

Tridandisvami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja  
DISAPPEARANCE DAY OF  
**SRILA BHAKTI-RAKSAKA SRIDHARA GOSVAMI  
MAHARAJA**

Govardhana, India Oct 19th, 2003

I met Prapujya-carana Srila Sridhara Maharaja in 1946, at which time he did not have any disciples. He was with my Gurudeva, Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, from 1942. He left the Sri Caitanya Gaudiya Matha and came with Guru Maharaja when Guru Maharaja established the Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti in 1942. At that time over one hundred disciples of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada were with Gurudeva. He established a Matha in Navadvipa, he requested Pujiyapada Srila Sridhara Maharaja, though our Guru Maharaja was senior to him, to be president, and he used to go there to meet with him. Srila Gurudeva joined the Matha in 1915 and he took shelter of Srila Prabhupada. Srila Sridhara Maharaja joined later, perhaps in 1926, and he was therefore junior to my Guru Maharaja. Because he was a senior Vaisnava, Srila Sridhara Maharaja used to hold him in very high regard.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja, whose brahmacari name was Ramananda Brahmacari, had previously been admitted into law-college in Calcutta. One day he came by chance to the Gaudiya Matha in Navadvipa where Srila Prabhupada was residing. When he reached there he saw a brahmacari sitting on a chair, in white dress, and holding a cane. Many brahmacaris and even sannyasis were coming to that devotee, offering him sastang dandavat pranamas, and inquiring from him. Keeping his feet on the table and moving his feet, he would reply to those sannyasis and brahmacaris, and again they would offer pranama to him. Ramananda brahmacari wondered, "Who is this person in white clothing, a cane in his hand and wearing a very beautiful dhoti and chaddar, sitting on a chair? He is so young in age and yet all the senior devotees are offering pranama to him. Why? Who is he?" He asked someone nearby this question and that person replied, "Do you not know? He is Vinoda Da." "Da" means "elder brother." Srila Sridhar Maharaja asked, "Why are all respecting him?" That person replied, "He established this matha. He has taken out all the Muslim graves and thrown them in the Ganges, and in one day he changed a graveyard into beautiful gardens. He also controlled all Muslims in the area. At first, when the brahmacaris and sannyasis used to go out for begging, the Muslims would make sarcastic comments, but when he came he established the glories of the Gaudiya math Srila Prabhupada and now the devotees are respected."

Srila Sridhara Maharaja then approached Guru Maharaja, who took him to Srila Prabhupada, and there he heard very deep and powerful hari-katha. He decided on that same day to give up studying and all other worldly engagements, and join the Gaudiya matha. Srila Prabhupada told him, "It will be better if you complete your study of law and then come," but Srila Sridhara Maharaja decided not to. He left his house and joined the Gaudiya mission.

Srila Sridhara Maharaja was a very good philosopher – like our Guru Maharaja. Guru Maharaja knew the philosophy of all the Vaisnava Sampradayas, like Sankara, Madhava, Ramanuja, Visnusvami and Nimbadiya. He knew all philosophy; it was as though everything was written on his hand. Pujyapada Srila Sridhara Maharaja was also a very great philosopher – he was the best of philosophers.

When my Guru Maharaja and Pujapada Sridhara Maharaja used to discuss philosophical topics, they would defeat each other's arguments and establish their own point of view. Guru Maharaja would defeat all of Srila Sridhara Maharaja's arguments, from top to bottom, and then establish his view. Then Pujyapada Sridhara Maharaja would defeat all of Guru Maharaja's arguments and established his own view. Thus, by their discussions all the sannyasis and brahmacaris present would learn so much.

Each year I would go and take darsana with Guru Maharaja of Srila Sridhara Maharaja, and I witnessed how much love and affection these godbrothers had for each other. They always respected each other. A devotee may have been aged, but if he was sincere they gave him the appropriate respect; and I have learned something about this from both of them. I always give respect to my superiors. Throughout my devotional life I have given respect to Srila Trivikrama Maharaja, and Srila Vamana Maharaja, and they also gave respect to each other and to me. You should try to learn all the principles of Vaisnava etiquette.

Srila Sridhar Maharaja was a great "bhakta-vatsala", that is, he was so generous and kind. Though this is something that should not be told I am bound to tell it – otherwise you will not be able to realize his kindness. Even if one of his disciples did wrong, even if he was lusty and after having spent many years in the matha he married, even if a disciple was a great thief and stole vast amounts of money, still Sridhar Maharaja was very polite, generous, and merciful towards him. He even dragged a disciple from his household life and again established him in sannyasa. I will not tell the name of this disciple, but I think that you all know who he is. It is an open secret. I have seen so many such incidences. He was truly bhakta vatsalya.

I have heard his Sri Premadhama Deva Stotram, as well as his Sri Prabhupada-Padma-Stavakah:

sujanarbuda-radhita-pada-yugam  
yuga-dharma-dhurandhara-patra-varam  
varadabhya-dayaka-pujya-padam  
pranamami sada prabhupada-padam

["O Srila Prabhupada, your beautiful lotus feet are cherished by millions and millions of the purest and most qualified devotees, and you are the most

competent personality to preach the recognized process for this era. Your sacred lotus feet are adorable, as they openly grant fearlessness and bestow the highest benediction to all living entities. I eternally offer my respects unto that charming effulgence that shines forth from the radiant lotus toe-tips of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada. "]

He composed this Prabhupada-astakam at the beginning of his life in the matha, and it still is sung in all branches of the Gaudiya Matha. This kirtana is extremely beautiful and ornamental: "Sujanarbuda radhita pada yugam, yuga dharma dhurandhara patra varam". It contains many alankara (ornaments of language). Besides this astakam he has composed many Sanskrit kirtanas and verses.

His Premadhama Deva Stotram is dedicated to Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. It is marvelous – extraordinary – and it has no comparison. Only our six Gosvamis, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura and others like them used to write like this, and our Guru Maharaja has also written in this magnificent manner:

radha-cinta-nivesena yasya kantir vilopita  
sri-krsna-caranam vande radhalingita-vigraham

["I worship the lotus feet of that form of Sri Krsna when, due to being thoroughly immersed in separation from Srimati Radhika (who is displaying mana, Her mood of jealous anger), His own dark complexion vanishes and He assumes Her bright, golden luster; or I worship the lotus feet of Sri Krsna as He is embraced by Srimati Radhika (after Her mana has broken)."] (Sri-Radha-Vinoda-Vihari-Tattvastakam, verse 1]

How beautiful and ornamental! Both Srila Sridhara Maharaja and my Guru Maharaja were greatly learned in Sanskrit. When I compare them to myself I see that I have no knowledge and no ability in Sanskrit. In comparison to them I am very insignificant and unqualified. Srila Vamana Maharaja, Srila Trivikrama Maharaja and myself at first decided not to take sannyasa because we considered ourselves unqualified and ignorant – especially myself. Even now I am not giving anything new. Devotees throughout the world come to hear my classes, but I don't understand what is there in those classes. Then I consider that something is there, but it didn't come from me. It came from my guru-paramapara. It came from what I have heard from my guru-parampara – Srila Rupa Gosvami, Srila Sanatana Gosvami, Srila Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, Srila Krsnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Srila Prabhupada, my Gurudeva, Parama-pujapada Sridhara Gosvami Maharaja, Parapuja-carana Srila Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja and others like them. I never say anything new in my classes. Only my voice is different.

Someone may say, "You are somewhat different from Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja." I reply, "Yes I am different, because he was somewhat shorter than me, and he went to college and mission schools whereas I never went to such

schools. He has so many great qualities whereas I have no such qualities, and there is sometimes a difference in our choice of words. We present the same wine in different bottles. The wine is not different. I am not explaining anything new. Srila Swami Maharaja has also not explained anything new, nor has Pujoyapada Sridhara Maharaja. They have also given the same thing in new bottles. They presented the same ideas with different words. Srila Sridhara Maharaja and my Gurudeva have taught the same philosophy and principles as taught by Srila Jiva Gosvami. They have not given anything new.

Krsna-bhakti is the aim and object of all human beings. You can tell it in a different style, but the wine must be the same. The color of the glass may change, but the wine must be the same.

Parama-pujoyapada Sridhara Maharaja had a great friendship with my Gurudeva, and also with Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja. How learned he must have been that a scholar like Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja accepted him like a siksa-guru. Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja preached throughout the entire world – in every country. He brought about great change in religious practice in the world, and he has said that his diksa-guru is Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Prabhupada and his siksa-guru is Srila Bhakti-raksaka Sridhara Maharaja and my Gurudeva Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja. Not only did Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja accept my Guru Maharaja like a siksa-guru, but he accepted him as his sannyasa-guru. Parama-pujoyapada Srila Sridhara Maharaja, Srila Bhaktivilasa Tirtha Maharaja and many other god-brothers were present when Srila Swami Maharaja wanted to take sannyasa, but he took sannyasa from my Gurudeva. Why? He felt, "I will take sannyasa from he whose heart is the most similar to mine." He thus came to Mathura and took sannyasa.

Both Srila Sridhara Maharaja and Srila Swami Maharaja are very exalted and learned persons, following in the line of philosophy of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura.

I have spoken some points, but I cannot even touch the glories of these great personalities. They were all transcendental, and I am speaking about them from the platform of this material world, not from the transcendental world. I have not realized the meaning of transcendental. Because they are from the transcendental world, I cannot properly glorify them.

Gaura Premanandi Hari Haribol.

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