

श्रीश्रीगुरुगौराङ्गे जयतः
All Glory to Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga

Chapter Three

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj Remembers

[From a recorded conversation with His Divine Grace]

(Edited by Śrīpād Bhakti Ānanda Sāgar Mahārāj)

I was born at midnight, Saturday 10th October, 1895. Navamī tithi [lunar day] under the same sign as Lord Rāmchandra. Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa [dark moon fortnight]. Śrīman Mahāprabhu was also born on a Saturday. I was the second child. The first was a daughter, but she died early, so Rām *Kavach* [a protective *mantram* and amulet] was given to my mother for the protection of the next child, that is, myself. So I was born after my mother took Rām *Kavach*.

There were two thatched rooms, one of which was the maternity room. Because the first child had been lost, after I was born and my mother was still confined within the maternity area, just in the front of that place my two English-knowing cousins kept night watch to make sure that any ghosts or something like that may not come in the shape of a cat, or in any other way. So as they were reading and studying, they would protect the first half of the night. They were B.A.s studying for M.A. And during the second half or last portion of the night two Sanskrit students, one cousin and another an uncle, sat there just in front of that temporary shed, reading, to guard against any unseen attack at that time. They all kept night watch.

Then, as I remember, when I was a boy being carried on the shoulder of my father, there was going in the distance one *Saṅkīrtan* party; crying, I asked him to take me there. Anyway, to console me he took me there for some time and then came back.

I had a very good memory, especially in Sanskrit. I was taught a *śloka* in praise of Lord Śiva—प्रणमामि शिवं शिवकल्पतरुं, and I could chant that by memory. When I was one year eight months, my grandfather died, but I can't remember him. My earliest recollection is an earthquake. I was born in 1302, Mohammedan era, and 1304 in the month of Vaiśākh there was an earthquake. I was only a child then of one year and eight months or so, but I remember that. I remember the shaking of the earth, so many cows gathered, and so on—this is my earliest recollection.

Then, my first brother was born when I was three. I remember the scene of the birth of my brother, around August, 1898. I can also remember when I reached the age of five and I was engaged in studying writing, and I was given to my maternal uncle's house. Many things before that I can remember as well. And when I was in my maternal uncle's house, for three years for early education in a primary school, I got some help from one of my aunts who taught me *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. That helped me a great deal. Already I had some affinity for all those things, some type of intuitive knowledge and partiality to ancient mythological teachings and culture of the orthodox section. From very childhood my tendency was with the culture of the orthodox section—*Veda*, *Upaniṣad*, etc., faith in God—all these things.

At nine years I was admitted into high school [intermediate according to the current system in India]. As a student, there in the debating club I always sided with the ancient Śāstric culture, even against the teachers that took up the cause of the renaissance or reformation. I was always on the side of the previous culture. I fought with them, and I don't think they could defeat me. Then I got my sacred thread in the family tradition when I was fourteen years. I feel that my memory was more or less quite sharp. I could remember what I saw and heard in my early age.

I am told that I had a general tendency that if anyone would come to ask me something, I would reply, "No." Whatever would be asked of me, "No." But once, when one of our family-members, a scholar, went to appear for his examination, he came to ask me whether he would pass or not. I pronounced, "Yes." And he won a scholarship. Then I matricu-

lated from the local High School when I was fifteen years of age. I could write Sanskrit verse before that.

I like sacrifice in life. The magnanimous side. I had affinity for Lord Rāmchandra, for the model Pastimes, but not so much Lord Kṛṣṇa, because of His Vṛndāvan Līlā. I could not accommodate why God should be a liar and a girl-hunter. I could not accommodate this. Though I saw Rādhā-Govinda *Mūrttis* [Deities]—They seemed to be very, very charming. I found some mystic background there, but on the surface, I had more liking for Rāmchandra than Kṛṣṇa.

My attraction to Kṛṣṇa first came through *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and then through Mahāprabhu. I liked Rāmchandra for His magnanimity. I was mainly attracted by the self-giving ideal. So I liked Rādhārāṇī very much, I liked Mahāprabhu very much, but my attraction to Kṛṣṇa was less. My attraction to Kṛṣṇa came through Mahāprabhu and through Rādhārāṇī—from Their side. When I was nine or ten or so, there was a temple where Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities were installed in Jagadānanda Pur, near Kāṭwā. Every year in Kārttik month my father used to read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there. Sometimes I visited that temple with him, and I found some mystic atmosphere there. It seemed very mystical to me.

After matriculation I went to Baharampur [District Mushīrabād] for college study at the Krishnanāth College. There, with the company of one of my cousins, my maternal uncle's son, I came into connection with the East Bengal people, who were renowned, we had heard, for their boldness and sacrificing nature. I took residence in the same hostel as them.

Somehow, I had passed matriculation second division, [Śrīla Guru Mahārāj had suffered a very dangerous bout of malaria for a whole year at that time. —Ed.] but I passed I.A. [Intermediate Arts] in the first division. When we were studying in the local school, we had to do some family works along with our study. But now, from the hostel, I passed in the first division.

Then I was again admitted in that same college at Baharampur. After the fourth year we sat for the examination of B.A. When I was a student of the fourth year I came into the connection of a younger boy who had

just passed matriculation and was newly admitted into the college. In the college I found that there was a small section of students who were addicted to some meditation and *pūjā*, etc. And there was another group that did not care for worshipping, but they liked the service of patients, and to do good for the public. But I have an internal nature for both.

I was a fourth-year student and that boy was a first-year student—three years gap. I found that he was given to both sides very intensely; taking the Name of the Lord sometimes very loudly like a madman, and also doing *sandhyā-vandanā* [regular morning, noon and evening prayers and worship] etc. At the same time, when there was any patient he would engage himself in their service, even neglecting to attend the college class. Both sides—social service as well as worship were combined in him.

Before this, when I was in school I got a book where it is mentioned that if we can go on with the *japam* [meditational chanting] of Gāyatrī 432 times daily, we can achieve a very good spiritual improvement. I practised that for some time, and at that time I tried my best to understand the revealed truth—without consulting any dictionary or grammar; I had heard that Gāyatrī is conscious, spiritual, not dead words. So, if I go on with *japam* Gāyatrī itself will express its meaning and purpose. I approached it with that attitude, and I used to feel some light coming from the words of Gāyatrī itself; I had some knowledge about that for some time.

Then, as I said, I came in connection with that boy in college, and I tried to associate with him. His name was Śrī Suresh Bhaṭṭāchāryya—he came from a *Brāhmaṇa* family of Faridpur. The founder of the Bhārat-sevāshram, Śrī Praṇavānanda, was from his village. Śrīpād Madhusūdan Mahārāj also comes from the same village—Bājepratāp-pur in the district of Faridpur.

One day, when we two were going on a morning walk and also cleaning our teeth with small twigs, he referred to his father with the expression, 'that gentleman.' I took exception to that.

"Why do you use this expression for your father? You say *that gentleman*? What is this!"

He said, "Yes, I have committed a wrong; I shouldn't have spoken in this way before you. But really it is like that. 'That gentleman'—he was

a gentleman, and in this life I came to him and he has protected me for some time, and in the next life I shall go to some other place; in this way we are moving hither and thither, coming to some gentleman and from there to another gentleman...”

Although I gave opposition, that point hit me very hard. I began to think, “Yes, it is true. We are in the midst of father, mother, brother, or, as he said, ‘that gentleman’. What real connection have I with them, or they with me? We are all almost like strangers!” Thinking and thinking on this point the whole world became as vacant. I felt a furious atmosphere, with no shelter to take anywhere. A chaotic position, and I have no position of stability. Wherefrom am I coming, where to go, how long am I to stay here—this is a point in the infinite. *I am an uncertain point in the whole of the infinite.* A great shock came to me in this way. And that was the great turn in my life.

The worldly achievement has no value. I was studying, a fourth-year student. I was to appear in a few months for the final examination. My friends were alarmed at seeing my position. “What are you doing? You are neglecting your studies! How will you be able to pass? Your father is sending money [for your education]; you are not so rich.”

In this way they tried their best to help me but I couldn’t concentrate on any book of study. They said, “If you can’t do so, we shall read and you try to hear.” At that time, my friend gave me some literature on Mahāprabhu’s Life and Teachings, and I devoured it like nectar. I found some position there—it is not that I am nowhere. Here is the support—the basis, the foundation; I found here the sustenance, hope and shelter I needed.

In this way I began to read and read. My very nature was that whatever I read, I read scrutinisingly. It may be slow, but my reading is more or less very accurate and representing the true aspect. I could also hear very clearly. Even without reading, acute hearing was also a part of my nature. Whatever I heard, I could grasp the very purpose and keep it within me. And here also by thorough reading I found my life, my future hope, everything. I was converted. In my mother’s family there was some recognition of Śrī Chaitanyadev, but my paternal family were orthodox *smārttas*. They hated the followers of Chaitanyadev.

Chaitanyadev has created a chaotic society. Pests that cannot keep their own stand in the social position—it is they who gather to follow Chaitanyadev. Those who have lost their social position become Vaiṣṇavas and they say that they are followers of Chaitanya. In my father's family they held such a hatred. But after this I became fully converted into a follower of Chaitanya. Such a feeling came in me, not only intellectually, but in heart and mind also. I underwent a wholesale conversion.

Then my father died. He was disappointed and dejected. I was the eldest son; he had some hope in me for family matters, but when he saw such a change in me, it may be said that he died almost heartbroken. The burden of the family also came on my mind, but my state of mind was somewhere else. The chance came to me to lead a life of abnegation. For one year the son won't use any umbrella or shoes. I made some extreme addition—I used nothing but one piece of cloth and a sheet for one year. And half-mad I used to do agriculture work and service to the cows. Anyway, I passed B.A. The Baharampur section where I appeared, my classmates, said this was a wholesale massacre! Very few could pass, but somehow I passed. Some of my classmates said, "Oh, by the method of worshipping and satisfying God he has passed! He did not study at all but he passed, only by worshipping God." They said like this.

When my father died, almost with full consciousness he passed away—he told several things to me. One was that I would have to marry. I had never uttered a lie. Whatever the effect, I strictly spoke the truth. But I couldn't commit myself before him. So I felt pressured—'Whether you marry or not don't disturb me in this time of my death. Say that you will do it.' Anyhow, the expression came from me, "I shall try to fulfill your request." In this way, in a modified way, I answered him. Then anyhow, I had to marry. Married life continued for six years. In the meantime I went to study again in the law class. But the Gandhi movement of non-cooperation came forward and I joined the movement, because there was some sort of promise that 'within one year I shall give *svarāj* [independence] to you.'

I wanted to become a *sannyāsī*, but the countrymen want one year, so I thought I must sacrifice this for them. I left law college and worked for some time posted as a secretary of the movement here in Kālṇā.

In this way, and sometimes in the village for two or three years. Then it was stopped for some time, and later I was wanted for service in Calcutta. With the help of a government office superintendent I got some vocation and I put up in Calcutta. I attended the office there.

My attraction stays always towards Mahāprabhu. In the meantime I wandered here and there searching for a *sādhu* from whom to take initiation. But I couldn't select anyone to my taste or satisfaction.

One day, I was returning from the office and I found a placard in Chittaranjan Avenue: *Gauḍīya Maṭh Mahotsav [Grand Festival] for one month*. The address was given, near the Pareshnāth Temple. I found this red-coloured placard. I thought, Gauḍīya Maṭh must be Mahāprabhu's followers, let us go and see what is there. When I was a law student, through Suresh Bhaṭṭāchāryya I knew the founder of Bhārat-Sevāshram, Śrī Praṇavānanda, and he tried his best to take me into his mission; but I flatly refused.

“My head is sold to Mahāprabhu, Gaurāṅga, so I can't go anywhere else.”

He said, “I also have great reverence for Mahāprabhu Chaitanyadev, but I think the first stage must be Buddhistic abnegation or *vairāgya* and indifference [to the world]. Second, Śaṅkar's *Vedānta* or *jñāna*. And the last and highest will be Chaitanya's *Prema*. Otherwise people will misunderstand that *Prema* for lust.”

I replied, “Yes, what you say is alright—that Śrī Chaitanyadev's *Prema-dharmma* is the highest, above the Buddhistic and Śaṅkarite conceptions of theism. But Chaitanyadev has not told us, ‘Go to the Buddhists and practice *vairāgya*, and then go to Śaṅkar and have knowledge of the *Vedānta*, and then come to Me.’ He has told that ‘wherever you are, take the association of a *sādhu* and you can take the Name.’ ”

He was silenced.

I said to him, “If you have got any supernatural power, I will be grateful if you can say where my spiritual guide, my Gurudev, is.”

But he took the name of some gentleman, Haranāth. I went to search for him but could not find him. But this was when I found that placard and went to Gauḍīya Maṭh. There I found only one gentleman manning the outside hall, and the rest had all gone on procession of

Nagar-saṅkīrttan [congregational chanting in the town]. Then I had a little talk with that gentleman. I had studied somewhat about Chaitanyadev and other Scriptures, but I found that these people representing the Maṭh had deeper and more sound knowledge than I. Then, the party came back from *Nagar-saṅkīrttan* and I found Guru Mahārāj in front with his *daṇḍa* [mendicant's staff]. As soon as he reached in front of the Maṭh some disciple came and took the *daṇḍa* from him and gradually he was received there.

At first sight I found Guru Mahārāj's attitude was that of complete indifference to the ordinary world. He does not care for anyone, he is self-sufficient. I got that sort of impression from his first sight. Then I began visiting. Gradually I came to realize that I wanted to stay in such company.

Unfortunately I had been unable to find it before, but now the thought came to me, what's to stop me coming and staying here? I cast my glance homeward—father gone, mother living, three younger brothers—they won't be much affected. But my wife will be affected. I don't know why, but a sudden thought came in my mind that if she dies, I am free. This thought came. I was attracted by that association. There were so many members of gentlemanly and educated nature, and wholly given to the Service of Mahāprabhu. That attracted me most.

And it was that very day, I came to my quarter and found that my wife was ill. I came home that night, and after three days she passed away. My mother tried to have me married again, but she could not do so. And within six months she also disappeared in Haridwār at the time of the Kumbha Melā. She died there. One of my brothers, Satyen, was attending her with other pilgrims and sisters, etc.

I was free. I was visiting the Maṭh. I was thinking that I must cast my faith here, so I thought it necessary to know as much as possible about the mission; and to know the mission means to know the leader of the mission. So I tried to go upstairs to where Guru Mahārāj stayed. I would go in front of his room and sit there to hear, because I was thinking I shall join here. Then one day, it so occurred that Kīrtanānanda Prabhu, one *brahmachārī*, stopped me when I was making an attempt to go upstairs.

“Where are you going?”

“I’m going to Guru Mahārāj. I like it very much [to hear and associate].”

“No, never. You must stay here in the waiting room, and when you find anyone you will inform him who you want to meet. He will check, and when he returns with the answer you can go. Otherwise you must stay here. Never cross this threshold.”

A little harsh. Then I thought, ‘What should be the considerate nature of the *sādhus*? Why should there be any difference outwardly and inwardly? So I need not come here again!’

But at that very moment the position of Śukadev appeared in my mind. I had read in *Mahābhārata* that Śrīla Vyāsadev sent Śrīla Śukadev Goswāmī to Rajarṣi Janak to finish his education or *sādhana*. Śrīla Śukadev came, and he was detained for seven days at the outer gate. Then information went to Janak, who sanctioned, “Allow him to pass the gate.” The next gate, he was again detained. In this way, there were seven boundaries of the capital, and at each of the seven gates he was detained for seven days. So seven times seven means *forty-nine days* he was detained, and only then he could meet Janak. This thought came in my mind. And then the next concluding thought came, ‘If there is anything bad here, and they take me and put me onto a throne to worship me, I should not come here; and if there is real good, and they beat with a broomstick, I must not leave!’ That conclusion came in my mind, and I kept visiting.

Then one day, Guru Mahārāj was strolling on the roof just after having taken his afternoon food. Generally he did not take any food at night. I just approached, and took my stand in a corner. One man was attending him. Guru Mahārāj asked,

“যে কোন বক্তব্য?” — “Has he something to say?”

The attending person came and asked me, “Have you something to say?”

“No. I have nothing to say.”

He went back. “He says he has nothing to say.”

Then Guru Mahārāj said, “He has something to ask?”

He again came to me, and said, "Guru Mahārāj said, have you got something to ask?"

"No, I have nothing to ask."

He again returned to Guru Mahārāj. "He says he has nothing to ask."

Then again Guru Mahārāj put, "He has got some purpose in mind for coming here."

The person returned to me.

I said, "Yes, without purpose no incident can happen. When I have come, I have some purpose."

"What purpose?"

"To gain the grace of you all." That was my answer. "আপনার প্রসন্নতা।" Nothing else but that.

Perhaps that touched Guru Mahārāj. He approached me and enquired from me who I was, what I did, where was my home and so on. And then he said,

"Yes, you are fortunate. You are born in the area of Gauḍa-maṇḍal."

They had one booklet printed then and the attending person said, "Guru Mahārāj is offering this booklet to you."

I said, "I already have it."

He said, "That does not matter; with his good will he is giving this to you, so it is something else. You take it."

Then I took it on my head and accepted it. That was the first talk with Guru Mahārāj.

The following year I was invited to Śrīman Mahāprabhu's Appearance Ceremony at Māyāpur. At that time I was visiting the Maṭh and hearing. I went there for the Ceremony. At that time my mother was also inviting me to the village Gumo where she was staying with my second brother. She wanted to see me before going to Haridwār, and the Gauḍīya Maṭh people were also inviting me to Māyāpur. I was in a dilemma.

What to do? It was my mother's call—and maybe the last. She might not live, her health was not good. This was the call. And I thought, I want to take *this* side in my life, so this side must be given preference. That is, I avoided the call of my mother to see her, and I went to the Gauḍīya Maṭh instead.

From their talks in general, I found that they do not care for the opinion of anyone else; but when anything is quoted from Scripture, they give a patient hearing. This was their nature. Summarily they reject all, they don't care for anyone, but they care only for Scriptural truth; that they soberly consider and evaluate. But with abhorrence they reject so many stalwarts of the then society—this Aurobindo, this Gandhi, this Ramkrishna, the [imitationist] Goswāmins—they summarily reject them all. But Mahāprabhu, *Bhāgavatam*, *Gītā*—they are all-in-all. I had an attraction, a taste for them. I could identify with them.

Still, there was some sort of objection. One was that Guru Mahārāj comes from a Kāyastha family, that is considered *śūdra*, and I come from a *brāhmaṇa* paṇḍits' family of great honour in the society. Ostensibly, any *brāhmaṇa* should have been suitable; in this way some sort of objection was felt in me. Then, when I went to Māyāpur I again saw many things that touched me.

Śrīla Prabhupād was delivering a lecture to so many gentlemen who had come from Kṛṣṇanagar—educated persons. In another place the elderly Śrīpād Bhakti Pradīp Tīrtha Mahārāj was giving a lecture. Somewhere else Śrīpād Bhakti Svarūpa Parvvat Mahārāj was found writing receipts, collecting funds from the people. It was a hive of activity. I felt a transcendental, happy atmosphere there.

When the celebration was over, Guru Mahārāj was sitting in a canvas chair on the verandah of his room, and many persons were offering him obeisances and going home. At that time he was speaking, giving some discourse. I was always very eager to hear him. He was saying, “আপনারা আমাকে বঞ্চনা করিবেন না।”—“Don't cheat me, you people.” I was alert. What? Where was the question of cheating him? Why cheating?! Everyone was invited, they came, and now they are leaving; what was his point about 'cheating'?

Then the next thing he said was, “You all came with the understanding that you will engage yourselves in the Service of Kṛṣṇa, and so I have entered into some relationship with you. And now, only as a fashion you have attended this ceremony and you are going home to engage yourselves in worldly affairs; but your assurance to me was that you would all serve Kṛṣṇa, but. . . disappointed. . .” Then he continued,

“You may say ‘Oh, I have got some important business and after finishing this I shall come and join you as soon as possible’ but no, no! If you tell me there is just a little fire and after extinguishing the fire you will return, then I say that is also not necessary. *If fire burns the whole world you do not lose anything.* Rather you are spared if you can disconnect from those things that are burnt. All your positive engagement, your inner hankering, has corresponding things in Kṛṣṇa. *All your necessities and hankering will be satisfied in the service of the Holy Lotus Feet of Kṛṣṇa, and nowhere else.*” He was speaking so forcefully.

I was wonderstruck. I thought, I would never hear anywhere in this living world such intense necessity for *Kṛṣṇa-bhajana*—so I must throw my head here. It was then that I took the decision that I must be a disciple here.

Before my mother died she had had some apprehension that ‘he is my eldest son but he will become a *sannyāsī* without completing my *śrāddha* ceremony [last rites]; then who will do my *śrāddha* ceremony?’ So when she passed, I went home and completed her *śrāddha* and after finishing that I came, in the last part of April, to join the *maṭh*. At first, I said that my two younger brothers would finish their studies and take to their vocations, and then I would come away [from the family and join].

But Śrīpād Bhāratī Mahārāj and others said that I had a great opportunity.

They pressed, “No, no! Kṛṣṇa has taken your wife, and Kṛṣṇa has taken your mother. He has done enough for you. Really if you neglect to avail yourself of this chance, perhaps some other obstacle will come and this life will be spoiled with no hope.”

I asked, “What are you saying?” They said, “Come immediately.” I took that advice and joined immediately. I was living together with my two brothers in a hostel, and they came with me. They went back crying, I remained in the *maṭh*.

I stayed at the Calcutta *maṭh* for some time. I was requested to do some service in the press there, but I was not particularly inspired by the press work of proofreading, etc. I had much liking for the preaching—to go on *kīrtan* and preach. So, I was next sent on a preaching tour.

The first stop was at the Dumurkondā *maṭh* [in Bengal] and from

there to Benares, then to Vṛndāvan. There, there was *nagar-kīrttan* for some time, then I was taken to Delhi where there was door-to-door collection for some time. Then Kurukṣetra *maṭh* was established and I was made *maṭh* commander there, and then I was alone. A small village-town and the place of Kurukṣetra. That is a solitary place except for during the solar eclipse when there is a great rush of hundreds of thousands of people. Doing collection, I passed about two or three years there. Then the Delhi *maṭh* was founded and I was in charge there. Then I visited Simla and other places for preaching.

Every year in August we had to come back to the Calcutta *maṭh* celebration for one month. So when I came back here I was taken by Śrīpād Bhakti Hṛday Bon Mahārāj and Śrī Hayagrīva Prabhu [later Śrīpād Bhakti Dayita Mādhav Mahārāj] in a party towards Madras side, installing the footprints of Mahāprabhu. Then again upon returning, the Bagh Bazaar Maṭh was opened, and from the original rented house in Ulṭā Ḍāṅgā the Deities were moved in procession in a chariot to Bagh Bazaar Maṭh, and a one-month festival was held there. After that Prabhupād went on that year establishing and installing those *Pāda-pīṭha* [footprints of Mahāprabhu] up to Maṅgalgiri, near Bejoydā, Kobhur, and so on.

Then he went to Madras and declared the opening of Madras Gauḍīya Maṭh and put us there. We rented a house. Śrīpād Bon Mahārāj was the leader, and the senior *sannyāsī*. In the meantime I was given *sannyāsa*, recommended by Śrīpād Bon Mahārāj. He said about me, “He can preach well; he’s a good preacher rather than a canvasser.” I had a B.A., and I was known as Śrī Rāmendrasundar Bhaṭṭāchāryya, B.A. My duty was to approach the people and introduce the *sannyāsins*, and more or less I had the work of a canvasser. But Śrīpād Bon Mahārāj said, “He’s not a good canvasser but a good preacher. He can speak *Hari-kathā* very well.” Then I was given *sannyāsa* in October, 1930, and after installing footprints of Mahāprabhu one by one in various places, Prabhupād opened the *maṭh* in Madras [as abovementioned], and we were left there and began preaching for three years or so.

Then there was Vṛndāvan *parikramā*, circumambulation of the whole of Vṛndāvan. We joined that programme, and then Śrīpād Bon

Mahārāj went to England for preaching, and I was in charge of Madras *math*. The temple was constructed almost in my time. Later, Bombay *math* was opened, and I was again taken there. I lived there for some time, and later was taken with the general party with Prabhupād. Staying most of the time with Prabhupād, we preached in different places of Bengal. At 5.30 a.m. on 1st January, 1937, Prabhupād left the world.

Before this, Prabhupād had wanted me to go for preaching to London, but I said, "I am not fit for this—I can't follow their accent, and I don't have the tendency to mix with them very closely. So you will spend money to send me, but I won't be able to show any satisfactory result. Of course, if you order me I must go, but I am just informing you what I am." Then he sent Śrīyukta A.B. Goswāmī Prabhu [later Śrīpād Bhakti Sāraṅga Goswāmī Mahārāj] instead of me.

When Prabhupād become ill, I attended his sickbed. Just one day before his departure he called for me, and he asked me to chant *Śrī Rūpa-mañjarīpada*. At that time I was not accustomed to leading the *kīrttan*. I was hesitating—Śrīyukta Kuñja Bābu, later Śrīpād Bhakti Vilās Tīrtha Mahārāj, asked one *Brahmachārī* Prabhu, "You go on singing." Then he began singing, but Prabhupād felt dissatisfaction. He said, "I don't want to hear the tone or sweet sound. Then that *Brahmachārī* Prabhu stopped and I had to sing *Śrī Rūpa-mañjarīpada*. And the others said, "Prabhupād has hereby given you admission to the *Rasa-sevā* section."

About one year before this, I composed a Sanskrit poem about Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākur, and Śrīla Prabhupād was very happy with this. When I first read it to him, he remarked, "A very happy style." Next, I heard, he said to Śrīpād Śrauti Mahārāj, "This poem is so fine, it is not written by him—it is written by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākur himself, and has come out through him. It is so appreciable." Once, he said to Śrīyukta Aprākṛta Prabhu, "I'm satisfied that what I came to say will remain after me—I find in this *śloka* [verse] the *siddhānta* [perfect theological conclusion]":

श्रीगौरानुमतं स्वरूपविदितं रूपाग्रजेनाहतं
रूपाद्यैः परिवेशितं रघुगणैरास्वादितं सेवितम् ।

जीवाद्यैरभिरक्षितं शुक्र-शिव-ब्रह्मादि-सम्मानितं
श्रीराधापदसेवनामृतमहो तद्दातुमीशो भवान् ॥

śrī-gaurānumataṁ svarūpa-viditaṁ rūpāgrajenādṛtaṁ
rūpādyaiḥ pariveśitaṁ raghugaṇair āsvāditaṁ sevitaṁ
jīvādyair abhirakṣitaṁ śuka-śiva-brahmādi sammānitaṁ
śrī-rādhā-pada-sevanāmṛtam-aho! tad dātum īso bhavān

“That which is the Gracious Gift of Śrī Gaurachandra, the deep, internal puport of which is known by Śrī Svarūp Dāmodar, that which is adored by Śrī Sanātan Goswāmī, and distributed by the *Rasa-tattvāchāryyas* headed by Śrī Rūpa Goswāmī; that which is tasted and enriched by Śrī Raghunāth Dās Goswāmī and followers, and tenderly protected by Śrī Jīva Goswāmī and his company; and that which is venerated from afar by the great personages like Mahādev, lord of the gods, and Brahmā, grandfather of the world—aho! marvel of marvels, that ecstatic nectar of the Exclusive Service of the Lotus Feet of Śrī Rādhā—you hold the perfect position to mercifully give even that to us.”

Before this also, I wrote an article for the spiritual newspaper Nadiyā Prakāsh, and Prabhupād remarked to Śrīpād Śramaṇ Mahārāj, who was the editor, “If you can gather this type of article to publish in your paper, the standard of your paper will be raised. Such articles are desirable to be published.” Anyhow, he appreciated my understanding and realization. There are many other instances.

Myself (Tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu Śrī B.A. Sāgar): I heard that Śrīla Prabhupād praised you as *Śāstra-nipuna*.

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāj: Oh. In Madras, in the ‘Gauḍīya’, Gauḍīya Maṭh’s leading weekly paper, there was published one *siddhānta*. The birthday of Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī and the birthday of our Guru Mahārāj were mistakenly transposed. Both are *pañchamī* [fifth lunar day]. Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī’s is on *pañchamī* of the bright moon fortnight, and Prabhupād’s is on *pañchamī* of the dark moon fortnight. But they were transposed—Prabhupād to the bright fifth and Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī to the dark fifth. I read it carefully, and I thought the basis of the philosophising was wrong. Why has *Kṛṣṇa-śakti* come on the

bright moon, and *Gaura-śakti* on the dark moon? I found it should be just the opposite.

I showed it to Śrīpād Bon Mahārāj, considering it a grave error. He suddenly took up the pen and wrote a letter to the effect, "What is this? We thought that the editors have some touch with the reality and what they write has some real connection with the sentiment, but how can this sort or error be possible from them? Have they no *śrauta*-connection? All concoction!" So it was detected, and an amendment was published in a later issue.

When Prabhupād was there, the books "*Ray Rāmānanda*", "*Relative Worlds*" and "*Brahma-saṁhitā*" were published. It was mentioned that when Mahāprabhu went to Vṛndāvan He met Śrī Rūpa and Śrī Sanātan Goswāmins on the way. But I knew it clearly that He met them when returning from Vṛndāvan, so I objected. Anyway, I didn't take it to Prabhupād's notice, but it must have come to his notice that Śrīdhār Mahārāj detected all these things. On the occasion of his *Vyāsa-Pūjā*, Prabhupād delivered a written address, and there he mentioned before my name, "*Śāstra-nipūṇa Śrīdhār Mahārāj—he has very deep knowledge in the Scriptures*"; that was his consideration.

Myself: And about discovering the place of Śrī Rāmānanda Rāy?

Śrīla Śrīdhār Mahārāj: Yes, when I was called from Uttar Pradesh to join the Madras party, before that my name was Śrī Rāmēndrasundar Bhaṭṭācāryya. But now he converted my name into Śrī Rāmānanda Dās, and with this name he sent me with a group to find out the place of the conversation between Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rāmānanda Rāy, and to install the *Pāda-pīṭha* [footprints of Mahāprabhu] there.

At that time I delivered a short lecture in Rājmaṅdry about that conversation of Śrīman Mahāprabhu and Śrī Rāmānanda Rāy at Kobhur, and I heard from Śrīpād Kṛṣṇadās Bābājī Mahārāj that Śrīpād Bon Mahārāj was of the opinion that this speech was extremely appreciable, and that it contained the most precious Teachings. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Myself: That Temple where you installed the *Pāda-pīṭh* is still existing today?

Śrīla Śrīdhār Mahārāj: Yes. During our time the Deities were installed by Prabhupād, but there was only that *Pāda-pīṭh mandir*. A separate

mandir was established after Prabhupād, perhaps by Śrīpād Bhakti Vilās Tīrtha Mahārāj.

Later, myself as a *sannyāsī* and Śrī Hāyagrīva Prabhu as a white-clad *brahmachārī*, who was later Śrīpād Mādhava Mahārāj, worked together.

Also, I collected funds from the Rājā of Jeipur [Orissa] for the Madras Temple. That is also a history. Their new I.C.S. was Mr. O. Pulla Reddy. He was appointed ‘Dewān’ [government official] of Jeipur. Because that is an *ādivāsī* [indigenous peoples] area, a special sort of rule was introduced there by the British. The Dewān is more powerful than the King.

We came from Madras with some recommendation from the officiating Chief Justice, Mr. Rameshan, to meet the Rājā of Jeipur. Then, the Rājā promised to pay the cost of the Madras Temple, but he kept requesting us, “Approach the Dewān, and he, and not I, will give you the money. So go and consult the higher. I am only giving my sign of approval, but the money will be paid by him. So meet him.” I had heard that he was a half-atheistic man, so I was hesitant to approach him. I said, “No, you are King, you are master, so it is better that you will give the money”, and so on, but he insisted again and again. “No. You will have to meet the Dewān.”

But when I met the Dewān, it was just the opposite. The Dewān said, “Oh, I’m the last man to pay you this amount, ten thousand, to build the temple at Madras. If you would be building it here, then I could have some consideration; people here would have some recreation in the temple. But these poor people, half-fed and half-clad—if we get any money in excess, I must give an order for their help. Funds must be used for *that* cause, not for this luxury of constructing a temple; and that, too, is in Madras town. Go there and collect funds to construct your temple.”

Then I thought this is a hopeless case, so drastic medicine must be applied. So I came out with this *śloka* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

विक्रीडितं व्रजवधूभिरिदं च विष्णोः
 श्रद्धान्वितोऽनुशृणुयादथ वर्णयेद्यः ।
 भक्तिं पारां भगवति प्रतिलभ्य कामं
 हद्रोगमाश्वपहिनोत्यचिरेण धीरः ॥

vikrīritam vraja-vadhūbhir idam cha viṣṇoḥ
 śraddhānvito 'nuśṛṇuyād atha varṇayed yaḥ
 bhaktim parām bhagavati pratilabhya kāmam
 hṛd-rogam āśv apahinoty achireṇa dhīrah

I said to him, “You want to help the *ādivāsīs*, and I also want to help them. But your help is in a particular way, and my help is in another way. It has been told in the Scriptures that to hanker for something [in this world] is a heart-disease. It is mentioned in *Bhāgavatam* by Śukadev Goswāmī, ‘*kāmam hṛd-rogam.*’

“I want this, I want that, I want thousands, I want millions—that is heart-disease, and not real. When I was a hog, I devoured a hillock of stools, but hunger is not appeased. When I was an elephant I finished a whole forest, but hunger is not finished.’ So hunger can never be finished in this way.

“There are so many who have amassed millions, still they say, ‘No, this is very little, I want more, more.’ So this is heart-disease, and in the *Bhāgavatam* Śukadev Goswāmī has given the medicine for this. *Vikrīritam*. . . when you can accommodate the Absolute to have His full, unrestricted play, and use His ownership with everything, every atom in the creation—if you can accommodate such a conception of the Absolute with the environment, then you can get out of this heart-disease. There’s no other way.’ ”

The man was impressed. Tears fell from his eyes. “Swāmijī, I believe in God.”

“Your eyes bear testimony to that.”

“I shall pay your money. But not just now; go to Madras, I shall pay.” He sent the money, and the Madras Temple was constructed.

My preaching was not that of the false canvasser, but straight dealing; dealing with the plain truth. Not any coaxing or indirect way, flattering, or by sweet words to somehow rob the man. Straight talk, straight dealing representation. My guide was, ‘why have I come here?’ What fascination brought *me* here? I tried my best to represent that fascination to them. ‘This is the cause for preaching—you must appreciate such cause. I have got appreciation in this line, and I don’t think that I

did wrong.’ Every moment I think I’m justified to accept this principle and to march on, in this line.

After the disappearance of Guru Mahārāj there were trustees appointed by him and he said to make a governing body.... But unfortunately for us.....there were many discrepancies and the mission could not be kept together.

Although I thought that I must try my best to purify the movement, according to my conscience, it was not to be so. So I thought I must leave silently. My principle wouldn’t be to try to fight again amongst one another to purify the mission. That was my mentality. Others, stalwarts, could not tolerate the discrepancies and they were fighting.

I was somewhat still associated when there was a case, and some stalwart Godbrothers were jailed and the case went on. I couldn’t leave like a coward, but after perhaps a year the case was finished, they were released, and I went to Vṛndāvan leaving the association of the Maṭh. I don’t care for such fighting.

They tried their best to keep me with them but I said it was not possible for me to remain in the association of [what was now becoming] quarrelling elements. I stayed there at Govarddhan for a month, and completing the Ūrjā *vrata* there, I took Govarddhan *Śilā* and came here and hired a house for two rupees per month. When I returned from Vṛndāvan I met my previous brother [my brother from my family], Maṇi Bābu. He was in the service of the railway. I asked him to give me ten rupees per month for a few months. He agreed and did so for two or three months, and with that I came here. Gradually the others tried to find out where I was. Finally they found me out and they began to visit me now and then. Whenever they came they would bring some gift or so.

Śrīyukta Śakhī Charaṇ Rāy secured this plot [where Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh stands today]. He purchased it with his own money. Here I began my ‘heart-service’ in a cottage. 1942 on Rathayātrā Day I entered that cottage with Govarddhan *Śilā*. Before that I lived for some time with Śrīpād Keśav Mahārāj in that rented house, and sometimes in Midnapore Maṭh with high people like Śrīpād Yāyāvar Mahārāj, Śrīpād Mādhav Mahārāj and others.

But here I was separated. Only one person was with me, then after some time another person with a few gentlemen of Orissa came, and some other Godbrothers also came. Then Śrīpād Govinda Mahārāj, as a boy, Śrī Gaurendu Brahmachārī, and others came.

Śrīpād Kṛṣṇadās Bābajī said to me, "You please give attention to this Śrī Gaurendu Brahmachārī; he's very intelligent and qualified." I tried to give a little more attention to Gaurendu Brahmachārī, but others could not tolerate that. I wanted to help him by Sanskrit education, etc., but they could not tolerate that, and they gave a proposal that we must prepare a deed. By that time this building had already been constructed in 1943. Two persons who had stayed with me for some time now demanded a document naming three Godbrother trustees, two themselves and one of whom was to be myself.

I then asked according to which law it would be managed. They said by majority vote, which meant that whenever they combined they could do anything with me they liked. So I said, "I avoided remaining in the company of many respected *Sannyāsins* and so many others. I came to live alone. That does not mean that you both will guide me. I can't accept this." They began to revolt and disturb. There was a compromise.

Śrīpād Goswāmī Mahārāj and Śrīpād Mādhav Mahārāj came. There was about five thousand rupees in the bank, and another seven thousand or so was to be paid to them, and then I would be here with absolute proprietorship. Śrīpād Goswāmī Mahārāj came to my help; he gave a loan of four thousand, and Śrīpād Yāyāvar Mahārāj and others collected some funds from different parts, then seven thousand was given up, and then from that time I am here. This is the history.

I do not go for preaching very often. I'm almost always sitting here, and I very rarely go out in the previous style. Śrīpād Mādhav Mahārāj was always very affectionately accusing me, "You are denying the educated section of the people. Sitting here idle, you are denying the people. You have quality and capacity to preach Mahāprabhu's Teachings, especially to the educated section, but you do not do so." Whenever he came he would always charge me. Almost every year, after completing the *Gaura-pūrṇimā* celebrations he used to visit me, and he

would charge me! And also, every year for his Calcutta Maṭh celebration I used to go and deliver lectures there. In this way, days have passed.

I first came to meet Śrīpād A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Mahārāj in Allahabad when I was white-clad [before *sannyāsa*]. After that I came here [Bengal], and then went to Madras. It was probably just before 1930 when I met him at Allahabad. At that time he was an agent of Kārttik Bose Laboratories. He was taken to the Maṭh. Prabhupād was not there then. 1933 or so after *Vraja-maṇḍal parikramā* Prabhupād came back to Allahabad for laying the foundation stone, and at that time he met Prabhupād on a few visits and took initiation. You are already familiar with my relationship with him.