

Founder Acharaya His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Promode Puri Goswami Thakur

BHAGAVATA

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DHARMA

President & Acharaya His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Goswami Maharaj

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My most worshipful Lord Sri Krishna appeared in this age of deception (kali-yuga) in the form of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and today is His 536th Appearance Day festival. This day is a very important day for all the devotees who aspire to follow in the footsteps of Lord Chaitanya. Today, we should pray earnestly to the Lord for granting us spiritual strength to follow the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and to wholeheartedly partake in the congregational chanting of the Hare Krishna Mahamantra. Through this, divine love will awaken in our hearts. The Lord Himself came down in the guise of a devotee to show the world how to perform devotion. He manifested His pastimes for 48 years and His entire life is an example to us. In the first 24 years, He showed us how to live a life of a householder, and in the latter 24 years, how to observe the renounced order of life. He taught us that in all stages of life, Hare Krishna Mahamantra sankirtan should be central to our way of living, to break free from the shackles of material attachment, and to be eternally blissful.

*His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Bibudha Bodhayan Goswami Maharaj
President, Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math*



SRI CHAITANYA AND SRIDHAR

*kholā becā sevakera dekho bhāgya-sīmā
brahmā, śiva kānde jā'nra dekhiya
mahimā*

(CB. Madhya, 23rd Chapter, Text 492)

“Sridhar, a true devotee of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was nicknamed kholabecha as he traded bananas, banana stems (thor), banana flower (mocha), and banana leaves for a living. Seeing his endless fortune even Brahma and Shiva were in tears of joy.”

I would like to share with you all one pastime manifested by Lord Chaitanya (Mahaprabhu), which took place at Sridhar's humble house. Once, while doing nagar sankirtan with His followers, Mahaprabhu went to Sridhar's cottage. Mahaprabhu felt thirsty after much singing and dancing. Sridhar was financially so poor that he could not even afford a cup to offer water in, to Lord Chaitanya. While Lord Chaitanya danced in Sridhar's courtyard, He saw a water pot there with a little hole on the top of the pot. Mahaprabhu took the pot and drank whatever water was left in there. Sridhar was not materially wealthy, but seeing the high degree of Sridhar's spiritual wealth, Mahaprabhu visited his house and bestowed His blessings on Sridhar.

We know that Lord Chaitanya's sankirtan movement started from Srivas angan (at the house of Srivas Pandit), and from there Mahaprabhu took the movement to the entire area of Navadip Dham. Sridhar's angan (courtyard) is special because Mahaprabhu went to his home and quenched his thirst by drinking water there. We know from scriptures that the Lord will forcefully take something from his pure devotees.

*bhaktera anna prabhu kaḍi kaḍi khāy
abhaktera anna prabhu uluti nā chāy*

“The Lord will forcefully take the offerings made by a devotee, but He will not look at the offerings made by a non-devotee.”

Sridhar was a very dear devotee of Lord Chaitanya. His devotion was so much that the Lord Himself would visit Sridhar's banana stall to speak with Sridhar. Sridhar had a placard marked with prices in front of his stall so that he would not be bothered by customers' questions about the price and thus he could focus on his chanting. This however, did not stop Mahaprabhu. He would still visit the stall with the intention to speak with His devotee. At the end, He would run away with some bananas from Sridhar's stall.

For several years, young Mahaprabhu did this. Sridhar used to think that since Nimai Pandit belongs to a brahmin family, even though He is forcefully taking away the bananas, by letting Mahaprabhu take the bananas, he was doing brahmin seva. Sridhar did not know that Lord Chaitanya was the Supreme Lord Himself. Once, when Mahaprabhu was doing sankirtan in Srivas Pandit's house, He suddenly manifested His Divine form and announced to all devotees that whoever wished to receive any boon, they should ask from Him and He would grant it. Everyone was having their desires fulfilled. Sridhar was not present there. Lord Chaitanya sent some devotees to call Sridhar. When Sridhar appeared in the house of Srivas Pandit, in the vision of Sridhar, Lord Chaitanya was no longer the brahmin boy, but was non-different from Krishna's Shyamasundar form. Then, as soon as Sridhar saw this and realised that Nimai Pandit is not an ordinary young boy, He is Shyamasundar, Sridhar remembered how he would forcefully take his goods from the shop. Sridhar realised that the Lord was now bestowing His mercy on him, and was crying thinking that all that time he was unable to realise it.

One may question why other devotees were unable to see the form of Lord Chaitanya as



Shyamasundar. To explain this, I would like to narrate a verse spoken by Supreme Lord Sri Krishna in Bhagavad Gita:

*ye yathā mām prapadyante
tāms tathaiva bhajāmy aham*

BG 4.11

“The way the devotee prays to me, I manifest Myself in that way accordingly.”

During Navadwip Dham parikrama, we may have listened to the glories of Samudra Sen, at Samduragarh. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur’s writing explains that Yudhisthir Maharaj once sent his younger brother Bhimsen to befriend the Kings in the kingdoms surrounding their kingdom. When Bhimsen appeared in Samudragarh, Samudra Sen did not want to befriend Bhimsen even though he was less powerful than Bhimsen. Instead, Samudra Sen wanted to fight with Bhimsen and defeat him in battle. The reason for this was that Samudra Sen was a devotee of Lord Krishna, and had a strong desire to see Krishna. He believed that Krishna would not appear before him simply through prayers because his devotion was not strong enough. He knew that Bhimsen is a great devotee of the Lord and so, if he could trouble Bhimsen in any way, Bhima will pray to Krishna and Krishna would appear before them. With such thoughts and intentions, Samudra Sen challenged Bhima to a battle, instead of accepting his friendship.

To fulfil the desire of Samudra Sen, Krishna blessed him with mighty strength and power so that he could trouble the very powerful Bhima. This indeed placed Bhima in trouble who was struggling to defeat Samudra Sen. Seeing the might and power of Samudra Sen, naturally, Bhima started to pray to Lord Krishna.

Hearing Bhimsen’s prayers, Krishna appeared and Samudra Sen immediately put his weapons down, and on his knees, with folded palms, he began to pray to Krishna. Seeing this, Bhima became astonished

because he did not understand what was going on. Only Samudra Sen could see Krishna there, and no one else.

There is another event which I personally witnessed of how the Lord appears to His devotees. An incident which took place with my beloved spiritual master HDG Srila Bhakti Pramode Puri Goswami Thakur.

About six months before his physical departure in 1999, my spiritual master HDG Srila Bhakti Pramode Puri Goswami Thakur manifested his sickness pastime of suffering a small cerebral stroke. He also lost his ability to speak after the stroke. Gurudev used to look around but did not say anything. This happened in Jagannath Puri. Gurudev’s desire was never to leave Puri Dham, as it was the place where Mahaprabhu disappeared from. At that time, I was in Mysore. Even though Gurudev did not want to leave Puri, for better quality of medical treatment, we decided to transfer him to Kolkata since Kolkata had better private facilities at Bell Vue nursing home. For one month he was being taken care of by the doctor there. The cost of treatment was very high and so we decided to move him to an apartment which was close to the doctor treating him. By the Lord’s grace, a devotee named Govinda Das Bandhopadhyaya Prabhu had a new flat and he happily allowed us to stay with Srila Gurudev in his new flat.

Srila Gurudev remained in the same condition. He was not moving much nor opening his eyes. One day, one of his godbrothers, HDG Bhakti Kumud Santa Goswami Maharaj called me to take him to my Gurudev. I went to Behala to bring Maharaj to my Gurudev’s flat. As soon as his god brother entered the room, Gurudev looked up, greeted him by folding his palms and ordered me to bring a chair and prasad for his godbrother. That was all he said and then became silent and went back to his same position. Seeing this, Santa Goswami Maharaj started lamenting.



After one week, early in the morning, Srila Gurudev manifested another amazing pastime in front of us all. It was between 7:30 and 8 am. We were all in the same apartment and on that day it was Rasheshwar Prabhu's responsibility to look after Gurudev. Suddenly, we heard Rasheshwar Prabhu shouting 'Gurudev has come back to normal, he wants to say something'. We all gathered around Gurudev and saw that he was pointing his index finger to the corner of the ceiling. Looking really happy and with such joy on his face he said, 'dekho dekho', 'look look'!

Rasheswar Prabhu then asked, 'Krishna?' Gurudev said 'na na' still pointing his finger to the ceiling. Again, Gurudev said 'dekho dekho dekho!' Rasheswar Prabhu asked, 'Mahaprabhu?' Gurudev said 'na'; still hand pointing to the corner. Rasheswar Prabhu asked again, 'Prabhupada'; then answer came, 'na na'. By then, we all started to think that Gurudev was perhaps not normal mentally. Again, Gurudev said 'dekho dekho', and Rasheshwar Prabhu asked 'who Gurudev?' Finally Gurudev answered, 'Radha Rani!' We were amazed by this. In Gurudev's vision, he was seeing Radha Rani along with Her associates. After this, Gurudev returned to his previous state, and fell silent. We had hoped that Gurudev would continue to speak to us since it had been around 45 days that he hadn't said anything. It seemed that he was in samadhi stage.

Going back to the pastimes with Sridhar, Lord Chaitanya appeared as Shyamasundar only in the vision of Sridhar. Lord Chaitanya, in the form of Shyamasundar said 'I took so many things from your shop, today I would like to pay you back. I would like to give you a boon'. Sridhar was a sincere devotee and was completely detached from material things. Sridhar was thinking, 'I was not able to understand, I made so many mistakes'. Thinking this way, Sridhar was very tearful. Lord Chaitanya repeatedly told Sridhar to ask

for a boon. Sridhar replied, 'Please don't cheat me Lord'. Generally, people have tendency to ask for material wealth, but Sridhar did not ask for anything. Sridhar asked to be kept under the shelter of the Lord's lotus feet. This is the essence of Vaishnava philosophy.

We know from reading the scriptures that the night Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu left his family, Sridhar Goswami had come to offer loki (green squash) to Mahaprabhu. Loki is not recommended to be eaten after sunset, but Mahaprabhu accepted it happily and requested Mother Saci to make 'dugdho lokloki' or sweet pudding made from loki, since He knew He was leaving that night. Mahaprabhu accepted everything Sridhar offered, or took things by force even if he did not offer them. This is the nature of the Lord towards His devotees. When the Lord drank the water left in the broken pot at Sridhar's cottage, the Lord felt ecstatic. We know from various places in the shastra that devotees feel ecstasy after accepting the Supreme Lord's prasada. But here, the Supreme Lord was feeling ecstasy after taking water at Sridhar's house. The Lord has such love and affection towards his devotees.

Vrindavan Das Thakur writes in Chaitanya Bhagavat:

*bhakta-vātsalya dekhi tribhubhana kānde
bhūmite lotāy keu keśa nāhi bāndhe*
(Madhya khanda, 13:487)

People in all the three worlds are crying seeing the level of the Lord's affection for His devotees. Seeing this, some are rolling on the ground and do not even care to tie their hair back.

Sridhar felt uneasy seeing the Lord drinking water from such a dirty pot. Sridhar objected with eyes full of tears to not take the water from that pot, but the Lord wilfully drank the water.

Chaitanya Bhagavat says (verse 488-490):



*śñdhara kāndiye ṭṛṇa dhoriyā daśane
uccho kori hari bole sajale nayane
ki jal korilā pān tridośera rāy
nāchaye śñdhar kānde kore 'hāy hāy'
bhakta jal pān kori prabhu Viśvambhara
śñdhara aṅgane nāche vaikuṅṭhera īśvara*

Sridhar is crying and lamenting that the Lord who is the owner of the Universe is drinking water from such a dirty pot. After drinking the water, Lord Chaitanya who is the controller of Vaikuntha, that Lord Vishwambhar is dancing in the courtyard of Sridhar.

Our previous teachers have stated that by how much a person has devotion towards the Lord's services, that much they are rich in spirituality. Sridhar is a wonderful example to all Gaudiya Vaishnavas. He has taught us that if we chant the Lord's name with simplicity, we will easily be able to reach the Lord. So that the Lord can come to the devotees in their homes, He, in the form of Lord Chaitanya instructed us to chant the Hare Krishna Mahamantra wholeheartedly and to purchase Him by chanting.

The Lord appears to us in the form of the spiritual master (guru), and the root of guru-tattva is Lord Nityananda. In order to understand Nityananda's mercy, Srila Locana Das Thakur wrote a very nice song:

*akrodha paramānanda nityānanda rāya
abhimāna śūnya nitāi nagare beḍāya*

*adhama patita jīvera dvāre dvāre giyā
harināma mahā-mantra dicchena bilāiyā*

*jā're dekhe tā're kahe dante ṭṛṇa dhari'
'āmāre kiniyā laha bala gaurahari'*

*eta bali' nityānanda bhūme gaḍi' jāya
sonāra parvata jena dhūlāte loṭāya*

*hena avatāre jā'ra rati nā janmila
locana bale sei pāpī ela āra gela*

In this song, the Lord says, 'āmāre kiniyā laha bala gaurahari'. It means that we can purchase Lord Nityananda if we serve Gaurahari (the combined form of the Divine Couple Sri Sri Radha Krishna) wholeheartedly. In other words, we can say that with Nityananda's mercy we can have Gaura's mercy. To help us understand this fine point, Srila Narottam Das Thakur says:

*kṛṣṇa-kṛpāy guru mile,
guru-kripāy kṛṣṇa mile |*

With the grace of the ultimate master Sri Krishna, we can get guru (spiritual master), and by the grace of the guru, we can obtain the service of Divine Couple. This is our ultimate goal as well as identity— to be the eternal servant of the Divine Couple.

*Written by HDG Srila Bhakri Bibudha Bodhayan
Goswami Maharaj, on the occasion of Gaura
Purnima, 2022.*



KEY VAISHNAVA FESTIVALS: MARCH - APRIL 2022

Date	Festival
18 March	Gaura Purnima (Appearance Day of Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya)
25 March	Appearance Day of Srila Srivas Pandit
28 March	Papa Vmochani Ekadasi
10 April	Sri Ram Navami
12 April	Kamada Ekadasi

Bhagavata Dharma

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Dedicated to:

His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Pramode Puri Goswami Thakur, Founder Acharya of Sri Gopinath Gaudiya Math, and
His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanata Saraswati Goswami Thakur PRABHUPADA.

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