

# **An Offering to SRILA BHAKTIVEDANTA VAMANA MAHARAJA**

By B. V. Madhava Maharaja

[Srla Narayana Maharaja went to Navadvipa on November 15 and returned two days later. Then, amidst many tears shed throughout the Sri Giridhari Gaudiya Matha in Govardhana, and along with 1000 international parikrama pilgrims and other guests, he observed the disappearance ceremony of Srla Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja. During the ceremony he called on several disciples of Srla Vamana Maharaja, to glorify him.

Called upon by Srla Narayana Maharaja, Sripad Madhava Maharaja wept intermittently as he spoke. The reader may not be familiar with all the honorific titles used by him, so here is some help: "Paramaradhya gurupadapadma" means "my supremely worshipful diksa Gurudeva" or "my supremely worshipful siksa Gurudeva", or both. When he uses the word "Srla Gurudeva" he refers to his siksa-guru, Srla Narayana Maharaja, and when he uses the word Guru Maharaja he refers to his diksa-guru, Srla Vamana Maharaja. Because of the importance of the occasions (Srla Vamana Maharaja's disappearance day on Nov. 15, 2004, and also the anniversary of his appearance day on Jan. 5, 2005) we are submitting Sripad Madhava Maharaja's speech separately, in this document. The following is a transcription of his offering:]

First of all I pay my humble obeisances unto the lotus feet of my guru-padapadma, om visnupada parivrajakacarya astottara-sata Srla Bhaktivedanta Vamana Maharaja and om visnupada parivrajakacarya Srla Bhaktivedanta Srla Narayana Maharaja. I offer my dandavat pranama to all sannyasis and all Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis who have assembled here, to hear some hari-katha.

As you know, two days ago, on the tritiya-tithi [the third day of the waxing or waning moon] the President-Acarya of Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, our paramaradhya-gurupadapadma, Srla Bhaktivedanta Vamana Gosvami Maharaja has entered into nitya-lila. This was one day before the anniversary of the disappearance day of our param-gurudeva, nitya-lila pravista om visnupada Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Svami Maharaja.

Vrajendra-nandana Syamsundara performs many pastimes during Kartika month, and we have also seen that many of our acaryas have entered nitya-lila during this month. My elder god-brother Sripad Parivrajaka Maharaja has just offered his puspanjali (offering of heartfelt glorification). Srla Gurudeva has now ordered me to translate something of his offering, and also to offer my own puspanjali unto my Guru Maharaja's lotus feet.

From his childhood, Guru Maharaja was a sruti-dhara, which means that whatever he heard once, he never forgot.

He joined the Gaudiya Matha in 1931, during the time of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. His mother was a disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and his father was a disciple of our Paramgurudeva, Srila Bhaktiprajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja. Srila Prabhupada gave my Gurupadapadma harinama initiation, and after his departure he received second initiation from our Paramgurudeva.

Guru Maharaja used to say, “What is happening, please watch, and what is being spoken please listen – and don’t be very concerned to give your opinion about, or be involved with, the things that are happening in this world. If you want to enter the realm of bhajana, don’t try to show off to others how learned and expert you are. Try to hear from your guru-varga (disciplic succession) and senior Vaisnavas. If you wish to show that you are a very learned scholar and very expert, you will be cheated by those superiors. So be very careful.”

Whenever someone joined the Matha, Guru Maharaja would send him to Srila Gurudeva for training in bhakti. When I was first sent by him to Srila Gurudeva in Mathura I could not accept the climate; it was too hot. After a few months Guru Maharaja came there and I requested him, praying to his lotus feet, “Please take me with you to Navadvipa.”

Guru Maharaja told me, “Listen carefully. If you are with me, you will be able to serve me in so many respects. But then my god-brothers will criticize me. They will say, ‘Srila Vamana Maharaja came and kidnapped Srila Narayana Maharaja’s servant.’ Would this be a fair thing for me to do?” I said, “But this climate is not good for me.” Guru Maharaja gave so many arguments and I tried to defeat his arguments.

Then he asked me, “What is the duty and responsibility of a disciple?” I replied, “To please one’s guru in every respect.” Guru Maharaja replied, “Then your whole life must be given for the service of Srila Narayana Maharaja. Don’t see any difference between me and him. In that way you can do your bhajana and progress in Krsna Consciousness very easily. From now on, don’t complain to me about any Vaisnava, and don’t tell me that the climate in Mathura is not suitable.” From that day on I never asked Guru Maharaja to take me from here.

Whenever there was a serious matter to be considered, he would say, “I do not know anything. Please go to Srila Narayana Maharaja.”

When Gurudeva was preaching in Western countries, ISKCON arranged a procession in Mayapura to celebrate the appearance day of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada. My Guru Maharaja was in Navadvipa at that time, and some of the Vaisnavas were ready to go to Mayapura to join ISKCON’s

procession. When this news came to Guru Maharaja he asked the Vaisnavas there, “Where are you going? They replied, “We are going to Mayapura to join the ISKCON procession for the appearance day of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura.”

Guru Maharaja said, “No one can go from our Matha. Whoever will go from here, will go forever. There is no need to come back here.”

All became surprised, thinking, “He has never been so strict before.” They asked him, “Why did you say this? Guru Maharaja replied, “On one hand they say they respect us, but on the other hand they insult us in so many ways.”

One sannyasi asked, “How have they insulted you?” Guru Maharaja replied, “Our Vice-president-Secretary is preaching in western countries. They are trying to create chaos for him and they are criticizing him. I consider that they are not criticizing him, but directly criticizing me and my Guru Maharaja. So how can I allow any one of you to go and join their procession? No one may go. If you go, you will go forever.” If anyone criticized Srila Gurudeva or Srila Trivikrama Maharaja he would not tolerate it. He always respected Vaisnavas.

My Guru-Maharaja had so much nistha for his own Gurudeva, Srila Bhaktiprajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, that we cannot even understand its extent. He served his Gurudeva as his life and soul. When chaos came in the Gaudiya Matha after the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, many of his disciples were sent to jail on a false criminal charge of murder. Guru Maharaja was alone at the matha at that time, serving all the Vaisnavas, attending court, going to see the lawyers, marketing, cooking and cleaning utensils. At that time there was no gas, so he had to cook with wood. He did all these services alone.

Once there was a festival at the matha. Guru Maharaja was very sick, with a fever of 104. While he was lying on his bed, Paramgurudeva asked, “Where is Sajjana-sevaka? Why is he not cooking or performing any services?” Someone told him he had a high fever. He replied, “High fever? All the Vaisnavas have come. This is no time for him to have a high fever.” Parama-gurudeva entered to Guru Maharaja’s room and told him, “Sajjana-sevaka, get up. Go and cook; don’t delay.” If this had happened to us, we would have lost our faith and left the matha.

Relating to this incident, Guru Maharaja told me, “When my Gurudeva ordered me, I got out of bed and cooked and offered prasadam to all the Vaisnavas present. I was not aware that I had a fever. Then, after that I became very tired, returned to my bed, and again experienced a high fever.” How much power there is in a liberated soul’s speech!

Whatever order Paramgurudeva gave him, he carried that order on his head as his life and soul. Guru Maharaja was his scribe. Whatever Paramgurudeva would dictate, he would write at once. In Paramgurudeva's dictation there was no defect, and in my Guru Maharaja's writing there was no defect. We have heard this from Srila Gurudeva's lotus lips.

Before Srila Gurudeva traveled to the Gaudiya Matha in 1946, to join, he did not inform Paramgurudeva. He was coming to surrender unto his Gurudeva's lotus feet. When Gurudeva was on his way to Navadvipa by train, Paramgurudeva sent Guru Maharaja to the train station to search for him. Gurudeva had a big moustache at that time because he was a police officer. Seeing Gurudeva when he reached the station, Guru Maharaja approached him and asked, "Are you Tiwariji?" Gurudeva said, "How did you know?" Guru Maharaja said, "Srila Gurudeva sent me to pick you up at the railway station and to bring you to our matha in Navadvipa-dhama." He and Guru Maharaja had never seen each other before; how much internal connection they had!

I have heard from Srila Gurudeva's lotus lips that when he joined the Gaudiya Matha, my Guru Maharaja used to nourish him and others like a mother. Guru Maharaja would give Gurudeva cloth and all other necessities.

Srila Gurudeva, Srila Guru Maharaja and Srila Trivikrama Maharaja had such a close relationship. We have heard this from Srila Gurudeva so many times, and we have seen how Srila Gurudeva and Srila Trivikrama Maharaja had loving quarrels. Anyone who has had the fortune to associate and hear from Srila Trivikrama Maharaja can understand their loving relation. [see Endnote]

I have heard from Srila Gurudeva that Srila Guru Maharaja never praised himself. Never. He would accomplish so much, but he would never say, "I did this."

Our head office was in Chinchura and there, Guru Maharaja was working at a machine in the printing press. Once his thumb got crushed under the machine, and he wept bitterly from the pain. Paramgurudeva was a very grave personality, and at the same time he had so much affection for his disciples. Seeing the pain of my Guru Maharaja, he also wept bitterly, and he took him personally to Calcutta for treatment. Another time my Guru Maharaja was affected by disease, and Paramgurudeva sent him to the Himalayas for recovery.

Once, Paramgurudeva gave Guru Maharaja two pairs of shoes. Guru Maharaja asked, "Why did you bring two pairs of shoes for me? You are my Gurudeva, and yet you are bringing two pairs of shoes for me?"

Paramgurudeva replied, "You are young now. When you will be the father of many children, then you will understand how much love there is in a father's and mother's heart. Relating this pastime to us, Guru Maharaja told us, "At first I became very disturbed and thought, 'I have been with Gurudeva for so many

years, and I will have to go back to material life?’ Later I realized what my Gurudeva wanted to say to me – that so many disciples will come to me and I will realize how much love a guru has for his disciple.”

Our Gurupadapadma has now joined Lord Gauranga’s pastimes and Lord Krsna’s pastimes simultaneously – and from there he will bless us that we can enter Krsna Consciousness. He ordered me, “Never see a difference between myself and Srila Narayana Maharaja, and serve Srila Narayana Maharaja for your entire life.” So please bless me that I can serve Srila Gurudeva eternally.

Now we shall listen from Srila Gurudeva’s lotus lips and from other Vaisnavas.

[Endnote: These three were the first sannyasi initiates of Srila Bhakti-prajna Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, and they took sannyasa initiation together. They were often described as the three pillars of Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti.]

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