānta*. *Kṛṣṇa-mantra* and *kṛṣṇa-nāma* are complementary. Nevertheless, *śrī nāma* is more merciful. By *mantra*, one is freed from the functions of the mind. By chanting *gāyatrī*, the chanter gains deliverance and by *dīkṣā*, divine knowledge arises. In other words, as

"The fruit of accepting *dīkṣā* is not the temporary health of the material body and hundreds of resultant material desires. Those who strive for such fruits are more or less offenders."

¹⁸⁰ See Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 2.169)

¹⁸¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 13.137)

¹⁸² Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 7.73)

Śrī Gaurasundara conveyed to the world, one attains “full mercy” – a glimpse of Śrī Bhagavān’s pastimes in the Vṛndāvana of the mind. Those who gain this qualification are truly the most fortunate of the fortunate.

I was happy to know that there was a question about *darśana* when you gave an interview. *Darśana* means knowledge. That from which one gains knowledge of *tattva-vastu* is the *darśana-śāstra*. That by which one discovers indications of the real *vastu* is real *darśana*. This *darśana* is of two types: primary and secondary. The word *darśana* also refers to *vicāra* (thought, consideration). There is a difference of heaven and hell between atheistic *darśana* and theistic *darśana*. *Jaḍa-vāda* (materialism) is atheistic *darśana*, and *paramārtha-tattva* (the truth of the supreme objective) is known as theistic *darśana*. With their concerns for the survival and development of the world, the atheists have gone mad straining their intelligence, while the theists have immersed their minds in concerns for the welfare of the transcendent soul and have thus determined the existence of a supreme consciousness, as well as their duty towards Him. Later you will find an opportunity to have all these discussions. Śrī Bhagavān Himself has protected you from a motor accident. He protects us in all situations. Keep this faith.

There is nothing bothersome about someone who is seeking the welfare of the soul submitting questions or extensive inquiries to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas for a long eight-year period. *Sādhus* are committed to helping others. They sacrifice their lives for the benefit of the living entities and they feel the pain of others. To sever the doubts of others and dispel ignorance is their special duty and lifelong vow. Therefore, despite being tormented by arrow-like questions of those with tender faith, they resolve all questions in a calm and steady manner, thinking only of the welfare of the living entities’ souls. By taking shelter of the worshipful feet of such exalted personalities, all of the *jīva*’s inauspiciousness is dispelled. This is a fact. Because they are merciful, they bestow qualification even upon one who is unqualified. This is why they are *mahā-mahā-vadānya* (greatly, greatly magnanimous).

My affectionate blessing is that you may chant *śrī nāma* without obstacle, study the scriptures and become established in [spiritual] life. If there is a desire to serve Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, then it will happen; it will become a reality someday. Convey my well-wishes and respectful greetings to your mother and father. What more can I say? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 34

Faith and determination afford one forgiveness for one's offences • You are never alone • The meaning of *sarva-dharmān parityajya* • The six enemies of the soul • The use of *mṛdaṅga* and *karatāla*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
Orissa
18/8/1976

Sādara sambhāṣaṇa pūrvikēyam—

Dear —! I arrived in Purī and received your three inland letters dated 2/8/76, 12/8/76, and 13/8/76.

Why are you spending your days in so much unrest? In the preliminary stages, *aparādha* and whatnot can occur, but Śrī Nāma Prabhu Himself eradicates that upon assessing a person's one-pointedness and conviction in *bhajana*. There is a means for trees, grass, shrubs, creepers, birds, and animals to obtain auspiciousness, so where is the hindrance to *hari-bhajana* for human beings, a superior creation, and especially those who are faithful souls? The mistakes you think you have made until now will be forgiven as a result of your faith and determination. For the followers of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, the only real path to spiritual well-being is to accept their chastisement without consideration. As they gradually proceed along the path of *sādhana*, the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* can prepare themselves, and then, in the realm of *bhajana*, they also obtain the proper qualification to hear. "I am not progressing in my *sādhana-bhajana*, O merciful *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas! Give me strength to do *bhajana*, so that my eagerness to attain the well-being of my soul increases day by day." This is the only thing a follower should pray for.

The moment you think you are *niḥsaṅga* (without devotee association) or alone is when doubts, dilemmas, and fears will come and devour you. You are never alone; *śrī guru* and Bhagavān are with you at all times, directly and indirectly. Know that in the form of *caitta-guru*, Śrī Bhagavān is granting inspiration at all times, and *guru* and Bhagavān are always showering their good wishes and auspicious blessings upon you. Hence, in *sāstra*, the word

niḥsaṅga has been used to refer not to being alone but to being in good association. Try to remain under the shelter of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas at all times. You will not run into any obstacles. By their causeless mercy, all of your obstacles and hindrances will be dispelled. ...

I am providing a few brief answers to your questions:

1. *Sarva-dharma*, in the verse “*sarva-dharmān parityājya*¹⁸³” refers to the *dharma* of the worldly and social realm, to *naimittika-dharma* (casual acts of piety), and even to *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*. This verse has conveyed the topic of abandoning materialistic *varṇāśrama-dharma*. To give up all mundane ego of being the doer and to accept the shelter of Śrī Bhagavān is *ātma-samarpaṇa* (submission of the soul). It is by this that one attains immortality. As long as the soul’s complete indifference to material objects does not appear, he wanders throughout Veda-dharma, or *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. Rousing faith in *bhagavat-kathā* is the chief purpose of scripture. Everything else is a secondary affair. They [the scriptures] have given instructions to give up not just the fruits, but also [the processes to attain those fruits, like] *karma*, *jñāna*, and *yoga*, to not take the shelter of the various presiding demigods, and to take full shelter of *ananyā-bhakti* (one-pointed devotion). This *ananyā-bhakti* is perfected by the special mercy of Śrī Bhagavān. One who evaluates the faults and merits of the injunctions and prohibitions of *śāstra* and grasps the ultimate conclusion is the most intelligent. This is the subject under discussion. *Bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is being specially indicated in this case.
2. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhu has conveyed the topic of the the six enemies of the soul (*ṣaḍ-varga*) in *Upadeśāmṛta*. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has explained the *vāco-vegāṃ* verse by giving a poetic translation as follows: “*vākya-mano-vega*, *krodha-jihvā-vega*, *udara-upastha-vega*; *miliyā e saba*, *samsāre bhāsāye*, *diteche paramodvega*¹⁸⁴ – the impulses of speech, mind, anger, taste, belly, and genitals come together, sweeping me into material existence and giving me supreme distress.” The cravings of the tongue, belly, and genitals – these three are particularly deadly. Persons who covet these three sense objects – the greed to eat nice things, to eat more than necessary, and gratifying the sense of touch (biological appetite) – can never perform *bhajana* of Kṛṣṇa. *Śiśna* + *udara* = *śiśnodara*. *Śiśna* refers to the female and male reproductive organs. In this case, *śiśna* means mundane lust aimed at satisfying one’s own senses. People otherwise

¹⁸³ *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66)

¹⁸⁴ *Śaraṇāgati*, *Hari He! Prapañce Paḍiyā* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

misunderstand. That is why in the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna on “lust that is not contrary to religion”. “*Ātmendriya-prīti-vāñchā—tāre boli ‘kāma’, kṛṣṇendriya prīti-vāñchā dhare ‘prema’ nāma* – the desire to satiate one’s own senses is called lust; the desire to please Kṛṣṇa’s senses bears the name of love.” If you properly study this couplet from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [Ādi-līlā 4.165], you will be able to understand the difference between *kāma* and *prema*. The *kāma* of the Vraja *gopīs* has become known as *prema*. This subject is understood according to individual qualification.

3. The tradition of performing *śrī nāma-kīrtana* with *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas* has been going on since the time of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Śrīla Advaita Ācārya Prabhu, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, and others all did *kīrtana* of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* with *mṛdaṅga* and *mandirā* (cymbals). That is why the succeeding generation of Vaiṣṇava poets all made similar injunctions. Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura, Śrīla Locana dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and others have indicated the same in various verses. Here, there are no rules or prohibitions about a fixed or unfixed number as with *japa*. The *mahā-mantra* is to be both chanted and sung. The differences and specialities of mental chanting, vocalized chanting, and quiet chanting are proof of that. The *gopīs* also used *mṛdaṅga*, *mandirā*, *vīṇā* and other instruments specified by ancient sages who utilized these in performing *kīrtana* of Kṛṣṇa. Hence, the use of *khola* (*mṛdaṅga*) and *karatāla* has endured since very ancient times.

I will give you a list of books, as I have a responsibility to collect vital books and distribute them. You can read *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. I will give you other books later. With all the books you read, keep very detailed notes. This will be of great use later. Accept my affectionate blessings. What more can I say? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 35

The soul is stronger than the body • The difference between Īśvara and the *jīvas* • The meanings of the word *māyā* • Śrī Bhagavān is never subject to *māyā*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
Orissa
30/8/1976

Sādara sambhāṣaṇa pūrvikeyam—

Dear —! Today I received your inland letter dated 28/8/96. You wrote that the festival for Śrī Janmāṣṭamī went well. But how good of a festival can you have when fasting? You were sighing and moaning because you did not eat till midnight, and all that did was increase your stomach acid. But then you did class and *kīrtana*. This is very good news. Though you deprived the body of its meals, you provided the soul its food, and the subtle body could not even go on strike about it because materialism cannot contend with the strength of the soul, nor will it ever be able to. The testimony to this was found in the assembly of Parīkṣit Mahārāja and the halls of Gokarṇa's avid *Bhāgavata* listeners. Demoniac force is forever defeated by the strength of the gods, as it is inferior to it. The devotees surely distributed some *prasāda* on Nandotsava. If you do not have yoghurt, milk, sweet rice, condensed milk, curd, butter, or palm fruit fritters that day, you do not have enough variety. Surely you gave me palm fruit fritter *prasāda* to eat? If you did not, then one day offer that to Ṭhākura and give me the *prasāda*.

There is no one in this world who can make me annoyed, but if I experience annoyance, [because I allow myself to be annoyed] then you can use that word in relation to me. It is a very difficult task to rouse annoyance (*virakti*) in a person who does not become annoyed (*virakta*). Indifference to material objects is also called *virakti*. Only if one can love Śrī Bhagavān, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas can the heart rise to a place beyond material objects. That is why *bhaktas* and Vaiṣṇavas have and always will have tolerance, patience, and perseverance.

Īśvara is the Lord of *māyā*, being beyond *māyā* and beyond the three modes. The *jīva* is in the clutches of *māyā*, fit to be dominated by *māyā*. The *jīva-brahmaika-vādīs* are the only ones who conjure up [the idea of] non-difference between Īśvara and the *jīva*. Īśvara and the *jīva* can be considered non-different in that they are qualitatively one, but since one is *brhac-caitanya* (the total consciousness) and the other is *aṇu-caitanya* (the minute consciousness), the quantitative gap between them has always been there and always will be. (In the context of *jīveśvara-vāda*, the belief that ordinary souls can become God) if the word *īśvara* is used to refer to the administrative demigods, then [it means that] only the greatest *jīvas* can become demigods and attain a somewhat similar status; but if the word *īśvara* is used to refer to Parameśvara, the Supreme Lord, then that is a fatal mistake and an offensive thought. “*Māyādhīśa, māyā-vaśa—īśvare jīve bheda*¹⁸⁵ – There is the Lord of *māyā* and one who is controlled by *māyā*. This is the difference between God and the living entity.” This is the real *tattva* and *siddhānta*. *Jīveśvara-vādīs* (those who believe ordinary souls can become God), *bahvīśvara-vādīs* (pantheists), *pañcopāsakīs* (Hindu worshippers of five deities), *ahaṅgrahopāsakas* (those who want to become God), *māyāvādīs* (monists), *nirviśeṣa-vādīs* (impersonalists), *viśvarūpopāsakas* (worshippers of the Universal Form) – these are all more or less atheists. If you study the *Gītā* verse [7.15] “*na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ*”, you will understand this properly. *Tattva-siddhānta* cannot enter a person as long as he harbours the erroneous notion that “*brahma* covered by ignorance is the *jīva*, and the *jīva* liberated from ignorance is *brahma*”. In reality, *brahma* is a semblance of Śrī Bhagavān, Paramātmā is His expansion, and Śrī Bhagavān is Pūrṇa-brahma (the complete form of *brahma*). The *jīvas* are *vibhinnāṁśa*, Śrī Bhagavān’s diverse parts and parcels, and they are of two types: *baddha* and *mukta*, embondaged and liberated. *Baddha-jīvas* attain the liberated state through *sādhana*.

By “*māyā*” people generally refer to the material energy: Mahā-māyā Durgā. But if *māyā* means Yogamāyā, then it refers to that [energy] which takes shelter of the *antaraṅgā-svarūpa-śakti* (the Lord’s internal, personal potency) and is renowned as Śrī Bhagavān’s *līlā-vistāriṇī* (“pastime-expander”) *śakti*. The verse in the *Gītā* [7.25], “*nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyā-samāvṛtaḥ* – nor am I manifest to everyone, as I am covered by Yogamāyā” is proof of that. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Tenth Canto, Chapter 19 [Text 14], in regard to Śrī Kṛṣṇa drinking up the forest fire, the *sakhās* say, “*kṛṣṇasya yoga-vīryaṁ tad-yogamāyānubhāvitam* – Kṛṣṇa’s yogic potency is imparted by the strength of Yogamāyā.” This Yogamāyā is under the guidance of the Goddess of Gokula, Śrī Rādhikā, and Her *āvaraṇātmikā-śakti* (obscuring potency) is

¹⁸⁵ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 6.162)

known as the goddess of all, Akhileśvarī Māyā-śakti. Though there may be many *śaktis*, or females, in one's home – mother, wife, daughter, sister, various aunts, maternal and paternal grandmothers, even housemaids – they are not all the same, and one behaves differently with each of them. Likewise, just saying “*māyā*” will not do. Mahāmāyā, Yogamāyā, and other principles have differences and specialities.

“*Pañca-bhūtera phāḍe, brahma paḍe' kāḍe* – into the noose of five elements, *brahma* falls and weeps.” This is the utterance of an atheist. The *jīva*'s body of five elements is fashioned by *māyā*. Why would He who is the Lord of *māyā* lead a life of captivity, suffering from threefold miseries in the jail of the material energy? Though Parabrahma Śrī Bhagavān advents in this material world, He is not affected by *māyā*. This is His *īśvaratā* (Godhood). Only *baddha-jīvas* who have forgotten Bhagavān endure the fruits of their actions and the tyranny of the five elements via the resources of mind, intelligence, and ego, thereby reaping misery in a body of five elements. The Lord of *māyā*, the Supreme Lord, never touches the material energy. This is indirectly explained in *Gītā* [9.10], in the verse “*mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram*”. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the Upaniṣads also revealed this profound conception in the “*dvā suparṇā*” verse.¹⁸⁶ *Jīva-brahmaika-vāda* is a non-Vedic, atheistic doctrine. The eternal Ārya sages have despised and refuted this everywhere. In the *Gītā*, *Bhāgavata*, and other scriptures, this doctrine has been deemed demoniac. ... Accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

.....
¹⁸⁶ *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* (4.6) and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.1.1) states:

*dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte
tayor anyah pippalam svādv atty
anaśnann anyo 'bhicākaṣīti*

Paramātmā and the *jīvātmā* reside like two friendly birds on the branch of a *pīpala* tree, which represents the gross and subtle bodies. The *jīva* tastes the *pīpala* fruits according to his fruitive activities, whereas Paramātmā does not taste the fruit. He is situated as a witness.

Letter 36

Rest is as necessary as service, but should not detract from it • Śrīpāda Trivikrama Mahārāja • The transcendent love and compassion of the Vaiṣṇavas • Heartfelt endeavour and simplicity vanquish *aparādha*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
30/8/1976

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! If one can engage this aged cow of a body in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, one can know its purpose to have been fulfilled. If one ends up living for the comforts of home and body, then where is one's advancement in *sādhana-bhajana*? Becoming distressed by winters and summers, etc. often hinders one's resolve to render service. As important as it is to exert oneself rigorously in service, it is just as necessary to rest one's body so one can do *bhajana*. The two are synonymous. Rest is for service; rest should not detract from service. These are two complementary states of being. *Ārāma* (rest) devoid of longing for the joy of service is *hārāma* (forbidden) and is in the category of mundane lust and hankering. One should never impose material ideas on transcendent truths, as this begets *aparādha*.

**“One should
never impose
material
ideas on
transcendent
truths, as
this begets
aparādha.”**

Śrīpāda Trivikrama Mahārāja is especially affectionate to destitute and unfortunate people like me, which is why he made his auspicious journey to Navadvīpa to confer with me. But I, due to misfortune, was cheated of seeing him, having left to go preaching just before he arrived. The well-being of all of us and that of the mission was contingent on that consultation. Whatever happens, we will have a chance to discuss this matter later, when I return from preaching.

There is nothing equal to the Vaiṣṇavas' transcendent love and compassion. If a soul who wishes to perform *bhajana* can appreciate this compassion, then they will surely reap good fortune. Being able to understand the chastisement and compassion of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is indicative of great fortune. Human beings who are attached to the objects of the senses

mistake the compassion of Bhagavān and His devotees for cruelty and their chastisement for anger and lack of sympathy. In reality, chastisement and mercy are employed for the same purpose. “*Vajrād-api kaṭhorāṇi mṛduṇi kusumād-api*”¹⁸⁷ – more brutal than a thunderbolt and softer than a flower.” It is imperative to take this notion to heart. The supremacy of one who can grasp mood and intention is acknowledged everywhere.

The meaning of the words “*vandō mui sāvadhāna mate*” is that one will have to become free from offences and praise the feet of *śrī guru-pādapaḍma*. Offences to *śrī nāma*, offences to the *dhāma*, offences while rendering service, and other countless types of flaws and mistakes have been noted in the realm of *sādhana-bhajana*. This is not something to despair about. By heartfelt endeavour and simplicity, all unfavourable conditions will vanish, and all types of

“**The *dharmā*
of service
is eternal,
and it has a
continuous
momentum.**”

good fortune will arise. Rejecting that which is unfavourable, one will have to accept that which is conducive for *bhakti*. This is the ultimate verdict. That is the instruction of the statement: “*tato duḥsaṅgam utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhimān*”¹⁸⁸ – an intelligent person gives up bad company and associates with devotees.”

In service, there is no notion of rest. The *dharmā* of service is eternal, and it has a continuous momentum, so why would Bhagavān’s *sevakas* and *sevikās* look for a chance to rest? In sleep, in dreams, and in waking – in all states of being, the perpetuity of *sevā-dharmā* is proven. ... Please accept my heartfelt blessings. Please convey my *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* and blessings of auspiciousness appropriately to all the other devotees. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹⁸⁷ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 7.73)

¹⁸⁸ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.26.26)

Letter 37

Bhagavān's dear associates are, like Him, incomparable • Offences to the holy name are vanquished by chanting • The means of severing material attachment • A family centred around Kṛṣṇa aids in the performance of *hari-bhajana* • Bhagavān's potency flows through *sad-guru* • The devotee does not crave *mukti* • *Sad-guru* and his message are non-different • Bhagavān is never devoid of mercy • Balanced diet and recreation is necessary for *hari-bhajana* • What Vijayā Daśamī means for pure devotees • Service and chanting *nāma* are not different • The qualification to receive the instructions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • In *vātsalya-rasa*, it is essential to serve the deity • The *sādhaka* must learn *pūjā* and *arcana* • The *sādhaka* must rise early • *Sādhana* yields different results depending on one's *adhikāra* • Remembering Bhagavān and His devotees destroys obstacles to devotion

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
Orissa
4/9/1976

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! Many days ago, I received your two letters. I have not had any news of you for a long time. I hope that by Bhagavān's mercy you are well. From time to time, write letters and let me know you are well.

I too am very satisfied to know that you participated in Śrī Dhāma Navadvīpa *parikramā* and derived supreme bliss. My bliss is in your bliss and my peace is in your peace. Only if you can perform *hari-bhajana* without worries will I be happy and healthy.

Śrī Bhagavān is “*ekam evādvitīyam*”¹⁸⁹ – one without a second.” He is the unparalleled principle. That is why, in determining the Supreme Truth, the Vedas have determined the following: “*na tasya kāryaṁ karaṇaṁ ca vidyate, na tat samaś cābhyadhikaś ca dṛśyate*”¹⁹⁰ – He has no tasks He

¹⁸⁹ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.2.1)

¹⁹⁰ *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.8)

is obliged to perform; no one is seen to be equal to Him, nor greater than Him.” He is second to none – no one is equal to Him, nor is there anyone above Him. Just as Śrī Bhagavān is the *parātpara-tattva* (superlative principle), so are His beloved intimate associates. They cannot be compared with anyone. As they delight in service at every moment, they establish an everlasting spiritual speciality. Śrī Bhagavān’s intimate associates always want to conceal themselves. They are always ornamented with the Vaiṣṇavas’ transcendental twenty-six qualities and initiated into the *dharma* of not expecting respect for oneself and giving respect to others. The devotee’s natural transcendental humility is not anything to feel sorrow about. No doubt, it is by the fruit of many, many births of *sukṛti* that we obtain the golden opportunity to behold eternally perfected great souls, *mahāpuruṣas*, and take shelter at their feet. Surrendering our everything to the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas and utilizing our very souls thus is our exclusive duty. By their inspiration and causeless grace, everything is possible.

If one can obtain the mercy of a bona fide *guru*, one can attain spiritual well-being and upliftment. The days designated to us are passing by: “*adya vābda-śatānte vā mṛtyur vai prāṇinām dhruvaḥ*”¹⁹¹ – death is certain for all living creatures, whether today or after a hundred years.” One must be one-pointed and full of conviction to worship Bhagavān. The preliminary *sādhaka* and

**“By chanting
śrī nāma
continuously
with honour
and effort,
nāmāparādha
will be
dispelled.”**

sādhikā can make mistakes, errors, and *nāma-āparādha* while chanting *śrī nāma*. Rather than being discouraged, by chanting *śrī nāma* continuously with honour and effort, *nāmāparādha* will be dispelled. That is why there are encouraging statements in *śāstra* like “*nāma-āparādha-yuktānām nāmāni eva haranty-aghāṁ*”¹⁹² – the holy name alone rids one of the impurities of chanting with offences to the holy name.” Special results are obtained from hearing *hari-kathā* every day. If one [truly] hears, eagerness for *kīrtana* comes, and it is only by *kīrtana* that *smaraṇa* is possible. Then only does one become liberated from attachment to material sense objects and the condition of material bondage. Mundane attachment is referred to as the

samsāra of the material energy. Real knowledge of one’s position and relationship (*sambandha-jñāna*) can only arise if one can offer this attachment to Śrī Bhagavān. “*Ei dehera kriyā abhyāse karibo, jīvana jāpana lāgi; śrī kṛṣṇa-bhajane anukūla jāhā, tāhe habo anurāgi*”¹⁹³ – I will tend to the activities of this body out of habit, for the sake of maintaining my life. I will become attached to

¹⁹¹ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.1.38)

¹⁹² Padma Purāṇa

¹⁹³ Kalyāṇa-kalpitaru, Hari Hari! Kabe Mora Habe Heno Dina (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

whatever is favourable to the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” This is the means by which to sever one’s attachment to the mundane. “Viṣaye je prīti ebe āchaye āmāra, sei mata prīti hauk caraṇe tomāra¹⁹⁴ – may I have the kind of love for Your lotus feet that I have for the objects of the senses.” This is the attitude or thought that destroys the knot of *karma*. “Time is wasting away in vain. When will I be able to worship śrī nāma without offences and with a pure heart?” This sort of hopeful conviction is especially beneficial and encouraging in the matter of *sādhana*.

One can only love śrī guru and Bhagavān if one can give up material attachment. Can anyone guarantee that one’s attachment to sense objects will never be dispelled? The more you progress eastward, the more the west falls further and further behind you. “Māyāre pichane rākhi kṛṣṇa-pāne cāya, bhajite bhajite kṛṣṇa-pāda-padma pāya¹⁹⁵ – Leaving the illusory energy behind, he wants to attain Kṛṣṇa. Worshipping and worshipping, he does attain the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.” By material considerations, every object has two sides, but in the Vaikuṇṭha conception, only the thought of the everlasting, truthful, eternal auspiciousness is resplendent. The material *saṁsāra* of family life is false, a transient truth, momentary, but Kṛṣṇa’s *saṁsāra* is an aid to the performance of *hari-bhajana*. It creates an atmosphere that is favourable for *bhajana*: “*kṛṣṇera saṁsāra karo chāḍi’ anācāra, jīve dayā, nāme ruci—sarva-dharma-sāra*¹⁹⁶ – make Kṛṣṇa the centre of your family life and give up wayward behaviour. Compassion for all souls and taste in chanting is the essence of all religion.” The household in which *sādhana-bhajana* is conducted is Vaikuṇṭha. That place where there is constant *nāma-kīrtana*, *sevā-pūjā*, pleasing and feeding the Vaiṣṇavas, and festivals for various *vratas* and special occasions, is Goloka Vṛndāvana. “*Je-dina grhe bhajana dekhi, grhete goloka bhāya*¹⁹⁷ – the day I see *bhajana* performed in my home, my home turns into Goloka.” The only duty of the multitude of souls in this infinite cosmos created by Bhagavān is to remain grateful to their Creator and sing of His holy names, forms, qualities, and pastimes.

Mantra is a fully conscious thing; it is Bhagavān Himself. Another name for divine knowledge is *dikṣā* – this is *tattva* and *siddhānta*. When proper practice of the *mantra* given by *guru* commences, then and only then does the mind become less restless and gradually, one attains perfection in *sādhana*. *Bhagavat-śakti*, the potency of Bhagavān, is Absolute Truth,

“*Mantra* is a fully conscious thing; it is Bhagavān Himself.”

194 *Gītāvalī, Prabhu Tava Pada-yuge* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

195 *Śrī Prema-vivarta* by Śrī Jagadānanda Paṇḍita

196 *Gītāvalī, Nadiya Godrume* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

197 *Saraṇāgati, Suddha-bhakata* (6) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

and that *bhagavat-śakti* is flowing within *sad-guru*. *Sad-guru* is the sole agent of Bhagavān's mercy, and he is Śrī Bhagavān's special manager.

The one-pointed devotee is never desirous of *mukti*. Of the five types of *mukti*, *īśvara-sāyujya* is like a flower in the sky [something absurd or implausible]. The remaining four – *sālokyā*, *sāmīpyā*, *sārūpyā*, and *sārṣṭi* – are obtained automatically [through *bhakti*]. Even though Bhagavān wants to give these [to the *bhakta*], the *bhakta* does not accept them, as he is desperate only for *bhakti-prema*. Certainly, the word *mukti* has been used in certain places to refer to *bhakti*, or *sevā*. For example: “*mokṣaṁ viṣṇv-aṅghri-lābham*”.¹⁹⁸ Attaining service to Viṣṇu's lotus feet is referred to as *mokṣa* or *mukti*. The eternal scriptures have refuted *brahma-sāyujya*, *īśvara-sāyujya*, *nirviśeṣa*, *nirvāṇa*, or *kaivalya-mukti*. Hence, the *mukti* of the *brahma-vādi* is to be interned in a state of unconsciousness in *brahma-loka*; and the fruit of worshipping Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the presiding deity of the five main *rasas*, is *prīti*, love, or attaining *prema* in Goloka Vṛndāvana. You should strive for that.

The *sad-guru* and his message are non-different. The message and the life history have the same intent; they are possessed of the same tone. Hence, if one analyzes them, one gains the opportunity to become acquainted with all *tattva-darśana* (precepts of the truth). Under the shelter of *guru*'s feet, one receives teachings in *bhāgavata-dharma*, and by attentively serving

“The *sad-guru* and his message are non-different.”

guru, the disease of material existence is destroyed, Śrī Hari becomes satisfied, and one attains Bhagavān. *Śikṣā-guru* has two forms: *caitya-guru* (the indwelling Supersoul) and the *mahānta-guru* (the best of the devotees). Bhagavān Himself gives instruction to the *jīvas* as both the *antaryāmī caitya-guru* and the *mahānta-bhakta*.

I am somewhat relieved that your eldest son has gotten a job. Who helped him get the job? This is truly an astonishing matter! I am happy you were able to appreciate that *guru*, Vaiṣṇava, and Bhagavān are thus infinitely merciful. Never think that if they do not listen to you or if your tasks are not accomplished, it means that they are not being merciful or that they are unnecessary.

After working extremely strenuously all day, the body needs rest and sleep to replenish itself. Resting for the right amount of time does not incur fault. Rather, if the body is healthy, there are no obstacles on the path of *bhājana*. Remember the words of the *Gītā* [6.16–17]: “*nāty-aśnatas tu yogo'sti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ, na cāti-svapna-śīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna; yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu, yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā* – One can never be

¹⁹⁸ Prameya Ratnāvalī by Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa

a yogī, O Arjuna, if one eats too much or too little or sleeps too much or too little. One who regulates his eating, recreation, and work and regulates his sleeping and waking, can eliminate all miseries by this practice of *yoga*.” All endeavours – eating, recreation, sleeping – must be in moderation. If there is excess or lack in any of these, one is pulled away from [aspiring for] the highest object. I am happy beyond measure that you are cooking for yourself after returning home from *śrī dhāma*, offering the *bhoga*, and partaking of the *prasāda* with faithful conviction. By this sort of conviction, progress in *bhājana* occurs and *śrī guru* and Bhagavān become satisfied. To bring satisfaction to them is *sādhana* and *sevā*.

You conveyed faithful “Vijayā” *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* [or greetings on the occasion of Vijayā Daśamī]. The language or emotion in your letter is not deficient in conveying your faith. I understand that you have relied on words of reassurance and proceeded on the strength of their courage and power. One-pointed Vaiṣṇavas do not condone the *śākta* doctrine that is part of the [doctrine of] worldly *pañcopāsakas* (worshippers of the five Hindu deities), nor are they nurtured by their ideology. Rather than establishing the predominance of the material energy, Durgā-devī, they are surrendered to the Lord’s *antaraṅga-śakti*, whose identity is the Goddess of Gokula. That is why, on this day, they celebrate the appearance of Śrīla Madhva Muni, the incarnation of Hanumān and Bhīma and the *ācārya* of the Brahmac *saṁpradāya*, and Vijayotsava. On this occasion, they convey mutual greetings and *daṇḍavat* obeisances to each other and exchange good wishes.

Faith or love is a special tendency of the heart. There is no way to say something to convey that or make someone understand it. Someone may have special faith in a person, whereas sometimes, the opposite is observed [meaning others do not have faith in that person]. Hence, in both the faithful and those they have faith in, there are qualifications and specialities to take special notice of. We like some people and yet turn our faces away from others. Supremely respectable individuals never hanker to receive faith, honour, and prestige from anyone. That type of strong personality is not comparable to anyone else, nor would it be proper to equate him as such. Personality and uniqueness forever establish a thoughtful person in a superior position. That is but a manifestation of power given by God.

It is a matter of great fortune to behold the form of Jagadīśvara, the Lord of the world, in a dream. There too, the via media must be taken into consideration. If one is not a transparent medium but becomes opaque, then it is not possible to see *tattva* via the said medium. Those who have obtained the advantage of realizing their eternal forms are, without a doubt, fortunate. Why would they be unfortunate? The words of saints, scripture, and *guru* have conveyed that

**“*Sevā* is
bhakti,
bhakti is
sevā.”**

those who discard the gold of realizing the soul and are attached to that which is not the soul, who are enamoured with mere iron, are the unfortunate ones. Those who have taken shelter at the feet of a bona fide *guru* have given their everything and become selfless and possessionless. How can they again give and become selfless? Can a single mind or soul be given twice, to two people? If one cannot be dedicated to *guru* in all respects, one cannot obtain peace or become inexhaustible.

As obligatory as it is to cook for yourself and partake of that, it is equally obligatory, a bounden duty, to chant a fixed number of *śrī nāma* every day. *Śrī nāma* and *sevā-pūjā* of the Ṭhākura (Deities) are synonymous. Nevertheless, one must certainly endeavour to chant a lakh of *nāma* daily without offence. To think of *sevā* and chanting *nāma* separately is ignorant and offensive. The speciality of these reveals itself to the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* according to their qualification. *Sevā* is *bhakti*, *bhakti* is *sevā*. By performing the sixty-four limbs of *bhakti*, one obtains the tendency for *bhakti*. Bhakti Mahādevī is independent, whole, and complete in herself. *Jñāna*, *vairāgya*, etc. are never limbs of *bhakti*. As soon as one obtains *bhakti*, then *jñāna* and *vairāgya* naturally arise.

Sad-guru and Śrī Bhagavān are omniscient. Despite knowing and hearing everything good and bad about the *jīva*, they remain quiet. This is their general equanimity; however, “*ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā, mayi te teṣu cāpy-aham*¹⁹⁹ – those who worship me with devotion are within Me and I am in them.” These are special cases. In such cases, the qualities manifest of feeling distressed by the pain of others, having affection for those surrendered to them, being like wish-fulfilling trees, and feeling a sense of responsibility for maintaining their own. That is why only obedient individuals who can accept chastisement and who are characterized by the tendency to serve are the worthiest candidates to obtain the orders, specifications, and instructions of *sad-guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

If a mother is satisfied feeding a cooked meal, or offering *bhoga*, to their child at four in the afternoon, what is Ṭhākura or *śrī mūrti* (the deity) supposed to do? Are all [deities] Śrī Madana-mohana-jīu, the Chaubey *brāhmaṇa*’s eternal object of worship? Will everyone become loving and affectionate like the *brāhmaṇi*? In *vātsalya-rasa*, one must serve *śrī vighraha*, or *śrī mūrti*. It is because Śrī Bhagavān accepts such *sevā* that He accepts this [deity] form and grants the opportunity of service. By rendering the service of *pūjā* and *arcana* to the deity, we will become blessed.

¹⁹⁹ *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.29)

Learning *pūjā* and *arcana* is for the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*, and in a concise fashion, it is absolutely imperative for him to do *pūjā* and *arcana* as part of his daily duties. We have no protector other than Śrī Bhagavān; this is true. Praying to Him for mercy, asking for forgiveness, and relying on Him is surely indicative of simplicity. Why would this be duplicity? An ignorant, unintelligent child has no other recourse than to ask for forgiveness and, in the case of *sādhana*, this is particularly useful. One must serve Hṛṣīkeṣa Śrī Bhagavān by body, mind, by life's breath, by all one's senses. The embodied human being must demonstrate the success of this rare human birth with his life, wealth, intelligence, and words. Utilizing them in the service of Bhagavān is *yoga*, and this is expertise in action – *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*²⁰⁰. In a *samsāra* that is centred around Śrī Bhagavān, everything must be attended to for the sake of His service, and the best items will have to be utilized. Studying religious texts, hearing *hari-kathā*, and performing *kīrtana* are all part of personal work. None of it depends on others.

“An ignorant, unintelligent child has no other recourse than to ask for forgiveness and, in the case of *sādhana*, this is particularly useful.”

In routined life, one must work according to the schedule and take some time out. You do not have to wake up at three in the morning, because it is necessary to have full rest. Nevertheless: “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” And: “The cock crows in the morn to tell us to rise; and he who rises late will never be wise.” This too must be kept in mind.

Do all the qualities of parents exist in their son or daughter just because he or she is their child? *Anuśīlana* (cultivation) and *abhyāsa-yoga* (practice) are the core subject matter. On top of that, there is *karma* and the results of *karma*. Therefore, in the *Gītā* [15.15], Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “*mattaḥ smṛtir-jñānam-apohanam ca* – from Me comes remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness.” In this case, “*mattaḥ*” means that remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness come from Me [Kṛṣṇa], the giver of the fruits of *karma*. From the results of the *karma* created by the *jīvas*, the power of memory and knowledge wax and wane. Iron is drawn to the magnet, yet with the touch of the *sparsa-maṇi* (philosopher's stone), it turns to gold. But if it is not the iron's time, or in other words, if the results of *karma* have not started to wane, or if there is rust on the iron, then why would it be drawn [to a magnet] or become gold? If the inherent power of an object is accepted, then the functions of the support and that which is supported, the attraction and the attracted, will bear different results depending on their capacity. The seed

²⁰⁰ *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.50)

should be good, but the field must be fertile. But all this is meaningless to someone who does not understand how to grow things. Now who will say what went wrong where?

The fruit depends on the tree. A mango tree will surely not bear a jackfruit. But why do plants (trees) growing on the same bank of the Gaṅgā and drinking Gaṅgā water produce different flavours? Who is going to answer that? In other words, the nature of a thing, whatever it is, will reveal itself. “*Svarūpe sabāra haya golokete sthiti*”²⁰¹ – by constitutional eternal nature, everyone has a place in Goloka.” This is *tattva-darśana*. But is everyone really heading towards

“**By constitutional
eternal nature,
everyone has a
place in Goloka.
This is *tattva-
darśana*.**”

Goloka? Are there no differences between *baddha-jīvas* (conditioned souls), *mukta-jīvas* (liberated souls), and *sādhana-siddhas* (those who have reached perfection through spiritual practice)? “*Manah eva manuṣyānām bandha-mokṣayoḥ*”²⁰² – for mankind, the mind is the cause of bondage and liberation.” The mind that is absorbed in sense objects is the cause of bondage. On the strength of *guru*’s grace, one must control it with practice and the *yoga* of renunciation. The cooperation of all the senses, the mind, and the intelligence can only

be maintained by following the soul’s lead. If the mind is disconnected or disinterested or, in other words, does not accept being controlled by the soul, then it traverses the wrong path. Coming under the sway of the world’s good and bad is the ultimate disaster for the mind. It is in this regard that the differences in the fruits attainable for the *baddha* and *mukta* arise. Still, the *baddha* becomes *mukta*. There is no doubt in that matter. Hence, it is certainly feasible to better one’s conditions. “Someday I will be able to arrive at the ultimate stage.” This sort of firm hope and eagerness is essential.

The answer to your long letter has become very long. Read it painstakingly and try to study its ontological side with an optimistic view, taking it to heart. I have many children, true, and you are one of them. Where will I find all this time [to care for so many children]? If you take on the weight of this dilemma, then I am free of it. But I am experiencing and realizing this fearsome bond of parental affection more than all of you are. How can I give up the responsibility I have towards all of you? Even if you say otherwise, my responsibility remains.

There is no blood pressure problem. Testing it and taking medicine stopped many days ago now. Diet is the same as usual. As much as possible, I try to follow that strictly. I do not have time to check or take account of whether or not a lack of sufficient diet causes low

²⁰¹ Śrī Kṛṣṇer Aṣṭottara-śata-nāma (28) by Dvija Haridāsa

²⁰² Amṛta-bindu Upaniṣad (2)

pressure; but how can I put a stop to class? I will have to go preaching and will not have the chance to take rest before 12 o'clock at night. Strict *sādhana* is necessary for the welfare of the soul and for the sake of learning. “*Yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhaḥ tat tad eva itaro janah*”²⁰³ – what great men do common men follow.” Hence, without practising, there is no place for preaching. “*Ācāra-pracāra nāme karaho dui kārya*”²⁰⁴ – practise [the process] and preach the holy name; engage in both of these activities.” This is Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s instruction. For the sake of teaching people, even exalted, liberated personalities accept the status of a *sādhaka*, observe rules, regulations, and so forth in their lives and demonstrate the utility of *bhajana* – “*muktā api līlayā vigrahaṁ kṛtvā bhagavantam bhajante*”.²⁰⁵

Without remembering Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, the material existence of the *jīvas* does not terminate. For the *jīva*, attraction to material enjoyment is the state of *samsāra*; it is full of fear and obstacles. Therefore, “*tinera smarāṇe haya vighna-vināśana*”²⁰⁶ – by remembering the three of them, all obstacles are destroyed.” The obstacles to *bhajana* are dispelled by remembering Bhagavān and His devotees. The reassurances of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru* are our aid and wealth. *Āśraya-vigraha śrī guru-pādapadma* is *dikṣā-svāmī* (the initiating master), and *viṣaya-vigraha bhokta* Bhagavān (God, the Enjoyer) is referred to by the name Jagat-svāmī (master of the world). May you obtain pure devotion – this is my ultimate blessing. “May the Supreme Lord’s choicest blessings be showered upon you”. This is my wish.

**The obstacles
to *bhajana* are
dispelled by
remembering
Bhagavān and
His devotees.**

I have been here since 9/8/76 and, till the 10th of November, I will stay in Purī. I am more or less okay. If you send letters to the Purī *maṭha* address, I will receive them. Know that you have my affectionate blessings and convey them to the children. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

203 *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.21)

204 *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya-līlā 4.103)

205 *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā* commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.87.21), Śrīdhara Svāmī

206 *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā, 1.21)

Letter 38

The corruptive power of ulterior motives • Two types of donors: one motivated, the other sincere and selfless • The worst fate for the *sādhaka* is to be cheated of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ mercy • Wholehearted service versus the logic of Padmā

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
24/9/1976

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Even a modest donation for service is not negligible but ample and cause to be proud. There are those who make a show of offering financial support and donations, hoping for some gain, adoration, or prestige. Their tactic of sacrifice is referred to as [or illustrated by the proverbs] “*Byāṅger Ādhuli*²⁰⁷” and “*Karmīr Kāṇākaḍi*²⁰⁸”. Any devious desires (*anyābhilāṣa*)

²⁰⁷ A frog once lived in a pond. One day he happened to dig up an eight-anna coin. As soon as the frog found the coin, he said to himself vainly: “Who is wealthier than I? This time when the king’s elephant comes to drink water, I will stop him and not let him to drink.” Saying this, the frog went and sat on the coin on the steps of the pond. Just then, the mahout brought the elephant down to the pond. The frog quickly leapt off his coin, landing at the elephant’s feet, underneath which he perished the very next moment.

In this world, the resources of those who pride themselves as great heroes of fruitive work are as trivial as the frog’s penny. The *karmī*’s prowess can be pulverized at any moment by the wheel of material existence, as that prowess is but an effect of the material energy. *Gītā* (3.27) has thus stated: “*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ, ahankāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate* – out of false pride, the living entity indulges in the egotism of ‘I am the doer’ and thinks that he has accomplished the functions that are in fact produced by the modes of material nature.” Such conceited people imagine that they are masters of the pleasures of this world and want to exert their reign upon the Earth. They cannot understand that at any moment the goddess of material nature can smash their huge mansion of pride to the ground. The Earth does not care if you are independent or dependent. Someone who is king today becomes a beggar on the wayside tomorrow; and likewise, the person who is a beggar today, tomorrow becomes intoxicated with the conceit of destructible opulences.

²⁰⁸ *Karmīs* are of two types: *su-karmī* and *ku-karmī*. The *su-karmī* engages in pious work and waits for the results; and the *ku-karmī* does evil work because he wants quick profit. When, with use, the *su-karmī*’s coins get cracks in them, the *ku-karmī* gathers them up. These cracked coins, called “*kāṇākaḍi*” (defunct), have no value; they cannot be used in the market. The *ku-karmī* thinks he is a boss with so many coins, that he has

that remain in the heart make way for *prākṛta-karma-jāda-vāda* (the materialistic dogma of fruitive work), and that is definitely not favourable for rendering service [to Kṛṣṇa]. Inner inclination and intention must be taken into consideration. That is why Śrīman Mahāprabhu said: “*viṣayīra anna khāile malin haya mana, malin mana haile nahe kṛṣṇera smaraṇa*”²⁰⁹ – if one eats food cooked by those engrossed in material enjoyment, one’s mind becomes contaminated, and once the mind is contaminated, one will not remember Kṛṣṇa.” The reason “*svacchanda vana-jāta śāka* – wild forest greens” are recommended is because no one’s consciousness enters into them. Therefore, they are *nirguṇa* (beyond the modes of material nature) and the real means of subsistence.

There are many donors who immediately after giving just a small donation to the Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha mission or to our Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti have compelled management to put up nameplates for display to the public, even prior to the completion of the temple and residences. Which category these donations fall into has been surely ascertained by Śrī Hari, guru, and Vaiṣṇavas. The strong ethics they propound and their clear statements have been published in more than one article and collection of letters. The *tattva-siddhānta* of the negative aspects of charity has been established therein.

Then again, “*tomāra dhana tomāya diye tomāra haye rai* – I give Your wealth to You and I too come to belong to You.” This attitude has also been preserved alongside that [negative aspect]. One donor, when asked to acquire the land for Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Baghbazar, said: “Vinoda Bābū, I have given you the plate, and I will give you the meal too.” In other words, in addition to donating the land, he accepted responsibility for constructing the temple and other facilities, thereby gaining the blessings of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. If one cannot become sincere and free from worldly attachments, one cannot become a *sevaka* or *sevikā* at heart. Donations of wealth certainly constitute service. That is why Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam has said, “An intelligent person will seek the ultimate good through his vital energy, wealth, intelligence and words, for this is the success

“If one cannot become sincere and free from worldly attachments, one cannot become a *sevaka* or *sevikā* at heart.”

lots of money, lots of possessions, lots of women in his collection. He has his storehouse loaded up with such defunct things, as useless as piles of dirt. If a person does not utilize his *kanaka* (gold), his *kāminī* (romantic interests), and his *pratiṣṭhā* (prestige) in Kṛṣṇa’s service, then all the items in his storehouse are *kāṇākaḍi* and he is a *ku-karmī*.

(Excerpts from the *Upākhyaṇe Upadeśa* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura)

of life.” In the Eleventh Canto [11.38], it is stated: “*mamārcā-sthāpane śraddhā svataḥ saṁhatya codyamaḥ, udyānopavanākṛīḍa-pura-mandira-karmāṇi* – expressing love and attachment for the establishment of My deity form entails concerted efforts, both individually and collectively, in constructing flower gardens, orchards, playgrounds, fields, residential areas, temples and so on, as well as sincerely cleaning them, coating the grounds with cow dung, watering the vegetation and painting *maṇḍala* designs. One should serve the house of the Lord thus.”

It is only from mutual connection and proper knowledge of the relationship between the *āśraya* (refuge) and the *āśrita* (refugee) that qualification and eagerness for the path of *bhajana* increases. Besides the grace of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, there is no other alternative arrangement to progress on our path in life; there cannot be. To be cheated of their grace and to deviate from *bhajana* is the same thing. This alone is the ultimate misfortune, the worst fate for the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*. *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ multitude of transcendental qualities and supramundane status are beyond the comprehension of material knowledge and awareness. In that context, it is said: “*yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ*”²¹⁰ – the Supreme Lord is attained only by one He accepts.” This is the only measure of qualification. Both Bhagavān and His *bhakta* are affectionate to those

who take shelter of them. There is no doubt about that.

**“The inclination
to serve is
the exclusive
ornament or
decoration of the
surrendered soul.”**

The inclination to serve is the exclusive ornament or decoration of the surrendered soul. To utilize one’s all-in-all in service is called full *ātma-samarpaṇa* (offering of the self). A truly surrendered soul, or one who has fully offered himself, has no other focus and no ulterior desires or fancies. In that state, there can be no commercial interest or business of materialistic giving and taking. If one thinks to keep track of a percentage for oneself, one succumbs to the logic of Padmā²¹¹. That is not an attitude of service and will end up being but a limb of mundane *karma*. “I am less than an insect or bacteria. I am vile and sinful.” If

²¹⁰ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (23)

²¹¹ Padmā, or Queen Padmāvatī, was the wife of Ugrasena and mother of Kāṁsa. Her infamous logic, as found in *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛtam* (1.6.73–75), assumes that money can compensate regarding matters of the heart: One day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was utterly heartbroken in separation from the Vrajavāsis when Grandmother Padmāvatī, in rather poor taste, attempts to console Him as follows: “Why are You grieving? Listen to my advice. You two brothers lived in Vraja in that cowherd Nanda’s house for eleven years. The Yadu King (Ugrasena) will have Garga Muni calculate every last speck of whatever goods You consumed during that time – whether or not they gave You something for taking care of their cows – and will repay that cowherd king double the amount they are owed, I swear.”

this sort of notion appears, then there is a possibility of auspiciousness. And if, instead, one's motives are to gain prestige and advertise one's good fortune, that same activity will act as a poison. By the causeless mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, even the impossible is made possible: “*kākere garuḍa kare aiche dayāmaya*²¹² – they are so merciful that they can turn a crow into Garuḍa.”

I understand that your mother's health is not good. Please convey to her my request that she stay at home in this advanced age and perform *kīrtana* and *smaraṇa* of *śrī nāma*. Tell her to stay in Chunchura and meditate on the *śrī maṭha*'s deities: Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda Prabhu, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha-jīu, and Jagannātha-deva. Tell her to sing this song of the *mahājanas*: “*ājñā dilā more, ei vraje bosī harināma karo gāna*²¹³ – [guru] instructed me to sit here in this land of Vraja and sing the name of Hari.” I know that she does not want to give you all any trouble. Nevertheless, you should all take responsibility for taking care of her at all times. In both realms, social and spiritual, she is your *śikṣā-guru*. She should stay at home and continually serve Śrī Gopāla-deva, from which she will reap the fruit of visiting the *dhāmas* of Mathurā-Vṛndāvana, Navadvīpa, and Purī. Because of her sickness, it is proper that she avoid contact with people. Do explain all these things to her properly.

I have shown the ornaments, eating plates, fabric, and outfits you sent as gifts for the deities to the *sevakas* here, and they were very delighted, wishing you all spiritual good fortune and praising you. There surely is a hole in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's nose, even if it cannot be seen with material eyes. There will not be any inconvenience in that regard. The nose-ring your mother has wanted to offer can be affixed and Śrīmatī will surely accept it. *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

212 *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya-līlā 12.182)

213 *Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Baḍo Kṛpā Kori* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 39

Taking advantage of the opportunity for *dhāma-parikramā* • The power of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' mercy • The grace of *guru* is everything • The power of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' appearance days • Repentance is the best atonement • The heart must melt when performing spiritual practices • A bona fide *guru's* potency can help us forget our worldly endeavours

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tegharipara, Navadvīpa (Nadia)
12/2/1977

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Śrīmān ——— went to see you but could not find you and came back; and he also did not have more time to wait. However that turned out, it is a matter of great fortune that you were able to participate in Śrī Purī-dhāma *parikramā* and the month-long *niyama-sevā pālanotsava* (festival of observing vows). How many people have the fortune of getting the opportunity to cultivate their absorption in the hearing and chanting of *śrī hari-kathā* in good association on such a regular basis? So many people are most eager to go touring, either within their native country or abroad, but only those with *sukṛti* can desire, or long, to visit *śrī dhāma* or the holy *tīrthas* in the association of saints. In order to obtain such opportunities, one must make an effort to give up concerns for worldly gain or loss, otherwise, one will be cheated of the good fortune that is available for only a brief moment. “Time and tide wait for none.” Once an opportunity goes, it does not come back again. ...

Not everyone gets the same type of opportunity and facility. You have to bear your worldly or practical duties and responsibilities as you progress on the path of spiritual life. Otherwise, misunderstandings are created in this world, and disorder, disputes, and disagreements are seen. Though the rule or conception of sacrificing trivial self-interests for the sake of the greater interest remains popular, often that [lesser interest] cannot be avoided.

By the blessings of the devotees, all types of inauspiciousness or obstacles are whisked away. This is a steadfast truth. By the auspicious grace of *sādhū*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, the unachievable can be achieved. By their causeless compassion, even the impossible becomes

possible. Inconceivable, transcendental events that can never be comprehended by the intelligence of worldly men are seen transformed into tangible reality by the grace of *sādhus* and *guru*. Earthly, mundane logic and reasoning are incapable and incompetent in regard to addressing such matters. Here, the understanding that “only he who is chosen [by the Lord] attains [Him] – *yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ*²¹⁴” is applicable. *Kṛpā* (mercy) is more glorious than *sādhana* (effort). This is certainly proven here. Only when *sādhana* and *kṛpā* converge is it possible to achieve perfection.

**“By the auspicious
grace of *sādhū*,
guru, and Vaiṣṇavas,
the unachievable can
be achieved.”**

“*Śrī guroḥ kṛpā hi kevalam* – the grace of *guru* is everything.” Without mercy, the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* cannot gain knowledge of *tattva*. *Śrī guru* is the captain to take one across the ocean of material existence. The human form of life is the root of spiritual practice. The ultimate ruin or misfortune is to obtain the rarity of birth as a human but be averse to worshipping Kṛṣṇa. When, by saintly association, the *jīva* becomes conscious of his true duty, then and only then does the desire to engage in *bhajana* strengthen in his heart and he thus progresses on the path of *sādhana*. On this path, the bona fide *guru* is the only resort, or *āśraya*. That is why the *āśraya-vigraha* is he who directs one in serving the *viśaya-vigraha* and shows the path. *Śrī Bhagavān*’s wish dictates his incarnation and therefore, he is known as the “*prakāśa-vigraha* – manifest form”. *Śrī gurudeva* is the potency of Nityānanda; he is non-different from the *tattva* represented by Baladeva. *Guru-tattva* is indivisible and eternal. “*Nitāiyer caraṇa satya, tāhāra sevaka nitya*²¹⁵ – the lotus feet of Nitāi are the Absolute Truth and His servant is eternal.” This is the special quality shared by master and servant and their mutual relationship and interaction. The bona fide *guru* is eternally the well-wisher of his followers and is occupied in thinking about their welfare. This responsibility and duty of his is forever, and this good favour is an unpayable debt.

If, on the auspicious appearance days of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, the *jīva* engages in glorifying them, his welfare is assured. “*Hari, guru, vaiṣṇava—tinera smarana; tinera smarane haya vighna-vināśana*²¹⁶ – Hari, guru, and Vaiṣṇavas – by remembering these three, all of one’s obstacles will be destroyed.” “*Vaiṣṇavera guṇa-gāna karile jīvera trāṇa*²¹⁷ – singing the glories of

²¹⁴ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.2.23), *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.3)

²¹⁵ *Prārthanā, Nitāi-pada-kamala* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

²¹⁶ See *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 1.20–21)

²¹⁷ *Śrīla Prabhupāda-vandanā* (18) by Śrī Gopāla-Govinda Mahānta

**“Regret and
repentance are the
best atonement.**

**That is what
purifies one on
the inside.”**

the Vaiṣṇavas ensures the *jīva*’s deliverance.” This decree is in accordance with proper conduct. No matter how many disqualifications the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* may possess, no matter how dejected or wretched they may be, they take shelter of these sacred days as an auspicious conjunction or moment in which to settle their accounts.

Regret and repentance are the best atonement. That is what purifies one on the inside. If one is not fixed and determined in following proper discipline, inner purity does not come. “*Sattvasya śuddhiṁ paramātma-bhaktiṁ, jñānām ca vijñāna-virāga-yuktam*²¹⁸ – [remembrance of Kṛṣṇa’s feet] purifies the heart and grants devotion to the Supreme Soul, along with knowledge endowed with realization and renunciation.”

The tradition of confession in Christianity was adopted from the eternal Ārya scriptures. “*Prabhu bole—āra torā nā karisa pāpa, jagāi-mādhāi bole—āra nāre bāpa*²¹⁹ – The Lord said, ‘You must not sin again.’ Jagāi and Mādhāi said, ‘No more, Father.’ ” This “*āra nāre bāpa*” confession is an integral part of repentance or atonement. Śrīman Mahāprabhu made Jagāi and Mādhāi vow this in front of Guru-Nityānanda. Without such a firm and determined resolution, the urge to sin returns and tries to pervert and pollute the pure inclinations of the heart.

Words of greeting and obeisance express *ātma-nivedana* (surrender of the self) and *śaraṇāgati* (taking refuge). In *Smṛti*, the details of *aṣṭāṅga-praṇāma* (prostrations of the body employing all eight major limbs) and *ṣaḍ-aṅga-śaraṇāgati* (sixfold-surrender) have been described. Although these have been specifically detailed in verses such as “*padbhyāṁ jānubhyāṁ śirasā*²²⁰” and “*ānukulyasya-saṅkalpaḥ*²²¹”, scripture informs us that the inner aspects are the real matter. If one’s heart does not melt when observing spiritual practices, if mental transformation does not come, then such activities yield only futility. “*Hṛdaya hoite bole, jīhvāra agrete cale, śabda-rūpe nāce anukṣaṇa*²²² – it speaks from within the heart, it situates itself on the tip of the tongue, and it dances constantly in the form of sound

**“If one’s heart does
not melt when
observing spiritual
practices, ... then
such activities yield
only futility.”**

218
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (12.12.55)

219 Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 13.225)

220 Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (1.8.360)

221 Lakṣmī-tantra (17.60–61)

222 Śaraṇāgati, Kṛṣṇa-nāma Dhare Kato Bala (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

vibration.” That is transcendental *śabda-brahma*, or *śrī nāma-brahma*. That *śrī nāma* enters the heart through the pathway of the ears and creates a sweet reverberation there. From that, the consciousness becomes anxious and manifests a desire to obtain the audience of the designated subject (*vācya*), Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra.

“*Pūrva itihāsa, bhulinu sakala, seva-sukha peye mane* – I have forgotten all my past history while revelling in the bliss of service. *Āmi to tomāra, tumi to āmāra, ki kāja apara dhane*²²³ – I am Yours, You are mine; what else is of any worth?” Herein is the awakening of *sambandha-jñāna*. The potency of a bona fide *guru*’s grace can help us forget all our past history, or in other words, all of our worldly endeavours or sense of accomplishment, and protect us from its clutches. In this matter, his causeless mercy is our only resource. We must vow to serve Hṛṣīkeṣa Śrī Bhagavān with our senses, which Bhagavān has given us. The bona fide *guru* is always happy and well. *Tattva-vijñāna* can never be inferred from the mundane, which is why the devotees and their Lord are qualified by the adjective *aprameya* (immeasurable). Although there is some difference between *darśana* through *śrauta-patha* (the path of hearing), or *kīrtana*, and direct *darśana*, everyone nurtures the hope of direct *darśana*. Hastā-yukta Navamī is on the 30th of Pauṣa. Accept my loving blessings. *Iti*—

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²²³
Śaraṇāgati, Ātma-nivedana (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 40

Only the one-pointed devotee is truly concerned for the future • He has no focus other than meditating in separation from Kṛṣṇa • We want to be indebted to guru and Vaiṣṇavas • Inner śraddhā is the real offering • If you chant a fixed number of śrī nāma, Śrī Bhagavān reveals His svarūpa • Paramagurudeva's finesse in generosity

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha,
Tegharipara, P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
22/2/1977

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear —! After many days, I received your inland letter dated 11/11/76 at the Siliguri maṭha after I returned from preaching in Assam and northern Bengal. Now time is very short. There are only three or four days till Śrī Dhāma Navadvīpa *parikramā*. I am not sure if this letter will reach your hands before *parikramā* or not. ...

Śrī Bhagavān is truly full of auspiciousness. It is by His sweet will that one attains the opportunity and fortune of beholding the *tīrthas*, *dhāma*, etc. in the association of guru and Vaiṣṇavas. The *sādhaka's* or *sādhikā's* lives become blessed if he or she can appreciate the causeless mercy of Śrī Bhagavān. The devotee can only become fully reliant on Śrī Bhagavān by one-pointed *niṣṭhā* (conviction). Only the *eka-niṣṭha* devotee is capable of proper consideration of the future. A person bereft of *bhajana* is deplorable and unconscious.”

“*Kasya tvam vā kutaḥ āyāt, tattvaṁ cintaya tad-idaṁ bhrātaḥ*²²⁴ – Who are you? Where did you come from? Think on this truth, brother.” “*Dhana-jīvana-yauvana-rājya-sukhaṁ, na hi nityam-anukṣaṇa-nāśa-param*²²⁵ – wealth, life, youth, and royal pleasures are not eternal; they are at every moment prone to destruction.” Those who do not have such concerns are materialists following the atheist Cārvāka. Only they who are occupied with thoughts of the future are *tattva-darśī* (seers of the truth) and *ātma-kalyāṇa-kāmi* (desirous of the soul's welfare).

²²⁴ *Bhaja Govindam* (8) by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya

²²⁵ Śrī Śrī Godruma-candra-bhajanopadeśa (2) by Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

“Kṛṣṇa re tḥākura mora, kṛṣṇa mora prāṇa, more se karilo kāṣṭha-pāṣāna samāna²²⁶ – “O Kṛṣṇa, my Lord! O Kṛṣṇa, my life!” He has made me like wood or stone.” This is, in the state of separation, the only thing to chant and sing. Kṛṣṇa is my treasure, Kṛṣṇa is the wealth of my life, He is my life; Kṛṣṇa alone is [the object of] my vows, recitations, and austerities; Kṛṣṇa’s name is my *bhajana* and worship. The *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* who have gained knowledge of their eternal relationship and have offered up their lives have no other form of contemplation or meditation besides thoughts of Kṛṣṇa – they simply cannot.

“Tomāra icchāya mora jivana-maraṇa²²⁷ – it is by Your will that I live or die.” The living entity reaps good and bad in the world as per the fruits of his *karma*. Hence: “*hanti rakṣati caivātmā hy asat-sādhū-samācāraṇa*²²⁸ – the *ātmā* (the Supreme Soul) slays those who engage in sinful acts and protects those who are saintly.” This is real *darśana*. Śrī Bhagavān and His devotees, as well as the whole of creation, are conquered only by love, affection, and attachment. The spiritual debt to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas can never be repaid. If one is indebted to them or, in other words, connected in relationship, the destination of Goloka is inevitable. Hence, we want to have this sort of debt.

Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, who sports in the forest of Vṛndāvana, is situated solely as the son of the *gopīs* due to their parental love. Yet again, in *sakhya-rasa*, He is occupied with eating lunch on the banks of the Yamunā and playing with His friends. Other times, He is also the presiding deity of conjugal love. If His mother did not have immaculate *vātsalya-bhāva*, she would not have Him as her son. Then again, if He did not eternally possess *putratva* (the quality of being a son), He would not even be able to address her as mother. Wanting to become a son and the eternal status of being a son are not the same thing. One is an affair particular to this mundane creation, and the other is a naturally perfect mood. Therefore, since love, attachment, affection, and possessiveness are introspective functions, they are not affected by any form of social shame or formality. Someone who is reluctant to do something will not get a good result. This is a universally accepted fact. Hence, in this case, there is no cause for misunderstanding.

This time, on the 30th of Pauṣa, Friday, it was *kṛṣṇa-navamī-tithi*. But the *hastā* constellation was two days earlier. I did not understand on which day you offered *pুষ্পāñjali* (oblation of

**“Śrī Bhagavān
and His devotees,
as well as the
whole of creation,
are conquered
only by love,
affection, and
attachment.”**

²²⁶ See Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata (Madhya-khaṇḍa 7.86)

²²⁷ Śaraṇāgati, Tumi Sarveśvareśvara (8) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

²²⁸ Viṣṇu Purāṇa (1.18.31)

flowers) and partook of nice, nice *prasāda*. Though every day you offer *bhoga* and take *prasāda*, the *prasāda* on this day was surely remarkable, otherwise you would not have mentioned it in your letter. “*Bhakti-puṣpa kothā pāi, bhakti candana nāi, ki diye pūjibo āmi?* – Where to find the flowers of devotion? There is no sandalwood of devotion either. What will I worship with?” This sort of thought is real *puṣpāñjali*. Inner *śraddhā* (faith), *bhakti* (devotion), *anurāga* (spontaneous attachment) is the real *arghya* [a mixture of water, sandalwood, flowers, etc.]. That is what satisfies and pleases the Lord of the heart. This is the necessary provision for the path of *sādhana-bhajana* and the test. You will certainly pass this sort of test. This is my wish and heartfelt blessing.

Read and study *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā*, *Jaiva-dharma*, *Śikṣāmṛta*, *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇī*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Nāradya Purāṇa*, and other books, in a regulated manner. Also, maintain a daily practice of *pūjā* and *arcana*, etc. If you chant a fixed number of *śrī nāma*, Śrī Bhagavān reveals His *svarūpa*. Chant your *gāyatrī-mantras* every day at the three junctures of the day. Maintain special eagerness and enthusiasm in performing the nine limbs of *bhakti*. If you chant *śrī nāma* properly, you will be able to obtain its direct result.

I do not want anything from you. I am happy only if you do not maintain an earthly sort of connection of give and take with me. My desire in life is to selflessly be of help to others; I have gained this tendency from my supremely generous *śrī guru-pādapadma*. His renunciation and policy of generosity has stunned me and granted me shelter at his feet. His affection for his god-brothers and disciples has rendered me speechless. Without hesitation, he gave thousands and thousands of *ṭākā* (rupees) to persons in need who asked for it. Though they took it as loans, he told this wretch to write it down as an expense. He used to say: “Give to

others with your right hand in such a way that your left hand does not know.” Though I had the opportunity and fortune to gain the proximity of such a liberated personality, an eternally perfected soul, due to my previous misdeeds, I have lost that *kṛti-ratna* (he who, by his deeds, is a jewel). Within the mission, I have only one personal concern – and that is my own *bhajana-sādhana*. If I deviate from that, then it would be breaking the policy of “we are everyone for everyone; every one of us is for everyone else – *sakaler tare sakale āmrā, pratyake āmrā parera tare*”²²⁹. By the strength of guru’s grace, I was, am, and always will be above everyone’s misunderstandings. I will only be worry-free once you all are mentally at ease.

Within the mission, I have only one personal concern – and that is my own *bhajana-sādhana*.

²²⁹ From a poem by Kamini Roy, the first woman Honours graduate in British India.

When will you come to Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā*? I am worried because I saw you did not write anything about that. I am, in a way, well. Accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 41

Those who chant *nāma* and *gāyatrī* have no need for demigod amulets • “Do not be lazy about *siddhānta*” • A philosophical conclusion is only to be accepted if favourable to *bhajana* • Refuting misconceptions is *guru-sevā* and not contrary to genuine humility • Performing *kīrtana* of *hari-kathā* is imbued with life and changes hearts

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
Orissa
28/3/1977

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear ———! I have received your letter. It is particularly delightful news that you all have returned home from Navadvīpa without any obstacle. ...

I left Navadvīpa with Jayadeva and arrived here at the Purī *maṭha* yesterday. I had to come because of some especially urgent matters concerning the *maṭha* here. I will only stay four or five days. From Purī, I will go to Kolkata this upcoming 2nd April. On the way, I will stay in Kharagpur for one day. On 4th April, I will go from Kolkata to Diamond Harbour. From there, the next day, I will go to Sundarban (Maipith). There are three days of lectures in this region. On 13th April, I will return from Sundarban to Navadvīpa, and on 14/4/77, I will travel to Mathurā via the Toofan Express. From Mathurā, on 21/4/77 (8th Vaiśākha), I am hoping to reach Behrampur with Sundarānanda. ...

The comments a certain *grhastha* devotee astrologer made about you on the train back from Navadvīpa and the rituals he prescribed may have some partial truth to them. He likely says these things in a general way. You have nothing to worry about. You do not need to wear any sort of amulet (*kavaca*) for Śani and Rāhu. If you need, I will make and give you a *nṛsimha-kavaca*.

Those who have taken shelter of *śrī nāma*, are initiated in a Viṣṇu *mantra*, and are chanting *gāyatrī* at the three junctures of the day have no need to wear any sort of amulet or remnant garlands from various presiding demigods or goddesses. That only invokes *nāma-aparādha*.

Only those who do not have faith in *śrī nāma* offer these sorts of erroneous instructions and derive pleasure from doing so.

The association and sight of an immaculately pure Vaiṣṇava who has taken shelter of *śrī nāma*, whether householder or renunciate, is extremely rare. Most people in the world are resorting to *karma-jāda-smārta-vāda* (reward-seeking ritualism) and *prākṛta-sahajiyā-vāda* (mundane sentimentalism) and belittling simple Vaiṣṇava *dharma* to the public. *Vivarta-vāda* (impersonalist doctrine) wants to bleach their brains. Those who want real well-being maintain caution and alertness in regard to *sādhana-bhajana* at all times.

If one does not have knowledge of *tattva-siddhānta*, advancement in *bhajana* is not possible. That is why it is written in *Caritāmṛta* [Ādi-līlā 2.117]: “*siddhānta boliyā citte nā karo alasa, jāhā haite kṛṣṇe lāge sudṛḍha mānasa* – do not be lazy about *siddhānta*, whereby the mind becomes firmly fixed upon Kṛṣṇa.” Do not accept any sort of misleading teachings or instructions from *sahajiyā*, *nāma-aparādhī* people. Whatever you hear, you should only accept it when you have confirmed it with the views and reasonings of scripture. A statement is worth accepting if it is favourable to *bhajana*, and if it is contradictory to that, then it is to be wholly rejected, just as you would reject vile company.

To refute misconceptions is *guru-sevā*. If, at any point, one can understand that someone is giving misleading teachings, one should, in a civil manner, refute them and establish the faultless *siddhānta*. Doing so is the ideal of conviction in service to *guru*. If, despite knowing and hearing the truth, one conceals it, hypocrisy finds its outlet, and that entails a lapse of duty. This (refuting someone’s views) is never contrary to humility or *amānī-mānada-dharma*. The frivolous sentiments of *prākṛta-sahajiyās* have ulterior motives and spawn more or less from selfishness. In the name of Vaiṣṇavism, they cultivate attachment to material objects and the accumulation of prestige. A person who thirsts for *bhajana* never lacks simplicity. Hence, the dedication of their every effort for Kṛṣṇa’s sake is beautifully proven in all respects.

**“A person
who thirsts
for *bhajana*
never lacks
simplicity.”**

You should utilize whatever knowledge of scripture you have, and taking the support of but a particle of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ mercy, refute the impropriety. “*Tato duḥsaṅgam-utsrjya satsu sajjeta buddhimān*”²³⁰ – therefore, giving up bad association, an intelligent person should associate with saintly personalities.” Remember this. By this, you will be able to perceive *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ direct mercy in your heart. Performing *kīrtana* of *hari-kathā* is called

²³⁰ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.26.26)

preaching. As it is imbued with life, it enters the innermost chambers of the heart and echoes sweetly there. That is what changes a man's heart. Man thereby gains a new, divine life. You should preach *hari-kathā* with enthusiasm. Never be distracted by concerns of what to eat, what to wear, or where to live. “*Yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*”²³¹ – I bear the burden of their necessities and safeguard what they have.” Steady your heart by studying this statement of the *Gītā*. The longing for service means service is one's life; that is something gained by patience and enthusiasm.

What more can I say? Accept my boundless affectionate blessings. I will answer your other letters later. *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²³¹ *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.22)

Letter 42

Establishing Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha • If one is not impartial, one cannot defend the principles of true religion • Different types of charity • Instructions from *Bhāgavatam* on building temples • Kṣīracorā Gopīnātha • Realizing Bhagavān’s mercy requires the strength of *sādhana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
30/10/77

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Trying to appease everyone’s mind leads to no task being successful. In all such matters, you need to have some of your own independence. Not everyone is ready to take responsibility, but every hero is very busy trying to “show cause” when it comes to the minutiae of the mission. Who is going to bear the costs? There is no arrangement for whose cooperative efforts will run the *maṭha* and mission, but the budget is fixed. Can there be any logicity to this? The real issue is that while no one is willing to take responsibility for running the *maṭha* and mission, they will not stop throwing their weight around. That is why I have been sitting silent in regard to the affairs of the Purī *maṭha* for four years. I have seen who has bravado and how much, and I have also seen how much of an actual sense of responsibility they have. This *maṭha* is not my personal asset, and I do not want permanent settlement here. Still, apparently, Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha belongs to Vāmana Mahārāja. Once the work is finished here, the deities are installed, and the *maṭha* starts functioning, my responsibility is finished. I am not going to come here considering it my birthright and sit on the beach to enjoy the breeze of the Bay of Bengal or count the waves. It is only proper that the Samiti should have a preaching centre in this famous holy place. That is all I have endeavoured to achieve. I have no hope for personal profit, worship, or prestige in this, and I have no intention of advertising any sort of bravado.

I have not asked anyone for any sort of financial support for Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha and nor will I ever do so in the future. Of their own accord, a few people have made some small contributions, which I have accepted. I think it proper to express gratitude to them, and so I will put nameplates up containing their names. It is not possible in accordance

“It is my firm belief that if there is any sort of partiality in the management and administration of the *maṭha* and mission, no one can ever be benefitted.”

with government law to list the amount of money donated on the name-stones, so the names will be listed according to merit. Those who tossed Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha to the wayside and sneakily, secretly syphoned funds to other *maṭhas* will certainly warrant a critical review in the future. If you take someone else’s things without saying anything, it is called stealing, and once you have taken those things without saying anything, even if you say something later, it is still considered theft. That is what the law says. If you commit a crime and confess to it later, it is still considered a crime. That cannot be proven to have been justified. A foregone conclusion suggests impropriety and indiscretion. Similarly, if confession and compulsion are used to conceal fault, I also consider that injustice and dishonesty.

It is my firm belief that if there is any sort of partiality in the management and administration of the *maṭha* and mission, no one can ever be benefitted. Śrī Bhagavān will grace you with the intelligence to understand all these matters someday.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam [10.22.35] says: “*Prāṇair arthair dhiyā vācā śreya ācāraṇam sadā* – service to Bhagavān is effected through one’s life energy, money, intelligence, and words.” As one acquires *paramārtha* (the supreme wealth) through wealth, which forever entails suffering, it becomes sublime through dedication or, in other words, through full surrender or the offering of one’s heart and soul. Man’s hard-earned money is dearer to him than his own life airs, which is why people trade any person or thing of this world to hold on to this *artha*, which is actually an *anartha* (non-wealth, or impediment), and brings only sorrow in the beginning, middle, and end. If someone can, with his or her intelligence, utilize that wealth for *paramārtha*, then that man or woman is truly intelligent. Selfless charity has no comparison. Generally, people give charity for the sake of mundane prestige. They retain some ulterior motive in giving said charity. Therefore, they do not reap the actual results. That is why, in the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavata*, three types of charity are mentioned – *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*.

“*Mamārcā-sthāpane śraddhā svataḥ samhatya codyamaḥ, udyānopavanā-kṛīḍa-pura-mandira-karmāṇi.*” In this (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.11.38) and subsequent verses, [Bhagavān states]: “You should serve My home by beholding, touching, worshipping, serving, praising, and bowing [to My *śrī* *vigraha* and My devotees] by performing *kīrtana* of My qualities, becoming attached to hearing about Me, meditating on Me, submitting all profits and achievements unto Me, accepting a position of servitude to Me, submitting one’s heart and soul, performing *kīrtana*

of My birth and activities, observing fasts and sacred occasions, singing, playing instruments, dancing, participating in *iṣṭa-goṣṭhī* discussions and festivals in My temple and on annual holiday festivals, offering gifts, showing love and attachment for the establishment of My deity form, and endeavouring to build flower gardens, orchards, playgrounds, fields, cities or residential areas, and temples, either alone or with others and, like a servant, with genuine sincerity, cleaning the *śrī mandira*, reapplying cow dung, and irrigating and landscaping the grounds. Giving up all pride and arrogance, you should surrender all that you aspire for and all that you cherish unto Me. In this way, your offerings remain everlasting, and you attain the ultimate destination of Vaikuṇṭha.”

I am delighted to know you participated in the deity installation festival and *niyama-sevā* in Śrī Kṣetra. Only you can say whether or not Remuṇā's Kṣīracorā Gopīnātha will give you His *darśana*. In any case, if you are exclusively devoted to Him, He can steal *kṣīra* for you too and feed it to you. *Darśana* is a general privilege. When you have this much eagerness, then I think He will surely give you *darśana*. When you are on your way back [from Purī] that will be possible.

Śrī Bhagavān is omniscient. He fulfils our innermost desires. His mercy is also causeless and unpredictable. The living entity cannot even begin to comprehend His mercy and favour; that is why He is *durjñeya-tattva* (a truth seldom known). If a person wishes to realize His mercy, he needs the strength of *sādhana*. This causeless compassion cannot be experienced as long as mundane egotism or perception remains. Only by a sincere inclination to serve does it become a matter of realization. *Iti—*

**“Śrī Bhagavān
is omniscient.
He fulfils our
innermost
desires.”**

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 43

The service-ethic of a true servant • Better to live at a distance from the *dhāma* than risk making offences • The joy of service is the devotee’s sole motive • The beauty of *yukta-vairāgya* is lost on impersonalists • Thinking one is unworthy to serve grants one the qualification to serve • *Parokṣa* (indirect) *darśana* versus *pratyakṣa* (direct) *darśana* • Worrying about the well-being of one’s soul is appropriate selfishness

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tegharipara, Navadvipa (Nadia)
21/11/1977

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! You write so many letters, one after another, yet never lose your patience, so I cannot help but praise you with a hundred mouths for your patience and tolerance. You are especially skilful for having broken my Jaḍa Bharata-like silence after so long and activating my pen, and for that, I am conveying to you infinite thanks. I am truly amazed and even stunned to see that your enthusiasm for writing letters never faltered, despite not having the convenience of my responses, as I did not want to respond. May Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Rādhā-Vinoda-Bihārī-jīu grant you even more enthusiasm and patience.

Do not be disturbed about my physical ill health, because, if need be, I must take my sick body out preaching, and there is no reason to be upset about that. Just going to see a good doctor does not rid one of disease; the illness will not subside until the results of one’s *karma* are exhausted. Rest that is devoid of service makes one *dehārāmī* (“body-indulgent”) and *gehārāmī* (“home-indulgent”). Auspiciousness lies in thinking about service in all conditions of life. You should know service to be real leisure. If I do not become disturbed, no one can cast me into inconvenience. My favourite secluded environment or place is wherever I have the convenience to chant *śrī harināma* and gain the fortune to hear and recite *hari-kathā* and the scriptures; wherever I can perform *sādhana-bhajana*. Cultivation of *śrī nāma* and *bhagavat-kathā* in the association of *sādhus* is true solitude; that is the only thing I yearn

for. The service ethic of a servant has no place for rest or holiday, because for a real servant a condition averse to service is beyond the scope of imagination.

Why would Māyāpura-dhāma reveal itself to a *sevaka* or *sevikā* if he or she does not worship its nine forests, which are the splendour of its form? If one considers *śrī dhāma* to be a mundane township, then offences to the *dhāma* befall one. Only by *śrī dhāma*'s mercy can one realize its transcendental nature and appearance, and only then can one become acquainted with its true compassion. “*Māyā kṛpā kari*” *jāla uṭhāya jakhana, ākhi dekhe suviśāla cinmaya bhavana*²³² – when Māyā has mercy and lifts the veil, then the eyes see the vast spiritual abode.” This is transcendental vision. Disregard, in its various expressions, for *śrī dhāma*, for Dhāmeśvara (the Lord of that holy abode), and for the *sādhus* who have taken shelter of the *dhāma*, is also considered one of the offences to the *dhāma*. Only if one gains the mercy of Śrī Gaura-dhāma can one attain the qualification to serve the transcendental Vraja-dhāma. That is why the eternally perfected intimate associate of Śrī Gaura, *mahājana* Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya, has sung: “*śrī gauḍa-maṇḍala-bhūmi, jebā jāne cintāmaṇi, tāra haya vraja-bhūme vāsa*²³³ – those who know this land of Śrī Gauḍa to be made of wish-fulfilling gemstone attain residence in the land of Vraja.” Therefore, rather than inviting *dhāma-aparādha* upon oneself, it is much better to live at a distance and, recognizing that one's own misfortune and bad luck are responsible, yearn to serve *śrī dhāma* and the residents of the *dhāma* and remember them. These sorts of thoughts prove favourable to *amānī-mānada-dharma*.

The *sevaka*'s realization of his incapacity and disqualification inspires him to serve Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Service is never possible with an attitude that is prone to material enjoyment. So, if one adopts caution in all areas, one develops finesse in service, which is why

“I venerate with caution – *vando muī sāvadhāna mate*”. The devotee's sole motive is to be devoted to the joy of serving *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and that alone is the main connection needed to attract and attain their transcendental affection. There is no place for mundane exchanges in this.

It is only proper that spiritually-minded persons be concerned with *artha* (wealth), because *artha* facilitates the accumulation of *paramārtha*. Only devotees realize and appreciate this supreme truth. “*Prāṇair-arthair-dhiyā vācā śreya ācaraṇam sadā* – one ought to pursue the ultimate good with one's life, money, intelligence, and words.” This is a truth only the servant

“The *sevaka*'s realization of his incapacity and disqualification inspires him to serve Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas.”

²³² Śrī Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga (11) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

²³³ Gaurāṅgera Du'ī Pada (3)

realizes. The *kevalādvaita-vāḍī* monists, who are absorbed in contemplation of a featureless divinity, adopt a dry and empty sort of renunciation referred to as *markaṭa-vairāgya* (monkey mendicancy) and, trapping themselves in the idea that “one should always consider wealth to be worthless – *artham-anartham bhāvayen-nityam*,” advertise their personal heroics by rejecting even those objects of the senses that are favourable to the service of Śrī Hari, thinking them to be useless. The beauty of service found in *yukta-vairāgya* (holistic renunciation) is never theirs to realize and appreciate. “*Tomāra dhana tomāya diye tomāra haye rai* – I give to You what is already Your wealth, and thus I remain Yours.” This is beyond their comprehension.

**“Everyone is sincerely
and excellently
serving guru.
This sort of attitude
aids the performance
of bhajana and
is uplifting.”**

“Everyone is sincerely and excellently serving *guru*.” This sort of attitude aids the performance of *bhajana* and is uplifting. “*Vaiṣṇava haiyā āpanāre māne tṛṇādhama*²³⁴ – when one becomes a Vaiṣṇava, one naturally considers oneself lowlier than a blade of grass.” The thought “I am unworthy of rendering service” grants one the qualification to serve. Yearning for unwavering conviction in *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas for firm devotion and for a selfless propensity to serve constitutes the innermost motive of the true servant.

Guru and Vaiṣṇavas do not nurture within themselves hopes of attaining any sort of mundane respect or status available in this world. Rather, they are the embodiments of the following: “*pratiṣṭhāra svabhāva ei jagate vidita, je nā vañche tāra haya vidhātā nirmita*²³⁵ – the nature of prestige is well known in this world; those who do not hanker for it are blessed with it by fate.” Never are they agitated or distressed by the puerile devotions or remarks of the material world. They do not see the faults in others. This is the exemplary quality and speciality of their immortal character.

Whether I stay in Navadvīpa or go out preaching, I have come to regard both situations as one. I go out traveling to collect provisions for the service of the *maṭha* in Śrī Navadvīpa, for the *maṭha*’s servants, for my *śikṣā-gurus*, and for the *śrī vigraha* established there in the *śrī maṭha*, and I go out to preach the message of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān and propagate *śrī nāma*. Therefore, if the motive is one and the same in both circumstances, then it is my firm belief that whoever comes to the *śrī maṭha* at whatever time to take *darśana*, there is no chance of their being deprived of *darśana* (*adarśana-yoga*). In this case, the superiority and reality of *parokṣa* (indirect, invisible) *darśana* versus *pratyakṣa* (direct, visible) *darśana* is a matter of special experience and realization. This will make sense to you some day.

²³⁴ See Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 20.22)

²³⁵ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 4.146)

“*Sevā se niyama* – service, that is the rule.” If service is not our motive, then living in the *maṭha* is the same as living anywhere else. There is no joy or charm in taking my ill body out preaching. Many think, “Even if he were told to stay in the *maṭha*, he would not, because everyone is attached to money.” Then again, others want to say, “He can’t eat the *bogrā* (unhusked, musty, fat-grain, autumn rice that is mixed with grit and husks) rice in the *maṭha*, so he finds it better to stay away.” Someone else spreads rumours: “He goes around outside eating rich dishes, touring about, and to keep the *maṭha*-resident *sevakas* in ‘check’, he sends them a measly 100 to 150 rupees a month and avoids his responsibilities.” But the individuals who are circulating all this gossip share the same responsibility to take care of the *maṭha*. How much financial support are any of them offering per year to the central *maṭha*? As soon as the topic of support comes up, no one has anything to say, because then the responsibility would fall on their shoulders. Up till now, these same people have come to me and said, “Somehow or other keep managing things. Don’t let go of your responsibility.” Today they are saying, “Stop all expenditures for the *maṭha*, then everything will be taken care of nicely.” How does that reconcile things? Those who criticize for no good reason have facilities like stoves, heaters, and cookers to prepare rice and mashed potatoes in their own time. They order their own milk and have their own independent arrangements for food and drink. They offer lip service, saying: “You should sit here in the *maṭha*. Don’t worry about anything; just start your writing work.” But when it is time to do something, everyone is indifferent to the wondrous need for rice. By mouth, they say, “Yes!” But by actions, they are saying, “No.” Good work will never be possible with this sort of two-faced policy. It is a matter of great delight that you have accepted a vow of service to provide Śrī Śrī Jagannātha-deva with outfits.

I am sad to know that you wrote two letters but did not post them because you thought I would be annoyed. If I get a letter from you, be it sooner or be it later, I always respond. Who is not happy to receive letters from one who is dear to them? So there was no reason for you to hesitate in sending me the letters. I have decided to go to Purī-dhāma, but it will not be possible for me to halt in Chunchura on the way. When I am on my way back from there, I will try to go to Chunchura. — Mahārāja asked for money for the Siliguri *maṭha* from a person that Hare Kṛṣṇa [Prabhu] and I know. That person had agreed to give five thousand rupees in the service of the Purī *maṭha*. — collected this money and wants to use it as he pleases to make a mosaic in the Purī *maṭha*. I went to so much effort to explain to him that it would be better to complete the half-finished rooms first, which will also increase the *maṭha*’s income. Even though I have asked him not to do this, he has gone ahead with this work to show off

his capabilities. Now everyone is whimsical and does as they please. Those who have taken responsibility to forbid certain activities and provide discipline are speechless and are modest persons. There is no possibility of a transgression of etiquette or offence if you write a letter to the servant in the middle of writing to the master.

“The *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* reaps real well-being precisely by worrying about the well-being of his or her soul, and that is true ‘selfishness’.”

Even people in spiritual society need to abide somewhat by worldly conduct and behaviour. Since Sarayū Dīdī’s body is ill, you have become duty-bound to return to Chunchura swiftly. You still have a sense of duty and responsibility to her. She was central to your entrance on to this spiritual path. You cannot disregard that. Therefore, you will surely have to endeavour to serve her, even though she does not expect that. Wherever a human being gains the good fortune of being fearlessly and uninhibitedly engaged in hearing, chanting, etc., receiving *darśana* and rendering service is always a desirable environment. The opportunity to gain love and compassion arises only if one can become selfish in the truest sense. There is no cause for the master to be annoyed or disturbed in any way by that. The *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* reaps real well-being precisely by worrying about the well-being of his or her soul, and that is appropriate “selfishness”. In the absence of direct association with devotees, *parokṣa sādhu-saṅga* (internal association with saints) or contemplating and remembering [Bhagavān’s] beautiful name, form, qualities, etc. aids in the performance of *bhajana*. Separation from Bhagavān and Bhagavān’s devotees makes the heart restless and anxious, but there is no material sorrow or suffering in that.

I understood that you have given Śrīpāda Trivikrama Mahārāja the copy of *Padma-Purāṇa* I keep for letters and reference. Ask him to return it to the library in Navadvīpa once he is finished with his work. My *Vedānta-darśana* (four volumes) is with him. If he does not need it anymore, please ask him to return it to me. You have prayed to develop full surrender, and therein lies the very purport of the word *ātmā-sāt* (one’s own). The very fact that “you are my unworthy, fallen, destitute daughter” makes you most worthy and rightly situated on this path of *bhakti*. This is my sincere and loving blessing to you. How is your mother? You can send your response to this letter to the Golakganj *maṭha* address. What more? *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 44

The feeling that *guru* and Bhagavān are always with us and will protect us from all dangers and difficulties • The unimaginable pain of separation from Bhagavān and His devotees • The introspection of the surrendered devotee • The power of Vedic astrology and the corruption of modern astrologers • Patience bears sweet fruit • Determination on the path of *sādhana* • Performing *kīrtana* of *hari-kathā*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Rādhē-Śyāma Basāka

Ukilpara, P.O. Rayganj (West Dinajpur)

25/11/1977

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear ———! I duly received your letter dated 15/10/77. Before that, I received the letters dated 23/2/77, 11/3/77, 19/3/77, 15/4/77, 5/5/77, 7/5/77, 31/5/77, 20/6/77, and 16/7/77. Despite the delay, I am acknowledging the letters and begging your forgiveness. I cannot help but convey thanks to you for your boundless patience and virtue of tolerance. Even when I cannot respond to your letters, your enthusiasm to write does not subside. For this, I praise you with a hundred mouths. I am providing brief responses to all your letters.

However insignificant the effort to collect donations through the *maṭhas* and mission may be, there is no doubt that it goes to serve Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Having the opportunity to see the holy places in the company of *sādhus* does not just develop the body (build it up), but also refines the tendencies of the mind and soul. To not be able to take shelter of the Brahma Mādhva Gauḍīya Maṭha is truly a matter of sadness and regret. When one sees devotees who are like-minded (*svajātīyāśaya*) and affectionate (*snigdha*), the heart overflows with bliss and the mind finds peace. It is natural for every disciple to be delighted to hear the *maṭha* and mission's renown and the praises of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. "It is impossible to survive without *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and their causeless mercy." This is the expression of a healthy mind that has discovered what the health of the soul is. In life, everyone has to face tough tests and muster the efforts to surpass them. There is no real peace in this material world. As we dwell

**“The feeling
that *guru* and
Bhagavān are
always with us
will protect us
from all
dangers and
difficulties.”**

in the midst of it, the feeling that *guru* and Bhagavān are always with us will protect us from all dangers and difficulties.

It is imperative that our thoughts are strictly for Śrī Bhagavān, day and night. He is the form of knowledge, eternity, and bliss. His is a transcendental body. He does not suffer the results of material *karma*; He is a being beyond worldly birth and death. This same view is mentioned in the *śāstras* in relation to His one-pointed devotees. The living entity's endless welfare depends on being able to offer his mind and soul to that Bhagavān and His devotees and on being regarded as one of their own. A condition more acutely painful than not being able to see them, than being away from them, than not receiving their mercy, is truly beyond imagination. One can die a hundred times for Śrī Bhagavān, but not being able to see Him and His devotees is intolerable.

“*Yāvat janama mora, aparādhe hainu bhora, niṣkapaṭe nā bhajinu tomā; tathāpi je tumi gati, nā chāḍiho prāṇapati, mora sama nāhika adhamā; jadi hai aparādhi, tathāpiha tumi gati, satya satya jeno satir pati; tumi to' parama devā, nāhi more upekṣibā, śuno śuno prāṇera īśvara; jadi kari aparādhā, tathāpiha tumi nātha, sevā diyā karo anucara*²³⁶ – In all of my births, I became immersed in offences. I have not worshipped You sincerely. Nevertheless, You are my refuge. Do not abandon me, Lord of my life. There is none so wretched as I. Even if I am an offender, You are my refuge, truly, as true as a chaste wife's husband. You are the Supreme Lord. Do not neglect me. Listen, hear me, Lord of my life. Even if I make offences, You are my master. Give me service and make me Your servant.” This is the humility and prayer of a devotee.

“*Mora vapu-citta-mana, sakala indriya-gaṇa, kṛṣṇa-binā sakala viphalā; nāhi kṛṣṇa-prema-dhana, daridra mora jivana, dehendriya, br̥thā mora saba*²³⁷ – My body, soul, mind, and all my senses are totally fruitless without Kṛṣṇa. I do not have the treasure of love for Kṛṣṇa. My life is destitute. My body and senses are all worthless.” This is the introspection of the surrendered devotee.

Jyotiṛ-vidyā (astrology) is scriptural and follows the guidance of the Vedas. *Jyotiṣa-śāstra* is part of the six limbs of the Vedas. By it, knowledge of that which is beyond the senses is obtained. Man can, by means of these scriptural insights, come to know the *karma* of previous lives and the impending results of that *karma* in this present birth. Modern fortune tellers or astrologers, however, put aside concern for man's well-being and utilize astrology as a profitable form of knowledge. This is a very regrettable state of affairs. If they learned to use their knowledge to consider the highest spiritual welfare of the general public, then everyone would gain auspiciousness. They judge good and bad based only on the effects of the nine planets. *Śāstra* has prescribed many

²³⁶ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Tumi To' Dayāra Sindhu* (2–4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

²³⁷ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 2.30)

types of remedies for these effects. The advancement of the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* in particular is capable of overcoming all obstacles and adversities. These effects are not particularly active upon them.

Our life is built amid many obstacles and adversities. A worry-free life is lethargic. That is never what spiritually inclined people want. They know: “An idle brain is the devil’s workshop.” Hence, a service-filled, progressive life is the only ideal. There is nothing effort cannot achieve.

“*Sabure meoyā phale* – Patience bears sweet fruit.” This is very true. No one can say with certainty that someone’s life has come to a complete stop, nor is that even possible. Regardless, one has to strive to advance at all times. One at least has to keep up one’s efforts to maintain the status quo as well.

“*Niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema dhana*”²³⁸ – If one chants the holy name without offence, one will attain the treasure of *prema*. This is the real truth. One does not chant *śrī nāma* purely in a single day. It is a matter of *sādhana*. Also, it depends on mercy. If one goes forward with a firm heart and conviction, one will surely achieve the desired results. Maintain no doubt or worry about this in your mind. In the case of *bhajana-sādhana*, high birth, wealth, recognition, and beauty invite unfavourable elements and create many obstacles and hindrances, but if one can become sincere and simple, one will reap beautiful results very quickly. In *samsāra*, the violence of personal selfishness remains. For a person who vows to proceed on his chosen path despite living amid that, there is no chance of any sort of loss. Patience, steadiness, and tolerance are the greatest provisions and resources on the path of life. One must surely combine them with enthusiasm, incentive, belief, and self-reliance. *Śrī Bhagavān* certainly grants inspiration. That is how the soul determines his path of *sādhana*, proceeds along life’s path, and obtains the ultimate result.

If the *sannyāsī mahārāja* who has renounced everything [referring to himself] becomes the “poor daughter’s” guardian [referring to becoming her *guru*], does the daughter’s miserable condition not subside? [Meaning though she is poor, her *guru* is the one who has given up everything, so she too will find herself becoming renounced and not disturbed about being poor.] Perhaps there are many contrary instances of this in a worldly environment with various members of the extended family, but with her very near and dear family members, we see that the dependent daughter gains equal status [as her close family members want her to be happy]. In such cases, “the poor daughter’s” childish demands are surely safeguarded.

The matter of *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* [who generally live very simply] aside, the conduct of eternally liberated personalities is such that for them, their straw hut often feels like a royal

**“‘An idle brain
is the devil’s
workshop.’ Hence,
a service-filled,
progressive life is
the only ideal.”**

²³⁸ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya-līlā 4.71)

palace, while even a mansion produces within them the utter detachment one would have from a straw hut. From this it is understood that their service to Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas alone provides them satisfaction in every respect.

“I am not able to do anything to serve them.” This sort of humility and lack of pride grants the qualification for service, and this is how *hari-bhajana* is perfected. There is no reason to doubt this. In the matter of *sādhana*, hopeful conviction and enthusiasm surely grant the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* the fruits they desire.

Kīrtana of *śrī hari-kathā* is the success of this body, which is readily perishable yet extremely rare. It is a matter of great delight if this body perishes in the course of performing *kīrtana* of *hari-kathā*. Sickness and health will always be there. Taking that into account, if we can become avowedly dedicated to the service of propagating *śrī nāma*, our superlative auspiciousness is inevitable. Though this [dedication to *śrī nāma*] may appear to be cruelty according to a mundane perspective, hidden within it is true peace. If, in performing *kīrtana* of Bhagavān’s glories, one does not develop time efficiency, taste, and attachment, and if there is no enthusiasm or stimulation to do so, then that [*kīrtana*] proves to be lifeless. “*Prāṇa āche tāra, se hetu pracāra,*

“By *kīrtana* of *hari-kathā*, the passions of mind and body are dispelled, and inertia and laziness flee far away.”

(*jaḍa*) *pratiṣṭhāśā-hīna kṛṣṇa-gāthā saba*²³⁹ – They have life, hence they can preach. They have no desire for mundane prestige in their glorification of Kṛṣṇa.” At all times, we ought to remember these words, which are the composition of a great personality. By *kīrtana* of *hari-kathā*, the passions of mind and body are dispelled, and inertia and laziness flee far away. “*Palāya duranta kali paḍiyā vibhrāṭe*²⁴⁰ – the terrible Kali flees in confusion.”

In this world, no one can give anyone else sorrow, pain, happiness, or peace; the living entity reaps good and bad due to the results of his *karma*. This is *tattva-darśana*. The surprising thing is that a foolish man whose everything is his material body and home cannot grasp this. With the blessings of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, one can attain not just lost umbrellas and bags but incomparable worldly opulence, as well as instructions regarding the proper utilization of that opulence. ... Accept my blessings. *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²³⁹ *Duṣṭa Mana Tumi Kisera Vaiṣṇava* (18) by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda

²⁴⁰ *Gītāvalī, Hari Bo’le Moder Gaura Elo* (6) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 45

The childlike reliance of śrī vighraha on Their devotees • The difference between the elevationist and the devotee • The purpose of āśramas and temples • The nature of Kali-yuga • “What God wills, no frost can kill”

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha,
Tegharipara, P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
26/2/1978

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear —! I have duly received your 3/1/78 and 20/2/78 dated inland letter and envelope. At present, after receiving two or three medicines on the advice of a Kavirājī (Ayurvedic doctor), I am using two medicines. That has helped greatly and now I am somewhat well. Still, if I do not eat and rest on time, I have trouble. It is difficult to maintain regulation, which is indispensable, when out preaching.

If you can understand that “you are not performing *bhajana-sādhana* at all”, then surely your eagerness for *bhajana-sādhana* will increase. But if a person who knows this does not make an effort or endeavour, where is his spiritual welfare? Kṛṣṇa’s *samsāra* and the *baddha-jīva*’s *samsāra* are not the same. There is a difference of heaven and hell between intention and conviction. If there is a delay in Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī receiving service, He or They will not say anything. This is the nature of Their pastime of accepting service. *Śrī vighraha* or *śrī mūrti* [the Lord’s deity form] or worshipful images of Them accept service and worship in an effortless manner as recipients of *vātsalya-rasa*, much like children. They are reliant on Their guardians in every respect, and this is what stimulates the *vātsalya-bhāva* of Their guardians.

It is only as a result of *sukṛti* from previous births that one obtains birth in a Vaiṣṇava family and becomes a Vaiṣṇava. It is true that there is no fruitive expectation in *bhajana*, but one does not observe [in the person performing *bhajana*] a lack of enthusiasm and stimulation. Rather, they increase exponentially. There is a vast gap between the *prākṛta-karmīs* (elevationists) and the devotees. The *karmīs* identify with material body and home, and the devotees, interested in satisfying Kṛṣṇa’s senses, sacrifice their lives to serving Him.

“Time and tide wait for none.” “Time does not belong to anyone. It runs swiftly; it does not sit still. Time takes everything – companions, wealth, strength. Age is like a drop of water on a lotus petal.” “Today or in a hundred years, death is guaranteed. Do not be care-free, brother. As soon as you can, worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s feet. Life has no guarantee.”

Your Śrī Kṛṣṇa has descended as Matsya, Kurma, Varāha. If He wants, He can become a duck too. Despite appearing in those species, He maintains His own, transcendental personal, eternal form (*svarūpa*). This is the speciality of Bhagavān, who is beyond the senses.

We have no cause for delight to know that some Mahārāja, having made a small temple, is now making a huge *maṭha-mandira*. After some days, the *śrī vigraha* (the deities) will turn into an undesirable burden around one’s neck (*gala-graha*) and will be subject to neglect (*nigraha*). This is the fear. Centres for preaching pure devotion are called *maṭha-mandiras*. If they do not fulfil that purpose, what is the use of making a place for bloodsuckers, a clubhouse for eating and lounging? “*Prāṇa āche tāra, se hetu pracāra, (jaḍa) pratiṣṭhāśā-hīna kṛṣṇa-gāthā saba*²⁴¹ – They who have life can preach. They have no desire for mundane prestige in their glorification of Kṛṣṇa.” These are the words of a *mahājana*. A spiritual gathering place or teaching establishment is renowned as an *āśrama* or *maṭha*. It is imperative that those purposes be fulfilled there.

Śrī Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *tattva* renowned the world over as Jagabandhu (friend of the world) or Jagannātha (Lord of the world). Śrī Śacīnandana Gaurahari is non-different from Vrajendra-nandana. Hence, Jagannātha is Mahāprabhu and Śrīman Mahāprabhu is Śrī Jagannātha-deva. *Viśaya-vigraha* Śrī Jagabandhu is *bhoktā* Bhagavān (God, the enjoyer), the cause of creation, sustenance, and destruction. How can Prabhu Jagadbandhu-sundara usurp that seat? And how does his cult have the gall to call him an *avatāra* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya? The people of the world are unintelligent and lack knowledge of *tattva*, which is why they like to talk rambling nonsense. They do not care for *tattva* and *siddhānta*. The tendency to discern good and bad comes only if there is *sukṛti*. It is the age of Kali. The beautiful path of *bhakti* is besieged by the millions of thorns of vile arguments by *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, and *yogīs*. Kali means the age of argument, the age in which people deviate from the path of truth and resort to falsehood. That is what Kali-yuga is. To see truth in what is not true is the nature of Kali. Seeing all this, seers of the truth will surely be cautious. This is their cleverness.

²⁴¹
Duṣṭa Mana Tumi Kiserā Vaiṣṇava (18) by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda

This time you will laugh when you get my letter. I started writing you a letter from Rayganj on 25/11/77. Today I finished my response. Nevertheless, you will be somewhat assured. “Better late than never.” By your love and affection, I will quickly be free from sickness. Would good wishes from such noble gentlemen and such chaste and saintly ladies prove fruitless? “What God wills, no frost can kill.” Feeling and realizing the unhappiness and suffering of others proves one’s love and affection. You wrote that you are forever indebted to me and that you will not be able to repay me in this life. Then my opinion is that if you are going to be indebted, be indebted (spiritually) to the Vaiṣṇavas, because they will feel no irritation about your having to repay the debt. What more? Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 46

Kṛṣṇa's name is the medicine, *mahāprasāda* is the diet, and *sad-guru* is the doctor • The worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa entails full surrender • Unavoidable difficulties are overcome by the mercy of Nāma Prabhu • The fruit of real *darśana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha,
Tegharipara, P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
10/4/1978

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear —! ... It is true that, as the fruit of many, many lives worth of *sukṛti*, one comes into communication with *sādhus* and *mahāpuruṣas* and gains the qualification to obtain their merciful written correspondence, but accepting them as one's own and realizing them as one's nearest relatives reveals one's generosity and magnanimity.

I understand that your body fell ill after Śrī Nityānanda Trayodaśī. At the appearance of Guru Nityānanda, who is non-different from Baladeva, all the filth surrounding the soul's *bhajana-sādhana* dissipates and the soul becomes healthy. In your case too, cough, cold, and other obstacles to *bhajana* were removed by drinking the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name, and you recovered. In this world, the most amazing thing is that the living entities give up the nectar

**“As imperative as it is
to help others in
the performance of
the limbs of *bhakti*,
it is equally important
for oneself to take
advantage of that
golden opportunity.”**

of *śrī nāma* to constantly drink the poison of sense objects and want to stay engrossed in that. Even though the medicine, diet, and doctor have been specified – Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name being the medicine, *mahā-prasāda* that has been offered to Bhagavān the diet, and the bona fide *guru* the very best of doctors, or captain – they have no inclination to take their support or take refuge of them. What could be more unfortunate than that?

As imperative as it is to help others in the performance of the limbs of *bhakti*, it is equally important for oneself to take advantage of that golden opportunity as well. This is why it has

been said: “*janma sārthaka kari, karo para-upakāra*²⁴² – make one’s life a success and help others.” I have been delighted and enthused to know that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*’s conception “*prāṇair artha dhiyā vācā śreyah ācaraṇam sadā*²⁴³ – one should pursue the greatest good by life, wealth, intelligence, and words,” has taken root in you. The speciality of the worship of *līlā-puruṣottama* Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, who is the presiding deity of the five *rasas*, *raso vai saḥ*, entails full surrender and supplication of the soul. I am happy to know you have been able to understand this. Such sublime intelligence arises by the influence of many births of *sukṛti* and the mercy of *sādhū*, *guru*, and *Vaiṣṇavas*. For that, you are thankworthy and deserve much praise.

Ordinary pilgrims come to *śrī dhāma-parikramā* to earn pious credits. Some frequent *śrī dhāma* and holy places for the sake of gathering *sukṛti*. I do not know for sure what kind of reception you get at the *maṭha*. On the other hand, it is debatable whether or not we would be worthy of a seat in your home. (In the *maṭha*,) you get parboiled rice, watered-down dahl, and sauteed drumstick. If this alone were so popular, we could truly take care of people and I would see no obstacle to us finding a place in heaven, in Indra’s city [for our acts of charity]. If you truly realize in your heart that you are not able to do anything to serve the *Vaiṣṇavas*, then surely there is a possibility of your attaining auspiciousness someday.

We remember Śrī Nṛsiṃha-deva in order to surpass obstacles and adversity. In the “*auśadhe cintayed viṣṇum*” verse²⁴⁴, we find mention of various holy names of the Lord: “*saṅkaṭe madhusūdanam, kānane narasiṃham ca... gamane vāmanam caiva sarva-kāryeṣu mādhamam* – (Remember) Madhusūdana when in danger, Narasiṃha when in the forest, Vāmana when travelling, and Mādhava during all activities.” If going to the dense forest, it is recommended to remember Śrī Nṛsiṃha Ṭhākura, but it is most suitable to remember Śrī Vāmana-deva when travelling. It is observed that even the devotees who follow these instructions face many obstacles and hindrances. What is the remedy for this? Do all inauspicious effects dissipate or not if Mādhava is remembered at every moment? The reality is that *śrī nāma* surely has its glories and also, whatever is bound to happen will surely happen. Those difficulties, however, are overcome by the mercy of Nāma Prabhu. If Bhagavān’s will for something to happen is strong, then even on a day when there is a strike, one rickshaw will be out and about so that a specific person can accomplish his task.

²⁴² *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 9.41)

²⁴³ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.22.35)

²⁴⁴ *Viṣṇu-dharma Purāṇa*, quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (11.310)

It makes me sad to think of you sometimes crying in your cottage, but I trust that one who can cry also knows how to laugh. This world is made of laughter and tears. Mundane weeping and lamentation that results from not seeing our loved ones submerges us in an

**“Eternal *darśana*
is forever
transcendental
and real.”**

ocean of sorrow, but if we can be moved by transcendental separation and *vipralambha-bhāva*, we can attain divine love and affection for Śrī Bhagavān and His devotees. ...

There will always be a difference between direct *darśana* and indirect *darśana*, but eternal *darśana* is forever transcendental and real. There, the past and future do not exist. Eternal *darśana* is something to be obtained within the eternal present. “*Vraje rādhā-kṛṣṇa sevā mānase karibe*²⁴⁵ – serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vraja, by mind.” This is the fruit of real *darśana*. There [in Vraja] you do not have *darśana* of tumours in the head and there is no question of fearing anything. The *jīvātmā*’s dwelling is within the *Paramātmā*, without whom the *jīvātmā*’s independent existence cannot be substantiated. “Operation successful, but the patient died.” This is the deplorable condition of the *nirviśeṣa-brahma-vādī*. By experiencing the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Bhagavān, His devotees obtain all auspiciousness and a new birth.

I will tell you everything in person and will hear more from you also. Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁴⁵ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 6.237)

Letter 47

The most valuable treasure for a *sādhaka* • *Śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas are our only true kin • A glimpse into the inner natures of the devotees and Bhagavān • *Śaraṇāgati* is not possible without *sambandha-jñāna* • Those who are constantly criticizing others fall down very quickly • Avoiding worship of himself on his *vyāsa-pūjā* • How to become free from the fatal flaw of *aparādha*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

% Śrī Baṅkebihārī Dāsādhikārī
Jalpeswar Road, Subhash Nagar
P.O. Maynaguri (Jalpaiguri)
15/5/1978

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! It is meaningless to worry that the conditioned soul shall forever remain in a state of material bondage and will never endeavour to become liberated. While the living entity is in a materially conditioned state, all his thoughts, moods, and activities are full of mundane conceptions. To transcend this material, or mundane, state is the primary objective of performing *sādhana-bhajana*. Direct *darśana* of *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas and their instructions and directions are certainly the most valuable treasures for a *sādhaka*. One only receives such opportunity and good fortune as a result of spiritual merit accumulated over many, many lifetimes.

It is ideal if all our pride, distress, lamentation, and so on are centred solely around *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, because they are our only true kinsmen, our real friends in the prison-house of this material world – “*tava nija-jana parama-bāndhava, saṁsāra-kārāgāre*²⁴⁶.” Our so-called relatives and friends in this material world give no value to these things, but the most munificent, omniscient Vaiṣṇavas are accepting of our moods and emotions and

**“Direct *darśana*
of *śrī guru* and
the Vaiṣṇavas and
their instructions
and directions are
certainly the most
valuable treasure
for a *sādhaka*.”**

²⁴⁶ Ohel Premera Ṭhākura Gorā (6)

most empathetic to the pain of others. When it comes to bringing conviction and determination to the *sādhana-bhajana* of the conditioned living entities, they are very adept and very clever.

The Vaiṣṇavas are ruthless and firmly avowed in the matter of rejecting unfavourable association. But the one-pointedness of a devotee who cries for them bitterly with a heart full of intense yearning controls them, and in such circumstances, the Vaiṣṇavas reveal their benevolent instincts. Therefore, in all conditions of life, they are the abode of our hope and trust, our shelter. Even Śrī Bhagavān may break His vows for the sake of His devotees. Those devotees are equally ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of the *bhaktas* and Bhagavān. This is a glimpse into the inner natures of the *bhaktas* and Bhagavān and the pinnacle of love and affection.

Unless *sambandha-jñāna* (realization of one's relationship with Śrī Bhagavān) is awakened in one's heart, *śaraṇāgati*, or offering of oneself, is not possible. Only he who has linked his mind and heart to Śrī Hari, *śrī guru*, and the Vaiṣṇavas will feel an anxiety and eagerness in his heart to have their direct audience. Surely all these matters are realized only according to one's qualification in *sādhana-bhajana*. Someday Śrī Bhagavān will mercifully bestow upon you this sort of qualification. Who can say how and on whom He will shower His mercy?

—— recently became engaged as a servant in the *śrī maṭha* there. The *maṭha* management did not engage him here. While thus engaged, he acted as he pleased and for his own self-

**“Those who
are constantly
looking for
faults in others
and criticizing
others fall down
very quickly.”**

interest. When a servant is unable to follow the instructions of *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas or is averse to following them without second thought, how can he possibly attain any welfare? “*Gurur sevaka haya mānya āpanāra* – the servants of *guru* deserve your utmost regard.” If one does not take this notion to heart, it is not possible to stay in the *maṭha* and render service there. Entanglement in worldly life is inevitable for such a person. Those who are constantly looking for faults in others and criticizing others fall down very quickly. For them, both this world and the next are destroyed.

On the *kṛṣṇa-navamī*²⁴⁷ day of Pauṣa [December–January], I will not be staying in the Siliguri *maṭha*. There is a program to go preaching elsewhere at this time. I cannot write where exactly I will be staying when I go out preaching. I can only indicate a rough outline of the itinerary. The day that people will be able to offer due faith unto Śrī Bhagavān, instead of worshipping a person or group, is the day the path to their real welfare will broaden. These

²⁴⁷ Pauṣa *kṛṣṇa-navamī* is Śrīla Mahārāja's appearance day

days, the craving for profit, adoration, and prestige has spread its all-devouring lolling tongue, compelling the conditioned living entities to misappropriate Śrī Bhagavān's seat. *Śūnyavādīs* (nihilists), *nirviśeṣa-brahmavādīs* (impersonalists), *cid-jāḍa-samanvaya-vādīs* ("spirit-matter-synthesis-ists"), *jīva-brahmaika-vādīs* (monists), and *pañcopāsakīs* (worshippers of the five major Hindu deities) all tote the flag of atheism. While pretending to serve Śrī Bhagavān, they are busy trying to occupy His position. Therefore, my exclusive desire is that *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are glorified, that their divine glories are broadcast everywhere. If that happens, then the whole world can find auspiciousness.

In the realm of spiritual practice, *aparādha* is a fatal flaw and defect. One must very carefully and thoroughly abandon all offences to the Lord's holy name and His transcendental abode, and also offences made while rendering service. But trying to refrain from such offences within a short period of time is not easy. We have to keep praying to Śrī Nāma Prabhu and to *śrī dhāma* to become free from offences. In that way, we can reside in *śrī dhāma* and chant *śrī nāma*. Only by the dust of the lotus feet of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and by their causeless mercy do we become established at a level of actual qualification. In the realm of *bhajana*, material qualifications are useless and breed conceit.

My children are desirous of having my *darśana*. Are you also among them? A loving father always thinks of his children's well-being. Even if the father stays very far away, he can bestow auspiciousness upon his children. This too is a matter of experience. Know that you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 48

A true inclination to serve is the real fortune of the living entity

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tegharipara, Navadvīpa (Nadia)
11/7/1978

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! I just received the letter you sent yesterday. Regarding ——— Dīdī's request, which you informed me of in your letter, it is not possible for me to fulfil all of that. I can lecture on *Bhāgavata* in her home, but I will not take *prasāda* there. The reason is that once, prior to this, I accepted lunch *prasāda* in your home and it caused much fuss. I have never seen a rule stating that if I take *prasāda* in someone's home, that householder will have to invite all the residents of the *maṭha*. From that day forth I decided to never accept *prasāda* at any *gṛhastha*'s home

in Chunchura. This being the situation, I will not be able to partake of *vaiṣṇava-sevā* at ——— Dīdī's house. Earlier I was also invited to a festival at ——— Prabhu's house, but I told them that I would not be able to attend.

**“Only simple
and sincere
individuals
attain well-being
and experience
the awakening of
a true inclination
to serve.”**

I am not independent. In my special designation, my independence is dependent on others. If one manages to become a *sevaka*, it is natural to be attracted by the beauty of others' service. While it is true that the *sevya* (the recipient of service) is attracted by a sincere propensity to serve, the *sevya* still has occasion to assess the *sevā* with judgment and discretion. Service that is no more than a one-act drama or an attempt to garner prestige certainly does not count as actual service. Vaiṣṇava scriptures

advise granting eligibility to the unworthy and fallen and facilitating their becoming exalted. *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are supremely merciful. With this conviction, you will surely get the chance for their *darśana*. Their causeless compassion is the sole provision and resource for us on the path of *sādhana* and *bhajana*. Human beings can never attain auspiciousness by materialistic arrogance, egotism, and bravado. Only simple and sincere individuals attain well-being and experience the awakening of a true inclination to serve. This alone is the living entity's real fortune.

I will reach Chunchura by the 5th of Śrāvaṇa. I will tell and hear everything in person. I hope that you are all well. Please accept my affectionate blessings. My body is really not well. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 49

The character of a real *ācārya* and *guru* • If a *sādhaka* craves prestige and poses as a liberated soul, he will ultimately fall down • If one follows *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ teachings, one can live with *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas always • Connection with *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is not based on any mundane exchange • The *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* have nothing to call their own

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

% Śrī Rasika-rañjana Dāsādhikārī
Dhadika, P.O. Kumarbad (S.P.)
16/8/1978

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! I received your letter of 15/7/78 in good time. You are sad that you did not see me before you returned home. If *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are omniscient, then they saw, internally, your desire to see me when you were leaving.

I cannot stay seated next to you all the time, forever. Then again, as my picture, I am always situated before you. What you want to convey to me, you can convey to that. If you submit all matters to the image you worship, your mind will find peace.

One who carefully gleans the purports of the scripture, practices them in his own life, and becomes dedicated to preaching precisely that to everyone, and who, as the foremost of preachers, is also keen on his personal practice (*ācāra*), receives the acclaim of being an *ācārya*. If we can gain a place at his worshipful feet, offer our lives to his teachings, and take initiation, then our ultimate welfare is inevitable. The *mahānta-guru* never makes anyone his disciple. He engages those under his guidance in service, knowing them to be instruments in serving his master. One eternally perfected great soul has addressed those who took shelter of him as “*vipada-uddhāraṇa bāndhava-gaṇa* – friends who have come to deliver me from calamity”. This is the experience and real *darśana* of the eternal *mahāpuruṣas*.

“The *mahānta-guru* never makes anyone his disciple.”

This time, in attempting to distribute the mercy of *hari-kathā*, some high calibre *sevaka-brahmacārī* who fancies himself a scholar instigated a great deal of irrelevant, ill-affected criticism, due to which several female listeners became very dissatisfied and later asked me

to give an explanation. When I properly explained this portion's purport and teaching, they were satisfied. They can understand that *śāstra* instructs everyone, women and men, equally. “*Makṣikā vraṇam-icchanti, madhum-icchanti śaṭpadāḥ* – the fly wants open wounds, the bee wants honey.” These are the natures of vile persons and saintly persons, respectively. “*Sajjanāḥ guṇam-icchanti doṣam-icchanti pāmarāḥ* – noble persons seek virtues, wretches seek flaws.” This is the measure of the good-natured and the bad-natured. “*Sarvatra sārām ādadyāt puṣpebhya iva śaṭpadāḥ*²⁴⁸ – take the essence of everything, just as a bee takes nectar from the flowers.” This is the honey-bee tendency. It is laughable for a *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* to claim the status of a *madhyama-adhikārī*. “*Vaiṣṇava cinite nāre devera śakati* – even the demigods do not have the power to recognize a Vaiṣṇava.” Just as this evidences the ineligibility to obtain *tattva-darśana*, the proverb “*nīca jadi ucca bhāṣe subuddhi udāya hese* – the highfalutin speech of a fool makes a wise man laugh” dismisses the ineligible and highlights the generosity that is silence. In attempting to perform *sādhana-bhajana*, should the *sādhaka*, deluded by the hope for profit, worship, and prestige, invoke disregard of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and pose as a liberated soul, he will ultimately fall down. There are countless examples of this.

To come into the proximity of Vaiṣṇavas is a matter of great fortune. The Sārasvata Gauḍīya *guru-varga* has informed us that to leave them and return [to one's worldly] home or even just to get a return ticket is a matter of misfortune. It is possible to always live in the proximity of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas if one follows their teachings and instructions. Only through contemplation and feeling is it possible to obtain their direct *darśana*.

The *sevaka* or *sevikā* has no worldly connection with *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, who are not satisfied by any worldly exchange. If one properly studies the “*dadāti pratigrhṇāti*” verse of *Upadeśāmṛta*, one sees that it is not speaking about mundane giving and taking. The

**“The devotee
who has offered
his soul at the
lotus feet of
śrī guru does not
claim anything
as his own.”**

exchange of transcendental love and affection constitutes the special connection between *guru* and disciple. The ordinary materially engrossed soul cannot grasp this and often becomes garrulous in criticizing *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Though this does not even slightly affect Vaiṣṇavas, who are of exalted consciousness, it is particularly harmful for conditioned souls.

The devotee who has offered his soul at the lotus feet of *śrī guru* does not claim anything as his own, for he knows “Nothing is mine. Everything is *gurudeva's*.” He takes the wealth Bhagavān has given

²⁴⁸ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.8.10)

him and vows to serve them. “*Āmāra bolite prabhu, āra kichu nāi; tumi-i āmāra mātra pitā, bandhu, bhāi*²⁴⁹ – Master, I have nothing to call my own. You alone are my only father, friend, and brother.” This is the exclusively surrendered individual’s *sambandha-jñāna* and sense of belonging. The *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* have nothing to call their own. Their mind, heart, body, home, money, etc., – everything – they give to *guru* and Bhagavān and become carefree. To give away their body, mind, words, life, wealth, intelligence – everything – and spend their lives in a selfless manner, devoid of possessions, becomes their natural tendency. Reliance itself [on *guru* and Bhagavān] establishes them in the highest position.

I will discuss *śrī gopāla-tattva* in person when we have time. In this matter, personal realization is the main thing. *Gṛhasthas* need not sacrifice male goats; they can offer monetary donations [to Mā Kālī]. If she is not satisfied by this, then I will know that Mā is a *rākṣasī* (an ogress) and not really the mother of the universe. Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁴⁹ *Śaraṇāgati, Āmāra Bolite Prabhu* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 50

Service to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is the core focus of *bhajana* • It is impossible to attain *bhagavad-bhakti* without serving *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • Real *sādhana* begins upon attaining a taste for *śrī nāma* • Those who cherish Śrī Bhagavān as their husband have no need for a husband of this world • Without the mercy of *sādhū* and *guru*, the restless mind cannot be tamed

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha,
Tegharipara, P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
17/2/1979

Sādara sambhāṣaṇa pūrvīkeyam—

Dear Mā ———! When you receive my letters, you become delighted and find peace of mind. That is why, even though time is scarce, today I have sat down to write you a letter. If we go to visit you, then you are delighted. And when we come back, you weep bitterly. That being the case, after this, should I visit you and thus give you sadness or not? That is what I am pondering. But the pull of your affection is such that there is no alternative but to go.

Who told you that having to take birth as a woman is the result of much sin? Is this written in any scripture? I do not have any knowledge of that. I know that as a result of *karma*, living entities obtain births as trees, grass, shrubs, creepers, birds, animals, and humans. Only by performing *bhajana* of Śrī Hari, or worship of Bhagavān, do their lives become successful, whereafter they proceed to a transcendental abode that befits the *sādhana* they performed, and there they obtain the qualification to render direct service to Śrī Bhagavān.

Just by remembering Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, one receives the fruit of staying in their association. Know that wherever one can stay and find plenty of opportunity to chant

**“Just by remembering
Śrī Hari, guru, and
Vaiṣṇavas, one receives
the fruit of staying in
their association.”**

Śrī Bhagavān’s name is the best environment for *bhajana*. “*Chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava sevā, nistāra peyechē kebā*²⁵⁰ – Who has ever gained deliverance by leaving the service of Vaiṣṇavas?” Hence, service to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is the core focus of *bhajana*. Know that the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*’s greatest fortune is being able to remain in the shade of their worshipful feet.

The prescription of fasting on Ekādaśī and other *tithis* (holy days) is for the welfare of our souls. Why would Śrī Bhagavān fast on such days? Even on Ekādaśī, one has to offer *bhoga* of rice and vegetable preparations as usual to Giridhārī, Śālagrāma-śilā, and others. Such rules are in the *smṛti-sāstras*. Inform your mother of this matter.

You must chant a fixed number of *śrī nāma* (*japa*) every day. Also read something from the *granthas*. Learn how to do *pūjā* and *arcana* well. Help your mother in cooking and all other household activities. It is impossible to attain *bhagavad-bhakti* without serving *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. One has to pray to them for the qualification to serve. Chant *gāyatrī-mantras* with firm conviction. If while performing *kīrtana* of Śrī Bhagavān's name one can meditate on Him and shed tears, then one's life is successful. Never let the sorrows and suffering of this material existence make you cry; it is your duty to shed tears before *śrī guru* and Bhagavān for the attainment of faithful devotion.

**“If while performing
kīrtana of Śrī Bhagavān's
name one can meditate on
Him and shed tears, then
one's life is successful.”**

“*Japite japite mantra karilo pāgala*²⁵¹ – chanting and chanting this *mantra* has made me mad.” This is the attainment of perfection in the *sādhana* of chanting *mantra*. Real *sādhana* begins once taste in *śrī nāma* comes. It is true that those who have developed the conviction to cherish Śrī Bhagavān as their husband have no need for a husband of this material world. If you choose as your husband only Viśvapati (the universal husband), Jagatpati (the world's husband), Śrī Jagannātha, I will not try to arrange your marriage. He is surely maintaining and nurturing you and will do so. He is the husband or master of infinite universes. He is the maintainer and nurturer of us all. I will not enmesh you in the mundane attachments of this material existence against your wishes. If you live in your father's home as an exemplary daughter and maintain your vow of serving Giridhārī, then I will not pose any obstacle to that.

With enthusiasm, live in your father's home and perform *hari-bhajana*. Those who love Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, who have made service to them the vow of their lives, can never retain any sort of sin or *aparādha*. Śrī Bhagavān's causeless mercy protects them at all times. Living in *saṁsāra*, be a *sevā-dharmī* (one whose sole duty is service). Know this to be your meditation (*dhyāna*), chanting of *nāma* (*japa*), and austerity (*tapā*). The only success of this rare human birth is to perform *hari-bhajana*.

You wrote this truth: “The mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation.” Hence, the symptom of a pure mind is learning to offer body, mind, and life to Śrī Bhagavān. Without

²⁵¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 7.81)

the mercy of *sādhū* and *guru*, the restless mind cannot be tamed. By Bhagavān's grace, all conveniences to facilitate *sādhana* are obtained. You will obtain all of that by your heartfelt conviction. It is your duty to maintain patience in all these matters. “*Mahat-kṛpā binā kono kārya siddha naya; kṛṣṇa-bhakti dūre rahu, saṁsāra nahe kṣaya*”²⁵² – Without the mercy of exalted personalities, no task can be accomplished. Let alone devotion to Kṛṣṇa, this material existence does not subside.”

I am healthy. Let me know you all are well. If you want, you can always see the smiling faces of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. By hearing, chanting, and remembering Śrī Bhagavān's name, form, qualities, and pastimes, one obtains direct *darśana* of Him. This is the one means of always having His *darśana*. Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁵² Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.51)

Letter 51

The austerities of travelling and preaching • The pull of the heart makes the impossible possible • How to witness Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in one’s dreams • *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the subject of study for those free from envy • Always remember that we are never alone • *Hari-kathā* helps the disturbed mind regain patience and enthusiasm • One must remember *śrī nāma* constantly to attain its real fruit

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha,
Tegharipara, P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
19/2/1979

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear ———! I hope that by the grace of Bhagavān you are all well. The dream you had on 8/2/79 was accurate. That day, at around 8:00 AM, I left Sundarban, travelled fifteen or twenty miles by motor launch and arrived in Raydighi. From there, in an overcrowded motor bus, we travelled nine or ten miles and arrived in Kashinagar at around 1:00 in the afternoon. Despite the notice “fasting from water for Pakṣa-varḍhinī Mahā-dvādaśī and Śrī Varāha-dvādaśī” written in boldface, I decided I was incapable of fasting and took *anukalpa* at 2:00 PM. From there, after only three hours rest, I went about eight or ten miles to a very remote location. I went by rickshaw some of the way and walked the rest on foot, reaching my destination at 7:00 in the evening. I was supposed to give *Bhāgavatam* class, but my body was exhausted from the intense exertion, so I did not give class and took rest instead. The next morning (9/2/79), I did *pāraṇa* before 10:00 and, after stopping in two or three places, went to a place some twenty-five or thirty miles away in Shyam Bose Chowk, where I had to give a three-day series of lectures in a hall there.

The pull of love and affection is so amazing that even from so far away, you were able to witness my physical malaise. And that is why I have told you everything openly. Your mind was nagging you because you were right. If the pull of the heart is there, often the impossible becomes possible. In your case, this is what happened. There is plenty of research going on these days about all these kinds of things, and it will go on.

Know that the hope and eagerness that comes with becoming a beggar for Śrī Bhagavān's causeless compassion are causes of auspiciousness. You will be able to say "Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa" and weep from the core of your heart, and also, you will surely gain the fortune of witnessing Śrī Rādhā Vinoda-bihārī's infinite pastimes in your dreams.

Those who sincerely want to become candidates for serving Śrī Bhagavān have no material demands, and they are entirely non-envious. That is why *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the one sovereign book to be studied by those who are supremely free of all envy (*nirmatsara*). Real *sādhus* and *sādhvīs* take shelter of this actual truth (*satya*) that eradicates all manner of delusion, and they cultivate that truth within them. That which is beyond *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* is the fifth objective of mankind, love of God, or *prema*, and is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s exclusive subject matter or goal. "*Ajñāna tamera nāma kahiye kaitava, dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa vāñchā ādi ei saba; tāra madhye mokṣa-vāñchā kaitava pradhāna, jāhā haite haya kṛṣṇa-bhakti haya antardhāna* – The darkness of nescience is deceit. This is the desire for religion, wealth, enjoyment, salvation, etc. Among them, the desire for salvation is the main deceit, whereby devotion for Kṛṣṇa disappears." Hence, the said four goals of human existence are not at all desirable for exclusively devout *bhaktas*. The attainment of transcendental, spontaneous (*svārasikī*) service to Śrī Rādhā-Govinda is their ultimate aspiration.

Perform *hari-bhajana* without any worry. You will not experience any inconvenience. I am conveying my auspicious wishes that you will be able to keep a cool head and do whatever you must. If you spend your whole life thinking only of Kṛṣṇa's pleasure, then you will know that your rare human life is a success. You can trust that this itself is the full mercy of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Heartfelt anxiousness and desperation to perform *sādhana-bhajana* is particularly helpful on this path.

“Śrī Hari and *guru-pādapadma* are at every moment near us and propelling us forward.”

We have to always remember that we are never alone. When I think I am alone, then only am I fearful and without shelter. Śrī Hari and *guru-pādapadma* are at every moment near us and propelling us forward. If we can feel this, there remains no more cause for concern. That is why the *mahājana* has sung: "*Ātma-nivedana tuwā pade kari, hainu parama sukhī; duḥkha dūre gelo, cintā na rahilo, caudike ānanda dekhi*"²⁵³ – Having surrendered my soul at Your feet,

I have become supremely joyful. Sadness has gone far away, worries no longer remain, and I see bliss in all four directions.”

²⁵³ Śaraṇāgati, *Ātma-nivedana* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

If someone's mind gets disturbed, then by hearing *hari-kathā*, again, patience and enthusiasm return. There are many, many examples of this in scripture. Cultivating *śravaṇa* (hearing) through the classes, *kīrtanas*, lectures, etc. of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, even by means of a *saṁrakṣaṇa-yantra* (tape recorder) also yields the fruit of *sat-saṅga*. Though it is indirect, it gives results like that of the direct experience, much the way *nāmī* and *nāma* are identical. The person and their message are one – identical.

If one remembers *śrī nāma* constantly, one attains its real fruit or, in other words, direct *darśana*, or the proximity of *viṣṇu-jana-sevakas* [the associates or servants of Viṣṇu or the servants of the Vaiṣṇavas]. By performing *śrī nāma-kīrtana* at every moment, one becomes absorbed, and by that, it is possible to obtain the mercy of Śrī Nāmī. We accept food and water only after chanting *śrī guru* and Bhagavān's name. Their faithful followers' exclusive aspiration is to make offerings to them and accept only the remaining *mahā-prasāda*. Their mercy in the form of their writing (*lekhanī-prasāda*) also aids us in attaining real welfare.

Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 52

Fulfilling our duties in life depends on an unseen power • Birth and death are as insubstantial as a dream for those keen on performing *hari-bhajana* • The customary contamination period following a death in the family does not apply to initiated devotees • The *bhakta* never becomes distressed by worldly losses • The character of resilient *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Goloka-gaṇja Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Golakganj (Goyalpara) Assam
14/9/1979

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! I duly received your letters, which were dated 28/4/79 and 6/8/79, and became aware of the details. Later, the printed invitation card to the *pitṛ-śrāddha* (ancestral oblations) also came into my hands. If you do not send three or four letters, I do not have the chance to write even one and that too only after much effort. Nevertheless, you write letters and do not become deterred by these tests of your patience. This is your special virtue.

This time, on the 1st of Vaiśākha (at your place), what happened was like a sudden “twist of a cat’s fate” [meaning “an unexpected success”]. I too had never anticipated that fate would bring me there and that I would have the opportunity to partake of such wondrous *prasāda*. The pull of affection is most fearsome. Your anxiousness and desperation alone have maintained this connection; of that, there is no doubt. If someone prays for something from their heart, it surely comes true.

In material existence, guardians have and always will have feelings of concern. Those who accept responsibility are our mothers, fathers, and caretakers. In this material existence, however, is anyone capable of taking real responsibility and fulfilling their obligations to another person? Sons bid farewell to the world before their fathers do, and daughters before mothers. With situations like that, a person does not even get a chance to fulfil his or her responsibilities. Hence (in *samsāra*), all we do is haul the burden of our duties on our shoulders. The opportunity to fulfil them, however, rests on an unseen power. ...

I found your two letters to be very painful and heart-breaking. Surely you were all prepared for your father's final moments for quite some time. The fact that a calamity occurred is undoubtedly heartrending. In this world, no one can endure forever. “*Āji vā śateka varṣe avaśya maraṇa, niścinta nā thāko bhāi* – today or in a hundred days, death is certain, so do not live carefree, O brother.” This is the harsh reality and the ultimate lesson of this world. Though man knows this, he does not understand. Though he sees it, he does not see. At this time, you must certainly maintain your composure. In this material world, there is only one tradition and we have to carry on with that. Birth and death are our companions, our comrades, but for those keen on performing *hari-bhajana*, birth and death are temporary and as insubstantial as a dream. The soul has no death – this is the constant truth. Your father was religious, and he left his body fully conscious, so know he has attained a good destination. Thinking of Bhagavān at the final moment is the cause of an exalted destination. This is the sublime fruit of performing *sādhana-bhajana* all of one's life.

“For those keen on performing *hari-bhajana*, birth and death are temporary and as insubstantial as a dream.”

“*Doṣa pāoyā* – incurring contamination” [in the household when a family member dies] is a lesser conception, one belonging to *karma-kāṇḍa*. In the case of devotees, in the case of those who are *dīkṣita* (initiated), no such conception exists. I am delighted to know that *brahmacārīs* from the Navadvīpa *maṭha* came and conveyed their respects to your father more or less according to Vaiṣṇava *smṛti*, by bringing *mahā-prasāda*. You are to go on, always maintaining your composure. If you become upset, there will be inconvenience and adversity in *saṁsāra*.

The *bhakta*, or *sādhaka*, never makes worldly losses part of his spiritual life. *Sādhana-bhajana* is a separate affair, something built independently on one's own dignity. The *bhakta* never becomes distressed by worldly losses, nor does his strength of mind diminish. A weak person is unworthy of gaining Śrī Bhagavān's mercy. “*Nāyam ātmā bala-hīnena labhyaḥ*²⁵⁴ – the soul (the Supersoul, or Supreme Lord) is not obtained by one bereft of strength.” Earthly love and affection immerse the living entity in oceans of sorrow. *Bhagavat-prīti* (love of God) is the cause and means of a higher destination.

Life is already painful, and a woman's life perhaps has more suffering. This is because, due to social restrictions and attitudes, they must lead a very restrained life outwardly. However, “*gorār ācāra, gorār vicāra laile phala phale*²⁵⁵ – If one adopts Gaura's conduct and Gaura's

²⁵⁴ *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.1.4)

²⁵⁵ *Prema-vivarta*

conceptions, the fruit fructifies.” This is the chief teaching. If a human being is conscientious and proceeds with purity of thought and intelligence, then his spiritual welfare is inevitable. The world is moulded from scarcity and grievance. To be grounded in one’s nature amidst all of that is very difficult. Those who dwell in material existence and who can lead a life that is indifferent and free from attachments are resilient *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*. One must keep before oneself the prescribed ideal and advance along the path of *sādhana*. Patience and enthusiasm are the main components. ...

Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 53

Finding peace by envisioning *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • Surrendering one's mind and spirit is the best donation • Love cannot be revealed before everyone, nor can *bhajana* • *Guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are in our heart, so our prayers are always heard

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vāsudeva Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Basugaon (Goalpara), Assam
21/9/1979

Snehāspadāsu—

I received a letter from you many days ago. I should have replied to your kind letter much sooner. Forgive me for failing to reply in a timely fashion. Your piteous weeping rends everyone's heart. You wrote referring to yourself as my 'fallen daughter'. In the shower of your tears, even the heart of a stonehearted person such as myself is torn asunder. Śrī Bhagavān shall fulfil your heart's desires. Maintain powerful enthusiasm and forbearance within your heart. If you envision the smiling faces of *śrī gurudeva* and the Vaiṣṇavas and remember their instructions and teachings, you will find peace of mind at all times, in all circumstances.

I went to Kashinagar for the occasion of the deity installation, which was held on Akṣaya Tṛtīya, during the month of Vaiśākha [May]. At that time, there was no opportunity to converse with you properly; it seems that you have become dissatisfied with me because of that. I hope that you have understood the gravity of my situation then and have forgiven me. I presumed that perhaps you were angry with me and feeling indignant. But that notion was dispelled upon receiving your letter.

Because you always weep, I keep saying, to give you consolation, "O Mother, please do not cry. Śrī Bhagavān shall certainly bestow auspiciousness upon you. Do not be upset that you have no wealth or money and therefore cannot donate anything for service. Śrī Hari and *guru* are served through life force, intellect, words, and wealth. Those who do not have wealth

**"If you
envision the
smiling faces of
śrī gurudeva
and the
Vaiṣṇavas...
you will find
peace of mind
at all times."**

will serve with their words, intellect, and life force. To surrender one's mind and spirit to *śrī gurudeva* and Bhagavān is the most excellent donation, the greatest wealth. Only if you are able to cry anxiously for *śrī gurudeva* and Bhagavān shall you obtain the fruit of having offered everything to them. In that, your heart shall find joy and peace.

What you wrote is the truth: "In this world there is no one to call your own except for *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān." If we can make them our own, then only will our lives be successful, and all our efforts blessed. Therefore, the *mahājanas* have sung: "*tava nija-jana, parama bāndhava, saṁsāra kārāgāre*"²⁵⁶ – Your personal associates are our greatest friends in this jail-house of material existence." It is essential for us to have this realization from our core. Loving attachment cannot be revealed before everyone, as it is an exchange of hearts. It is for this reason that shedding tears in the presence of ordinary people often becomes cause for criticism and misunderstanding. Many find opportunity for cutting remarks, mockery, and the like. Therefore, specific instructions have been provided regarding proper time, place, and circumstance for performing *hari-bhajana*. As *śrī guru*, the Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are omniscient and present within the heart, they accept our moods and intentions. Therefore, our every cry, whether in front of them or out of their sight, truly reaches them. Śrī Bhagavān has sat down for His meal in Dvārakā, Rukmiṇī-devī is serving Him, but at that moment, from Vṛndāvana (Kāmyavana), the sound of Draupadī's cry reached Dvārakā over a thousand miles away.

You have written that 1979 was the year your money was squandered, and you even received the punishments of Yama-purī (city of death). As long as one has a body, there will be unhappiness, misery, sickness, disease, suffering, and torment. Perhaps you only went to the hospital because you had to. What you wrote is true: hospitals are like pits of hell, where you suffer only hellish torture. The stench makes it unbearable to breathe and people are dying and writhing in pain before your eyes. It is truly horrific! I understand that they even left you in the cold room. It was Śrī Bhagavān alone who protected you. You must never forget *śrī gurudeva* and Bhagavān, and you must faithfully perform *hari-bhajana*.

You have wanted to know whether your fortune will be like that of — and —. Though born to a wealthy family, what kind of service and *bhajana* are they performing? Meanwhile, your inner cries are staying just there, inside you. Is it not possible for someone without money to perform *hari-bhajana*? Why are you upset because you could not give me a donation this time? The anxious fervour of your heart is certainly felt by *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, who are

²⁵⁶ Ohe Premera Ṭhākura Gorā (6)

compassionate. Although you have no worldly wealth, Śrī Bhagavān will see how you are crying and bless you with supreme, transcendental wealth. There is no doubt about it.

I understand that, despite being my mother, you are not getting the chance to serve me by cooking for me with your own hands. I will come to your cottage and relish the *prasāda* cooked by your own hand. This hope of yours will be fulfilled. *Kīrtana* and class will be held in your home. Invite as many devotees as you can. Surely you will be able to feed eight to ten devotees. We will certainly come to your home and take *prasāda*. You have no worries. I am reassuring you. And please do not be angry with me for taking so long to reply. Without concern, without anxiety, chant *harināma*. Maintain a practice of studying a little of scripture, as time permits. Sing the songs of the *mahājanas*. Chant your *gāyatrī* at the three junctions of the day. We are honoured to be invited to the house of Vidurā to partake of the foodstuffs prepared by the hand of Vidurānī. We will be satisfied just by tasting your leafy greens and rice.

I will go with the party to Kashinagar around the 20th of this upcoming month of Pauṣa [December–January]. At that time, I will come to your house one day and take *prasāda*. Class, *kīrtana*, and so on will also be held there. For those who have no one else in this world, Śrī Bhagavan, *śrī guru*, and the Vaiṣṇavas are their only aid. Why have you written that you are unfortunate? Those men and women who immerse their minds in *hari-bhajana* by taking shelter of a bona fide *guru* are the fortunate ones. Their births are blessed and meaningful. Selfish, worldly people are forever criticizing devotees. You have nothing to gain or lose from that.

May my fallen daughters and my crazy sons continue to serve Śrī Hari in happiness and peace. The all-auspicious Śrī Bhagavān will certainly see to their welfare. Know that I will never be indifferent to your “waking late in the night and expressing in hints the incoherent nonsense of inner pain”. May Śrī Bhagavān grant me the intelligence to at least be able to consider the simplicity of your heart. What is of particular concern is that the son of a crazy mother and father does not become crazy in the end. If even after obtaining *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas as your sons you still feel childless, then you should accept the arrangement of making Śrī Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa Himself your son, because such a son will never die, nor will He cause you to weep. By accepting Śrī Bhagavān as our

**“By accepting
Śrī Bhagavān as our
mother and father,
our child and friend,
our husband and
our supreme master,
we will never have
to fall victim to
mundane sorrow
and delusion.”**

mother and father, our child and friend, our husband and our supreme master, we will never have to fall victim to mundane sorrow and delusion. So, know Him to be your one and only son. He will never be the cause of sorrow and suffering for you. ...

All of you, please accept my unlimited, affectionate blessings. We are doing okay. *Iti—*

Your ever well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 54

Instructions on chanting the holy name • The bliss derived from chanting cannot be explained to anyone • The mercy of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas is essential • The qualification to perform *nāma-kīrtana* • Praying to be absorbed in meditating on Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

% Śrī Madana-mohana Dāsādhikārī
Grāma+P.O. Barobisha (Jalpaiguri)
Śrī Śrī Viraha-tithi
5/10/1979

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! ... I hope that by the grace of Bhagavān you are all well. ... After leaving Śrī Meghālaya Maṭha with a party on 2/9/79, I went preaching in Dhubri, Gauripur, Golakganj, Bilasipara, Basugaon and other places, and then arrived at this address three or four days ago. From here, I will go preaching in Koch Bihar. I will be in Sapatgram on the 10th of Kārtika, then Golakganj. After that, on the 14th, I will go to Dhubri. From there, I will reach the Siliguri *maṭha* in the first week of Agrahāyaṇa-māsa [November–December] via Jalpaiguri, Maynaguri, and Mathabhanga. Afterwards, I will return to Navadvīpa by the first week of Pauṣa [January–February] via Chittaranjan, Asansol, and Bardhaman.

I am particularly delighted to know that you are chanting one lakh *nāma* [100,000 names, or 64 rounds] every day. You must put all manner of worldly tasks aside and chant one lakh daily, perform *pūjā* and *arcana* of the deity, study various sacred texts, and go to the *maṭha* to take advantage of hearing *śrī hari-kathā*. This is the special purpose of Kṛṣṇa's *samsāra*, Bhagavān's *samsāra*. Many believe that one lakh (*lakṣa*) of *nāma* means setting one's *lakṣya* (focus) and chanting. But that is a one-sided notion. Chanting a fixed amount of *śrī nāma* means chanting with a steady heart, crying and weeping anxiously. One must complete one's fixed number of rounds in that manner [with absorption]. Śrīman Mahāprabhu gave His devotees the instruction to chant one lakh *nāma* daily. Nāmācārya Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura used to chant three lakh of *nāma* daily. The six Gosvāmīs and the *ācāryas*

**“Chanting a
fixed amount
of *śrī nāma*
means
chanting with
a steady heart,
crying and
weeping.”**

under their guidance have all put importance on *śrī nāma-japa*. This is *sādhana-bhajana*, a part of *abhyāsa-yoga*. If one utters *śuddha-nāma* (the pure holy name) with a tongue composed of pure consciousness, then one obtains direct audience of *nāmī* Parabrahma Śrī Bhagavān and the qualification to serve Him directly. At first, when the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* still have *anarthas*, they cannot chant *śuddha-nāma* as they keep chanting *nāma-aparādha*. But if they keep chanting like that in a manner that is full of attachment, then they obtain *nāmābhāsa*, and later, *śuddha-nāma* manifests in their hearts. Whether or not you are chanting *śuddha-nāma* is something you will be able to realize yourself at some point.

When eating, it is not appropriate to ask if your stomach is full or not, because by eating, your stomach fills up, and if you do not eat properly, your stomach stays hungry. You don't need to explain to everyone, though, exactly how you fill your stomach. Just as a person who is eating experiences satisfaction, nourishment, and the alleviation of hunger with every morsel, only the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* can experience and realize within their heart the bliss they are deriving from chanting *śrī nāma*. It is not possible to explain this to anyone.

Besides the mercy of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, there is no other route by which we will attain our ultimate auspiciousness. This is why it is has been said in invocation: “*hari-guru-vaiṣṇava—tinera smaraṇa, tinera smaraṇe haya vighna-vināśana*”²⁵⁷ – by remembering Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, all obstacles are destroyed.” “*Tasmāt sarva-prayatnena gurum-eva prasādayet*”²⁵⁸ – in all endeavours, one must aim to please *guru*.” “*Chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā,*

“The qualification for mercy is simplicity, an absence of duplicity.” *nistāra peyeche kebā?*²⁵⁹ – Who has ever attained deliverance by abandoning the service of the devotees?” By any means, we must become illuminated in the service and merciful gaze of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas and absorb our minds in *bhajana* of Kṛṣṇa – “*yena kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet*”²⁶⁰. This is the quintessence. If we gain the mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, we gain success in *sādhana-bhajana*. The qualification for mercy is simplicity, an absence of duplicity. “*Yogyatā vicāre, kichu nāhi pai, tomāra karuṇā sāra; karuṇā nā haile, kāḍiyā kāḍiyā, prāṇa nā rākhibo āra*”²⁶¹ – In considering my qualifications, I find nothing. Your mercy is essential. If you are not merciful to me, weeping and weeping, I will no longer maintain my

²⁵⁷ See Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.21)

²⁵⁸ Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (4.360)

²⁵⁹ Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

²⁶⁰ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.1.32)

²⁶¹ Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Kṛpā-bindu Diyā (7) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

life.” This sort of humility is what grants the qualification to attain mercy. Knowingly and unknowingly, we commit so many types of mistakes, errors, offences, and wrongs towards *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. However: “*tomā sthāne aparādha—tumi karo kṣaya*²⁶² – You expunge offences committed to You.” Besides this prayer, we have no other recourse. Giving satisfaction to *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is service, and that is *bhajana-sādhana*. Only if we obtain their causelessly merciful glance will our condition of material existence dissipate and the attainment of *bhagavad-bhakti* or *bhagavat-prema* be possible.

**“Giving
satisfaction to
śrī guru and
Vaiṣṇavas is
service, and
that is *bhajana-
sādhana*.”**

If you understand that humility is the ornament or decoration of the Vaiṣṇava, or *bhakta*, then someday you will be able to abandon pride and mundane ego. There are four qualities that are absolutely necessary to obtain the qualification to perform *śrī nāma-kīrtana*: “*dainya, dayā, anye māna, pratiṣṭhā-varjana, cāri-guṇe guṇī hai karaḥo kīrtana*²⁶³ – endowed with the qualities of humility, compassion, respect for others, and shunning prestige, perform *kīrtana*.” In the conditioned state, in the material existence wrought by *māyā*, we simply must tolerate blow after blow. In the midst of that, the idea “I came to this world to worship Kṛṣṇa – *kṛṣṇa-bhajibāra tare saṁsāre āinu*²⁶⁴ will transport us to our real objective. You have heard so much *hari-kathā* from the Vaiṣṇavas, which is why you have written such beautiful *tattva-siddhānta*. If you do not hear, how will you do *kīrtana*? When I come to know *hari-kathā*, then I will be able to write you something. Even now I have not come to know, learn, and understand it. Once that concludes, there will be no purpose in conversing with all of you. Then, silently, with eyes closed, I will remain absorbed in meditation on Śrī Rādhā-Govinda.

Convey to me and tell me in a simple manner, without hesitation, all of your joys and sorrows. That way, your burdened heart will become light. You will be able to perform *śrī nāma* without concerns. Then you will genuinely be able to sing: “*saṁsāra phukāra, kāṇe na paṣibe, deha-roga dūre rabe*²⁶⁵ – the call of material existence will not enter my ears, and the disease of this body will remain far away.”

Accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁶² *Śaraṇāgati, Nivedana Kori Prabhu!* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

²⁶³ *Gītāvalī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kīrtane Jādī* (7) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

²⁶⁴ *Śrī Kṛṣṇer Aṣṭottara-śata-nāma* (5) by Dvīja Haridāsa

²⁶⁵ *Śaraṇāgati, Gurudevā! Kabe More Sei Dina Habe* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 55

The power of living in the *dhāma* • Being embarrassed about receiving worship • Real *pratiṣṭhā* is being a devoted disciple

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Keśava Gosvāmī Gauḍīya Maṭha
Shaktigarh, P.O. Siliguri (Darjeeling)
13/12/1979

Snehāspadāsu,

Mā Umā! “*Bhramibo dvādaśa vane, rasa-keli je je sthāne, premāveśe gaḍāgaḍi diyā; śudhāibo jane jane, vraja-vāsi-gaṇa sthāne, nivedibo caraṇe dhariyā*²⁶⁶ – I will roam the twelve forests, and wherever the Lord’s loving pastimes took place, I will roll in the dust in the rapture of divine love. I will enquire from all the Vrajavāsīs [about the pastimes that took place there] and supplicate myself before them, clutching their feet.”

Though the exalted, eternally perfected souls want for nothing, they pray in this manner so that conditioned souls may be liberated from bondage. The importance and influence of time, place, and subject must surely be taken into account. Although one cannot appreciate the pure transcendence of the Lord’s pastimes in the preliminary stages, one who is of pure heart will obtain a glimpse of the divine *śrī dhāma*’s true form. The speciality of the *dhāma* is that it establishes even those who are unworthy in their respective spiritual qualifications. As one understands the forests of Gauḍa and Vraja to be identical, one gains the eligibility to live within *śrī dhāma* and comes to realize its transcendence and its true form. The pinnacle of all achievement is to attain service to the youthful couple of Vraja, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, under the guidance of Their beloved maidservants. ...

Prior to last year’s Dola festival, I reviewed and submitted several proofs of *Śrī Caitanya-pañjikā*. None of the proofs for the month of *Agrahāyaṇa* [December–January] and onwards were shown to me. Suddenly, one day, Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja said, “Your appearance

²⁶⁶ *Prārthanā, Hari Hari! Āra Kabe Pālāṭibe Daśā* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

day has been included in the calendar this time.” I could not be very pleased to hear this and come to know of it because, personally, during my *guru-vargas*’ presence and [also] in their absence, I never, in my heart, craved profit, adoration, or prestige. Many people think it seems like I have requested and made this arrangement. But I am completely opposed to mentioning my date of birth like this. “*Āmi to vaiṣṇava, ei buddhi haile, amānī nā ha’bo āmi; pratiṣṭhāsā āsi’, hṛdaya dūṣibe, haibo niraya-gāmī* – If I think ‘I am a Vaiṣṇava’, I will never become free from the desire for respect. The desire for prestige will come and soil my heart and I will be set on the path to hell. “*Nija śreṣṭha jāni’, ucchiṣṭādi-dāne, ha’be abhimāna bhāra, tāi śiṣya tava thākiyā sarvadā, nā laibo pūjā kāra*²⁶⁷ – If I think myself superior and allow others to take my remnants, I will become weighted down by arrogance. Therefore, I seek to remain your disciple forever and not accept worship from anyone.” This *pratiṣṭhā* [or being established in the position of being a devoted disciple] is, by Śrī Guru-pādapadma’s causeless mercy, what I maintain the honest courage to safeguard.

Though you all feel reverence for me in a variety of ways, personally, I feel embarrassed by it. I will not be able to make you understand this. However, surely it is necessary that I too have a sort of independence in my own thoughts. May Śrī Bhagavān bless you with auspiciousness. May He grant you all enthusiasm in *bhajana* and faith in *bhakti*. Your forbearance and tolerance will surely situate you at the height of honour. Routine study of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Jaiva-dharma*, *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi* and other such holy literatures is essential. Do not forget to always take advantage of the opportunity to hear *hari-kathā*. Perform *pūjārcana* (deity worship) according to your capacity. It is best to chant a lakh of *śrī nāma*. I know that you are very committed in this regard. But do keep in mind one thing: it is also necessary to get adequate rest. If you do not, your *sādhana-bhajana* will be crippled by poor health. ... *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁶⁷ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru*, *Kṛpā Karo Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura* (2, 4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 56

Requirements on the paths of *bhajana* and life • Who are our real relatives and who are real human beings?

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
8/1/1980

Snehāspadāsu—

——, if the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* weeps pitifully, *śrī guru* and Bhagavān surely respond. There is no cause for any doubt in this regard. The teachings and instructions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are certainly the provisions and resources we need on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*. In order to walk the path of life, copious amounts of patience, enthusiasm, and tolerance are necessary. If we do not have those things, there is no possibility of our attaining real auspiciousness. You

“In order to walk the path of life, copious amounts of patience, enthusiasm, and tolerance are necessary.”

are my crazy mother, and therefore, for you, I must go to some trouble.

Only you, Mother, can say for sure whether or not your tears have become the ink for my pen. I count two letters I wrote to —— and one letter to you. Does this mean I have more affection for one of you than the other? The lives of those who engage in *hari-bhajana* are truly blessed. Never lose your determination. This is my special request. ...

Those who love Śrī Bhagavān are not ordinary men and women, as they are not compelled by mundane lusts and wants and obsessions with various dualities. Their *saṁsāra* is centred solely around Śrī Bhagavān. *Śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are the objects of their love; that is whom they consider their only wealth and their near and dear relatives. The people of the world are *svajanākhyā dasyu* (robbers and rogues calling themselves your family). They do not understand what the welfare of the soul is. Individuals who are opposed to performing *hari-bhajana* are ignorant and suicidal. There is none more pitiful than them in all the world. Those who think that eating, dressing nicely, and living comfortably is all there is to *saṁsāra* are *ku-karmī* (vile doers) and *karma-jāda* (dulled by action); they are referred to as two-legged animals or are even regarded as more degraded than animals. Those who perform *bhajana* of Hari are real men and women, real human beings. ... *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 57

Real service is giving one's love • You do not need wealth to chant *harināma*; you need patience, enthusiasm, faith, determination, and devotion • Practical instructions on education • The drawback of European instruments • Duties in the month of Kārtika

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O.—Navadvīpa (Nadia), W. B.
8/1/1980

Snehāspadeṣu—

You wrote: “How much longer will I have to suffer?” True and proper service to Hari is accomplished by giving the love you have inside, and *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are always exceedingly satisfied with that. Those who have wealth serve by that means, and those who do not have wealth will serve with their lives, intelligence, and words. This has been delineated in scripture.

If you do not have books and whatnot, I will provide you with them. You do not need wealth to chant *harināma* and hear *hari-kathā*. What is needed for that is patience, enthusiasm, faith, determination, and devotion. That way one can properly associate with *sādhus* and engage in *nāma-kīrtana* and the other five predominant limbs [of *bhakti*].

I am happy to know you are now studying in twelfth grade. In the future, ultimate well-being (*kalyāṇa*) will be yours. Your studies and classes will prove very beneficial when you have to deal with the pressures of further studies and employment. This is because “no one gets happiness in this world without suffering, do they?” And “You will only find Keṣṭa (Kṛṣṇa) if you undergo a bit of *kaṣṭa* (suffering).” Only that which is earned through struggle endures forever.

“*Saṅgīta-carṇā-dvārā prabhu ānanda-vidhāna-pūrvaka kārtika-māsa jāpana karibe* – one should spend the month of Kārtika delighting the Lord with musical recitations.” This statement instructs us to dance, sing, and play instruments before Śrī Bhagavān during this time. That, without a doubt, constitutes service to Him, and it is by such activity that one avoids rebirth. It is taught that *mṛdaṅga* drums, *mañjirā* and *karatāla* cymbals, conchshells, bells, gongs, etc.

**“You will only
find Keṣṭa
(Kṛṣṇa) if
you undergo
a bit of *kaṣṭa*
(suffering).”**

are to be used by Vaiṣṇavas. Foreign instruments have *rājasika* and *tāmasika* qualities that make them *tauryatrika*²⁶⁸. They have an intoxicating quality, and that is part of pleasure and sport. Distributing *mahā-prasāda* and accepting it certainly effects the welfare of the soul and conquers the senses. “*Mahā-prasāda sevā karite haya, sakala prapañca jaya*”²⁶⁹ – When one serves *mahā-prasāda*, all this bondage of material existence is vanquished.” Only those who are able will donate rice and they can donate ghee and camphor for offering lamps. If the living entity does not hear *hari-kathā* and take *darśana* of Vaiṣṇavas, he meets with the opposite of well-being. That is what is conveyed in *Kārtika-mahātmya*. One must take birth in animal species if one does not perform *bhajana* of Hari. It has been determined that during the month of Kārtika, one should observe *go-grāsa*, which means putting one’s meal on the dirt or cement and eating it from there. This directive is especially for renunciates. ... *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

.....
²⁶⁸ *Tauryatrika* – *tūrya* (musical instrument) + *tri* (three) – refers to the “musical triad” of song, dance, and instrumental music. *Manu-smṛti* (7.50) lists *tauryatrika* along with hunting, gambling, sleeping during the day, engaging in criticism, illicit sex, intoxication, and listless wandering as activities born of lust or a craving for pleasure (*kāmaja*). *Kīrtana* that is not performed exclusively for the pleasure of Śrī Bhagavān, but for one’s own sense gratification, culminating in a partying mood, falls in this category.

²⁶⁹ *Śaraṇāgati, Śuddhā-bhakata* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 58

Adopting the temple as one's own • A comparative analysis of *goṣṭhānandīs* and *bhajanānandīs* • There is life in giving oneself to service and preaching • The importance of guidance and expertise in frugality in service

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
Orissa
7/8/1980

Snehāspadeṣu—

Today I received your letter dated 5/8/80. As soon as you went there, Śrī Nṛsimha came here. You are new there, so it is natural for you to experience some inconvenience. Practice performing *arcana* of the deity properly. Learn that well from Harijana Mahārāja. If he shows you for a few days, you will be able to grasp it well yourself.

Besides deity worship, do as many small, miscellaneous services as you think possible for you. If you cannot adopt the *maṭha-mandira* as your own, then you cannot execute your service properly. When that pull and attachment comes for every object in the *maṭha*, then only will you be worthy of the title of *sevaka*. The *dharma* of the *sevaka* is not just to fulfil his duties. That [mentality] has a *rājasika* mood to it and the give-and-take of this earthly realm. Real service is the work the *sevaka* sets his mind to in the *maṭha* of his own will for the pleasure of Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. There is life in that. To make his life about *sevā* constitutes the main characteristic of a *sevaka*.

**“Real service
is the work
the *sevaka*
sets his mind
to of his
own will.”**

True *sevakas* are of two kinds: the first lives in the *maṭha-mandira* and takes direct responsibility for the service of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, while the second kind bears the responsibility for preaching *bhagavat-bhāgavat-mahimā* (the glories of the Lord and His devotees) from door to door throughout the world. It is a difficult task to determine which of these two types of *sevakas* is greater and which is lesser. According to the impartial view of scripture, *bhajanānandīs* and *goṣṭhānandīs* are both equally engaged in benefiting others. Prahlāda Mahārāja has noted that the latter of these two is more empathetic and magnanimous, and he

has pointed out that the first group is comparatively less magnanimous in their dedication to the benefit of others. From the perspective of *sādhana-bhajana*, neither of these is less than the other. Hence, comparatively speaking, *ācāra* (practice) and *pracāra* (preaching) are said to be part of the same category. *Jagad-guru* Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained: “*prāṇa āche tāra, se hetu pracāra, pratiṣṭhāśā-hīna kṛṣṇa-gāthā saba*²⁷⁰ – Because they [the Vrajavāsīs] are infused with life, they preach. They have no desire for mundane prestige in their glorification of Kṛṣṇa.” Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has also written: “*ācāra pracāra nāmer karaḥo dui kārya, tumi sarva guru tumi jagatera ārya*²⁷¹ – You practice and preach the holy name, so you are a world teacher, venerable for all the world.” A reconciliation of both sides of all these various considerations can be determined.

Stay near Mahārāja as if you were a young boy and learn how to serve as in an apprenticeship. Then, later on, your expertise in the tasks of service will reveal itself. *Vaiṣṇava-dharma* is the *dharma* of being under guidance. If you have the guidance of Vaiṣṇavas, then everything is yours, and if you are bereft of that guidance, then “*śūnya granthi añcale bandhana* – you have simply tied empty knots in your shawl.” If you can act according to the Vaiṣṇavas’ wishes, you will gain the true welfare of the soul. The ability to continue service expertly even amid scarcity and poverty is characteristic of intelligence. The service of feeding and decorating the deities has to be done as prescribed, because *sevā* is established with the central focus of service to *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and the deities. The *sevaka*’s skill reveals itself in doing the service nicely with little money. The *sevaka* must pay special attention so that nothing that is used in the service of the *maṭha* is wasted.

When you cannot understand the right thing to do in any given service, then ask in a calm and collected manner and find out. Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁷⁰ Duṣṭa Manal Tumi Kisera Vaiṣṇava? (18)

²⁷¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.103)

Letter 59

Praising the tranquillity of Baidyanath and *parikramā* with Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja • Performing *parikramā* of Vraja unseen on the transcendental plane, but still hoping for direct *darśana* in Navadvīpa

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

% Śrī Bālānanda Āśrama
“Santosh Ashram” P.O. Ashram
Karanibara
B. Deoghar (S.P.) Bihar,
28/12/1980

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! Your inland letter of 27/11/80 arrived on time at the Kolkata address. It has been three or four days since I have received this letter here. On 6/12/80, we travelled from Sealdah on the Muzaffarpur Fast Passenger train via Jesidi Junction and arrived in Baidyanath, Deoghar. I have come for two months for a bit of a change. I have rented a house named Santosh Ashram for two hundred rupees a month. This house is in the middle of Śrī Bālānanda Āśrama. It is a very secluded, pleasant, and peaceful environment. All around are temples and gardens of fruits, flowers, and vegetables. I have come to like the place very much. I feel it is very conducive to *sādhana-bhajana*.

I was delighted to know you performed proper *parikramā* and had *darśana* of Śrī Mathurā, Vṛndāvana, and other sites. I gather that Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja took on a fair bit of trouble for you. I was delighted beyond measure to know that he did not let you feel my absence. I would say it is because you performed *parikramā* without any worries that I have quickly regained my health. If you had not gone on *parikramā*, then I would have been heartbroken. I would have thought that you did not go just because of me. ... If you can perform *hari-bhajana* without any worries then my mind can be at peace.

From what you prayed for in Kāmyavana, it seems as if I was not with you. However, I was, as usual, present with you as you went on *vana-parikramā* (pilgrimage of the forests) and had various *darśanas*. I cannot understand why you could not detect my presence. If you had tried, you would have been able to see me with you. Sitting in Kolkata, I performed *parikramā* of Vṛndāvana by mind and had various *darśanas*. Śrī Gaura-gopāla's *vijaya-vigraha* was with

me, and the Vaiṣṇavas and Vaiṣṇavīs were following. Regardless, when you have developed the desire to go on Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* again in the association of *praṇayi-bhaktas* (loving devotees), Śrī Bhagavān will surely fulfil it. When I am your everything, then surely it is only right that your heart's desires be fulfilled, and so they will be.

I am well at present. You are not to worry for me anymore. Now has come the time for me to worry about you. ... You will see me in good health in Navadvīpa for Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā. I am also hoping I will be healthy for Śrī Dhāma Navadvīpa *parikramā* as well. During the last *parikramā*, I could not go anywhere. I did not even have the fortune of having *darśana* of Śrī Dhāma Māyāpura. This time I hope to have *darśana*. It is not good to have too much hope to start with, because the fear is that “man proposes, God disposes”. ... Please accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 60

Praises of Baidyanath and surrounding area • How to deal with physical illness • The fortune of associating with Vaiṣṇavas • Śrīla Mahārāja’s natural humility • Assertions of individual free will in a political situation • Unheeded warnings about taking on the service of deities • Harsh words about a devious *pūjārī*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Bālānanda Āśrama

“Santosh Ashram”

P.O.—Ashram Karanibara, Deoghar
(Bihar)

14/1/1981

Śrī vaiṣṇava-carāṇe daṇḍavan-nati pūrvikēyam—

—— Prabho! I just received here your international letter dated 9/1/81. Prior to this, while I was in Purī-dhāma, I also received the letter you sent on the 31st of Śrāvaṇa (16/8/80). At the time, my body was ill so I was not able to reply to your letter. Do forgive me for that.

After consulting with my doctor, ——, and ——, I have come to Baidyanath-Deoghar on 6/12/80 for a change of climate. Since I came here, I have been quite well. I am taking medicine regularly, taking *prasāda*, and taking rest. I have not written a letter in a long time, and now that I am writing one or two letters, I see that I have fallen out of practice.

The water and air in Baidyanath-Deoghar is very healing. The natural scenery is also very enchanting. We have rented a house named “Santosh Ashram” from the management of Śrī Bālānanda Āśrama for a monthly 200 rupees. The environment in the *āśrama* is very beautiful. In all four directions, temples, ponds, gardens of fruits, flowers, and vegetables have enhanced the beauty of the *āśrama*. Vaidyanāthajī of Deoghar is a holy place famously mentioned in the *Śiva Purāṇa*. Not too far away, about thirty-five to forty miles, and especially worthy of seeing, is Śrī Madhusūdanajī atop Māndāra Mountain. This is where the churning of the ocean took place.

I am very sad to find out that you have been attacked by typhoid and that Dīdī was so sick that she was losing consciousness. I hope the both of you have since recovered. May Śrī Bhagavān keep you healthy and may you remain absorbed in *hari-bhajana* without any worries.

The perils of material existence have been and always will be there. “*Mana-sthira kari*’, *nirjane bosiyā*, *kṛṣṇa-nāma gābo jabe*; *saṁsāra-phukārā*, *kāṇe nā paśibe*, *deha-roga dūre rabe*²⁷² – when I can steady the mind, sitting in a solitary place, and sing the name of Kṛṣṇa, then the call of material existence will not enter my ears, and the afflictions of the body will remain far away.” What you wrote is true: “Whatever occurs in worldly affairs, let it be. Whatever is going to happen, let it happen. Beholding the pure Vaiṣṇavas and touching them, etc. is the only thing that brings auspiciousness to the conditioned soul.”

You two will never be cheated of the association of Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīpāda — Mahārāja and various other pure-hearted Vaiṣṇavas frequent where you are. This is a matter of great good fortune. You two have received the special mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas, so there is no reason for you to have any worries. It is true that the supremely merciful Vaiṣṇavas appear on the doorsteps of those immersed in family life in order to deliver and protect them from the blind well of family life. Their merciful glance is surely directed towards the souls of this world. ...

You have written: “How long will it be till we see you again? I do not want to be cheated of Vaiṣṇava association in any way in this life. I am a *gṛhamedhī*. I have no qualification. Though we have committed hundreds of offences, out of mercy, please forgive us. I do not have proper knowledge of language. I do not even have the qualification to write properly. All I wish for is that we attain your mercy and that your merciful gaze stays upon us.” Only you can judge whether or not what you wrote me was accurate. Am I your superior, your custodian, or judge? I have never considered myself as such, nor do I now. So, leave me out of this matter and do forgive me. You cannot recognize who I am. That is what is sad! I never make Vaiṣṇavas accountable to me, and I have no desire to do so. I am involved in the *maṭha* mission, and, as per the rules, I am bound to do something. I specially request you to kindly not take offence.

They have invited me to go to Kashinagar. Is it not possible to go without invitation? Am I the only one who has lost my independence as an individual, so much so that I cannot tread a path in that direction? Whenever I get the chance and convenience and have a need to, I will go right then. I have a sort of personal independence and viewpoint, which even my people in the *maṭha* mission do not know about, and I do not let anyone know about it.

I have repeatedly obstructed your efforts to establish your temple in Kashinagar because I knew that after a few days, you would meet with the dilemma of rendering proper *sevā-pūjā* (service and worship). Śrī Vedānta Samiti is not going to take on this homestead temple. I already explained this to you, so you would know beforehand. But you do not really listen to

²⁷² *Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Kabe Mora Sei Dina Habe* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

what I say, and now you are stuck in a difficult situation. Now, as I said, it is quite inconvenient. You cannot abandon Ṭhākura's *sevā-pūjā* to go anywhere for even one or two days. And you cannot even fathom how much more inconvenience you would be dealing with if you were actually doing the *sevā-pūjā* yourself, with your own hands!

I have not seen your [book] *Bhakti-gīti* before. When I received [for my approval] the submission from the *Patrikā* office, all I did was tell you exactly what you needed to do [to correct it]. Some objections have come, and that is precisely why we [the *Patrikā* team] have had to take certain measures. It certainly is and will remain my responsibility to see that no one finds fault in you and also to make sure that you do not create any sort of inconvenience for the mission, knowingly or unknowingly. I have written to Śrīpāda — Mahārāja and — to bring the rest of the copies of *Bhakti-gīti* on the day of Śrīla Guru Mahārāja's disappearance festival. I heard you perhaps sent a single copy of the book to the [*Patrikā*] office via someone. When you yourself were present, was it not proper for you to deliver them with your own hands? In the future, though, please do not print this book again. This too is my special request.

I submit one more matter to you. I have heard that —, who abandoned the Śrī Vedānta Samiti *maṭha*, has at present left his saffron cloth and is working as a *pūjārī* at your place. He can leave the *maṭha* and go home and enter family life, but I have not been able to understand whose permission you received to keep him there. Is this how you are going to stay on good terms with the *maṭha*? He could not find work in Belgachi at a tile factory, so it would be best if you did not keep him there. That sort of arrogant, convenience-seeking, and whimsical person can never find auspiciousness. If you let him go from your temple, I will be free of concern. I will not have a chance or the time to go to Kashinagar before Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā. I still want to go one time later.

For at least three months, from January onwards, I am forbidden to give classes and lead *kīrtana*. So, if I go, I will have no option but to just remain seated. Please accept my prostrated obeisances. Convey my affectionate wishes and blessings to everyone there. *Iti—*

Vaiṣṇava-dāsa-abhāsa,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 61

Heartbreak at the passing of Śrīmān Sundarānanda Prabhu • The soulful service of Śrīmān Sundarānanda Prabhu • Memorial services for him

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha,
Tegharipara, P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
12/10/1982

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear ——! I received your letter of 29/9/82 upon returning from Kolkata on 7/10/82. Sitting in the Kolkata *maṭha*, I tried two or three times to write you a letter, but could not, the cause of which only you can understand. I wonder who forbade giving me the news, but I have come to know. Mā went to Kolkata and came to know of that awful news.

I am very unfortunate, otherwise I would have been present for a final sight of my dear Śrīmān Sundarānanda! I trust you too were robbed of your composure and at a loss of what to do at such a sight. If, after falling ill and going through treatment, a child were to eventually pass on, it would not cause as much sorrow and heartbreak as this. It was such a traumatic incident, and all in a matter of one or two minutes. My heart is still in shock to this day. I cannot seem to forget about Śrīmān at all.

When I was staying in Purī and was in the worst of health, he spent night after night sleepless, weeping by my side. Even when I forbade him, he fell at my feet and, in a choked voice, repeatedly made oaths to Supersoul, saying: “O Bhagavān! Make my master well again. I cannot tolerate his suffering. Give him my longevity.” When I heard him making statements of this sort, I chastised him mildly, and told him that was no way to talk. But he himself has managed to cut his lifespan short. “I will go before you.” This was Śrīmān’s vow. And Śrī Bhagavān fulfilled his wish. The son has gone in the presence of the father. Is this like Nāmācārya Śrī Haridāsa Ṭhākura’s vow and respectful demand? To this day I cannot understand why Śrī Bhagavān gives this kind of affection and attachment and bewilders us. What is the lesson in this? In Śrīmān’s absence, today, the mission’s *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* are numb with grief, and the *gṛhasthas* are speechless at the news. “*Ākāśa kānde, vātāsa kānde, kānde taru-latā* – the sky cries, the air cries, the trees and creepers cry.” I have become a stone. I have no way to cry. I never thought, even in dreams, that I would have to endure such

intolerable sorrow as that of losing a child. Even those with no *samsāra* have to experience the burn of *samsāra*! Śrī Bhagavān! May Your wishes be fulfilled. Only the Supersoul can properly know what is good and bad for the living entity. His profound pastimes are a burden to fathom.

I came to Navadvīpa on 25/9/82. Śrīmān's memorial festival was on 26/9/82 and there was a memorial assembly that night. Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja and others were especially overwhelmed during their speeches. Everyone shared the same words: "We will not find another devotee with such conviction in the service of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas." There were memorial festivals in Siliguri, Meghalaya, Mathurā, Kolkata, and various other preaching centres.

In the shade of your affection, I am somewhat well. If you make it your duty to become well, then I will be worry-free and happy. You are not going to cheat me like Sundarānanda, are you? Even now I cannot begin to write a proper memoir, as my mind is so agitated and numb. Accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana



Śrīmān Sundarānanda Brahmācārī

Letter 62

The eternal service of Śrīmān Sundarānanda Prabhu • Like Bhagavān, the *bhaktas* are controlled by love • The true servant conquers the heart of his master with love • The servant is honoured and cherished • Awareness of one's true relationship with another enables an eternal connection with them • Glorifying the sacrifice of motherhood to mediate between a mother and daughter

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tegharipara, Navadvīpa (Nadia)
1/12/1982

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! I promptly received your affectionate letter dated 2/10/82. I gather that my previous letter gave you mental anguish and disturbed you. I was worried about that when I was writing that letter full of such sad news. But if I had not informed you of this pressing news, I would have been biding my days in extreme unease. In revealing that to you, I have tried to lighten my heart somewhat. You are a loving mother, which is why I have sought solace from you. I have somewhat found that solace in this present affectionate letter of yours.

Mother! Though you were delighted to see your son that day, it broke your heart to see his face downcast in the pain of loss. Surely this is very natural for such a loving mother as you. How the servant has brought the master under his control by his service, wherefore the master is overwhelmed and agitated in separation from the servant. Coming to know that you could perceive this too has made me indebted to you. While you adored Śrīmān Sundarānanda and he was the object of your special affection, you have also expressed the utmost regard for him, which is telling of your natural benevolence. What good fortune resulting from service Śrīmān has attained, to be like a shadow, rendering service that is deeply rooted in love, guarding and taking care of the object of his service, maintaining that connection for all time, even today, in both visible and invisible ways, through his absorption in service? This is something you have tangible realization of. Your firm conviction is that he has donned a form appropriate for his service and is present with his master. May this conviction of yours be efficacious and become

a reality. Although today you all cannot see him in person, his is a fortune exclusively yearned for by genuine, intimate *sevakas* and *sevikās* of *guru*. Of this, there is no doubt.

You described an incident from Śrī Bhagavān's pastimes in Dvārakā as an example. As Śrī Bhagavān's conduct does not entail mundane predilections, His weeping is not a material affair like the wailing of a conditioned soul caught in the grip of illusion. Nothing that is related to Bhagavān, who is beyond the senses, can be measured by the material senses, as that would be but an attempt at exerting material control. "*Vaiṣṇavera kriyā mudrā vijñe nā bujhaya*"²⁷³ – learned men cannot fathom the gestures and activities of the Vaiṣṇavas." The same applies to *śrī guru*. This statement is so true and, being the word of scripture, is full of pertinent import. Although, like Śrī Bhagavān, the *bhaktas* are completely independent, they become dependent by service. In other words, they adore their servants. The servant makes his master his own through intimate, loving service, and the master, out of loving mercy, also makes the servant his. This relationship between master and servitor, or the object of service and the servant, is eternal, as it is this *sambandha-jñāna* that perfectly establishes both in the eternal inner *darśana*.

"The servant makes his master his own through intimate, loving service, and the master, out of loving mercy, also makes the servant his."

Śrī *guru-pādapadma* is the all-in-all of those who have taken shelter of him, the life of their lives. He who expresses the pinnacle of service in all forms and manners is truly a *viśrambha* (intimate) or *snigdha* (loving) *sevaka*. He who can give his master so much love through service that he conquers the heart of his master is deemed a true *sevaka*. "*Gurur sevaka haya mānya apanāra* – the servant of one's *guru* is venerable to oneself." This is applicable to all types of *sevakas*, whether *kaniṣṭha* (neophyte) or *viśrambha* (intimate), though considerations of varying qualifications in regard to *sādhana-bhajana* are surely to be taken into account. Some are recipients of affection from certain people, whereas others are objects of service.

The servant, being "*parama ādaraṇīya jīvana-svarūpa* – supremely adored and dearer than one's life" is cherished and venerated, for he is the recipient of love and affection. There is no room for misunderstanding in such a dynamic, and so the notion of *aparādha* cannot even interfere. Dedicated service, simplicity, amiability, and other such heart-winning behaviours enchant absolutely everyone. These are the special qualities of the *sevaka*. The love-besmeared

²⁷³ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 23.39)

and laughing faces of those who are beloved, as well as their loving words, which permeate their sweet dealings, conquer each and everyone's heart, while the opposite sort of temperament, that of anguish, sorrow, and grief, impairs people's hearts.

Too often, the living entities' mental goals and ambitions find no refuge and fade into the material creation, but if they find a genuine connection, their ambitions meet with a response. If both parties are cognizant of their true relationship, then it is possible to maintain the connection between them. Only then does *milana* (meeting) and *viraha* (separation) really become a matter of experience.

A daughter has feelings like attachment, tolerance, anger, and jealousy. For her loving mother, affection, hopes, compassion, tenderness, possessiveness, love, fondness, blessings, pride, and ego are natural. The daughter needs and seeks love, and the mother is the giver of that love, keen on her daughter's well-being and showering her with blessings. So, if you consider each other's natural disposition, it is possible to achieve reconciliation. Another thing to consider is that these dispositions are a matter of inner realization and experience; they are spontaneous and in accord with the living entities' souls. No one must decide who has what *adhikāra* (right, authority). That is something realized spontaneously in the heart. For the doting mother, pride and ego are natural. A mother can never give up on her dependents, and the fact that she held them in her womb speaks of her endurance. Why would someone who has accepted sorrow and pain as her duty lose her patience? To label her an undiscerning mother would be a denial of truth and would amount to being ungrateful. To forgive such a foolish child is a mother's natural compulsion and characteristic of her love.

A mother and son can have a lot of discussion and questions and answers. It can also take a long time to test the relationship. But everything depends on the loving mother's compassion. Kindness, proper direction, and instruction are also certainly necessary. If the mother blesses her child with her heart and soul, the son will never become conceited. If we make it our life's vow to yearn for the service of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas with the natural and simple propensity of our hearts, then we can never meet with peril and misfortune. This I firmly believe. Who is going to bless whom? A qualified person can bless only a wretched, destitute, unworthy person. [One who is not wretched does not need blessing.] So, if the mother is capable of blessing the love-hungry son, then the

**“If we make it our
life's vow to yearn
for the service
of *śrī guru* and
Vaiṣṇavas ... then
we can never
meet with peril
and misfortune.”**

son must be helpless and unworthy. Who is fallen and destitute? Who is going to test whom and cast judgement in this regard? Do not turn your back on your son. This is a special request of you. You will surely have to change the tone you wrote your letter in, otherwise your son will be dissatisfied. If you keep recognizing your love for your son, you will surely be able to fulfil my request and order. We will discuss in person who is whose refuge. Please accept my loving salutations. If you are displeased, I will forget about writing you and meeting with you in person. What more can I say? *Iti—*

Praying for the mercy of the loving Vaiṣṇavas,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 63

This world is moulded from sorrow • Openly expressing one's personal challenges to *guru* increases one's conviction in *bhajana* • Confession is part of *sanātana-dharma* • The only atonement for *aparādha* is to pray for forgiveness • Simplicity is the only way to attain God • The glory of forgiveness • How to deal with injustice • Accepting responsibility for one's actions is the only way to find peace

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tegharipara, P.O. Navadvīpa (Nadia)
27/1/1983

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I was very delighted to receive your affectionate letter of 17/1/83. At the start of the letter, you conveyed your *daṇḍavat* obeisances to the *āśraya*- and *viṣaya-vigraha*. This is Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava etiquette. When I saw that you conveyed your loving entreaties and appeals by praying for the well-being of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅgau-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī, I became pleased with your love and attachment. Praying for the well-being of others reflects *vātsalya-bhāva* (parental love). Therefore, you should be pleased with your own virtues.

You wrote truly that if the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* conveys all aspects [of their life] to *śrī guru-pādapadma*, both that which is favourable and that which is unfavourable to the path of *bhajana*,

then his or her conviction in *bhajana* increases. The sorrow, pain, and suffering of material existence has always and will always be there. This material world is moulded from sorrow. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [10.14.22] says: “*tasmād idaṁ jagad aśeṣaṁ asat-svarūpaṁ, svapnābham asta-dhiṣaṇaṁ puru-duḥkha-duḥkham* – this whole world is unreal, like a dream, and thus it veils one's awareness and attacks one with one sorrow after another.” Real happiness and peace cannot exist in this world of *māyā*. That is why *jagad-guru* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has sung: “*bhāviyā dekhaho bhāi, amiśra ānanda nai, je āche se duḥkhera kāraṇa; se sukhera tare tabe, keno māyā-dāsa habe, hārāibe paramārtha dhana*”²⁷⁴ – Reflect and see,

²⁷⁴ Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Ore Mana, Bhālo Nāhi Lāge E Samsāra (4)

brother, that [in this world] there is no undiluted bliss. What is there is the cause of sorrow. So why, for that happiness, will you become a servant of *māyā* and lose your supreme wealth?”

There is a convention of conveying to one's *śrī guru-varga* the advantages and disadvantages one faces in regard to *bhajana*. In doing so, one must discard the “lest people say something” sort of shame. Though *śrī guru* and Bhagavān are omniscient, this convention is necessary for rectification of the soul. In Christianity, there is the custom of confession, or *ātma-svīkṛti*, which is in line with the moral ideals of India's *sanātana-dharma*. Conviction in *bhajana* is observed once the heart is purified by this practice. In this world, man knowingly and unknowingly engages in many activities that are contrary to scripture or, in other words, unprincipled, or devoid of ideals, another name for which is *pāpa* (sin) or *aparādha* (offence). “Violation of the rules of state laws or moral laws” is generally referred to as *pāpa*, and the envy or disregard that is displayed towards *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is called *aparādha*. The greatest atonement for *pāpa* is *śrī nāma-saṅkīrtana*. But the atonement for *aparādha* is to pray for forgiveness with remorse. If Śrī Hari becomes angry, only *śrī guru* can give protection, but if *gurudeva* becomes angry, there is no other protector. That is why it is the special duty of *śrī guru-pādapaḍma*'s disciples to satisfy him in all respects. A genuine *guru* never desires worldly profit, worship, prestige, money, and wealth. Rather, only those who follow the orders of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru* are capable of attracting his love.

“The greatest atonement for *pāpa* is *śrī nāma-saṅkīrtana*. But the atonement for *aparādha* is to pray for forgiveness with remorse.”

As *caitya-guru*, Śrī Bhagavān is constantly cautioning and propelling us. He forgives our flaws and mistakes, be they conscious or unconscious, and, as our conscience, He shows us the path. It is possible to have *darśana* of Bhagavān as *guru* only with the light of knowledge,

and He is millions of miles away from the darkness of ignorance. However, granting inspiration to inquisitive individuals is characteristic of His affection for devotees. He is forever manifest to the simple, non-duplicious person. The prospect of attaining Him via duplicity is far-fetched. Śrī Bhagavān has, in the scriptures, endorsed simplicity, stating that simplicity is characteristic of *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas. He has condemned duplicity, however, as characteristic of *śūdras* and non-Vaiṣṇavas. Hence, by simplicity alone one attains the direct *darśana* and mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

“By simplicity alone one attains the direct *darśana* and mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.”

Should someone in this material existence act unjustly towards you, you will only prove your nobility and magnanimity if you can forgive them. This virtue of forgiveness establishes the human being in life. If one can ignore the flaws and mistakes of others and proceed along the path of one's own *bhajana*, then one can attain peace and well-being. This material existence is full of riddles and brimming with selfishness. “*Āpnāre laye vivrata haite, āse nāi keha avanī-pare; sakaler tare sakale āmrā, pratyake āmrā parera tare*”²⁷⁵ – No one comes to this world seeking embarrassment. We are all for all. Each of us is for the other.” Where are such ethics and ideals today?

One must respond to violence and indiscretions with the virtues of love and forgiveness. Those sorts of virtues forever shed light, like blazing stars, on the paths of those who are bewildered, guiding them. Mā, you display that magnanimity, so *śrī guru* and Bhagavān will be pleased with you. Mothers are, categorically, specially possessed of forgiveness. Like the Earth Goddess herself who tolerates everything, may your glories be proclaimed the world over. Keep in your memory the statement of *Gītā* [10.33]: “*kīrtiḥ śrī-vāk ca nārīṇāṁ smṛti-medhā-dhṛti-kṣamā* – of feminine virtues, I am glory, beauty, eloquence, memory, intelligence, steadfastness, and forgiveness.” It will not do to forget the following either: “*mā himsāt sarvaṇi bhūtāni* – do not harm any living entity.”

Though human beings in this material existence observe moral ideals to the best of their ability, many perhaps cannot properly estimate the value of doing so. Only through largeness of spirit is there a chance of recognizing the value of that. Rather than imposing blame on one's *guru-jana* (superiors), if one can accept the Vaiṣṇava attitude of “*sva-karma phala-bhuk pumān*”²⁷⁶ – man reaps only the fruits of his own actions”, then one can gain peace and well-being in one's heart. I request you to have patience in developing enthusiasm for *bhajana*, faith in *bhakti*, and love for Bhagavān. Mother of mine, you will surely honour this request and childish demand of mine.

May the auspicious wishes and blessings of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas be your provisions on the path of life. I believe this to be your greatest duty and solace at present. To follow the orders, directions, and teachings of *śrī guru* is the responsibility and sacred vow of his disciples. May Śrī Bhagavān grant you the capacity to tolerate all matters. This is my entreaty to Him.

Chant *śrī nāma* with firm faith. Maintain a practice of reading something from the sacred texts every day. Always assist your elderly mother. By her blessings, your spiritual welfare will be assured. Take my loving blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁷⁵ “Sukh” (last verse) from the book *Ālo O Chāyā* by Kamini Roy

²⁷⁶ See *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya-līlā 2.163)

Letter 64

We must maintain our *bhajana* despite the disturbances of the world • Real *darśana* of the *dhāma* is not possible without its mercy • True saints have no desire for money • The significance of wearing three strands of *tulasī* neckbeads • The dietary preferences of Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura • Living always in Vaikuṇṭha, aspiring for Goloka Vṛndāvana

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
24/2/1983

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear ———! I received your affectionate letter of 12/2/83 on time. I hope that by Bhagavān's grace you are all well. You only write to two people, and if you are not able to do even that these days, then you certainly must have developed the special virtue of *avyartha-kālatva* (never wasting time). If you fully immerse your mind in *sādhana-bhajana*, then you will surely experience a shortage of time. This is a good sign. There is no cause for fault or error in this.

In material existence, it is impossible for everyone to be equally united in mind and carry on, but nevertheless, we have to consider all perspectives in a calm, collected manner and proceed on the path of life. Amid maintaining all kinds of responsibilities, we must sustain our chanting of *śrī nāma* and reading of sacred texts, our hearing, chanting, and remembering of *hari-kathā*, and service to saints and guests, etc. In the midst of maintaining worldly obligations, one must certainly maintain arrangements to engage in the five [primary] limbs of *bhakti-sādhana*, such as *sādhū-saṅga*, *nāma-kīrtana*, etc. For the *grhastha*, this is his core ideal and very centre of his life.

This time, when you went for *kārtika-vrata*, you surely offered *pūjā* to Girirāja and Kāmeśvara Mahādeva. Who does not adore Girirāja and Giridhārī? Śrī Girirāja Govardhana is the united incarnation of both *bhakta* and Bhagavān. It is neither a transgression nor an offence to make a vow for the sake of serving *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Only if one becomes a Vaiṣṇava can one understand what Vaiṣṇavas want or do not want in regard to any given matter. If the *śrī dhāma* and Śrī Dhāmeśvarī do not extend their mercy, transcendental *darśana*

**“If the *śrī dhāma*
and *Śrī Dhāmeśvarī*
do not extend
their mercy,
transcendental
darśana of *Vraja* is
not possible.”**

of *Vraja* is not possible. Those who have had such fortune will surely utilize that [mercy].

In striving for a person’s spiritual welfare, one surely must become the subject of criticism by the people of the world. Why would you give up concern for another’s welfare because of this? The materialists have no concrete idea of what real welfare is. That is why the chance for misunderstandings always remains.

I want to believe that just reading the *Gītā* does not constitute *sādhana-bhajana*. Just uttering it will not do. Why then does a man collect ten more treatises (explanations) [on that scripture]? No one can satisfy true saints by giving them money. Those for whom Śrī Bhagavān is the essence and who have taken an oath to spend their lives performing *nāma-kīrtana* do not submit to people who are blinded by the vanity of wealth. They understand this: “*prāṇair-artha-dhiyā vācā śreyah ācaraṇa sadā* – one must pursue the ultimate good by life, wealth, intellect, and words.” The desireless mood of saints is not intelligible to the general public. It is essential to have a simple nature to understand it. There are no discrepancies in the behaviour of saints. They see all equally. It is by the result of much good fortune that this is taken to heart.

The practice of wearing three strands of neck-beads has been prescribed in *smṛti-śāstra*. To wear three strands of *tulasī* beads on the neck is proper for Vaiṣṇavas. Two strands at least, but never one strand. The Atibāḍī *sampradāya* has transgressed the directives of scripture by wearing a single strand. They are independent from Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society and do as they please. Wearing three strands of beads is explained to represent the following sets of principles: *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*; the equilibrium of *sattva*, *rajaḥ*, and *tamaḥ*; Brahman, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara; the three currents of Gaṅgā, Yamunā, and Sarasvatī; Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān – three types of perception of *tattva-vastu* (the Absolute Truth); *vaidhi*, *rāgānugā*, and *rāgātmikā* – three types of *bhakti*; Śrī Bhagavān, *bhakti*, and the *bhakta* – the three divisions of *tattva*; *guru*, Vaiṣṇava, and Bhagavān; *Guru-gopāla*, *Gaura-gopāla*, and *Kṛṣṇa-gopāla*; the *tattvas* of *Gaura*, *Nityānanda*, and *Advaita*; as well as *sevyā* (master), *sevaka* (servant), and the relationship between them. These and other explanations can be accepted.

You have written that you do not know what it is to make efforts in service. Humans only learn by practice. Everything is possible by the strength of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ mercy. If there is love and affection, even bad becomes good, even flat rice yields a nectarous flavour. It was your cooking, and *Ekādaśī* on top of that, that compelled me to eat vegetable preparations that

day. But the cooking was indeed very tasty. If it had been given to Śrīla Prabhupāda, he would surely have eaten it with great delight. Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would partake of very salty and very sweet [foods]. Because of the salt, it was difficult for me to take his *prasāda*. You are my own people, so there is no reason for you to be anxious about me. I am used to taking that which is either burning with salt or saltless. I partake of *prasāda*, so I know that if I judge its faults or virtues, it will be an offence.

I live at all times only in Vaikuṇṭha. Vaikuṇṭha's various outer regions are also known as Vaikuṇṭha. I spend my days in the aspiration that someday I will gain a place in Goloka Vṛndāvana. I do not know if that two-armed, *muralī*-holding Śrī Śyāmasundara, who is accompanied by Śrī Rādhā, will someday adopt this orphaned maidservant or not. You all should progress on the path of *bhajana*. Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha will surely accept you as His own. No sort of adversity can befall you if you go forth with patience, enthusiasm, and hope. Accept my auspicious blessings. What more? *Iti—*

**“I spend my days
in the aspiration
that someday
I will gain a
place in Goloka
Vṛndāvana.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 65

Honesty and simplicity are the best testament of Vaiṣṇavism • Going to school in Māyāpura in the 1930s • Disinterest in making disciples • Chanting brings one face-to-face with Kṛṣṇa • The connection between *guru* and disciple is eternal

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Meghālaya Gauḍīya Maṭha
Tura, Meghalaya
7/9/1983

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I received your loving letter on 26/8/83 after reaching Śrī Meghālaya Gauḍīya Maṭha.

Śrī *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are forgiving and omniscient. Of that, there is no doubt. The unique capacity to experience and grasp the joys and sorrows of another is called *antaryāmitva* (omniscience). Thus, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas experience constant concern for the well-being of those who seek their love and are dear to them.

Honesty and simplicity are the greatest resources on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*. These are the foundation of *brahmaṇya-dharma* (brahminical religion) and are the best testament of Vaiṣṇavism. Deceit is a non-Ārya characteristic, a commonplace characteristic of a *sūdra*. Advancement in *sādhana-bhajana* is not possible for those who are controlled by mundane lamentation and delusion. If one proceeds with patience and enthusiasm, all obstacles and adversities on the path of *bhajana* will be dispelled by the mercy of Bhagavān, and the attainment of peace thereby becomes possible.

You did well to accept *dīkṣā* from Śrīla ——— Mahārāja. By doing so, you have been saved from the clutches of much criticism. I had the opportune fortune of coming to *jagad-guru* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda's place of *bhajana* in Śrī Māyāpura at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in March of the English year of 1931. At the *para-vidyā-pīṭha* (centre for spiritual learning) he established, I was taught under the guidance of *tridaṇḍi-gosvāmī* Śrīla Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīmat Bhakti Kevala Auḍulomi Mahārāja in the same institution of spiritual education. My two *śikṣā-gurus* were, respectively, rector and headmaster of the same

college. It was never observed that they thought of establishing a separate school. In that single Gauḍīya hospital, many impoverished individuals like myself had the opportunity to receive treatment for the disease of material existence, but never could they have imagined a separate institution. Many preaching centres of the Gauḍīya Maṭha have been established today in the East and West, yet I consider all of them to be a single indivisible unit. I know those who have been favoured by *jagad-guru* Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda and those who are his disciples and grand-disciples to be my own people, and I convey my obeisance to them, knowing them to be Gauḍīyas. I know every Vaiṣṇava who is bathed in the current of Śrī Gaura-vāṇī-vinoda (the delight of Śrī Gaura's message) to be my supreme well-wishing friend and most intimate relative, but there is no way I can imagine a separate institution.

“Many preaching centres of the Gauḍīya Maṭha have been established today in the East and West, yet I consider all of them to be a single indivisible unit.”

I previously addressed you as Mā and, at present, I will continue to address you in the same way. There will be no change in my affection for you. There is no cause for you to be perturbed in this regard. I have not made any disciples, nor do I make any claim in this regard. I also do not nurture any hope of becoming a *kākā-guru* (uncle guru), so remain absorbed in performing *śrī nāma-bhajana* without worry. Therein lies your ultimate well-being. *Jagad-guru* Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda addressed his dear disciples as *vipada-uddhāraṇa-bāndhava* (friends to deliver me from adversity), thereby manifesting the sort of pastime that can only be conducted by a *mahā-bhāgavata* and conferring teachings of *amānī-mānada-dharma*. All these transcendental teachings are to be grasped by us.

The restless heart is only steadied by *abhyāsa-yoga* (practice) and *niṣṭhā* (steadfastness). *Sādhana*, *japa*, and *tapa* all depend on patience and steadiness. Chanting *śrī kṛṣṇa-mantra* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa's name alleviates the condition of *saṁsāra* and it becomes possible to see Bhagavān face-to-face. Śrī guru's state of being guru is beautifully resolute for eternal time, as is the state of being his disciple. The connection between guru and disciple is eternal – “*nitāiyer caraṇa satya, tāhara sevaka nitya*.”²⁷⁷ ...

Take my affectionate blessings. Convey my auspicious wishes to Mā and others as befitting. What more? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁷⁷ *Prārthanā, Nitāi-pada-kamala* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Thākura

Letter 66

Even Bhagavān will not interfere with a living entity's *karma* • Accept hardships to be tests from Śrī Giridhārī-gopāla • Unbreakable faith will establish you at the pinnacle of prosperity • Be wary of demigod worshippers who conjure 'rapture' and contradict *siddhānta* • Proper etiquette for *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs* in regard to weddings

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Meghālaya Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O. Tura, Meghalaya
14/9/1983

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I received your affectionate letter of 15/7/83. Forgive me that I could not reply in a timely manner. I am more or less healthy. You all worry about me, which is why Bhagavān has been compelled to keep me healthy. I wrote inviting you to come to Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma for the Ratha-yātrā festival. Come another time when you have the chance and have *darśana* of *śrī dhāma*. If you make the effort, Śrī Bhagavān will give you the opportunity.

Despite living in *samsāra*, try to remain *asamsārī* (not of the world). Śrī Bhagavān has given you that sort of power of knowledge, conscience, and discretion. In this world, if you do not adopt a liberal policy, you cannot effect your own or another's welfare. If you cannot be impartial, you cannot preserve your *sva-dharma* (own duty). I was concerned to know that ——— Bābū's unhappiness has been exacerbated. Try the best you can for treatment. The result is in Śrī Bhagavān's hands. Every human being takes his birth in *samsāra* according to his own individual fortune. No one has the capacity to do otherwise. Even Śrī Bhagavān Himself does not lay a hand on the *jīva's karma* or the fruits of that *karma*. You must accept the sorrow and

**“It is not that
Śrī Bhagavān
will protect us;
He is always
protecting us.”**

pain of *samsāra* to be the harsh test of Śrī Giridhārī-gopāla. Do not fall stricken by worry. This is my childlike request of you. Look to Gopāla and tolerate the sorrow and suffering of material existence.

“It is not that Śrī Bhagavān will protect us; He is always protecting us.” You must keep firm faith in this. Know that my special wish is for there never to be any impediment to your contemplation on Bhagavān

because of worry for food. Your unbreakable faith and belief in Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas will establish you at the pinnacle of prosperity. You have no worries since you have been able to surrender your soul to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

Those who display arrogance about having received the mercy of Bhagavān or some demigod or goddess can never achieve well-being. Those to whom Śrī Bhagavān shows His mercy can never contradict *siddhānta*. They can never, in a state of “rapture”, speak things that are illogical and uncorroborated by scripture. *Sādhana-bhajana* and the resultant experience of Bhagavān is real; it is never imaginary or false. No demigod or goddess can speak erroneous *siddhānta*. As they have taken refuge of the truth, they only make statements in accordance with *tattva-siddhānta*. Persons who are acquainted with *śāstra* and who are seers of the truth never speak erroneous accounts rife with contradictions of *siddhānta*. The statements of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru* reveal a single vision of truth. Do not fall prey to these sorts of erroneous conclusions. “*Jei kālī, sei kṛṣṇa* – she who is Kālī is also Kṛṣṇa.” This can never be. It is contrary to *tattva*.

I will not be able to be present at the time of your daughter’s wedding. Still, I will send a *brāhmaṇa* priest and two or three *gṛhastha* Vaiṣṇavas from Kolkata. Said Vaiṣṇavas will take care of the tasks of the fire sacrifice, cooking, and serving. I will explain everything to them in detail. No *brahmacārī* or *sannyāsī* should be present at the wedding ceremony. This is forbidden in *śāstra*. Prior to the wedding and after, as time permits, they can be present, but even then, it should be several days later. That is why neither I nor any *sevaka* wearing saffron garments will be able to be present at said function. After one or two months, I will come to visit. Please do not feel any sort of sadness in this regard.

Once my body is healthy, sometime in the month of Jyeṣṭha (May–June), I will, all of a sudden, come to see you. Do not tell anyone about this. I will have to return the next day because book printing is going on in Kolkata. Know you have my affectionate blessings and convey them to your children. What more? *Iti—*

“*Sādhana-bhajana* and the resultant experience of Bhagavān is real; it is never imaginary or false.”

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 67

Why Vaiṣṇavas never grieve • Poorness of mind is true poverty • The servant's inclination to serve is his true achievement • The fruit of seeing Śrī Jagannātha • We cannot experience Śrī Bhagavān by material perception • Exclusively devoted servants never meet with adversity

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

%—Śrī Rādhe-śyāma Basāka
Ukilapara, P.O.—Rayganj
(West Dinajpur) W. B.
12/10/1983

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

I came to know all the news when I received your affectionate letter of the 2nd of Śrāvaṇa. Forgive me for taking so long to send a response to your letter. I hope you will not be angry with me or displeased. What you wrote is totally true. My heart is still breaking today for Sundarānanda. It is very natural that all your hearts would cry. Your grief and pain are greater, particularly because you nurtured him in your lap and raised him. No one comes to this world for long. At a certain point, everyone must go to a place that befits their *sādhana*. In this life, *sādhana-bhajana* alone is most auspicious, for that alone will properly establish a human being in his life. When our time is up, you and I and everyone else will have to go from this world. This is why *bhaktas* and Vaiṣṇavas never grieve. ...

**“Only a person
poor of mind
is truly poor.
Those who
serve Śrī Hari,
guru, and
Vaiṣṇavas can
never be poor.”**

Is it true that you cannot serve us in any way because you are poor? Only a person poor of mind is truly poor. Those who serve Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas can never be poor. The *sevaka* or *sevikā*'s inclinations to serve are their achievement. You have that, so you are blessed. Even if exalted Vaiṣṇavas will not step foot in your humble old cottage, I will appear as soon as you call me. Whatever foraged greens and rice you prepare, I will devour with utmost honour, as if I had prepared them myself. I am allowed to joke with you, which is why I told you this in Diamond Harbour on the 13th of Śrāvaṇa. I do not entertain any ambition to get money from you, so there is no reason you will incur loss. But

surely I have the right to receive your love and affection. It is not right for you to think that if you were qualified like other people, then Vaiṣṇavas would step foot in your home. My good wishes and affectionate blessings are always with you. Do realize this in your heart and gain some solace.

Vaiṣṇavas are surely omniscient. There is no doubt in this. You want to offer your soul to the *bhaktas*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas and become rid of anxiety, and you can. *Bhaktas* offer everything to Śrī Bhagavān and make themselves worthy of the title *niṣkiñcana* (free of possessions). If you see Śrī Jagannātha-deva on His chariot during the Ratha festival, you will never take birth again. Though Śrīman Mahāprabhu entered the body of Śrī Jagannātha, His own form remains unaltered. His *śrī nāma*, form, qualities, pastimes, associates, and so on are eternal and transcendental. His potency is non-different from Him. If you do not accept His Śrī, Bhū, and Līlā potencies, you have not accepted Him properly. He is identical to Vrajendra-nandana.

This being the case, the devotees do not see a manually carved Jagannātha. Rather, they behold and experience His full form. We cannot experience Śrī Bhagavān's real form and nature by means of fragmented and divisive knowledge. Those who are exclusively devoted servants never meet with adversity. In the end, they attain direct service to Bhagavān in His abode. I am delighted to know that your pantry is open to serve and feed the Vaiṣṇavas. I will go to Kolkata at the end of this coming October or by the first week of November. Then I will go to your house once to take *prasāda*. At present, I am well. Do not worry for me. Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja is doing well in Mathurā. I have not received a letter from him in a long time. *Iti—*

**“Those who
are exclusively
devoted servants
never meet with
adversity.”**

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 68

How to make a success of this human birth • Patience, tolerance, and simplicity make the impossible possible • Obstacles in *bhajana* increase our eagerness and focus • We must be eager for service • Śrīman Sundarānanda Prabhu’s attainment of eternal service

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
Halدار Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
13/12/1983

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ——! Prior to this, I received five of your letters. Forgive me for not being able to respond to them. I must praise your patience. I am particularly indebted to you for your love and affection.

How exactly you have remained in the darkness of ignorance, I cannot fathom. Those who chant *śrī nāma* with faith, having taken shelter of a bona fide *guru*, and chant *gāyatrī-mantras* at the three junctures of the day are illuminated by knowledge and blessed by the attainment of divine knowledge. Ordinary human beings of the world are preoccupied only with eating, dressing, and living arrangements, but those who are desirous of the soul’s welfare live lives that are successful and blessed. They alone are making a success of this rare human birth.

Why are you not able to perform any *sādhana-bhajana*? You have to make an effort to maintain enthusiasm and do everything. It will not do to become impatient. In addition to all the tasks of worldly life, you must chant *śrī nāma*, perform brief *pūjā* and *arcana* of the deities, and study the *granthas*. There is and always will be the sorrow and pain of material existence, a burning and torment. In the midst of all that, one must consider all aspects of the soul’s welfare. By patience, tolerance, and simplicity, the impossible will become possible.

**“Wherever
we are,
bhajana-
sādhana is
our chief
concern.”**

Wherever we are, *bhajana-sādhana* is our chief concern. Where there are too many atheists is precisely where *sādhana-bhajana* is best performed. Where there are no obstacles and adversities, where is the chance for

reformation? It is only when obstacles to *hari-bhajana* come that eagerness and one-pointed focus in *bhajana* increases. Hence, that environment must be considered favourable for *bhajana*. For those who are dedicated to *śrī nāma*, who daily serve and worship *śrī vigraha* and study the *bhakti* literatures, all places are conducive for *bhajana*. Do not disturb your mind with this. If you perform *bhajana*, your mind will gain patience and enthusiasm. Remain firmly engaged in *bhajana*. ...

Remaining near to *śrī gurudeva* and rendering any task of service will suffice. There is no difference between tasks of service. They are all a test of heartfelt mood and simplicity. *Guru*, *Vaiṣṇava* and *Bhagavān* want the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* to sit this test. The more conviction one has in service, the more exalted one is. Although *śrī guru* and *Bhagavān* bestow worthiness and qualification for service, those who are eager for service find their keen efforts and conviction established above all else. No one gives service. That you have to want and take yourself. The inclination to serve comes from the inside, from the heart of the person dedicated to the *dharma* of service. That is real service. It is my prayer to my supreme object of service, *Śrī Bhagavān*, that you obtain service to *Śrī Hari*, *guru*, and *Vaiṣṇavas* in every birth. “*Aprākṛta dehe kṛṣṇer caraṇa bhajaya*²⁷⁸ – he serves Kṛṣṇa’s feet in a spiritual body.” This is the real *sevā-dharma* of a surrendered soul.

Śrīmān Sundarānanda has left us and become engaged in the service of his worshipful Lord. There is nothing for us to do in this regard. This happened like lightning striking without there even being any clouds in the sky. We cannot hold on to anyone in this world forever. We have to know this to live in this material existence. He was not able to stand being away from me for even a minute. As a result of this service, he has become engaged in the eternal service of his worshipful Lord.

If you can perform *harināma* and *bhajana* in a calm and steady mood without any worries, I will be free from worries and be happy. If I can make laughter burst from your lips, it will be my delight and pleasure. Do not lose your composure even in the midst of hundreds of worldly obstacles and adversities. Keep on performing *hari-bhajana*. Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁷⁸ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.193)*

Letter 69

Accepting whatever situation Śrī Bhagavān puts us in • A home that is full of *hari-kīrtana* is Goloka-Vṛndāvana • We obtain the service and proximity of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas by remembering them • If one performs *bhajana*, gender makes no difference • All living entities are *śakti*, or female

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
28/3/1984

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear —! I hope you are all well by the grace of God. ... I fell sick at your place there due to lack of regulation and a lack of rest. After *parikramā*, I always rest for seven days and then go elsewhere. This time I did not have that rest. What Śrī Bhagavān does is for our auspiciousness. If I had not been unwell, perhaps I would not have stayed at your home for many days. We have to accept whatever situation Śrī Bhagavān puts us in. How and to whom He shows His mercy is not comprehensible to conditioned souls. What power do we have to fathom His causeless mercy? The mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is something to be realized internally. Those who have mundane pride can never appreciate this. Only by serving *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas without duplicity is *bhagavad-bhakti* obtained.

In your home, Śrī Gaura-gopāla, Kṛṣṇa-gopāla, Guru-gopāla, and others are being eternally served and worshipped. Hence you are especially fortunate. If you as much as try, *śrī mūrti* will converse with you directly and you will find bliss and peace.

You are to always remain engaged in the Lord's service. A home that is full of *hari-kīrtana* is Goloka-Vṛndāvana; Śrī Bhagavān's eternal residence is there. “*Je dina gr̥he bhajana dekhi, gr̥hete goloka bhāya*²⁷⁹ – the day I see *bhajana* in my home, Goloka appears there.” Chant a fixed number of *śrī nāma*. Make a practice of *kīrtana* and studying *granthas* and so forth. Only

²⁷⁹ *Śaraṇāgati, Śuddha-bhakata* (6) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

then will your home remain full at all times. Many deities are present in your home. Why did you write that your home is empty? ...

You wrote that your place there is devoid of *sat-saṅga*. The transcendental books are your *sādhū-saṅga*, which is unseen but true (*parokṣa*), so why have you written that there is an absence of *sat-saṅga* in your region? For those who have obtained the causeless mercy of *sādhū*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, why would there be a dearth of *sādhū-saṅga*? The injunction has been given in the scriptures to remember Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas while residing in distant lands.

If you do not want to stay in your home and you also do not want to go to other people's houses, then rope together a cottage in the forest and do *sādhana-bhajana* there. It is not that all young women have to go to another's house. A young woman's guardians think that if they can get her married and send her to someone else's house, then they are relieved of all responsibility, but one possessing high-class intelligence should not go there and spend their time in a state devoid of *sādhana-bhajana*. I think that wherever constant remembrance of Śrī Bhagavān can be kept intact is the right place to be. If we can always stay in the proximity of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, we will meet with auspiciousness.

Śrī Bhagavān alone is the enjoyer, caretaker, and maintainer of the whole of creation. By His sweet wishes, the infinite material existence is maintained and nurtured in a beautiful orderly fashion. He is Jagannātha, Jagatpati, Viśvapati. It is only because the embondaged souls have forgotten Him that they are bobbing up and down in the ocean of the illusory material existence. It is only by cultivating the hearing, chanting, and remembering of the holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes of that omnipotent Bhagavān that the living entities obtain real well-being. Only by good thoughts (*sac-cinta*) and good feelings (*sad-bhāvanā*) is our well-being possible. No matter where we live, we have to create that sort of environment. Only by *smarana* (remembrance) do we obtain the service and proximity of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. That is possible from even thousands of miles away.

If one performs *bhajana-sādhana*, then it does not make a difference whether one is a man or a woman. “*Jeī bhaje, sei baḍo* – he who worships is greater.” This is the word of the eternal scriptures. “*Kibā yati satī, kibā nīca jāti, jeī hari nāhi bhaje; tabe janamiyā, bhramiyā bhramiyā, raurava narake maje*”²⁸⁰ – whether one is a mendicant, a chaste woman, or of a low caste, one who does not worship Hari will take birth in the hell of Raurava and wander

**“If one performs
bhajana-sādhana,
then it does not
make a difference
whether one is a
man or a woman.”**

²⁸⁰ Bhajo Bhajo Hari (4) by Śrīla Locana dāsa Ṭhākura

and roam, drowning there.” This is the accepted scriptural equality of women and men. In other deliberations on *śāstra*, the following is seen: “*Līlā-puruṣottama* Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra alone is the Supreme Person. All other entities are *śakti*, or female (*prakṛti*). This is the constitutional identity of the *jīva*. Since the living entity is Bhagavān’s servant, his sole *dharma* is to serve Bhagavān.” If he forgets this *dharma* of service, then the mundane condition of being a man or woman gains prominence. “The infinite living entities are all Śrī Bhagavān’s maidservants.” If you can understand this, you will no longer feel remorse about being born a woman.

If you have a particular desire and convey anguished prayers, Śrī Bhagavān will give you residence in *śrī dhāma*. Even if we have been born in *śrī dhāma*, our life becomes blessed only if we obtain the mercy of *śrī dhāma*, which is part of the form and opulence of the Lord (*tad-rūpa-vaibhava*). Then we find the opportunity and advantage of beholding *śrī vigraha*, hearing *hari-kathā*, etc.

When you have offered your soul unto *śrī guru* and Bhagavān, there is nothing to call your own, nor can there be. Then why the question of fault and mistake? *Sādhakas* and *sādhikās* reap results according to the distinct qualities of their services. You have sacrificed your soul to the service of Bhagavān, so such a result is determined for you. Do not cling to your own sense of accomplishment. If you can do that, then you will reap actual results. Take my affectionate blessings. What more? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 70

How to deal with prestige in the renounced order of life • Youth and beauty cannot help you attain Bhagavān • Only Bhagavān and His devotees are omniscient, not demigods or human beings • Hankering for mundane profit, worship, and prestige makes a person subhuman • Without humility, the heart becomes like a thunderbolt

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
24/5/1984

Snehāspadeṣu—

Bābā —! I duly received your letter of 16/4/84. There was a delay in responding to your letter. I went to Kanpur via Lucknow with the party this past 27/4/84. Here the “loo” [hot wind] that causes heatstroke had started. After reaching Kolkata on 5/5/84, I became bedridden. Intense fever, vomiting, headache, lack of appetite, and weakness have combined to create a single unhealthy condition. Even now I cannot eat or move around properly.

Take good care of the watch I sent you. I gifted it to you as per your wishes. If you really do not want to keep it, I will make another arrangement when I go at Janmāṣṭamī time. If you keep the watch, will your renunciation lessen or will your advancement in *sādhana-bhajana* be hindered? Who gets what has already been decided. “*Āsakti-rahita, sambandha-sahita, viṣaya-samuha sakali mādharma*”²⁸¹ – when free from attachment, one sees all objects of enjoyment in connection with Mādhava.” Know that if you proceed with this thought, no inauspiciousness will occur.

I am giving brief responses to your questions: (1) If someone becomes a *sādhū*, it is not proper for him to have something separate called prestige. On the other hand, as long as we take pride in being the remnant-eating servants of Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, whatever honour and respect we get will have a central root. If we are deprived of a connection to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, then a sense of our self-worth separate from them appears, which drops us into a condition devoid of shelter.

²⁸¹ *Duṣṭa Mana, Tumī Kisera Vaiṣṇava?* (11) by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda

(2) Human beauty and youth cannot facilitate attainment of Bhagavān. That is why Śrī Śaṅkara has said: “*mā kuru dhana-jana-yauvana-garvam, harati nimeṣāt kālaḥ sarvam*”²⁸² – do not take pride in wealth, followers, and youth for time steals it all away in the blink of an eye.” Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has sung: “*tyaja jīvana-yauvana-rājya-sukham, na hi nityam-anukṣaṇa nāṣa-param*”²⁸³ – Abandon life goals, youth, and kingly pleasures. None of it is eternal. It is prone to destruction at every moment.” On the path of *bhagavat-sādhana*, infatuation with birth, opulence, fame, or women is an obstacle. This is mundane ego.

(3) The omniscient Śrī Bhagavān and the eternally perfected *mahātmās* can know and understand the innermost feelings of human beings. Bhāvagrāhī Janārdana (He who accepts the

“Offering the heart’s natural, simple moods to Śrī Bhagavān is *śraddhā*, or *bhakti*.”

devotees’ sentiments) is capable of understanding everyone’s feelings. *Guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* can, by their omniscience, be fully acquainted with the living entities’ thoughts. Offering the heart’s natural, simple moods to Śrī Bhagavān is *śraddhā*, or *bhakti*. That means simplicity, sincerity, and straightforwardness. The demigods or ordinary humans are incapable of understanding everyone’s inner thoughts, which raises the question: “*devāḥ na jānanti, kuto manuṣyaḥ?*” – If even the demigods do not know, how can humans?”

(4) If the *maṭha* manager transgresses the president’s directives and instructions, he is not worthy of remaining in his position. If he disregards the secretary’s instructions, he cannot cling to his authority. Being able to follow rules and laws constitutes civilized behaviour. This contrary predisposition deserves censure. It is only when the hankering for mundane profit, worship, and prestige become powerful that man engages in uncivilized behaviour. He is then subhuman.

(5) If someone commits an injustice but attempts to pose as a just or good human being, this is an impediment to *bhajana* that is included in the flaw of *vipralipsa* (the cheating propensity). “I am a perpetrator of dishonesty, of injustice.” To convey this to *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* and strive to become good is called humility. Śrī Madhusūdana pulverizes the arrogance of those who display mundane egotism and pride. This is the conclusion of scripture. Those who are aspiring to perform *bhajana* must be without ego; there is no place for pride in their heart. If a person does not have natural humility

“Those who are aspiring to perform *bhajana* must be without ego.”

²⁸² *Bhaja Govindam* (11) by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya

²⁸³ *Śrī Godruma-candra-bhajanopadeśaḥ* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

in his heart, then it becomes as hard as a thunderbolt and there is no place for the fluid substance that is the propensity for *bhakti*. Humility is the servant's, or *sādhaka's*, ornament – his decoration. ...

Bābā, keep your head cool and do what you have to do. Even if cause for anger and irritation comes, do not lose your composure; do not be prideful. *Hari-bhajana* is the only thing we want. Always remember this. It is for *sādhana-bhajana* alone that we have accepted renunciation and will continue to do so. Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 71

Resolve and conviction in *sādhana* are our only aids in attaining our goal • On the liberated platform, everything is practical • *Sevā* is eternal, everlasting, and dynamic • *Guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* are omniscient and test us directly and indirectly

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

% “Santosh Ashram”
Śrī Bālānanda Āśrama
P.O. Ashram Karanibara
B. Deoghar (S.P.) Bihar,
13/8/1984

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! Your letters dated 27/5/84, 5/6/84, and 5/7/84 arrived in a timely fashion at the Kolkata *maṭha*.

“Resolve and conviction in *sādhana* are the only aids one has in the fulfilment of one’s ambition.”

There is no question of throwing you aside or abandoning spiritual responsibility for you. If the connection between *guru* and disciple is eternal, then these worries have no basis. Even if you are unworthy, then granting worthiness to the unworthy is a token of causeless compassion. “*Yogyatā vicāre, kichu nāhi pai, tomāra karuṇā sāra*²⁸⁴ – In considering my qualifications, I find nothing. Your mercy is essential.” This is the anguished prayer of the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* at the feet of *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas*. Should the tendency to cheat remain in *bhajana-sādhana*, the main purpose is disrupted. To be cautious upon seeing the examples of others is the symptom of intelligence. Resolve and conviction in *sādhana* are the only aids one has in the fulfilment of one’s ambition. If you proceed with patience, enthusiasm, and tolerance, there is no fear of any sort of inauspiciousness.

Through their omniscience, *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* are aware of all matters. Nevertheless, we have to sit the examination. The examination is necessary so that feeling and realization become real. Actual [spiritual] realization or experience is only possible for liberated souls. The

.....
²⁸⁴ *Saraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Kṛpā-bindu Diyā* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

experience or mental speculation of conditioned souls cannot be taken to be actual realization or the experience of *mahājanas*. On the liberated platform, everything is practical; material assumption has no place there. It is Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas who are omniscient: *sarvajña* or *antaryāmī*; of that, there is no doubt.

Go forward on the path of *bhajana* without any duplicity and you will certainly attain qualification for service. You will never be deprived of your spiritual guide's blessings. This is my affectionate blessing. Simplicity and honesty are the main provisions on the path of *sādhana*. With these, as soon as one meets with the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, service commences. *Sevā* is eternal, everlasting, and dynamic. Everything is easily attainable through the tendency to serve, or *bhakti*. The real *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* want nothing aside from *bhakti*.

“Simplicity and honesty are the main provisions on the path of *sādhana*.”

Guru and Vaiṣṇavas understand everything, yet they pretend to be speechless. There are many examples of this. They implement many types of tests directly and indirectly. If the conditioned soul's natural inclinations do not become spiritual, then *anarthas* come and devour him. On the pretext of developing an environment that is favourable for *bhajana*, he often just invites worldly materialism. This is the ultimate calamity. Know you and your family have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 72

Vaiṣṇavism does not acknowledge any spiritual difference between men and women • If you see your job as a limb of *bhajana*, no peril will befall you • Whatever you do, strive to do it properly, in relation to Kṛṣṇa • *Śrī guru* and *Bhagavān* are more loving than any mother and father • The purpose of the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā's bhajana-sādhana* is to fulfil the desires of *śrī guru* and *Gaurāṅga*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

% “Santosh Ashram”
Śrī Bālānanda Āśrama
P.O. Ashram Karanibad
B. Deoghar (S.P.) Bihar
14/8/1984

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I received your affectionate letter here, dated 19/7/84 on 24/7/84. Because of physical illness, I did not, by my own hand, write to anyone for three months since the month of May. I started writing letters myself a few days ago. ...

I have replied to you quickly because you are enduring great anxiety and mental perturbation to find out if I am well. I was saddened to understand that you have fewer opportunities to have direct *darśana* of *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* than you would like because you bear the body of a woman.

Our previous *guru* and *Vaiṣṇava* poet, the *mahājana* Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has conveyed the following in his transcendental poetic literature: “*choḍata puruṣābhimāna, kiṅkarī hailū āji kāna; varaja-vipine sakhī sātha, sevana karabū rādhānātha*²⁸⁵ – Having given up the male ego, I have today become a maidservant, O Kṛṣṇa. In the forest of Vraja, in the company of Rādhā's girlfriends, I will serve Her Lord.” “*Āmi to' svānanda-sukhada-vāsī, rādhikā-mādhava-caraṇa-dāśī*²⁸⁶ – I am a resident of Svānanda-sukhada-kuṅja. I am a maidservant at the feet of Rādhikā and Mādhava.” He has rejected the mundane male identity and prayed for the transcendental moods of a *sakhī*. So, having obtained birth as a

²⁸⁵ *Śaraṇāgati, Choḍata Puruṣābhimāna* (1–2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

²⁸⁶ *Śaraṇāgati, Āmi To' Svānanda-sukhada-vāsī* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

woman, why have you not followed exclusively the guidance of the *mahāpuruṣas* and vowed to offer all of your mundane ego and pride unto the transcendental ever-fresh Cupid, Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra? Śrī *Gītā*, *Bhāgavata*, and other scriptures have referred to the *jīva* soul with the word *pumān*. That soul is not a man or woman enjoying material pleasures, but rather, having attained the qualification to serve Śrī Bhagavān and come into His proximity, is known as *jīva-śakti*. The words *yoṣit* or *yoṣā* refer to the mutual attitude between women and men of regarding one another as objects of enjoyment or wanting to enjoy each other. Know that only when this mundane attachment is abandoned does the conscious living entity's pure constitutional nature really manifest. “*Kanaka-kāminī, pratiṣṭhā-bāghinī, chāḍiyāche jare sei to' vaiṣṇava*”²⁸⁷ – Only those who have abandoned the tigresses of money, women, and fame are Vaiṣṇavas.” In this statement, the worthiness of both women and men is expressed. Vaiṣṇavism, or *bhaktatva* (being a devotee), acknowledges no difference between men and women. It is a conception arising from transcendental qualities, and therefore earns the title *nirguṇa* (beyond material qualities).

**“Vaiṣṇavism,
or *bhaktatva*
(being a devotee),
acknowledges
no difference
between men
and women.”**

I understand you have taken a job teaching at the school because you do not have the patience and perseverance to do *bhajana* all day and have no intention of wasting your time discussing the trivialities of material existence. However, at school, you could find yourself in an environment that is contrary to *bhajana* and, amid the trifles, some harm could come to you in the matter of *sādhana*. This too is something to be careful about. Every pro and con in this matter depends on you. By your strong personality and by actually employing the policy of shunning bad association, you can gain protection from many perils and dangers. That, however, is wholly possible only by the causeless grace of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. If you can regard your teaching work as a limb of *bhajana*, and a special part of it, then there is no possibility that any inauspiciousness or peril will befall you. If not, there will also be a negative aspect to your teaching. It is intelligent to proceed after considering every angle. “*Jei jana kṛṣṇa bhaje, sei baḍo catūra*”²⁸⁸ – that person who worships Kṛṣṇa is very clever.” It will not do to forget this.

Every day you should sing and discuss portions of songs from the *mahājānas*, which are beneficial to the soul. In this, it is certainly essential to have patience and enthusiasm. When you have the chance, you will have to do some delegated service. When you are able to see this

²⁸⁷ *Duṣṭa Mana, Tumi Kiserā Vaiṣṇava?* (10) by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda

²⁸⁸ *Śrī Kṛṣṇera Aṣṭottara-śata-nāma* (55) by Dvija Haridāsa

material world as Govinda's, then, because of your knowledge of your eternal relationship, you will gain an inclination for service in everything you do. Whatever you do, strive to do it properly, in relation to Kṛṣṇa. From this will come peace of mind. Do not do things according to your own whims. Only if your life is driven by the words of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru* and in accordance with their conceptions will it meet with auspiciousness. ...

I understand that because you took the job at the school, even though you wanted to, there was no way or, in other words, you did not have the chance, to come out to Deoghar. The quality of *avyartha-kālatva* (not wasting time) develops in *premika-bhaktas*, and so they too have no opportunity to absorb their minds in any worldly matter. “*Samsāra phukāra, kāne nā paśibe*²⁸⁹ – the call of the world will not enter my ears.” “*Kabe e samsāra, sindhu pāra haye, tava vraja-pure jābo*²⁹⁰ – When will I cross this ocean of material existence and go to Your abode of Vraja?” This is their oath and ambition. If you can follow them, you will meet with auspiciousness.

Physical health and illness depend on the results of one's own *karma*. If one's *karma* is good there is no dearth of conviction in following the orders, instructions, and teachings of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and if one's *karma* is bad, then they seem as bitter as poison. Those who can appreciate the transcendental love and affection of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are blessed. Śrī *guru* and Bhagavān will surely adopt and accept such persons as their own. There is no sort of loving kindness in this world that can be as valuable as [bestowing] a state of transcendence. Śrī *guru* and Bhagavān, as *sevaka-vatsala* (those who are affectionate to their servants) and *āśrita-jana-pālaka* (the maintainers of those surrendered to them), are more loving than any mother and father. Someday, you will have the chance to realize and experience all these matters.

We must certainly tread the path determined by śrī *guru* and Gaurāṅga. I am the machine and Śrī Bhagavān is the driver; this is true. This notion is explicit in the following verse of the *Gītā* [18.61]: “*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati, bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāṇi māyayā* – the Lord dwells in the hearts of all living entities, Arjuna, as they wander under the sway of the illusory energy as if seated on a machine.” The *bhajana-sādhana* of the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* is to fulfil the desires of śrī *guru* and Gaurāṅga. Those who see all as equal are perfect and worthy of the title of *mahātmā*. They are devoid of hatred,

289 Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Kabe Mora Sei Dina Habe (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

290 Śaraṇāgati, Hari He! Saṅga-doṣa-sūnya (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

violence, and envy. They are empathetic. They are greatly, greatly magnanimous. And they are exclusively surrendered to Kṛṣṇa. Just by seeing and remembering them, the conditioned souls obtain spiritual benefit. “*Kaniṣṭhe ādara, madhyame praṇāti, uttame śuśrūṣā jāni*”²⁹¹ – I understand I must honour the neophytes, offer obeisance to the intermediates, and devoutly serve the topmost.” These are the considerations of varying levels of qualification. Conviction in your own level of qualification is known as a virtue. Acting beyond one’s level is wholly objectionable. My affectionate blessings to you and yours. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁹¹ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Kabe Mui Vaiṣṇava Cīnibō* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 73

We require the blessing of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas at all times and in all circumstances • Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead • The development of *prema* • The glories of Śrīmatī Rādhikā

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

% “Santosh Ashram”
Śrī Bālānanda Āśrama
P.O. Ashram Karanibad
B. Deoghar (S.P.) Bihar
25/8/84

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Have you not learned to carefully treat *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas with love and adoration? “*Je jena vaiṣṇava, ciniyā laiṇā, ādara karibo jabe; vaiṣṇavera kṛpā, jāhe sarva-siddhi, avaśya pāibo tabe*²⁹² – when one recognizes a Vaiṣṇava and honours him, then he will surely

“We require the blessing of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas at all times and in all circumstances.”

attain the Vaiṣṇava’s mercy, which brings all perfection.” I trust you are acquainted with this. It is a matter of great delight that you have become renounced and are sincerely cultivating aspirations to serve *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. The inclination to serve has awakened in your heart and you will surely attain loving conviction in *sādhana-bhajana*; of this, there is no doubt. Know that we require the blessing of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas at all times and in all circumstances, for that alone is our only strength in *bhajana*, our support and resource.

Can the *adhikāra* (qualification) to serve be given to us or is it attained according to our *adhikāra*? The answer to this question is very complex. That said, the attainment of perfection is possible once our *sādhana* coincides with divine grace; this is a truth agreed upon unanimously by all manner of philosophers. Attachment to the mundane is dubbed “*samsāra-daśā*” (material existence) and freedom from attachment is “*mukta-daśā*” (liberated existence). “*Raso vai saḥ*” – Parabrahma (God) is the *svarūpa* (embodiment) of bliss, the form of *rasa*. He is *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti* (the personification of all nectarean mellow), the fullest expression of the form of *rasa*. The form of supreme bliss, Parabrahma, the original personality of Godhead,

²⁹² *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Kabe Mui Vaiṣṇava Cinibō (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura*

Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, attracts the souls of all living entities with the sweetness of His *rasa*, which tells us why His name is “Śrī Kṛṣṇa”. The *Bhāgavata* [1.3.28] informs us: “*kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* – Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.” “*Svayam bhagavān kṛṣṇa—kṛṣṇa para-tattva; pūrṇa-jñāna, pūrṇānanda, parama-mahattva*²⁹³ – Kṛṣṇa is God Himself. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme principle. He is absolute knowledge, absolute bliss, and supreme glory.” Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *saccidānanda-svarūpa*, the form of eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss, and He is *līlā-puruṣottama*, the Supreme Person who conducts infinite divine pastimes; He is Parabrahma, or God, in human shape; He is ever youthful and the best of dancers. The *sūtra* “*lokavat tu līlā-kaivalyam*²⁹⁴” posits that His pastimes are human-like, His pastimes are infinite, and His pastimes are supreme. He is “*madhurāiśvarya-mādhurya-kṛpādi bhāṇḍāra*²⁹⁵ – the treasure-house of sweet opulence, pure sweetness, mercy, and more”. He has the capacity to attract even the hearts of all the other forms of God. That is why He has been called the *mādhurya rasa-maya vigraha* (the personified form of all sweet moods and relationships).

The desire to please one’s own senses constitutes mundane lust and desires, whereas love [for pleasing] Kṛṣṇa’s senses is referred to by the word “*prema*”. This is a special function of *śuddha-sattva* (pure existence) and is by nature a spiritual phenomenon. Since a time without beginning, *prema* has presided over the hearts of those who are *nitya-siddha* (eternally perfect). From *prema*, an attitude of *mamatā* (“my-ness”, or possessive loving attachment) arises, and then one realizes that Śrī Bhagavān is *paramātmīya* (one’s supreme dear most relative). A person who has obtained this sort of *adhikāra* is perpetually obsessed and anxious to make Śrī Kṛṣṇa happy. They have no interest in anything that is unrelated to Kṛṣṇa. As *prema* intensifies or thickens, it brings an attitude of possessiveness, and then one’s relationships with worldly convention, familial bonds, and social ethics disappear.

As *prema* concentrates, it gains names like *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga*, *bhāva*, and *mahābhāva*; *mahābhāva* is the topmost level, though in some specific cases, *bhāva* and *mahābhāva* seem to be almost identical. Real *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, and so on are never feasible in a material body; it is only possible for them to manifest in those who have *rati*, who have attained *prema*. Śrī Rādhārāṇī is *kṛṣṇa-kāntā-śiromaṇī* (the crown jewel of all Kṛṣṇa’s beloveds); She Herself is the concentrated state of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. The essence of *hlādinī* is *prema*, and the essence of *prema* is *mahābhāva*; Śrī Rādhā is *mahābhāva-svarūpiṇī*, the embodiment of that

²⁹³ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 2.8)

²⁹⁴ Vedānta-sūtra (2.1.33)

²⁹⁵ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 21.44)

greatest love. Śrī Rādhā is the presiding deity of *prema*. Total absorption in the bliss of serving Kṛṣṇa constitutes Her very life. Śrī Rādhā is the fullest form of *śakti* (potency) and Śrī Kṛṣṇa

**“Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra is
controlled by *prema*,
and so, in the presence
of Śrī Rādhā’s *prema*,
Śrī Kṛṣṇa is subdued
and defeated.”**

is the fullest expression of *śaktimān* (the potent). Śrī Rādhā is *kṛṣṇa-gata-prāṇā* (She whose life force flows towards Kṛṣṇa); She experiences Kṛṣṇa in all of Her senses. She is *kṛṣṇa-mayī* (imbued with Kṛṣṇa). *Svarāṭa līlā-puruṣottama* (the sovereign Supreme Person of all divine pastimes), Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, is controlled by *prema*, and so, in the presence of Śrī Rādhā’s *prema*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is subdued and defeated. Without *mahābhāva-svarūpiṇī* Śrī Rādhā, Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra’s sweet charm does not

blossom or manifest. “*Rādhā-saṅge yadā bhāti tadā madana-mohanah*²⁹⁶ – only if He is in the company of Rādhā is He Madana-mohana, the beguiler of Cupid.” *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

.....
296 Govinda-līlāmṛta (13.32)

Letter 74

The meaning of the word “Mā” • *Guru-tattva* • Śrī Bhagavān offers *guru-śakti* to His dear devotees • One whose heart is exclusively established in *śuddha-sattva* (pure existence) is worthy of being *dīkṣā-guru* • As long as the hankering for enjoyment remains prominent, it is impossible for *bhakti* to bloom • The nature of great personalities

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
20/10/1984

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Mā ———! I hope that by the causeless compassion of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Gāndharvikā Giridhārī-jīu you are all well physically and also well in terms of your *bhajana*. ...

I received a letter dated 19/7/84 from your sister. Because I wrote her a letter calling her “Mā”, she wanted an explanation of *mā*. Let her know that *mā* means *mātā* (mother). *Ramā*, *Lakṣmī* and others are referred to by the word *mā*. The word *mā* or *mātā* is also used to refer to *kumārī* (lifelong celibate) *Vaiṣṇavī*. The word *mā* is also used in the sense of *dhātr* (nurse), *pṛthvī* (Earth), and *jananī* (mother). *Mā* or *mātā* is also used for one who gives birth, or who carries a pregnancy. The word *mā* is also seen to be used in reference to *śakti* (energy), *prakṛti* (nature) and other things related to that which is feminine. *Mā* is also used in relation to those deserving honour, like *jyēṭhimā* (senior paternal aunt by marriage), *kākimā* (junior paternal aunt by marriage), *māsimā* (maternal aunt), and *māmīmā* (maternal aunt by marriage). One’s object of affection is also addressed as *mā*. Fathers and mothers also often express deep affection to their daughters by calling them *mā*. *Gurus* and people who are like *gurus* also express unearthly affection by addressing their daughters or disciples as *mā*. In the connection between *guru* and disciple, the moods of *dāśya*, *sakhya*, and *vātsalya* exist. These three moods are applied to *śrī guru-pādapadma* in particular situations, although according to the highest conception, *guru* is a *sakhī*, a *sakhī* under the guidance of the *sakhīs*, a *mañjarī*, etc. Generally, disciples address *sad-guru* as father. If necessary, an extensive explanation of this will be conveyed later.

Śāstra delineates many principles and philosophic conclusions in relation to *guru-tattva*. *Gurus* are of two types: *dīkṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*. He from whom one receives the *mūla-mantra*

and *gāyatrī* of one's worshipful deity is *dīkṣā-guru*. He from whom one receives instructions on the matter of *bhajana* is *śikṣā-guru*. “*Yadyapi āmāra guru caitanyera dāsa, tathāpi jāniye āmi tāhāra prakāśa*²⁹⁷ – although my *guru* is the servant of Caitanya, I know that he is His manifestation.” *Śrī gurudeva* is, by identity, the devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. He is, by identity, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's most beloved devotee. There is a decree to remember *śrī gurudeva* as Śrī Kṛṣṇa's most beloved devotee or *mukunda-preṣṭha* (the dear most of Mukunda). Though he is said to be Hari Himself, he is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's dear devotee. *Gurudeva* is said to be equal to Kṛṣṇa in terms of how dear he is [to Him] and how worshipable. Pure devotees see Śrī Śiva and *śrī gurudeva* as non-different from Śrī Bhagavān because of how dear they are to Him.

There is a chance that even considering *śrī gurudeva* to be Kṛṣṇa's beloved devotee can be dangerous for the disciple, because there remains the risk of thinking *guru* to be an ordinary human being, and that is particularly likely to generate offences. For the disciple, *śrī gurudeva* is a special manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is Śrī Bhagavān's *anugraha-śakti* (potency of mercy). Bhagavān's *guru-śakti* appears through the medium of *gurudeva* and blesses the disciple. Śrī Bhagavān is the main refuge of *guru-śakti*. That is why He is referred to as the *samaṣṭi-guru* (the aggregate *guru*). Śrī Bhagavān offers this *guru-śakti* to His dear devotees and shows mercy to individuals who are thirsting for *bhajana* by granting them *dīkṣā* and so forth. Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not directly grant anyone *dīkṣā*; for the *jīva* who is bound by *māyā*, there is no possibility of attaining spiritual well-being except by the grace of *guru-śakti*. For the disciple, *śrī gurudeva* is the personification of Bhagavān's formless mercy. Śrī Bhagavān is subservient to the devotees and [the attainment of] His mercy is also possible by the mercy of the devotees. And so it is that He grants the *jīvas* knowledge of the truth through the medium of His dear devotees. One whose heart is exclusively established in *śuddha-sattva* (pure existence) is worthy of being *dīkṣā-guru*; Bhagavān's appearance is possible only in a heart that is radiant with *śuddha-sattva*, and by that, real experience and realization are gained. *Sad-guru* is acquainted with *śāstra* and thus can alleviate the doubts of his disciples, and he is equipped with realization of Bhagavān. “*Jei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya*²⁹⁸ – one who knows the truth of Kṛṣṇa is *guru*.” It is imperative to take a *guru* in order to invoke the mercy of *bhagavad-anugraha-śakti* (the Lord's potency of grace), and therein lies the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*'s unique spiritual welfare.

²⁹⁷ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.44)

²⁹⁸ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 8.128)

In regard to *sādhana-bhakti*, it is certainly crucial to observe *sadācāra* (proper conduct), which consists of various injunctions and prohibitions. Giving up misconduct and adopting proper conduct is the same as adopting the policy of shunning bad association and accepting good association. The Vaiṣṇava will observe specific conduct that is favourable for *sādhana-bhajana* and will certainly reject sense objects and association that are opposed to *bhajana*. These rules and prohibitions have been instructed for the sake of gaining *bhakti*. Performing the limbs of *bhakti* like *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, etc., which have been prescribed by *śāstra*, constitutes Vaiṣṇava *sadācāra*. The root of all injunctions is to remember Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the main prohibition is to forget Him. Hence, remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the chief *sadācāra*. “*Yena kenāpy upāyena manah kṛṣṇe niveśayet*²⁹⁹ – by whatever means, one must turn the heart towards Kṛṣṇa.” Giving up bad association is Vaiṣṇava *ācāra* (conduct). As long as the hankering for enjoyment, which is rooted in the gratification of one’s own senses, remains prominent, it is impossible for *bhakti* to bloom. That is why, for a person who is desirous of *bhakti*, there is the instruction to abandon even *varṇāśrama-dharma*. As long as faith in the hearing, chanting, etc. of descriptions of Bhagavān and His devotees has not manifested, man remains attached to worldly, materialistic *dharma*. Any

**“Remembering
Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the
chief *sadācāra*.”**

**“Bhagavān is
controlled by the
devotees, and
Bhagavān’s mercy
is dependent on
the mercy of the
devotees.”**

lust, or desire, for anything other than the desire for *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* is part of bad association and therefore discardable.

It is by good association and the mercy of great personalities that all these things [*sadācāra*] gain robustness. Great personalities have equanimous vision and are endowed with an intelligence that is fixed on Bhagavān. Those who are *sat* (virtuous) never acknowledge the flaws of others. They know that the supreme objective of mankind is only to love God. The company of living entities who are attached to eating, drinking, etc. and wife, son, daughter, wealth, home, etc. brings them no pleasure. “*Kṛṣṇa-bhakti janma-mūla haya sādhu-saṅga*³⁰⁰ – *sādhu-saṅga* is the root of the birth of devotion for Kṛṣṇa.” Without the mercy of great personalities, one cannot obtain devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Devotees are of two types: *sādhakas* (practitioners) and *siddhas* (perfected). Bhagavān is controlled by the devotees, and Bhagavān’s mercy is dependent on the mercy of the devotees. Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

²⁹⁹ See *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.1.32)

³⁰⁰ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 22.83)

Letter 75

Encouraging people to preach on the Indian mainland • The supremacy of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* • The difference between Śrī Buddha-deva and Siddhārtha Buddha • Transgression of etiquette is contrary to *tṛṇād api sunīcena* and creates obstacles in chanting • The influence of *prākṛta-sahajiyā-vāda* on the Gauḍīya Mission

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
22/10/1984

Snehāspadeṣu—

Bābā —! The letter you wrote to the Kolkata address dated 15/9/84 arrived on the date of 24/9/84. After a long delay, I received it while staying in Deoghar. I understand that you are worried because you have not received any letters from me for so long. ...

There has hardly been any preaching on the Indian mainland. First preach on the mainland and glorify the contribution of the Indian Ārya sages and the speciality of their beautifully subtle philosophical tenets and conclusions. Then, later, cross the waters and endeavour to spread the light of those philosophical conclusions across the continents. “Charity begins at home.” Make the auspicious commencement of the *dharma* of charity from your own nation. Later, strive to spread its glory in foreign lands. First make your body healthy, later, all this preaching will be able to happen properly. With a healthy body, a healthy mind, and well-being of the soul, all is possible. So do not be negligent in this regard.

I am responding to your four questions as follows: (1) “The seventeen Purāṇas are part of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*.” Where did you get this from? *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata Mahā-purāṇa* is unbiased and independent and beautifully established in its own glory. It is wrong to compare it with other Purāṇas. Śrī Nārāyaṇa first taught the *catuḥ-ślokī* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to the four-headed Brahmājī, and it is that which, in later times, Śrī Nārada Ṛṣi taught to Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vedavyāsa. The expansion of that is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It is not surprising that *Garuḍa Purāṇa* mentions the verse “*artho ’yam brahma-sūtrānām*”, which proclaims the

glories of *Bhāgavatam*. Śrī Vedavyāsa, who is cognizant of past, present, and future, can make a reference of any scripture in any Purāṇa before noontime. Śrī *Vedānta-darśana* [*Brahma-sūtra*] contains the opposition and refutation of Buddhism, Jainism (the Arhat doctrine), and other *apa-dharmas*. By this, is it to be assumed that the said doctrines are as ancient as *Vedānta-darśana*? This [Vedānta] is the foregone conclusion of Śrī Vyāsa-deva, seer of past and present.

(2) That Śrī Buddha-deva who is an incarnation of Bhagavān did not preach *māyāvāda*. He appeared in the region of Gayā, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [1.3.24] refers to Him as Añjana-sūta (the son of Añjana): “*buddho nāmnāñjana-sūtaḥ kīkaṭeṣu (gayā) bhaviṣyati* – Buddha, known as the son of Añjana, will appear in Gayā.” He blasphemed the practices of *yajña* and forbade the sacrifice of animals, preaching the policy of “*ahimsā paramo dharmaḥ* – non-violence is the supreme religion”. And it was Siddhārtha, or Gautama Buddha, who appeared in the town of Kapilāvastu in the foothills of the Himālayas that preached *śūnyavāda* (nihilism). Ācārya Śrī Śaṅkara refuted his *śūnyavāda* and established *māyāvāda*, even though *māyāvāda* and *śūnyavāda* are propagated for the same purpose. If you study the book *Māyāvāder Jīvanī*, you will know the particulars of *śūnyavāda* and *māyāvāda*.

(3) No *sādhaka* can advance in *hari-bhajana* by transgressing *māryādā* (etiquette). Śrīman Mahāprabhu Himself conveyed the following: “*maryādā laṅghana muī sahite na pāro*³⁰¹ – I cannot tolerate a transgression of etiquette.” Transgression of etiquette is also contrary to the “*trṇād api sunīcena*” verse taught by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Doing so destroys *amānī-mānada-dharma* (the religion of giving respect without the expectation of any in return) and creates obstacles in the performance of *śrī harināma-saṅkīrtana*. If one cannot become initiated into *amānī-mānada-dharma*, the qualification to perform *śrī nāma-saṅkīrtana* will not manifest. Hence, transgression of etiquette cheats one of the greatest limbs of *sādhana* [*nāma-saṅkīrtana*].

“Transgression of etiquette cheats one of the greatest limbs of *sādhana* [*nāma-saṅkīrtana*].”

(4) If you search the *Pātra-sūcī* (List of Characters) in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata*, you will find out whether or not Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī’s brother was Śyāmadāsa. You can also consult the book *Śrī Bhakti-ratnākara*. Śyāmadāsa’s name may also be in there. Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda has explained that the histories contained in *Bhakti-ratnākara* are not verified.

³⁰¹ See *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya-līlā 4.166)

It is not implausible that the invocation in *Gaura-pārṣada-caritāvalī* published by Gauḍīya Mission contains *prākṛta-sahajiyā* conceptions. They have ended up following in the footsteps of the *prākṛta-sahajiyās*. Rejecting the ideology and conclusions of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda, they ramble on as if they have five heads when glorifying the *jāti-gosvāmīs* and various *apa-sampradāyas*. They are reluctant to accept the pure Gauḍīya Bhāgavata *guru-paramparā* and regard Śrī Madhvācārya as the bona fide *sampradāya ācārya*. In the introduction to the book *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi* published by Śrī Vedānta Samiti, I have conveyed an in-depth refutation in this regard [of Gauḍīya Mission], which will be perfectly evident from a study of that book's *nivedana* [which is similar to a preface]. [Also] get *Bhakti-ratnākara* from the *maṭha* library and look at its *nivedana* (Śrīla Prabhupāda's) [for more about its questionable histories].

I have answered your letter swiftly so as to enthuse you in your service. Surely once you receive this letter, there will remain no possibility of that enthusiasm subsiding. With great enthusiasm and patience, perform your services and engage others in service. Let the programme to preach in the Andamans be postponed for the time being. Make arrangements later when it is the right time and the right opportunity. Do not make a patchwork attempt to keep your body going. It is wanted that you get proper treatment and perform *hari-bhajana* with a healthy body. Try to grasp what I want to express in this letter.

All of you, please accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 76

In the perfected stage, one chooses when to die • Two Kapilas • *Pañcaroga* (five illnesses) • Attaining transcendence of the senses • Śrīman Mahāprabhu's mind is non-different from Vṛndāvana • Following in the footsteps of Śrī Gaurasundara

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
30/12/1984

Snehāspadeṣu—

Bābā —! I received your loving letter dated 1/12/84 on time. ... You wrote that your body is unwell. If you think you really need to, finish up your work as best you can and come to Kolkata for some days. You can return after proper treatment and regaining your health. The planetary influence of the planet Rāhu on you will subside if you come to Kolkata. All illnesses can be alleviated with the proper treatment. Do not worry; the illness will subside before you become gripped by old age. You need to maintain some composure. Why are you stoking the desire to only survive eight or ten years? It is proper for the *sādhaka* to feel, “I have not done *hari-bhajana*.” In the perfected stage (*siddhāvasthā*), it is fine to say that one chooses when to die. “*Bhajite bhajite, samaya āsile, e deha chāḍiyā dibo*³⁰² – in the course of performing *bhajana*, when the time comes, I will discard this body.” Why are you becoming a ghost without even dying?

I am giving brief responses to your questions:

(1) Kapila, who was born in the dynasty of Agni, annihilated the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara. It is correct to accept this as conclusive information. On the other hand, the theistic Kapila, son of Devahūti, appeared in this world as an *avatāra* of Bhagavān. The very first place he set foot was at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the ocean. This is described in *Bhāgavatam*. And He did not burn the sons of Sagara to ashes. It was at the site of his footprints, however, that [the other] Kapila, the son of Agni, made his seat.

³⁰² *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Hari Hari! Kabe Mora Habe Heno Dina* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

(2) *Pañca-roga* (five illnesses) are *avidyā* (ignorance), *asmitā* (vanity), *rāga* (anger), *dveṣa* (hatred), and *abhiniveśa* (obsession).

(3) The *jīvas* bound by *māyā* do not and cannot serve Adhokṣaja Śrī Bhagavān by means of their gross senses. “*Sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty-adaḥ*.³⁰³” As per this statement, the transcendental *śrī nāma-brahma* appears via the senses that are inclined towards service; Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name, which is beyond sensory faculty, cannot be grasped by material senses. This is the principle and conclusion. That which is material can never become spiritual, and the spiritual never becomes material. “The presiding Lord of the transcendental senses, Hṛṣikeśa Śrī Bhagavān, can be served only by transcendental senses, a process referred to as *bhakti – hr̥ṣikena hr̥ṣikeśa-sevanam bhaktir-ucyate*³⁰⁴”. Attaining transcendence of the senses is a special experience, not some gross affair of the inert. Śrīman Mahāprabhu discussed the difference between the inert and conscious mind: “*ānyera hṛdaya—mana, mora mana—vṛndāvana, mane vane eka kari jāni*³⁰⁵ – Others’ hearts and minds are one. My mind is Vṛndāvana. I know My mind and the forest to be one.” The conditioned soul’s mind is controlled by the material senses, whereas Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s mind, which is overwhelmed with transcendental sentiment, is non-different from Vṛndāvana. It is only possible for Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, who is beyond all that is material, to appear in that transcendental Vṛndāvana. Another transcendental perspective of Him is as follows:

*vana dekhi’ bhrama haya,—ei vṛndāvana
śaila dekhi mane haya,—ei govardhana
jāhā nadi dekhe, tāhā mānaye—kālindī
mahā-premāveśe nāce mahāprabhu paḍe kāndī*³⁰⁶

[Seeing any forest, He becomes bewildered and thinks, “This is Vṛndāvana.” Seeing any mountain, He thinks, “This is Govardhana.” Wherever He sees a river, He thinks it to be the Kālindī. In the grand rapture of divine love, Mahāprabhu falls and weeps.]

*mahā-bhāgavata dekhe sthāvara-jaṅgama
tāhā tāhā haya tāra śrī kṛṣṇa-sphuraṇa*

303 *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.234)

304 *Nārada-pañcarātra*, quoted in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.12)

305 *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 13.137)

306 *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 17.55–56)

*sthāvara-jaṅgama dekhe, nā dekhe tāra mūrti
sarvatra haya nija iṣṭadeva sphūrṭi*³⁰⁷

[When a *mahā-bhāgavata* looks at a moving or non-moving being, all he perceives are manifestations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Although seeing entities, both moving and inert, he does not see their form. Everywhere are only visions of his own worshipful Lord.]

Due to the nature of the *mahā-bhāgavata-paramahamsas'* *prema*, their vision of everything, all moving and non-moving creatures, is utterly devoid of mundane awareness, thus giving them glimpses of their worshipful deity's *śrī mūrti*. In other words, they have *śrī kṛṣṇa-bhāva-darśana* (they see Śrī Kṛṣṇa everywhere). The *uttama-bhāgavata* sees the soul of all souls, Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, in all living entities, and he sees all souls in Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is why they are *sama-darśī* (possessed of equal vision).

I hope you are all cooperating to manage the service tasks in the *maṭha*. If the unfavourable environment is utterly harmful for the *maṭha* and mission, then you will have to arrange to remedy it. But that must happen with intelligence and tact, so that the social dignity of the *maṭha* and certain individuals are not injured. The teacher of all worlds, the *guru* of all realms, Śrī Gaurasundara, who is Himself initiated into *amānī-mānada-dharma*, would defeat the opposing party but always safeguard their dignity. As we introduce ourselves as the servants of His servants, we will follow in His footsteps. What miserliness is there in this? In the Śrī Sārasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society, the Vaiṣṇavas use the term “*gaura-jana-kīṅkara* – the servant of Gaura's associates” to introduce themselves to the outside world. As the *vighaśāsī*³⁰⁸ servants of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, they are accustomed, in their inner circle, to introducing themselves as the servants of the servants of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. This has been a custom in practice since ancient times. Accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁰⁷ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 8.273–274)

³⁰⁸ What is left over after the servants of a household eat is called *vighasa*. One who eats the leftovers of the servants is called a *vighaśāsī*.

Letter 77

Singing the glories of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas is the root-fibre of *sādhana-bhajana* • There is real happiness and peace in renunciation • We need the blessings of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas at every moment in life

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
4/1/1985

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear —! ... You worry way too much for me. That is why you keep having dreams about me. If you are going to have dreams, try to have good dreams. If you have bad dreams, you give yourself trouble and cast me into bouts of worry. I am healthy, so you have no cause for concern. Surely you will be relieved to receive my letter.

You strung a garland from flowers of devotion. Surely it was put to use. “*Yāḥ chīḍe yāḥ, mora phula-mālā, thāk pade thāk bharā phula-ḍālā; habe nā viphalā mora phula-tolā, tumi to’ caraṇe laibe*³⁰⁹ – Let it break, let my flower garland break and stay strewn. Let the flowering boughs stay full; my picking of flowers will not be fruitless. You will take it at Your feet.” Utter this portion of poetry to pacify your mind.

You should not become attached to the material objects you receive in this world. Do not forget the Lord of the world, the Lord of the universe, Śrī Bhagavān. This is my greatest blessing to you. Without worship of Śrī Jagannātha, man’s life is in vain. This is the exclusive purport of all scriptures. Keep this in mind. Man’s work-filled life is for the sake of remembering *śrī guru* and Bhagavān. As you remain constantly absorbed in the various services of family life, you will find the opportunity and good fortune of keeping Him in your memory. Singing the glories of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas is the root-fibre of *sādhana-bhajana*. Aside from this, there is no other easily accessible path for the deliverance of conditioned souls.

**“Singing the
glories of
Śrī Hari, *guru*,
and Vaiṣṇavas
is the root-fibre
of *sādhana-
bhajana*.”**

³⁰⁹
Samsāre Jādī Nāhi Pāi Sādā (3), a Bengali folk song

Human beings practice *gārhasthya-dharma* to conquer mundane lust and desires. *Saṁsāra* is another name for praying for material sense objects, but devotion to Kṛṣṇa is the only thing we pray for. There is real happiness and peace in renunciation. Man can never have well-being by leading a life prone to sense enjoyment. If one can engage all the impulses of one's senses in the service of Bhagavān, one can obtain devotion for Bhagavān.

The affection of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is transcendental. We need their good wishes and auspicious blessings at every moment in life. If we are deprived of their love, we will never be able to progress on the path of *bhajana*. You should proceed having intelligently considered all of these matters. There are none so foolish in this world as those who are inconsiderate in society. Go forth with love and affection, faith and belief. This is my special wish.

The responsibility for you is upon me and will remain as such. You have no reason to doubt this. I say I have accepted full responsibility for you. Hence you have no worries. “Who am I to you?” I am rather angry and indignant that you still cannot recognize this. My words of fearlessness and reassurance will surely make you all free from worries. What more? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 78

Gratitude for the sacrifice that is preaching • The devotees are patient, for all their joys and sorrows are related to service • Counselling a senior devotee, encouraging cooperation and conflict resolution • Leaving the *maṭha* and rejecting *guru's* service is akin to suicide • Studying the qualities of a saint described in *Bhāgavatam* subdues hatred, violence, and envy • Magnanimity means to cultivate the good qualities of others within oneself

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
5/6/1985

Śrī vaiṣṇava-caraṇe daṇḍavan-nati pūrvikēyam—

Dear ———! I hope that by God's grace you are well. ... In the (preaching) party, you are senior in age and the uncle (*kākā*) *guru*. I hope that the other *sevakas* act according to your instructions and advice. If you enthuse the *sevakas* and inspire them in their service, they will find strength in their hearts.

For most of the year, you have to be out preaching, and naturally, you endure profuse and strenuous exertion, as well as physical and mental suffering, but you are all accepting this suffering for the sake of service to Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. It will not do to forget this. This is, without a doubt, the ideal of renunciation, or giving up sense enjoyment for the sake of Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. For this sort of sacrifice to serve *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, the *sevakas* of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, and I especially, feel particularly indebted to you all. Seeing your efforts in service, the *guru-varga* will surely shower profuse blessings upon you from beyond the veil.

By worldly, temporal standards, everything has a limit. When the limits of patience are left behind, many declare rebellion, and then they do not receive assistance in the most ordinary of matters [from the government they have rebelled against]. The view of *nīti-śāstra* (political science) in this regard is “they are all to be condemned to the extreme – *sarvam-atyantam garhitam*”. This notion cannot be applied in the case of spirituality. The conception of the Lord's devotees is “*tomāra sevāya, duḥkha haya jata, seo to' parama sukha; sevā-sukha-duḥkha,*

parama sampada, *nāśaye avidyā duḥkha*³¹⁰ – Whatever suffering one undergoes in the course of serving You is a matter of supreme joy. The joys and sorrows of service are the greatest wealth, for they abolish the misery of ignorance.” You should explain all these matters to the *sevakas* of the preaching party and tell them to comprehend the purport of such statements of the *mahājanas*.

I am delighted to know that all are giving their attention to the service of collecting donations. I have understood that while we are still alive, the *sevakas* will be able to keep the daily *sevā* going. If they can always reap the delight of service, they will meet with extensive auspiciousness. You should pay particular attention to getting the *brahmacārīs* in the preaching party to work together in a mood of friendship. “We will all cooperate under the guidance of the *āśraya-vigraha*.” Tell them to take this notion to heart.

When living together, at times some differences of opinion or mind can occur, but it is not good to keep that going for too long. If not mutually forgotten, these individual differences of opinion can cause fearsome damage to the *maṭha* and mission overall. My special request is that in such cases, you, as a supervisor, make a wholehearted effort to keep the harmony between the two intact and make arrangements accordingly.

The *sevakas* have come to the *maṭha-mandira* for the express purpose of serving *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. If they disturb their minds over ordinary matters, they will lose an eagerness to perform *sādhana-bhajana* and end up forever cheated of service to Hari. A human being can never survive in a condition that is bereft of service. “*Chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava sevā, nistāra peyeche kebā?* – Who has ever gained deliverance by leaving the service of Vaiṣṇavas?” You have to consider this. We have no use for worldly glamour and must be particularly careful that we do not end up as *dehārāmī gehārāmīs* [persons content with the pleasures of body and home]. It is very difficult for those who are trying to get a final settlement [severance package] to perform *hari-bhajana*. The endeavour to create a bank balance for one’s future food and clothing just shows a lack of faith in *śrī guru* and Bhagavān. One does not receive the causeless mercy of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān if one cannot become reliant on them. *Sādhakas* that we are, we will always be ready for them to test our heart. Gaining well-being for the soul is only possible through patience, enthusiasm, firm conviction, keenness to perform one’s duties, observance of the rules and, above all, through faithful devotion. Explain all these matters in depth to the *sevakas* and encourage them.

**“One does not
receive the
causeless mercy
of *śrī guru*
and Bhagavān
if one cannot
become reliant
on them.”**

³¹⁰ *Śaraṇāgati, Ātma-nivedana* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

“*Durdaive sevaka jadi jāya anya sthāne, sei prabhu dhanya, tāre keśe dhari āne*³¹¹ – if, due to unfortunate circumstances, the servant goes elsewhere, that master who grabs him by the hair and brings him back is blessed.” This is indicative of the causeless compassion and parental affection of the Vaiṣṇavas, who are merciful, free from enmity, who see all as equals, who are magnanimous, who work for the benefit of all, and who are empathetic to all. Those persons are fortunate who have come to perform *hari-bhajana* and have taken shelter at the feet of a bona fide *guru*. Should they leave the *maṭha* and reject *guru*’s service to roam the universe of the illusory energy, it is akin to suicide. It is the result of many, many births worth of *sukṛti* to obtain all this good fortune. *Sādhana-bhajana* cannot be perfected by living in a house of indulgence in the name of performing religious activities or spending one’s time as a paid worker in some *gr̥hastha*’s deity temple.

The statement “*nāyam ātmā bala-hīnena labhyaḥ*³¹² – the Supreme Soul is not attainable by those without strength” does not refer to physical strength. One can never make the soul strong by material physical strength. But by *ātma-bala*, or will-force, it is possible to compel the strong and the weak of the world. All manner of injustice and iniquity can be counteracted by a strong personality. For that, a profuse amount of practice and acceptance of renunciation is also necessary. The *maṭha-mandira* or spiritual gathering place is the real hub of peace. It is only by love and affection that even a stone-hearted person’s soul is conquered. Studying the many virtues that a bona fide *guru* or saintly person must possess as described in *Bhāgavatam*

**“It is only by love
and affection
that even a
stone-hearted
person’s soul is
conquered.”**

subdues hatred, violence, envy, etc. Whatever the *sevakas* obtain is to be implemented in the service of *guru*. If someone thinks of any of it as their personal property, they become enjoyers of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and are born as a *kṛkalāsa* (lizard). We can only attain auspiciousness if we can adopt proper standards and ideals, no matter what the circumstance. It is rectification of ourselves rather than criticism of others that generates auspiciousness for us. Do try to grasp the core essence of my letter and tell the *sevakas* to maintain fortitude. Magnanimity means to cultivate

the good qualities of others within oneself. “*Āp bhālo to jagat bhālo* – if you are good, the world is good.” *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³¹¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.47)

³¹² Śrī Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (3.2.4)

Letter 79

***Bhakti* can only appear if one engages all one’s senses in Bhagavān’s service • Avoid those devotees of the *maṭha* who are prone to enmity and violence • The misconceptions of the *prākṛta-sahajiyās* • The material body does not become transcendental • Attaining a transcendental body and serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa**

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
5/7/1985

Snehāspadeṣu—

——! I received your letter of 21/6/85 on the date of 26/6/85. ... You are imagining that you are deprived of achieving the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. It is by the strength of *guru*’s mercy that one attains Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. Lust, anger, and so on only take one down the path to hell. Ṭhākura Śrīla Narottama has described the path of deliverance from this: “*kāma—kṛṣṇa-karmārpaṇe, krodha—bhakta-dveṣi-jane, lobha—sādhū-saṅge hari-kathā; moha—iṣṭa-lābha-bine, mada—kṛṣṇa-guṇa-gāne, niyukta karibo jathā-tathā*³¹³ – I will engage lust in the offering of work for Kṛṣṇa, anger to oppose those malicious to devotees, greed in seeking saintly association and hearing descriptions of Hari, bewilderment in the feeling that I have not attained my worshipful Lord, and the feeling of intoxication in singing Kṛṣṇa’s glories.” *Bhakti* can only appear if one engages the proclivities of all the senses in the service of Bhagavān. “*Hṛṣīke govinda-sevā, nā pūjibo devī-devā, iha bhakti parama kāraṇa*³¹⁴ – I will engage my senses in the service of Govinda, and I will not worship the demigods or goddesses. This is the supreme cause of *bhakti*.” These are the words of the *mahājanas*. “*Hṛṣīkena hṛṣīkeśa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate*³¹⁵ – *bhakti* is service rendered by one’s transcendental senses to the Lord of the senses, Hṛṣīkeśa.” The path to deliverance for everyone has been determined in the aforementioned manner. ...

You should let go of the so-called assistance, empathy, and cooperation of those *maṭha-sevakas* who are prone to enmity, violence, and envy and try to become self-sufficient. When *sevakas* become arrogant and egotistical, they are cast very far away from the service of Śrī

³¹³ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Anya-abhilāṣa Chāḍī*’ (10) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

³¹⁴ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Anya-abhilāṣa Chāḍī*’ (1) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

³¹⁵ *Nārada-pañcarātra*, quoted in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.12)

“No one can ever bring about any good for the *maṭha* and mission by factionalism or grouping.”

Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. No one can ever bring about any good for the *maṭha* and mission by factionalism or grouping. Be cautious in this regard. I will discuss all these matters in person.

You should all come together to perform *hari-bhajana*. Be free of hatred and envy, of the hope for profit, worship, and prestige, of criticism, gossip, and analysis of others, and of extraneous desires and deceit; and try to live life as a servant of servants, subsisting on the remnants of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Always keep yourself free from notions contrary to *siddhānta*, the faults of *rasābhāsa*, transgressions of etiquette and other types of conduct befitting non-devotees. Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda will surely show you Their true mercy. Try to properly comprehend Gauḍīya *tattva-siddhānta* by the medium of the Gauḍīya Gosvāmīs. Never associate with *prākṛta-sahajiyās*, *smārtas*, *pañcopāsakīs*, *cid-jāḍa-samanvaya-vādīs*, and *jīva-brahmaika-vādīs*.

I am answering your questions as follows:

The purport of *jagad-guru* Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda’s *Gauḍīya-bhāṣya* and Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Prabhu’s introduction to *Śrī Dāmodarāṣṭakam* is one and the same. “When *bhakti* manifests, the *jīva*’s body of five elements attains *saccidānanda-rūpatā* (the state of having a form composed of cognizance, eternity, and bliss)” means “within the body of five elements, one attains *saccidānanda-rūpatā*”. The physical body composed of five material elements does not become transcendental. This you must understand. The same sort of difference between Śrī Hari and *haritva* (being like Hari) exists between the words *rūpa* and *rūpatā*. Inert matter never becomes spirit; what is material never becomes spiritual. This is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s view. If you study his and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s articles like “*Prākṛta-rasa Śata-duṣaṇī*”, “*Sahajiyā Mater Heyatva*”, and “*Siddhānta-virodha O Rasābhāsa-doṣa*”, this will be very clear. This has also been concluded in the verse “*ataḥ śrī kṛṣṇa nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam-indriyaiḥ, sevonmukhe hi jihvādau svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ*”³¹⁶ – Hence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name, and so forth cannot be grasped by the senses. They only manifest themselves upon the tongue that is inclined towards service.” “The view of the *prākṛta-sahajiyās* is that matter becomes spirit, and by the power of *sādhana*, one can see Bhagavān with material eyes.” This statement is beautifully consistent with statements Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura made [explaining the view of *prākṛta-sahajiyās*].

³¹⁶
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.232)

“If, at the time of *dikṣā*, the devotee offers his soul, then Kṛṣṇa makes him akin to Himself. The devotee’s body then becomes composed of spiritual consciousness and bliss and he, in his transcendental body, worships Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s feet.” This too is a statement that is synonymous [with the above excerpt from the introduction to *Śrī Dāmodarāṣṭakam*]. The transcendental state has been described in this context. Only in a body composed of transcendental sentiment is the service and worship of the transcendental *sac-cid-ānanda-tattva* possible. This is the ontological aspect of *sādhana-bhajana*. By morphology, by material conceptions, it is impossible to experience the *tattva* that is beyond the senses. It is impossible, just as it is impossible for there to be a gold stone bowl, a poisonous rabbit, or a flower growing in the sky. The process of *bhūta-śuddhi* (purification of the physical elements) that the *pūjaka*, or *arcaka* (priest), performs when he worships *śrī viṅghraha* or offers *bhoga* effects *citta-śuddhi* (purification of the heart), *bhāva-śuddhi* (purification of sentiments), etc. And once that happens, that is, once knowledge of one’s relationship with Bhagavān arises or once one realizes the constant, pure primordially of both the *jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* and attains that state of consciousness, Bhagavān accepts the servant’s worship and whatever offering one makes. The notions of “*devaṁ bhūtvā devaṁ yajet* – be a god to worship a god” and “*nā devo devaṁ arcayet* – you cannot worship a god without being a god” are applicable here. Only if the *jīvātmā*, or *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*, have experienced the awakening of *sambandha-jñāna*, or in other words, only when their transcendental condition is established, do they become worthy candidates for the attainment of *bhakti* and *bhagavat-prema*. Service to Bhagavān can never be obtained by any sort of mundane, imaginary ascending path.

“Once knowledge of one’s relationship with Bhagavān arises, Bhagavān accepts whatever offering one makes.”

Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 80

“I am fully indebted to each and every *sevaka* and will remain so” • Plain living and high thinking come naturally in the course of *sādhana* • Every soul is a blossomed flower fit to be offered to Śrī Bhagavān • Studying the path of *sādhana* (a recommended book list) • The two Kapilas

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
10/7/1985

Snehāspadeṣu—

—— Mahārāja! I received the letter you wrote from Lumding dated 29/6/85, on 3/7/85. I understand you received my previous two letters when you went to Tinsukia.

I am delighted and enthused to know that the party’s *brahmacārī-sevakas* are serving with enthusiasm. If they become responsible like this, then I can have some peace of mind in my old age. I am fully indebted to each and every *sevaka* and will remain so. I am especially indebted knowing that you are all helping, empathizing with each other, and cooperating for Śrī Guru-pādapadma’s service. Your heartfelt empathy is, for me, sufficient.

I discussed the matter of the Vaiṣṇavas’ virtues in the previous letter. We must convey earnest prayers to Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas so that we may obtain those virtues. If we nicely engage in *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* of *hari-kathā*, the condition of the mind will transform. Once inertia, laziness, and disinterest in hard work are dispelled, the delight of service is obtained. Plain living and high thinking come naturally in the course of *sādhana*. “*Bhaktiḥ pareśānubhavo viraktir anyatra*³¹⁷ – the more one obtains realization of Bhagavān, the more natural detachment from the sordid objects of the senses arises.” “*Vāsudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ, janayaty āśu vairāgyam jñānam ca yad-ahaitukam*³¹⁸ – by performing *bhakti* to Lord Vāsudeva,

³¹⁷ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.2.42)

³¹⁸ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (6.17.31)

one swiftly develops causeless renunciation and knowledge.” “*Jñāna-vairāgyādi kabhu nahe bhaktir aṅga*³¹⁹ – knowledge and renunciation are never limbs of *bhakti*.” This is the special purport in this case. Every *jīvātmā* is a blossomed flower fit to be offered at Śrī Bhagavān’s worshipful lotus feet. These are the words of *sādhū*, *guru*, and *śāstra*. Hence, we have some sort of faith and belief in everyone.

As time permits, I will put into writing some scriptural messages, or instructions and teachings. Surely some of my lectures are preserved in the *Śrī Patrikā* and on some tapes. You can also select from there. The personal *sevakas* who have been with me, as well as the ones who currently are, never felt any need to take notes of my classes or make tape recordings. I do not foster the audacity of telling others to make notes of what I say. You can collect more or less what you want from my yearly dairies from 1941. “Where there is a will, there is a way.” If you believe in this proverb, you will be successful in this regard.

It is only through the service and association of Vaiṣṇavas more exalted than oneself that one attains utmost benefit on the path of *sādhana*. In this regard, the verse “*hīyate hi matis-tātaḥ hīnaiḥ saha samāgamāt, samaiś ca samatāmeti viśiṣṭaiś ca viśiṣṭatām* – O son, by associating with those inferior to oneself, one’s intelligence is degraded, by associating with those equal to oneself, one’s intelligence remains the same, and by associating with those greater than oneself, one gains knowledge” from the *nīti-śāstra* is memorable. If one is to advance on the path of *bhajana*, one must study “*sādhana-patha* – the path of *sādhana*” or, in other words, *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmāṣṭaka*, *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta*, *Śrī Manah-śikṣā*, *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, *Sva-niyama-dvādaśakam*, *Śrīman Mahāprabhur Śikṣā*, *Daśa-mūla-niryāsa*, *Śrī Jaiva-dharma*, *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (with the commentaries of Śrī Baladeva and Cakravartī), *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (with Cakravartī’s *ṭīkā* and Śrīdhara Svāmī’s *ṭīkā*), *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha*, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, and other various sacred expository texts. We see, in the words of *sādhū*, *guru*, and *śāstra*, the instruction to take saintly association via the scriptures in the absence of direct *sādhū-saṅga*. At the time of *sādhana*, it is surely our duty to shun anything that is unfavourable for *bhakti* and accept an environment that is favourable for service. Examining one’s own flaws and mistakes is more beneficial to the soul than seeking out the flaws and mistakes of others. By this, the hankering for profit, worship, and prestige is dispelled and peace of mind is gained.

**“Every *jīvātmā*
is a blossomed
flower fit to
be offered at
Śrī Bhagavān’s
worshipful
lotus feet.”**

³¹⁹ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya-līlā 22.145)

It was the theistic Kapiladeva, son of Kardama Ṛṣi (and Devahūti), who first graced the site of Gaṅgā-sāgara. After Him, the atheistic Kapila, a son of Agni, went there. This atheistic Kapila was the one who reduced the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara to ashes with a curse. The history of the theistic Kapila is discussed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Have a good look at that.

My body is carrying on somehow or other. I was very concerned to receive news of your poor health. Make regular use of medicine and treatment. This year you have not had any rest. The body also needs rest from time to time, even if “*ārāma* (rest) is haram (forbidden)”. It is true there is no rest in service, yet if we do not give the body some rest, often it will go on strike.

Know you all have my affectionate blessings. *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 81

Having reservations about the state of society and wanting to lead a solitary life • The opinion of Kuntī-devī • We must try to make the environment favourable for service • Leaving civilization to live in the forest or jungle is not a solution • Studying *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, *Śrī Maṇaḥ-śikṣā*, and *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta* every day gives strength of mind

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

85/1 Bechu Chatterjee St.
Calcutta-9
6/8/1985

Sādara sambhāṣaṇa pūrvikēyam—

Mā —! ... I have very little time. At the moment, with all the book publication work I have to do, I cannot find any time. If I stay in the *maṭha*, people get irritated, so I am staying separately in a remote house overseeing the work of printing the *granthas*. No one else comes here.

To tell you the truth, seeing the current situation, I do not want to go anywhere anymore. Men's hearts are extremely polluted. No one is accustomed to seeing the good in others. Hatred, violence, envy, blasphemy, gossip, and hopes for profit, worship, and prestige have turned people's lives upside-down. There is at present a dearth of love, affection, and courtesy among mankind. Extreme arrogance and bravado have become solidly established in every field. If a person has no patience, tolerance, and simplicity, then what kind of *sādhana-bhajana* can he be doing? Seeing all of this, I have personally become quite reserved. I am just trying to carry on with what little goodness there is in me. After great ordeal, I have, by the blessings of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, become a human being, so I do not wish to waste time with incompatible (*vi-jāṭīya*) people. My sole aspiration is to lead a solitary life and I am accustomed to leading a solitary existence even in the midst of many people.

**“If a person has no
patience, tolerance,
and simplicity,
then what kind of
sādhana-bhajana
can he be doing?”**

I understand that you are sad because you have not had the opportunity to hear *hari-kathā* for a year and a half. When, amid the greatest disturbance in the world, you are not overwhelmed, then I trust that Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī-jīu have shown you special mercy. If you can always carry on maintaining your composure in any circumstance, you will have

auspiciousness. Therein is satisfaction of the soul, therein is peace of mind. The situation these days cannot quite be called misfortune. *Sādhū* and *śāstra* have explained that the sorrow or suffering that rouses remembrance of the Lord and His devotees constitutes, in the opinion of

Kuntī-devī, good days and good fortune.

**“We ourselves
must try to
make the
environment
favourable for
service.”**

Living entities embroiled in material existence have no alternative other than material existence. Where else will you go besides this infinite material universe? Wherever you go, this material existence of yours and mine will keep trailing along behind us. This material existence is an ocean. It is a mistake to think that the water will dry up and then you will be able to cross that ocean. You have to live in the midst of it and consider the well-being of your soul. We ourselves must try to make the environment

favourable for service. Why only a little concern for you and yours? You have profuse concerns and responsibility and always will. Your sister has learned to tread carefully and deliberately, so there is no need to worry so much for her. Perhaps, indirectly, she has given me some relief from the clutches of worry. But with stubborn you, I have fallen into a predicament. “*Samsāra nirvāha kari, jābo āmi vṛndāvana, ṛhṇa-traya śodhibāre karitechi sujatana, e āśāra nāhi prayojana*”³²⁰ – Once I carry out my duties in this material existence, I will go to Vṛndāvana. Though I am trying so hard to repay the three debts [to the sages, gods, and ancestors], there is no use to this hope.” “*Gṛhe thāko vane thāko, ithe tarka akāraṇa*”³²¹ – whether you live at home or in the forest, all such debate on the matter is pointless.” This is our go-to policy at present times. If you leave civilization to go to the forest or jungle, there too you will surely have violent blood-drinking beasts and animals for neighbours, like snakes, scorpions, mosquitoes, worms, and insects. Hence, the best policy is to consider all matters and maintain composure in your heart. That way it is possible to gain peace.

If, daily, you carefully study and cultivate the teachings given in *Śrī Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, *Śrī Maṇḍikā-sikṣā*, and *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta*, you will find strength of mind and then the world’s good and bad cannot agitate you. It is true that good fortune is needed to gain the *darśana* of *sādhū*, *guru*, and *Vaiṣṇava*, but even though *darśana* of “your *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas*” is rare, know that it is also very much accessible. All is well if you are all well. What more? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³²⁰ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Jīvana-samāpti-kāle Koribo Bhajana* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³²¹ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Jīvana-samāpti-kāle Koribo Bhajana* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 82

Gratitude between Bhagavān and His devotees • Service and chanting are synonymous and simultaneous • The importance of patiently and enthusiastically engaging others in service • The special virtues required of a temple manager • Only those who are deprived of the service of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are petty gossipers

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
6/8/1985

Snehāspadeṣu—

—— Mahārāja! Upon receiving your twelve-page letter (27/7/85), I became acquainted with all the matters at hand. You cannot write a letter at a low cost; there is enough proof of that. It would not be a bad idea to cut down on the cost of paper a little. What you conveyed in twelve pages I can write in two. ...

If I am your *śrī gurudeva* and you are my disciple, or follower, then why should I or you endure mental disturbance? If I can think of you as the servant or *vaibhava* (opulence, expansion) of my *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, then there is no reason for anyone to feel any sense of obligation or to make claims or demands. This is very appropriate if considered from the perspective of *vaiṣṇavatā* (what it means to be a Vaiṣṇava) as well. When a human being can gain physical, mental, and financial support, sympathy, and cooperation from anyone via a material conception of relationship, then surely such convenience and opportunity can be found directly and indirectly in the spiritual realm too. Even that grateful, capable, magnanimous, *bhakta-vatsala* Śrī Bhagavān, to whom all *sādhakas* and *siddhas* are forever indebted in their pursuit of that extremely rare *prema-bhakti*, is forever indebted to His exclusively devout *sevaka* and *sevikās* and expresses His gratitude.

You wrote, “If I am continuously roaming around preaching outside, *bhajana* is somewhat hindered.” This cannot be considered correct. If preaching and *bhajana* are synonymous, there is no question of hindrance. Service and chanting of *śrī nāma* are synonymous and to be

“Service and chanting of *śrī nāma* are synonymous and to be performed simultaneously.”

performed simultaneously. Without service, there is no *śrī nāma*, and without *śrī nāma*, there is no service. The performance of the five limbs of *bhakti* – engaging in *sādhū-saṅga*, performing *nāma-kīrtana*, hearing *Bhāgavatam*, living in the *dhāma*, and serving the deity – has certainly been determined as duty. The prescription for chanting *śrī nāma* that aids one in service and also service

that aids one in chanting *śrī nāma* has been established by the Śrī Rūpānuga Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas. Chanting *śrī nāma* and rendering *sevā* develop differences and specialities in accordance with one’s individual competence in the practice of *vidhi* and *rāgānuga*. Someone of a lower qualification cannot realize or appreciate the transcendental *bhāva-sevā* of the *uttama-adhikārī*. By chanting *kṛṣṇa-mantra*, the condition of material existence is eradicated and, by chanting Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pure name, direct service is attained. This is in accordance with scriptural conclusions and the supreme truth approved by the *mahājanas*.

I trust that, by Bhagavān’s desire, the collection will not be bad. By your firm conviction and concerted efforts, it will turn out more or less all right. The responsibility and service conviction of the elderly Vaiṣṇava Vajranābha Prabhu is an especially remarkable phenomenon. His fervour for service even at such an advanced age stuns and captivates us all. You have your own enthusiasm and patience, but still, I am advising you to adopt more patience and enthusiasm. We must keep people of all kinds of eligibility and qualification engaged in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. We must intelligently engage whatever little qualification a person has. Śrīla Guru-pādapadma used to say, “Attempting to use one’s intelligence to engage the capabilities of others in service has more speciality and is more praiseworthy than accomplishing the tasks of service by enduring painful toil oneself.” Expertly engaging other *sevakas* in service does more to prove excellence in service. You have to consider all of this to lead the preaching party.

The conduct and indiscretion of weakhearted and angry individuals often becomes the cause of harm for the *maṭha* and mission instead of its upliftment. All of these causes need special, cautious attention. All manner of flaws and mistakes of a *sevaka* can be accepted, but it is only moral character that establishes his dignity. “*Sādhur alpa-chidra sarva-loke gāya*³²² – the smallest flaws of a saint are broadcast by everyone.” We will mingle with householders and sense enjoyers as much as is necessary for the interests and development of the *maṭha*; but we will not become their bought slaves. A *maṭha-rakṣaka* (“temple protector” or temple president)

³²² Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 12.51)

should have some special virtues. He must be accommodating and obliging. A restless-hearted, crude, vitriolic, harsh-spoken person who lacks composure can never get along with even five people. “A bad workman quarrels with his fellow men.” This is the worst situation.

Know that you are preaching for the service of the *maṭha* and mission at the behest of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. This leaves no room for others to make futile criticisms. Do not disturb your mind because of that. Only those who are deprived of the service of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are petty gossipers. They can never find auspiciousness.

**“Only those who
are deprived of the
service of *guru* and
Vaiṣṇavas are petty
gossipers.”**

Both conditioned and liberated souls have the desire for prestige and always will.³²³ If someone says that he does not have any sort of desire for prestige, then he is “*na devāya na dharmāya* – neither for God, nor for religion”. We are neither *bhoga-tyāgīs* (renouncers of enjoyment) nor *tyāga-tyāgīs* (renouncers of renunciation). We are the *vighasāsī*³²⁴ servants of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. This is our special identity.

Know you have my affectionate blessings. Convey my *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas* to ——— Prabhu. I will tell and hear everything in person. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³²³ Quoting Prabhupāda Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s *Duṣṭa Mana Tumi*, Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja says: “I want *vaiṣṇavī-pratiṣṭhā*. I won’t want any popularity from the ordinary public – they are almost insane – but I want a position in the eye of my master, my Gurudeva” (The Golden Staircase, Chapter 4).

³²⁴ What is left over after the servants of a household eat is called *vighasa*. One who eats the leftovers of the servants is called a *vighasāsī*.

Letter 83

The mercy of *guru* • The glories of *Daśa-mūla-śikṣā* • The rarity of a genuine disciple • *Mantra* is directly *guru*, and *guru* is Hari Himself • Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *sarva-śaktimān* (the possessor of all potencies), and *śrī guru* is *pūrṇa-śakti* (full potency) • *Śrī guru* alone is our protector, maintainer, and nurturer • Qualities of a true *sādhikā*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
7/8/1985

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I received your two letters. I received your last letter on the date of 17/6/85. I hope you are well physically and that your *bhajana* is also well. If you abandon anger and pride and become keen on contemplating the soul's benefit, you will find peace of mind. ...

Śrī Guru-pādapadma can make one acquainted with Śrī Gaura-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī and inform one about Them. By his causeless mercy, the *jīva* gains knowledge of his true form and nature; that is to say, *sambandha-jñāna* arises. The ignorant infant does not recognize or know anyone but his mother. Likewise, the *sevaka* or *sevikā* who has taken refuge at the feet of *guru* is wholly dependent on his mercy. If one drinks of the teachings and nectar of *Daśa-mūla-śikṣā*, the earthly, mundane lusts and desires of this world are dispelled and the qualification for *prema-prīti* is obtained. Only especially fortunate individuals become exceedingly blessed by obtaining this sort of opportunity and advantage. Your fortune is extremely favourable, which is why you have obtained the wonderful opportunity to drink the nectar of *Daśa-mūla*. Day to day, move forward in *sādhana-bhajana*. Know this to be my special blessing.

There are very few people to hear *hari-kathā*. Even if you find two or four listeners, many people cannot understand the topics of *bhakti*. Only greatly fortunate persons take shelter of the path of *bhakti* and become blessed. Teachers who perform *kīrtana* of the topics of Bhagavān

are extremely rare. Even if one finds a bona fide *guru* by the grace of Bhagavān, a genuine disciple who is free from deceit and is following his guidance is even more rare.

Guru is not a *jīva*. *Guru* is Śrī Bhagavān's *prakāśa-vigraha* (manifestation). He is the Lord's dear one. It is in the form of *guru* that Śrī Hari grants shelter to the *jīva*, shows him mercy, and delivers him. Only fortunate good-hearted persons who have obtained the mercy of Bhagavān become blessed and fulfilled by attaining a bona fide *guru*.

Śrī *gurudeva* is Bhagavān Himself. If one thinks of *śrī gurudeva*, who is directly Bhagavān, to be an ordinary human, then hearing *hari-kathā*, remembering, chanting *mantra*, studying scripture, and performing *nāma-kīrtana* is all in vain. *Mantra*, *guru*, and Hari are all one substance. *Mantra* is directly *guru*, and *guru* is Hari Himself; hence, Bhagavān is automatically pleased with whomever *guru* is pleased with.

**“*Mantra*
is directly
guru, and
guru is Hari
Himself.”**

Although *śrī guru* is Bhagavān, he is Bhagavān's dear one. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *bhokta-bhagavān* (the enjoyer God) and *śrī gurudeva* is *sevaka-bhagavān* (the servant God); Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *viṣaya-vigraha* (the object of love), *śrī gurudeva* is *āśraya-vigraha* (the abode of love); Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *sarva-śaktimān* (the possessor of all potencies), and *śrī guru* is *pūrṇa-śakti* (full potency). Śrī *guru* is *bhagavat-preṣṭha* (the dearest of Bhagavān) and *vaiṣṇava-śreṣṭha* (the greatest of Vaiṣṇavas). Every disciple should see *śrī gurudeva* as Bhagavān and as His most dear one. Doing so is the source of auspiciousness. One who serves him with love by body, mind, and words is a real *sevaka*, a real Vaiṣṇava, and truly cognizant of *śāstra*.

Śrī *gurudeva* grants teachings regarding Bhagavān. He is eternal, his servant is also eternal, and his service is also eternal. Śrī *guru-pādapaḍma* is the refuge of all our hopes and beliefs. If we take shelter of him, we become capable of being fearless, worriless, and supremely happy. If we pray with heart and soul to him for blessings, he, out of compassion, bestows all manner of auspiciousness.

Śrī *gurudeva* is the directly witnessed form of Īśvara. Śrī Bhagavān in the form of *guru*, be he a *gṛhasṭha* or *sannyāsī*, is the exclusive refuge of all. *Sad-guru* is the abode of all the holy places. Therefore, if one circumambulates him, one receives the fruit of going on pilgrimage to all the holy places.

**“*Guru's* mercy
is the root or
foundation of
performing
bhajana of
Bhagavān.”**

Guru's mercy is the root or foundation of performing *bhajana* of Bhagavān. The embodiment of Bhagavān's mercy, *śrī gurudeva*, is the disciple's life and is more beloved than his very life. In this material existence, *śrī guru* is everything to the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*. He is the

jīva's selfless friend. He is the only courage, strength, and hope of those who thirst for *bhajana*. Śrī *guru* alone is protector, maintainer, and nurturer. A devotee who has surrendered his soul to *gurudeva* (*gurudevatātma*) is courageous, fearless, free from worry, happy, and peaceful. I will write more about *guru-tattva* to you later.

Your desire to render some service, despite knowing that “everything of yours is *gurudeva*'s and Bhagavān's”, is not bad. We employ in service to Bhagavān the items bequeathed to us by Him and, as His remnant-eating *sevakas* and *sevikās*, we pray for His causeless mercy. Know that we have no prowess of our own. May śrī *gurudeva* and Śrī Bhagavān alone be victorious, then only will there be peace and well-being for all universes. The conditioned soul can, by the mercy of śrī *guru* and Bhagavān, conquer all *anarthas*. There is no other adequate means to conquer extraneous desires (*anyābhilāṣa*) and so on. All our lust and desires have been put to good use only if they are engaged in the service of Bhagavān.

A *sādhikā* who is keen on *sādhana-bhajana* is completely different from ordinary humans of the world. Her life is sacrificed to the service of Bhagavān. She exclusively worships only Śrī Gaura's name, Gaura's desires, and Gaura's abode. Without Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, she perceives the world as void. Exclusively devoted *bhaktas* do not want to live where the glories of Bhagavān are not sung, where Vaiṣṇavas who have taken shelter of *Bhāgavata* do not come and go, and where Śrī Hari's grand festivals are not celebrated. In other words, they pray for an environment that is favourable for *bhajana* and gain satisfaction in doing so.

You are absorbed in performing *sādhana-bhajana* without any other concerns. I am very delighted to be able to know this. Make special efforts to give up sense objects that are unfavourable for *bhakti* and accept a situation that is favourable for *bhajana*. Worldly calamities can never create obstacles for a tolerant person. If one can be inspired with eternally fresh inclinations to serve, there is no chance of any inauspiciousness. Proceed on the path of *sādhana* with profuse patience, enthusiasm, and tolerance. This especially is what I wanted to say. Accept my blessings. I hope you are all well. What more? *Iti—*

**“If one can be inspired
with eternally fresh
inclinations to serve,
there is no chance of
any inauspiciousness.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 84

Maintaining a link with *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas allows us to render real, practical service • Answers to questions about various *kīrtanas* (*Maṅgala Ārati*, *Sarvasva Tomāra*, *Śrī Guru-caraṇa-padma* and *Harī Haraye Namaḥ Kṛṣṇa*)

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata-4
23/12/1985

Snehāspadeṣu—

——! I received your two letters, one dated 6/12/85, delivered by courier, and later, one dated 18/12/85, delivered by mail. ...

“Service to *guru* is the exclusive purpose of life, and I am forever deprived of that.” If that is the main thing you want to express, then I have nothing to say. We live in the *maṭha-mandira* for the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas and out of a longing for their love. All our efforts are dedicated to that noble end. It is possible to pursue this grand objective wherever one may dwell. Those who have maintained a link with *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas render real, practical service, while those who are without shelter hold on to life in vain. “*Āśraya laiṃ bhaje, tāre kṛṣṇa nāhi tyaje, āra saba mare akāraṇa*”³²⁵ – Kṛṣṇa never abandons those who worship under the shelter of the Vaiṣṇavas. All others perish in vain.” This message of the *mahājanas* inspires us in service in a special way. Patience and enthusiasm increase the delight of service. Hence, occasional restlessness and discouragement are never capable of overshadowing a real *sevā-dharmī*. You are intelligent. What I hope for from you is that you will understand all these matters and forever be inspired in the *dharma* of service.

“Those who have maintained a link with *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas render real, practical service.”

I am providing brief answers to your questions:

(1) Singing the poet’s line two times first – “*śrī keśavera dāsa kare nāma-saṅkīrtana*” – is custom and constitutes proper etiquette. *Kīrtana* is performed under the guidance of the

³²⁵
Prārthanā, Ṭhākura Vaiṣṇava-pada (1) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

Vaiṣṇava *mahājanas*. The poet cannot use “*prabhu śrī keśava*” himself. The guidance of Vaiṣṇavas is the root of Vaiṣṇava *dharma*. That is why the line the poet has composed is sung first and then we sing [an alternative line] in a mood of servitude to him. The author and poet has humbly written compositions in many places. Will we not discuss them? We must study them and convey their purport to everyone. “Śrī Keśava Prabhu” has humbly written “*abhāgā keśava* – the unlucky Keśava”. That is the subject of our study.

(2) In the *Sarvasva Tomāra kīrtana*, the original, accurate rendering is: “*bhaktivinoda, tomāre pālaka, boliyā varaṇa kare* – Bhaktivinoda accepts You as his sole maintainer.” If “*bhaktivinoda, tomāre pālaka, boliyā jānaho more* – Bhaktivinoda, know Me to be your maintainer” has been printed in the current edition, then this is wholly erroneous and meaningless.

(3) In the *Śrī Guru-caraṇa-padma kīrtana*, “*hā hā prabho karo dayā, deho more pada-chāyā, ebe yaśa ghuṣuka tribhuvana*” is the original line. This *kīrtana* of Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura is very long; that is why the last line of another *kīrtana* by him has been incorporated and, at present, it is sung like this: “*narottama lailo śaraṇa*” or “*tuwā pade lainu śaraṇa*”. In this case, the use of the word “*narottama*” is correct, because there is mention of the poet. Singing “*narottama lailo śaraṇa*” first and then singing “*tuwā pade lainu śaraṇa*” is appropriate.

(4) “*Śrī caitanya-nityānanda-śrī-advaita—goptā*” – these three are *viṣaya-vigraha* or *bhoktā-bhagavān*; hence, they are maintainers and nurturers. Previously, it was like this in the *padāvalī* [Bengali songbook] collections. Later, “*sītā*” was printed by mistake. To suddenly mention a *śakti* in the middle of listing *viṣaya-vigraha* is incongruous; and *Sītā* cannot be the *śakti* of all three. Considering all this, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas use the word *goptā* instead of *sītā*. Know that you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 85

Ultimate well-being lies in transcendental love and attachment • Real simplicity is being able to introspect • Glorification and encouragement of a disciple's motherly love and service

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-Bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane,
Kolkata-700004
19/7/1986

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! Your affectionate letter of 9/7/86 reached the Kolkata *maṭha* promptly. I returned to the Kolkata *maṭha* from Navadvīpa after the conclusion of Śrī Rathotsava yesterday and received it. I hope you are all well. I am well, in a manner of speaking.

There is not a great deal of happiness or well-being in worldly *sneha* and *mamata* (love and attachment). The conditioned soul only finds meaning and fulfilment when she offers all love and affection to *śrī guru* and Bhagavān. Human beings suffer in the absence of one they love and are attached to. If you have real love and attachment for someone, you will inevitably cry in separation from them.

If you have truly fallen in love with Śrī Bhagavān, then you will most certainly be remembering your cherished *gurudeva* and your longing to have his *darśana* will be very strong. Just as a mother experiences intense pain when she cannot see her son, it is quite natural that you too are experiencing such pain internally. Even without the mother's invitation, the child can always happily go to see his mother. The pull and call of the heart are always particularly effective. Even an ungrateful son is never deprived of his mother's love. This really is the general rule and habit. *Śrī guru* and Bhagavān will never deprive you of their transcendental love.

That day there was no plan to stay in Jayanagar, but since the *gr̥hasthas* strongly insisted, we were compelled to stay. We went to Kolkata the very next morning, on the early train. I never want to conceal my inner feelings around you just to look like a good person. I know

“The conditioned soul only finds meaning and fulfilment when she offers all love and affection to *śrī guru* and Bhagavān.”

“A human being’s ability to introspect is the real expression of simplicity.”

well that Śrī Bhagavān only gives His genuine mercy to people who are simple and straightforward. A human being’s ability to introspect is the real expression of simplicity.

You are a mother. You will serve and worship Śrī Gaura-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī and Śrī Gaura-Rādhā-Madana-mohana with more love than anyone. They alone are our only beloveds and worthy recipients of our love. Just behold and serve that object of worship even in sleep and in dreams. Śrī Gaura-gopāla, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-gopāla is the supreme object of your *bhajana* (devotional absorption). Their service is attained under the guidance of *śrī guru-pādapadma*. If you give your innermost feelings and serve and attend to your cherished deity that way, your mind will find peace.

Though I cannot be near you in person, imperceptibly I am there and always will be. You can never uphold your responsibility as a mother if you do not give me *mahā-prasāda*. Does any mother take food and water before feeding her child? If you die soon, who is going to serve me food and drink with such affection? Know that it is possible to remain near *śrī guru* and Bhagavān and serve them without abandoning this perishable body.

Write me letters in whatever sort of mood or language comes naturally to you. That way you will be content, and I will be delighted. I do not detect any insincerity in your letter. Rather, I have noted your gracious attitude and your extensive affection and nurturance, which gives me so much affection for you. Before I go, I will write you a letter and let you know.

I too am relieved and delighted to know that although some obstacles came on the path of your *sādhana-bhajana*, you are now free from any worry. Every day, worship the deity and study something from the *granthas*. Know that I have affection for you. Convey my obeisances to your mother. *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 86

The mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is constant • Duties during *ūrja-vrata* • The importance of reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* • Your guardian is always protecting you • Only by simplehearted introspection does one obtain *tattva-jñāna* • The supreme object can never be relinquished in exchange for worldly convention

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata-700004
23/10/1986

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! ... You are specially endowed with the special mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. I hope that you will never be deprived of their transcendental affection. Despite dwelling far from *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, you will serve them at some point. What offence or misfortune is in that? If I find time, I will come to see you some time. If I go to your home without your invitation, on my own whim, then there will be no room for appeal, petition, and prayer [on your part]. Know that I am beyond your invitation and rejection. The transcendental current of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' mercy is forever being showered upon those seeking their love. That is the pattern of unearthly love and affection and most of the world's people are desperate for it.

**“The transcendental
current of *guru*'s and
Vaiṣṇavas' mercy is
forever being showered
upon those seeking
their love.”**

I was delighted to know you are observing *ūrja-vrata* with your mother. In the month of *niyama-sevā*, one must, in a regulative manner, perform various limbs of *bhakti*, knowing “*sevā se niyama* – service is regulation”. Every day, it is absolutely obligatory to perform worship (*pūjārcana*), behold *ārati*, attend class and *kīrtana*, study various sacred books, recite *Dāmodarāṣṭakam* and various *stavas* and *stotras*. It is imperative to read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-prema-taraṅgiṇī*. Hearing and chanting the *Bhāgavata* is the main *sādhana* of *bhakti*. Bhagavān and His devotee followers are called *bhāgavata*. *Śabda-brahma* in book form is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*; its worship is *bhāgavata-kīrtana*. The hearing, chanting, remembering,

etc. of Śrī Bhagavān's name, form, qualities, and narrations of His pastimes is real *upāsana* (worship).

That which non-envious (*nirmatsara*) *sādhus* cultivate is this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In it, the topic of the supreme *dharma* has been discussed. “*Prthivīte jata kathā dharma nāme cale, bhāgavata kahe tāhā paripūrṇa chale*³²⁶ – *Bhāgavatam* refers to all the spiels on Earth that pass for religion as being full of deceit.” To know the *vāstava-vastu* (actual substance) is the supreme *dharma*.

**“Only by
simplehearted
introspection
does one obtain
tattva-jñāna.”**

Any state of being contrary to that is deceit or duplicity. Only by simple-hearted introspection does one obtain *tattva-jñāna*. The maturation of the six enemies of lust, anger, and so on, is envy, or anguish at the fortune of others. In the field of *sādhana-bhajana*, envy has been entirely rejected.

Śrī Caitanyadeva and His associate *ācāryas* demonstrate the uselessness of mundane enjoyment and renunciation. *Ku-karmīs* and *ku-jñānīs* are non-devotees. They have no taste in reading or reciting *Bhāgavatam*. Those who have honour for objects born of material modes are known as *jaḍa-vādis*. The *vāstava-vastu* (true reality) can never be a subject of their cognition. Those who strive for the four goals of material existence (*catur-varga*) are anguished at the fortune of others. There is no doubt about this. Śrī Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra alone is the most worshipful *tattva*. In worshipping Him, the living entities attain all perfection. Knowing this, it is one's duty to study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

By the mercy of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, you have found the light of knowledge. This is your special fortune. You should always keep this thought or feeling that you are sheltered and never without shelter. Your guardian is always protecting you and you are being guided. Keep this faith. If you do so, you will find strength of mind.

In order to live in this material existence, one must maintain civility and social decorum. Still, it is imperative to safeguard the *paramārthika* (spiritual) aspect to a greater degree. We are instructed to engage in worldly conduct and behaviour only once we have preserved our spirituality. The supreme object can never be relinquished in exchange for worldly convention. It is imperative to keep a cautious eye in that regard. If one's kith and kin who are possessed of worldly, mundane intelligence do not want the well-being of our souls, then internally, within our minds, we will have to push their association far away. That is respectable for the spiritualists and represents their ideal. What more? Know you have my loving blessings. Convey my best wishes to Mā. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³²⁶ *Jaiva-dharma (Phala-śruti, verse 1)* by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 87

A respectable person never injures another person's dignity • Being doubtful of others is the cause of distress • The necessity of selfless renunciation • Only if we can relinquish our individual selfishness and be tolerant of suffering can we find auspiciousness • One should never test *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane,
Kolkata-700004
14/1/1987

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā Umā! You wrote that you read my letter and have understood everything, but I think you do not read my letters with inner vision. If you did, you would not treat me harshly. You said that you are not worthy of writing me a letter, that you are scared to write me a letter, and that you do not know what to write where. I think these statements are imagined and you are just coming up with excuses.

I always write you letters and whatnot in a suitably natural fashion. Whatever is my actual impression of you is expressed in the letter I have written. There is no artificiality in this. The form in which your love and affection reveals itself to me is what I write in my letters. Perhaps, from your own perspective, you cannot grasp whether you are loving or not. Only he who can perceive that [affection] can understand who is worthy of being given respect.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teaching is "*dainya, dayā, anye māna, pratiṣṭhā-varjana, cāri-guṇe guṇī hai' karaḥo kīrtana*"³²⁷ – humility, compassion, respect for others, and the shunning of prestige – develop these four qualities and perform *kīrtana*." This is *amānī-mānada dharma* (the religion of forgoing pride and giving respect to others). A respectable person never injures another person's dignity. That is his nature. He cannot rid himself of his soul's natural disposition, as that is his ornament, or adornment.

Being doubtful of others is the cause of distress. Rather than calling it deceptive, it would be more accurate to call it the source of mental disturbance. In

**"A respectable
person never
injures another
person's dignity."**

³²⁷ *Gītāvalī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kīrtane Jadī (7)* by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

**“Only if we
can relinquish
our individual
selfishness,
be tolerant
of suffering,
and heed our
responsibilities
can we find
auspiciousness.”**

the *Gītā*, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra addresses His friend Arjuna as He delivers an instruction to all the inhabitants of the world: “The ignorant, unfaithful, and doubtful – these three types of people cannot find happiness in life.” If you harbour the dogma of doubt and suspicion, then you too will never find peace of mind.

Only if we can relinquish our individual selfishness, be tolerant of suffering, and heed our responsibilities can we find auspiciousness. In order to honour love’s demands from those who seek it, there is much we must concede to sacrifice. This is a paramount truth, widely accepted by the wise. Without selfless renunciation, one cannot attain Bhagavān, who is the form of truth (*sad-vastu*). Acceptance of this sort of renunciation is necessary in order to obtain the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas as well.

Those who are prepared to accept whatever renunciation is necessary never exercise doubt or lack of faith in *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. This [lack of faith] will precipitate the downfall of the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* rather than their advancement in *sādhana-bhajana*. One should never test those who have passed beyond *śraddhā-bhakti*, beyond *sneha* and *mamatā*. Rather, to be tested by them is a matter of great fortune, as such a test yields auspiciousness for the soul. *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas do not need to be taught; they are not students. They are the testers and judges. If we can establish our reliance and faith in their integrity, we will reap ultimate good.

If he who possesses *bhakti* for Śrī Bhagavān places a particular individual in the distinguished seat of his affection, it never means that he becomes biased or narrow-minded. Rather, his generosity and large-hearted dignity will strengthen. *Sādhū*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, who see everyone equally, are accustomed to perceiving the souls of all living entities. They earn the title *mahātmā* (great soul) because of their magnanimous sentiments for Śrī Bhagavān [and His creation]. They are accustomed to offering all candidates honour, high and low. Because they behold the soul and Supersoul within all living entities, they offer obeisances to absolutely everyone, giving no particular attention to whether one is a horse, cow, donkey, dog-eater, neophyte devotee, woman, or man. “*Jīve sammāna dibe jāni’ kṛṣṇa-adhiṣṭhāna*”³²⁸ – they give respect to all living entities, knowing them to be the abodes of Kṛṣṇa.” This is their large-heartedness, or great magnanimity. If we can pass this sort of test of patience and fortitude from *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, our lives will be successful.

³²⁸ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 20.25)

I too, at present, am a student, a trainee, someone seeking love in the school of this world. I trust that one day I will pass this test in patience and gain the qualification to become a teacher. Then I will forever behold with utmost regard those I have accepted as my loving and affectionate guardians. They can point out my flaws and they can be merciless to me, but as someone craving their love, I will await their sympathy and compassion. This is my *dharma*. I will not place blame on anyone else. Rather, I will sit here hoping to gain their extraordinary love and affection. I will strive to realize the purport of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Upadeśāmṛta* verse “*utsāhān-niścayāt dhairyāt*”³²⁹. Who is to be angry with whom? Who will shower blessings on whom? I am responding to your call for affection, not your request, so that I may not be deprived of affection.

Accept my well-wishes. *Iti*—

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³²⁹ *Upadeśāmṛta* verse 3: (1) Enthusiasm [for performing *bhakti-sādhana*], (2) firm faith and determination, (3) patience, (4) performing activities favourable for *bhakti*, (5) giving up bad association, and (6) adopting the pure behaviour of *sādhus* – by these six qualities *bhakti* is nourished and accomplished.

Letter 88

Do not pray to that loving Bhagavān for anything of this earthly world • The lamentation of the devotees attracts Bhagavān’s mercy • Those with simplicity can gain the mercy of *guru* and Bhagavān • The mercy of Bhagavān and His devotees is limitless • The only good fortune is *hari-bhajana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata-700004
25/1/1987

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! Your affectionate letter arrived at the Kolkata *maṭha* on the date of 17/1/87. I returned from preaching and received your letter today on the 25th of January. Previously, I received one of your letters, but please forgive me that I could not reply to it. My body is well. You fell ill because of your intestinal disease but are well at present; I am relieved to hear this. Do not be upset with me because I could not reply to your letter on time.

You need not worry so much about purifying your money. You are not indebted to me. You received *darśana* of Śrī Jagannātha-deva because of your *sukṛti*. I am only an instrument in this regard.

Serve and worship your Śrī Gopāla with firm faith so that you always have *darśana* of His divine form in your heart. He is your life, He is your everything – the giver of *bhakti*, the giver of liberation, and the giver of *prema*. Do not pray to that *prema-maya* Bhagavān for anything of this earthly world. If a person surrenders unto Him, He will not deprive such a surrendered soul and will give him a place at His worshipful feet.

You have written only the truth: “In this world, no one is anyone else’s. It is a fully selfish world. Selfishness is the relationship.” Śrī *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are selfless. They must welcome profuse suffering in order to deliver the *jīvas*. They have to render tireless service. If one does not serve like this, Śrī Bhagavān does not become controlled.

Devotees of Bhagavān lament as follows: “I have not been able to serve”, “Bearing a body of sin, I am only burning in the fire of remorse”, “I am reaping the reactions of all the sin I

committed in my previous life.” Seeing this manner of humble expression, *prema-maya* Śrī Bhagavān, as the master of the masterless and the destination of the lost, grants *prema-bhakti* to those exclusively surrendered to Him and engages them directly in service to His lotus feet.

A life bereft of service is worthless. Hence, the devotee who has surrendered his soul submits all responsibility for his life at the lotus feet of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān. He knows, “Śrī Bhagavān is mine and I am Śrī Bhagavān’s.” *Prema-maya* Śrī Bhagavān manifests via the *sad-guru*; Śrī Bhagavān can fulfil all the desires the *jīvas* have; He is the friend of the desperate. Those who do not have profuse devotional faith in Śrī Bhagavān but have simplicity develop an anxiousness for *sādhana-bhajana*. They are capable of gaining *śrī guru* and Bhagavān’s causeless mercy. Those who perform *sādhana-bhajana* by faithfully serving and worshipping *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān experience and realize their glories directly.

**“A life bereft
of service is
worthless.”**

Those who have *bhakti* call themselves stone-hearted, but *śrī guru* and Bhagavān’s mercy on them is limitless. There is no comparison to *śrī guru* and Bhagavān’s unearthly compassion, love, and affection. Remembering their causeless mercy, the devotees weep piteously in quiet seclusion. Since they are omniscient, they are aware of all the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*’s humility and prayers, and directly and indirectly, they fulfil those prayers. The devotees and Bhagavān have limitless mercy for their followers. Under Their merciful gaze, one gains perfection in *sādhana* and conviction in *śrī nāma*.

You have written that it is your misfortune to not receive responses to your letters. Someone who is fortunate to receive a loving letter from time to time has expressed sadness. Only *hari-bhajana* is good fortune, and the misfortune of those bereft of *bhajana* is proven. You have humility, anxiousness, faithful devotion – all of it – and you have a beautiful understanding of language. I did not know you could write such beautiful, heart-touching letters. Śrī Bhagavān Himself has made you rich, infusing your heart with such loving sentiment and language. He has dispelled your ignorance and made you voluble, made you like Garuḍa.

You are not devoid of *bhakti* nor are you an offender or a heretic. To those who chant *śrī nāma* faithfully and are earnest in the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, Śrī Bhagavān grants all worthiness and qualification for *hari-bhajana*. Only by His mercy can we know and understand Him. Rather than watering the branches and leaves of the tree, you are giving water to the root of the tree. This will give you the fruit you desire. Those who possess love and affection for *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas have surely received the mercy of Śrī Bhagavān. Śrī Bhagavān

**“*Śrī guru* and
Bhagavān never
forget the devotee.
They do not deceive
anyone.”**

alone is your master, friend, son, and husband. Serve Him as your cherished object of worship. Your worldly sorrow and suffering will not last. You will forget the pleasures of this world and be able to engage your soul in loving service. *Śrī guru* and Bhagavān never forget the devotee. They do not deceive anyone. Know you have my best wishes and convey them to your elder brother and his wife.
Iti—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 89

If we can offer our lives in the service of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, we are blessed • *Śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas may be invited but not bade farewell • Those who gossip experience a scarcity of happiness and peace • Our duty is to lead a life of service until our last breath • Comparative analysis of *Śrī Nārāyaṇa's*, *Śrī Rāmacandra's*, and *Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra's* qualities • It is not proper to distribute *unnatojjvala-rasa* to unworthy candidates

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata-4
27/1/1987

Snehāspadeṣu—

Bābā —! Your letters, dated 8/9/86 and 5/1/87, arrived in Kolkata in a timely fashion. I am sorry and ashamed that I have not had the time to reply for so many days. I hope that by Bhagavān's mercy you are all well. After the Janmāṣṭamī festival, in the middle of October, I returned to Navadvīpa. After that, there was a programme of lectures and speeches in various places. I had very little time to stay in the Kolkata *maṭha*. It is true that you have not had a response to your letter in a very long time. If we can offer our lives in the service of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, we are blessed. At the awakening of faithful devotion, the life of the living entity becomes successful. ...

There is no point in any *sevaka* bidding farewell to *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. They may be invited and offered words of greeting but not bade farewell or ejected, so there is no reason for you to feel regret or be counted among the *aparādhīs*. I am writing you this letter just to encourage you. I hope the void feeling in your heart will be removed and you will find peace of mind. In this regard, there is no question of rectifying your offences. I hope that your perturbed mind will find peace hereafter.

If one is only gossiping about others, proper rectification of the self is not possible. Those who appear to have five mouths when criticizing and gossiping experience a scarcity of

**“At the
awakening
of faithful
devotion,
the life of
the living
entity
becomes
successful.”**

**“For the sake
of serving
Śrī Hari,
guru, and
Vaiṣṇavas,
we have to
resolve our
personal ill-
feelings.”**

happiness and peace. In the field of *bhajana-sādhana*, the term *duḥsaṅga-varjana* (giving up bad association) is what is otherwise known as *vyatireka-bhāva* (negating materiality). When people live together, quarrels and differences of opinion can happen. But to forget such occurrences for the sake of the greater good proves magnanimity. What we want is that all our pursuits are engaged in a common cause. For the sake of serving Śrī Hari, guru, and Vaiṣṇavas, we have to resolve our personal ill-feelings. Whatever the matter may be, if it is conveyed to *śrī gurudeva* not as a complaint but to draw his attention, it is not harmful. As he is an impartial observer, he has no cause to misunderstand anyone. For an embondaged soul who hankers for profit, worship, and prestige, complaints and allegations do not achieve

anything of value. However, the equal vision (*sama-darśana*) and introspection of that exalted soul who is *sama-darśī* is supremely auspicious for all living entities. The *sādhaka-jīva* will never imitate the *premika-bhakta*, as to do so is the cause of utter degradation.

If the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* become attached to hopes for *kanaka* (gold), *kāminī* (the opposite gender), and *pratiṣṭhā* (prestige), they can never attain auspiciousness for the soul. Even when the *sādhaka* gives up *kanaka* and *kāminī*, the hankering for prestige hides somewhere within him and spoils everything. In the service of Śrī Hari, guru, and Vaiṣṇavas, the misuse of money is never appropriate. One who does so is attacked by the flaw or blunder of stealing the property of a *brāhmaṇa*. We have to surrender our souls to the service of Hari, guru, and Vaiṣṇavas. It is surely our duty to lead a life of service until our last breath.

I am providing brief answers to your questions:

(1) In addition to Nārāyaṇa's sixty qualities, Śrī Rāmacandra has two and a half more qualities or *rasas*. They are *śānta*, *dāsyā*, and part of *sakhya-rasa*, or *gaurava-sakhya* (reverential friendship). Śrī Kṛṣṇa has sixty-four qualities; His four special qualities are not in any other *avatāra*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the presiding deity of the five full chief *rasas* and the seven secondary *rasas*. *Rasa* theory states that two and a half *rasas* are considered two and a half qualities, which makes a total of sixty-two and a half. The fact is that Śrī Rāmacandra has sixty main qualities and two and a half *rasas*. Likewise, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has sixty main qualities and four special qualities, like His *līlā-mādhurya* and so on, which are not in any *avatāra*. With sixty universal good qualities, Śrī Rāmacandra is *māryādā-puruṣottama* (the Supreme Person upholding moral ideals) and He is the presiding deity of two and a half *rasas*. With His sixty-four qualities, the presiding deity of the full twelve *rasas* is *līlā-puruṣottama* Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra. In certain cases,

qualities and *rasa* are considered to be one and the same. If one is to consider the qualities separately, Nārāyaṇa and Rāmacandra have sixty qualities, whereas one will have to admit that Kṛṣṇa's *svarūpa* has sixty-four.

(2) “It is not proper to distribute to unworthy candidates the descriptions and philosophical conclusions of pastimes that are sheltered within *unnatojjvala-rasa* (the highest most radiant conjugal mellow).” This is the opinion of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and this is correct. It should be like this: “Distributing it is the approach of the *prākṛta-sahajiyās*.” One or two words have been excluded here. It can be called an omission. If this had been caught after printing, it would have been included in the list of printing errors or the erratum. For now, correct them in the book itself.

You wanted *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha* (except for *Bhāgavata-sandarbha*), *Govinda-bhāṣya*, and *Manu-saṁhitā*. Even though I do not have *Govinda-bhāṣya*, I will try to send the other *Sandarbhas* and *Manu-saṁhitā*. Accept my affectionate blessings. If you cooperate, śrī guru and Bhagavān will be happy and peaceful. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 90

Developing affection and attachment for *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • The trust and forgiveness that takes place between mother and child • *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas make arrangements for us to work out our *karma*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-Bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane,
Kolkata-700004
7/2/1987

Snehāspadāsu—

... I have responded every time mother has called, but mother has not been able to accept that her *chele* (son) is her *santāna* (child). I responded to mostly all of your questions and gave you consolation. That you cannot deny. You only like to see your child; you do not like to hear what he has to say. What kind of attitude is this? If *śrī gurudeva* is omniscient, then by means of that inner vision, he can understand the good and bad in everyone and make arrangements accordingly. Why would you be my love-deprived daughter or mother? Do I not have even a little affection for you?

Mother, why “have you accepted defeat before your son’s pure affection”? I know I do not have love and affection for anyone. As such, how can the son be well in body and mind? In my previous life and in this life, I have given pain to many individuals, so where is the possibility of my peace of mind and happiness? I am making a meagre effort to help you all live with some modicum of peace and contentment and so that I can spark a smile and laughter on your faces. Whether you quarrel with me or display your affection, I never misunderstand you and never will.

The fact that you have discovered something good in quarrel is the effect of your foresight, I must say. There is an increase of depth and intensity of *sneha* (affection) and *mamatā* (possessive attachment) that manifests in a full-blown manner when one makes *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas very much one’s own and most dear. *Śraddhā-bhakti* (sincere faith and devotion) in Vaiṣṇavas is itself the defining characteristic of real *sneha* and *mamatā* for them. Truly, there is nothing to compare with love that is not of this Earth, and it is impossible to express it in the language of the material world.

The whole point of asking whether someone is doing well or not is out of feelings of concern and anxiety for one who yearns for your love. Once one or two lines of a response is received, the anxious mind calms down. In this sort of circumstance, sending and receiving letters is the only means to gain peace of mind.

When I am your guardian, be that as *guru* or son, then between you and I, there is no chance of “if some offence occurs”, no chance of this sort of doubt or apprehension. The children never assume there is any fault in the mother, and the mother also always forgives the mistakes and shortcomings of her offspring. In this sort of dynamic, there is no cause for blame. For her children, mother is the object of utmost honour, and to the mother, her children are her darling angels. In the midst of this immaculate love and parental nurturing, any sort of contrary notion is rather unbecoming, is it not?

You will never misunderstand me. That person whom I address and regard as mother, and her children, along with their benevolence, virtues, and refined sentiments are exemplary for the whole world. If the world can accept the exemplary position of both [the mother and her children] then there is real auspiciousness. Accepting the orders, teachings, and instructions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas benefits everyone. Can anyone find auspiciousness without following those things? I accept all the demands of your love, but if you accept the request of your *guru*, father, or son, does it harm your magnanimity and large-heartedness? You cannot be so brave as to say, “I do not listen to many of the things you tell me.” The omniscient *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas understand the good and bad of every action and make arrangements for us to work out our *karma*. No one can read scripture on their own and take to heart *tattva-darśana* (proper vision of truth). For that, actual realization is imperative. Conditioned souls have no actual realization of the soul. They cannot. Ignorant, unfaithful, doubting individuals can never gain real *tattva-jñāna* (knowledge of the truth). There is no chance of them having any peace of mind in this world or the next.

I have no use for seeing dreams. When I am no one to you, then do not worry so much. What is going to happen just waiting for a letter? If I do not go, then your minds will perhaps become upset or perhaps your exams will not go well. For that reason, I will go one time after Vyāsa-pūjā. After that, I am not sure if I will be able to go. I cannot understand what is causing your mental anguish. I have many fathers and mothers, grandfathers, sisters, brothers. Of all

**“The omniscient
guru and Vaiṣṇavas
understand the good
and bad of every
action and make
arrangements
for us to work out
our *karma*.”**

of them, you are a particularly special mother, one I cannot compare with anyone else. Maybe I will not be able to get you to understand this connection. You will realize it on your own, someday. Who needs whom? That is what has to be realized. I will be happy if I can witness the proof that my absence is supremely excruciating for you. You will be able to perceive whether or not I have given you a place in my thoughts. If you observe the duties and responsibilities a mother has for a son, I will be delighted and enthused. ... *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 91

Language that conveys transcendental sentiment is the aid to attaining realization of transcendental substance • The fortune of being born in a devotee family • Things to be rejected in the course of *sādhana-bhajana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-Bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane,
Kolkata-700004
12/5/1987

Snehāspadāsu—

As usual, I will continue to uphold the duty and responsibility I have for you as I am doing now. Even though I have come to such a faraway place, I cannot forget about you. I never forget you and your affection, nor will I ever. A son never dares test his mother like that, and it would not be proper to do so. Now, whether or not I will be able to pass your test or whether or not I have passed your test is something only you can say.

In order to develop *śraddhā-bhakti* (faithful devotion) to Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, it is necessary to have inner conviction. There is no worldly connection in the way the transcendental nurturer and those nurtured by him see into each other's hearts. There is always some gross selfishness lurking in the things of this world, and as such there is no actual benefit to be gained from them. Language that conveys transcendental sentiment aids realization of transcendental substance. That language never invokes inauspiciousness.

Man roams the path of *karma* for as long he does not have apathy and remorse for the toil of that *karma* and as long as he does not have taste for topics related to Bhagavān and *bhakti*. The living entity develops taste for saintly company as a fruit of much devotional merit. In other words, by establishing faith in the words of saintly persons, a person develops enthusiasm to perform *sādhana-bhajana*. If one manages to take birth in an exemplary *gr̥hastha* devotee family, one's natural propensity will be to have a taste for *bhajana* of Hari. Very few people attain this opportunity and good fortune. From that perspective, you are especially fortunate. The fact that Śrī Bhagavān has granted you such a beautiful environment

**“Language
that conveys
transcendental
sentiment aids
realization of
transcendental
substance.”**

that is favourable for engaging in His service is indicative of His causeless compassion. If you utilize this [advantage] properly, then in the future, by your generosity and compassion, many individuals who long to worship Hari will become attracted.

Of all the affirmative and prohibitive injunctions given in scripture, the foremost affirmative statement is: “*yena kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet*”³³⁰ – one way or another, immerse your mind in Kṛṣṇa.” [And the foremost] prohibitive statement is: “Never forget that loving Lord and never doubt Him.” In the *Gītā-śāstra*, three types of individuals are said to be lame in regard to walking the path of *sādhana* and making other spiritual endeavours: “The ignorant, the faithless, and the sceptical can never find auspiciousness.” Therefore, in the field of *sādhana-bhajana*, these three faults are to be absolutely rejected. Besides these, arrogance related to birth, affluence, erudition, and physical beauty are also to be fully rejected. The flaws of *bhrama* (error), *pramāda* (delusion), *karaṇāpātava* (sensory imperfection), and *vipralipsa* (deceit) are also to be cast off. And if one cannot relinquish one’s motives for profit, worship, prestige, as well as the impulses of hatred, violence, envy, pride, arrogance, and egotism, it becomes utterly impossible to attain the well-being of the soul. You are mother, you have had the opportunity to hear all these teachings many times. Nevertheless, like Upendra offering instructions to Aditi, I have written this out of affection. *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

.....
³³⁰ See *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.1.32)

Letter 92

Chanting *śrī nāma* and weeping leads to perfection • Bhagavān’s grace dispels the devotee’s obstacles in *bhajana* • In *sādhana-bhajana*, concern for social opinion is surely rejectable • Those who do not love Vaiṣṇavas are always rejectable

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
21/7/1987

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I received your affectionate letter almost four months ago. After that, we certainly saw each other two or three times while travelling. I am writing to you because I feel you will be displeased if I do not respond to your letter. Do not be angry with me.

By Śrī Bhagavān’s mercy, we are well in a way and hope you all are well physically and in regard to *bhajana*. I am not far from you. Know that I stay close by.

You will only find auspiciousness if you can chant *śrī nāma* for a fixed number of rounds. If you can chant *śrī nāma*, weeping and crying, Śrī Bhagavān will grant you direct *darśana* and engage you in the rightful position of performing loving service (*sevā-adhikāra*) to Him. We have no path to auspiciousness other than the causeless mercy of *sādhus*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. If we obtain Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s mercy, all the results of our former *karma* are dispelled.

“Girls cannot do *hari-bhajana*.” These are not the words of *sādhus*, scripture, and *guru*. The mundane attachment of a man to a woman and the natural attachment of a woman to a man is referred to as the bondage of *māyā*. In that, both parties are guilty. *Jei bhaje, sei baḍa, abhakta—hīna chāra, kṛṣṇa bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi vicāra*³³¹ – The one who performs worship is superior. The non-devotee is destitute and detestable. There is no consideration of race, family, etc. in the worship of Kṛṣṇa.” This is the

**“If you can
chant *śrī nāma*,
weeping and
crying, Śrī
Bhagavān will
grant you direct
darśana.”**

³³¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.67)

opinion of scripture. Only one who has faith, belief, and devotion is worthy of *hari-bhajana*. “*Śraddhāvān jana haya bhakti-adhikārī*³³² – a faithful person is suited for devotion.”

Only if our love, affection, and attachment are offered to Śrī Bhagavān can we find spiritual fortune. “*Viṣaye je prīti ebe āchaye āmāra, sei mata prīti hauk caraṇe tomāra*³³³ – may I have the kind of love I now have for the objects of the senses for Your lotus feet instead.” This is the prayer of exclusively devout devotees. His causeless compassion is the only resource and provision for the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*. A devotee who has offered his soul to Śrī Bhagavān has no sort of fear or pain and suffering. The *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* whose heart is resolute can conquer all obstacles and adversities on the strength of his or her *bhajana*. By taking shelter of Śrī Bhagavān’s lotus feet, which are the basis of freedom from sorrow, fear, and death, they are freed from the fear of fear itself.

**“If we
can chant
śrī nāma
without
offences,
we have
no fear.”**

Our *sādhana-bhajana* should not be checked by fear or shame related to others. We will have to completely give that up and walk the path of *sādhana*. It is very easy to deviate from *bhajana*, whereas it is a very difficult business to become devoted to *bhajana*. Śrī Bhagavān alone is our protector, our maintainer, and nurturer. If we can chant *śrī nāma* without offences, we have no fear.

Worldly relationships are momentary, short-term. Persons who thirst for *hari-bhajana* do not want even the slightest bit of association with those who do not have faithful devotion, or love and affection for *sādhus*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. It is imperative to mentally recognize those devoid of this affection as bad association and become one-pointed in *hari-bhajana*. ...

I took — and came to Purī-dhāma from Kolkata on the date of 18/7/87. Once again, on the date of 26/7/87, I will return to the Kolkata *maṭha*. On the upcoming date of 11/8/87, I will travel with seven or eight *sevakas* from Howrah on the Kamroop Express and reach the Koch Bihar *maṭha* around ten o’clock in the morning. If you have time, come to see me. The next day I will travel to Dhubri and reach Tura on the date of 14/8/87.

Please, all of you, accept my affectionate blessings. ... *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³³² Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.64)

³³³ Gītāvalī, Prabhu Tava Pada-yuge (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 93

Guru-pādapadma’s omniscience • Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī is more glorious than Śrī Kṛṣṇāṣṭamī • Kamala Mañjarī’s prayers to serve Śrī Rādhā • Śrī guru’s position as an intimate associate of Śrī Rādhā is what makes him guru

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha,
28 Haldar Bagan Lane,
Kolkata-4
4/10/1987

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! ... I am well as usual. Understanding that you are passing your days in mental turmoil due to not having the *darśana* of guru and Vaiṣṇavas for many a day, the omniscient Lord in the heart (*antaryāmi*) has made arrangements. If you feel that by this you have gained some mental peace, then I will consider my efforts worthwhile. Gaining the opportunity to directly serve *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas does not occur due to some meagre fortune but as the fruit of many lifetimes of accumulated *sukṛti*.

I am delighted to know that daily you are practising and reciting “*Gopīnātha, Mama Nivedana Śuno*” and other songs of the *mahājanas*. Why Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī is more merciful than Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī is something you can only experience yourself. The glories of both have been revealed by the male and female parrot couple. In their dialogue, the superiority of Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s glories over those of Śrī Madana-mohana Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been broadcast. Śrī Rādhārāṇī is Sevārāṇī (Queen of Service) and “*yugala-premera guru*”³³⁴ – the guru of *prema* for the Divine Couple”. The worthiness and qualification to attain the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is only obtained by being in the guidance of the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* who are under Śrī Rādhārāṇī’s guidance.

It is to attain this mood alone that ‘Śrī Kamala Mañjarī Sakhī’, as a poet, has conveyed:

“*Choḍata puruṣābhimāna, kiṅkarī hailū āji kāna; varaja-vipine sakhi-sātha, sevana karibo rādhānātha*”³³⁵ – O Kāna, having abandoned male ego, today I have become a maidservant. In the forests of Vraja, in the company of the *sakhīs*, I will render service, O Lord of Rādhā.”

³³⁴ *Śaraṇāgati* and *Gītamālā*, *Vṛṣabhānu-sutā* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³³⁵ *Śaraṇāgati*, *Choḍata Puruṣābhimāna* (1–2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

“*Āmi to svānanda-sukhada-vāsī, rādhikā mādharma-caraṇa-dāsī; dūhāra milana ānanda kari, dūhāra viyoge duḥkhethe mari*³³⁶ – I am a resident of Svānanda-sukhada-kuñja, a maidservant of Rādhikā-Mādhava’s feet. I delight in Their meeting and perish in the sorrow of Their separation.”

“*Rādhā-pada vinā kabhu kṛṣṇa nāhi mile, rādhāra dāsīra kṛṣṇa sarva-vede bole*³³⁷ – Without the feet of Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa can never be found. All the Vedas say Kṛṣṇa belongs to the maidservants of Rādhā.”

“*Ātapa-rahita suraja nāhi jāni, rādhā-virahita mādharma nāhi māni; kevala mādharma pūjaye so ajñānī, rādhā-anādara kara-i abhimānī; brahmā śiva nārada śruti nārāyaṇī, rādhikā pada-rajā pūjaye māni*³³⁸ – Without light, I cannot know the Sun. I do not accept Mādhava isolated from Rādhā. He who worships only Mādhava is ignorant. Only an egotistical person disregards Rādhā. Brahmā, Śiva, Nārada, the personified Vedas, and Nārāyaṇī [Lakṣmī] – all worship Rādhikā’s footdust.”

“*Samsāre āsiyā, prakṛti bhajiyā, puruṣābhimāne mari; kṛṣṇa dayāmaya, prapañce udaya, hailā āmāra lāgi*³³⁹ – Entering material existence and worshipping material nature, I perish under the influence of male ego. But Kṛṣṇa is merciful and has arisen in this realm of five elements for my sake.”

Without Śrī Rādhārāṇī’s guidance, service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not attained. It is only because She considers *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas Her *nija-jana* (own people) that they attain the defining characteristics of *guru* and Vaiṣṇava. Śrī *guru-pādapadma* is the personification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. Therefore, he too is merciful, compassionate. The *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* attain realization of all this in the perfected stage.

You all please accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³³⁶ *Śaraṇāgati, Āmi To Svānanda-sukhada-vāsī* (1–2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³³⁷ *Gītāvalī, Rādhikā-caraṇa-padma* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³³⁸ *Gītāvalī, Rādhā-bhajane Jadi Mati Nāhi Bhelā* (2–3, 6) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³³⁹ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Bahirmukha Ha’ye Māyāre Bhajiyē* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 94

The glories of Haridvāra • The glories of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* • The early, historic recitations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* • The difference between a *tīrtha* and a *dhāma*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

%—Śrī Vinoda-Bihārī Pura-kāyastha
Polo Hills (Shillong) Meghalaya
Kolkata-700004
31/5/1988

Snehāspadāsu—

... After we left from Śrī Bhaktivedānta Gauḍīya Maṭha, I was unable to find out how many more days you were in Haridvāra. Did you find this *maṭha* to your liking? I went there for two days and fell sick, so I did not have a chance to see the city properly. Personally, I felt said *maṭha* and its environment were favourable for *bhajana*. Still, it can never be said to be superior to Mathurā-Vṛndāvana. Though *māyāvādīs* and impersonalists inhabit this place, it is the gate to Bhagavān Śrī Hari.

On these Haridvāra banks of the Gaṅgā, Śrī Sanaka and the other Kumāras spoke the subject matter of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to Nārada Ṛṣi. In singing the glories of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, they said, “Gaṅgā, Gayā, Kāśī, Puṣkara, and Prayāga have not the capacity to measure up to the fruit of reciting this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* scripture as spoken by Śrī Śukadeva.” Seers of the truth behold the primeval syllable *om*, the *gāyatrī* and *puruṣa-śukta mantras*, the three Vedas, the twelve-syllable *mantra*, Mahā-dvādaśī, Tulasī, Bhagavān Śrī Puruṣottama, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as non-different. Reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, meditating on Śrī Hari through deity worship, watering the *tulasī* tree, and serving the sacred Surabhī cows every day in a regulated manner yield equivalent results. Śrī Bhagavān invests all of His potency into *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and then disappears, entering into the ocean that is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Therefore, this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is Bhagavān’s direct literary, verbal form, the direct *śrī vigraha* (beautiful figure) of Parabrahma (the Supreme Personality of Godhead).

Countless associates of Śrī Bhagavān who participated in His pastimes, like Śrī Uddhava, Arjuna, Dhruva, and Prahlāda, came to hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* on the banks of the Gaṅgā

“*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is Bhagavān’s direct literary, verbal form.”

in Haridvāra. Bhagavān Śrī Hari Himself personally appeared in the assembly, and Devarṣi Śrī Nārada worshipped Him. Śrī Hari blessed everyone as follows: “Wheresoever in the future the sacred *kathā-yajña* (recitation ceremony) of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* takes place, I Myself, Svayam Bhagavān, will preside.” Thirty years after Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to His own realm, in the month of Bhādra [August–September], on the *śuklā-navamī*, or the ninth day of the bright fortnight, in Śukara-tāla, Śrī Śukadeva spoke the account of the *Bhāgavata* to King Parīkṣit. After two hundred years of the age of Kali, on the *śuklā-navamī* of the month of Āṣāḍha [June–July], on the bank of the Tuṅgabhadra, Śrī Gokaṛṇa recited *bhāgavata-kathā* to Dhundhukārī. When three hundred years of the age of Kali had elapsed, in the month of Kārtika, on the *śuklā-navamī*, Śrī Sanaka and other ṛṣis spoke *bhāgavata-kathā* to Śrī Nārada Ṛṣi in Haridvāra. Śrī Suta Gosvāmī had related the *Bhāgavata* narrative to Śaunaka and other sages in Naimiṣāranya after the gathering in Śukara-tala, or in other words, 200 years prior to Kali.

The fact that impersonalists and *māyāvādīs* live in *śrī dhāma* does not detract from the *dhāma*’s glories. All the *tīrthas* become *tīrthas*, that is, gain their purificatory power, by their proximity to Bhagavān and the devotees. “*Māyā kṛpā kari jāla uṭhāya jakhana, ākhi dekhe suviśāla cinmaya bhavana*³⁴⁰ – when *māyā* mercifully lifts the veil, the eyes behold a colossal palace of divinity.” We do not regard *śrī dhāma* to be an ordinary settlement and we do not regard Śrī Bhagavān’s *āvīrbhāva-sthalī* (place of appearance, or birth) and *līlā-sthalī* (pastime places) as mundane. If we put *śrī dhāma* and *tīrthas* in the same category, we commit an offence. Still, Śrī Bhagavān does appear there [at the *tīrthas*]; the devotees draw Him there by *śrī nāma-kīrtana*.³⁴¹

“*Gaura āmāra, je-saba sthāna, karalo bhramaṇa raṅge; se-saba sthāna, heribo āmi, praṇayi-bhakata-saṅge*³⁴² – I will behold all the places my Gaura festively roamed in the company of loving devotees.” And “*bhramibo dvādaśa vane, rasa-keli je je sthāne, premāveśe gaḍāgaḍi diyā; śudhāibo jane jane, vraja-vāsi-gaṇa sthāne, nivedibo caraṇe dhariyā*³⁴³ – I will roam the twelve forests, wherever Kṛṣṇa’s loving pastimes were performed, and roll in the dust in ecstasies of *prema*. I will inquire from each and every person in the dwellings of the residents of Vraja and petition them, catching hold of their feet.”

³⁴⁰ Śrī Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga (11) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁴¹ *Tīrthas* are where Bhagavān appears briefly, having been summoned by His devotees. The *dhāma* is where He is born and engages in endless pastimes.

³⁴² *Śaraṇāgati, Śuddha-bhakata* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁴³ *Prārthanā, Hari Hari! Āra Kabe Pālaṭibe Daśā* (4) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

I regard the *praṇayi-bhakata* (loving devotees) and *śuddha vraja-vāsīs* (pure residents of Vraja) mentioned in these songs of the *mahājanas* to be of the same calibre. Would it be a mistake or an offence to call both of them *rasika-bhaktas* (devotees eligible to taste *rasa*)? Is there much of a difference between those who are acquainted with real *tattva-siddhānta* and those who are *rasika-bhaktas*? All these topics can be properly determined through study and *iṣṭa-goṣṭhī*. Please accept my good wishes and loving blessings. *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 95

The surrendered devotee accepts whatever situation Bhagavān puts him in • Discussing *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ teachings is the only way to maintain a connection with them • Śrī *guru-pādapadma*’s exclusively surrendered followers always carry the memory of him in their hearts • Meditation on *guru* and Bhagavān’s qualities aids us in truly seeing them • It will not do to chant half a lakh • Special qualification in serving Bhagavān comes from chanting one lakh

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
24/9/1988

Snehāspadeṣu—

Dear ——! I can understand that when you do not receive my letters, many kinds of worries arise in you. Nowadays there is simply no time to write letters. On top of that, physical illness has created more obstacles. In this world, cold, heat, and rain come. It is all *āgamāpāyī* (that which comes and goes repeatedly), so we definitely have to tolerate these things. We will have to accept whatever situation Śrī Bhagavān is happy to put us in. This is the special attitude of the surrendered devotee.

“I fell ill.” I do not understand who is showing you dreams of this sort. Can he not give you news of my recovery and console you? If he gave you some reassurances that took away your worries, then I too could be a little relieved. If I give my unhappiness to you, who will serve and worship *śrī vigraha* and perform your *sādhana-bhajana*? Be healthy and perform *hari-bhajana* – this is what I want.

When *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas disappear, we convey our faith (*śraddhā*) in them only by cultivating and discussing their teachings and instructions. This is the only way it is possible to maintain a connection with them. In this world, they are our real friends and family, our own people. Know their transcendental love and affection to be the provisions conditioned souls and *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* require on the path of *bhajana*. The relationship with them is also eternal. Whatever little time one can have in their proximity is a matter of auspiciousness.

One who thirsts for *hari-bhajana* has no earthly hopes or aspirations. In a life of service, service is the one constant and provides inner peace.

What you wrote is very true: “*Kṛṣṇa-bhakti* is very rare. *Guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* are storehouses of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*; they are the ocean of mercy. If *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* want, they can grant that extremely rare *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* to even fools and wretches.” In this case, the qualification of the giver and receiver has been considered. If *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* are pleased with someone, Śrī Bhagavān is also pleased with them. This is written in scripture. The natural state of *śrī guru-pādapadma*’s exclusively surrendered followers is to always carry the memory of *śrī guru-pādapadma* in their hearts.

It is proper for us to execute *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, and *smaraṇa* by all means. Just remembering the divine qualities of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān is, in the stead of direct *darśana*, a meditation on Their forms. In the absence of direct *darśana*, such meditation aids us in truly seeing Them. Like the *gopīs* of Vraja, by remembering Śrī Bhagavān’s transcendental name, form, qualities, and pastimes, you can obtain His direct audience. He is the in-dwelling Paramātmā of all souls. He is the supreme abode of *prema* – *akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti*, the embodiment of all nectareous *rasa*. *Sādhakas* and *sādhikās* worship that transcendental crest jewel of connoisseurs, Śrī Gopīnātha, by their *dāsyā*-, *sakhyā*-, *vātsalyā*-, or *madhura-prema*, as befitting their nature, and thus become blessed.

That transcendental ever-fresh Cupid constantly attracts all conscious living beings by His gentle smile and flute. Śrī Bhagavān’s transcendental compassion for the infinite universes manifests as His *līlā-mādhurya* (pastime sweetness), *veṇu-mādhurya* (flute sweetness), *rūpa-mādhurya* (form sweetness), and *prema-mādhurya* (love sweetness), by which the living entities become exceedingly blessed and fulfilled. By the mercy of that Bhagavān, who is affectionate like a parent to the devotees, the impossible becomes possible – and this is His unsurpassable compassion, or causeless mercy. Only one-pointed devotion is capable of attaining that one true object (*vāstava-vastu*). Full surrender, or offering of the soul, is the sole nexus (*yogasūtra*) of attaining that Absolute Truth (*para-tattva*). If you all perform *sādhana-bhajana* in said manner, perfection is inevitable.

It will not do to chant *śrī nāma* 50,000 times. If you make a firm vow of chanting one lakh (100,000) every day, special qualification

“In a life of service, service is the one constant and provides inner peace.”

“If you make a firm vow of chanting one lakh (100,000) every day, special qualification in serving Bhagavān comes.”

in serving Bhagavān comes. Therefore, even if it is a struggle, you have to make time for this. Every day it is necessary to perform *pūjā* and *arcana* of *śrī vigraha* and make a practice of discussing various sacred texts.

Earthquakes, lightning strikes, floods, too much rain, too little rain – these are all part of *adhidaivika-tāpa* (suffering inflicted by the demigods). Persons who wish to perform *hari-bhajana* will perform *sādhana-bhajana* while living in the midst of all this. “*Viśva jadi cale jāya, kādite kādite, ekā āmi paḍe rabo kartavya sādHITE*³⁴⁴ – if the world goes away, I, crying and weeping, will remain alone to fulfil my duties.” This is their attitude. Do *hari-bhajana* without any other concerns. Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁴⁴ Last two lines from the poem “Mukti” by Rabindranath Tagore

Letter 96

Special qualification is required to remember Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's intimate pastimes • *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* provides the authoritative word on Bhagavān's incarnations • What is commonly observed as Buddha Pūrṇimā (May full moon) pertains to Siddhārtha Buddha • Viṣṇu or Sugata Buddha is different from Gautama or Siddhārtha Buddha • Viṣṇu Buddha appeared on the *śukla dvitīya* of Jyeṣṭha (second lunar day of the bright fortnight of May–June)

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha,
28 Haldar Bagan Lane,
Kolkata-4
12/10/1988

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! Your last affectionate letter dated 1/9/88 reached Kolkata *maṭha* on time. I am particularly ashamed and sorry that I could not respond to your letters. For this you must certainly forgive me. ...

I understand that this time you all held Jhūlana-yātrā in your home. Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's transcendental swing-pastimes are helpful for the *bhajana* of those who long to perform *sādhana-bhajana*. However, those who are perfected, having conquered their six urges, have special qualification for this [for *smaraṇa* of *jhūlana-līlā*]. Only transcendental Vrajavāsīs gain the qualification for Kṛṣṇa's *līlā-kathā*, or His divine loving service, which is devoid of any hankering for prestige. They have a special qualification to remember the holy names, forms, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda in the context of transcendental *bhāva-sevā*. *Premika-bhaktas* find satisfaction for their souls in gaining this sort of qualification. In the mundane, conditioned state, one can follow the divine pastimes (*līlānusaraṇa*) up to *vātsalya-rasa*. In the liberated state, one follows in the footsteps of the associates (*līlānukaraṇa*) of *mādhurya-rasa*. The *hindola-līlā* written by Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī should be studied under the guidance of *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas*. ...

I am giving brief answers to the questions in your last letter:

Every person who is thirsty for *bhajana* has accepted the crest jewel of all evidence, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the sovereign scripture, as the greatest word of proof (*śreṣṭha śabda-pramāṇa*). Śrī

**“Every person
who is thirsty
for bhajana
has accepted
Śrīmad-
Bhāgavatam,
as the greatest
word of proof.”**

Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the Gauḍīya Gosvāmī *guru-varga* under His guidance have accepted Śrī Bhagavān’s twenty-four *avatāras* as described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the immaculate *śabda-pramāṇa*. From there, the Vaiṣṇava poet Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī, whose very nature is transcendental, has selected ten of Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra’s incarnations – He being the source of all incarnations – and composed *Śrī Daśāvatāra-stotram*. Thus, we see that in the scriptures, only Śrī Bhagavān’s *avatāras* are described. Their glories are also described and revealed in other Purāṇas. In this context [of determining the truth regarding *avatāras*], worldly opinions cannot be regarded highly. Besides the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, everyone else wrongly thinks that such *avatāras* “are human incarnations”. The holders or bearers of this sort of opinion are Shri Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram in particular. They were the first to stoop to trying to dress humans up as God. Prior to this, they certainly had Śrī Śaṅkarācārya as their predecessor. On the order of Bhagavān, to benefit the living entities and make the devotees’ path of *sādhana-bhajana* free from obstacles and oppression, he bewildered the atheistic demons by preaching *cij-jāda-samanvaya-vāda*, *jīva-brahmaika-vāda*, *nirviśeṣa māyāvāda*, and other doctrines. The opportunistic atheists later became the cheap version of *brahma-vādis* and started neglecting and disregarding the main *tattva-siddhānta* taught by Śrī Bhagavān. The seers of scripture, however, who are versed in *tattva*, revere the philosophy of theism and are distinguished by their firm oath to protect the honour of the words of *sādhus*, *śāstra*, and *guru*.

In many places in scripture, we find mention of eighteen different Buddhas. One of them is Viṣṇu’s ninth *avatāra*, Buddhadeva. Rāvaṇa’s *guru* was also one “*tathāgata Buddha*”. At present, the holy day of Buddha Pūrṇimā that is observed pertains to the Siddhārtha Buddha, son of Śuddhodhana, from the city of Kapilāvastu. It is described in the Buddhist text *Lalitavistāra* that he attained perfection in Bodh Gaya at the same place the *avatāra* Buddha attained perfection, at the base of the Bodhi tree. We as pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas do not revere the complete nihilism of *nirvāṇa-mukti* and *śūnyavāda* propagated by Siddhārtha Buddha. Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His associates, the Gauḍīya Gosvāmī *guru-varga*, have refuted Buddha’s *śūnyavāda*. The Uttara-mīmāṃsā, or Vedānta school of philosophy, has demonstrated the insignificance of Buddhist philosophy, the Arhat philosophy, and the Pāśupata and Nākulīśa [Lakulisha] doctrines, and established the immaculate Vedantic *siddhānta*.

Vaiṣṇava poet Śrī Jayadeva Sarasvatī has written about the *avatāra* Buddhadeva in his *Daśāvatāra-stotram* [9]: “*nindasi yajña-vidher ahaha śruti-jātaṁ, sadaya-hṛdaya-darsita-*

paśu-ghātam – You decry the prescriptions of the Śrutis that pertain to sacrifice, Your heart brimming with compassion when You witness animal slaughter.” Buddhadeva, the *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, criticized and condemned the violent Vedic *karma-kāṇḍa*. He was the first to specially preach the policy and message of “*ahimsā paramo dharmah* – the greatest religion is non-violence”. Siddhārtha Buddha later followed this conception.

Śrī Viṣṇu-avatāra Buddhadeva appears in Kikāṭa, or the region of Gayā. At the beginning of the age of Kali, which began some 5,500 years from the present moment, He appeared as the son of Añjana in the region of Gayā. This is described in *Bhāgavatam*. There is a distinct difference between the *sādhaka* Buddha and the *avatāra* Buddha. Many know the story of Śākyasiṃha, the *sādhaka* Buddha; they know nothing of the history of the other Buddhas. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas do not observe the birth date of the *śūnyavādī* Buddha, nor do they wish to honour his atheistic philosophy. Śākyasiṃha Buddha is no more than a very knowledgeable living entity. It would never be appropriate to consider him equal to Śrī Buddha, the incarnation of Bhagavān. If you say “Sugata Buddha”, it refers only to the *avatāra* Buddha. He is never Gautama Buddha, the son of Śuddhodhana. Another name for the original Buddha, the incarnation of Viṣṇu, is Sugata.

The Buddha *avatāra*, who is determined to be one of the *daśāvatāra* and is written about in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*, the *Līṅga Purāṇa*, and the *Varāha Purāṇa*, is not Śuddhodhana’s *śūnyavādī* son. Vaiṣṇavas do not worship a *śūnyavādī*; they offer their respects to Buddha the ninth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu who bewildered the Daityas and Dānavas. The Buddha who is worshipful to the Bhāgavata *sampradāya* is the son of Añjana or Ajina, and is an *avatāra* of Bhagavān. It is written in the book *Nirṇaya-sindhu*: “The *avatāra* Buddha was born on the second lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Jyeṣṭha.” The provision of his *pūjā*, *namaskāra* and *arcana* is ordained for the seventh bright fortnight day of Pauṣa-māsa. This provision is mentioned in *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, *Agni Purāṇa*, *Vāyu Purāṇa*, *Skanda Purāṇa* and other Purāṇas.

If the worshippers of the various presiding demigods and goddesses, the *pañcopāsakas*, and the pantheist *bahv-īśvara-vādīs* worship the *śūnyavādī* Gautama Buddha or honour the day of Buddha Pūrṇimā, it does nothing for the *sātvata-bhāgavatas* who follow *sanātana-dharma*. Max Muller has said, in regard to Śākyasiṃha Buddha: “He was born in the Christian year 477, in the city of Kapilāvastu, in Lumbini forest.” This city is a renowned settlement near Nepal. His father’s name was Śuddhodhana, his mother’s name was Māyā-devī. This is well-known history. Though Añjana’s son and Śuddhodhana’s have the same name, they are not the same

person. Viṣṇu Buddha's appearance place is in the Kīkaṭa region, at a place called Bodh Gaya, whereas Siddhārtha Buddha's birthplace is in the foothills of the Himalayas.

There is much history and many accounts of Buddha. I can inform you about this in detail later. If one studies various Purāṇas, one gains a proper conception about Buddha. Reading the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtram* composed by Rāvaṇa also provides information on many subjects pertaining to the *tathāgata* Buddha. If you are interested in this subject, you can study it in depth.

Know you have my affectionate best wishes and convey my affectionate blessings to everyone else. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 97

One who longs for his master's *prīti* (pleasure) is *priya* (dear to him) • The mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas dispels the conditioned soul's *anarthas* and *aparādhās* • Any function is made a success by heartfelt love and attachment • Remembering verses from *Bhagavad-gītā* maintains one's composure

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane,
Kolkata-700004
12/10/1988

Snehāspadāsu—

... No matter where I am for preaching, you are all advised to direct your letters to the Kolkata *maṭha*. Even if there is a delay, the letters etc. are redirected from Kolkata to wherever I am. I found out you were at the Haridvāra *maṭha* for seven days. I gather that the *maṭha*'s peaceful and *bhajana*-favourable environment has attracted you. It is quite natural that a mother is pleased to receive her son's affectionate letters.

You want me in Chunchura for your son's upcoming birthday. Because of my own bad luck, I have not been able to fulfil my mother's wishes for the past two years, for which I am deeply pained. I keep making a special effort to fulfil your order, but yet this son, due to his own misfortune, ends up breaking his promise from time to time. Still, the hope is that the mother will forgive her son. The mother cannot keep her son at her side on his birthday or her son has been unlucky to lose this golden opportunity – neither of these is a matter of debate any longer, as the mother is situated far away enough to avoid increasing offences by quarrelling with her son.

What you wrote is definitely true: the master's *prīti* (pleasure) is what the *sevaka* or *sevikā* especially longs for. Desiring the pleasure of one's beloved is indeed what constitutes one's endearing quality

**“Mundane pride,
arrogance and
egotism deviate
the living entity
from the path of
bhajana by means
of the hankering
for personal
happiness.”**

(*priyatva*) and is the special field and state of love and attachment. Mundane pride, arrogance, and egotism deviate the living entity from the path of *bhajana* by means of the hankering for personal happiness. It is by the mercy of *sādhū*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas that the filth of the conditioned souls' *anarthas* and *aparādhās*, which are contrary to *bhajana*, are dispelled and their hearts attain immaculate sanctity.

There is no reason for you to be filled with despair due to the enthusiasm and excitement that the devotees from northern Bengal had for *guru-pūjā*. Any sort of function is made a success by heartfelt love and attachment and faithful devotion. In your case, it is my well-contemplated opinion that your parental love for your son will grant you fulfilment in this regard. Your moral courage, your zeal and enthusiasm and, above all, your nurturing parental love will adorn your preparations and ceremony with success in every way. There is no reason for any sort of negative thought in this regard. “*Vāmana haiyā cāda dharār* – a dwarf (*vāmana*) longing to touch the moon” is one thing, and the loving mother Aditi attracting Upendra-Kṛṣṇa in the form of Vāmana is another sort of affair. Know that neither Vāmana nor anyone under His supervision has any objection to the aforementioned functions in Chunchura city. You will make all necessary arrangements in this regard.

I understand that you received news of my physical illness from the *brahmacārīs* during Ratha-yātrā in Navadvīpa. From the 15th October of 1987 till December I was bedridden both in Kolkata *maṭha* and in Deoghar. Later, during the time of Ratha in Navadvīpa, and again in Barobisha I was bedridden for a week. Right now, this sort of poor health has been written or predestined according to my lunar sign and the ascendant. You have to endure what you do not have a remedy for. If I consult various teachings, like the *Gītā*'s “*mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya śitoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkhadā* [2.14] – the discomforts of summer and winter, happiness and distress are little more than sensory stimulation” and “*duḥkheṣv anudvigna-manāḥ sukheṣu vigata-sprhāḥ* [2.56] – one should not let the mind be disturbed by sorrow and be free from desires induced by joy”, I find the aphorisms (*yoga-sūtras*) I need to maintain my composure in regard to all these issues.

Right now, I am returning to Kolkata to go to an E.N.T. doctor for a check-up of my ears. I can barely hear anything in my right ear. Testing will take up to ten days, and after that, therapy will start. If the cause of the condition is mucous, then medicine will treat it, otherwise, I will end up having to get an operation (micro-surgery). Right now, a full check-up is necessary. My body is very weak. I am nearly sleepless and am hyperventilating. What will I do in this condition? I cannot really figure that out. I do not want to worry and upset you by

writing you about my sickness, but it does not work to not tell you anything, because at every step there is an opportunity (place) for blame and criticism. I think it is impossible for me to be completely free of that. I have informed you of my physical condition. Please do not say anything to anyone. I am compelled to go out, even though my body is ill. If I do not go out, I will not collect anything, and it would be very difficult to keep my *samsāra* running. I have many expenses, and many do not want to understand that. Know you have my well-wishes.
Iti—

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 98

***Pūjā* is real and directly interactive, though considered indirect from a general perspective • Both *sādhakas* and *siddhas* engage in *pūjā* and *arcana* • All material lust and desires are subdued through sincerity • The harsh truth of this world is that all the world's people together cannot satisfy a single person • If you keep going with patience and enthusiasm, you will not experience any inconvenience**

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

PARAMOUNT

25/1 Ballygunj Circular Rd.

Kolkata-19

11/6/1989

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! Your affectionate letter dated 28/3/89 reached the Kolkata *maṭha* on time, on the date of 31/3/89. After staying one month and twenty days in Deoghar, I went to the Sidhabari *maṭha* on the date of 10/3/89. Seeing there was no chance of physical wellness in Deoghar, I quickly left. In Sidhabari too my health did not improve, and on top of that, as the houses were not fit for habitation, I was compelled to come back to Kolkata.

Knowing that your “sun-scorched desert-like heart” found some peace in coming to Deoghar and seeing me, I too have been somewhat relieved. Surely you were dissatisfied with me when you could not see me a second time there, but there was nothing I could do. ...

You will become ‘*gurudevātāma*’ and render *pūjā* and *arcana* service to *śrī vigraha* (the deity) with firm faith. Is the *pūjā* of the *śrī vigraha* or *arcālekhyā* (painting, or image for worship) not direct service? Is *sādhana-bhajana* all just theoretical? From the words of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru*, we can gather that *sevā-pūjā* is real and that it is conducted in a directly interactive manner. Although it would be considered indirect from a general perspective, for one who is qualified, it is the true reality. While *pūjā* and *arcana* are prescribed for *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*, exalted perfected souls (*siddha-mahātmās*) or those of very high qualification also preserve their *bhāva-maya prema-maya sevā* (service consisting of transcendental sentiment and divine love) by means of *pūjā* and *arcana*. It is not possible for a louse to be eligible for direct service,

meaning it is accessible only by special qualification. Some considerations and discernments of the social, civil world also come into the realm of spirituality, which is why some hurdles or restrictions have been imposed in this regard. What is absolutely mandatory in *vidhi-mārga* [a fear of disobeying śāstric injunctions] is inessential in *rāga-mārga* [which is impelled by greed] and beyond all such regulation. Know that it is only by the medium of service that one gains the direct *darśana* of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

All material lust and desires are subdued through sincerity. On the path of *sādhana-bhajana*, it is necessary to have a spiritual guide who can provide the necessary directions at all times. As we walk the path of learning about *bhakti*, there is a need to rest in the exceedingly cooling shade of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' feet. Only those who walk the path can make mistakes on that path, but if they strive to rectify those mistakes, their weakness of heart is dispelled, and they gain inner strength in *bhajana*. Full surrender or auspiciousness for the soul does not happen in one day. One has to offer the heart's faithful devotion to *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān. Though he has many children, [the] spiritual guardian will never let you float away in the water. There is no reason for you to have this sort of unreasonable fear. Your *guru* and Bhagavān will be the guides on your path and keep you going.

Mulling over the various troubles of family life, you want to leave your home. This is not a good idea. Even if you kill yourself trying to please someone, you cannot appease their mind. This is a natural state of affairs. All the humans of the world together cannot satisfy a single person. This is the harsh, actual truth as related by scripture. Take this into consideration and find some solace. Just keep going and stay fixed on your main purpose.

By your firm faith, all three types of *aparādha* will be dispelled. You will attain a good destination. There is no reason to worry. If you keep going with patience and enthusiasm, you will not experience any inconvenience. “*Guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are always protecting me and always will.” It is your duty to carry this firm conviction in your heart at all times. Accept my affectionate best wishes. *Iti—*

“As we walk the path of learning about bhakti, there is a need to rest in the exceedingly cooling shade of guru and Vaiṣṇavas’ feet.”

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 99

To love *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, you have to equally employ your faithful devotions towards their various god-brothers and your own god-brothers • In the kingdom of service, there is no such thing as taking revenge • Serving as *guru* instructs is more pleasing to him than serving of one's own accord

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata
25/5/1989

Snehāspadeṣu—

——! I cannot figure out exactly when you returned to Kolkata from Sidhabari and then went from Kolkata to Mathurā-Vṛndāvana. I understand that you are living near Dāujī now. I know you have faith, devotion, belief in *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, but if you could make a proper arrangement and settlement to keep that unbroken, it would be a matter of special delight.

If you are going to love *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, you have to equally employ your faithful devotions towards their various god-brothers and your own god-brothers. If you do not do that, you end up trapped in the paradigm “*eke ninde, āre vande, ei mata bhaṇḍa*”³⁴⁵ – criticizing one person while praising another makes one a hypocrite.” If you are to take to heart the

**“If you are to
take to heart
the conceptions
of *śrī guru* and
Vaiṣṇavas, you
have to try to
understand
their hearts.”**

conceptions of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, you have to try to understand their hearts. To become acquainted with the main gist of what they want to say and turn that into a reality is called *guru-sevā* or *vaiṣṇava-sevā*.

You have to understand the situation and make proper arrangements for the tasks of service. In that case, patience, steadiness, and restraint is especially necessary. Excessive anger and murderous intent can never become the ornament of a Vaiṣṇava or *sevaka*. For the servant of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, malice, violence, envy, pride, egotism, and arrogance are wholly rejectable. In the kingdom of service, there is no such thing

³⁴⁵ See *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* (*Madhya-khaṇḍa* 20.97)

as taking revenge. In such situations, restraint and tolerance are the *sevaka*'s special virtues. I hope you can somewhat understand the gist of what I am trying to say.

However much you are content and delighted to be near me and serve, I am even more delighted if you continue in your tasks of service as per my directions. Only *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are specially acquainted with where one must be for the beauty of service to flourish more. So, I think if you can put aside your own ideas and heed the instructions and directions of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, you will have more auspiciousness.

At the moment, I think you should stay in Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha in a steady and calm manner, keeping a cool head. I will be happy if you take responsibility for some service and worship, some general *bhoga-rāga* (offerings of food and other forms of loving worship) and other services. After partaking of *prasāda*, you will have plenty of time to chant *śrī harināma* and study various *granthas*. You will not have to go out for *bhikṣā*. I will arrange for someone to provide rice, dahl, spices, and other ingredients for the service there. You just need to keep all these items sorted and stored in your little pantry.

Be sure to convey what intentions you have in mind via letter to the Kolkata *maṭha* address. If you can recruit one more *sevaka* to be with you there, you will have some help. All I ask is that you never enter into any arguments with any of the *sevakas* from the — *maṭha* or the — *maṭha*. What more? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 100

Instructions for a surrendered *brahmacārī-sevaka* • Following the orders of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is the greatest service and responsibility • *Vaiṣṇava-dharma* is the *dharma* of being under guidance • *Sevakas* are soldiers

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri (Darjeeling)
27/7/1989

Snehāspadeṣu—

——! I received your letter dated 17/7/89 on the date of 21/7/89. You wrote that after Navadvīpa *parikramā*, you went to Mathurā with Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. I understood that your digestive issues started there and that your mind became very upset. I understood that as per the advice of Sa——r, you took Mahārāja's leave and are now at Śrī Gopīnātha Gauḍīya Maṭha. If your body stays well there and your stomach issues go away, then you can stay there.

If you understand that living in Navadvīpa or Vṛndāvana is not the main thing and that gaining the mercy and service of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas gives all perfection, then it was not right for

“Vaiṣṇava-dharma is anugatyadharma (the dharma of being under guidance.”

you to leave Śrī —— Gauḍīya Maṭha and —— Mahārāja's guidance to go to Navadvīpa on your own whim. If your body was unwell, then it would have been right to inform the *maṭha* management and get treatment. It was rather improper of you to go to the Dola festival of your own accord instead of doing that. The *maṭha* management will deliberate on where you can perform *hari-bhajana* properly. Know that you do not have any responsibility in this. Following the orders of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is your greatest service and responsibility. This is the servant's beauty or ornament, his greatest virtue. A life under guidance is a life of *sādhana*.

Vaiṣṇava-dharma is *anugatyadharma* (the *dharma* of being under guidance). Therefore, if the *sādhaka* leaves guidance or service, he deviates (*cyuta*) from his own *dharma* and ends up becoming averse to the service of Acyuta Śrī Bhagavān.

Staying wherever you like and doing whatever service you want is not real service. Your real service lies in following the orders of the Vaiṣṇavas. *Sevakas* are soldiers. They must

always strive to follow the orders of the general. That is their meditation and understanding. I understood that at present you have been engaged in the temple's *sevā* and *pūjā* since the date of 18/6/89. Know that you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 101

One must repay the debt of love with love • The real result of full surrender, or submission of the soul • Transcending the good and bad perceived in dreams • Attachments within the realm of *māyā* will not trouble you if you perform *bhajana* as per the orders of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • Exemplary *gr̥hasthas* only want to serve Bhagavān and His devotees • Concessions for those who cannot fast due to high *pitta* • The importance of caring for the body as a means of *sādhana-bhajana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Gauḍīya Maṭha
Sannyas Marg, Kankhal
Haridvāra (U.P.)
27/8/1989

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear —! ... I am healthy at present. Do not even worry about this. I understood you were very happy to partake of *mahāprasāda* and *śrī caraṇa-tulasī*. The debt of transcendental love can truly never be repaid. Never is it possible to clear the debt to *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. One must repay the debt of love with love.

Previously, if I went to your village, I would stay for eight to ten days. I had time then. At present, the number of sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters have increased, so I am tormented by worries and lack of time: “*bahu suta sūtā janama labhilo, marama hainu hata*³⁴⁶ – many sons and daughters were born, and I became distressed at heart.” Presently I am unstable due to suffering and worry. In my old age, who will serve me, who will feed me, who will help me dress? That is the concern! If I were to ask, you would perhaps answer: “How will we render direct service as women?” You probably receive most of my handwritten letters. But how will I give you the opportunity of direct *darśana*? It is by love, fondness, and possessive attachment that a human being can keep very close even that which is far away from him. Try to gain some peace of mind by adopting precisely that sort of [loving] means. The instructions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, which generate auspiciousness for the soul, constitute

³⁴⁶ *Yauvane Jakhona* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

our great welfare and our cherished object. We must carry that in our hearts in every respect.

Many of us speak of offering ourselves at *śrī guru*'s lotus feet, but do we really offer our souls? All of the *sādhakas*' and *sādhikās*' pride and arrogance is dispelled by surrendering their souls. "*Ātma-nivedana, tuvā pade kari, hainu parama sukhī; duḥkha dūre gelo, cintā na rahilo, caudike ānanda dekhi. Aśoka abhaya amṛta ādhāra—tomāra caraṇa-dvaya; tāhāte ekhona viśrāma labhiyā, chāḍinu bhavera bhaya*"³⁴⁷ – Having surrendered my soul at Your feet, I have become supremely joyful. Sadness has gone far away, worries no longer remain, and I see bliss in all four directions. Your two feet are the basis of freedom from sorrow, fear, and death. Now, gaining rest there, I have discarded the fear of material existence." This is the real result of full surrender, or submission of the soul. Despite surrendering everything to Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas, we keep the key to the iron safe for ourselves. This is not called real surrender or acceptance of renunciation. Scriptures state that the surrendered and the renounced have the same characteristics. The real surrendered souls and actual renunciates are those who have no one on this Earth other than *śrī guru* and Bhagavān.

"One can never grasp *guru-tattva* and *bhagavat-tattva* by one's own meagre intelligence or by studying scripture." What you said is true. Only if one obtains the causeless compassion of *guru* and Bhagavān does one gain competence in all matters. "*Dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayanti te*"³⁴⁸ – I give that transcendental knowledge by which they attain Me." This is the special *adhikāra* (qualification) afforded by gaining that which is beyond all the senses.

Whatever is seen or experienced in dreams or deep sleep all has two aspects. In dreams, two things can be seen: good and bad. As long as the mind is not fixed upon that which is beyond the senses, or supramundane, one only experiences the two elements of good and bad. When one becomes established in actual truth, then one has constant vision and experience of the *sad-vastu* (transcendental substance). The *ku* (bad) is dispelled and the *su* (good) comes and establishes itself naturally in the heart. As long as one dwells on worldly concerns and feelings, the perception of good and bad will certainly remain. If one attains a state beyond the modes of material nature, one thinks of everything in terms of "*Gaurer āmāra saba bhālo* – all is well because I am Gaura's."

**"The instructions
of *guru* and
Vaiṣṇavas,
which generate
auspiciousness
for the soul,
constitute our
great welfare and
our cherished
object."**

³⁴⁷ *Śaraṇāgati, Ātma-nivedana* (1–2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁴⁸ *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.10)

“The ultimate aspiration of our *bhajana* is to attain the everlasting service of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda’s transcendental pastimes together.”

If you follow the orders and directions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and perform *hari-bhajana*, material attachments, which are produced by *māyā*, will not give you trouble. If you can chant *śrī nāma* without offences, your restless heart will be steadied, and you will gain the opportunity to perform *sādhana-bhajana* properly. In such a state, mundane lust and desires will find no place in your heart. By the strength of *guru* and Vaiṣṇava’s mercy, all our desires for sense objects, for enjoyment, and for *samsāra* are eradicated. To become the servant of the servant of Gopī-jana-vallabha Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra is the natural inclination of the soul. The ultimate aspiration of our *bhajana* is to attain the everlasting service of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda’s transcendental pastimes together. Those who are established in this kind of conception are especially fortunate.

I see that some exemplary *grhasthas* keep some proverbs framed in their home. In one place, I saw written: “A contracted heart has infinite thirst. Its hopes do not, have not, and will not ever dissipate.” Surely these hopes and aspirations of virtuous *grhasthas* are in relation to the service *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān. They have the conviction that only *śraddhā*, *bhakti*, *prema-prīti* are the objects of their ultimate aspiration. They do not have any sort of mundane lust or desires. All their endeavours are especially for Kṛṣṇa’s sake. The only desire and focus of their life is service to Bhagavān and His devotees.

I am worried to hear the news of your poor physical health. If you take medicine punctually, follow a diet, and take rest, you will recover. If the body is unwell, despair naturally fills the mind. It also disrupts the daily service and worship, chanting of *śrī nāma*, and study of scripture. Therefore, it is imperative to keep the body healthy. That is the only way to have the convenience of performing *sādhana-bhajana* properly. If it is particularly necessary, there is no harm in eating something to quell the *pitta* (stomach acid) right after *ahnika*. Śrī Bhagavān will not be dissatisfied or displeased with you for that. There are people who have too much *pitta* and are therefore incapable of fasting from water on Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā, Śrī Janmāṣṭamī, Śrī Nṛsimha Caturdaśī. If, instead of fasting and then spending three or four days ill, they take some *śarabata* (chilled juice) or milk, their fast will not be destroyed. The rules and regulations of scripture are prescribed with consideration to place, time, person, and circumstance.

Śraddhā-bhakti is the real truth. It is never a temporary or perishable thing. As a result of offences, the heart of the living entity becomes hard like a thunderbolt. Once the offences are

dispelled, the once soiled heart regains its strength and becomes pure, turning into Śrī Bhagavān's dwelling place. It is true that a life deprived of *sādhana-bhajana* and devoid of *bhakti* has no purpose, since the human body is extremely rare and is the root of *sādhana-bhajana*. At the same time, it is absolutely necessary to utilize and care for it properly. Those who do not appreciate the need to perform *sādhana-bhajana* fall in the category of lamentable, ignorant, fallen men of ignominious conduct and atheistic beliefs. Their time both here and in the next world is wasted. *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are omniscient and do not see the faults of others, so there is hope for everyone. There is no way to not accept this.

In Chittaranjan, one mother who is very affectionate to me wrote that she recovered after I gave her medicine in a dream. I am somewhat relieved to know that, in this case too, your loving mother fed you the medicine I gave her and you found some comfort. By the desire of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and their ambitions for our well-being, we will surely obtain the real result. Bhagavān's mercy supersedes all. It is our duty to remember this. Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

**“*Guru* and
Vaiṣṇavas are
omniscient and
do not see the
faults of others,
so there is hope
for everyone.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 102

Duties of a *maṭha* resident • *Vaiṣṇava-dharma* is the *dharma* of *ānugatya* • Chanting a fixed number of rounds out loud removes *anarthas* and laziness • How a renunciate should perform *bhikṣā* • The dangers of finding faults in others • Service to *guru* and service to *Vaiṣṇavas* are of the same calibre

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Gauḍīya Maṭha
Sannyas Marg, Kankhal
Haridvāra (U.P.)
27/8/1989

Snehāspadeṣu—

Cā——, Ni——, Cai——! I received your affectionate letter and have replied to it. I have also discussed with you in person the standards, ideals, and rules and regulations of living in the *maṭha*-mission. Of the three of you, Cai—— is the youngest, so if the two of you show him your love and affection and follow the rules and regulations of the *maṭha-mandira*, *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* will be satisfied with you and shower you with their loving wishes.

Śrī —— dāsa Brahmācārī has been engaged as the *maṭha-rakṣaka* (“temple protector” or temple president) of Śrī —— Gauḍīya Maṭha. It is right that you execute the tasks of service in the *maṭha* according to his directions and wishes. It is right that you always heed him. The *maṭha* residents should never disobey him, going here and there without asking him or receiving his permission. *Vaiṣṇava-dharma* is the *dharma* of *anugatya* (being under guidance); a

“*Vaiṣṇava-dharma* is the *dharma* of *ānugatya* (being under guidance).”

life bereft of guidance is full of chaos. If one gives up *anugatya*, one will end up falling from the soul’s *dharma*. Śrī *guru*, *Vaiṣṇavas*, and *Bhagavān* never show mercy to persons of poor character. Their lives end in vain. For people like that, there is no possibility of their gaining any uplifting lessons or anything from living in the house of the *guru* in the *maṭha-mandira* other than a collection of offences. I hope you never abandon service to choose such misfortune.

If you can grasp the transcendental conceptions of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and adopt the ideal they have set of a life of service, then you can obtain real auspiciousness. Do not ever try to imitate them. In becoming a *sevaka*, do not try to be the master; do not choose the ultimate misery. Rather than giving each other instructions, it is more beneficial to try to rectify oneself. It is preferable to take chastisement and become a disciple. A person becomes a *śiṣya*, or *sevaka*, if he can follow the orders and instructions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas unquestioningly.

**“If the *jīva*
loudly performs
kīrtana of the
mahā-mantra,
his *anarthas* are
eradicated and
sloth flees.”**

If the *sevaka* chants a fixed number of *śrī nāma* every day, he never has to become a *karmī*, *jñānī*, *yogī*, or *anyābhilāṣī*. If the *jīva* loudly performs *kīrtana* of the *mahā-mantra*, his *anarthas* are eradicated and sloth flees. It is not right for any *sevaka* to abandon service and indulge in laziness. The sole *dharma* of the *sevaka* is to always be making efforts to serve Bhagavān and His devotees.

Though village people have high regard for worldly talk, *sevakas* do not develop enthusiasm for that. It is best to give a *bahirmukha* (spiritually averse) person the respect they want. You never have to honour or condone their worldly behaviour. In collecting the ingredients for Bhagavān’s service, one [a *maṭha* resident] must maintain respectful dealings with *grhasthas*, but one does not need to become their slave. “*Viṣayīra anna khāile malin haya mana, malin mana haile nahe kṛṣṇera smaraṇa*³⁴⁹ – If one eats the foodstuffs of sense enjoyers, one’s mind becomes contaminated. With the mind contaminated, one cannot remember Kṛṣṇa.” Always remember this guideline. Not everyone becomes a resident of Vraja just by living in Vraja. Know that only the transcendental Vrajavāsīs have the qualification for *mādhukarī-bhikṣā* (bee-like begging for alms). To impose mundane conceptions on to the transcendental principle, which is beyond the modes of material nature, is the approach of the *prākṛta-sahajiyā*. To call a saintly person a rogue and to call a rogue a saint are equal offences. The consideration of *adhikāra* (qualification) must always be accepted. To establish an unworthy person as worthy and to not accept the competence of a worthy person – both are counted as errors of the same calibre.

To diminish the honour of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas or to disrespect them either directly or indirectly by asserting one’s own value, honour, and prestige does not befit any Vaiṣṇava. Instead of seeking flaws in others, if one praises even their most ordinary qualities, one’s

³⁴⁹ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 6.278)*

mind will find peace. For conditioned souls, judging another's virtues and flaws has been forbidden. Still, praising the virtues of another is comparatively better. If man searches for flaws in others, often those very same flaws end up attacking him and he falls from his path of *bhajana-sādhana*. This soils his own heart, and many types of anxieties and worries destroy the balance of his mind. *Gītā*'s "*dhyāyato viṣayān... buddhi-nāśāt praṇaśyati*" verse³⁵⁰ perfectly illustrates this matter.

**“Service to
guru and
service to
Vaiṣṇavas are
of the same
calibre.”**

All of you *sevakas* should render the tasks of service in the *maṭha* together and keep the *maṭha*'s daily service intact. If you become prone to mutual fighting, conflict, and disagreement, then the opportunistic party will have an opportunity to ridicule you. Never engage in such heinous activity. Keep an impartial view and be cautious in regard to the service of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. No one can ever find auspiciousness by abandoning the service of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. One who rejects service to the *dīkṣā-guru* and preaches that there is greater glory in serving the Vaiṣṇavas or *śikṣā-guru* and *nāma-guru* must be given up as bad association. Service to *guru* and service to Vaiṣṇavas are of the same calibre. Know you have my best loving wishes. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁵⁰ By continuously meditating on the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment to them. Attachment gives rise to lust, which in turn leads to the awakening of anger (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.62).

Letter 103

Śrī guru-pādapaḍma is truly the embodiment of love • Hari, guru, and Vaiṣṇavas are the only essence • We must keep our hearts resolute and absorbed in Bhagavān in the midst of everything • The relationship of the viśrambha-sevaka with śrī guru and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Gauḍīya Maṭha
Sannyas Marg, Kankhal
Haridvāra (U.P.)
29/8/1989

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ——! I received the affectionate letter you wrote dated 4/7/89 and addressed to the Siliguri maṭha address. This time, when I got sick, I was in Kolkata at the house of one Vaiṣṇava gr̥hastha. From there I went straight to Deoghar.

Praying at the lotus feet of śrī guru for his mercy, you have expressed your anxiety and desperation. Śrī guru-pādapaḍma is truly the embodiment of love, the walking stick for those blinded by ignorance, and the supreme refuge of those wishing to attain mercy and bhakti. By śrī gurudeva's causeless mercy, even the dumb become voluble and the lame gain the capacity to scale mountains.

It is to enjoy the fruits of our actions that we have come into this material existence and ended up in a condition of bondage. That is why, even while performing all activities in this world, our main duty, hari-bhajana, is vital. “Kṛṣṇa bhajibāra tare saṁsāre āinu³⁵¹ – to worship Kṛṣṇa, I came into the material existence.” It will not do to forget this statement of the mahājanas. We will have to engage our consciousness in contemplation of Bhagavān by any means possible. Even in the midst of various obstacles and calamities in this material existence, we must keep our hearts resolute and engaged in Bhagavān's name, form, qualities, and narrations of His pastimes. In this theatre house of five types of disparity – this material existence – śrī nāma and Hari,

**“We will have
to engage our
consciousness in
contemplation of
Bhagavān by any
means possible.”**

³⁵¹ Śrī Kṛṣṇer Aṣṭottara-śata-nāma (5) by Dvija Haridāsa

guru, and Vaiṣṇavas alone are the only essence. All the affection and attachment of the world can be abandoned, and the needs of body, home, and money can be restricted, but can we dispose of *bhakti*, the *bhaktas*, and Bhagavān? On the path [of *bhakti*], they are indispensable. Śāstra refers to humans who are devoid of thoughts of Bhagavān as animals. The *Bhāgavata* has marked people who think of matter as spirit and spirit as matter as *paśu-ghna* (creature-killing hunters) and *go-khara* (cows and asses). We cannot waste this rare human birth in

**“We cannot waste
this rare human
birth in neglect
and frivolity.”**

neglect and frivolity. You have all offered your souls unto the lotus feet of *śrī guru*, so *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are your only treasured possessions and the objects of your faithful devotion. For one who is the master of infinite universes, there is no difference between the wealthy and poor, beggars and bugs. Śrī Bhagavān is the main *viṣaya-vigraha*, and His *svarūpa-śakti*, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī,

is the main *āśraya-vigraha*. As a *mañjarī*, *śrī guru-pādapadma* is, by constitution, the *āśraya* under the guidance of the main *āśraya-vigraha*. To the *viśrambha* (intimate) *sevaka* and *sevikā*, these three personalities are *sneha-vigraha* (the objects of love) and *sneher dulāla* and *dulālī* (the beloved and darling boy and girl). Each of these three figures have their own prowess, but they each accept each other's guidance, they continually express humility, and they do not regard themselves as the authority, so they are worry-free. Know that these three personalities yearn for love.

The duty of each of us is to serve the main *āśraya-vigraha* and *viṣaya-vigraha*. It is by the causeless mercy of *āśraya-vigraha śrī guru-pādapadma* that said service is attained in a direct, in-person manner. These three principles of reality (*tattva-vastu*) are everything for those who are exclusively surrendered. The devotee who has offered up his soul conveys his prayer to stay close to these three *tattvas* as a particle of dust (at their feet) and constantly submits himself for their examination, wanting to become sincere and free from the conceit of ownership (*akiñcana*). Their auspicious blessings and powerful words of instruction and direction are the strength, hope, and wealth of the *sādhaka's* and *sādhikā's* lives, their everything. ... I hope you are all well. Accept my best wishes and affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 104

The *sādhaka* only gains qualification for *bhajana* through the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • One should not go on pilgrimage without Vaiṣṇavas • Those whose hearts are anxious to have *darśana* of *guru* can control even Bhagavān • The system and strategy of *sādhana-bhajana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Gauḍīya Maṭha
Sannyas Marg, Kankhal
Haridvāra (U.P.)
29/8/1989

Snehāspadeṣu—

——! Your loving letter of the 10th of August arrived on time at Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha. From there, it was redirected to here, to the Haridvāra maṭha, where I received it yesterday.

What you wrote is very true: “No mundane object of this world can give us happiness and peace.” Besides the causeless mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, the conditioned souls can never gain real knowledge and *bhakti*. What qualification does the *sādhaka* have for *hari-bhajana* and *bhagavad-anuśīlana*? If one can make the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas one’s resource, one can become properly engaged in the service of Bhagavān.

Only those who have surrendered their body, mind, and soul to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas truly submit an offering of their faith as *puṣpāñjali* (a flower offering). The scriptures contain directives regarding going for *darśana* of *śrī dhāma* and holy places in the association of Vaiṣṇavas. If you maintain the solemn vow that you will not do anything without the order of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, then you should know you certainly cannot have my permission to go on pilgrimage without Vaiṣṇavas.

I understand that you have *darśana* of *śrī gurudeva* in most of your dreams. You will also receive *sākṣāt* (direct) *darśana* [of Bhagavān] in this manner [in your dreams]. If the heart’s passion, love, and affection are there, then one surely obtains the opportunity of direct *darśana* and *sevā*. Even *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are grateful and indebted to *sevakas* like you. Those whose hearts are anxious to have *darśana* of *guru* can control even Bhagavān.

**“Those whose
hearts are anxious
to have *darśana* of
guru can control
even Bhagavān.”**

The profound conduct and teachings of Vaiṣṇavas specially enlighten the *jīvas* on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*. In the material world (*samsāra*), one has to act like a materialist (*samsārī*), and in one's heart, one's eternal cultivation of *dharma* goes on. This is the system and strategy of *sādhana-bhajana*. “*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*³⁵² – *yoga* is expertise in action.” The desire to gain pure devotion, having given up the mundane efforts of *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga*, and so on, is the real fruit of action related to Hari. This sort of attitude effects all the worthiness and qualification needed to perform *sādhana-bhajana* and service to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and to obtain *prema-bhakti*. If one has conviction, all hopes in the field of *sādhana* are fulfilled. Drinking undiluted milk surely nourishes the soul. Partaking of adulterated items will inevitably cause harm to one's health. In all situations, a touchstone grants all items an elevated state of beings. Of that there is no doubt.

Due to the results of my previous actions, I fall ill from time to time. Then, by the causeless mercy of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān, I recover my health somewhat. The *sevakas'* untiring labour and acceptance of renunciation are also special aids in this regard. It is by their conviction in service and the bonds of their love and affection that I become healthy, so I am indebted and grateful to them too. ... *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁵² *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.50)

Letter 105

Never be discouraged by anyone's negative criticism

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha
Gourbatsahi, Swargadwar (Purī)
7/1/1990

Snehāspadeṣu—

You were planning to go to Haridvāra on 23/12/89. Perhaps you have changed this programme. If you had gone at this time, you could have pushed forward some of the work in regard to the plan sanction and other affairs. Is there a possibility of your going to Haridvāra again?

I made corrections to Śrī Guru-praśasti (praise of śrī guru) and the description of the festival at Badla. It would be best if we did not print them at present. I desired to carry out the activities of the *maṭha* and mission in a way that accommodated everyone, but that is not actually happening. As my *karma* is bad, the opposite of good is happening. Those who are moving in opposition are again the ones casting threatening looks. How am I to function in this sort of situation? That is what I am worried about. Nowadays, despite “blowing on chilled rice before I eat it”, there is no escape. At the moment, I cannot see any truth in the proverb: “A dumb mute has no enemies.” “Faults are thick where love is thin – jāke dekhte nāri, tār calan bākā”³⁵³. These are the politics of the religious world at present.

If you all uphold your duties and responsibilities properly, you will be able to obtain the good will and blessings of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Never be discouraged by anyone's negative criticism and do not let your mind be disturbed. Remain fixed and firm in your duties and responsibilities. Patient, optimistic individuals are never inconvenienced on the path of *sādhana*. Deal with everything head-on and with enthusiasm.

**“Patient, optimistic
individuals are never
inconvenienced on
the path of *sādhana*.”**

I believe you are physically well at present. You have been using the headache and migraine medicine. Have your

³⁵³ Literally, this translates as: “He whom I cannot see has crooked behaviour.” In other words: “I judge a person and think badly of him – regardless of what he is actually like – because I do not know him.”

headaches and migraines lessened at all? If you take regular doses of the medicine and rest a bit, you will get better.

Since ——— Prabhu came and administered injections, capsules and tablets, expectorant, vitamin tablets, etc. today, after eight or ten days, I managed to eat a little and sleep. It is a lot less cold in Purī than Kolkata, so it has been good for me. I want to return to the Kolkata *maṭha* once the month of Māgha is over. In the meantime, if you need to, come and visit once. I will write the editorial for the 42/1st issue as time permits. I have not been able to study at all. When I try to read a little, I get a migraine. Still, I will try to help you the best I can. Let me know what you think of my going to Kolkata. ...

What more can I say? I will tell and hear everything in person with you. Accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 106

How *guru-pādapadma* serves as a *mañjarī* under the guidance of the *sakhīs* • Description of Mother Yaśodā • Realization of one's *svarūpa* happens internally • One should be tenacious in asking questions of *guru* • The meaning of the name Revā • How to solve all conflict in relationships

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Gauḍīya Maṭha
Sannyas Road, Kankhal
Haridvāra (U.P.)
14/8/1990

Snehāspadāsu—

I received your affectionate letter dated 28/7/90 here, on the date of 1/8/90. I do not think your guardian's love and affection has been impaired because the words “father and daughter” were used instead of “mother and son”. Mistakes and omissions can occur in either case. There is no way to deny this.

I could not quite understand why you used the word *śraddhāspadāsu* (object of my faith) in your letter. Generally, you have to write *śraddhāspadeṣu* when referring to one addressed by the word “father”. In Sanskrit and Bangla grammar, as per the *sūtra* “*viśeṣasya hi yal-līṅgam viśeṣaṇa-padeṣv api*”, the adjective needs to match the subject's gender and number. If you wrote this [*śraddhāspadāsu*] by mistake, then it is no matter.

If you consider “your father or *gurudeva*” to be in the category of *śakti*, if you meditate on *guru-pādapadma* as one following the guidance of the *priya-sakhīs*, *prāṇa-sakhīs*, and *nitya-sakhīs*, who are in turn under the guidance of the eight prominent *sakhīs*, then your usage of *śraddhāspadāsu* in referring to his *mañjarī* form has been appropriate. Śrī *guru-pādapadma* is engaged in various services to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava under the supervision of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī, Rāga Mañjarī, Rati Mañjarī, Lavaṅga Mañjarī, and Guṇa Mañjarī, who take pride in following the guidance of Lalitā, Viśākhā, Citrā, Campakamallikā, Tuṅgavidyā, Indulekhā, Raṅga-devī, and Sudevī – the eight

“Śrī *guru-pādapadma* is engaged in various services to Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava under the supervision of Śrī Rūpa Mañjarī.”

prominent *sakhīs* – as well as Maṇi-kuntalā (a *priya-sakhī*), Kādambarī Maṇi Mañjarī (a *prāṇa-sakhī*), and the *nitya-sakhīs*. They do not follow Śyāmā, Padmā, Śaibyā, and other *sakhīs* of Candrāvalī and support only Śrī Rādhārāṇī's party. This is their conviction in *bhajana*.

In immaculate *vātsalya-prema*, Śrī Nanda-Yaśomatī worship or serve Śrī Bāla-Gopāla Kṛṣṇa. Mother Yaśodā is the personification of *vātsalya-rasa*. The complexion of her limbs is *śyāmala* (an ineffable blackish blue), she wears rainbow-coloured garments, she is full-figured, and her hair is long, dark, and thick. Rādhārāṇī's mother, Kīrtidā, is her *prāṇa-sakhī* (best friend). She is the wife of Nanda and the friend of Vasudeva's wife Devakī. Mother Yaśodā, who gives *yaśa* (glory), is the *īśvarī* (queen) of the people of Vraja, the empress of Goṣṭha-Vṛndāvana (the pasturage of Vṛndāvana), and Kṛṣṇa's mother. “*Jāra jei rasa, sei sarvottama*³⁵⁴ – whichever *rasa* one possesses is the topmost.” Knowing this, performing *bhajana* of one's *ārādhyā* (worshipful) or *iṣṭa* (cherished) deity, as per one's *adhikāra*, is topmost.

Even though you are particularly well-acquainted with your *svarūpa*, you have again sought to know about it from me. In this, in progressing on your path of *sādhana-bhajana*, there will surely be an advantage. *Dāsyā-rasa* is the first stage, after which there are instructions for *bhajana* in *sakhyā*-, *vātsalya*-, and *madhura-rasa*, according to the mood of the identity of the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*'s soul. You will also realize this matter internally on your own. Your *svarūpa* and your *adhikāra* on the path of *bhajana* have been granted to you long ago.

You have to find proper answers to all types of questions that may arise about *sādhana-bhajana* from *guru-pādapadma*. There is no place for mistakes, errors, or offences in this regard. “*Dārḍhya lāgi puche,—ei sādharma svabhāva*³⁵⁵ – the saint's nature is to be tenacious in his inquiry.” As per this consideration, there is no fault in inquiring about *tattva-siddhānta* at all times. Although *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are omniscient, there is nothing wrong in revealing one's thoughts or feelings to such a senior person.

The special reason that *revā* is used with the word — is this that when a *ramā* (young woman) moves beyond *kanyā-dharma* (the *dharma* of a young girl) and has advanced towards attaining marital status, then it is necessary for her to form a proper connection or relationship with her prospective husband. That is why I have addressed you with the word *revā*. We find the following information in scripture to explain the word *revā*: “*revā tu narmadā devī nadī vā revatī matā*.” In other words, the word *revā* refers to the southernly Narmadā or Revā river. Then again, *Ramā*, *Lakṣmī*, *Sarasvatī*, *Pārvatī*, and other goddesses are also called *Revā*. Also,

³⁵⁴ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 8.83)

³⁵⁵ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 20.105)

Balarāma, Baladeva, or Balabhadra's predominant potency, Revatī-devī, is also known by the name Revā. Therefore, considering the matter from all angles, I, your loving mother, have addressed you as "Revā" in the letter. ...

If there is deep, heartfelt sincerity between mother and son, father and mother, father and son, daughter and mother, husband and wife, brother and sister, brother and brother – in every relationship – and everyone manages to understand each other's mistakes, flaws, failings, carelessness, etc. and with affection and loving attachment, from the core of the heart, say, "please forgive and forget" then all the blaming goes away and mutual love, affection, attachment, fondness, trust, and devotion arises. Then, both parties, though defeated by the other, are champions. Know that this is the speciality of kindness and generosity. You will see that the whole world is conquered by love and affection. *Iti—*

**"You will
see that the
whole world
is conquered
by love and
affection."**

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 107

Worldly prowess is wholly defunct in the realm of spirituality • How to go through crises with fortitude and faith • It is never possible to have any conflict of opinion with one who wishes you eternal auspiciousness • Only the foolish, crazy, absent-minded, and simple find auspiciousness in the company of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • Love and affection is mutually reciprocated even from thousands of miles away • Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas are our greatest friends in this world

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Bhaktivedānta Gauḍīya Maṭha
Sannyas Marg, Kankhal
Haridvāra (U.P.)
19/8/1990

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear —! Prior to this, I have received your loving letters dated 24/9/89, 20/10/89, 19/12/89, 1/1/90, 16/1/90, 12/6/90, 11/7/90, 28/7/90 on time. It is my despair that I was not able to give you any response despite receiving all of these letters. If it had been anyone else, they would surely have been offended and stopped writing me letters. I know that would never be possible in your case.

I cannot understand why human beings become puffed up for no reason. A person who cannot understand his own worth meets with endless misfortunes. One who does not accept the help of those who try to help is called ungrateful or unappreciative. An ungrateful person can never find auspiciousness. Worldly prowess is wholly defunct in the realm of spirituality and begets especially poisonous results where there is hatred, violence, and envy.

A person who utilizes his fortitude, unwavering patience, and strategic intelligence to solve whatever difficult problems and crises there are in this world finds that his glory and acclaim are broadcast everywhere. I have no earthly expectations of anyone. I want to stay satisfied with whatever I have. I maintain the faith that by the blessings and best wishes of the *guru-varga* and the kind-heartedness of close, dear friends, I will surely be able to cross over

all precarious situations. Opportunists can take advantage of my simplicity, skills, popularity, generosity, and personal preferences and try to gain prestige, but nothing comes of that. We all have to develop conviction in *hari-bhajana* by any means necessary.

You can have misunderstandings with your apparently close relatives or companions in this world, but it is never possible to have any conflict of opinion with one who wishes you eternal auspiciousness. There is back-biting only in worldly affairs. Should someone share private information with an equanimous saint, he will never keep record of it like a set of evidential documents. On the other hand, persons like Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who did not regard everyone equally, or like Duryodhana, who was like the personification of arrogance, will likely keep such information on record as proof of violence or envy. However, if one mistakenly thinks that Vaiṣṇavas are quarrelsome, deceitful, and inconsiderate, there is a risk of inauspiciousness. Hence, it is necessary to adopt caution in this regard.

You should forever be stupid, foolish, immature, and bereft of intelligence. This is all I want. “*Ati cālāker galāy daḍi* – too clever a man has a noose around his neck³⁵⁶.” Definitely try to understand this proverb. Only foolish, crazy, absent-minded, simple people find auspiciousness in the company of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. If one tries to be clever like the crow³⁵⁷, one ends up cheated. Those who can mingle with equal ease in any and all groups do not find auspiciousness. They are called opportunists. They give priority to their own self-interest. They can be called dishonest or deceitful.

Guru and Vaiṣṇavas surely accept whatever you offer with faith. In some cases, their acceptance is experienced or realized indirectly; in other cases, it is experienced directly. “*Bhūṅkte bhojayate* – feeding Vaiṣṇavas and being fed by them” is one of the six types of *sat-saṅga*. “*Dāna-pratigraha, mitho (paraspara) gupta-kathā, bhakṣaṇa, bhojana-dāna; saṅgera lakṣaṇa, ei chaya haya, ihāte bhaktira prāṇa*³⁵⁸ – giving and receiving gifts, sharing confidential matters, eating [the *prasāda* given by devotees] and offering them meals [of *prasāda*] – these are the six aspects of association in which the life force of *bhakti* dwells.” Palm fritters, gotu kola fritters, water spinach, taro, taro stem, dry calabash curry, dry banana flower curry, and calabash and milk pudding – these are all mediums, or ingredients, of affection. In this case, there exists the

356 Or: “Too much cunning overreaches itself.”

357 There are numerous fables in Bengal about the cunning of crows. Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s *Upākhyāne Upadeśa* features one such fable wherein a crow inserts discarded peacock feathers into his own tailfeathers and tries to masquerade as a peacock.

358 *Śaraṇāgati, Hari He! Dāna-pratigraha* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

sweet connection of profound introspection between giver and receiver. Even at a distance of thousands of miles, this love and affection is experienced mutually. All of you should give your heart to serving and worshipping the deity. He or They will surely accept that [service] directly.

“It feels like every moment is passing me by. There is no time. I will be hopeless in the end.” I will definitely give you a resolution to this concern of yours. Try not to walk in error, try to walk in rectification and learning. I accept that without the causeless compassion of the *atimartya* (immortal) *aiśī-śakti* (potency of Īśvara), no one has the capacity to move forward even one step in this context. What greater friends are there in this world than Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas? “*Tava nija-jana, parama bāndhava, saṁsāra-kārāgāre*³⁵⁹ – Your associates are our best friends in this jail of material existence.” One will certainly have to realize this. If you can weep in anguish, everything on this earth will be there for you. Then the world will give you consolation, take you as its own, cherish each of your whims. Recognizing your love for Bhagavān and for *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, the religious world, the considerate world, will answer all of your requests or pleas and will love and care for you selflessly. Your natural simplicity will firmly establish you in life. Know you have my affection, love, and best wishes. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁵⁹ *Ohe Premera Ṭhākura Gorā* (6)

Letter 108

True fortune is having love and affection for *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • *Śrī guru-pādapadma* does not see any fault, so he can forgive all mistakes • Only the individual can evaluate whether or not he is cheating or failing in *sādhana* • Real wealth, knowledge, and fortune is attaining *bhakti* to Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa • Attaining *nitya-rāsa-sthālī* Vṛndāvana through the guidance of *saṅkīrtana-rāsa-sthālī* Navadvīpa • The cheap policy of opportunists and the naked form of selfishness • Prayers from *Śrī Yāmuna-bhāvāvalī* • Only by full surrender is completeness achieved

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha,
28 Haldar Bagan Lane,
Kolkata—4
11/2/1991

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! I have not heard from you in a long time. I hope you are well physically and that your *bhajana* is going well. I have been ill this whole time, since October of 1988. In the meantime, I have been travelling to northern Bengal, Assam, and other places because it was most necessary.

The love and parental affection of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is always there for their followers and always will be. They convey their generosity and magnanimity by granting their followers opportunities to do service. There is a certain measure of who is fortunate and who is unfortunate. From a spiritual perspective, only those who have love and affection for *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are truly fortunate. There exists a difference of heaven and hell between the fleeting fortunes of the social, materialistic world and the fortune that is spiritual well-being. Those who have been blessed with attainment of the latter fortune are truly the most blessed of all who have been blessed. What conviction in service is and what kind bliss exists therein is truly only a matter of realization. These things never come within the purview of the ordinary. By the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, all the unworthiness, misfortune, restlessness, and deceit of the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* are completely dispelled. *Śrī guru-pādapadma* does not see fault in anyone. Therefore, he can

**“Śrī guru-
pādapadma
does not see
fault in anyone.
Therefore, he can
forgive all types
of disqualifica-
tions, faults, and
mistakes.”**

forgive all types of disqualifications, faults, and mistakes. In attempting to serve the *āśraya*- and *viśaya-vigraha*, it is very likely that there will be flaws and mistakes. As they possess the virtue of forgiveness for those who have taken shelter of them, the *sevaka* or *sevikā* can be worry-free. Nevertheless, the line “*vando mui sāvadhāna mate* – I worship [śrī guru] with caution” has been sung as a warning.

You alone have to evaluate whether or not you are cheating in the field of *sādhana* or are regressing in some way. Those who are your well-wishers and who want the best for you are affectionate towards you and want good fortune for you, and they always will. In the field of *sādhana*, one’s destination is decided beforehand, and it is with that focus that the journey along said path has an auspicious commencement.

Those who think that high birth, opulence, erudition, physical beauty, profit, worship, and prestige are the only objectives of life are mistaken. I think being devoid of hatred, violence, envy and leading a life in an immaculate, penniless manner is “keeping your head up and surviving”. You should know this to be the real policy and ideal of spiritualists. Money and wealth are not the main objective of our lives. Humanity, patience, tolerance, tact, discretion, good behaviour, humility, and the *dharma* of relinquishing pride and honouring others are the special ornaments of the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*. This is where their glory lies. “*Kīrtir yasya sa jīvati* – those whose deeds are glorious truly live.” Those who have been blessed to attain *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* are the greatest of those renowned for their deeds. Attaining *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* is the most exalted accumulation of knowledge. Those rich with the wealth of love for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are the true possessors of wealth and riches. Kṛṣṇa’s name, qualities, and pastimes are the greatest things to be heard, sung, and remembered. Meditating on the lotus feet of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is the great object of meditation for the living entities. Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s unified names are the topmost object of worship and spiritual practice. Only those men and women who are extremely fortunate are blessed to attain the supreme refuge of the nectar of divine love for Kṛṣṇa in the association of Kṛṣṇa’s devotees.

The qualification to live in the land of Śrī Vṛndāvana, the place of the eternal *līlā-rāsa*, and to remember those pastimes is only attained by the guidance of Śrī Gaura’s holy abode, the place of *saṅkīrtana-rāsa*. Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has also sung:

**“Qualification to
live in the land of
Śrī Vṛndāvana...
is only attained
by the guidance
of Śrī Gaura’s
holy abode.”**

*gaurāṅgera saṅgi-gaṇe, nitya-siddha kari māṇe, se jāya vrajendra-suta-pāśa
śrī-gauḍa-maṇḍala-bhūmi, jebā jāṇe cintāmaṇi, tāra haya vraja-bhūme vāsa*

[Those who regard the associates of Gaurāṅga to be eternally perfected go to be with the son of the King of Vraja. Those who know the land of Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala to be composed of divine touchstones attain residence in the land of Vraja.]

*gaura-prema-rasārṇave, se-taraṅge jebā ḍube, se rādhā-mādhava-antaraṅga*³⁶⁰

[Those who drown in the ocean of love for Gaura are the intimate companions of Rādhā and Mādhava.]

Though I cannot make proper sense of your family and well-wishers' train of thought, I have conveyed in writing the real conception and scriptural truth of "keeping your head up and surviving while leading a very stable life". This they cannot approve of, but you should know that it is of supreme benefit for you. Is it ever possible to stand on one's own feet without inner strength? Even those whose mothers and fathers are still alive end up in dire circumstances due to their misfortune and are rushing around like lost travellers, are they not? Fortune, or what is written upon the forehead, is a different thing. If earthly resources, wealth, and riches were a guarantee of life's prospects, then why the statement: "*dhane jadi prāṇa dito, dhanī rājā nā marito, dharāmara hoito rāvaṇa*"³⁶¹ – if wealth gave life, then rich kings wouldn't die and Rāvaṇa would have been immortal on this Earth." The so-called well-wishers of the world look at me and always laugh at and mock me, and they always will. They never want my real welfare. They want to take advantage of my weakness and, by tactics of trickery or force, capture me. "*Kājer belāy kājī, kāja phurāle pāñji* – when people need something done, you're a king; when they have what they need, you're a scoundrel." This is the cheap policy of opportunists and the naked form of selfishness. I hope you will not imitate this sort of corruption cultivated by opportunists.

In Śrī Yāmuna-bhāvāvalī, we see the sādhakas and sādhikās' prayers to Śrī Bhagavān: "*patita-pāvana tumi, patita adhama āmi, tumi mora eka-mātra gati; tava pada-mūle painu, tomāra śaraṇa lainu, āmi dāsa tumi mora pati*"³⁶² – You are the saviour of the fallen. I am fallen and wretched. You are my only hope. I have taken shelter at the soles of Your feet. I am the servant, You are

³⁶⁰ Prārthanā, Gaurāṅgera Duṭi Pada (3–4)

³⁶¹ Kalyāṇa Kalpataru, Mana Re Dhana-mada Nitānta Asāra (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁶² Gītāmālā, Hari He! Dharma-niṣṭhā Nāhi Mora (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

my master.” “*Stanya-pāyī śīśu-jane, mātā chāḍe krodha-mane, śīśu tabu nāhi chāḍe māya; je-hetu tāhāra āra, ei jīvana dharibāra, mātā binā nāhika upāya*³⁶³ – the breastfeeding infant may push the mother away in anger, but still the mother does not leave the child, because the child has no way to survive except for his mother.” “*Tumi jagatera pitā, tumi jagatera mātā, dayita-tanaya—*

**“Only by full
surrender is
fulfilment
achieved.”**

*hari tumi; tumi suhṛn-mitra guru, tumi gati kalpataru, tvadīya sambandha-mātra āmi*³⁶⁴ – You are the world’s father, You are the world’s mother. Lover, son – that is You, Hari. You are *guru*, the well-wishing friend. You are the destination, a wish-fulfilling tree. Yours is the only relationship I have.” If the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* do not have this sort of intimate, inseparable connection and *sambandha-jñāna* with *śrī guru* and Bhagavān, then real

sādhana-bhajana is impossible. Only by full surrender is fulfilment achieved. “*Tomāra karuṇā pāi, tabe to tariyā jāi, āmi ei duranta sāgara*³⁶⁵ – if I obtain Your mercy, then I will cross over this fearsome ocean.” This is the exclusive prayer of the *sādhaka* dedicated to *guru* and Bhagavān.

Pacify your restless mind. Know that you have not made any offence to me. *Śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇava can never, under any circumstance, abandon that *sevaka* and *sevikā* who is in a helpless condition. Rest assured. You must know that Śrī Bhagavān has surely embraced the souls of those who have dismissed all manner of material enjoyment and become exclusively dedicated to Śrī Bhagavān. They are supremely fortunate. We will have to become such that all our efforts come from a desire to please Bhagavān. The service of those whose lives are devoted to service is the real beauty of life. That is the ornament, the unique virtue. Accept my affectionate blessings. What more? *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁶³ *Gītamālā, Hari He! Anya Āśā Nāhi Jā’ra* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura

³⁶⁴ *Gītamālā, Hari He! Tumi Jagatera Pitā* (1) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura

³⁶⁵ *Gītamālā, Hari He! Āmi To’ Cañcala-mati* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura

Letter 109

Instructions for residents of the *maṭha* • The qualities of those who really want to perform *sādhana-bhajana* • “One should not give distress to any living being physically, mentally, or verbally, and one should forego one’s own happiness to help others” • The instructions in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s song “*Āmāra Jīvana*” are vital aids to *bhajana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, P.O.—Siliguri
Darjeeling (North Bengal)
3/8/1992

Snehāspadeṣu—

—— has not settled on a month in which to commence the work on the Haridvāra *maṭha*, which is why I have not been able to provide that [auspicious date to start]. Last time, when we were installing the cornerstone of the *maṭha* there, many different opinions and arguments and counterarguments came up. It would be best if you consulted Śrīpāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja in that regard and settled on an auspicious day. If that can happen, then there will be no scope for complaint later.

I saw that some pilgrims were excited that there would be a Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* by foot. Later, many were disappointed when they heard it was going to be by reserved bus. Śrīpāda —— Mahārāja conveyed that latest news to [the devotees in] Siliguri. The previous bitter experience of Vraja *parikramā* is even today a matter of sorrow and concern for the Siliguri pilgrims.

My program to stay here is not fixed, but you could say that my body is somewhat better than before. I think I am somewhat more relaxed here than elsewhere. I do not like worldly chitchat one bit; my mind wants to stay in a somewhat solitary mood. Therefore, I will make arrangements as I come to understand the situation.

I have no new instructions regarding the printing of books and so forth. You can put into action what I have said before. Whether you do so or not depends on all of you. It is not appropriate for me to be overbearing at this old age. I have decided it is prudent to feel and contemplate everything but remain quiet. The sad thing is that I will not always be able to adapt to your views and ideas. You should all do what is best for you and live happily and peacefully.

In the *maṭha-mandira*, one ought to live only for the service of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Rather than doing that, nowadays, personal interests and opportunism have trampled the *maṭha*'s core principles and ideals, putting aside concern for the *maṭha* and mission as a whole. Those who are keen on performing *sādhana-bhajana* do not harbour hatred, violence, and envy. They deal only in love, affection, and fondness and are initiated in the *dharma* of not seeking honour while giving all respect to others. They are not desperate for profit, adoration, and prestige. They are never greedy for wealth, nor are they *artha-piśāca* ["wealth-witches" who haunt people for money]. They just want to serve to the best of their ability and carry on.

"*Kāya-mano-vākye prāṇī-mātre udvega nā dibe, para-upakāre nija sukha pāsariḥ*"³⁶⁶ – one should not give distress to any living being physically, mentally, or verbally, and one should forego

**"One should not
give distress to
any living being
physically, mentally,
or verbally, and one
should forego one's
own happiness to
help others."**

one's own happiness to help others." This is the special characteristic and ornament of an individual who aspires to perform *bhajana*. The desire for revenge can never be promoted as a Vaiṣṇava virtue. Pride, arrogance, and conceit never want man to be well situated in life. "*Bhakti-anukūla mātra kāryera svikāra, bhakti-pratikula-bhāva varjanāṅgikāra*"³⁶⁷ – one must accept only those activities that are favourable for devotion and adopt a policy of shunning any mood that is unfavourable for devotion." This is the resolute fortitude of mind and rigorous conviction possessed by a person who is surrendered and has offered his very soul. In Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's song

"*Āmāra Jivana Sadā Pāpe Rata*", there are very specific instructions regarding the relinquishment of that which is unfavourable for devotion. Those instructions are of vital aid to our *bhajana*.

At present, I am somewhat healthy. Still, "*vārdhakyē ekhona, pañca-roge hata, kemane bhajibo bolo*"³⁶⁸ – now in old age, afflicted by diseases of the five senses, tell me, how will I perform *bhajana*?" This is my bad luck and misfortune. I do not want to applaud the power, competence, or ability of any thing or person of this Earth, only that of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. The potency conferred by Bhagavān gives us all the strength we need for *sādhana-bhajana*. I am a believer in this truth and optimistic in that regard. All of you please accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁶⁶ See *Gītāvalī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtane Jādī Mānasa Tōhāra (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁶⁷ *Śaraṇāgati*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Prabhu Jīve Dayā Kari' (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁶⁸ *Śaraṇāgati*, Gurudeva! Baḍa Kṛpā Kari' (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 110

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, P.O.—Siliguri
Darjeeling (North Bengal)
2/9/1992

Snehāspadeṣu—

I have not heard any news from you since I returned to Kolkata. I hope that by Bhagavān's grace you are well. — came to find people who want to go on pilgrimage to Vraja. He came from Koch Bihar on his way to Golakganj and Dhubri. I know the pilgrims have reservations for the 10th of October on the Toofan Express.

I have started writing a couple of articles but have not been able to finish them. They have not been sent. I will send them later with someone. I gave speeches on Janmāṣṭamī and Nandotsava. They were recorded on cassette and will be sent later.

You took a few of the copies of the report concerning Śrī Jhulana-yātrā and Janmāṣṭamī that was published in the Bangla and Hindi magazines. I sent the remaining issues.

Here, there is not even a single English publication. Please send ten copies of every English book. Keep a note in your records. The payment will be deposited all at once. Please purchase and send a copy of “*Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu*” (the one that you sent) and English “*Shrimad Bhagavat Gita*”. That is what I separately sent INR 50.00 for.

Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā has not been sent here since the 5th issue of year 44. If someone is coming this way, please send copies with them. Two copies of Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala Parikramā and Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala Parikramā from Śrīla Prabhupāda's time are especially needed here. It would be best to get them from our Kolkata or Navadvīpa library and send them.

Has the paper for printing the Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma Granthāvalī been purchased or not? Have you delivered it for printing at the press? It would be good to print that before Śrī Navadvīpa parikramā.

It would be very helpful to have the *kīrtana* books of the *maṭha* in one book. Please try to compile them all together and send them. If we can combine all five editions and print them, it would be *sarvāṅga-sundara* – beautiful in every respect. The possibility of error and mistakes will be less that way.

I gave —— instruction to go to Haridvāra and start work before Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala *parikramā* starts. I told you the kind of day [auspicious *tithi*, or lunar day] it has to be. The project will proceed only if work is started at such a time. —— had to go on pilgrimage to South India. If there had not been that pilgrimage, then he would have been able to oversee the work in the Haridvāra *maṭha* without interruption since the month of Agrahāyaṇa (November–December).

Please convey news to the Navadvīpa, Kolkata, Chunchura, and other *maṭhas* that I am fine. I hope you are well. Know you have my affection and blessings. *Iti—*

Forever your well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 111

As pursuing a career and education takes time away from *hari-bhajana*, safeguarding one's *hari-bhajana* should be prioritized • The perils of selfishness and opportunism • Guardians must maintain a balance between affection and discipline • There is no difference between a renounced *sevaka* and an exemplary *grhastha* if both are devoted to the *dharma* of serving Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas • The special service of collecting rare *granthas* • Performing *parikramā* by mind

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
2/9/1992

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear ———! I hope that by Bhagavān's grace you are well. ... The idea that those who are endeavouring to perform *hari-bhajana* will have to earn some qualification before living in the *maṭha-mandira* should not be heeded. This is because, in trying to gather this sort of qualification, there ends up being a lack of time for *sādhana-bhajana*. That is never desirable for the *maṭha*-dwelling *sevakas* who have relinquished their homes. It is very difficult to preserve the kind of intelligence that is inclined towards *hari-bhajana* once a *sevaka* has lived and studied somewhere else. The *sevaka*'s personal train of thought often brings moods only unfavourable for his *bhajana*. That leads to things getting completely destroyed in all directions. Therefore, safeguarding your *hari-bhajana* and then making arrangements for studies would be most beneficial. Raising *sevakas* to become [functional] human beings looms as a huge dilemma these days. Today, in the name of granting the facility of service, personal selfishness and opportunism are coming into view everywhere. To protect what is good, much renunciation and difficulty must be accepted in life, otherwise there is no possibility of gaining good results.

**“To protect what
is good, much
renunciation and
difficulty must be
accepted in life.”**

From a lawful, rule-abiding perspective, there is honour for virtue and the virtuous, but man blinded by selfishness forgets that and neglects the common benefit. Nothing is gained from that other than one's own detriment and that of others. Know that the *sevaka* only achieves auspiciousness in all respects if he heeds the good instructions and directions of the guardian.

Many *sevakas* have finished their school and college studies while residing in the *maṭha*, and then taken their Sanskrit degree/diploma and left the *maṭha*, giving up *hari-bhajana*. There is no shortage of this precedent. No one was benefited by that, neither the *sevakas* individually nor the *maṭha*-mission as a whole. Digesting the pride of high birth, opulence, and erudition ends up being impossible for many individuals. In most of these cases, enmity, violence, envy, and the hankering for profit, worship, and prestige impair the *sādhaka*, and love and attachment, faith and belief can no longer have a hold on him. There is no alternative but to consider this sort of situation from the neutral perspective of time and place.

Those who are guardians, who maintain and nurture their children with love and affection, must carry in their hearts an understanding of both affection and discipline. If their approach becomes one-sided, it becomes flawed. Blind affection and excessive discipline are both subject to critique. Hence, one must adopt the middle path in the matter of nurturing and raising.

From a spiritual perspective, there is no difference between a *sevaka* who has left his home and an exemplary *grhastha* if both are devoted to the *dharma* of serving Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. Should the renunciate and householder be compelled by mundane ego to establish the superiority of their [respective] mundane efforts, they commit the ultimate blunder. Both will deviate far from the path of spiritual objectives. “*Jei bhaje, sei baḍa, abhakta—hīna chāra, kṛṣṇa bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi vicāra*”³⁶⁹ – One who is absorbed in devotion is superior. The non-devotee is destitute and detestable. There is no consideration of race and family in the worship of Kṛṣṇa.” We must always remember this supreme truth. “*Dīnere adhika dayā karen bhagavān, kulīna, paṇḍita, dhanīr baḍai abhimāna*”³⁷⁰ – God has more mercy for the fallen than for scholars, aristocrats, and the rich, who are too arrogant.” We should also have a proper grasp of these *anvaya* and *vyatireka* (direct and indirect) aspects of *dayā* (mercy) and *vañcanā* (cheating).

Chanting a fixed number of *śrī nāma* every day, studying the *bhakti* scriptures, and serving and worshipping the deity facilitates the supreme welfare of a person who thirsts for *hari-bhajana*.

³⁶⁹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.67)

³⁷⁰ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 4.68)

Right from when I was very young, my supremely worshipful master, my *śrīla guru-pādapadma*, gave me a certain inspiration to collect scriptural texts, and he taught me the diligence needed for the task. As per the instructions he gave, an enthusiasm and effort to collect ancient, rare texts from various places is thriving in my heart till this day. Those who collect such *granthas* for personal interests are given the title *kṛpaṇa* (miser) or *anudāra* (non-generous) by the authors of scripture. However, those who are preoccupied with collecting rare and out-of-print *granthas* with the desire of increasing the volume of the *maṭha*-mission's libraries for the benefit of all are surely the special recipients of the blessings of the Gauḍīya Gosvāmī *guru-varga* and *rūpānuga* Vaiṣṇavas. In the midst of many types of service, they establish the speciality of this sort of service, and therein lies spiritual welfare.

You will all, without obstacle, have *darśana* of all the places and deities in Śrī Mathurā and Vṛndāvana under the guidance of exalted personalities and strive to gain the success of life by hearing and singing the glories of the *dhāma*. By hearing your descriptions of *śrī dhāma's darśanas* and *parikramā*, I will internally make the meagre effort to serve *śrī dhāma* by mind and thus become blessed. For those who do not have the opportunity or advantage of taking direct *darśana*, there is no other way but to do so indirectly, through the performance of *kīrtana* and *smaraṇa*. All of you, do take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

“For those who do not have the opportunity or advantage of taking direct *darśana*, there is no other way but to do so indirectly, through the performance of *kīrtana* and *smaraṇa*.”

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 112

How to attain *darśana* of one's worshipful object • Becoming *gurudevatātma* • Associating with Vaiṣṇavas is a golden opportunity and the result of special *sukṛti* • How to deal with the *anartha* of anger • How to deal with worldly society • Studying Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhu's *Śrī Upadeśāmṛtam* helps solidify one's *sādhana* • *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are omniscient, as Kṛṣṇa dwells in their heart and inspires them • Praying to Gaura-dhāma for residence in Vraja-dhāma • *Śrī guru's* cultivation and preaching of *śrī nāma-bhajana* • The oneness and multiplicity of *guru-tattva* under the guidance of Śrīmatī Rādhikā • The glories of Śrī Gopāla • The relationship between householder and renounced *sādhakas* • The guardian's indifference towards a fallen servant

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
6/10/1992

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! ... For one who has fully surrendered to and taken shelter of *śrīla guru-pādapadma*, he truly is like one's own self. If one who is an intimate servant (*viśrambha-sevaka*) is deprived of his audience, instructions, etc., there truly remains no limit to the sorrow and misery. When

**“No doubt
or fear can
cast the
surrendered
person off
the course of
his *sādhana-
bhajana*.”**

we regard *śrī gurudeva* to be extremely dear to us, it is possible to travel to where he is and be with him, simply by wanting to. Still, in this regard, one's own moral courage is most essential. What you wrote is true: “When one cannot obtain direct *darśana* of one's worshipful deity, what is the use of this most rare human birth?” Your *gurudeva* has many children, but you have just one person. Knowing this allows me to have some understanding of your sorrow and suffering, your inner pain. By firm conviction, one-pointed focus, anxiousness, and desperation, one finds one's cherished object close at hand and obtains peace and well-being via direct *darśana*. No doubt or

fear can cast the surrendered person off the course of his *sādhana-bhajana*. By the auspicious wishes and blessings of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, you will be able to traverse the path of *bhajana* properly. By their causeless compassion and by becoming drenched in the current of their mercy, you will certainly be capable of obtaining the success of your life.

Becoming bathed in the inexhaustible current of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' parental affection nourishes one's devotional life. There is no doubt in that regard. In due course of time, the attainment of *darśana* will occur. It is with this hope that we must wait with restless eagerness, like a thirsty *cātaka* bird.

You have conveyed to me by body, mind, and words how anguished your heart was that you were not able to communicate in any way, neither in person nor by letter, this past 1st of Vaiśākha. How can those who are capable of offering their mind, intelligence, and ego be wretched and miserable, orphaned, fallen, and despicable? That is beyond my understanding. A vow of full submission of the soul is observed in their stick-like prostrations of all eight bodily limbs (*sāṣṭāṅga-daṇḍavat-praṇāti*). By means of their senses, they accept the vow of serving Bhagavān Hṛṣīkeśa, the Lord of the transcendental senses, in every way, by body, mind, and words. Following the path indicated by *śrī guru-pādapadma* constitutes all the vows, chanting, meditation, and knowledge of their lives. It is to grant qualification to those who are unworthy and undeserving that *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas appear in this world. They are truly empathetic, the most generous, the greatly, greatly magnanimous (*mahā-mahā-vadānya*). Afflicted by the fear of material existence, man strives for objects other than Bhagavān, and because he forgets Bhagavān, he endures endless sorrow, difficulty, suffering, and torment. The result is the upheaval of his intelligence. His ultimate well-being is only possible if he gains awareness and, with faithful devotion, takes shelter of a bona fide *guru*, thereby becoming *gurudevātāma* (one in soul with his *guru*).

It is certainly not possible to obtain proximity to *śrī gurudeva* by any meagre measure of *sukṛti*. By the effect of accumulated *sukṛti*, one obtains a taste for associating with saintly personalities, and by that *sat-saṅga*, one obtains devotion to Bhagavān. This has been described in the scriptures and other places. Without the mercy of exalted personalities, no activity can be perfected. Nevertheless, with powerful effort and eagerness, even the impossible becomes possible. Between 1991 and 1992, three or four times I had the opportunity to live at the Siliguri *maṭha* and other nearby places for extended periods of time. I think of this lengthy period of time as a golden opportunity for a negligible person such as I to come into the proximity of Vaiṣṇavas and cultivate the ultimate goal of life. If we are to consider the impermanence of

“Even an unworthy person becomes worthy if he can abandon the desire for respect and instead give respect to others.”

life, its deterioration and destructibility, then we have no time at all. Having attained this rare human form, it is a matter of special *sukṛti* in this material world to serve and provide joy and comfort to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Śrī Bhagavān Himself fulfils those powerful longings to have *darśana* of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, and by such *darśana*, we can gain peace of mind. Even an unworthy person becomes worthy if he can abandon the desire for respect and instead give respect to others. That is when the merciful blessings of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas can be held on to.

Arrogance, pride, ego, vanity, and conceit throw us far from the path of *sādhana*. It is because of arrogance and conceit that anger arises. That is why to experience suffering inwardly and then try to remedy it is certainly praiseworthy. The *anartha* of anger creates significant obstacles on the path of *bhajana*. Therefore, it is our duty to be diligent in giving it up. When we are angry, it is imperative to pray fervently to *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān. As soon as one meditates on their *śrī mūrti* (beautiful forms) equilibrium returns. Mistakes and blunders, flaws, and errors can happen in any situation, but it is the effort to rectify them that is worthy of honour in all respects.

A person who has taken shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *mantra* has no use for any worldly, societal undertakings. Still, if some specific affairs of mundane society are favourable to the service of Hari, one often must participate in them. While living in society, it does not work to be altogether antisocial or fully indifferent. For that purpose, one must certainly give up trifling individual self-interest for the greater self-interest. *Sādhus* and gentlemen are accommodating and obliging. There is no doubt in that regard. We must proceed according to considerations of time, place, and the individual. This is the order and instruction of scripture. With this manner of consideration, the wretched become exalted, those gripped by *anarthas* obtain *paramārtha* (the ultimate goal of life), the helpless obtain help, and the unworthy become capable of gaining qualification.

In the field of *hari-bhajana*, the aspiration for profit, worship, and prestige is fearsomely harmful. This is seen to be naturally present in the heart of the *jīva* who is gripped by *anarthas*. The humblest expression of *amānī-mānada-dharma* (expecting no respect from others yet offering others full respect) made by *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* who have attained the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is truly to be honoured. “*Chaya-vega dami*, *chaya doṣa śodhi*, *chaya-guṇa deha dāse*³⁷¹ – subdue my six urges, cleanse me of my six faults, and grant this servant six virtues.” These achievements, in conjunction with the six types of saintly association, make

³⁷¹ *Saraṇāgati*, *Ohe Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

successful the vow of giving up bad association and adopting good association. Know that maintaining fortitude in all circumstances is a special *sādhana*. If one nicely studies Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhu's *Śrī Upadeśāmṛtam*, one's *sādhana* becomes firmly fixed. It is by following the instructions and directions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, which are beneficial to the soul, that one renders heartfelt service to them.

**“Know that
maintaining
fortitude in all
circumstances
is a special
sādhana.”**

The demigods are not capable of describing the incomparable glories of *śrī gurudeva*, who is affectionate to his disciples, his children. Even those human beings who have taken shelter of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas display a lack of qualification in extolling *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' glories. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's residence is in the core of the devotees' hearts. To behold *śrī guru* and Bhagavān's presence within those simple, pure hearts is also a matter of special fortune. The ability to know another's heart (*antaryāmitva*) is considered the devotees' unique virtue and speciality for all time. How will those whose consciousness is not properly dovetailed be able to experience or realize *śrī guru* and Bhagavān's omniscience? “*Yathā niyukto 'smi tathā karomi* – I do as You inspire me to do.” Only *mahā-bhāgavatas*, who are absorbed in the bliss of their spiritual realizations and who are self-realized associates of the Lord, are qualified to utter such a statement. The glory of becoming one in mind and soul with the *goṣṭhī* (spiritual community) and performing *hari-saṅkīrtana* is greater [than solitary practice]. The statement “*sajātīyāśaye snigdho sādhanau saṅgaḥ svato vare*³⁷²” specifically recommends the proximity of saints who are endowed with the same kind of longing [for the Lord] and who are more exalted than oneself. The instruction has been given to relish and cultivate the purports of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with loving, *rasika* devotees.

“*Śrī mathurā-maṇḍale sthitiḥ*³⁷³” or, in other words, living in Śrī Mathurā-dhāma means living in Kṛṣṇa's abode. The lineage of the Śrī Svarūpa-Rūpānuga Gauḍīya *ācāryas* know the land of Śrī Gauḍa-maṇḍala to be *cintāmaṇi* (touchstone) and offer their prayers to it to gain the qualification to live in Kṛṣṇa's abode of Śrī Mathurā. They have conveyed that living in Dākṣiṇātya (the holy places of South India), in Śrī Kṣetra-maṇḍala, in various regions of Vraja-maṇḍala, and other *dhāmas* is non-different from *mathurā-vāsa*, dwelling in Mathurā.³⁷⁴ Therein it has been demonstrated that living in Śrī Gaura's pastime place of Śrī Māyāpura-

³⁷² *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.91)

³⁷³ *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.92)

³⁷⁴ Śrī Raṅgam, Tirupati, and other holy places in South India are non-different from Mathurā and Dvārakā where Kṛṣṇa dwells in great majesty, assuming a four-handed form and receiving service in *aiśvarya-bhāva*.

dhāma and the surrounding sites is non-different from living in Vraja-bhūmi. The Vaiṣṇava ācāryas have taught that the vanity, deceit, or egotism of so-called residence in Mathurā possessed by those who see a difference between Śrī Gaura-dhāma and Vraja-dhāma provides the degraded destination of endeavouring for material enjoyment. In regard to practising five limbs of devotion, the eligibility for *rāgānuga-rāgātmikā prema-bhakti* is far superior to the sort of *sādhana-bhakti* that is achievable through following rules and prohibitions. What is observed therein is that none of the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*'s mundane thoughts are invoked. Eternally perfected great souls who have attained the highest level of eligibility perform these five limbs, develop their inherent equal vision of all, and attain transcendental realization.

It is not easy or natural for the average person to appreciate *śrī guru-pāda-padma*'s transcendental cultivation of *bhajana* and follow it in a mood of simplicity if that person does not become free from deceit. Śrī guru maintains steadiness in his *śrī nāma-bhajana*. With the firm belief that *śrī nāma-brahma*, *śabda-brahma*, is the only worshipful object of spiritual practice for the living entities, he preaches the glories of *śrī nāma* with the intention of liberating the unconscious world from its conditioned state, by granting a taste for *śrī nāma*. In this way, he fulfils his designation as *patita-pāvana* (deliverer of the fallen). “*Jīve dayā, nāme ruci—sarva-dharma-sāra*³⁷⁵ – compassion for the living entities and taste in the holy names is the essence of all religion.” This is worthy of special attention. In this age of Kali, *śrī nāma-bhajana* alone is the best means by which to obtain direct service to *nāmī* Parabrahma Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra along with His potency.

The eternal path of *bhajana* originates from a single source (*ekāyāna*). The worshipful objects are Śrī Gaura Rādhā Vinoda-bihārī-jīu, along with the *āśraya-jātīya śrī guru-tattva*. The oneness, or shared identity (*ekatva*), of the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs* who are under the guidance of the *dīkṣā-guru-rūpā sakhī*, who is under the guidance of the root *āśraya-vigraha* Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, is corroborated by the words of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru*. However, the multiplicity of *śikṣā-gurus* is also definitively proven. Still, the *dīkṣā-guru* alone has, all at once, the qualifications of the *śikṣā-guru*, the *bhajana-guru*, the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, the *śrī nāma-guru*, and the *mahānta-guru*. The *śikṣā-guru* is indispensable when it comes to endowing one with conviction in *bhajana* and providing instructions on *kṛṣṇa-dīkṣā* and other matters. One's life will not prove fruitless if one is reliant on a single *dīkṣā-guru* who has all qualifications in *sādhana-bhajana*. In that case also, it has been observed that there is no lack of beautifully imparted consolations regarding the attainment of perfection.

³⁷⁵ See *Gītāvalī*, *Nadiya Godrume* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Sitting on His throne and worshipped as the *viṣaya-vigraha*, Śrī Gaura-gopāla, or Kṛṣṇa-gopāla accompanied by Śrī Rādhā, is capable of fulfilling all the desires of the *sevaka* or *sevikā*. Knowing this, Nanda-gopāla or Yaśodā-dulāla, Śrī Dāmodara-gopāla, accompanied by His beloved Rādhikā, accepts faithful offerings and, like nectar that brings one back from the dead, grants the *pūjārīṇī* (priestess) the *mahā-mṛtyuṅjaya-kavaca* (great, death-conquering amulet), thereby fulfilling her ambitions. Then the maidservant of *śrī vigraha* becomes utterly blessed by obtaining new life through the medium of service and worship. Becoming exceedingly attracted to the *āśraya-vigraha*, she obtains enthusiasm and consolation in *bhajana*.

Among intimate servitors (*viśrambha-sevakas*), there is no difference between exemplary householders and those who have abandoned their homes [renunciates]. If those who are devoted to *śrī nāma-bhajana* exchange news or maintain communication about each other's *sādhana-bhajana*, they will be mutually benefited. Śrī *guru-pādapadma* will follow proper etiquette and preach the philosophical conclusions of the scriptures from door to door throughout the world. This is the injunction of scripture. Only if he is deprived of the power of mobility does he establish a permanent residence, a *bhajana-kuṭīra*, at a specific place in *śrī dhāma*. The *mahānta-guru* does not take anyone as his disciple. Hence, he generally becomes homeless, remaining devoted to preaching the message of *śāstra* and *guru*.

Even if children or *sevakas* become veterans, they are still dependent on others. If they become reliant on their caretakers, they become one of the six types of fallen *sevakas*. Their guardian's responsibility for them thus increases greatly. If that is the case, the prudent thing to do is adopt the stance of an impartial observer. A person whose *dharma* is service maintains his life by the medium of service alone. The instruction to serve, having given up *śrī nāma-aparādha*, *dhāma-aparādha*, and *sevā-aparādha*, must certainly be followed. The omniscient *śrī guru* and Bhagavān see the anguish and desperation of the *sevaka* and surely manifest and distribute to him their *amandodaya-dayā* (mercy from which nothing bad can ever arise).

Take my affectionate blessings. I will discuss various other topics in person. *Iti—*

“Among intimate servitors (*viśrambha-sevakas*), there is no difference between exemplary householders and those who have abandoned their homes [renunciates].”

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 113

The importance of taking care of one's physical and mental health • Praying for the mercy of śrī guru, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān is the only way to eliminate aparādha • Observing Ekādaśī and other fasting days is imperative, but when physical illness arises, one is bound to resort to provisional alternatives • We must perform bhajana in all conditions of life, whether we are healthy or sick • We must accept all the arrangements of Bhagavān • Service to Hari is the main purpose of staying alive • Śrī nāma-yajña is greater than all other yajñas

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
12/10/1992

Snehāspadāsu—

——! I received all your affectionate letters promptly while in Kolkata and also here at Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha. I am responding to all of your letters in brief. I hope that at present you are all well.

Physical and mental health is necessary for *sādhana-bhajana*. Physical afflictions often create disruption in *hari-bhajana*. Just as anything that is unfavourable for the practice of *śrī*

“Just as anything that is unfavourable for the practice of *śrī kṛṣṇa-bhajana* is fit to be given up, an unwell body and mind are to be avoided out of concern for the welfare of the soul.”

kṛṣṇa-bhajana is fit to be given up, an unwell body and mind are to be avoided out of concern for the welfare of the soul. In other words, they create obstacles and setbacks in the attainment of the real results we seek. *Śāstra* and other sources have therefore provided the instruction to adopt arrangements by which physical and mental betterment is attained. If the body is tormented by an illness, it quite naturally communicates its inability to perform various functions. At the same time, the mind also becomes weak. Hence, a healthy body and mind are necessary for *hari-bhajana*. This is why one has to accept treatment regimens, take one's medicine punctually, follow a proper diet, and take rest.

The main thing is this: it has been acknowledged that a healthy body and a healthy, clean mind are necessary for the practice of *dharmā*.

Śrī Vaiṣṇavas do not have to endure the results of their *karma*, nor is there any point in their atoning for the sins or offences committed in their previous life. Vaiṣṇavas have no birth, death, or karmic bondage, but reaping the results of *karma* remains the scope of experience for souls bound by *māyā*. Their *nāma-aparādha*, *dhāma-aparādha*, and *sevā-aparādha* create many types of disruptions and obstacles on the path of *sādhana*. There is no other way to eliminate all of these obstacles and setbacks than to pray for the mercy of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān. Man cannot overcome all of these obstacles and impediments by his own efforts.

In attempting to perform *sādhana-bhakti*, one must certainly perform or practise all the limbs of *bhakti*. One must also observe Śrī Hari-vāsara [Ekādaśī] and other special occasions related to Viṣṇu by following the rules of fasting. If there is any deficiency in the balance of the body's *vāyu*, *pitta*, and *kapha* elements, then physical illness appears and it becomes rather impossible to follow the directions of *śāstra* and the *mahājanas* fully. At those times, one is bound to resort to provisional alternatives. General rules and special rules are not the same. That is why we see in the words of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru* the instruction to proceed according to considerations of place, time, and person.

As long as the body exists, illness will certainly exist: “*śarīraṁ vyādhi-mandiram* – the body is a temple of disease.” Hence, the intelligent individual does not think: “I will do *sādhana-bhajana* once I attain physical health.” As long as the living entity's soul exists within the vessel of the body, he must absorb his mind in contemplating the welfare of the soul or, in other words, not delve into considerations of health. “I will cross the ocean once it dries up.” This is the conception and utterance of a madman. In this sorrowful ocean of material existence, the crocodiles and sharks of lust, anger, etc., attack, and there are many obstacles and impediments, such as one's desires for the objects of the senses. We have to advance on the path of *sādhana* in the midst of all of this.

You wrote the veritable truth: we are bereft of power and intelligence. We have no worthiness or qualification in regard to *sādhana-bhajana*. The causeless mercy of *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān is our only resource and provision. Accepting whatever arrangement Śrī Bhagavān has made is, for surrendered individuals, their special *anugātya* (practice of following guidance) and where their greatest conviction lies. Whatever the means, one simply

**“The causeless
mercy of *guru*,
Vaiṣṇavas, and
Bhagavān is our
only resource
and provision.”**

must perform *hari-bhajana* – “*yena kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet*³⁷⁶ – by any means necessary, absorb your mind in Kṛṣṇa.” By offering their hearts to Śrī Bhagavān, the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā* gain the inclination to perform *śrī nāma-bhajana* without any worries.

**“Service to
Hari is the
main purpose
of staying
alive.”**

Even if one cannot remember anything, studying scripture and discussing it is a vital duty. One must chant a fixed number of *śrī nāma*. Read *Śrī Patrikā* attentively. It is imperative to conduct the ritual worship of *śrī vigraha* with faith. If the living entity can develop confidence in *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān, he obtains endless benefit. Their compassion is the only thing needed on the path of *sādhana*. In material existence, if one can simply remember Bhagavān and survive, all is well.

Service to Hari is the main purpose of staying alive.

The *yajña* of *śrī nāma* is greater than all other *yajñas*. If there is a necessity for any sort of ritual sacrifice, then it is best performed by the medium of *śrī nāma-saṅkīrtana* and out of a desire to serve and please *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān. Where there is service and worship of *śrī vigraha*, performance of *śrī nāma-saṅkīrtana*, and study of scriptures, no sort of ghost who is unfavourable to *bhakti* can remain. By performing *kīrtana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s name, all manner of auspiciousness is obtained. It is by this that real peace and well-being are attained.

Asking about physical illness is a sort of mundane consideration, but there is no fault or error in asking about the well-being of a Śrī Vaiṣṇava’s soul, as there is no scope for the *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas to have reactions of *karma*, negative astrological influences, or sins and offences. There are specific instructions stating that more important than increasing one’s rounds is chanting *śrī nāma* with clear enunciation and contemplating the form and glories of *śrī nāma*. One must inquire of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas about special topics concerning *sādhana-bhajana*. That way, one’s enthusiasm and attraction for these matters will increase. Those to whom *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas provide shelter and accept as their own perform *hari-bhajana* without any worries.

Take my affectionate blessings. Convey my best wishes to your mother. I am fine. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁷⁶ See *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.1.32)

Letter 114

Give honour to others, even at the expense of your own suffering • Occupy yourself with *bhajana* and avoid bad association • *Śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān quickly show mercy to one who has humility in his heart • Without humility, the heart becomes like stone • Following Śacīnandana Gaurahari's teachings even slightly will result in auspiciousness for the soul

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
20/8/1993

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! After leaving from there, I did not receive any letters from you. I hope that by Bhagavān's grace you are well. ...

The people of the world are selfish, opportunistic, and unfaithful. Their self-conceit and arrogance, their hatred and violence, envy, pride, and egotism are intense. They do not know how to show other humans proper etiquette. There is a lack of real love and affection among them. You must carry on giving others honour and respect even at the cost of enduring suffering yourself. This is how you will find well-being. Never say anything to give distress to another's mind. Do not criticize others. Always spend your time in your *sādhana-bhajana*. If others criticize you, do not be displeased with them. Rather, see them as helping you in *hari-bhajana*. By doing this, your mind will find peace.

**“You must
carry on giving
others honour
and respect
even at the cost
of enduring
suffering
yourself.”**

Always remember *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' direct instructions, directions, and *tattva-siddhānta*. Whenever you have the chance, sing the songs of the *mahājanas*. Eliminate useless time-wasting idle chatter and always chant *śrī nāma*. With firm faith, worship and render service to *śrī vigraha*, offering Them *bhoga* and so on. Read the sacred texts every day and study their explanations. Do not ever mingle with those who are busy criticizing others. Avoid people who are full of hatred and envy. Always avoid those

**“Do not ever
mingle with
those who are
busy criticizing
others.”**

in whom the desire for prestige is especially intense, knowing them to be bad association. They do not engage in *hari-bhajana* themselves and they prevent others from doing so as well. Do not mingle at all with those who are preoccupied with the gains and losses of worldly existence. Know them to be bad association and always avoid them.

You wrote that you are a fool, that you cannot understand anything about the *tattva-siddhānta* of the scriptures. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself said: “*mūrkhā dekhi’ guru more, karilā śāsana; mūrkhā tumi tomāra nāhi vedāntādhikāra, kṛṣṇa-nāma japa sadā, ei mantra-sāra*³⁷⁷ – Seeing me to be a fool, my *guru* chastised me, saying, ‘You are a fool. You do not have the qualification to study Vedānta. Chant Kṛṣṇa’s name constantly, for this is the essence of all *mantras*.” Hence, if a person’s heart bears a mood of humility, *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān show him their mercy as quickly as possible. The arrogant and egotistical never attain actual well-being. It is their own fault that they choose their own ruin. If one cannot become initiated in the *dharma* of *amānī-mānada*, of giving respect to others and not expecting any for oneself, one can never become a real Vaiṣṇava. Bhagavān never has mercy for those who perish in mundane arrogance. Humility alone is the ornament in the hearts of the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*. In the field of *sādhana*, it is this that is the ornament and special virtue. If there is no humility in the heart, then it becomes like stone. Violence and envy are always to be rejected. If one deviates from logic, moral conduct, and ideals, envy comes and grips even one who has a simple heart. In scripture, envy has been compared to a *caṇḍālīnī*.

**“If there is no
humility in the
heart, then it
becomes like
stone.”**

If we can grasp for even a moment the transcendental teachings that Śacīnandana Gaurahari preached in the world, the welfare of our souls is assured. If you study the divine accounts of the glorious women in Śrī Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literature, you will be able to see where material existence stands and what a divine life is. Due to worldly delusions, the soul bound by *māyā* becomes unworthy of securing true auspiciousness and mistakes *akalyāṇa* (ruin) for *kalyāṇa* (well-being). Vaiṣṇavas are seers of the truth. They follow the higher path. They do not reap peace and contentment in momentary gratifications. Know that you have my affection and love. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁷⁷ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 7.71)

Letter 115

A home bereft of *bhajana* is not fit for residence • The meanings of *śrī guru-* and *gaura-mantra* • Where to find explanations of *kṛṣṇa-mantra* and *kāma-gāyatrī* • *Śaraṇāgati* comes from firm conviction in Bhagavān and relying on Him • Service in a mood of *aiśvarya* is not relevant to those who accept Kṛṣṇa as the Absolute Truth • One cannot serve the *āśraya-vigraha* in *madhura-rasa* • The guardian must be both tender and harsh • Serving the pure devotees gives one the ability to perform *bhajana* properly

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
25/8/1993

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā —! ... I too became happy to know you all experienced the joy of living in the maṭha when the *sevakas* of *śrī maṭha* were present in your home. “*Je dina gr̥he bhajana dekhi gr̥hete goloka bhāya*”³⁷⁸ – the day I see *bhajana* in my home is the day it becomes Goloka.” A home that is bereft of *sādhana-bhajana* is the blind well of family life, or *gr̥hamedha* (a domestic sacrifice). It is the dwelling place of mundane sense enjoyers, or a place of indulgence. This is why *śāstra* has said: “*vanam tu sātṭviko vasaḥ grāmaḥ rājasa eva ca; tāmasaṁ dyuta-sadanam man-niketanam tu nirguṇam*”³⁷⁹ – Living in the forest is in the mode of goodness, living in a town is in the mode of passion, living in a place of gambling is in the mode of ignorance. My abode, however, is beyond the modes.” That is precisely why devotees have prayed thus: “I do not want to live in any place where the current of nectarous narrations concerning Bhagavān does not flow, or where *sādhus* who have taken shelter of Bhagavān do not dwell, or where descriptions of Śrī Bhagavān’s holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes are not discussed, and festivals and functions not held – even if that place is the city of Indra.” ...

³⁷⁸ *Śaraṇāgati*, *Śuddha-bhakata* (6) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁷⁹ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.25.25)

The meanings of all *mantras* and the meaning of *gāyatrī* are more or less the same. Still, according to differences between the *āśraya*- and *viśaya-vigraha*, there are specialities and wondrous aspects [to each *mantra*]:

“I offer obeisances to *śrī gurudeva*. I want to know *śrī gurudeva*. I meditate on him as one who gives bliss to Kṛṣṇa. May *guru-pādapadma* manifest his *tattva* in my heart, by which I may be able to become truly acquainted with him.”

“I offer obeisances to Śrī Gaurasundara. I want to know Śrī Caitanya-deva. His *svarūpa* is as Viśvambhara. I meditate on Him. May that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya inspire intelligence in my heart, by which I can be properly acquainted with the truth of Him.”

Look for the explanations of *kṛṣṇa-mantra* and *kāma-gāyatrī* in the main text of Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* as well as in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya* and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *Anubhāṣya*. Besides these, there are explanations given in Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary (*ṭikā*) and in Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī Prabhu’s *ṭikā-bhāṣya*. You can find explanations of *mahā-mantra* in the essays of Śrīla Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī and Śrīla Gopāla-guru Gosvāmī and in Śrīla Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s book *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-nāmārtha-dīpikā*.

If firm faith does not come, how will full surrender be possible? The *samarpitātmā* (one who has offered his soul), the *akiñcana* (one who is voluntarily impoverished), and the *śaraṇāgata* (one who is surrendered) share the same characteristics. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has explained the word *śraddhā* to mean *sudṛḍha-viśvāsa* (extremely firm faith). “*Kṛṣṇe bhakti kaile sarva-dharma kṛta haya*³⁸⁰ – by engaging in devotion to Kṛṣṇa, all obligations are fulfilled.” It is by this sort of firm conviction and reliance that surrender, or offering one’s soul, is accomplished. The more surrendered a person is, the more *śraddhā* he has and the greater his tendency for *bhakti*. There is no doubt in this regard. Although there is no mundane difference or division between *śaraṇāgati* and *viśrambha-sevā*, the fact they have individual specialities must be accepted.

We accept as the *advaya-jñāna-tattva* (Absolute Truth) only the presiding deity of the full five main *rasas* and the seven secondary *rasas*, He who is the embodiment of all the nectar of *rasa* and the beloved of Rādhā, He who is the beginning of that which has no beginning, and He who is the cause of all causes: Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra. The example of Dāśarathi Śrī Rāmacandra and the service of Lakṣmaṇa are not relevant for us. When one is

³⁸⁰ Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 22.62)

serving one's *prabhu* (master), there is a submissive attitude (*dāsya-para vicāra*) that belongs to the path of reverence (*aiśvarya*), and when one is serving one's *priya* (dear one) or *preṣṭha* (beloved), the attitudes (*vicāra*) of *sakhya*-, *vātsalya*-, and *madhura-rati* become celebrated in the form of service.

The worthy or intimate (*viśrambha*) disciple can only employ all the *rasas* in the case of the *viṣaya-vigraha* (object of love), but with the *āśraya-vigraha* (reservoir of love), he can maintain interaction up to *vātsalya-bhāva*. This mood is not trapped by any sort of mundane conception. This is because the root *āśraya-vigraha*, Śrīmatī Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Rādhārāṇī, the *narma-sakhī*s, the *priya-narma-sakhī*s, the *mañjarī*s, and others under Her guidance are all *svarūpa-śakti* or, in other words, subservient to *hlādinī-śakti*. In this context, there is no mundane male or female ego. It has been determined that the prospect of discussing and experiencing transcendental pastimes exists only for those who have conquered the six mundane enemies. Only by the merciful blessings of the bona fide *guru* does the disciple gain fullness.

It is in reference to the connection between the *āśrita* (surrendered) and the *āśraya-vigraha* that the following adjectives are used: *patita* (fallen), *adhama* (wretched), *doṣī* (guilty), and *pāpī* (sinful) [for the *āśrita*], and [for the *āśraya-vigraha*] *adoṣa-darśī* (one who does not see the flaws of others), *patita-pāvana* (savior of the fallen), *narottama* (the greatest of men), *nirdoṣa* (faultless), and *sarva-pāpa-hāra* (stealer of all sins). The caretaker forgives all the flaws and mistakes of the child. As the saying goes, they go unpunished for even grave misdeeds. Nevertheless, the statement “*vajrād api kaṭhorāṇi mṛduni kusumād api*³⁸¹” has also been made in reference to *śrī guru-pādapadma*, or the caretaker. That is, the tendencies of his heart have been described as being hard like a thunderbolt and soft like a flower. To whom is he hard like a thunderbolt, and to whom is he soft like a flower? In response to that, scripture has informed us: “*ugro 'pi anugram-evāyaṁ sva-bhaktānāṁ nṛkeśarī, keśarīva svapotānām-anyeṣām-ugra-vikramaḥ*³⁸².” In other words, though Nṛsiṁhadeva is very fierce, to His devotees, He is the personification of compassion, just as a lioness is fiercely violent with other species, but very loving toward her cubs. Hence, one has to consider the conditions and circumstances pertaining to the fierce and the loving. ...

One does not attain the transcendental spiritual truth by serving one's natural, or material, mother, father, etc. This much is true. However,

“By serving our caretakers who are devoted to *bhajana*, it is possible to gain an experience of divine service.”

³⁸¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 7.73)

³⁸² From Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.9.1)

by serving our caretakers who are devoted to *bhajana*, it is possible to gain an experience of divine service. In other words, by serving mundane objects or developing attachment to said objects, material attachments increase and the conditioned souls' conditioned state grips them even more. However, by attending to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, who themselves delight in service, one gains service, *bhakti*, and the ability to properly perform *bhajana*. Though many people have duties in that regard, one's own obligations, responsibilities, discernment, and one's own love and affection have more priority. There is no place for any sort of hateful or violent rivalry or *padmā-nīti*³⁸³. “*Bhāger mā gaṅgā pāy nā* – a mother's remains [ashes] divvied up will not reach the sacred waters of the Gaṅgā” [which roughly translates as “Everyone's business is no one's business”]. Giving up this selfish policy of the material world and always deriving inspiration from the standards of one's ideals constitutes intelligence. Hence, the priority of service for the *sevā-dharmī* (one whose *dharma* is service) is a universal truth. They [the *sevā-dharmīs*] alone are worthy of beholding Śrī Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā's cowherding outfit (*rākhāla-veśa*) and are acquainted with the subtleties of this *tattva*.

I do not know whether or not there is any difference between Śrī Puruṣottama Maṭha and Śrī Puruṣottama Gauḍīya Maṭha, but philosophers could perhaps present various types of explanations. We relinquish the mundane concept of morphology and will proceed with the ontological aspect. This is the unbiased view. ... All of you, accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

.....
³⁸³ See footnote on page 154.

Letter 116

One who is clever in *bhajana* never meets with defeat • One can only develop attachment for Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas if one offers one's heart and soul to them • Those who really want to perform *hari-bhajana* have no time to waste • To perform *bhajana* in Gauḍa-maṇḍala on the banks of the Gaṅgā is a matter of great fortune • “Do not speak of your own *bhajana* here and there” • One has to discern between good and bad to perform *hari-bhajana*

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
9/1/1994

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Mā ———! Previously I received your letters dated 21/10/93 and 1/12/93. I hope you are all well at present. ...

However many *grhastha* devotees are in this region, if you can all cooperate, everyone will be benefitted. Do not ever get involved in village politics. If you are clever in the performance of *bhajana* (*bhajana-catura*), everyone will trust and love you. I hope that if you always proceed with good judgment and discretion, you will not be defeated anywhere. If man has patience, tolerance, and discretion, he will have no difficulty as he moves through this world. Pointless criticism, blasphemy, and gossip do not bring auspiciousness or well-being for anyone. Words such as “*para-caracaker gati nāhi kona-kāle* – a gossip never has a good destination” and “*para-svabhāva-karmāṇi na nindet na praśamset*”³⁸⁴ – one should neither criticize nor praise another's nature or deeds” are cautionary messages for our life's journey.

**“If man has
patience,
tolerance, and
discretion, he
will have no
difficulty.”**

If surrender or submission of the soul does not occur, a sense of possessiveness does not arise. Then even one who is extremely intimate is considered to be “other”. May Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas always be victorious. We gain real well-being by their auspicious wishes and

³⁸⁴
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.28.1)

auspicious blessings. For their service, we will be ready to accept any kind of renunciation. This is the inner desire of one who adheres to real *dharma*. If you proceed with a policy of impartiality, you will find peace of mind. *Amānī-mānada-dharma*, the religion of giving respect to others and expecting none in return, is topmost.

“Those who are really striving to perform *hari-bhajana* have very little free time.”

Those who are really striving to perform *hari-bhajana* have very little free time. In trying to perform the tasks of service and maintain their responsibilities, they do not have any free time on their hands. Only those who have plenty of time are accustomed to keeping track of who sneezed how many times and how many times they coughed. Do not ever waste time in this manner. The proper use of time happens through contemplation of the soul's welfare. How much progress have

I made in *sādhana-bhajana*? Keeping this personal account is the real utilization of one's time. Even while completing one's services every day, there still remain various duties favourable for the service of Hari, like chanting a fixed amount of *śrī nāma*, studying the scriptures, worshipping *śrī vigraha*, cooking *bhoga*, and so on. So rather than occupying yourself with seeking faults in others, try to rectify your soul as per the vision of the scriptures. If you do this, *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān will shower blessings upon you.

Those who tie together a *bhajana-kuṭīra* on the banks of the Gaṅgā and, while gazing upon the Gaṅgā, chant *śrī harināma* are supremely fortunate. That is why a certain Vaiṣṇava *mahājana* has sung: “*vṛndāvanābhede, navadvīpa-dhāme, bādhībo kuṭīra-khāni; śacīra-nandana, caraṇa āśraya, karibo sambandha māni*”³⁸⁵ – in Navadvīpa-dhāma, which is non-different from Vṛndāvana, I will build a cottage and take shelter of the feet of the son of Śacī, recognizing my relationship with Him.” There is no limit to the fortune of those who are in Gaura-tīrtha (the holy land of Śrī Gaurahari), in Gauḍa-maṇḍala, on the banks of the celestial river [the Gaṅgā] and who, with devotion and a desire to serve the lotus feet of the *vraja-rasa-rasikas* (connoisseurs of the mellows of Vraja) are absorbed in the intimate service of the Divine Couple Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī. The *sevaka* and *sevikā* who are immersed exclusively in meditation on Bhagavān become absorbed in the service of *śrī nāma* and remember Śrī Rādhā-Govinda's transcendental pastimes. Adopting the words “*śūnyāyitaṁ jagat-sarvaṁ govinda-virahena me*”³⁸⁶ – the whole world seems void in separation from Govinda” in their condition of

³⁸⁵ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Kabe Habe Heno Daśa Mora* (2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁸⁶ *Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam* (7)

separation, they feel the whole world is empty and cry piteously. A home that is full of *bhajana* of Śrī Bhagavān is referred to as Goloka. It is forever resonant with hearing and chanting and decorated with ingredients of service. As it is a place that stimulates the performance of pastimes, the beauty of service manifests and the devotee's eyes and mind become anxious and desperate. That is why I say you are exceedingly fortunate, because your lives are offered to the service of Bhagavān.

My special instruction is to not spend your time on ordinary matters and concerns. At all times, discuss and cultivate most exalted and unique aspects of *sādhana-bhajana* and *tattva-siddhānta*. If you become occupied with criticizing others rather than focusing on your own efforts, your mind will become polluted. That will not give you peace in *sādhana-bhajana* and service. “*Āpana bhajana kathā, na kahibe jathā tathā*³⁸⁷ – do not speak of your own *bhajana* here and there.” Always remember this. Then there is a possibility of gaining ultimate auspiciousness. “*Āpani ācari dharma jīvere śikhāya, āpane nā kaile dharma śikhān nā jāya*³⁸⁸ – Practise *dharma* yourself and teach it to other living entities. If you do not practise *dharma* yourself, you cannot teach it.” This statement is forever applicable.

**“Do not
speak of your
own *bhajana*
here and
there.’ Always
remember
this.”**

“*Mārobi rākhabi je icchā tōhārā, nitya-dāsa prati tuwā adhikārā*³⁸⁹ – Kill me or keep me, whatever You please. You have full authority over Your eternal servant.” This is the unconditional surrender, or submission, of the surrendered person who has offered his soul. Nevertheless, one has to discern between good and bad, otherwise *hari-bhajana* cannot happen properly. By the blessings of *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas, all inauspiciousness is dispelled. Do not ever be distressed by the adversities of the world. May Śrī Gaurasundara and Śrī Nṛsimhadeva dispel all the obstacles and impediments on the path of your *bhajana* and may you perform *hari-bhajana* without any worries. Know this to be my greatest blessing.

Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁸⁷ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Āna Kathā Nā Bolibo* (19) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

³⁸⁸ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 3.20)*

³⁸⁹ *Śaraṇāgati, Mānasa Deha Geḥa* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 117

Nothing is out of reach for those who are *akiñcana* • All qualification is attained through simple faith and conviction • As life is uncertain and time is short, it is imperative to study *śāstra* and seek out its essence • Gossiping about others causes fearsome damage to *sādhana-bhajana* • Be the honeybee, not the fly • *Guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān grant qualification to those who have none • The speciality of Śrī Nṛsiṃhadeva • The importance of freedom and intimacy in being able to render service fully

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
28/2/1994

Kalyāṇīyāsu—

Dear ——! I sent you a letter by courier this past date of 18/2/94. Prior to receiving this letter, you sent me a letter again on the date of 21/2/94. I answered all of the questions in your current letter in my previous letter. ...

“*Mārobi rākhobi jo icchā tōhārā, nitya-dāsa prati tuwā adhikārā*³⁹⁰ – Kill me or keep me, whatever You please. You have full authority over Your eternal servant.” This is the surrendered soul’s surrender, or submission, of his soul. Those who have been able to become genuinely fully reliant on *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas and, above all, on Śrī Hari, have had all their doubts dispelled. It is they who are capable of gaining real peace and well-being in life. Those whose exclusive endeavours and conviction are directed towards *sādhana-bhajana* have no feelings of concern. They are thoroughly liberated from all the sorrows and sufferings, the burning and torment, of material existence. They are beyond all mundane good and bad, gross and subtle. For those who have been able to become *akiñcana-niṣkiñcana* (voluntarily possessionless), no object, material or spiritual, is inaccessible. Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas’ love and causeless compassion for them is forever manifest. If, in the matter of *sādhana-bhajana*, you always maintain *amānī-mānada-dharma* and shun prestige, you will find all perfection.

³⁹⁰ *Śaraṇāgati, Mānasa Deha Geḥa* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Those who, through service, can take Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas to be their own, are blessed. The sole duty and responsibility of one whose mind is fixed on service is to follow the instructions and directions of our *guru-varga* without any hesitation. Surely there is love and affectionate possessiveness in giving orders and instructions, as there will be in chastisement too. Chastisement without love and affection never works. Mundane qualification is not needed to follow the orders, directions, and instructions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. All qualifications are fully acquired through simple faith and conviction. If one is to know *tattva-siddhānta*, one must become humble and free from the desire for prestige. As long as hatred, violence, envy, hankering for the fortune of others, vanity, pride, arrogance, and egotism are present, the questions that are truly beneficial for one's soul do not arise and there remains no possibility of receiving such uplifting answers [that are beneficial to the soul]. Hence, one certainly has to nurture universal good qualities in one's heart.

**“All qualifications
are fully acquired
through simple faith
and conviction.”**

Although *śabda-śāstra* (scripture composed of the primeval word) is infinite, one has to engage in developing an understanding of it despite one's short duration of life. Being aware that time is short, not delaying, and surpassing all obstacles and impediments, it is the duty of the intelligent man and woman to advance in *sādhana*. Even if you say, “*kemane pāibo, kichu nā pāi sandhāna*³⁹¹— how will I achieve [my goal]; I cannot find the way,” you must maintain patience and steadiness. As our time is short, we have to gather up the essence. The one-pointed devotee who has submitted his soul to Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas is ready to accept any sort of sacrifice. This is the fearsome oath (*bhīṣma-pratijñā*) of their lives. “*Sādhū-śāstra-guru-vākya*—*e tine kariyā aikya, āra nā kariho mane āśā*— the words of saintly personalities, scripture, and the holy teacher—align yourself with these three and do not aspire for anything else.” This is what we have to realize in life. It is precisely because “there is no certainty in life” that it is especially imperative to study the scriptures. One way or another, one has to allot time to that. If you have *bhakti* scriptures at home, then at some point, the opportunity to study and cultivate them will come.

**“If one can become
clever about *bhajana*
or grasp the essence
of *bhajana*, then
there is opportunity
in every direction.”**

If one can become clever about *bhajana* or grasp the essence of *bhajana*, then there is opportunity in every direction. Those who are discerning never spend their time pointlessly criticizing

³⁹¹ Prārthanā, Jaya Jaya Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya Nityānanda (5) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

others. They make proper use of their time. The heart is defiled by gossiping about others. It causes fearsome damage to *sādhana-bhajana*. Adoring people's general virtues is called *pallava-grāhitā* ("taking the buds", or eclecticism). This is the honeybee's nature. And the fly's is to get trapped in things that are rotten, dead, or decomposing. Hence, to always consider and cultivate the positive side is intelligence.

At present, there is no need to give charity anywhere to Nṛsimha, Kṛṣṇa, and Viṣṇu. You are very poor. I know that well. Therefore, Śrī Vāmana-deva does not ask for any charity from you. "*Vaiṣṇavera āvedane kṛṣṇa dayāmaya*"³⁹² – Kṛṣṇa becomes merciful upon the requests of the Vaiṣṇavas." This is the real truth. If *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān have accepted you as Their own, then what worry do you have? They grant qualification to those who have none.

"If one learns to fathom the deep import of every activity in one's life, then difficulties on the path of *sādhana* do not seem like difficulties."

To grant the unworthy worthiness is characteristic of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' causeless compassion.

Man follows special rules out of a sense of love, attachment, and duty. Then a specified deadline, or calculation of time, cannot keep him contained. Still, one has to maintain consideration of time, place, and person in order to ensure balance. Sorrow and suffering, irritation and torment, meeting and separation go side by side with *sādhana-bhajana* and increase our patience and enthusiasm. This is the reality of life. If one learns to fathom the deep import of every activity in one's life, then difficulties on the path of *sādhana* do not seem like difficulties. ...

Śrī Nṛsimha-deva dispels all the obstacles and impediments to the *sādhana-bhajana* of crazy men and women and grants them opportunities. This is His affection for the devotees. *Jagad-guru* Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda has written: "Even though there is a predominance of reverence in the considerations of *vātsalya* pertaining to Śrī Nṛsimhadeva, Nṛsimhadeva, as the personification of *vatsala-rasa*, brought Prahlāda very close. Within Śrī Nṛsimhadeva, within His *vatsala-rati*, exists *vātsalya-rasa*. It is by the *vātsalya-rasa* for Prahlāda that Śrī Nṛsimha appears. *Vātsalya* is one of the main *rasas*, whereas the *rasas* of Matsya, Kūrma, and Varāha are secondary. Gaurasundara adopted the six arms of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and Nṛsimhadeva and became Gaura-Rāma, Gaura-Kṛṣṇa, and Gaura-Nṛsimha. According to other opinions, Kṛṣṇa, Baladeva, and Gaura have had their own manifestations of six arms. This has speciality. This is why this is a main *rasa*."

³⁹² *Śaraṇāgati*, Kabe Śrī Caitanya More (6) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Śrīdāma and other *sakhās* put their feet on Kṛṣṇa's shoulders and put their full weight on Him. They give Kṛṣṇa their remnants. It is not advisable to impair one's service by deliberating on whether one is equal or superior [to the object of one's service]. It is necessary to ensure the elegance of service. The notion of reverence more or less means depriving the *sevya* (the object of service). *Madhura-rasa* is *mukhyatama* (the most predominant), *vatsala-rasa* is *mukhyatara* (predominant), and *sakhya-rasa* is *mukhya* (dominant). In each of them, *vipralambha*, or the concept of separation, is powerful. And *śānta*, *dāśya*, and *gaurava-sakhya* (reverential friendship) are mixed with a mood of reverence. If the *sevaka* does not find extensive latitude for service, then he becomes incapable of fully serving the master. If there is not an abundance of intimacy, then he does not have the ability to render all types of service. It is necessary to realize all of this *tattva-siddhānta* in the heart.

“Falling in love with a conditioned soul entails a state of bondage, whereas the love and affection of liberated personalities enables the conditioned soul to attain *bhakti*, *prema-bhakti*.” I was delighted to learn of this philosophical insight. Money is not everything for man. There are many superior things like dignity, magnanimity, generosity, and discretion. Independence that is subservient to another, rather than individual independence, is what effects advancement in *sādhana-bhajana*. As man proceeds in life, whether he wishes it or not, many errors, mishaps, and shortcomings occur. Regret and remorse are the best atonement or means of regulation. The bona fide *guru* never abandons those who have taken shelter of him. Remember this. Śrī *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are *patita-pāvana*, deliverers of the fallen. Personalities as merciful, compassionate, and gracious as them are very rare in this world. Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

**“The bona fide
guru never
abandons those
who have taken
shelter of him.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 118

Using the words of śrī guru and Vaiṣṇavas for one's own purposes is a grave offence • There is no room for the sevaka to be hopeless in awaiting the arrival of the sevya • One-pointedness (ekāntikatā) is having no other duty but transcendental bhajana of the Divine Couple • There is no chance of inauspiciousness for those who chant śrī nāma in a regulated manner, are eager to study śāstra, and are diligent in their sevā

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
26/7/1994

Snehāspadāsu—

Dear —! It has been a few days since I received your affectionate letter, dated 19/7/94. I hope you are all well. Your “*paramārādhyatama* (most worshipful) *gurudeva*” is moderately well physically and in *bhajana*. It seems, by the use of the word *paramārādhyatam*, he is a little unequipped, or lacking [as there is a missing “a”]. In other words, rather than writing “m”, if you write just “ma”, he will reap full contentment. ...

You are thankworthy for delivering the recipient's letter to the right place, thereby having fulfilled the duties and responsibilities of a peon. We are all mere peons of Śrī Caitanya's message.

**“We are all
mere peons of
Śrī Caitanya's
message.”**

This alone is the real definition of our identity. Hence, the blackmailing effort of using the words and the *tattva-siddhānta* of *sādhū*, *śāstra*, and *guru* for oneself never constitutes being under the guidance of *guru*. That which is deserved by and meant for *guru* and Bhagavān will be preserved for them alone and must be utilized in service. If, in the course of serving them, one takes part in that [sort of blackmail], one will be submerged in the mire of *sevā-aparādha*. We all have the right to partake of the remaining *prasāda* once the articles of service have been submitted to *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, which is why we are their *ucchiṣṭa-bhojī* (remnant-eating) *sevakas* and *sevikās*. The qualification and right to accept those items after they have been submitted to the *sevya*, or object of service, is permissible.

Just as Śrī Bhagavān is merciful, Śrīmatī Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī is also infinitely merciful. Śrī guru and Vaiṣṇavas are also supremely compassionate to unworthy living entities. We alone are the candidates for their causeless compassion. “*Tomāra sevāya, duḥkha haya jata, sei to parama sukha; sevā-sukha-duḥkha, parama sampada, nāśaye avidyā duḥkha*”³⁹³ – Whatever suffering occurs in the course of Your service is the supreme joy. The joys and pains of service are the greatest wealth, for they abolish the misery of ignorance.” This is the inherent mood of one who aspires for service. As he experiences this, the *bhakta-cātaka* [thirsty swallow-like devotee] prays for mercy and awaits the arrival of the *sevya*. This sort of hope and eagerness keeps the *sevaka* alive. There is no place for fast or slow or hopelessness. *Guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* are *suviceka* – very considerate. By their causeless mercy, the life force is revived. Hence, having patience is the sole great remedy.

May we fully engage our souls in the service of Prāṇanātha Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Prāṇeśvarī Śrīmatī Rādhikā-devī. For that alone, we will all pray for the mercy of *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas*, whereby it is possible to please them. For the one-pointed, exclusively dedicated *sevaka*, Śrī Bhagavān alone is the wealth of life, the heart, and everything. He alone is the life of life itself. We have no other duty in this world other than the transcendental *bhajana* of the Divine Couple. This is one-pointedness (*ekāntikatā*). In the field of this conviction, we can surely aspire for the heartfelt affectionate blessings of our *guru-varga*, and thus we will become capable of satisfying them.

“We have no other duty in this world other than the transcendental *bhajana* of the Divine Couple.”

None of our caregivers in this world is capable of eliminating the fruits of *karma*. Nevertheless, if one employs the right means, the impossible is achieved. That too is dependent on the mercy of Bhagavān. There is no chance of inauspiciousness for those who chant *śrī nāma* in a regulated manner, who are especially eager to continuously study *śāstra*, and who are diligently engaged in their assigned services. The welfare of souls who are exclusively engaged in the worship and *sādhana-bhajana* of Śrī Bhagavān is inevitable.

I understand that as a teacher, you really do not have so much time. Regardless, you must certainly fulfil all the responsibilities and duties of *sādhana-bhajana*. In this world, no one will give you your time. You have to make time. Life is impermanent. You have to proceed in consideration of this. Accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

³⁹³ *Śaraṇāgati, Ātma-nivedana* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 119

Only *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas can gauge our progress in *sādhana-bhajana* • *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are always guiding their surrendered followers, both perceptibly and imperceptibly • To gain the transcendental love of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, we must develop the necessary spiritual qualities • No one should object to education, especially if it is engaged in spiritual well-being • Let yourself become a magnet drawn to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas • The core focus of *sādhana-bhajana* is to appreciate within our hearts the presence and causeless compassion of *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān • A suggested routine for *sādhana-bhajana* • How to balance the expression of emotion with refined, concise language

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, P.O.—Siliguri
Darjeeling (North Bengal)
20/8/1994

Snehāspadāsu—

The reason for the delay in my replying to your letter is that you very distinctly invested your confidence in someone and showed them the affectionate letters I wrote you. I have a rather keen objection to this. When it comes to affectionate dealings, it is often proper to maintain special confidentiality. It occurs to me that you have strayed somewhat from the integrity of the vow you took to keep your *mantras* secret. For this, I do not see you as being at fault, nor will I ever, because you are in every respect eligible for my most heartfelt affection.

**“It is by the grace
and blessings of *guru*
and Vaiṣṇavas that
a human being
surely becomes
fulfilled in life.”**

When you have come to know me as your ultimate guardian, then I must maintain my responsibility for you in every respect. In this regard, it is best if there is no cause for misunderstanding between you and me.

I am pleased to know that you had a powerful discussion with ——— Prabhu at Śrī Nīlācala Gauḍīya Maṭha regarding your spiritual life and future. It is by the grace and blessings of *guru*

and Vaiṣṇavas that a human being surely becomes fulfilled in life. Only *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are able to take account of who has been able to progress in their *sādhana-bhajana* and to what degree. If you write a letter, my time is definitely not wasted in reading it. When we do not have the advantage of meeting and discussing things face-to-face, then correspondence by letter is the only medium of exchanging our mutual views. That is why the *bhakti* texts and scriptures and the *vāṇī* of the *mahājanas* are our only resort in the absence of *sat-saṅga*.

Though Revā, or Revatī, is Pārvatī, or Sarasvatī, she is identified as Narmadā, a river flowing and purifying the southern regions of the country. Though she leaps and bounds along, her movement does have a particular manner to it. You have become accustomed to moving forward with a composed and steady mind. Therefore, you will progress on the path of *sādhana-bhajana* at a very tranquil, languid pace. This is what I have come to believe after much thought. When man moves forward in any work, he first has to consider what comes first and what comes last. Only then can he reap the proper fruit of that task. The fact that you have gone along in a very composed and steady manner indicates that your namesake, Revā, or Revatī, has not been fulfilled. This is Śrī Bhagavān's special test for you. You can be somewhat worry-free knowing that you have in one way, in this case, passed this test.

I am always situated well physically and in terms of *bhajana*. Surely the gracious blessings of my worshipful deity are responsible in this regard, both tangibly and intangibly. In this material existence, the question of *kuśala* (wellness) and *akuśala* (illness) centres on the self. If the *jīvātmā* forgets his *svarūpa*, then he can do nothing to demonstrate *kuśalatā* (expertise) in performing *sādhana-bhajana* of Paramātmā and Śrī Bhagavān. Still, in the social, materialistic realm, there remains a question of wellness or how one is doing. Therefore, what we really want to talk about is how our *bhajana* is doing rather than how well our body or mind is faring. Man will not endure forever in this material existence, but others' memories of his habits and example keep him alive. Likewise, if you can gently and tenderly safeguard a beautiful legacy, you will surely succeed in passing the test that is this battle of life. Even if the result of one's test in this world is average, try to see whether or not you can progress more in learning spiritual insight. If you take a positive, favourable approach and dedicate yourself wholeheartedly to the service and worship of *śrī vigraha*, then you attain that truth which is *raso vai saḥ*. Śrī Bhagavān is controlled only by the *bhakti* of loving, tender-hearted devotees. Only those who have chosen Śrī Bhagavān as their sole protector and maintainer

“Śrī Bhagavān is controlled only by the *bhakti* of loving, tender-hearted devotees.”

and who never see fault in Śrī Bhagavān and Bhagavān's devotees are capable of attaining *bhāva-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti* by following the process of *sādhana-bhakti*. At all times, *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are right in front of those whom they have taken as their own, perceptibly and imperceptibly aiding them in their *bhajana*. Know this to be the realest truth. The conditioned soul has no actual experience or realization. This is true. Regardless, we see that everyone is particularly eager to find proximity to the supremely worshipful truth. Even if you do not have the advantage of obtaining love and blessings in person, if conveyed through the medium of writing, do they not translate into reality?

You have engaged in many prescribed and prohibited activities without my permission. The result of conducting good activities (*sat-karma*) is permanent, but the mundane endeavours of a living entity following the dictates of mind and body are surely due for censure. “*Yogyam yogyena yujyate*³⁹⁴ – objects can only combine with other objects that are compatible or worthy of them.” There is a significant meaning to this statement that ought to be keenly examined. “*Vaiṣṇava dekhiyā, paḍibo caraṇe, hṛdayera bandhu jāni*³⁹⁵ – upon seeing a Vaiṣṇava, I will fall at his feet, knowing him to be my bosom friend.” This statement is applicable to *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas of the highest calibre. As guides on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*, *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are our guardians, nurturers, and maintainers. We have no great and valiant ability to advance on the path of spiritual life. Any remarkable feat is that of our *āśraya*- and *viṣaya-vigrahas* – our worshipful deities. “*Kevala īśvara ei viśvapati jini, sakala samayer bandhu sakaler tini*³⁹⁶ – only He who is the Lord, the master of this universe, is everyone's friend for all time.” This is something we really have to realize. When *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are our everything, can we put them aside to think of anyone else as our own?

The *kaniṣṭha* devotee cannot instruct *kaniṣṭha* devotees. They only have the capacity to talk and discuss matters with each other. The *madhyama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava is in all respects competent to grant teachings and instructions in regard to our *sādhana-bhajana*. The *uttama-adhikārī* is wholly immersed in transcendental *bhajana* of the Divine Couple and caught up in the ecstasies of his own experience. Therefore, when it comes to [receiving] instructions, we have to choose Vaiṣṇavas who are more advanced than us, and by conversing with them, our spiritual life will be elevated and blessed. If we want to gain the transcendental love of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, we will surely have to attain the specific spiritual good qualities that are

³⁹⁴ *Stavāmṛta-lahari*, *Surata-kathāmṛtam* (43) by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

³⁹⁵ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru*, *Kabe Āha Gaurāṅga Boliyā* (5) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

³⁹⁶ From a poem entitled *Susamay* by Kṛṣṇacandra Majumadar

necessary. If love reaches the state of unearthly transcendence, then where is the possibility of being cheated of anything? If just one time we can be blessed by the genuine love of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, who are entirely devoid of envy, then there is no chance of being cheated. If a person has not obtained the divine love of *sādhū*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas in his life, then for that, he surely needs to welcome the greatest renunciation in life. The compassion and love that *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas have for the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā* who craves spiritual welfare far exceeds their mercy for the general populace.

Keep on going on your own, progressing on the path of *sādhana* with patience and determination. Know that your guardians will surely guide and engage you on that path, always and forever and in all respects, and that is what they are doing now. Awareness of one's responsibility is something that can never be discarded. I have not received any letter you wrote on 29/12/93 through any sort of courier. If I had, it would be with the other letters.

You have conveyed that at present your main dilemma is in regard to your education. It is not right for anyone to have any sort of objection to education, especially if that education is being engaged in spiritual well-being. I never want to say, "You have no need for more education." If you have a desire to learn more so that you can study *śāstra* and other sacred texts, then why would I hinder you? Rather, I want what will make your future bright: devoted study of the sacred texts of Vaiṣṇava philosophy. You have entrusted me with the responsibility of understanding what is good or bad for your future, but you too need to take responsibility yourself in regard to discerning good and bad. Regardless, it is true that this human life is momentary. "*Janmile marite habe, amara se kothā rabe*"³⁹⁷ – The fact that if you are born you must die is what remains immortal." This is a cautionary word to the individual inclined to perform *bhajana* of Hari. I am not writing things like this to you so that you can shirk any sort of responsibility you have. I only write this because I want your future to be happy and peaceful. If you make any sort of mistake or error on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*, I will definitely catch it. You also must not be dissatisfied with me in this regard and misunderstand me. ...

When we arrive at your house, you all become very busy looking after me and the *sevakas*. When you have guests at your house and you are endeavouring to serve them and look after them, your opportunity to hear *hari-kathā* diminishes greatly. If, in the midst of that – in

**"If just one time we
can be blessed by
the genuine love of
guru and Vaiṣṇavas,
who are entirely
devoid of envy, then
there is no chance of
being cheated."**

³⁹⁷ From a poem by Michael Madhusudan Datta

dealing with such household affairs and making sure your service is topnotch – you get upset about something, you will withdraw even more and naturally become deprived of *hari-kathā*. Therefore, rather than cheating yourself of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ mercy, let yourself become drawn by their magnetic attraction, whereby you will constantly experience the appeal of hearing and reciting *hari-kathā* and surely reap unparalleled bliss, peace, and well-being. Śrī Bhagavān is the big magnet and the whole realm of living entities is always attracted to Him. This is the natural relationship and connection between Bhagavān and the devotees. By the natural, effortless melodies played on His *muralī*, by His threefold-bending form, and by His gentle smile and laughter, the all-attractive Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra is perpetually attracting infinite millions of souls in all the universes who are inclined toward *bhajana*. This is a special example of His causeless compassion.

I never deprive you of my affectionate letters and never will. Even when I am sick, I have tried to respond. To think that at the moment I am disinclined to write you because I have detected some sort of flaw or mistake in you is, I think, far-fetched. You should never – past, future, or present – feel that you are helpless or alone. Śrī *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān, who are our only real kin, preside in very close proximity to us. The very core focus of *sādhana-bhajana* is to appreciate within our hearts their presence and causeless compassion. If we cannot feel that *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are our own, then where is the actual realization in our *sādhana-bhajana*? “Śrī *guru-kṛpāya bheṅgeche svapana, bujhechi ekhona tumi-i āpana; tava nija-jana parama-bāndhava, saṁsāra kārāgāre*”³⁹⁸ – By the mercy of śrī *guru*, the dream has broken, and I have understood now that only You are my own. Your intimate associate is my supreme friend in the jail of material existence.” This is the only matter we should be pondering at all times. You wrote in your letter, “My invaluable time will be wasted.” Why has this worry gripped you? Why would you let what is mine to worry about get to your head and give you needless suffering? If sending and receiving letters keeps you happy, then keep doing just that and relieve yourself and your *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas [of anxiety]. Then, in any and every direction, whatever you are finding difficult will become easy.

I had said you have a keen need for an uncompromising spiritual guardian or caretaker in your maiden life, but I cannot decide right this instant who that guardian should be. Still, I regard your Vaiṣṇava mother and father themselves, who are devoted to the ideals of moral conduct, as your guardians. If someone cannot maintain proper neutrality, then showing another the path forward becomes a very difficult affair. In this world, everyone, including

³⁹⁸ Ohe Premera Ṭhākura Gorā (6)

one's mother, father, brothers, friends, and relatives, are more or less seeking their own self-interest and are opportunists. Each and every second they show us some love and attachment, it is always, somehow or other, in exchange for our aid, sympathy, and cooperation. *Guru*, *Vaiṣṇavas*, and *Bhagavān*, however, never resort to this manner of gross selfishness and opportunism in any of their teachings or instructions. At all times, it is exclusively the welfare of the soul that is the chief focus of their teachings and instructions. I have full faith that if, and only if, you put all of your hopes and confidence in *guru*, *Vaiṣṇavas*, and *Bhagavān* and accept them as your real guides, will you find peace of mind.

I will do *bhajana* of Hari myself and get others to do the same. This is our real policy. If, after your daily duties of chanting a fixed number of rounds, worshipping and serving the deity, and studying *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Gītā-Bhāgavata*, and other such texts a little bit each day – you have extra time, then you can teach others. If they come to your house to study, that would be the best arrangement for you.

Though I do not know your daily *sādhana-bhajana* routine, I am writing that you can get up early, at around 4 o'clock in the morning, bathe, and if possible, after bathing, complete your morning *āhnikā* and then do *maṅgala-ārātika* of the deities. Later, after finishing your duties in the deity room, as time permits, you can chant some *harināma* – at least 25,000 [names]. If you have time before bathing, you can complete some [harināma] then too. If you can finish your deity worship early on in the morning, you will have a lot of free time, so you can appease your hunger before it's too late, and then use this time to study a bit from some *granthas*. In the afternoon, after *bhogārati-kīrtana* and *ārati* and putting the deities to sleep, you can rest a little. You could study a sacred text for a little while at this time as well. If that chance does not present itself, then after waking the deities and offering a cooling snack, you can study *granthas* without any worry. Then again, after *sandhya-ārāti* and after offering the deities their evening meal and putting them to sleep, you can rest. Those who are in the habit of getting out of bed as the sun is rising or during *brāhma-muhurta* have plenty of time to chant *śrī nāma*, worship the deities, and study devotional scriptures. Utilizing one's time properly in this manner is the special routine of the *sādhaka* or *sādhikā*. If one who longs to perform *hari-bhajana* can follow this, all good fortune lies in store. I have written a rough outline. You can plan your services and time as is suitable for you.

You wrote that you do not know how to be concise in language or how to moderate your speech, but that is precisely the trick of speech and the speciality of eloquence. Writing whatever comes to one's mind makes proper expression of language, intent, figures

“Without emotion, there is no language, and without refinement of language, it is not possible to reveal emotion.”

of speech, and so on impossible. Without emotion, there is no language, and without refinement of language, it is not possible to reveal emotion. Managing to balance the expression of emotion and language is what you want. The outward expression of emotion is precisely what language is, and if it is refined, it reveals greater impact. As such, giving up *guru-caṇḍālī-doṣa* [the habit of mixing slang with more elegant language] and using immaculate language is characteristic of an intelligent person. I have firm faith that if you steadily study and contemplate all these matters, you will certainly be able to attain in this very life the treasure that *sādhana* yields.

Śraddhāspadāsu is a *śakti*- [female] specific form of address, but *śraddhāspadeṣu* is the correct word to address a male. *Śraddhāspadāsu* would not be spelled *ṣu*, but *su*. But *śraddhāspadeṣu* is definitely spelled with *ṣu*. “His Holliness” is spelled wrong – there is just one “l” in that.

You have to use sweet speech with superiors and caretakers and also some restraint. In this material world, no one can love everyone the same way, nor can they satisfy them the same way. “One cannot please everybody.” That is the proof. Know you have my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 120

Following the instructions of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is more beneficial than their direct *darśana* • If possible, it is best to follow *kārtika-vrata* in the *dhāma* • Installed deities must be offered full meals, not just dry snacks and fruit • We have no refuge in this material existence besides *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
29/8/1994

Snehāspadeṣu—

Bābā —! I received your loving letter, which was dated 11/8/1994, the day before yesterday. I hope that by the grace of Bhagavān you are well physically and well in *bhajana*. Here, we too are quite well. ... It is true that we have very little opportunity to have direct *darśana* of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, but we can expect more benefit from accepting and following their orders, directions, instructions, etc. in actual day-to-day life than from having their direct *darśana*. Not that I want to discourage you from your aspiration to behold *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas.

It is good that you go to Vṛndāvana and other *dhāmas* every year during the month of Dāmodara and observe *ūrja-vrata*. To observe *kārtika-vrata* at home is to be rather constrained. “*Tīrthe kārtikaṁ kuryāt* – one should observe Kārtika in a holy place.” According to this statement of scripture, there is special recommendation to go to a *dhāma* or *tīrtha* to observe *dāmodara-vrata*. If you observe the *vrata* at home, you will end up having to go to the store and will surely have to fulfil the obligations and duties of material existence. No one is exempt from these daily activities and duties. Hence, if one goes to *śrī dhāma* and, without any worries, keeps one’s body, mind, and life force engaged in chanting *śrī nāma*, hearing *hari-kathā*, and participating in *iṣṭa-goṣṭhī* (spiritual discussions), it is seen that there is a greater chance to obtain ultimate auspiciousness. Your children have now grown up. If you somewhat place the burden of looking after the household on them, it will be convenient for you on your path

of *sādhana-bhajana*. But it is still surely necessary as a guardian to supervise their activities. They will be content if you entrust them with responsibility, having understood their mental state, and maintained your love, affection, and possessive fondness (*mamatā*) for them. In this material world, if the people at home cannot come together and cooperate and if there is no mutual assistance and solidarity, it creates a sort of dysfunctional situation. You are intelligent guardians, so if you proceed having considered all of these matters, I too will gain some peace and well-being.

This year I have a special desire to stay in Navadvīpa to observe *śrī dāmodara-vrata*. Though my body is not very healthy, it is more or less functioning. For many years, I have not had the opportunity or fortune to observe *ūrja-vrata* in Śrī Dhāma Navadvīpa. This time, by the causeless mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, I feel I will have this opportunity. If my body is healthy, from time to time, I will try to discuss *hari-kathā* during the *vrata* period. I was delighted to hear that you have decided not to go to Vṛndāvana this time and will instead observe *kārtika-vrata* in Navadvīpa-dhāma. ... This year, because you have had *śrī vigraha* installed in your home, some new responsibilities have developed for you.

One cannot expect the full result of service if one keeps installed deities fasting or offers them only fruits, roots, sweets, and other similar offerings. One must at least follow the standard of serving and worshipping Ṭhākura as prescribed in the *vaiṣṇava-smṛti* texts. Just because some *brahmacārī* says, “You can just serve Gopāla,” or, in other words, that you can take Gopāla with you to Navadvīpa (and keep the *śrī vigraha* of Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the temple) does not mean this is a good idea. How can deities who have been installed in the home and are accepting rice and curries every day be satisfied with eating only fruits and sweets for a whole month? Can the children in your home spend a month eating dry snacks? Therefore, no matter how inconvenient it is, it is one’s responsibility and duty as prescribed by scripture to offer installed deities food-grain offerings and other prepared dishes. For this, you will have to make a special arrangement that will address every aspect of the situation. In other words, it will be most auspicious if you can keep the service going for a month with the assistance of an initiated *grhastha* or a renounced *brahmacārī sevaka*.

Do not become too preoccupied with asking about my well-being. I am at present moderately well. [However] asking about *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas’ well-being is a part of service. Desperation to have their direct *darśana* and to hear their teachings and instructions is surely something always necessary for the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*. We will find real auspiciousness only if we

can take *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān to be our own. Their direct service and instructions are the sole provisions and resources for our lives. The *viśrambha-sevaka* becomes blessed to attain the direct service of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān through his heart's simple, natural anxiousness and desperation. Besides *śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān, we have no other refuge in this material existence, nor any other aid or support. Our life can only become blessed if we can come to know this. A *sādhaka's* life can only be properly developed by putting *śrī guru* and Bhagavān in the centre. *Iti—*

**“We will find real
auspiciousness
only if we can
take *śrī guru*,
Vaiṣṇavas, and
Bhagavān to be
our own.”**

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 121

Requesting Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja to give *harināma* and *dīkṣā* on his behalf • Calling for the expulsion of those attempting to instigate a rift between him and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja • The purpose of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti is to preach the message of Śrī Rūpa and Raghunātha

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha
P.O.—Navadvīpa (Nadia) W.B.
4/11/1994

Śrī vaiṣṇava-carāṇe daṇḍavan-nati pūrvikēyam—

Pūjyapāda Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja! I hope that by Śrīla Guru-pādapadma's causeless mercy you are well physically and in your *bhajana*. The last letter I sent, in response to yours, was in August of 1993, which was before the start of *puruṣottama-vrata*. After that, I received three of your kind letters sent on 22/10/93 and 22/10/94 and 29/10/94. There was nothing specific to respond to in them. You went to the Haridvāra *maṭha* and caught a chill, which gave you a cold and cough, so you came back. That much I gathered.

I received one of the letters you wrote straight from Kamalāpati Brahmācārī's hands, but I cannot find it even after searching for it a great deal. After that, I saw the letter you wrote Ācārya Mahārāja on 18/10/94. I went to Mathurā-Vṛndāvana in April of 1993, and since then 1994 has not yet finished. In the meantime, I have been so busy, I did not understand. Please consider the issue of my physical and mental condition, which is sometimes healthy and sometimes unhealthy. Even though I do go out for special purposes, I do not go out wandering for fun and I do not give classes or readings anywhere.

As I will not be able to go to Mathurā-Vṛndāvana every year, I have requested you to give the *sevakas* there *śrī nāma*, *dīkṣā*, etc. If you accept my request, there would not be any sort of inconvenience in managing the *maṭha*, and I too would be relieved. I am especially saddened to know that because I did not give a response to your letter, it has become the subject of discussion everywhere. For this, please be gracious and forgive me. "Many *brahmācārīs* who have gone around saying: 'Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja has no affection for Gurudeva; therefore it is not proper to stay in this *maṭha*' or 'What to do in this sort of situation? This has become a matter of concern.'"

After Śrī Dhāma Navadvīpa *parīkramā* each year, on your instruction, some *sevakas* always go to Mathurā-Vṛndāvana. One or two persons perhaps go of their own accord for convenience and to take advantage. I do not think I send any of them. My meek request to you is this: You are indeed the executive of the management committee and sub-committee of the *maṭhas*. Therefore, in regard to those *sevakas* who are trying to see and create a difference between you and me, identify them and, immediately after reading this letter, expel them from the *maṭha* and the mission. Let the point be made that such persons have no place in the Samiti or any of its branch *maṭhas*.

In the course of management, there can be some good, some bad, some errors, so it is never justified for the *sevakas* to interfere in the manager's responsibilities. I do not teach any of my *sevakas* to disobey *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas or violate etiquette. The sort of instruction given is for them to heed the laws of the *maṭha* and mission in all respects. The *maṭhas* and temples, etc. under Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti will be run according to its rules. The opportunistic and selfishly motivated rules and regulations of outside *maṭhas*, missions, or organizations is not permitted in our Samiti. Vedānta Samiti will move forward unchecked with its specialities and dignity. We will be avowedly dedicated in every respect to preaching the Śrī Svarūpa Rūpānuga message of Śrī Rūpa and Raghunātha, under the guidance of the Gauḍīya *guru-varga*, the six Gosvāmīs, and our *ācāryas*. May this be the sole source of life for us, we who are servants subsisting on their remnants.

**“We will be avowedly
dedicated in every
respect to preaching
the Śrī Svarūpa
Rūpānuga message
of Śrī Rūpa and
Raghunātha.”**

It will be fine if the introduction that has been written in Bengali for *Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* is translated into Hindi. At the end, write: “For Hindi language speakers, adopting *vaiṣṇava-smṛti* will be a special aid in performing *sādhana-bhajana*.” Till today my body has been very ill for about eight to ten days. I will go to Madras towards the end of November. At the end of December, I will return to Kolkata. Please accept my *daṇḍavat-praṇāmas*. Here everyone is fine. What more? *Iti—*

Vaiṣṇava-dāsādhama (a wretched
servant of the Vaiṣṇavas),
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 122

There is no harm if life is short • Auspiciousness lies in rendering service • Śrī gurudeva, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are our *samsāra* • Lending selfless assistance is characteristic of the saintly • Do not be angered by anyone else's adverse mentality or bad behaviour • For those absorbed in *bhajana*, blasphemy and praise are equal

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
3/6/1995

Snehāspadāsu—

Dear —! We left around four in the morning on the date of 30/5/95 and reached Siliguri the same day around four in the evening, twelve hours later. Govinda Mahārāja came to the NJP station with the devotees. ...

Someone was specially praising your tolerance. When there is no means to avoid cold, heat, rain, etc., then surely we have to tolerate them. This is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's instruction to his friend Arjuna. There is no harm if life is short. As long as one can patiently continue serving and performing worship, everything will be auspicious. Amid all manner of worldly duties,

**“For those
who thirst for
bhajana, there
is nothing more
to do than
remember *guru*
and Bhagavān.”**

one must carry on as usual chanting a fixed number of *śrī nāma* and studying scriptural texts. The success of the rare human birth is certainly imperative.

We worship Gaṅgā with Gaṅgā water. In other words, we really have no support or resources of our own. It is around *śrī gurudeva*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān alone that our *samsāra* revolves. For those who thirst for *bhajana*, there is nothing more to do than remember *guru* and Bhagavān. That is their meditation, knowledge, chanting, austerities – their everything. Those who are blessed to become *gurudevātātmā*, one in spirit with *gurudeva*, forever preserve on the paths of their memory the truth of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas' causeless mercy.

It is natural for everyone to have faith in and gratitude for those whose nature it is to help others, support them, and empathize with them. However, it is seen that most of the time, the recipients of such help end up being inimical, dishonest, and unappreciative. If man is ungrateful, then there is nothing to say. In this world, ungrateful people are in the majority. They are called opportunists and are selfish. You should carry on with your natural, simple concerns to help others. Do not help or empathize with others because you think they will help you in the future. That, according to *Gītā-śāstra*, is considered a *rājasika-tāmasika* undertaking. Lending assistance in a selfless mood is *sat* (virtuous) and befitting the nature of a *sādhū*. Know this to be the special virtue and ornament of *sādhus* and *sādhvīs*.

Do not be angered by anyone else's adverse mentality or bad behaviour. If, as a result of bad association, someone does not cooperate, it is not proper to be upset. Man reaps only the fruits of his own actions. Never think evil thoughts about another. In this world, no one can subjugate another. On the other hand, even if they try, they are also incapable of giving them the pleasures of heaven. The transcendental love and affection of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is the only provision we need on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*. Try to be satisfied with just that.

“The transcendental love and affection of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas is the only provision we need on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*.”

In the field of *sādhana-bhajana*, hatred, violence, and criticism are extremely damaging. Therefore, those things are wholly prohibited. For those who are always absorbed in the bliss of performing *bhajana* of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, blasphemy and praise are in the same category. They simply spend all of their time in the *bhajana* of their supremely worshipful Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-lāla. “*Tulya-nindā-stutir-maunīḥ santuṣṭo yena kenacit*”³⁹⁹ – for them, blasphemy and praise are equal; they are silent and satisfied with anything.” This is their magnanimous attitude. Affection, possessiveness, love, and attachment – all these virtues are the greatest ornaments of the *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*. No worldly virtue is capable of gaining the transcendental *tattva-vastu* (Absolute Truth). That is why we see the statement “*devo bhūtvā devaṁ yajet*”⁴⁰⁰ – one must obtain divine status to worship that which is divine.” By the heartfelt mercy of *śrī guru* and Bhagavān, even the impossible becomes possible. “*Kākere garuḍa kare aiche dayāmaya*”⁴⁰¹ – He is so merciful He turns even a crow into Garuḍa.”

³⁹⁹ *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.18)

⁴⁰⁰ *Gandharva-tantra* (9.2): “*nyāsaś tadātmako bhūtvā devo bhūtvā tu taṁ yajet*.”

⁴⁰¹ See *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* (*Madhya-khaṇḍa* 12.182)

It is natural for those who thirst for *bhajana* to experience severe mental distress when, from time to time, they do not have the *darśana* of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. It is by their mercy that we can live a good life. Several of us will travel to Haridvāra via Delhi on the 12th of August by the Link Express. I will go to Mathurā-Vṛndāvana via Jaipur. On the 29th, I will travel from Mathurā to Dumka. In Navadvīpa, after the *virahotsava* (separation festival), I will stay in Kolkata and observe *kārtika-vrata*.

All of you, please accept my affectionate blessings. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 123

Both Bhagavān and His devotees are ill-disposed towards those intoxicated with pride • If one's practices are unfavourable for *bhakti*, the inclination to stay under Bhagavān's guidance does not remain • In *bhajana*, it is necessary to carefully protect the sanctity of one's practice • We should not oppose the desires of another if we seek integrity in every aspect of life • *Śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān do not cater to anyone's mind, but give reassurance to foster patience and enthusiasm

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, Siliguri
Darjeeling
3/6/1995

Snehāspadāsu—

Mā ———! We traveled this past 30/5/95 via the Teesta–Torsa Express, leaving at seven in the evening and arriving twelve hours later at the New Jalpaiguri Station. Govinda Mahārāja was present at the station with the *sevakas*. We had no inconvenience on the train. ...

I myself do not want to be deprived of affection, nor is it my desire to deprive anyone else of affection. If someone who wants love does something wrong, they should be prepared to receive punishment. Though I am a guardian, I do not unjustly mete out punishment. I do not wish to become that sort of undiscerning son. But a disobedient child certainly deserves to receive punishment. Know that I do not have any sort of indiscretion in this regard.

There is no doubt that *śrī guru* and Bhagavān are merciful, but will they not have some sort of discretion as well? They give qualification to those who are unqualified, but standards still apply. Śrī Bhagavān and *śrī guru-pādapadma* are sitting there to show mercy to the ill-fated and wretched. But both the devotees and Bhagavān are ill-disposed towards those who are intoxicated with pride. How can someone who cannot see their own faults correct them?

**“Both the
devotees and
Bhagavān are
ill-disposed
towards
those who are
intoxicated
with pride.”**

“*Asthira siddhānte, rahinu majjyā, hari-bhakti railo dūre; e hṛdaye mātra, parahimsā-mada, pratiṣṭhā śathatā sphure; e-saba āgraha, chāḍite nārīnu, āpana doṣete mari*⁴⁰² – Remaining immersed in fickle conceptions, devotion to Hari remained far off. In this heart, only violence, intoxication, prestige, and deceit manifest. I have not been able to give up these urges and thus I perish of my own fault.” For our own sake, we must know this and other beneficial instructions of *Upadeśāmṛta*. The inclination to follow Bhagavān’s guidance does not remain if one practices that which is unfavourable for *bhakti*. Instead, the hankering to be a master within this illusory universe increases and one falls from the path of *bhakti*. “*Garhita ācāre, rahilāma maji, nā karīnu sādhu-saṅga*⁴⁰³ – I remained immersed in heinous conduct and did not associate with saintly personalities.” “*Śrī guru-āśraye, ḍākibo tomāya, kabe vā minati kari*⁴⁰⁴ – In the shelter of *śrī guru*, when will I call out to You and pray?” This right here is a matter of special comprehension for *sādhakas* and *sādhikās*.

If materialistic pride and egotism become predominant, one is compelled to go very far away from *hari-bhajana*. If the living entity frequents the *maṭha* or *mandira* and immerses his mind in hearing and reciting *hari-kathā*, then his interest in *bhajana* increases. Those who mingle too much with mundane *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, and *yogīs* end up taking bad association on direct and indirect levels. They cannot properly protect the pure state of their *bhajana*. In the cultivation of *bhajana*, it is necessary to carefully protect the sanctity of one’s practice, otherwise, an adulterated mood comes and attacks the root of the propensity for *bhakti*. A person then becomes *anyābhilāṣī* (desirous of insignificant objects) and abandons the real path and ideology of *sādhana-bhajana*.

I cannot personally give you the order or direction to go to Śrī Dhāma Vṛndāvana. Nor can I forbid you from going to have *darśana* of *śrī dhāma*, as it is not proper for anyone to give up the sublime fortune of beholding *śrī dhāma* in the company of saintly personalities or relinquish the opportunity to hear and recite *hari-kathā* and live in *śrī dhāma*. It is best to centre whatever conversation or discussion we may engage in, whatever activity we perform or thought we have, around the main subject matter [Kṛṣṇa]. It is not proper to say or do anything that opposes the desire of another when we seek integrity in every aspect of our

⁴⁰² *Śaraṇāgati, Hari He! Arthera Saṅcaye* (2–3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁴⁰³ *Śaraṇāgati, Hari He! Bhajane Utsāha* (3) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

⁴⁰⁴ *Śaraṇāgati, Hari He! Bhajane Utsāha* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

lives. Scripture forbids any sort of activity that is harmful to the body, mind, and soul. Hence, evaluating the injunctions and prohibitions that I have given according to time, place, and person and putting them into action is what I consider intelligence.

Śrī guru, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are true seers of the heart. They do not say anything to cater to anyone's mind, but they provide reassurance and consolation to foster patience and enthusiasm. This is one of their many virtues. In this, their natural generosity, greatness, magnanimity, and affection for devotees manifests in its finest form. False perception or material ideas cannot compare with the true conceptions of the Vaiṣṇavas. *Guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are eternal, pure, primeval entities. Those under their guidance are also like that. Meditating and focusing on them entails taking refuge of the transcendental, actual truth.

Accept my affectionate blessings. Convey my affectionate blessings as befitting to everyone else. *Iti—*

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 124

As the body is the root of *bhajana*, *sādhakas*, and *sādhikās* know not to neglect it • They maintain their lives by the transcendental love and affection of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas • One should not neglect the service of *śrī vigraha* to come to the *dhāma* for *darśana* • Nothing should detract from the fullness of service • Nothing can stop one from living in Vṛndāvana constantly via inner vision • A bona fide *guru* is not biased or swayed by public opinion

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata-4
25/10/1995

Snehāspadeṣu—

Dear —! Accept my affectionate blessings. I have received the letters you sent by post. I have been suffering from fever for most of the past several days, but at present I am somewhat better. Unable to ignore the requests of the assembled devotees, I have been giving class since yesterday. I do not trust myself. I cannot say how long I will be able to give class in this manner.

I will have to go to Vṛndāvana for the occasion of the deity installation. Otherwise, again there will be criticism. I will stay there for a week and return to Kolkata. I am thinking there are many books to publish. And there is no stability in my body's health. That is why, unless it is extremely necessary, it has become impossible for me to go anywhere away from *śrī maṭha*.

This time I will spend my birthday at this *maṭha*. That is decided, so, know that things have changed from the arrangements mentioned in my previous letter. Do not be upset by this. You know my current physical condition and my future condition as well, so I do not need to trouble myself by explaining things to you.

Although my letter is full of philosophical considerations, if you contemplate it in a patient, steady manner, you will properly grasp the *tattva-siddhānta* therein. Śrī Bhagavān reveals His real identity to humble and surrendered individuals. Knowing that “*nara tanu*

*bhajanera mūla*⁴⁰⁵ – the human body is the root of *bhajana*” and is conducive for *sādhana-bhajana*, the *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* never neglect it. For the sake of *hari-bhajana* and with a desire to please Bhagavān, we will care for the health of body and mind for the purpose of service. If we do not do that, then Bhagavān’s words of “*ātma hā* – soul killer” will always caution us. Those who are inclined to perform *bhajana* never give distress to anyone and do not become disturbed themselves.

“Those who are inclined to perform *bhajana* never give distress to anyone and do not become disturbed themselves.”

From time to time, as the human being treads this path, he makes some mistakes and errors. There is no reason to worry about that. Conviction and sincerity always protect that person. Your simplicity and firm faith will establish you in life. *Śrī guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān are seers of the heart. It is by their transcendental love and affection that living entities become successful. By faith, belief, and conviction, the impossible is achieved. The *sādhakas* and *sādhikās* maintain their lives by the transcendental love and affection of *Śrī Hari*, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. They nurture resolution and firm hope on the path of *sādhana* by remembering their causeless compassion.

There is a decree that *śrī ūrjā-vrata* is to be observed only within *śrī dhāma*. That opportunity is not always possible for everyone. If those who are constantly absorbed in *kīrtana* of *harināma* and whose livelihood is for the sake of Kṛṣṇa’s household leave a place where the sole activity is the service of the deity and thus give up that *vrata* of service, then no matter what kind of *vrata* it is, it will not yield fruit. Avoiding the daily service of *śrī vigraha* on the pretext of avoiding the torment of material existence is by no means characteristic of *sādhana-bhajana*. Those who take a holiday from their responsibilities of service in the name of going to *śrī dhāma* for *darśana* and hearing *hari-kathā* have become disinterested in the constancy of service. They therefore want to take a break and provide enjoyment to the sense known as the eyes. Their *darśana* of the *dhāma* and hearing of *hari-kathā* is not real. “*Koṭī-janme-o kare jadi śravaṇa-kīrtana, kṛṣṇa-pade tabu nā pāna kṛṣṇa-prema-dhana*⁴⁰⁶ – even if one performs hearing and chanting for millions of lives, one will not attain the wealth of love for Kṛṣṇa at His feet.” Always remember this explanation. I trust that you are chanting a profuse amount of *harināma*, studying the scriptures, and serving *śrī vigraha*. Never stop being engaged in that.

⁴⁰⁵ *Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Āna Kathā Nā Bolibo* (6) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

⁴⁰⁶ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 8.16)*

Everything combined constitutes the fullness of serving Bhagavān. This fullness is sometimes accomplished by several people coming together. Then again, in the absence of people, just one person can take responsibility for that full service. Not having any deficiency in the fullness is *sādhana-bhajana*.

Even if one cannot live in Vṛndāvana externally, there is nothing to stop one from always living in Vṛndāvana by inner vision. “*Jathāya guru-vaiṣṇava-gaṇa, sei-sthāne vṛndāvana, sei sthāne ānanda aśeṣa*”⁴⁰⁷ – where *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* are, that place is Vṛndāvana; in that place, the bliss is endless.” The endeavours of *sādhana-bhajana* are aimed at gaining the constant proximity of *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas*. Those who are truly striving to perform *bhajana* cannot have any sort of doubt, nor would that be proper. The *viśrambha-sevaka*’s only duty and obligation is to stay in the association of *guru* and *Vaiṣṇavas* and fulfil the responsibilities of service. Following their orders is real service, or acceptance of responsibility. It is written in scripture that following the orders and instructions of *guru* without second thought is the disciple’s exclusive duty and ideal.

To protect one person’s devious indulgences, *gurudeva* does not create obstacles in the independent service concerns of another one-pointed disciple or servant. He alone is a bona fide *guru* who is not a flatterer and who is not dependent. Only one who is fully cognizant of the subject of real welfare, who is not influenced by public opinion, and who is fully unbiased in the matter of managing service – in other words, one who sees the truth – is called a bona fide *guru*. ... Take my affectionate blessings. *Iti*—

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁴⁰⁷ *Kalyāṇa-kalpataru, Mana Tumi Tirtha Sadā Rata* (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Letter 125

Conveying his good wishes on the occasion of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja's first journey to Western countries for the purpose of preaching the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Śyāmasundara Gauḍīya Maṭha
Milanpalli, P. O. Siliguri-734405
Darjeeling (North Bengal)
25/04/1996

Śrī vaiṣṇava-carāṇe daṇḍavan-nati pūrvikēyam—

Pūjyapāda Mahārāja! Yesterday, after considerable delay, I received your merciful letter dated 12 April 1996. I hope that by the causeless mercy of our most worshipful Śrīla Guru-pādapadma, you are well in all respects.

I became extremely gladdened and enthused to know that on the repeated insistence of the foreign devotees, you are preparing for an auspicious journey to Western countries, with the objective of preaching the *prema-dharma* of Śrīman Mahāprabhu in the lands of Holland, England, America, and Canada. I came to know that devotees from those countries are bearing the travel expenses for three people, and that your visa and tickets have been duly arranged. But why should the lands of Singapore and Hong Kong be deprived of the *prema-vāṇī* of Śrī Gaurasundara?⁴⁰⁸

You are going abroad solely to preach the message of pure *bhakti* (*śuddha-bhakti-kathā*), and therefore, I am not at all concerned about your profit or loss, for I consider that for the inhabitants of those countries, your travels are a golden opportunity and exceptional good fortune. May the causeless and auspicious blessings of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī, Śrī Nṛsimhadeva, and he who is topmost among those who fulfil all desires – Śrī Girirāja Mahārāja – forever shower mercy upon you. By your preaching of their message, their

⁴⁰⁸ Singapore and Hong Kong are places of entry into China. Thus, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was indirectly indicating that according to the desire of Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Prabhupāda Sarasvatī Thākura, he should also propagate the message of *prema-dharma* of Mahāprabhu in China.

inner heart's desire (*mano'bhīṣṭa*) will certainly be protected. This is indeed my firm belief. At an elderly age, your enthusiasm and patience to preach the message of Śrī Gaura in the West is undoubtedly true bravery. To label this mere “bravado” is to deny the actual truth.

May you be victorious, along with your associates. I have come to know that the day of your auspicious journey is fixed for 5 May 1996. Kindly accept my *sāṣṭāṅga-daṇḍavat-praṇāmas*. *Iti—*

Śrī Vaiṣṇava-dāsābhāsa
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 126

“A Heartly Welcome” – written on the occasion of Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s return to India from preaching the message of Śrī Gaura in Eastern countries.

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha
28 Haldar Bagan Lane
Kolkata-4
5/3/1997

O *dīna-vatsala*, you who are affectionately disposed to the fallen! My hearty welcome upon your return to your own nation after extensively preaching the message of Śrī Gaura in the prominent Eastern countries of Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, and so forth. Your preaching travels are in every way distinct from the leisure travels of ordinary people. “*Mahānter svabhāva ei tārite pāmara, nija kārya nāhi tabu jāna para ghara*”⁴⁰⁹ – The magnanimous nature of saintly persons is that they always deliver the fallen and sinful souls. They have no personal business of their own, nor do they seek self-profit. Still for the benefit of the living entities, they visit their homes for the sole purpose of delivering the fallen souls.”

The *sādhus*’ travel is solely for this reason. *Sādhavo dīna-vatsalāḥ*.⁴¹⁰ The *sādhus* are the friends of the fallen and become distressed at the suffering of others. Their hearts naturally melt with compassion upon seeing the incredible misfortune of the conditioned souls resulting from their forgetfulness of Bhagavān. The kindness they bestow upon such souls is not ordinary or mundane; the supremely compassionate *sādhus* awaken in them a yearning to develop their *ātma-dharma*, the constitutional occupation of their souls.

O Keśavānuga-jana (dear follower of Keśava)! For the purpose of fulfilling the inner heart’s desire (*mano’bhīṣṭa*) of *paramārādhyatama jagad-guru* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Prabhu, you, not caring for your own happiness or distress, took a vow to preach the message of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta. Our unlimited gratefulness to you. Śrī Gaurasundara, has said, “*jagat vyāpiyā mora habe pūṇya-khyāti, sukhi haiyā loka mora gāhibeka kīrti*”⁴¹¹ – My

⁴⁰⁹
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 8.39)

⁴¹⁰ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.4.23)

⁴¹¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 9.40)

virtuous glories will pervade the whole world, and with untold satisfaction, people will sing of My fame.”

In order to actualize His prophecy, Śrī Gaurasundara transmitted both inspiration and ability into the hearts of His *anugata* devotees, His keen followers. Otherwise, without surmounting the obstacle of old age and with a bodily condition that is not stable, it would have been entirely impossible [for you] to preach the message of Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s *prema-dharma* with such irrepressible vigour.

O Vaikuṇṭha *vārtā-vāhaka*, messenger bearing news of Vaikuṇṭha! The original founder of the worldwide Gauḍīya Maṭha and Mission, *jagad-guru* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, declared himself to be the messenger of Śrī Caitanya. This means that to uphold, carry, and distribute the message of Śrī Caitanya as it is, is indeed the distinctive feature of Gauḍīya preachers. They never tamper with the divine message of Godhead, as heard from authentic sources (*śrauta-vāṇī*), by altering it, rejecting it, or speculating about it, in order to achieve their own comforts, out of fear of their own weakness being exposed, or to enhance their own prestige. All the associates and followers of Śrī Keśava are extremely joyful by your resolve to preach the non-deceptive Gaura-Sārasvata message, without the slightest alteration.

O conqueror of the East and West! By inundating and nourishing the whole world with a flood of *prema*, Viśvambhara Śrī Gauracandra, the maintainer of the entire universe, bequeathed a code of conduct. By following that code, you have conquered the Eastern and Western countries.

In the past, many persons from India crossed the great ocean, with the doctrines of *karma* and *jñāna* in hand. The heroes of the path of *karma*, who dutifully perform their religious activities for the purpose of enjoying the fruits, proclaim that one can attain eternal peace through the performance of *karma*, yet this is only cheating. And the cultivation of impersonal knowledge [by *jñānīs*] paralyzes the existence of the Supreme Absolute Entity. Persons adhering to this philosophy claim that it brings peace by bringing about the absolute cessation of misery, but this is completely illusory.

The living entities are eternal servitors of Śrī Bhagavān, and He is the eternal object of their service. This platform of causeless service encompasses the fifth and final goal of human life, *kṛṣṇa-prema*. You have conquered the native persons of those countries by shining upon them a new light containing that very message (*vāṇī*) of *prema-prajayana*. Consequently, all the devotees of Śrī Gaura are filled with bliss.

O beneficiary of all living entities! “*Bhārata-bhūmite hailo manuṣya janma jāra, janma sārthaka kari’ karo para-upakāra*”⁴¹² – one who has taken birth as a human being in Bhārata-

⁴¹² Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 9.41)

varṣa (the land of India) should make his life successful by performing acts to eternally benefit others.” The land of Bhārata alone is the birthplace of true welfare workers.

In the above statement, Śrīman Mahāprabhu specifically confers upon the residents of India the responsibility to truly benefit others. *Para* means “topmost”. Since Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī established the *mano’bhīṣṭa* of Śrī Gaurasundara in this world, the conception of the highest welfare is expressed solely in his guidance. You indeed proclaim, with great specificity, the attributes of a true and topmost beneficiary, as displayed by Śrī Rūpa Prabhu and his followers on this Earth, who illuminated the most confidential truths (*tattva*) and service to Śrī Gaura-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārījī.

O best of those who preach *āmnāya-vāṇī* (the immaculate instructions received through the succession of bona fide *gurus*)! The residents of Bhārata who are great benefactors (*paropakārī*) possess an abundance of wealth to bestow upon the inhabitants of the West, but they have nothing worthwhile to take from them. For the devotees of Sarveśvareśvara, the Lord of all lords, there is never any worldly dearth that makes them dependent on inhabitants of foreign lands.

According to the statement, “*sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*”⁴¹³ – everything belongs to *brahma*,” every being in the universe and everything within the universe is a servant of Bhagavān and an instrument to be used in service to Him. But because a certain group of foreign devotees are not established in this statement’s meaning, they are creating obstacles to your preaching of Śrī Gaura’s divine message, solely due to fearing a loss of profit, adoration, and prestige. “*Karīndre bhrājamāne ’pi stūyamāne supuruṣeḥ, vukkanti sārameyās ca kā kṣatiś tasya jāyate* – What harm can the barking of the street dogs do to a person who is brilliantly situated upon a royal elephant and extolled by virtuous persons?” Wise persons are gradually becoming enlightened regarding the essence and purpose of your preaching of *āmnāya-vāṇī*, so the hubbub raised by those opposing you is proving to be fruitless.

To conclude, may your life be long and may you remain in excellent health, so that you can preach the eternal message of the Śrī Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya-Sārasvata *sampradāya*, as it is, all the over the world. This alone is my fervent prayer at the lotus feet of Śrī Gaura-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī, Śrī Girirāja, and Śrī Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃhadeva.

Śrī Vaiṣṇava-dāsānudāsa,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁴¹³
Chāndogya Upaniṣad (3.14.1)

Letter 127

A Cordial Reception to His Holiness parivrājakācārya tridaṇḍī-svāmī

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja

[Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja penned this letter in English]

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha,
28 Halder Bagan Lane
Kolkata—4
9/3/1997

Revered Svāmiji,

My heartiest congratulations to you at your happy return to India after completion of your successful preaching tour of Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, and Singapore. A few months ago, you had to pay a visit to the West in response to the calls of devotees in Holland, England, America, and Canada.

Your preaching tour is far different from that of the excursion made by the people for sensual pleasure or that of loitering about by worthless vagabonds. It is because the Vaiṣṇavas are causelessly merciful to all enfeathered souls and alone grieved by their misery – misery due to indifference towards the Transcendental Truth. In spite of having no business of their own, they roam about to relieve humanity from the terrible afflictions of births and rebirths.

Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura left us an invaluable prediction made by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the original fountainhead, that His name would be introduced in every town and village on Earth. And again, Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the greatest pioneer of the movement of pure unalloyed devotion in the modern age, professed that the movement of pure devotion would soon be broadcast all over the world by a specially powerful individual. This prophecy is found to be fulfilled in the divine personage of Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, who at that time moved heaven and earth to establish pure theism in large scale. He time and again employed his Gauḍīya expounders of extraordinary merit to dispel all nescience prevailing in the lands of the Eastern and Western hemispheres. Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the most affectionate disciple of Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, had founded the world-reputed Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti to preserve

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's message of unflinching devotion. Knowing his inner desire, you stepped forward to carry the responsibility of conveying the Gauḍīya Vedānta expositions beyond the seas, ignoring the bondage of your old age. Such is your benevolence.

India has always been the homeland of spiritual movement. In times like the present, when the minds of men are distracted by multiplicity of material considerations, it has become the utmost necessity for mankind to be spiritually awakened. No other doctrine can really bring eternal bliss to the distressed souls but the divine message of love propounded by Śrī Caitanya-deva, who has appointed Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī as the Original Apostles. You, being the worthy messenger of them, would certainly be successful in imparting the true spirit of their teachings to fallible beings, by the divine grace of Śrī Guru-Gaura-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī, Śrī Lakṣmī-Varāha-Nṛsiṃhadeva. I earnestly pray to Them, so that you remain hale and hearty and be blessed with long life to broadcast the sublime message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu all the world over. Amen.

Vaiṣṇava dāsanudāsa
Tridaṇḍī-bhikṣu
Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

Letter 128

No matter where we must reside, we will perform *śrī nāma-bhajana* in the proximity of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas • Advice on living in the *maṭha* • Śrī *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas are seers of past and future • *Sādhana-bhajana* requires Himalayan-like patience and tolerance

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Mādhava-jīu Gauḍīya Maṭha
1/1, Kalitala Lane, P.O. Baidyabati
Hooghly
29/4/1999
Śrī Nṛsimha Caturdaśī

Snehāspadeṣu—

——! I received your loving letters dated 16/2/99, 5/4/99, and 17/4/99 on time. I hope you are well physically and well in your *bhajana*. The *sevakas* and I are more or less well.

Why are you thinking that you are living very far away from the company of *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas? No matter where we reside as per the will of Bhagavān, we will perform *śrī nāma-bhajana* in the proximity of Śrī Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas. This should be our meditation and focus at all times. You are serving in the guidance of Śrī Śyāmasundara, remaining subservient to the root *āśraya-vigraha*. The pure Vrajavāsīs are always worshipping *guru-pādapadma*, who is the personification of Kṛṣṇa's mercy. They can never conceive of a separate existence. Do not feel yourself to be without shelter. You will surely attain perfection in *sādhana*. For this, unbroken patience is necessary.

If you are to live in the *maṭha* or *mandira*, then surely you must render some service. If you cannot cooperate with everyone, how will it work? In the *maṭha* and *mandira*, all the *sevakas* do not share the same views and moods of affection. They cannot all agree with each other.

“One has to boycott evil persons mentally.”

If you find it inconvenient to live separately from *śrī guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, then you have to follow their rules and regulations. The meaning of “Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti” points exclusively to my Śrī Guru-pādapadma. How will I leave him and go on? The main concern is that one has to obey the standards. One has to boycott evil persons mentally. For the sake of

greater self-interest, the smaller self-interest has to be given up. Picking the hairs out of a wool blanket, however, will destroy the whole blanket. [The whole is nothing without the individuals.] This sort of notion is not in accordance with proper *siddhānta*.

Your *gurudeva* does not want any publicity. There is a firm belief in my mind that *jagad-guru* Śrī Śrī Gopeśvara Mahādeva never promotes himself. All the efforts of *sādhus* and the *guru-varga* are only for the welfare of the souls of this world. May everyone in the world perform *bhajana* of Kṛṣṇa. This alone will bring about their true welfare. This is the only blessing of the *jagad-guru-varga*, the universal teachers, to the world.

Śrī *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas do not wish ill upon anyone. With this belief, always steady your heart. Their words are never false, or untrue. They are seers of past and future. All the ego we have of being very capable and perceptive becomes futile. For those servants who subsist on the remnants of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, love and affection for Bhagavān is the only thing they want. Their *sādhana-bhajana* is to achieve that alone.

No one has any chance of auspiciousness for their soul if they do not believe in *tattva-vastu* (the Absolute Reality). Moreover, the real belief is “*kṛṣṇa-bhakti kaile sarva-karma kṛta haya*”⁴¹⁴ – if one engages in devotion to Kṛṣṇa, all duties are fulfilled.” So you should be patient. *Sādhana-bhajana* is very difficult. Himalaya-like patience and tolerance is required. The moment one loses one’s composure, nothing else remains. Write from time to time. Take my affectionate blessings. We are the same as usual. *Iti—*

“*Sādhana-bhajana* is very difficult. Himalaya-like patience and tolerance is required.”

Your eternal well-wisher,
Śrī Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

⁴¹⁴ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.62)

The Sublime Life and Qualities of nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

[Adapted from the introduction to
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārājer Prabandhāvalī, 2006]

Early life

Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata-śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's sacred life and character reveals that he was a *mahāpuruṣa* sent forth by Bhagavān. Some of his godbrothers are often heard saying to others, "All this time, we ourselves have not been able to truly know him, so how will you understand him?" As *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 9.194) says, "*aprākṛta nahe kabhu prākṛta gocara* – that which is supramundane is never accessible to the mundane." Obtaining the mercy of that embodiment of divine compassion is our only recourse.

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja appeared in this world on 23 December, 1921, which was a Friday and *kṛṣṇa navamī-tithi*, the ninth lunar day of the dark fortnight, in the month of Pauṣa. He took birth in India's East Bengal in the district of Khulna (the modern day Bagerhat district of Bangladesh), in the village of Piljang, to parents Śrī Satīśacandra Ghoṣa Mahāśaya and Śrīmatī Bhagavatī Bālā-devī. He was named Śrī Santoṣa, which means "satisfied", and his audience (*darśana*), nature, and behaviour were truly very satisfying to everyone.

The spiritual atmosphere in which Śrī Santoṣa was raised brimmed with the influences of pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. His mother, Śrīmatī Bhagavatī-devī, was a disciple of *jagad-guru* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda. His maternal aunt, Śrīyuktā Nirmalā Bālā Bose, was widowed in her youth and lived at her father's home. She too was a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. As a boy, Santoṣa was very dear to his aunt. His only paternal uncle, Śrī Virendra, was also initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrī Virendra came to reside in Śrī Caitanya Maṭha in Māyāpura, where he was known as Śrī Vīracandra dāsa Brahmācārī. Later, he was known by the name *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrīmad Bhakti Kuśala Narasimha Mahārāja. Santoṣa's father took *śrī harināma* and *dīkṣā-mantras* from *jagad-guru* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja in the year 1948, and Santoṣa's brothers also became disciples of Śrīla Bhakti

Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, receiving the names Śrī Nimāi-carāṇa Brahmācārī and Śrī Subala-sakhā Dāsādhikārī.

Coming to Māyāpura

From childhood, Śrī Santoṣa was very calm, humble, loyal, and extremely bright. He had just graduated from the fifth grade when he came to know that some devotees from his village were going to participate in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma *parīkramā* and Śrī Gaura-jayantī. Feeling his eternal attraction to the holy *dhāma*, he expressed his desire to go with them to Śrī Māyāpura. Since there already was a very spiritual atmosphere in the home and, on top of that, since they all adored Santoṣa, no one was going to forbid him from going. Moreover, the pilgrimage only lasted a few days. Santoṣa was therefore permitted to go to Śrī Māyāpura with his aunt, under the guidance of Śrī Viṣṇupāda Dāsādhikārī “Bhakti-sindhu” Prabhu, who served as an organizer for the pilgrims from their village. It was the year 1931 and the boy Santoṣa was all of nine years old.

It was during this time that his uncle, Śrī Vīrendra left his job as a surveyor at the Government Survey Office and took up residence at the *maṭha* in Śrī Māyāpura. Santoṣa performed *parīkramā* of all the nine islands of Navadvīpa with his aunt and uncle and continually heard *hari-kathā* from Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda and his disciples. He also came into the proximity of Śrī Caitanya Maṭha’s magnanimous temple president, Śrīla Narahari Sevā-vigraha Prabhu, popularly known as Mā (mother), and the *maṭha*’s estate manager, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Kṛtiratna Prabhu, and became the object of their profuse loving blessings.

That year, on Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā day, Śrīla Sarasvatī Prabhupāda inaugurated Śrī Bhaktivinoda Institute, which had been founded on the initiative of Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī Prabhu. Seeing all this, the boy Santoṣa quietly made a vow to not return to his home. Feeling he had found his own true place and his real guardians, there was no question in his mind of returning to an ordinary worldly life. Pursuit of the ultimate goal of life was his eternal inclination. To follow the associates of Śrī Gaura was his *dharma*.

At the end of the *parīkramā*, when everyone was returning to their homes, the boy Santoṣa would not go. His aunt was thunderstruck. What to do? No matter how much she pleaded, how much she tried to reason with him, it was all in vain. He would not budge. Finally, his uncle Śrī Vīrendra Prabhu took the boy’s side and persuaded his sister to return home.

Distressed at the news, his parents rushed to get him. However, the boy’s resolve was as immovable as a mountain. Despite all their tears and anguish, nothing could sway him. Śrī

Virendra Prabhu consoled them. “Santoṣa can stay here and go to school. A new secondary school has been started here and he will be able to receive both spiritual and material education. You can come to visit from time to time and see him. He will not have any inconvenience here. Once he finishes his studies, I will convince him to go home.” With these assurances and those of Śrī Narahari Prabhu and Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu, Santoṣa’s parents were persuaded to let him stay there.

Going to school in Māyāpura and serving the Vaiṣṇavas

Thus, the boy Santoṣa began to reside at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha with great delight and no desire to return to his hometown. Nothing could make him falter in his resolve for even a moment, not even missing his parents or his doting aunt. He did not seem to miss his friends or his toys or the pony he used to love to ride. He felt that Śrī Gaurasundara’s birthplace, Śrī Māyāpura, was his true home and that Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda and his associates were his real family members.

Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu arranged for him to be enrolled in the Śrī Bhaktivinoda Institute. There, his teachers quickly became very fond of him because his intellect was so sharp. He could memorize a textbook just by listening to it being read out loud. Everyone was amazed. He could listen to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *hari-kathā* and repeat it word for word. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself would become delighted to hear this charming boy repeat his lectures verbatim. Santoṣa thus quickly endeared himself to Śrīla Prabhupāda and his learned disciples.

The boy Santoṣa had another special quality, however, which was his sincere inclination to serve. It was because of this quality in particular that he won all their hearts. Every day, early in the morning during *brahma-muhūrta*, before anyone was awake, he would wake up with Śrīla Narahari Prabhu and perform a variety of services incognito and in a very beautiful manner. These services ranged from cleaning the toilets, picking flowers from the garden, cutting and preparing vegetables, cleaning the *sannyāsīs’* and *brahmacārīs’* rooms, washing their clothes, hanging the clothes to dry and later, folding and delivering them to their owners, refilling the pots of drinking water in all the rooms, polishing the *ācamana* cups, and so on. There was not a *sannyāsī* or *brahmacārī* who lived in Śrī Caitanya Maṭha during that time that he did not serve.

It was this wholehearted and remarkable propensity for service that Śrīla Prabhupāda and the bearers of his divine message, his disciples, recognized as an indication of Santoṣa’s eternal nature. It was this that made them count him as one of their own. Śrīla Prabhupāda was very

pleased to see the sincere service tendency of this little boy and the fact that he had memorized *Gītā* and *Vedānta-sūtra* in their entirety. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Māyāpura, Santoṣa would always be around him. He would wash Śrīla Prabhupāda's clothes, massage his feet, pick fresh green chickpeas from the garden, shell them, and offer them to Śrīla Prabhupāda. In August of 1936, Śrīla Prabhupāda, being pleased with Śrī Santoṣa, granted him *harināma mahā-mantra*. Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja would sometimes say, "I was possibly the last person to receive *harināma* from Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Dedicated service and receiving initiation

Then, on the 1st of January, 1937, Śrīla Prabhupāda, the driving force of the Gauḍīya Maṭha mission, entered the *niśānta-līlā* of Śrī Gāndharvikā-Giridhārī. In order to carry on the services in all the *maṭhas*, the board of trustees created by Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed various individuals to various positions to manage the mission. Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Kṛtiratna Prabhu was engaged as the General Superintendent at that time.

That year, Śrī Santoṣa took the government-administered high school exams in Krishnanagar and passed, coming top in the class. He had no desire to go to college or university to continue cultivating material knowledge. How could an eternal servant of Śrī Caitanya's message separate himself from the guidance of his guardians and become enamoured with the pale shimmer of *māyā* that is the cultivation of mundane education? Those whose all-in-all is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the pinnacle of knowledge perpetually cultivated by Brahmā, Śiva, and the demigods, do not find taste in any other topic. When he told his main guardian, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu, that he had decided not to pursue further material education, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu was very pleased.

Of the many boys in his age group who were at Śrī Caitanya Maṭha at the time, he was, somehow, by the mercy of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas, the only one who stayed. His god-brothers and childhood friends from that time later held him in the highest regard and sought his guidance in their spiritual practices. Only those very rare personalities who are free from mundane ambition and intensely attached to the service of Śrī Caitanya's message can follow the guidance of *śrī guru* and the Vaiṣṇavas in such a one-pointed manner.

When Śrī Virendra Brahmācārī sent news home that Santoṣa had passed his secondary school exams and came first in his class, his mother, Bhagavatī-devī, came to Māyāpura to take her son home. Just before her arrival, however, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī took Śrī Santoṣa elsewhere. Unable to find her son at the *maṭha*, Bhagavatī-devī began looking for him

everywhere. Finally, she came to know from Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī Prabhu that her son would not be returning home, that he had donned saffron cloth, and had been engaged in service at another *maṭha*. People tried to console her, telling her that a mother who has borne in her womb such a gem of a son is supremely fortunate. However, despite hearing such praise and consolation, Bhagavatī-devī was heartbroken. She did not return home, but instead went to Vṛndāvana for some time.

In time, when the *brahmācārī* who had been appointed as the *ācārya* of the Gauḍīya Maṭha began to deviate from certain aspects of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings, those who were staunch followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda could not abide by the changes. As a result, different groups formed, and an intense conflict ensued. Eventually a plot was hatched to frame those in active positions of management, like Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī, Śrī Mahānanda Brahmācārī, Śrīla Narahari Sevā-vigraha Prabhu, and other devout servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda. They were arrested on false charges of murder and imprisoned for a period of time. Seeing the state of the mission, many people lost their faith and returned to their homes. Those whose faith was very tender even left the path of *sādhana-bhajana* and entered fully into worldly life.

Santoṣa, however, persevered. Nothing could make him waver. Seeing his beloved guardians the victims of this plot, he jumped into action. On the direction of Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī, he sought the assistance of a well-known lawyer in Medinipur, Śrī Manmatha Mukhopadhyāya. Living in a house in Krishnanagar, Śrī Santoṣa busied himself with the case under Manmatha Bābū's guidance, rushing files back and forth, conveying messages to and from Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu. When people from the opposing party saw him helping Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu, they tried to discourage him from doing so and even tried to bribe him. His response was: "I will always give up *asat-saṅga* and I will take the association of Vaiṣṇavas and serve them, wherever they are. Gold does not lose its value even if it gets tossed in a sack of husks."

Another devotee, Śrī Dīnadayāla Vrajavāsī was living in that house with Śrī Santoṣa and cooking for all the devotees who were in prison. Śrī Santoṣa would bring the *prasāda* to the prison every day and consult with Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī about the case. As he was *śrutidhara* (able to remember everything he heard) and very intelligent and devoted, he was able to follow all of Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmācārī's instructions.

At one point, Śrī Dīnadayāla Vrajavāsī Prabhu fell gravely ill and could not cook anymore. This was a serious concern, as the devotees could not eat food cooked by someone who did not have *dīkṣā* initiation. On the suggestion of Śrī Narahari Sevā-vigraha Prabhu, Śrī Vinoda-

bihārī Brahmacārī imparted the *dikṣā-mantras* to Śrī Santoṣa. Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu had never given *dikṣā-mantras* to anyone before and he was not a *sannyāsī* yet. Santoṣa's name then became Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī, as per his eternal inclination to serve saintly persons (*sajjana*). From that day forth, he started doing all the cooking himself and providing *prasāda* to his beloved guardians. Later, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Prabhu had Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī's *upanayana-saṁskāra* (donning of the sacred thread) and *upanayana-yajña* performed by Śrīla Prabhupāda's last *sannyāsa* disciple, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Vicāra Yāyāvara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, at the Śrī Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Medinipur city.

In the end, the court released all the devotees on bail and eventually they were proven innocent. Then, in 1940, along with Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī, Śrīla Narahari Sevā-vigraha Prabhu, Śrī Mahānanda Brahmacārī, Śrī Vīrendra Brahmacārī, Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmacārī, and others, Śrī Sajjana-sevaka took up residence in Koladvīpa (Navadvīpa town) in a rented house in Tegharipara. Later, he went to Śrī Śyāmānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha in Medinipur and lived there for some time. On the orders of his guardians, he also went preaching in various districts of Bengal with Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Bhūdeva Śrauti Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrī Hayagrīva Brahmacārī (Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja), always busying himself in serving all the Vaiṣṇavas by cooking and tending to them in various ways.

Founding of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti

That year (1940), on Akṣaya-tritīyā, in order to protect and re-establish the current of conceptions (*vicāra-dhārā*) of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī founded Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti with his god-brothers Śrī Abhaya-caraṇa Bhaktivedānta Prabhu (Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja) and Śrī Narottamānanda Brahmacārī at a rented house at 32/2 Bosepara Lane in Baghbazar, Kolkata. Śrī Sajjana-sevaka was also present there at that time.

On the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda imparted via a dream, Śrī Vinoda-bihārī Brahmacārī accepted *sannyāsa* in 1941 on Bhādra Pūrṇimā (Viśvarūpa Pūrṇimā) from Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Katwa, at the site where Śrī Gaurasundara Himself took *sannyāsa*, and became known as *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja. He then began preaching the message of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga everywhere with abundant enthusiasm. His one and only disciple, Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī, was with him constantly, like a shadow, serving him.

Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja established Gouranga Printing Works in Kolkata and started publishing the works of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Śrī Sajjana-sevaka

Brahmacārī was his right-hand man then. He learned all the tasks of printing and gave himself fully to the work of publishing *granthas*.

In 1943, Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti accepted the responsibility of caring for the ancient Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda deities personally served by Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita in Chunchura. The old home that housed the deities became known as Śrī Uddhāraṇa Gauḍīya Maṭha and began to be utilized as the main office of the Samiti. On the order of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī shifted the printing press there from Kolkata and continued the Samiti's publishing work.

In 1948, *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* was registered as the main publication of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti and Śrī Sajjana-sevaka Brahmacārī was appointed as its first publisher and printer. In addition to publishing various Gauḍīya *granthas*, he published issues of *Śrī Gauḍīya Patrikā* every month in a beautiful manner and without errors, thereby earning everyone's praise.

In 1952, on the sacred day of Phālgunī Pūrṇimā, on the appearance day of Śrī Gaurahari, jagad-guru Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja granted *sannyāsa* to his dear *sevaka*, Śrī Sajjana-sevaka, and adorned him with the name and title *tridaṇḍi-svāmī* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Trivikrama Mahārāja and Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja also took *sannyāsa* on that same day.

Becoming Ācārya of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti

Just as Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Prabhu was renowned as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's most intimate servant or just as Śrī Kureśa was devoted to Śrī Rāmāṇujācārya and Śrī Hanumān to Śrī Rāmacandra, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja's right hand and a servant who knew his master's heart. "*Kṛṣṇa-bhakte kṛṣṇer guṇa sakali sañcāre*¹ – all of Kṛṣṇa's qualities are infused in His devotees." The virtues of the object of service are infused within the servant. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja inherited all divine qualities of his eternal guardian, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. This is why Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja himself, various distinguished *sannyāsī* and *grhastha* disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and all the prominent disciples of Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja accepted Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī as the next *ācārya* and president of the Samiti. Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja wrote in his will: "It is my exclusive desire that after my departure, my dear Śrīmān Bhaktivedānta Vāmana

¹ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya-līlā 22.75)

Mahārāja will become the president-*ācārya* of Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti and grant *śrī harināma* and *dīkṣā* to the faithful devotees.”

Though Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja carried on his duties in publishing books and the monthly *Patrikās*, from time to time, he also had to go preaching in various places. Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, anticipating his own departure to the abode of Vraja and wanting to introduce people to the next chief of the Samiti, transferred Śrīla Mahārāja's responsibilities in the press to others in 1966 and engaged him fully in preaching. From then onwards, he preached the message of Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga tirelessly in various regions of Bengal, Bihar, and Assam.

In 1968, at the beginning of *dāmodara-vrata*, on the day of Śārādiya-rāsa Pūrṇimā, *jagad-guru om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja departed for the eternal service of Śrī Śrī Gaura-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī-jīu. Thereafter, as per his wishes, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Śrīrūpa Siddhānti Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Pramoda Purī Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prakāśa Hṛṣīkeśa Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prāpaṇa Dāmodara Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and other *sannyāsī* disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed their trusted and much adored Santoṣa, Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja, as the president and *ācārya* of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti.

Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja comments in this regard in one of his letters: “I do not sit in the seat of *ācārya* because I was elected or selected by my god-brothers. Even though I do not desire this responsibility at all, weeping and weeping, I have been bound to accept this responsibility because of Śrīla Guru-pādapadma's wishes. I never had a desire to be *ācārya* and still do not.”

On the day of his accepting the position of *ācārya*, after paying his respects to his *guru-pādapadma* and all the assembled Vaiṣṇavas, he glorified his *guru-pādapadma* briefly and humbly, and made the following solemn comments:

“Today, on the disappearance day of Śrī Śrīla Guru-pādapadma, we have been hearing from the lotus mouths of my *guru-varga* present here, as they profusely sing his glories. I cannot think of anything to say that they have not already said. My sole duty is to chew what they have chewed, just like a servant who survives on his master's remnants. I have neither the capability nor the words to narrate the glories of Śrī Guru-pādapadma, but I will endeavour to describe his glories in brief so as to execute the order of the Vaiṣṇavas.

“Specifically, we can contemplate a few aspects of his glories that we have been hearing from the lotus mouths of the Vaiṣṇavas. If we reflect upon the significance of his life, we find that his behaviour could be divided into two distinctly notable classifications. He exhibited them while he preached the innermost desire of his supremely worshipful master, Śrīla Prabhupāda. We can observe both types of behaviour in all *mahājanas*.

*vajrād api kaṭhorāṇi mṛdūni kusumād api
lokottarāṇām cetāṁsi ko nu vijñātum īśvaraḥ*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 7.73)

[Who can comprehend the heart of exalted, supramundane personalities, whose natures are stronger than thunderbolts and more tender than flowers.]

“*Vajrād api kaṭhorāṇi* – stronger than a thunderbolt.” This virtue was prominently illuminated in his character. “*Mṛdūni kusumād api* – more tender than a flower.” Yet this virtue was also consistently observed in him. Today we have heard examples from the lips of our *guru-varga* that clearly reveal him as a fearless preacher of the Truth. You yourselves have sufficient evidence of his kindness and soft-heartedness. In this sphere, I want to convey that Guru-pādapadma is our eternal friend and well-wisher. Those who have given up all sorts of material comfort, mundane attachments, and affections, and have taken shelter at his lotus feet by acquiring spiritual knowledge (*śikṣā*) and by taking initiation (*dīkṣā*), are trying wholeheartedly to advance on the path of *bhajana* – for them the only destination is Śrī Guru-pādapadma.

“Therefore, let Guru-pādapadma’s ideals, directions, and instructions be our life and soul. Today, on the occasion of his disappearance, our earnest prayer to his lotus feet is that, although we can no longer behold his form, may he bestow his unlimited blessings upon us. In this way we can abide by his words, orders, and instructions in every respect and establish his glories meticulously throughout the world. May we also propagate the glories of his worshipful Lords, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī-jīu, throughout the world.

“Respectable speakers have yet to deliver their addresses, so I will keep my talk brief. I have already confessed my inability to contribute more than the previous speakers, so finally, my humble entreaty to the venerable Vaiṣṇavas and affectionate *guru-varga* here today is that I am completely unqualified for the heavy responsibility that has now been conferred upon me. In fact, I cannot comprehend its weight. But since taking this responsibility is the order of my *śrī gurudeva*, I must submissively comply. May he and other venerable Vaiṣṇavas consider my worthiness.

“I can assure them that I will not waver in abiding by the orders of Śrī Guru-pādapadma. This I solemnly vow. Therefore, I pray for their kind cooperation, sympathy, benedictions, and all else. With their mercy and blessings, I may be able to acquire the strength and ability to carry out these responsibilities competently. Finally, I convey my humble submission unto the lotus feet of my god-brothers and pray for their sincere, wholehearted cooperation. Without their cooperation, sympathy, and help, I am unable to move forward a single step.

“My earnest appeal unto the lotus feet of Guru-pādapadma is that he shower his profuse blessings upon me, even though he is no longer visible to us. In this way, I will be able to follow his order and execute his final instructions, thus making my life successful. My humble prayer to the Vaiṣṇavas is that they bestow profuse benedictions upon me so that I can act in accordance with the grave responsibility given to me by my *gurudeva*. I would like to conclude my talk here.”

As president of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja gave proper honour to all of his god-brothers and thereby guided the Samiti in such a beautiful manner that it proved to be truly exemplary in what is an age of constant quarrel. The sort of fearsome conflict that generally ensues once an institution’s founder departs could not even sprout once he was installed as the principal overseer of the Samiti. Many of his god-brothers have commented in this regard, saying, “Residing in the shade of his umbrella, we have not really felt the absence of or separation from our *śrīla guru-pādapadma* (Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja). From him, our most senior god-brother, we have received all the nourishment we received in the presence of our *śrīla guru-pādapadma*. He is truly non-different from Śrī Keśava.” ☺

The Full Embodiment of a Vaiṣṇava's Twenty-Six Qualities

Of the infinite qualities of a Vaiṣṇava, twenty-six are given special mention by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, thus pointing us in the direction of the full extent of the Vaiṣṇava's glory. All of these qualities were observed to be naturally present in Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja to the fullest degree. These qualities are fully supramundane (*aprākṛta*). Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself is the source of them. It is never possible for them to exist or arise on the mundane platform. Śrī Kṛṣṇa only infuses those whom He has accepted as His own with these qualities. “*Sarva-mahā-guṇa-gaṇa vaiṣṇava śarīre, kṛṣṇa-bhakte kṛṣṇa-guṇa sakali sañcāre*¹ – All exalted virtues dwell in the body of the Vaiṣṇava. All of Kṛṣṇa's qualities are infused in His devotees.”

(1) **Kṛpālu (merciful)**: Just as Bhagavān is Dīna-bandhu (the friend of the fallen), the Vaiṣṇava is “*para-duḥkha-duḥkhī* – aggrieved by the sorrows of others”. The cause of all the living entity's sorrows is forgetfulness of Bhagavān. Forgetfulness, in this case, refers to the living entity's indifference to its own natural, unconditional propensity to serve Bhagavān. Because the living entity has forgotten the propensity that is his only true bliss, his eternal bliss (*parānanda*), extreme sorrow (*para-duḥkha*) has taken its place. The soul's disconnection from the Supersoul is the ultimate sorrow and has become the three types of material miseries. The Vaiṣṇava is aggrieved by that *para-duḥkha*, not mundane sorrows and scarcities.

For decades, for almost twelve months a year, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja busied himself going from home to home in the villages of Bengal, Bihar, and Assam, preaching the message of Śrī Caitanya, striving to turn everyone towards the worship of Kṛṣṇa. In those days, especially in rural areas, there was very little infrastructure and people were very poor. Regardless, every year, enduring all manner of hardship, he would travel out to the remotest village regions, places where other preachers were hesitant to go. His was a heartfelt manner of preaching, full of love and kindness. To this day, the people in those villages recall his visits with tears in their eyes. This was something he did year after year. Most of the villages were accessible only by foot, on paths often knee-deep with mud. He would have to walk miles and miles on these muddy paths in the torrential rain. Often, in the absence of boats, he had to cross rivers carrying his clothes in a bundle above his head. Every year, the people of these villages would eagerly await his scheduled arrival, and every year, he would

¹ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.75)

bring many of them to Navadvīpa and make all arrangements for them there, nurturing them like a father and taking them on pilgrimage of Śrī Gaurahari's holy abode.

(2) **Akṛta-droha (non-malicious):** *Mahā-bhāgavata* Vaiṣṇavas are ever anxious for the living entities to attain ultimate auspiciousness. Hence, they never engage in any sort of malicious activity towards any living creature. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was the embodiment of a non-malicious disposition. What to speak of malice, he was always making sure that he did not cause anyone any sort of agitation. He would always say, “*jīvana-nirvāhe āne udvega nā dibe, para upakāre nija-sukha pāsaribe*² – in the course of maintaining one's life, one must not disturb others, but rather forego one's own comforts for the benefit of others.” He was truly the radiant personification of this statement. He was even extremely hesitant to ask anything of the devotee who looked after him. “One should not give agitation to the Vaiṣṇavas,” he would say, revealing the inner torment it caused him to ask anything of anyone.

When he was preaching and staying with different *grhasthas*, he was always careful not to cause them any disturbance, even if he knew them very well, and always made sure the devotees travelling with him were also careful in this regard. If he happened to arrive very late at night at someone's home, he would tell them, “Do not worry, we already took *prasāda*.” Even if this was not true, he would assure the *grhasthas* he had eaten and stay hungry through the night.

In general, he never said anything to anyone, even his own disciples, that would disturb them in any way. He would often say, “I blow even on *pāntā bhāt* (rice left soaking overnight in water) before I eat it.” Not only that, if someone wanted to provoke him, he would not allow himself to be affected. He was very tolerant in this way and this disposition of his was very well known throughout the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

(3) **Satya-sāra (truthful):** Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja had taken to heart the essence of the Supreme Truth manifested in the current of transcendental conceptions flowing from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī. He never deviated from the practice and propagation of that truth for even a moment. No plea or opposition could make him waver even slightly from his conviction in the truth they taught. His conviction was in following the guidance of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī. In this context, he would say, “*ācāryera jei mata, sei*

² *Gītāvalī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-kīrtane Jādī (4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

mata sāra, ara jata mata saba jāuka chārakhāra – the conclusions of the *ācāryas* are the essence; all other conclusions can fall to ruin.”

(4) **Sama (equanimous)**: In happiness or distress, in the company of friends or foes, whether receiving honour or insult from others – in all situations – Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was endlessly calm and composed. Because of this *sama-buddhi*, or equilibrium, his tolerance was quite natural. He could be in a place that had an utterly foul stench and not be bothered in the slightest. “*Sama-loṣṭrāśma-kāñcanāḥ*³ – pebbles and gold are the same,” he would say. In places that were horrendously noisy, he would, without difficulty, go about his writing and studies and then easily take rest. Even in extremely insulting situations, he would remain unperturbed. “Everyone is the servant of Kṛṣṇa and my teacher,” he would say. With this attitude, his expertise at giving honour, whether it was to a small child or to an extremely arrogant person, was genuinely astonishing. To have love for God, friendship with the pure devotees, mercy for the ignorant, and indifference for the envious is quite impossible to even conceive of for those of mundane intelligence. The genuine realization that all living beings are servants of Kṛṣṇa is the basis of the *madhyama-adhikārī*’s equal vision, but the way he would offer *praṇāma* to his disciples or those on the level of his disciples and address them as “Prabhu” is indicative of how a *mahā-bhāgavata* sees others.

(5) **Nirdoṣa (faultless)**: In regard to this virtue, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura has written the following: “As Vaiṣṇavas are exalted beings, their character needs to be exalted and worthy of following. If a Vaiṣṇava’s character is poor, then how will other souls who are of weaker character learn proper behaviour? Taking these matters into consideration, all those who are *ācāryas* and who impart *mantras* should and will make special efforts to keep their character free from flaw.” Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was naturally of such flawless character. The filth of the five places where Parikṣit Mahārāja allowed Kali to live (gambling, intoxication, illicit sex, violence to other entities, and gold) never dared to touch him. When he left his home at the age of nine and spent his whole life dedicated to following the guidance of *paramahansa* Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, what appeal could these vices of Kali have for him?

Even though he was the president of a huge institution, he never had a personal bank account. He used to say, “My bank is in the pocket of my *kurtā*. Whatever I have for the service of Hari, *guru*, and Vaisnavas is all there.” For the last fifteen years of his manifest presence, he

³ Śrīmad Bhagavad-gīta (6.8)

stopped even touching money. The devotees serving him saw to financial matters, and from time to time, he would simply instruct those devotees to provide financial support where needed for the service of Bhagavān.

No one ever saw him indulge in any kind of luxury or convenience. All his life, he used simple ordinary soap and a rather old-fashioned type of rubber shoes. As long as a garment was not ripped or falling apart, he could not and would not part with it. If someone gave him a new set of clothes, he would ask the devotees to pass it on to serve the Vaiṣṇavas. Once, someone gave him a new kind of soap that was sandalwood-scented, and he got rather upset. “Are you trying to get a licence for your own indulgences by getting me to use this?” he said. “Use this in the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī, please. They are the only ones who have the right to enjoy such nice things.”

(6) *Vadānya* (**magnanimous**): What is generally referred to as magnanimity was denounced by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī when he offered his obeisance to Śrī Gaurasundara and addressed Him as *mahā-vadānya* (greatly magnanimous). One who is well-versed in the wondrous qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya’s mercy becomes infused with a similar *mahā-vadānya* quality.

It was by the painstaking and heartfelt endeavours of greatly magnanimous personalities such as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, and Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja that all corrupted forms of the soul’s eternal religion were dispelled and the pristine current of the highest teachings preserved within this earthly realm. Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja founded Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti to safeguard this pure current of devotional conceptions and then entrusted it to his dear Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, whom he had taught and trained since childhood. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja displayed his great magnanimity by keeping that sacred current undisturbed and undiluted. He would always say, “Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti is non-different from my *guru-pādapadma*, and I can never be separated from my *guru-pādapadma*.” He simply sought to inspire the living entities in the process of worship that was revealed by his *guru-varga*: worship of Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa as served by the *gopīs* of Vraja.

He kept an extremely wide berth of all devious conceptions and strongly emphasized the maintenance of the standards set by Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, which included the strict observance of *cāturmāsya-vrata*, *puruṣottama-vrata*, *Ekādaśī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Janmāṣṭamī, Śrī Rāma-navamī, and all other sacred fasting days. Moreover,

he never condoned any compromise in regard to the conduct of initiated devotees, which meant strict prohibition of them engaging in the worship of demigods and goddesses and consuming tea, paan, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and non-vegetarian foodstuffs.

One lady, who had heard Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's *hari-kathā* for a long time and wanted to follow proper Vaiṣṇava *sadācara*, repeatedly approached him to receive *harināma* and *dīkṣā*, but her husband refused to give up eating meat and she had to cook for him. Finally, after a great many tearful requests for him to just give her a *mālā* that he had not even chanted on, he told her, "Mother, I do not have the right to do anything independently. I am bound and obligated to my superiors. You are a mother to me. Are you going to force your son to do something that is forbidden?"

His great magnanimity was that he safeguarded the impeccable standard of Vaiṣṇava *dharma* so carefully amid the ocean of contaminations that is Kali-yuga and inspired his followers to do the same. "*Nirapekṣa nā haile dharma nā jāya rakṣaṇe*⁴ – one cannot protect *dharma* unless one is uncompromising."

(7) **Mṛdu (gentle)**: The *bhakti-latā* (vine of devotion) is very tender. It cannot survive in a hard heart. If one does not relinquish *kutarka* (specious reasoning) and desires for sense enjoyment, the heart does not become soft, and if the heart does not soften, Bhakti-devī cannot appear there. As taste (*ruci*) arises for anything related to Bhagavān, the heart softens to the point that it remains constantly melted. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja's nature was so soft and gentle that the moment people came into his presence, they would be overwhelmed by it. Thousands and thousands of people were blessed to be able to bathe simultaneously in the nectareous ocean of affection of his gentle heart. Everyone felt like they were the special object of his affection and felt supreme satisfaction in that. In the ambience of that softness, no one could be hesitant or withdrawn. Whoever came into the proximity of his childlike tenderness would blossom and seat him on the throne of their heart. He himself would say, "I am a child, and you are all my guardians." He would also say, "We are all children in front of Bhagavān. If you cannot be simple-hearted like a child, you can't become a Vaiṣṇava. Just as an infant has no other language besides crying, we have no other alternative than to weep while chanting *harināma* before Bhagavān. If the infant does not cry, the mother doesn't give him milk. Not that one should make a show of crying. It has to be the crying of the heart. And Bhagavān, who lives in the heart, knows well what that is. Can a parent remain unmoved by the crying of their child?"

⁴ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 3.23)

(8) *Śuci* (clean): “*Gaṅgāra paraśa haile paścāte pāvana, darśane pavitra karo ei tomāra guṇa*⁵ – one becomes pure by touching the Gaṅgā, but your quality is that the mere sight of you is purifying.” Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was truly the personification of such purificatory power. What to speak of seeing him, just remembering him purifies the heart. This is why it has been said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.10): “*tīrthī kurvanti tīrthāni svāntaḥ-sthena gadābhṛtā* – because you [the devotees] carry Bhagavān Gadādhara bound within your heart, you make holy places holy.” By the rare *darśana* of such *mahā-bhāgavatas*, the living entity becomes purified of the inclination for sinful activity. The tendency for sin must be dispelled for one to become inspired to perform *hari-bhajana*. Then, by hearing the divine message emanating from the lips of those devotees, the living entity can advance in *hari-bhajana*. Many, many fortunate persons were drawn to Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja in this way and became engaged in *hari-bhajana*.

In regard to cleanliness, he would say, “All manner of purity, inner and outer, depends on remembering the lotus-eyed Śrī Hari. *Śrī nāma-bhajana* is not to be given up in any condition of purity or impurity, because it is the eternal function of the living entity. Chanting *śrī nāma* with conviction and serving *śrī vigraha*, who is non-different from *śrī nāma*, is imperative for every *sādhaka* and *sādhikā*, but there is no need to practice the stringent and ritualistic standards of cleanliness as observed in the *smārta* tradition.”

(9) *Akiñcana* (possessionless): To be free of the arrogance associated with high birth, opulence, education, and physical beauty is true *akiñcanatā*. Only one who is *akiñcana* is *trṇād api sunīca*. That mood of being bereft of any and all possessions and that quality of being humbler than a blade of grass was evident in every step Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja took. He would often say, “I am always staying under trees. I never stay in buildings. I really have no address. My only real refuge is under trees.” These were not mere words. He would spend day after day in utter delight in the rickety cottages of very poor devotees. Once, in Koch Bihar, he was invited to stay at the home of a poor disciple. That night, a storm blew in and it began raining very heavily. Water began leaking through the thatched roof on to his bed. Instead of telling anyone, he just sat through the whole night, holding an umbrella over his head to keep dry. He even forbade his *sevaka* from saying anything to the host. In this way, he did not get any rest all night. But he felt more comfortable staying with poor devotees in their straw cottages than with proud rich people in their multi-storey mansions.

⁵ *Prārthanā, Ei Bāra Karuṇā Karo* (3) by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

If ever coerced to go to a rich person's house, he was always very uncomfortable in that environment. He would say, "Bhagavān has more mercy for the poor. Aristocrats, scholars, and wealthy people are very arrogant. You cannot buy Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas with wealth, opulence, and erudition. These efforts to buy me really make me uncomfortable. Poor people naturally have a humble mood because of their lack of money, and such a mood is favourable for *sādhana-bhajana*. If those people gain *sādhū-saṅga*, they can easily progress on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*, much more easily than those who are rich and arrogant. Poverty is really not a curse but an advantage in obtaining the real mercy of *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān." Such an *akiñcana* saint who has no enmity toward anyone and is wholly indifferent to wealth, position, and prestige is truly rare.

(10) *Sarvopakāraka* (works for the benefit of all): "*Bhārata-bhūmite manuṣya janma hailo jāra, janma sārthaka kari' karo para-upakāra*⁶ – those who have taken a human birth in the land of India should make their lives worthwhile by engaging in the welfare of others." It is through the compassion of Śrī Caitanya-candra, the abode of mercy, that one can offer the greatest help to any and all living entities. The resonance of the *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana-yajña* propagated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu simultaneously invokes supreme auspiciousness for mountains, trees, plants, animals, birds, and human beings of every kind. In order to duly and beautifully spread Śrīman Mahāprabhu's *saṅkīrtana-yajña* everywhere, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja established temples and *āśramas* everywhere, thus providing all living entities with the means to gain ultimate auspiciousness. Even when a dangerous creature like a snake appeared in front of him in the assembly where he was lecturing on *Bhāgavatam*, he told the frightened audience not to harm it in any way and had it listen to that *bhāgavata-kathā*. After a short while, the snake went away peacefully. He remarked that he had not detected any harmful intent in the snake and surmised that it was likely a special *sādhaka*. On countless occasions, he delivered various ghosts and spirits by reciting *hari-kathā* and chanting *harināma* to them in the middle of the night. He would provide *mahā-prasāda* meals to the poor and distressed and would even provide them financial assistance.

(11) *Śānta* (peaceful): "*Śamo man-niṣṭhatā buddheḥ* – peace means absorbing one's intelligence in Me" (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.19.33). The *jīva* only becomes truly peaceful if his intelligence becomes fixed upon Kṛṣṇa. Those who want material enjoyment and those who want salvation

⁶ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 9.41)

or mystic powers are not peaceful. Aside from the devotees of Kṛṣṇa, no one is peaceful. Being peaceful does not just mean being disciplined and sober. It means being free from agitation, having brought one's senses under control, having no violent impulses, never being susceptible to provocation, being content, etc. Aptly named Santoṣa ("satisfied"), Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja displayed these virtues from a very early age and thus became dear to everyone. It was because he was devoted to Kṛṣṇa from birth that he went to Navadvīpa just once at the age of nine and became fully surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, never to return to the unrest of family life.

People commonly say, "*saṁsāra dharma baḍa dharma* – the *dharma* of family life is the greatest *dharma*." Or they say, "*āge bhoga, pare tyāga* – first enjoyment, then renunciation." These popular sayings encourage entanglement in family life and cast people into oceans of misery via marriage. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja never gave any such instruction to the *jīvas*. He would say, "Though the propensity for enjoyment does subside temporarily through enjoying, it never truly subsides or becomes satiated. Only through *sādhusaṅga*, which causes the *jīva*'s consciousness to blossom and enables him to gain knowledge of his true nature and function, do the *jīva*'s material desires become soothed. That gives him peace, and then, by serving Kṛṣṇa, he gains *parā-śānti* (supreme peace)."

(12) **Kṛṣṇaika-śaraṇa (surrendered exclusively to Kṛṣṇa):** All the qualities of a Vaiṣṇava are centred on this quality of exclusive surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Like the central point from which it is possible to draw a circle's circumference, this quality becomes the central pivot around which the whole sphere of all the glorious qualities of a Vaiṣṇava exist. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja would frequently recite verses like: "*karmāvalambakāḥ kecit kecit jñānāvalambakāḥ; vayanṁ tu hari-dāsānām pāda-trāṇāvalambakāḥ*"⁷ – some resort to fruitive action and others to impersonal knowledge, but I simply take shelter of the shoes of the servants of Hari, which ferry souls across the ocean of material existence." Other times, he would say, "*sahāyo me mātraṁ vitatha-dalanī vaiṣṇava-kṛpā*"⁸ – the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas, which destroys the illusion of *māyā*, is my only aid." He would always say: "My every activity occurs strictly according to the orders of my masters. I am bound to them. I have no way to do anything independently." At night, when it was time to take rest, he would often be seen conversing with some invisible presence. When asked repeatedly who it was, he would relent and quietly say,

⁷ Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Śrī Padyāvalī* (58), verse composed by Śrī Mādhava Sarasvatī

⁸ *Sva-niyama-dvadaśakam* (12) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

“My masters came.” In answer to the question of who his masters were, he would point at the pictures of the *guru-varga*.

He would often be heard murmuring from the following *kīrtana*: “*vṛṣabhānu-sutā, caraṇa sevane, haibo je pālya-dāsī... rādhā-pakṣa chāḍi, je-jana se-jana, je-bhāve se-bhāve thāke... āmi to’ rādhikā, pakṣa-pāti sadā, kabhu nāhi heri tāke*⁹ – When will I become a maidservant of Vṛṣabhānu’s daughter? ... Let everyone aside from Śrī Rādhā’s party be as they are. I am always partial to Śrī Rādhā and never look upon those who are not.”

Whenever there was a disturbance in the service at one of the *maṭhas*, it was always Ṭhākuraṇī (Śrīmatī Rādhikā) who would report it to him, not Ṭhākura (Kṛṣṇa). Accordingly, he would then take steps to remedy the situation. He always referred to Śrīmatī Rādhikā in this manner, as Ṭhākuraṇī. He would rarely ever speak Her name aloud. In this way, he expressed his *kārṣṇaika-śaraṇatva* (exclusive surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s dear most beloved, Śrīmatī Rādhikā), which is the topmost zenith that this quality can reach.

(13) **Akāma (desireless)**: Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja never sought anything from anyone in this world. He used to say, “My *gurudeva* told me: ‘You will not have to worry about serving Bhagavān. The moment you think of something you need in order to render some service, the arrangement will be made.’ In reality, *śrī gurudeva* alone is the main custodian of all service rendered to Śrī Śrī Gaura-Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī. He is the one who makes all the arrangements. We simply collect ingredients of service as per his arrangement. What to speak of this world, there is nothing we seek from anyone in the entire universe.”

Instead of seeking to receive anything from anyone, he would endlessly glorify *śrī guru* and Śrī Gaurāṅga, without any trace of ulterior motive. He would gesture toward the pictures of his *guru-varga* and say, “They see to all our maintenance and nourishment. All this time, they have been seeing to our real welfare. They are doing so right now as well, and they will certainly continue to do so in the future.”

(14) **Nirīha (effortless, indifferent)**: All the endeavours of one who is *jīvan-mukta* (liberated while living in this world) are strictly for the sake of Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. As neither indulgence nor renunciation is part of the living entity’s eternal *dharma*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was never seen to engage in either sort of pursuit. He displayed this sort of indifference in his life, thereby expressing the pinnacle of *śaraṇāgati*. “*Nija-bala-ceṣṭā-prati*

⁹ *Gītāmālā* and *Śaraṇāgati*, *Vṛṣabhānu-sutā* (1, 4) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

*bharasā chāḍiyā, tomāra icchāya āchi nirbhara kariyā*¹⁰ – giving up faith in my own strength and efforts, I am here at Your will, relying upon You.” In one sense, he was constantly striving, engaging his body, mind, and words in the service of Śrī Hari. On the other hand, he was utterly inactive when it came to accumulating profit, worship, and prestige.

(15) *Sthira* (steady): Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja would sit for hours on end in the midst of an assembly or on his bed, immersed in his activities. It seemed like an impossible task to us, who are of rather restless natures. This was truly an indication of the steadiness imbued throughout his body, mind, and words.

Once, a devotee said to him, “I have been looking for you for so many days. You never stay in one place.”

In response, he said, “What is *sthira*? One who is always engaged in the service of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga is *sthira*. Everyone else is not *sthira*.”

Once, a devotee living in the *maṭha* in Navadvīpa expressed the desire to live in one of the *maṭhas* in Vraja-maṇḍala. Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja said to him, “For one who has not realized the glory of Gauḍa-maṇḍala, Vraja-maṇḍala is just a place with trees, roads, houses, ponds, and fields. That is why our *guru-varga* has sung: ‘*gurudeva! baḍa kṛpā kari*’, *gauḍa-vana mājhe... citta sthira habe, sakala sahibo, ekānta bhajibo hari*”¹¹ – Gurudeva, bestowing great mercy on me, you have given me a place in Gaura’s forest, and ordered me to sit in this Vraja and chant *harināma*. But when will you have mercy on this servant and give me the qualification to do so? Then my mind (*citta*) will be steady, I will tolerate everything, and I will perform *bhajana* of Hari with exclusive focus.’ *Śrī guru-pādapadma* is the foremost Vrajavāsī. The place he instructs us to do *bhajana* in is indeed Vraja. One who sees the forests of Gauḍa and Vraja as non-different is a real Vrajavāsī. He alone is *sthira* because his soul is offered to the instruction of *guru-pādapadma*. That is how one attains the qualification to perform one-pointed *bhajana*.”

(16) *Vijita-ṣaḍ-guṇa* (victorious over the six enemies): One who has conquered lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride, and envy is referred to as *vijita-ṣaḍ-guṇa*. It was as if the word *indriya-tarpaṇa* (sense enjoyment) was not in Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s dictionary. These six foes of the soul had no sway over him. All of his senses were fully dovetailed with the senses of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga, so he was quite naturally *vijita-ṣaḍ-guṇa*.

¹⁰ *Śaraṇāgati, Tumi Sarveśvareśvara* (7) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

¹¹ *Śaraṇāgati, Gurudeva! Baḍa Kṛpā Kari*’ (1–2) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

(17) **Mita-bhuk (moderate in diet)**: From birth, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja never partook of any non-vegetarian foodstuff. He would say, “I really am a *vighaśāsī-bhṛtya*, a servant who grew up eating the remnants of the Vaiṣṇavas, my masters.” He never, even by mistake, ate anything that was not offered. Hence, the flaw of *atyāhāra* (consuming too much) could never attack him. By his ideal example, he taught never to judge the taste of *prasāda* while honouring it. If asked how the cooking was, he would always respond, “I have rendered service to *prasāda*.” Sometimes, he would say, “I do not know good or bad. I just render service.” There was no question of him eating too much. Daily he ate an amount proportionate to a few small, children’s size bowls.

(18) **Apramatta (unagitated)**: He was firmly established in the *rūpānuga* words: “*āsakti rahita, sambandha sahita, viṣaya-samūha sakalai mādḥava*¹² – if one is devoid of material attachment and endowed with divine knowledge of one’s relationship with Kṛṣṇa, then one knows that all objects of the senses belong only to Mādḥava.” Hence, he never fell prey to the maddening preoccupation with sense objects. As his full attachment was focused on the source of everything, no attraction to or repulsion in regard to material enjoyment could affect him.

(19) **Amānī (without any desire for honour)** and (20) **Mānada (respectful of others)**: Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was, from head to toe, the personification of *amānī-mānada*. Even though he had the rare fortune of being in the proximity of Prabhupāda Śrī Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and the fortune of serving him personally and receiving *harināma* from him, he never even attempted to take pride in that great fortune or count himself as one of Prabhupāda’s disciples. He would always say, “My *gurudeva* is *jagad-guru* Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and his *gurudeva* is *jagad-guru* Śrī Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda.”

One day, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja privately addressed him as *guru-bhāi* (god-brother) and Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja burst into tears, objecting with the words, “Prabhupāda is yours and you are mine.”

Once, a disciple asked him, “Can we refer to both Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja and Śrīla Prabhupāda as “*paramagurudeva*”?

In response to this, he said, “You want to say this because of my one little interaction [receiving *harināma* from Śrīla Prabhupāda] and earn some *pratiṣṭhā* that way? However, I do not maintain

¹² *Duṣṭa Mana Tumi Kiserā Vaiṣṇava* (12) by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda

the ego (*abhimāna*) that Śrīla Prabhupāda is my *gurudeva*, so he cannot be your *paramagurudeva*. Only Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja is your *paramagurudeva*.”

Even though he received *harināma* from Śrīla Prabhupāda and *dīkṣā-mantras* from Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja before Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja even took *sannyāsa*, even though he was a direct witness to the founding of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, even though he was chosen as the president and *ācārya* by Śrīla Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and even though he was a peerless scholar of all the scriptures, a living, breathing encyclopedia of *siddhānta* – even though he was entirely beyond compare in every way – he never made any effort to be treated differently or earn prestige by making it known that he was somehow superior. He considered himself to be a negligible servant of the Samiti. His natural humility was such that the day before his appearance day, to avoid the ceremony of *guru-pūjā*, he would suddenly disappear and go where no one could find him.

He gave honour to all as befitting their status and always taught his disciples to give honour to their seniors, thus manifesting the practice of *mānada-dharma* (giving respect to others). His expertise in giving proper honour to people in both worldly and spiritual settings was truly exemplary. If someone wanted any sort of respect or prestige, he seemed to be omniscient of their desire and never hesitated to fulfil it. And even when he was very vocal about what was unfavourable to *bhakti* or the *sampradāya*, his statements and conduct never transgressed his naturally respectful nature.

(21) *Gambhīra* (grave): Though Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja had a natural childlike gentleness, at the same time, his gravity was unsurpassable. He followed closely every word of his *śrī guru-varga*, and thus, being fully versed in *śabda-brahma* and Parabrahma, retained an ocean-like aura of gravitas at every step. Just as it is difficult to deduce from the surface of the ocean that it is a treasure-chest of gems, similarly, it was difficult to detect from outside the glow of the radiant blue sapphire (*ujjala-nīlamanī*) situated in the depth of his heart. In front of that vast gravity, all manner of frivolous talk would bow away and the witch of the desire for prestige would vanish in fear.

(22) *Karuṇa* (compassionate): As the personified mercy of Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s butter-like heart was always melting with the quality of compassion. There is no counting how many hundreds of impoverished individuals he lent his full assistance to. Seeing their inclination to perform *hari-bhajana*, he supported them with

money, goods, wise instructions and helped them develop or increase the fortitude of mind necessary to perform *bhajana*, thus not allowing them to stray from or be deprived of this exalted path. Literally thousands of people, amid the most precarious situations of their lives, had more faith and confidence in him than in their own family members. Knowing he was theirs, they could be peaceful and worry-free. Either he would be there for them in person or he would send someone trustworthy to help them. Otherwise, if he was very busy, he would confer valuable instructions via letters – hundreds of letters – which stand testament to his painstaking efforts to extend himself to help them. To this day, the thought of his magnanimity draws forth tears from the eyes of those persons.

Another special feature of his compassion was that he would not readily give any instruction to anyone, even to his disciples. First, he would observe and evaluate their capacity, mindset, and inclination to fulfil his instruction. His reasoning was: “If a *jīva* disobeys my direct order because he is in a conditioned state and compelled by the stubborn habits of misusing his independence since time immemorial, then because he will have committed the offence of disobeying one’s *guru*, he will sink further to a lowly condition of existence. Once again, because he is bereft of shelter, he will have to wander aimlessly through countless species of life. Since he does not know how to obtain the shelter of a bona fide *guru*, how many more lifetimes will he have to wait? Rather than benefiting him, I will have caused him unimaginable suffering. Just because he does not understand the risk of neglecting a direct order does not mean I can be frivolous in this regard.” Therefore, he would, with utmost respect, say, “If I say something, will you kindly listen?” Or: “If you do this service, Hari, *guru*, and Vaiṣṇavas will be pleased with you.” Thus, he would give instructions in a very polite and indirect manner.

(23) **Maitrī (friendly):** Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja had profoundly deep friendships with Vaiṣṇavas. There is no calculating the amount of assistance, both financial and otherwise, he discretely offered to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s renounced disciples. Those who had even a glimpse of his friendship with *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīla Bhakti Jīvana Janārdana Gosvāmī Mahārāja can perhaps comprehend what friendship looks like between two *mahā-bhāgavatas*. If he saw someone sincerely engaged in the service of Bhagavān, then no matter who that person was, there was no end to his affection for him. His door would be wide open for that person.

(24) **Kavi (a poet):** Poets and poetry aficionados are referred to by the word *kavi*, but it can also refer to a scholar. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja knew hundreds of poems of native and foreign poets by heart. He had learned these during his time in school in Māyāpura. While others may have read the same poems and fallen prey to the allure of *māyā* expressed in them, he, even as a young student, derived inspiration from them that was favourable to *bhakti*. He would explain very beautifully which poet he felt had some semblance of devotion to Bhagavān or which poem expressed teachings favourable to the cultivation of *bhakti*.

As far as transcendental poetry is concerned, there is no fathoming how much of that he kept stored up in his heart. The way divine poetry would issue forth from his lips in an unbroken flow, like the current of the Gaṅgā, one could only assume he was a messenger from that supramundane realm. That is why Śrī Vinoda (Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja) referred to him as “*jīvanta gauḍīya abhidhāna* – the living encyclopedia of the Gauḍīya *siddhānta*”. This treasure-house of his was no burdensome accumulation bereft of *kr̥ṣṇa-bhakti* or a means to gain profit, worship, and adoration. He was truly a *kavi* in the sense that his consciousness was fully absorbed relishing the *rasa* of that divine poetry. There is one small poem he has written that gives us a glimpse of the expansive nature of his pure, transcendental love:

keho cāya śudhu pīta-gaura, keho cāya śyāma-nīla,

Some only want yellow-gold, some want dark-blue...

āmi cāhi śudhu rāmadhanu-raṅga, jāhāte sakali mila

I just want the colours of Rāma's bow (the rainbow), wherein all meet.

keho bhālobāse svarṇa cāpa, keha bhālovāse śudhu jūi,

Some love golden champaka, some just love jasmine...

sājāna bāgāne sneha-mamatāya, kāke rekhe kāke chūi

Both are arranged in the garden via love and attachment. Which one do I turn a blind eye to?

Which do I choose to caress?

bhālobāsi sabe 'āpana' bhāviyā, bādhiyā prītira rākhī,

I love all, feeling them to be my own, binding them with the amulet of love.

keho nahe para, pāya samādara, guṇa saurabhe saba dhāki

No one is other. They all receive the same honour, as I douse them in the perfume of virtue.

(25) **Dakṣa (expert)**: It is very difficult for conditioned souls to remember Kṛṣṇa by themselves. This is why Kṛṣṇa has mercifully manifested the Vedas, Purāṇas, and other scriptures, wherein various rules and regulations for different people of different capacities reveal the gradual path to remembering Kṛṣṇa at all times. All these rules and regulations are, at first glance, perceived by the conditioned soul to be very difficult to follow. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja, through his own conduct, very expertly revealed to the living entities how to apply these instructions of scripture in their lives, whereby they can gain the mental fortitude to move forward in *sādhana-bhajana* in a pure and proper way. He always said, “All the instructions of the scriptures are not for anyone but me.” Once a devotee asked, “Gurudeva, then are they not for us?” He laughed and replied, “If you become mine, then they are also for you.” In other words: “I follow all the instructions of the scriptures because they were prescribed just for me. Since they are not for anyone else, I do not bother to see who is following them and who is not. If you inherit this conception of mine, then you too will be benefited from these instructions.”

There was no limit to the expertise he displayed in proving, through comparative analysis, the inferiority of the craving for material enjoyment or impersonal liberation, and thereby establishing *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* as the *dharma* of the soul. Whether there was only one person present to listen or ten or thousands, astonishingly, he always invested a hundred percent of his effort into communicating these truths. No matter how many people came to see him per day, how many religious assemblies he was invited to, or how many homes he was requested to deliver *hari-kathā* in, he was always fully eager and ready to fulfil said demands and paid no attention to any bodily inconvenience incurred in the course of doing so.

Those who heard his sublime, nectareous *hari-kathā*, which was full of profound realizations of scripture and relieved its listeners of doubt, had no taste in any other *kathā*. This special expertise of his distinguished him. His writings are the same: profound, sublime, and beautifully articulate. And it was with great expertise that he published many sacred texts written by the Gosvāmīs in order to preserve and protect the *sampradāya*.

(26) **Maunī (silent)**: In the age of Kali, the age of conflict, to be silent in the midst of conversations that are not related to Kṛṣṇa is the only intelligent thing to do. This was one of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja’s special instructions. He would often say, “The last instruction my *gurudeva* gave me was: ‘*Dekhbi, śunbi, bolbi nā* – see, hear, but do not speak. You have eyes, so you will see, you have ears, so you will hear, and you have a mouth, but don’t speak.’ ” This instruction was something Śrīla Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja

personally followed very strictly. If he saw someone knowingly doing something wrong, he would see such behaviour as irremediable and remain silent. At times, his silence would be for the sake of chastisement. He would say, “A dumb mute has no enemies.” Thus, he would remain untouched by unwanted association and conflict and stay immersed in *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, the one sublime feature of Kali-yuga. In this way, he instructed his followers to do the same. But when he saw that, in this age, even a dumb mute has enemies, he commenced his pastimes of illness and became fully silent. He would recognize everyone and smile, but would not say anything besides, “Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

Like Śrīman Mahāprabhu in His final pastimes, Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja began to spend most of his time absorbed in an internal realm of service. Sometimes, he would be observed calling out to his Ṭhākuraṇī. Sometimes he would be tossing and turning on his bed, uttering the following couplet: “*kṛṣṇa re, bāpa re, kothā mora hari, kona dike gelā mora prāṇa kari’ curi* – O Kṛṣṇa, alas! Where is my Hari? Which way did You go, having stolen my heart?” Sometimes he would be wide awake in the middle of the night, clutching *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to his chest, gazing at it. He displayed extreme indifference to anything that was not related to Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes, unknowingly, he would reveal a hint of his internal service, but then, the next moment, he would come to external consciousness and try to conceal it. Though he was always trying to keep his *svarūpa* hidden, his inner mood of a Vraja *gopī* revealed itself in various emotions and expressions.

Entering nitya-līlā

Many times, he said, “I will leave this world on the bank of the Gaṅgā in Bhagavān’s *dhāma* in the midst of loud *saṅkīrtana* in all four directions.” And so it came to be. In late 2004, he was being looked after at Śrī Nimāi-tīrtha Gauḍīya Maṭha in Baidyabati (near Kolkata). As if he could sense his departure to the eternal abode was imminent, he suddenly returned to Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma on the Ekādaśī just prior to the start of *dāmodara-vrata*. Many devotees came from all over to gather at Śrī Devānanda Gauḍīya Maṭha, in Navadvīpa, to observe *kārtika-vrata* in his proximity. From time to time, he made public appearances, fulfilling the devotees’ desires for his *darśana*. But from the day of Śrī Annakuṭa Mahotsava, the illusory forces of *māyā* began to cover their eyes as the health of his sacred form (*śrī aṅga*) appeared to deteriorate. The next day (14/11/04), seeing his health deteriorating further, his *sevakas* considered shifting him to Kolkata immediately, but he would not allow himself to be moved. He did not want to leave the banks of the Gaṅgā to set one foot outside of Navadvīpa,

which is non-different from Govardhana. The devotees began to do *kīrtana* all throughout the *maṭha*. As the night progressed, the apprehension about his departure increased, and just after midnight, at around 12:37 AM, on the third day of the bright lunar fortnight (*śuklā-tṛtīyā-tithi*), during *amṛta-yoga* (a very auspicious time), just as his *sevakas* applied *tilaka* to his limbs, he disappeared from our midst.

As he had always been the intimate companion, servant, and right-hand man of his *gurudeva*, Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, he was given a resting place to the right-hand side of his beloved *gurudeva's samādhi*.

Both the appearance and disappearance of Bhagavān's associates are for the welfare of the world. They know that as long as they are directly manifest before us, we remain trapped in external vision of them, content with having seen their external appearance, often not even attempting to appreciate who they really are. Hence they have just cause to conceal themselves from the world and from us, for our benefit. On one hand, they teach us renunciation by showing us the transience of human life. However, if we have some love for them, we will know them to be an eternal truth, the *āśraya-vigraha*, and will strive eagerly on the path of *sādhana-bhajana*, following the principles of real renunciation (*yukta-vairāgya*), in order to one day meet with them again.

All glories to the supremely worshipful *āśraya-vigraha*, *nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja! All glories to the *viṣaya-vigraha*, Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nityānanda, Śrī Śrī Gaura-Gadādhara, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-bihārī-jīu! ॐ



Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Gosvāmī Mahārāja was born in 1921 in East Bengal. At age nine, he left kith and kin to devote his entire life to his spiritual preceptors – Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda and Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He lived as an ascetic within the monasteries of Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, which in his later years were entrusted into his caring charge, and he simultaneously propagated the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu throughout India.

It is rare in this world to find a leader who is disinterested in the power and position accompanying their post, but through these letters, we have the opportunity for such an encounter. His dedicated disciples and followers, numbering tens of thousands, confidently bear testimony to this. In 2004, he departed from this world in Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma, leaving for us a mine of instructions for our ultimate welfare, conveyed through his many articles and loving letters.



“I lived with *pūjyapāda* Vāmana Mahārāja for almost sixty years and had the opportunity to closely observe and understand him. He possessed all the qualities that are inherent in a Vaiṣṇava. By nature, he was simple, grave, humble, tolerant, overflowing with *guru-niṣṭhā*, and inclined to serve the Vaiṣṇavas. This situated him on the highest level of *bhakti*.”

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja