

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



Gour Gopālānanda Dāsa
Meets
Śrīla Prabhupāda

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Śrīla Gour Govinda Swami: In Vṛndāvana, I was moving around. I spent one day in one *maṭha* just observing what was going on, who was there, and if there were any *sādhu*-Vaiṣṇavas. In this way I was spending one day in one *maṭha* and another day in another *maṭha*. There are so many *maṭhas*, *mandiras* in Vṛndāvana, so many.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes:

Presenting the following *śloka* composed by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, I offer my obeisances at the feet of all the readers:

*ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas-tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam
ramyā kācid-upāsanaṁ vraja-vadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpitā
śrīmad bhāgavataṁ pramāṇam-amalaṁ premā pumartho mahān
śrī caitanya mahāprabhor-matam-idam tatrādaro naḥ paraḥ*

“The Supreme Lord Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His transcendental abode Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma are my worshippable objects. The most excellent method of worshipping Kṛṣṇa is that adopted by the beautiful cowherd damsels (*gopa-ramaṇī*), the young wives of Vraja (*vraja-vadhū*). *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the flawless (*nirmala*) and most authoritative scripture (*śabda-pramāṇa*), and *kṛṣṇa-prema* is the fifth and highest achievement of human life beyond *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. It is thus known as *pañcama-puruṣārtha* or *parama-puruṣārtha*. This is the opinion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. We have supreme regard for this conclusion. We have no inclination or respect for any other misleading opinions.”^{1*}

Gour Gopālānanda dasa spent three to four days in one *maṭha*, but, because his head was completely shaved, he was asked to leave because they thought that he was an impersonalist. There was a second incident, also, in which he was considered an impersonalist, again because of his completely shaved head. As we will see as we read on.

He completely shaved his head as a sign of total renunciation from everything: he had freed himself from entanglement with children, wife, home and the rest. He did not even have a fixed place of residence, he was just wandering looking for the *sādhū* that would give him *sannyāsa*, as has been quoted many times in this publication, so that he could preach the mission of Prema Puruṣottama Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu.

* ...Why people come here? You have seen while you are walking, a devotee. He was taking the dust, Rāmaṇ Reti, and putting on his head. This is Vṛndāvana - the dust. Vṛndāvana dust is also Kṛṣṇa. So *ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeṣa-tanaya tad dhāmaṁ vṛndāvanam*. This is the verdict of the *ācāryas*. Vrajendra-nandana, Hari, Kṛṣṇa, He is worshippable, everyone knows. But His *dhāma*, Vṛndāvana, is also as good as Kṛṣṇa. It is also worshippable. Therefore so many devotees, they are keeping strictly in Vṛndāvana...” (Lecture A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.48 - Vṛndāvana, April 3, 1976)

Then one day as he was passing through the Rāmaṇ Reti area in front of a large compound he saw a large sign, which read:

International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Founder Ācārya
His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

When he saw this he thought: What is this? An International society? Let me go and see what it is! It was the construction site of a temple that had not yet been built. It was just at the beginning stages. Only the foundation was laid, and there were a few thatched cottages where some devotees, including a few Westerners, were living. The only completed house there was the one where the Founder Ācārya was living.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a spiritual movement founded to spread the teachings of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the *avatāra* of the Lord in Kali-yuga, all over the world. Its founder and leader, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupāda (1896–1977), is a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda (1874–1937), the founder of the Gauḍīya Maṭha and a powerful *ācārya* or spiritual preceptor, in the Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya. It was on the order of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda that Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda went to the Western countries at the advanced age of sixty-nine (the age when most people have retired) and began preaching the glorious message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

After successfully preaching and establishing many temples in the Western countries, Śrīla Prabhupāda took some of his Western disciples to India and began opening temples there.

Gour Gopālānanda noticed immediately that the devotees had shaved heads with *śikhā*, they wore *kañṭhī-mālā* around their necks and chanted on *japa-mālā*. All these symbols of Vaiṣṇavism (Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas) were only too well known to Gour Gopālānanda, as he had grown up in these surroundings. Most of them wore saffron cloth, and when he entered the compound, one Western devotee gave him a *Back to Godhead* magazine. He looked over the pages and found what he had been searching for: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. As he read through the *Back to Godhead* magazine, Gour Gopālānanda felt that his prayers had been answered: Kṛṣṇa had led him to the right place.*

Sambandha – Abhidheya – Prayojana

The path of *bhakti* or Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a non-sectarian, universal science of spiritual practice. It is the essence of the Vedic literature of ancient India which teach three fundamental principles: *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana*.

Sambandha-jñāna means knowledge of the original relationship of the individual soul with the Supreme Lord;

* Author's note: Gour Gopālānanda dāsa [Śrīla Gour Govinda Swami] had been wandering throughout India and now Vṛndāvana looking for a *sādhu* from whom he could accept *sannyāsa* and shelter. He had no prior knowledge that there was a temple in Vṛndāvana under construction, at Rāmaṇ Reti, with Westerners, with a *sādhu* named Śrīla Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who was initiating these Westerners. The whole concept was totally new to him (Western Vaiṣṇavas), but it caught his interest and he entered the compound. I reiterate, prior to seeing the Westerners with shaved heads and saffron *dhoti*'s he had no idea that they even existed. In his own words he said, "...I was wandering about; just looking, just looking..."

abhidheya refers to acting according to that constitutional relationship, and *prayojana* is the ultimate goal or need of life, which is to develop love of Godhead (*prema-prayojana*). As one takes shelter of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by surrendering to a bona fide guru (*sad-guru*) and deepens one's knowledge of that eternal relationship, one's understanding of the process by which to reach the ultimate perfection becomes clear.

The Three Truths

Śrīla Gour Govinda Swami: ...In the Vedas there are three truths - *vede trī-tattva kaya*. They are *sambandha-tattva*, *abhidheya-tattva*, and *prayojana-tattva*. The *sambandha* is Kṛṣṇa, the *abhidheya* is *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, and *prayojana* is *prema*. *Sambandha* means relationship. There is only one relationship, which is the relationship with Kṛṣṇa. There is no other relationship.

Kṛṣṇa is bent in three places, *tri-bhaṅga-lalita*, indicating these three *tattvas*: *sambandha-tattva*, *abhidheya-tattva*, and *prayojana-tattva*. His first bend, *bhaṅga*, is at the feet. The second bend is in His lips, His left-hand side is bent towards Rādhārāṇī. And the third bend is in the heart. First are the feet, which represents *sambandha-tattva*, relationship. The presiding deity of *sambandha-tattva* is Madana-mohan, Rādhā-Madana-mohan. The second bend is in the lips, which is *abhidheya-tattva*, *bhakti*. The presiding deity of *abhidheya-tattva* is Rādhā-Govinda. And the third bend is in the heart, that is *prayojana-tattva*, *prema*. The presiding deity of *prayojana-tattva* is Rādhā-Gopīnātha. The Vedas give these three invaluable assets, *tīna mahā-dhana*. A fortunate *jīva* who obtains these invaluable assets becomes rich with *kṛṣṇa-prema* and he will be really happy. Otherwise he cannot achieve happiness..."²

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes:

*siddhānta vihīna hoile kṛṣṇe citta lāge nā
sambandha-hīnera kabhu abhideya haya nā
sambandha-vihīna jana prayojana pāya nā*

“Without knowledge of transcendental truth (*siddhānta*), no one’s heart can ever be spiritually attuned with Lord Kṛṣṇa. If one lacks knowledge of his relationship with Kṛṣṇa (*sambandha*), then the proper execution of devotional service in relationship to Him (*abhidheya*) is impossible. One who lacks knowledge of *sambandha* can never attain *prayojana*, the supreme goal of life, (namely pure love of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa-prema).”³

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in his *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*:

“...The bonafide spiritual master gives the disciple *sambandha-jñāna*. The chanting of the holy name is the indication (*abhidheya*) of this eternal relationship (*sambandha*). The spiritual master entuses the disciple to take up *abhidheya* or chanting. The sun of the holy name then shines stronger and evaporates the mist and clouds... Chanting at this stage becomes an indispensable need (*prayojana*). *Prayojana* takes the devotee to pure love of Godhead (*prayojana*) at which point he experiences ecstasy in every moment of chanting. The spiritual master must explain exactly what is *sambandha-jñāna* to the disciple, who in turn must receive it with proper faith.* The quintessence of this knowledge is that Lord Kṛṣṇa

* In his *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written:
In considering the relationship there are seven topics:

1. Kṛṣṇa
2. Kṛṣṇa’s energies
3. *rasa*

is eternally the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the *jīva* is His eternal servitor and the *jīva*'s loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa is likewise eternal as an inherent trait of his nature..."⁴

Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa

The aim of ISKCON, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, is to acquaint all people of the world with these universal principles of God realisation so that they may derive the highest benefits of spiritual understanding, unity and peace.

As we can see, there is not too much peace and unity on the planet; there are many wars and great unrest because we do not understand the basic principle that we are not these bodies but we are spiritual souls. We do not understand the principles of *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana*; therefore the whole world is in upheaval. The basic principle of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is to act on the platform of the soul, not of the body. Bodily consciousness causes great problems. The ISKCON movement aims at diminishing the upheaval by teaching how to develop God consciousness, love of God or *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

The Vedas recommend that in the present age, the most effective means of achieving this consciousness, which culminates in self-realisation, is the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. Following the Vedic recommendation, the members of ISKCON chant:

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4. *jīva*
 5. *jīva* in the material realm
 6. *jīva* in the liberated state
 7. *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*

By thoroughly understanding these seven topics of scriptures, a person obtains *sambandha-jñāna*.

*hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare,
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*

The sublime chanting of this Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* gradually awakens one's dormant love of God.

The World Wide Chanting of the Holy Name

When Gour Gopālānanda read how Śrīla Prabhupāda had spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa all over the world, he remembered a verse from the *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* predicting the worldwide spread of this chanting:

*pṛthivīte āche yata nagarādi-grāma
sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma⁵*

“In every town and village of the world, the chanting of My name will be heard.”

Śrīla Gour Govinda Mahārāja later reminisced, “I thought, Yes! This Swami has fulfilled the prediction of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. I must meet him.” At last Gour Gopālānanda dāsa was to meet his spiritual master whose association he had been awaiting for such a long time.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Kṛṣṇa and Mahāprabhu

Śrīla Gour Govinda Swami: I had been searching for this and here it was. I thought, let me enter and see what is going on. So I went inside and saw Western devotees with shaved head, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. I thought they looked very nice with their saffron robes.

One of the devotees gave me a copy of a *Back to Godhead* magazine and I eagerly looked at it, because I was searching for these three: *Bhāgavata* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*], Kṛṣṇa and Mahāprabhu. I had met many *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, *pañḍitas*, *yogīs*, and even Vaiṣṇavas with whom I had discussions, but no one was ever speaking about Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was important to me because in this age of Kali, His *sankīrtana yajña*, *kalau tad dhari kīrtanat* is the only *dharma*. I thought, Oh, yes here it is! I found it! Here it is! I have found it in Vṛndāvana! I already had the feeling that after completing all parts of India, in Vṛndāvana, the dear land of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa would grant me His blessings to find a *sādhu*. I thought Kṛṣṇa may fulfill my desire there. I might meet my spiritual master there. Therefore at last I came to Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa fulfilled my desire. “Oh here it is! Yes! All three - *Bhāgavata*, Kṛṣṇa and Mahāprabhu! What I am searching for is here! I have found it! I’ve found it!” By that time, I was wearing the dress of a *sādhu* although I was not a *sādhu*; I was just wandering. Then I enquired.

The Darśana of a Mahātmā Is Good Fortune

Śrī Gour Gopālānanda asked, “Where is the Founder-Ācārya, is he here?” Fortunately, Śrīla Prabhupāda was in. He asked, “Can I meet him?” He was told, “First meet the secretary.” The secretary at that time was Brahmānanda Swami. He would sit in the front room and Śrīla Prabhupāda was in the next room. So first he had to meet the secretary and then, with the secretary’s permission, he would be allowed to meet Śrīla Prabhupāda; otherwise he could not meet him. So he went there, he paid his obeisances and said, “*Swamījī*, will you please make some arrangements so that I may meet the Founder-Ācārya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami?”

The secretary then asked him, “What for?”

Gour Gopālānanda said, “I want to have *darśana* and a few words with such a great *mahātmā*. If I meet him, some good fortune may come to me. The *darśana* of a *mahātmā* is available because of good fortune; otherwise no one could meet such a *mahātmā*. If good fortune comes to you, you can meet such a *mahātmā*. So if a *mahātmā* is available, why should I depart without seeing him? Please help me I just want to meet and talk with him and to hear something from him. Yes, I have some questions I want to ask him. Will you please kindly make some arrangements so that I may meet him?”

He paid his *danḍavats* repeatedly and said, “Please help me, please help me.” He was wearing saffron-coloured clothing, looking like a wandering *sādhu*. The secretary thought that perhaps he might really be a *sādhu*.

It was midday and Śrīla Prabhupāda had just taken his lunch. He was sitting alone in his room, reclining in his chair. Brahmānanda Swami went in and said to Śrīla Prabhupāda, “This *sādhu* has come and wants to meet you.” Śrī Śrīmad Gour Govinda Swami many years later said, “...It was the Paramātmā’s prompting, Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement.” Immediately Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Allow him to come in.” When Gour Gopālānanda entered the room he saw Śrīla Prabhupāda sitting by himself in a chair. Brahmānanda Swami went back to the front room. Gour Gopālānanda, a dishevelled *sādhu*, introduced himself.

A Real Guru – A Sad-Guru

Śrīla Gour Govinda Swami: All that time I had been looking for a real *guru*, a *sad-guru*^{*}, to take *sannyāsa* from and then preach. When I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda for the first time, I

^{*}*sad-guru*: topmost spiritual master, most perfect spiritual master.

paid my obeisances flat on the ground like a stick,* and from that first sight, that first *darśana* I could understand that this *mahātmā* truly was a *paramahansa*, a *mahā-bhāgavata*. He really was the representative of Mahāprabhu. I could feel it. It was my heart's natural attraction.⁶ He just looked at me and asked, 'Have you taken *sannyāsa*?' and I answered, 'No.' then he said, 'I will give you *sannyāsa*.' That was the first thing he said! From his side he said so.⁷ I immediately surrendered because he knew what was in my heart. So I understood, 'He is my *guru*! Yes, he knows my heart! Really, he is the *caitya-guru*** who is in the heart. I had left my home with that purpose.'"⁸ It is by his mercy only, causeless mercy. Yes, Prabhupāda is just giving mercy; you just have to catch it. It is like hanging ropes that you have to catch hold of.

Understanding that Śrīla Prabhupāda knew his heart, Gour Gopālānanda dāsa surrendered himself at Śrīla Prabhupāda's lotus feet. Thus the *sad-guru* and the *sat-śiṣya**** met by the order of the transcendental system in that most auspicious place, Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

* *yatra yatra guruṃ paśyet
tatra tatra kṛtāñjalīḥ
praṇamed daṇḍavad bhūmau
chinna-mūla iva drumah*

"Anywhere that one sees his spiritual master, he should, with folded hands and in a humble mood, pay his obeisances to him just as an uprooted tree falls on the ground." (Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 1.90, from *Devī-āgama*, spoken by Śrī Nārada Muni.)

** "The supreme spiritual master is Kṛṣṇa, who is therefore known as *caitya-guru*. This refers to the Supersoul, who is sitting in everyone's heart. He helps from within as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, and He sends the spiritual master, who helps from without. The spiritual master is the external manifestation of the *caitya-guru*, or the spiritual master sitting in everyone's heart." [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam verse 4.8.44 purport Śrīla Prabhupāda]

****sat-śiṣya*: topmost disciple, most perfect disciple.