

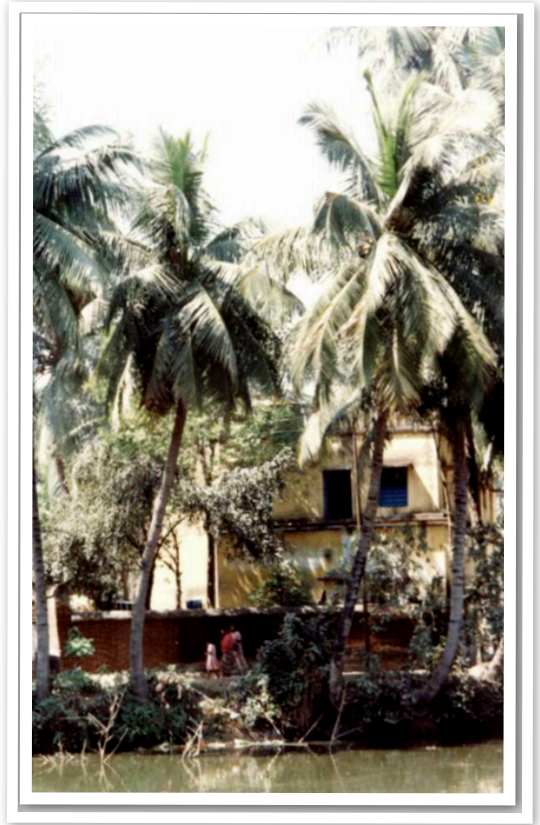
Autobiography

OF

SRILA SRIDHAR DEV GOSWAMI MAHARAJA

I was born at midnight, Saturday 10th October, 1895. Navami tithi [lunar day] under the same sign as Lord Ramchandra. Krsna-paksa [dark moon fortnight]. Sriman Mahaprabhu was also born on a Saturday. I was the second child. The first was a daughter, but she died early, so Ram 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 Ram 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 Sankirtan 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 sloka in praise of Lord Siva, 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 Vaisakh there was an earthquake. I was only a child then of one year and eight months or so, but I remember that . I remem-

ber 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 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 Ramayana and Mahabharata. 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 culture of the orthodox section-Veda, Upanisad, 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 Sastric 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 matriculated 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 Ramchandra, for the model Pastimes, but not so much Lord Krsna, because of His Vrndavan Lila. I could not accommodate why God should be a liar and a girl-hunter. I could not accommodate this. Though I saw Radha-Govinda Murtis [Deities]-They seemed to be very, very charming. I found some mystic background there, but on the surface, I had more liking for Ramchandra than Krsna.



My attraction to Krsna first came through Bhagavad-Gita, and then through Mahaprabhu. I liked Ramchandra for His magnanimity. I was mainly attracted by the self-giving ideal. So I liked Radharani very much, I liked Mahaprabhu very much, but my attraction to Krsna was less. My attraction to Krsna came through Mahaprabhu and through Radharani-from Their side. When I was nine or ten or so, there was a temple where Radha-Krsna Deities

were installed in Jagadananda Pur, near Katwa. Every year in Karttik month my father used to read Srimad-Bhagavatam 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 Mushirabad] for college study at the Krishnanath 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, [Srila Guru Maharaj 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 puja, 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 sandhya-vandana [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 Gayatri 432 times daily, we can achieve a very good spiritual improvement. I practiced 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 Gayatri is conscious, spiritual, not dead words. So, if I go on with japam Gayatri 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 Gayatri 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 Sri Suresh Bhattacharyya-he came from a Brahmana family of Faridpur. The founder of the Bharat-sevashram, Sri Pranavananda, was from his village. Sripad Madhusudan Maharaj also comes from the same village-Bajepratapur 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 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 Mahaprabhu'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 Sri Chaitanyadev, but my paternal were orthodox smarttas. 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 Vaisnavas 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 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 session 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 svaraj [independence] to you.'

I wanted to become a sannyasi, 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 Kalna. 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 government office superintendent I got some vocation and I put up in Calcutta. I attended the office there.

My attraction stays always towards Mahaprabhu. In the meantime I wandered here and there searching for a sadhu 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: Gaudiya Math Mahotsav [Grand Festival] for one month. The address was given, near the Pareshnath Temple. I found this red-colored placard. I thought, Gaudiya Math must be Mahaprabhu's followers, let us go and see what is there. When I was a law student, through Suresh Bhattacharyya I knew the founder of Bharat-Sevashram, Sri Pranavananda, and he tried his best to take me into his mission; but I flatly refused.

"My head is sold to Mahaprabhu, Gauranga, so I can't go anywhere else."

He said, "I also have great reverence for Mahaprabhu Chaitanyadev, but I think the first stage must be Buddhistic abnegation or vairagya and indifference [to the world]. Second, Sankar's Vedanta or jnana. 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 Sri Chaitanyadev's Prema-dharmma is the highest, above the Buddhistic and Sankarite conceptions of theism. But Chaitanyadev has not told us, 'Go to the Buddhists and practice vairagya, and then go to Sankar and have knowledge of the Vedanta, and then come to Me.' He has told that 'wherever you are, take the association of a sadhu 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, Haranath. I went to search for him but could not find him. But this was when I found that placard and went to Gaudiya Math. There I found only one gentleman manning the outside hall, and the rest had all gone on procession of Nagar-sankirtan [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 Math had deeper and more sound knowledge than I. Then, the party came back from Nagar-sankirtan and I found Guru Maharaj in front with his danda [mendicant's staff]. As soon as he reached in front of the Math some disciple came and took the danda from him and gradually he was received there.

At first sight I found Guru Maharaj'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 Mahaprabhu. 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 Haridwar at the time of the Kumbha Mela. She died there. One of my brothers, Satyen, was attending her with other pilgrims and sisters, etc.

I was free. I was visiting the Math. 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 Maharaj 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 Kirtanananda Prabhu, one brahmachari, stopped me when I was making an attempt to go upstairs.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to Guru Maharaj. 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 sadhus? Why should there be any difference outwardly and inwardly? So I need not come here again!'

But at that very moment the position of Sukadev appeared in my mind. I had read in Mahabharata that Srila Vyasadev sent Srila Sukadev Goswami to Rajarsi Janak to finish his education or sadhana. Srila Sukadev 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 Maharaj 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 Maharaj asked, "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 Maharaj said, "He has something to ask?"
 He again came to me, and said, "Guru Maharaj said, have you got something to ask?"
 "No, I have nothing to ask."
 He again returned to Guru Maharaj. "He says he has nothing to ask."
 Then again Guru Maharaj 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. Nothing else but that.
 Perhaps that touched Guru Maharaj. 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 Gauda-mandal."
 They had one booklet printed then and the attending person said, "Guru Maharaj 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."
 The I took it on my head and accepted it. That was the first talk with Guru Maharaj.

The following year I was invited to Srīman Mahāprabhu's Appearance Ceremony at Mayapur. At that time I was visiting the Math 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 Haridwar, and the Gaudiya Math people were also inviting me to Mayapur. 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 Gaudiya Math 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 adherence they reject so many stalwarts of the then society-this Aurobindo, this Gandhi, the Ramkrishna, the [imitationist] Goswamins-they summarily reject them all. But Mahāprabhu, Bhagavatam, Gita-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 Maharaj comes from a Kayastha family, that is considered sudra, and I come from a brahmana pandits' family of great honor in the society. Ostensibly, and brahmana should have been suitable; in this way some sort of objection was felt in me. Then, when I went to Mayapur I again saw many things that touched me.

Srila Prabhupad was delivering a lecture to so many gentlemen who had come from Krsnanagar-educated persons. In another place the elderly Sripad Bhakti Pradip Tirtha Maharaj was giving a lecture. Somewhere else Sripad Bhakti Svarupa Parvvat Maharaj 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 Maharaj was sitting in a canvas chair on the verandah of his room, and many persons were offering him obeisance's and going home. At that time he was speaking, giving some discourse. I was always very eager to hear him. He was saying, "Don't cheat me, you people." I was alert. What? Where was the question on 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 Krsna, 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 Krsna, 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 so 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 Krsna. All your necessities and hankering will be satisfied in the service of the Holy Lotus Feet of Krsna, and nowhere else." He was speaking so forcefully.

I was wonder struck. I thought, I would never hear anywhere in this living world such intense necessity for Krsna-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 sannyasi without completing my sraddha ceremony [last rites]; then who will do my sraddha ceremony?' So when she passed, I went home and completed the sraddha and after finishing that I came, in the last part of April, to join the math. 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 Sripad Bharati Maharaj and others said that I had a great opportunity.

They pressed, "No, no! Krsna has taken your wife, and Krsna has taken your mother. He has done enough for you. Really if you neglect to avail yourself of the 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 Math.

I stayed at the Calcutta math 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 kirtan and preach. So, I was next sent on a preaching tour.

The first stop was at the Dumurkonda math [in Bengal] and from there to Benares, then to Vrndavan. There, there was nagar-kirtan for some time, then I was taken to Delhi where there was door-to-door collection for some time. Then Kuruksetra math was established and I was made math commander there, and then I was alone. A small village-town and the place of Kuruksetra. 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 math 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 Math celebration for one month. So when I came back here I was taken by Sripad Bhakti Hrday Bon Maharaj and Sri Hayagriva Prabhu [later Sripad Bhakti Dayita Madhav Maharaj] in a party towards Madras side, installing the footprints of Mahaprabhu. Then again upon returning, the Bagh Bazaar Math was opened, and from the original rented house in Ulta Danga the Deities were moved in procession in a chariot to Bagh Bazaar Math, and a one-month festival was held there. After that Prabhupad went on that year establishing and installing those .-pitha [footprints of Mahaprabhu] up to Mangalgiri, near Bejoyda, Kobhur, and so on.

Then he went to Madras and declared the opening of Madras Gaudiya Math and put us there. We rented a house. Sripad Bon Maharaj was the leader, and the senior sannyasi. In the meantime I was given sannyasa, recommended by Sripad Bon Maharaj. 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 Ramendrasundar Bhattacharya, B.A. My duty was to approach the people and introduce the sannyasins, and more or less I had the work of a canvasser. But Sripad Bon Maharaj said, "He's not a good canvasser but a good preacher. He can speak Hari-katha very well." Then I was given sannyasa in October, 1930, and after installing footprints of Mahaprabhu one by one in various places, Prabhupad opened the Math in Madras [as above mentioned], and we were left there and began preaching for three years or so.

Then there was Vrndavan parikrama, circumambulation of the whole of Vrndavan. We joined that program, and then Sripad Bon Maharaj 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 Prabhupad. Staying most of the time with Prabhupad, we preached in different places of Bengal. At 5:30 a.m. on 1st January, 1937, Prabhupad left the world.

Before this, Prabhupad 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 Sriyukta A.B. Goswami Prabhu [later Sripad Bhakti Saranga Goswami Maharaj] instead of me.

When Prabhupad became ill, I attended his sickbed. Just one day before his departure he called for me, and he asked me to chant Sri Rupa-manjaripada. At that time I was not accustomed to leading the kirtan. I was hesitating-Sriyukta Kunja Babu, later Sripad Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Maharaj, asked one Brahmachari Prabhu, "You go on singing." Then he began singing, but Prabhupad felt dissatisfaction. He said, "I don't want to hear the tone or sweet sound. Then that Brahmachari Prabhu stopped and I had to sing Sri Rupa-manjaripada. And the others said, "Prabhupad has given you admission to the Rasa-seva section."

About one year before this, I composed a Sanskrit poem about Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, and Srila Prabhupad was very happy with this. When I first read it to him, he remarked, "A very happy style." Next, I heard, he said to Sripad Srauti Maharaj, "This poem is so fine, it is not written by him-it is written by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur himself, and has come out through him. It is so appreciable." Once, he said to Sriyukta Aprakrta Prabhu, "I'm satisfied that what I came to say will remain after me-I find in this sloka [verse] the siddhanta [perfect theological conclusion]".

sri-gauranumatam svarupa-viditam rupagrajenadrta
rupadyaih parivesitam raghuganair asvaditam sevitam
jivadyair abhiraksitam suka-siva-brahmadi sammanitam
sri-radha-.-sevanamrtam-aho! tad datum iso bhavan

"That which is the Gracious Gift of Sri Gaurachandra, the deep, internal purport of which is known by Sri Svarup Damodar, that which is adored by Sri Sanatan Goswami, and distributed by the Rasa-tattvacharyyas headed by Sri Rupa Goswami; that which is tasted and enriched by Sri Raghunath Das Goswami and followers, and tenderly protected by Sri Jiva Goswami and his company; and that which is venerated from afar by the great personages like Mahadev, lord of the gods, and Brahma, grandfather of the world-aho! marvel of marvels, that ecstatic nectar of the Exclusive Service of the Lotus Feet of Sri Radha-you hold the perfect position to mercifully give even that to us."

Before this also, I wrote an article for the spiritual newspaper Nadiya Prakash, and Prabhupad remarked to Sripad Sraman Maharaj, 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.

Sagar Maharaja: I heard that Srila Prabhupad praised you as Sastra-nipuna.

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Oh. In Madras, in the 'Gaudiya', Gaudiya Math's leading weekly paper, there was published one siddhanta. The birthday of Srimati Visnupriya Devi and the birthday of our Guru Maharaj were mistakenly transposed. Both are panchami [fifth lunar day]. Srimati Visnupriya Devi's is on panchami of the bright moon fortnight, and Prabhupad's is on panchami of the dark moon fortnight. But they were transposed-Prabhupad to the bright fifth and Srimati Visnupriya Devi to the dark fifth. I read it carefully, and I thought the basis of the philosophizing was wrong. Why has Krsna-sakti come on the bright moon, and Gaura-sakti on the dark moon? I found it should be just the opposite. I showed it to Sripad Bon Maharaj, 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 of error be possible from them? Have they no srauta-connection? All concoction!" So it was detected, and an amendment was published in later issue.

When Prabhupada was there, the books "Ray Ramananda", "Relative Worlds" and "Brahma-samhita" were published. It was mentioned that when Mahaprabhu went to Vrndavan He met Sri Rupa and Sri Sanatan Goswamins on the way. But I clearly knew that He met them when returning from Vrndavan, so I objected. Anyway, I didn't take it to Prabhupad's notice, but it must have come to his notice that Sridhar Maharaj detected all these things. On the occasion of his Vyasa-Puja, Prabhupad delivered a written address, and there he mentioned before my name, "Sastra-nipuna Sridhar Maharaj-he has very deep knowledge in the Scriptures"; that was his consideration.

Sagar Maharaja: And about discovering the place of Sri Ramananda Ray?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes, when I was called from Uttar Pradesh to join the Madras party, before that my name was Sri Ramendrasundar Bhattacharyya. But now he converted my name into Sri Ramananda Das, and with this name he sent me with a group to find out the place of the conversation between Sriman Mahaprabhu and Sri Ramananda Ray, and to install the .-pitha [footprints of Mahaprabhu] there.

At that time I delivered a short lecture in Raj-mahendry about that conversation of Sriman Mahaprabhu and Sri Ramananda Ray at Kobhur, and I heard from Sripad Krsnadas Babaji Maharaj that Sripad Bon Maharaj was of the opinion that this speech was extremely appreciable, and that it contained the most precious Teachings. Hare Krsna.

Sagar Maharaja: That Temple where you installed the .-pith is still existing today?

Srila Sridhar Maharaj: Yes. During our time the Deities were installed by Prabhupad, but there was only that .-pith mandir. A separate mandir was established after Prabhupad, perhaps by Sripad Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Maharaj.

Later, myself as a sannyasi and Sri Hayagriva Prabhu as a white-clad brahmachari, who was later Sripad Madhava Maharaj, worked together.

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

We came from Madras with some recommendation from the Chief Justice, Mr. Rameshan, to meet the Raja of Jeipur. Then, the Raja promised to pay the cost of the Madras Temple, but he kept requesting us, "Approach the Dewan, 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 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 Dewan."

But when I met the Dewan, it was just the opposite. The Dewan 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 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 sloka of Srimad-Bhagavatam:

vikriritam vraja-vadhubhir idam cha visnoh
sraddhanvito 'nusrnuyad atha varnayed yah
bhaktim param bhagavati pratilabhya kamam
hrd-rogam asv apahinoty achirena dhirah

I said to him, "You want to help the adivasis, 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 Bhagavatam by Sukadev Goswami, 'kamam hrd-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 Bhagavatam Sukadev Goswami has given the medicine for this. Vikirtam...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. "Swamiji, I believe in God."

"Your eyes bear testimony to that."

"I shall pay your money, he said. 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 Maharaj 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 release, and I went to Vrndavan leaving the association of the Math. 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] quarreling elements. I stayed there at Govardhan for a month, and completing the Urjja vrata there, I took Govardhan Sila and came here and hired a house for two rupees per month. When I returned from Vrndavan I met my previous brother [my brother from my family], Mani Babu. 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.

Sriyukta Sakhi Charan Ray secured this plot [where Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math stands today]. He purchased it with his own money. Here I began my 'heart-service' in a cottage here. 1942 on Rathayatra Day I entered that cottage with Govardhan Sila. Before that I lived for some with Sripad Kesav Maharaj in that rented house, and sometimes in Midnapore Math with high people like Sripad Yayavar Maharaj, Sripad Madhav Maharaj 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 Sripad Govinda Maharaj, as a boy, Sri Gaurendu Brahmachari, and others came.

Sripad Krsnadas Babaji said to me, "You please give attention to this Sri Gaurendu Brahmachari; he's very intelligent and qualified." I tried to give a little more attention to Gaurendu Brahmachari, 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 Sannyasins 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.

Sripad Goswami Maharaj and Sripad Madhav Maharaj came. There was about five thousand rupees in the bank and another thousand or so was to be paid to them, and then I would be here with absolute proprietorship. Sripad Goswami Maharaj came to my help; he gave a loan of four thousand, and Sripad Yayavar Maharaj 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. Sripad Madhav Maharaj 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 Mahaprabhu's Teachings, especially to educated section, but you do not do so." Whenever he came he would always charge me. Almost every year, after completing the Gaura-purnima celebrations he used to visit me, and he would charge me! And also, every year for his Calcutta Math celebration I used to go and deliver lectures there. In this way, days have passed.

I first came to meet Sripad A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaj in Allahabad when I was white-clad [before sannyasa]. 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 Karttik Bose Laboratories. He was taken to the Math. Prabhupad was not there then. 1933 or so after Vraja-mandal parikrama Prabhupad came back to Allahabad for laying the foundation stone, and at that time he met Prabhupad on a few visits and took initiation. You are already familiar with my relationship with him.