

Tridandi Svami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

## **Gangamata Gosvamini**

Murwillambah, Australia: Jan 14, 2000 and 2001

Typists: Pitambari dasi, Nandini dasi, and Madan Mohini dasi

[Jan 14, 2001 was Makhara-sankranti, the anniversary of the day Ganges descended to this world. Srila Narayana Maharaja gave his class about this holy day in Hindi. A summary of the translation, contributed by Sripad Madhava Maharaja, is as follows:]

There are many lines on the earth, like the Equator, the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. In Sanskrit these lines are called rekhas. In Vedic Astronomy these rekhas are called Bhumadhya-rekha, Karka-rekha, and Makhara-rekha. In its travels, the Sun is always somewhere between these lines. The day on which it comes nearest to Makhara-rekha is called Makhara-sankranti. After that it comes back to either of the other two lines.

Surya, the Sun, gives life potency to the living entities. Because of its connection with Surya, Makhara-sankranti is very auspicious. On that day, almost everyone with any connection to Vedic or Indian culture takes bath, either in the Godavari, Jamuna, Ganges, or in any other river, or in the ocean. This takes place especially in India, but it also goes on to some extent around the world. On this day it is auspicious to give donations to others. Yudhisthira Maharaja gave so much in charity on this day that he and his family had nothing left, and all over the world he was praised for this. While he was taking rest that night, a flock of swans were flying overhead, talking to each other. One swan said, "I never saw such a big donor as Maharaja Yudhisthira." Another swan replied, "Don't praise him so much. If you want to know who is the best donor, it is Reikhya Muni." "How?" "Yudhisthira is a great Emperor. His wealth is incomparable. Therefore, though he gives so much, he is only giving a part of his wealth. Reikhya Muni has no kingdom -- nothing. He does Silanache Vrtti. When the farmer takes grains from the fields and some of those grains fall to the ground, this Muni goes and collects those grains, like barley and wheat, cleans and roasts them, and then distributes them. He never thinks of his own welfare."

Yudhisthira Maharaja was hearing all this, because he understands the language of the birds. On the next day he asked Krsna, "Who is Reikhya Muni?" He told Krsna what had transpired the previous night, and Krsna then took him to see Reikhya Muni, who was then living under a bullock cart. They offered pranamas to him, and they all conversed together.

If one gives donations on this auspicious day, in his next life he'll never be in want. That is because this day is in relation to the Sun, who gives life.

[In this class, Srila Narayana Maharaja mentioned Gangamata Thakurani, but he did not tell the details of her life. On the previous year he did. As many devotees have expressed a desire to hear her glories, Srila Maharaja's lecture given on the same date of the previous year is presented herein. The texts in the body of the lecture which are in brackets were contributed by Sripad Madhava Maharaja:]

Yesterday was Makhara-sankranti, the descending of the Ganges River. All Indians, even those living very far away from Ganges, will somehow go there to take bath. When I was a little baby in India, I used to take bath with my father on this very day. I remember that although it was very cold, still I would jump in. On this day all the bathing ghats are full with hundreds of thousands of people.

## Gangamata Gosvaminis Life and Character

There was a beautiful girl in East Bengal named Saci devi. She was the daughter of the King of Putiya. From the beginning of her life she heard about Krsna and gave her whole heart to Him. From the time she was about five years old, she used to worship Krsna, sing to Krsna, play with Krsna, and do everything with Him. When she was about sixteen years old she became mad for Him.

Saci devi was not only beautiful, but she was very intelligent and she used to also study Sanskrit and Bengali. Her father and mother were very worried for her marriage, but she refused totally. She told her father, "My marriage has already been done. There is no need of another marriage. Don't be worried. I will go to Vrndavana and I will meet my beloved there."

She took her Deities and was ready to go to Vrndavana alone, on foot, which was a three to four thousand mile journey. There were no airplanes or any modern conveniences in those days. She was preparing to go by foot, but her father arranged everything.

Having come to Vrndavana and being mad for Krsna, she began searching for Him everywhere, wandering here and there. She would go to Vamsivata and ask that Vamsivata banyan tree: "Where is Krsna? Can you tell me where is Krsna?"

There was a disciple of a very exalted devotee named Hari Dasa, and he was in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami. He was always chanting and remembering Krsna. He was also giving classes, just as I give in the evenings, and all Vrajavasis and saints and sadhus in our line would attend. Saci devi also used to hear the classes, and she was attracted. She told him, "I am taking your asraya, shelter. Please give me initiation, otherwise I will die. I want to see Krsna, and I want serve Krsna and Radha." Hearing this, he was so much happy. Though he never wanted to initiate anyone, he initiated that beautiful princess.

Hari Dasa then gave Saci devi instructions on how to chant, how to remember, how to practice in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami, how Krsna is her beloved, and how she should serve Radhika. He told her that her guru will be a manifestation of Visakha devi or Rupa Manjari.

Sri Hari Dasa did not want her to be alone. He told her that there was an elderly lady of about fifty years, and that lady was very matured in hari-bhajana. He placed her in the hands of that devotee, just as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu placed the hands of Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami in the hands of Sri Svarupa Damodara.

After her initiation, Saci devi was always weeping for Krsna. She used to chant more than one lakh of harinama daily, and she was totally absorbed. Her Guru never gave her any bhajana kutira. Rather he told her, "Oh, you should arrange this yourself. I have nothing to do with these things. You should manage."

Saci devi used to live in a broken temple on the Yamuna ghat, and there she would perform her sadhana-bhajana. She never made any management for taking prasada, but rather she would go from door to door, taking very little madhukari. She would take one forth of one chapatti, not taking all or even half of it. Everyone loved her. They wanted to give her foodstuffs, but she never accepted them. She never wore nice clothing. She wore only worn and torn white cloth, and she was satisfied by this. She had no electricity, and no facilities at all.

Then, by continually hearing and developing her Krsna consciousness, she became totally renounced. When she became twenty-five years old her Gurudeva told her, "You should go to Radha-Kunda, to the place of Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, and do bhajana like him. And also take that nice elderly devotee."

For the next twenty-five years Saci devi remained in the renounced order, doing madhukari (begging) and somehow maintaining her life. There was no problem in maintaining herself, and therefore she used to perform bhajana day and night. She did not sleep, even at night.

After twenty-five years her Guru, now very old, called her and said, "You should now go to Nilacala, near the Gambira of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and you should remain there for some time. There you will become siddha, perfect; so don't delay. Also, you should discover the place of Sarvabhuma Bhattacharya. At present it is in ruins. No one is taking care of it and practically no one knows about its existence. So you should go and discover it, make a very simple temple there, worship there, live there, and you should take the prasadam of Jagannatha.

That elderly lady was now gone, and therefore Saci devi went there alone. Somehow she came in the same way that Sri Sanatana Gosvami came from Vraja Mandala to Jagannatha Puri, traveling for many days on foot. You cannot imagine how she came.

Once in Puri, Saci devi discovered the place of Sarvabhuma Bhattacharya. She made a hut of leaves and began to live there, chanting and remembering Krsna. In the evenings she used to give classes on Rasa Pancadyaya (the five chapters in Srimad Bhagavatam 10th Canto regarding rasa-lila). Sometimes she spoke on Venu-gita, and sometimes on other very important subjects of Srimad Bhagavatam.

When giving class, tears would come to Saci devi's eyes. All the residents of Puri were attracted, and even the King used to come in disguise to hear from her. The King made a proposal: "I want to give something to you. I want to build you a nice hut, and I want to give you a donation." Saci devi refused the donation and said, "I don't want a donation from any king."

One day, on Makhara-sankranti, all were going to take bath in the Ganges, which was hundreds of miles away. At that time Saci devi made up her mind: "I should also go to the Ganges to take bath." She made this determination in her mind, and she was going to go, but at midnight she saw, "Oh, the Ganges is coming." There was a very heavy, roaring current. As though by magic, she found herself in that Ganges, where lakhs and lakhs persons were taking bath. The current in the Ganges took her to the temple of Jagannatha, and then it entered and touched the feet of Jagannatha. [The Ganges originally came from the feet of Jagannathadeva, because He is Krsna Himself. When Sri Vamanadeva took the universe away from Bali Maharaja, His foot went through the universal covering and touched the Causal Ocean. A drop of that Causal Ocean thus came into the universe as the Ganges. It is also said that Ganges is originally a sakhi of Srimati Radhika from Goloka Vrndavana. It can therefore be said that Jagannatha Himself, in the form of the Ganges, picked Saci devi up and brought her to His lotus feet.] She was now there at Jagannatha's feet, and the door was closed. No one else was there.

In the morning the priest came, opened the door, and thousands and thousands of persons

came in to take darsana. The priest saw that lady and said, "Oh, why did you come here? To steal the ornaments of Jagannatha?"

Saci devi was absorbed in Krsna, thinking, "Krsna is so merciful. Ganges came to me, made me take bath, and her current took me to the lotus feet of Jagannatha." She could not answer that priest, however. [It is prohibited for a devotee to reveal his or her realizations, and moreover, no one would have believed her.] She was thus taken to jail as if she were a thief.

During the night Jagannatha gave a dream to the King, and also to the prominent pujari. Saci devi would now become famous as Gangamata Thakurani or Gangamata Gosvamini, due to her being carried by the Ganges. Jagannatha told them, "Go at once and beg forgiveness. Bring Gangamata Thakurani in a golden chariot, with drums and all other paraphernalia to make a royal reception and royal procession. Also, you should become a disciple of that lady, along with your priests and all others prominent persons."

The king awoke and at once went to the jail with golden chariots, a large crowd, and a royal reception. He brought her to her cottage and said, "Jagannatha has told me, "You should go and take shelter of that devotee. And, if you do not take initiation from her, I will finish your whole dynasty." Along with all his councilors and others, he now began to fast and pray, "Be pleased to give us initiation very soon." Gangamata Thakurani replied, "My Guru has not told me to do this. I don't want to make any disciples." Jagannatha then ordered her, "For Me, to please Me, you should make disciples." After that she accepted them.

The king then promised, "I will give some land for Sarvabhuma Bhattacharaya, and I will make a very good temple there. I know that you have come from your Gurudeva for this." He made a temple, but Gangamata Thakurani was always living in the temple of her heart. Her temple was there.

She continued to give classes, and all the residents of Puri, as well as the highly elevated devotees, used to attend. One day, while she was absorbed in chanting and remembering the pastimes of Krsna, a brahmana from Jaipur came to her. That brahmana had been serving the Deity of Raya Kisora. Who is Krsna Himself. Krsna had told him in a dream, "You should take me to Puri and give me to Gangamata Thakurani." The Deity continued, "She will serve me. If you don't do this I will curse you. You are not doing proper service to me. Sometimes you give offerings and sometimes not. You sometimes give Me bath and sometimes not. You are not doing service as you were before. So please go there and give Me to her. Otherwise, I will curse you, and your dynasty will also be finished."

That brahmana then took that very beautiful Thakurji in a basket, and walked on foot for many months until he came to Puri. Now he approached Gangamata Thakurani and requested her, "Thakurji has come. Please take Him and serve Him. She refused and said, "I am doing manasi-seva in the line of Srila Rupa Gosvami. I cannot do all this. I have no time to worship and do all these things."

The brahmana became very worried and thought, "What to do?" Gangamata Thakurani had a Tulasi garden. That night the brahmana left the Deity in the midst of her Tulasi garden and fled. At four the next morning, Raya Kisora, that is, Syama Raya, said to Gangamata, "You are neglecting

Me. I came to have your service, your love and affection, and you are neglecting me. I'm thirsty; I'm so hungry. So please take me. Prepare something and offer that to Me." Gangamata Thakurani then went to see that Deity. Charmed, and took Him in her arms. She brought Him inside the temple and began worshipping Him there, and still now that vigraha is there.

When the king heard about this, he thought, "I am fortunate to be the disciple of this great devotee."

All the ladies should try to be like Gangamata Thakurani. She never even dreamed of marrying any worldly person. I have come to help you to become a devotee like this. The world is like a fire, a burning forest fire. We have seen such a big fire in Florida. It burned for miles, and the government could not do anything. The burning forest fire of material existence is greater than this. We are in that fire, and we can never be saved as long as we are in material consciousness. If someone puts ghee in the fire, what will happen? It will become bigger. You will not be able to be saved.

The father of Yadu Maharaja, Yayati, had so many very beautiful wives, but he was not satisfied. When he was old he wanted to take the youthful age of his son, but Jadu Maharaja refused and told him, "This life is only meant to serve Krsna. If you were a pure devotee, I would have been very happy to give you my youth." Yayati then asked his second son, Puru. He said, "Puru, you are my very dear, darling son. Please give me your youth. I want to further taste material pleasure. My thirst has not been quenched." Puru replied, "O father, I came from you, and so I'm giving you my youth." Yayati thus became young, and for many thousands of years he engaged in sense gratification. He was not satisfied, however, and one day he thought, "What silly things am I doing?" He quickly returned his youth to his son, and then left everything and went in the forest.

This history shows that the world is a burning fire. The fire in the sea is thousands of times greater than the forest fire, and we are in that fire. We should try to know all these truths. Don't waste your time. Try to develop your Krsna Consciousness. If you are married, there is no harm in that. Along with your wife and children you should try to be detached. There must be some sense of duty, but no attachment at all. You should think, "I must serve my wife (or husband) and children because they are eternal servants of Krsna. For this reason I should help them."

Male devotees should try to become like Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Srila Sanatana Gosvami, and Srila Rupa Gosvami. Lady devotees should become like Gangamata Thakurani, Jahnava Thakurani, and Hemalata Thakurani. Sometimes Jahnava Thakurani exhibited four arms. [Jahnava Thakurani is the eternal potency of Lord Nityananda. Nityananda has two potencies, Jahnava and Vasuda. The son of Vasuda devi is the incarnation of Godhead, Bhirabhadra, He was searching a guru and was recommended to take shelter of Jahnava Thakurani, but he thought, "She is my mother. How can she be my guru?" One early morning, after passing and just before taking her bath, Jahnava Thakurani was undressed from the waist up, as was the custom for Indian ladies. Bhirabhadra saw her in that condition, standing by a well, and became shy. She immediately manifested two more arms, and with them she covered her breasts. Bhirabhadra then offered his pranama to her and took initiation.]

Don't waste your time. Remain in your positions. If you are married, that is okay. If you are not married, if you are renounced, that is okay. If you are not renounced, that is okay. But hear hari-

katha wherever you are and in whatever position you are. Offer pranama to that place where hari-katha is being spoken. Offer pranama to the organisers, and offer satstang-pranama to the speaker and to the whole audience. Then, very soon you will have sadhana-bhakti, bhava-bhakti and prema-bhakti. Try to realize all these things. These are truths.

Gaura premande hari hari bol.

[at a darsana given one day later, an Indian guest asked Srila Narayana Maharaja about the benefits of giving donations on the auspicious day of Makhara-sankranti. Srila Maharaja replied that the best and only really valuable donation to give is hari-katha and Krsna consciousness.]