

TRIDANDI GOSWAMI SRI SRIMAD BHAKTIVEDANTA NARAYANA MAHARAJA'S
Return to Mathura
& His observance of the Vyasa Puja Celebration of
SRILA BHAKTI PRAJANA KESAVA GOSVAMI MAHARAJA

Kesavaji Gaudiya Matha
21-22 February 2000.

Srila Narayana Maharaja arrived in Mathura from Delhi at about 8.00pm. There were about 300 devotees present. The temple was gorgeously decorated with thousands of strings of marigolds and other flowers, creating the shapes of canopies, domes, tents, doorways, curtains and lattice kunjās. There were also opulent cloth canopies. Sri Sri Radha-Vinoda Biharī, Sriman Mahāprabhu, Srila Govardhana, and the diety of Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja met Srila Narayana Maharaja in their outfits of gold, blue and silver. When the welcome kirtana ended, Srila Narayana Maharaja took a seat, and Rasananda prabhu led Gurupuja, 'Gurudeva kripa-bindu diya kara ei dase...', as the pujari performed the aratika. Then Srila Narayana Maharaja gave his opening speech, on the subject of guru-nistha.

He said that even if one has ananya bhakti—even to Srimati Radhika—his bhakti will be zero if he has no guru-nistha, great faith in Guru. He repeated the hindi expression, "One should take his life in the palm of his hand". In other words, the disciple should perform any service, even a dangerous one, for Sri Gurudeva. He should sacrifice any mundane relationships, any desire, and any activity, for guru-seva. If the guru says, "Jump", you jump. He shared with the Indian devotees that everywhere he went in the West, at every airport, hundreds of western devotees from all over the world would gather to greet him. He asked rhetorically why this was so. And only he could give his own surprising answer. He said it was not due to he, himself, as Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayan Goswami Maharaja, that he was getting so much honor and regard. Rather, it was due to the guru-nistha in his heart. Because his life is totally absorbed in his own guru, therefore people are coming to him.

At the end of his talk he announced that the next morning, on the occasion of the sacred appearance day of his beloved Guru Maharaja, Nitya-lila-pravista om visnupada astottara-sata Sri Srimad Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, we would all meet just before 10:00 am for bhajan, kirtan and glorifications. Independent as he is, instead of coming down at 10:00 am, he came down at 7:00am, just after the bhajans, proceeding mangala arotika. Fortunately, many of us were there. Gurudeva requested Sheshayi brahmacari, who is himself a disciple of Srila Bhakti Prajana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, and who also had association with our Srila Prabhupada, to sing "Gurudeva! Kripa-bindu diya..." After the bhajan, Srila Gurudeva explained the meaning of the song. He said that we should always remember his Guru Maharaja and we should pray to the lotus feet of Sri Gurudeva, and remember him. We pray that he gives us a drop of his mercy, so that we can become more humble than a blade of grass. We may try to do that on our own, but without Guru's mercy our attempts will be ruined and disturbed. In order to become 'amanina manadena', that is, in order to have the power to give all respects to others and be free from any desire for self-respect, we must weep to Sri Gurudeva and get his mercy. Then, "sakala sahane bala diya koro, nija mane sprha-hina", we can reconcile and tolerate all problems. Srila Gurudeva then quoted the next verse: "sakale sammana korite sakati, deha natha-jathajatha." Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura is praying to Sri Gurudeva to have the power to honor all living beings according to their quality. Reiterating what he had said in his welcome address the night before, Srila Gurudeva said that we should also honor juniors. In bhakti there is no junior or senior in one sense.

Srila Narayana Maharaja gave an example in history. Srila Krsnadas Kaviraja Gosvami, the revered author of Sri Caitanya-Caritamrita, once invited many devotees to his house for a festival. The guest of honor was Minaketan Ramadasa, a pure devotee of Lord Nityananda Prabhu. He was always in great happiness. Whoever paid obeisances to him, he would joke with him and slap him with his flute. When he entered the assembly, everyone stood up to show him respect—except for the pujari, Gunarnava Misra. Because this pujari had been repeatedly hearing the criticism of Sri Nityananda prabhu from his employer, the elder brother of Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja, he had become implicated. Seeing the offense of the pujari, Minaketan Ramadasa declared, “Here is the second Romaharsana.” (Romaharsana did not show respect to Lord Balaram). Later Minaketan Ramadasa forgot the incident and did not take further offense from the pujari, who was a kanistha and merely influenced by the elder brother.

Seeing the behavior of Mineketan Ramadasa, the older brother of Krsnadasa Kaviraja told his brother, “Why glorify Nityananda Prabhu? Why not only Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is Bhagavan Himself?” Not understanding that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Nityananda Prabhu are the same tattva, He said that if Nityananda Prabhu is also Bhagavan, then He should at least be renounced like Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu took sannyasa, but Nityananda Prabhu, even after taking the renounced order, married twice. The brother could not understand who were the wives of Sri Nityananda Prabhu, who is Balaram Himself. His wife, Jahnava, is the root of Baladeva’s wife Revati in Dvaraka. Sri Radhika Herself gave up Her own place on the left side of Krsna, so that her younger sister Ananga Manjari, who is none other than Jahnava herself, could take that exalted position. The result of criticizing Lord Nityananda Prabhu was that Sri Minaketan Ramadasa, out of great anger, broke his flute and left the courtyard of Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja. Because of this, Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja’s brother was ruined and became an atheist.

This was the third class in the last week that Gurudeva had given about Minaketan Ramadasa. We understood that he wanted us to take it deeply in our heart, and be very careful to not criticize Sri Guru Vaisnavas, or their dear servants (Sri Nityananda Prabhu is adi Guru). If we see a fault in a Vaisnava, it is actually a fault in our vision.

After his Srila Gurudeva quoted Sri Manah Siksa. “Na dharman nadharmam sruti-gana niruktam kila kuru...” (sloka 2), Sri Raghunatha Das Gosvami is requesting his mind to do neither religious activities nor irreligious activities. If the kanistha adhikari does not follow vedic religious injunctions, he will perform sin. However, the guru-sevaka, the disciple who has guru-nistha (unwavering dedication to guru-seva), is not under the control of Vedic injunctions. Sri Nityananda Prabhu is also not under its control. In fact He breathes the Vedas. For guru-seva, a disciple can do anything. The root idea of bhakti is guru-nistha.

Srila Gurudeva then repeated from his previous evening’s talk: “Even if one has ananya bhakti to Krsna, without guru-nistha his bhakti disappears. ‘Bhagavati akincanana’. The deepest conclusion of the Vedas is ananya bhajana. The other, less important regulations, therefore, cannot control a person who is so engaged.

Without guru-nistha all other devotional qualities are zero. They are only apparent. If we try to please guru and not guru’s sevakas, then guru is not pleased.

Srila Gurudeva gave the example of his Guru Maharaja, who gave up his white clothes, and took the sannyasi garments of Srila Prabhupada in order to protect Srila Prabhupada’s life. He was once criticised by his godbrothers in a letter to Srila Prabhupada. They said that he was not really a vaisnava. He rarely attended mangala aratika, he was always going here and there collecting money, and meeting dignitaries, he did not shave his head, he wore opulent dhotis and kurtas, etc. Srila Prabhupada replied, “Anyone who does not respect Vinoda brahmacari is not a Vaisnava.” He said those Godbrothers should simply see his guru-nistha and guru-seva. If we give proper respect, then we can chant Hare Krsna happily.

“Kabe heno kripa labhiya e jana krtartha hoibe natha.” Srila Gurudeva said that we must have this type of intelligence. “Tomara karuna sara.” His mercy is everything to us. If it was not for his Guru Maharaja, it would have been very hard for aspiring devotees to come in this line of Srila Rupa Gosvami. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja (our Srila Prabhupada) tried to bring his disciples in this line. He wanted that they would at least become madhyama-adhikari. But he saw that they could not follow him at that time, so he requested Srila Gurudeva to help them after his departure, in order that we come properly in line.

Srila Gurudeva said that his Gurudeva was a greatly poetic writer, following his predecessors who wrote such kirtans as “srita-kamalakuca-mandala he...” and Sri Radha-kripa-kataksa-stava-rajā: makhesvari kriyesvari svadesvari suresvari.

He said, “So today is my Guru Maharaja’s appearance day. How merciful he was, we cannot imagine”. He continued that in all the universes, Goloka Vrindavan is the topmost place. And of all worship, Radha-Krsna worship is the highest. In Radha Krsna worship, unnata ujvala rasa is the best. Of all the gopis, even among Lalita and Vishaka, only Sri Radhika has madanakya mahabhava. Krsna also has mahabhava, but not on the stage of madanakya. In order to have this, He had to come as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Even Lalita and Visakha, therefore, could not give what Sri Rupa manjari came to give. No money can purchase this. How close Sri Rupa manjari is to Sri Radhika we cannot know. She came as Sri Rupa Gosvami. Lalita as Sri Svarupa Damodar Gosvami, and Sri Ramananda Raya is Vishaka. They all manifested in this world, and they wrote such beautiful verses as “anarpita-carim cirat karunayavatirnah kalau..” and “radha krsna pranaya vrikiti...” We could never understand these concepts without these verses. These acaryas are our only friends. Now we cannot realize their mercy, but if we are sincere, we will realize later, how their love is millions of times greater than the love of the best of mothers.

Srila Gurudeva said that his Guru Maharaja had no connection with his vamsa-parampara, family tree. Though he was very aristocratic, highly educated and wealthy, this was not his glory. His connection with bhagavata parampara and guru parampara is his glory.

Srila Gurudeva then told two pastimes of his Guru Maharaja which he had told on several previous occasions: Vinodabihari and his 15 or 20 friends, of whom he was the leader, used to go to school together. He was just a child at that time. One night he did not come home from school until about 10:00 pm. His mother, who was very strict, was waiting for him at the door with a stick. She asked where he was, but he put his head down and was simply silent and humble. She repeated, saying, “If you don’t tell me where you were, I will beat you.” He then very humbly told her, “The money you give me to buy things for myself, I save that, and my friends do the same. We made our own organization to help poor people who have no help with eating or drinking or hospitalization. We go to the villages where there is no one to help. Today there was one very old lady with cholera. We took her to the hospital and made sure she was taken care of. When she was feeling a little better I came home.” Vinodabihari’s mother looked at his very soft and delicate body. Seeing how he had forgotten his own welfare, she melted, the stick fell from her hand, and she cried and said, “From now on I will never discipline you.” When Srila Gurudeva told this story, he also wept.

It was the two aunties of Bhakti Prajana Keshava Maharaja, the first and second female disciples of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who had taken Guru Maharaja to meet Srila Prabhupada for the first time in 1915. Soon after that he took harinam initiation and continued his college attendance. His teachers were atheists. They taught Srimad Bhagavatam and Sri Caitanya-Caritamṛta with atheistic and mayavada interpretations. Vinodabihari refuted their arguments strongly and finally left school. After this he joined the Math. Soon after that his mother wrote to Srila Prabhupada that she was very sick and she

wanted that he send Vinodabihari home. Srila Prabhupada ordered him to go home and visit his mother; but he did not go. Instead he hid in a room in the Matha and performed harinama all day. Someone told this to Srila Prabhupada who then called him, asking, “Why didn’t you go?” Guru Maharaja replied, “After millions of births I had met you by your mercy, and by your mercy I can end the cycle of birth and death. If I go home to my mother, and on her deathbed she requests me to remain home and manage her affairs, how can I refuse her? In each birth one gets a mother and a father, but it is very rare that one gets a relationship with Krsna and Guru.” This is guru-nistha. When Srila Prabhupada heard this, his heart melted.

Srila Gurudeva then told something about Ananta Vasudeva, who became the acarya of the Gaudiya Matha after the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada. In the beginning he manifested so many good qualities: he was talented in singing, speaking and writing; he was a sruti-dhara, expert at vicara, analyzing things from all points of view, and so forth. Srila Bhaktiprajnan Kesava Gosvami Maharaja was known to be expert at management, but he was not known as a great scholar. In the Matha there was a rule that no one was allowed to read Srila Jiva Gosvami’s Sat Sandarba, or the Tenth canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, what to speak of the rasika books of Sri Rupa and Raghunath dasa Gosvami’s, nor they were allowed to sing “vibharari sesa..” and a few other songs because of their highly rasika and esoteric nature. One day Ananta Vasudeva saw Guru Maharaja reading Sat Sandarba and criticized him. Guru Maharaja said: “You can test me on any aspect of this.” When tested, he showed that he was a much greater scholar than Ananta Vasudeva himself. Ananta Vasudeva was astounded, and after he became acarya, and especially after he left the post, he recommended his disciples and others to learn tattva and bhakti from Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Maharaja.

Now it was about 8:30 am, and Srila Gurudeva ended his class by saying: “First I offer my prayers in the lotus-feet of my Guru Maharaja and the lotus feet of my guru parampara, then at the feet of parama- dayalu, Sri Nityananda Prabhu and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and then at the feet of Sri Sri Radha-Krsna and Their associates.

Prema Prayojana braamacari gave a translation of the lecture to the western devotees. Then at 10:00 am there was more kirtan, and Srila Gurudeva returned from his room on the roof to his vyasasana. He did not sit on the it however. Instead, he sat on the floor next to it, along with two other senior sannyasis from another Matha. One braamacari came and brought a garland for Srila Gurudeva, but he was disturbed that garlands and chandan were not brought for his sannyasi guests.

Srila Gurudeva comenced the ceremony by saying that, there is no parampara like this one. Even Krsna became golden and took initiation in this parampara. It is incomparable.

Then after one of the sannyasis spoke in Bengali, Sriman Hari priya braamacari spoke in Hindi, and then Gurudeva gave his own glorification of his Guru Maharaja in Hindi. (All these three classes of Srila Gurudeva were given in Hindi). He began his lecture by saying that today is a great day. When Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu came, all His associates came, and when Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura came, his associates also came and preached all over the world. Among of his associates, his Guruji is special, and one of the greatest. Srila Gurudeva told four beautiful pastimes. One was about the difference between about Nimbarka and Nimbaditya: The second was about the Muslims in Mayapura; the third was about paramapujapada Srila Vamana Maharaja being sruti-dhara; and the fourth was about his guru Marahaja risking his life by putting on Srila Prabhupada’s sannyasa clothing and taking his danda. You can read all these lilas in the new Biography. Srila Gurudeva stressed that all of his disciples and followers read the entire book.

Srila Gurudeva continued that after the departure of Srila Prabhupada Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Thakur there was a dark time for the Gaudiya Matha. Preaching, publications and Navadvipa parikrama had come to a standstill, but his Guru Maharaja revived them all. Srila Gurudeva requested that we read those chapters in the Biography dealing with his Guru Maharaja's five prapanda's, essays defeating different sects of sahajiya babajis and other unbonafied groups who were preaching against the true Gaudiya Vaisnava line. (Srila Gurudeva is printing a book of these in English to distribute freely or cheaply in mass in India, and especially in Vraja-mandala)

Towards the end of his class, a prominent disciple of Gurupadpadma Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada came in the temple room—Pujapada Paramadvaiti Swami. Srila Gurudeva requested him to come and sit with him. He then ended his class by saying, "We are all in one Gaudiya family. Our Gurudeva is serving Sri Sri Radha-Krsna in the line of Raghunath Das Gosvami. Money and other material things will not suffice as a presentation for Vyasa puja. The only very good present is absorption in Krsna bhajan. This is real puspanjali."

Srila Gurudeva then requested Paramadvaita Swami to speak. The respected Maharaja said that he had recently finished reading Param gurudeva's biography. He said how fortunate he was to have had such an extraordinary experience. He could understand how Param gurudeva was full of love and all capacity to please Sri Guru and Vaisnavas. He concluded his glorification by saying that by attachment to devotees of this caliber we can get love for Sri Sri Radha-Krsna. We all have attachment in this world, and we are embarrassed by these attachments. The attachment to such stalward Vaisnavas as Srila Bhakti Prajana Keshava Gosvami Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Pramode Puri Maharaja, Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja and others will pull us out of the entanglement of material attachment and will bring us to Sri Sri Radha and Krsna.

Gurudeva told his audience (by now 500) that now we will have puspanjali, aratika and prasadam. He said that everyone should return at 4:00 pm for kirtan and continuation of Hari Katha.
Gaura Premanande!

Your servants,
Syamarani dasi & Vrinda-devi dasi