

সাধু বাবার পাবন স্মরণ

Sadhu Bābā's sacred memory



*The life and teachings of
Śrī Nīkuṅja Gopāl Gosvāmī (1934-1986)*

Compiled by Advaita dās

*śvetāmbara paridhānam śveta mālānulepanam
varābhaya karam śāntam karuṇāmaya vigraham
vāmenotpala dhāriṇyā śaktyāliṅgita vigraham
smerānanam suprasannam sādhakābhīṣṭa dāyakam*

*Wearing white garments, garlands and unguents,
His hand, raised in benediction, bestowing fearlessness,
His figure peaceful and full of compassion,
embraced by a divine Shakti that holds a lotus flower in her left hand,
His countenance smiling in satisfaction.*

He bestows all objectives to the spiritual practitioners.

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তা'তে কৃষ্ণ ভজে কর গুরুর সেবন |
মায়াজাল ছুটে পায় কৃষ্ণের চরণ ||

*tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje, koro gurura sevana;
māyā-jāla chuṭe pāy kṛṣṇera caraṇa*

“Therefore, worship Kṛṣṇa and serve the Guru. Then the net of illusion will break and you will attain Kṛṣṇa’s lotus-feet.” (Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya 22.25)

This is the biography of a unique saint. While reading this, the most important is that one does not mirror Sādhu Bābā on any sectarian role model, tradition or established doctrine. One who reads this narration without any precondition and is able and willing to accept Sādhu Bābā as a manifestation of Lord Śiva can relish this narration. Then meditation on him will lead to blissful and sweet transcendental experiences. One should not think that these are the activities of an ordinary human being, nor should one try to imitate them. Śrīmad Bhāgavata (10.33.31-32) warns:

*naitat samācarejjātu manasāpi hyaniśvaraḥ
vinaśyatyācaran maudhyād yathā rudro’bdhijaṁ viṣam
īśvarāṇām vacaḥ satyaṁ tathaivācaritaṁ kvacit;
teṣāṁ yat sva vaco yuktaṁ buddhimāṁs tat samācaret*

“Not even within one’s mind one should imitate the Lord without being a lord oneself; such foolish behaviour leads to destruction, as it will if one would imitate Lord Śiva by drinking the poison from the Milk-ocean. The words of the lords are true and one should act accordingly. An intelligent person should only follow that conduct of theirs that is consistent with their guideline.”

An ordinary person will die by drinking the powerful poison from the milk ocean, but the same act even enhanced Śiva’s beauty, making Him Nīlakaṇṭha, He whose neck is beautified by a blue line. It is not in his capacity as Guru that Sādhu Bābā should be seen as an incarnation of Śiva, but in his capacity as a 13th generation direct descendant of Lord Advaita, who is the joint incarnation of Mahāviṣṇu and Sadāśiva. And it is not only by birth that his identity is ascertained like that. It was in

Sādhu Bābā that the qualities of Lord Advaita were manifest to the utmost. *kartum akartum anyathāpi kartum samarthah* – “He can do or leave what ever he likes, and can even act otherwise.”



Śrīmat Sādhu Bābā's Abhiṣekāṣṭakam

Eight couplets glorifying the Divine appearance of Sādhu Bābā

By Nirañjan Prasād Dās

*panca śata varṣa pore, āilen advaita ghore,
bhakti dhan pracārite nikuñja gopāl
ānanda gopāle gaṇi, navadvīpa śiraḥ maṇi
tāri suta guna mani parama doyāl*

“Five hundred years to the year after the Divine appearance of Śrī Advaita Prabhu, Nikuñja Gopāl Gosvāmī appeared in His home (Advaita's family) to preach the treasure of devotion. This jewel of glories, the most compassionate one, thus became the son of Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī, who was considered the crest jewel of Navadvīpa's spiritual teachers.”

*caturdaśa varṣa dhari, mahāviṣṇu tapaḥ kori
mā janani divā niśi bhāsi aśru jale
tāri phale āśutoṣa, mone bhāvi paritoṣa
vatsa rūpe janamilen mā janani kole*

“Mother performed penance for fourteen years to please Mahāviṣṇu, bathing in tears day and night. As the result of this Lord Śiva, who is swiftly pleased, was satisfied and took birth in her womb as her son.”

*śāradīyā durgā ṣaṣṭhī, sombār rātri niśi
uṭhilo mangal dhvani prabhu grha mājhe*

*sthāvara jangama sobe, mahānanda kalarabe,
devatā mandire śona kinkinī bāje*

“On the autumnal Durgā Ṣaṣṭhī (a festival day in Bengal), Monday at night-time, auspicious sounds arose in the house of Ānanda Gopāl Prabhu. All the moving and inert creatures made ecstatic noises and ankle-bells could be heard to tinkle in the temple.”

*kohilen daivajña āsi, śono o go jagad bāsi!
mone loy ei sei batsa sītānāth!
komala vadana khāni, jeno amṛtera khani,
ye herilo tā sobāre koren ātma sāt*

“An astrologer came and said: ‘Hear me, O residents of the world! I think this child is the husband of Sītā (Advaita Prabhu)! His tender face is like a mine of nectar – He takes anyone who sees Him to His heart!’”

*śire śobhe keśa dāma, laharī laharī ṭhām
anupama sudhāmoy angera ghatan
praśānta lalāta khāni, aṣṭamīra candramāni
tāhe dekhi suśobhana tribalī racan*

“His head is beautified by waves of curly locks and His limbs are made of peerless solid nectar. His peaceful forehead resembles the moon on the eighth lunar day and is beautified by three lines.”

*mādhuryera rasa dhām, sobār hore manaskām,
ki bolibo lobhaniya nayanera śobhā
padma palāśa jini, duti nīlakānta maṇi,
aparūpa śobhe jeno muni mana lobhā*

“What can I say about the beauty of His eyes? They are the abodes of sweet *rasa* that destroys everyone’s material desires! They are more beautiful than lotus petals or two blue sapphires – their extraordinary beauty destroys the patience of the wise!”

gupta vraje joto nārī, tārā sobe śārī pore,

*sāri sāri cole gongār ghāte
sumaṅgala ghaṭe kori, abhiṣekha vāri puri,
haraṣite jaya dhvani kore phire bate*

“All the women of the hidden Vraja (Navadvīpa) wear nice sarees as they walk to the bathing place of the Ganges in rows. After filling auspicious jugs with Ganges water meant for the *abhiṣekh* (ceremonial shower), they return on the path, blissfully singing of the Lord's glories.”

*pañca gavya pūrṇa thālā, dhānya durvā dīpa mālā
śata śata braja-bālā ulu dhvani dilo
bohilo ānanda rol, cāri dike utarol,
abhiṣekh dine prasād bhakati māgilo*

“Hundreds and hundreds of Vraja-girls make the Ulu sound (a high sound made by women while horizontally moving the tongue between the lips) while bringing trays filled with five kinds of dairy products, paddy, Dūrva grass and garlands of lamps. A roar of ecstasy arose in all four directions! On this day of the *abhiṣekh* Nirañjan Prasād Dās begs for devotion.”



Bābā's early youth

According to family tradition, Bābā took *dikṣā* from his mother. He did so early in the morning in the cold month of Māgha when he was 9 years old. Initially Bābā wanted to take *dikṣā* from a *siddha yogī*, but when his mother expressed her disappointment at this he rolled at his mother's feet and told her: “Mother, your heart's desires have been fulfilled – the Guru is *antaryāmi* (God the inner monitor of each living being). Therefore, O *mā*, please give me the shelter of your *dikṣā*.”

Rādhā-Caraṇa Deslā: “Bābā behaved very well. He never took *prasāda* without first circumambulating his parents.”

In his youth Bābā attended the Government Sanskrit College in downtown Navadvīpa, but he showed little interest in intellectual gymnastics. Much rather he could be found behind his room practising *yoga āsanas*.

Gopāl Candra Ghoṣh – “When Nikuñja Prabhu was a little boy, whenever he was with his father in Vṛndāvana, he was educated by Gopī dās Bābāji, a highly educated (Matric pass) and renounced saint who lived there. Gopī dās was very heavy and corpulent and lived near the Gopeśvar Mandir. He was the manager of Aśvini Bābu Kunja. He was a great follower of Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī, though it is not clear if he was his disciple. He taught Bābā Sanskrit grammar, English, Hindi, Bengali and maths, holding his hand while teaching him how to write. If Bābā made mistakes in Sanskrit conjuncts or in maths he would chastise him, but he also offered his affection and obeisances unto him.”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “In his very early life when our Bābā was practising Yoga Vāśiṣṭha, the book of *yoga mārṅa*, once his father said to him: "Why are you not practising *bhakti grantha*?" Bābā then and there replied "Oh my father, please excuse me, I don't chew the remnants of others." He was determined to find the truth on his own.¹



Bābā's pastimes at adolescence

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Three persons have taken an *āsana* at the Tārā-pīṭha cemetery – Vāma Kṣepā, Tārā Kṣepā and Bābā. Vāma Kṣepā and Tārā Kṣepā are two *siddha tāntriks*, Guru and disciple. Taking the corpse of a 16-year old *caṇḍāla* (untouchable) girl on the shoulders, Bābā was immersed up to his neck in the Ganges in the pitch dark of a new moon night when an unembodied voice told him: “My child, you may have achieved perfection in your practise, but your father is waiting for you - he needs you, so go and fulfil his desires. There are jewels in the safe at your home, go and practise these jewel-like spiritual practises. Then your father's desires will be fulfilled.” Without delay Bābā hurried home. Outside of human vision Bābā completed his duties in his *kuṭīr* in the complete darkness of that new moon night. After this he began to study the devotional scriptures. One night he had a wonderful dream – he

¹ Narrated in a letter to Advaitadas, February 12, 2001

saw Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Advaita Prabhu established in the Mandir and himself in the front of the courtyard of the Mandir sitting on the *vyāsāsana*, lecturing on the Bhāgavata. While he was lecturing his dream suddenly broke. The next morning he told his father about his dream, and his father said: “Boy, this is a true dream. Today you have to lecture at Rāsa Bihārī Mahānta’s Mandir. Your middle brother has done this until now, but now he is very ill, so prepare yourself.” Bābā had, however, just commenced his scriptural studies a few days earlier. He panicked and as he wanted to express his inability to his father, his father had already understood his predicament and placed the dust of his lotus feet upon his head, saying: “My child, do not fear – whatever you will say during this lecture will be elixir for the ears and heart, as the Bhāgavata says – *hṛt karṇa rasāyaṇī*.” As father blessed him and assured him like this, Bābā felt a superhuman power coming over him. Relying on his father’s foot-dust he mounted the *vyāsāsana* in that great assembly. It was great to see how he firmly sat down on that elevated seat. There was a huge audience there of all the foremost saints of the time. Everyone present saw only a divine light, created by penance. All, whether young or old, stared at him thirstily as if spellbound by a *mantra*. His matted locks, his pleasant creamy complexion, his broad chest and forehead, his whole figure grave by meditation, he illuminated the whole assembly hall with his divine radiance. As soon as Bābā’s lecture commenced, the thousands of throats of the audience fell dead silent. It was as if Śukadeva (who was also half-naked and wore matted locks) sat in front of Mahārāja Parīkṣit and the assembled sages on the bank of the Ganges, listening to the topics of Śrīmad Bhāgavata from his divine mouth, like a nectar-Ganges descending upon them. What could compare to their divine bliss! Everyone was speechless. At the end of the lecture everyone sat fixed on their seat, bereft of external consciousness, like bumblebees inebriated by drinking divine honey. What could anyone say to anyone else? No one was able to get up or speak – the lecture was still reverberating in their ear-shells. Mothers had forgotten their children, *sādhakas* had forgotten their *mālā japa*. Everyone was perplexed, like a snake that lost the jewels on its hoods (মণিহারা ফণী) – nothing could compare to Bābā’s lectures! Devotees led by Pancānan Ghosh, a senior wealthy resident of Navadvīpa Dhāma, went to see Bābā’s father afterwards and told him: “Prabhupāda, have you invested all your inner power into your youngest son?” Bābā’s father could understand it was a special day – unless the devotees proclaim so, the holy Dhāma could not have become blessed in such a way. It is not an overstatement to say that even now the holy Gaura-Dhāma of Navadvīpa has never been blessed with such sweet nectar topics

of the Holy Bhāgavat. When Śrī Śrī Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī heard such glorifications of his son he lost himself in divine bliss and could not help kissing his qualified son on the forehead in blessing.²

When Bābā was of adolescent age he was an independent *sādhaka* – with firm determination he continuously progressed, like a meteor. He would not respond to anyone's call, as he had no time for that. He was free from external conditioning and apparently did not strictly follow the spiritual family tradition either. He was a bit different – a great *yogī* steeped in meditation. His two elder brothers did follow the family tradition and assisted their father in devotional programmes. They were somewhat dismissive of their younger brother's spiritual practises. One day they took the opportunity to submit to their father: "Father, we are very busy with all the devotional programs going on in our home – wouldn't it be good if you ordered Śrīmān Niku in assisting us a bit?" Śrī Ānanda Gopāl Prabhu agreed and Bābā was compelled to accept this. Bābā had not yet paid sufficient attention to the topic of the Bhāgavata, yet he had to comply with the order of his father. His father assured him, saying: "My son, you need not worry - by my blessing all that is revealed in your meditation-steeped consciousness will be compatible with the verdict of the *bhakti*-scriptures." Blissfully taking the foot-dust of his father on his head, Bābā began to recite the Bhāgavata for a week, day in day out, and the assembled devotees praised his skills with hundreds and thousands of mouths. His father and brothers enthusiastically blessed, praised and rewarded him. All the assembled devotees accepted Bābā as a unique and independent *mahāpuruṣa*, whose knowledge was self-revealed.³

Gopāl Candra Ghosh: "Advaita Dās Bābāji was the first disciple of Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī. He was a great renunciant, scholar and *bhajanānandī* who lived in a *kuṭīr* on the bank of Brahma Kund. Advaita Dāsji and Nikuñja Prabhu were very fond of each other, so Advaita Dāsji requested Bābā to perform his last rites, which he did in 1958, when he passed away. Bābā also organised a big *virahotsava* (memorial festival) for Advaita Dāsji."



² Narrated in a letter to Advaitadas June 30, 2000

³ Narrated in a letter to Advaitadas April 10, 2001

Mother's passing away

When Bābā's mother passed away a shadow was cast over the family home – her starlight had vanished, leaving everyone perplexed with a broken heart. Who could console Gopāl (Bābā)? His whole world had turned dark; it made him show his real nature and cast off his external appearance. He used to wear a fancy *dhoti* with *kurta* and a golden pen in the pocket. Now he cast off this worldly appearance, having no more taste for fine cloth and ornaments, put on coarse short cloth and grew his famous matted locks (*jaṭās*). Many parties came to him for marriage, but he always declined. No one was any more wondering whether Bābā would leave home, only when. He stayed, however, to engage in the service of his broken-hearted father. He could not fully dedicate his mind anymore, though.⁴



Bābā's musical interest

After some time Bābā became interested in music. Within a short while he mastered the art of music and could play his favourite tunes. He often mentioned the songs of Vṛndāvana's Haridās Swāmi as his favourites. His musical skills too, like his scriptural knowledge, were self-taught and internally revealed. His father proudly called him a *śrutidhara*, a person who learns through a single hearing. Will a forest bird, however, like to stay in a cage? The bird of Bābā's mind was flying from one *kuñja* of nature to the other, absorbed in relishing the sweet juice of the mango buds there. Forgetting the world, Bābā took his Vīṇā to his chest and sang to the lotus feet of his beloved Lord in his favourite tunes, while shedding tears. If ever his father called him: 'Niku! Niku!' how could he reply? His mind had forgotten his body and had become absorbed in dressing *premādhikā* Rādhikā in the *kuñjas* of Śrī Vṛndāvana.



⁴ Compiled from narrations by Rādhācharan Deslā, Niranjan Prasād Dās and Girirāja Bābā.

Renouncing the world – pilgrimage into the Himālayas

This, however, did not last long. Within a year Bābā's father also passed away. Now Bābā's last shackles had fallen off, the forest bird was set free to fly to the other side of the blue sky, to dive into the soothing nectar waterfall of Śyāma-*rasa*.

Advaita Dās: "I asked Bābā about the heritage of his father. He told me: "Oh there was no question about these things. On his death-bed my father just cried out "Hā Rādhe! Hā Rādhe!" Nothing was said about any heritage. I just left it all to my elder brothers and went out to become a *sādhu*."

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: "Bābā set off to a cave in Haridvāra, to the astonishment of the world he left behind. Finally our young ascetic placed down his meditation mat to sit in a lotus position in a bluish meadow in the dense woods of Mount Manasa. Thus the days passed in penance. After some time the wild animals of the forest began to take shelter of Bābā. Mother Manasā (a snake) was blissfully playing hide-and-seek within his matted locks, which hung down to his feet. One day a mountain girl appeared with burning incense in her hand and offered oblations with this along with fruits, flowers and sandalwood pulp. After making this devotional offering she disappeared without anyone ever finding out her identity. This dense forest was far away from the bustle of society, only 2 to 3 *sannyāsīs* were there, absorbed in their worship and meditations. Later Bābā left that place and proceeded to Mount Chandi and from there to Mount Triśulī. In this way some years passed in great penance.

One day Bābā ascended to an inn on top of a high mountain. Snowstorms caused a deep darkness from midday. 2 to 3 *sannyāsīs* were staying in that inn. They warned Bābā not to go out alone because of wild animals. However, at night Bābā had to go out urgently to urinate, and the other *sādhus* were sleeping. Not wanting to disturb their sleep Bābā went out alone. There was an abyss of 2 miles deep below the path. One wrong step and one was lost. Just then a severe snow- and hailstorm started. Bābā shivered – he could not protect himself anymore. Suddenly a huge figure wearing matted locks swooped down upon the mountain path. Astonished, Bābā then saw a wonderful woman, having a divine lustre, illuminating a nearby forest, laughing loudly and then vanishing. Bābā somehow silently re-entered the cabin and found some peace there. The next morning he told the two *sannyāsīs* about his adventure. When they heard it they were perplexed and congratulated Bābā in great bliss – he had attained what they could not attain even through severe penances – the divine vision of Mahālakṣmī Parvata-Nandinī (Pārvatī). Perhaps, since Bābā was the

complete Yogeśvara, this girl was the embodiment or manifestation of the *kula kuṇḍalini* that is the natural *śakti*-companion of the great *yogīs*.

Once Bābā was in Haridvāra offering praises to the Ganges on her shore after taking a bath in her holy waters. As he was about to return after completing his prayers, a photographer came and asked him if he could make a photo of him. Bābā refused, but the photographer was so attracted to Bābā's appearance as an authentic and exemplary seer, monk and sage, that he found a trick to take a photo of this mobile Shankar (সেচল শিব) anyway. When Bābā was inattentive for a moment he seized the opportunity to shoot a picture of him. But what could come out of such a trick? It is impossible to trick Pancānana (Shiva)! Bābā smiled and asked him for a copy of the photo. But how amazing! As the photographer washed the photos in the dark room he discovered they were all blank! He was speechless and stared at Bābā in disbelief.

From Haridvāra Bābā proceeded to Hṛṣīkeśa, seven miles on foot. On the way he heard that there was a Satya Nārāyan Mandir there, and he developed a desire to see it. If there is any Mandir on the way of a pilgrimage it is certainly proper to ask the deity there for courage and strength for the journey. Yet at the same time Bābā felt he missed something to offer to the deity. Then he decided to himself that the best and only present he could give was to let the Lord hear of His own pastimes. Day and night there was a huge crowd of people coming for *darśana* of the deity, so Bābā sat down in meditation in a corner of the yard of the Mandir. When the *pūjārī* saw him he came up to him at once and said: "Bābā, I have one desire." Bābā said: "What is your desire?" Pūjārījī said: "Bābā, could you please narrate some of Satya Nārāyana's pastimes in the Mandir?" Bābā consented and the *pūjārī* instantly had a seat prepared for him. Bābā lectured wonderfully, for about an hour and a half. The Mandir got packed with people who were spellbound by Bābā's sweet lecture. Afterwards the crowd surged forwards to grasp the dust of Bābā's feet, so the *pūjārī* whisked him off to the inner quarters of the complex. The *pūjārī* fed Bābā Satya Nārāyan's *prasāda* and offered him a donation. Bābā refused the donation and continued his journey to Deva-prayāga the next day. Bābā travelled on foot and did not return to Hṛṣīkeśa due to the fame that he had accrued there. Saying 'Jay Rādhe' he continued on his journey to admire the beauty of the Himālayas. On the way he had to climb a very steep slope. All other pilgrims went up in palanquins – Bābā sat down and wondered how he could climb the mountain. At some points one could only climb up by pulling oneself up at the stooping roots of some big, big trees. The problem was that Bābā had eczema on his hands. How could he pull himself up at the vines? As he pondered like that in the

silent forest on the mountain summit, one old *sannyāsī* came by and told him: “O Bābā, what are you doing here pondering? Catch hold of these creepers, and up you go.” Bābā said: “I have sore hands and will feel too much pain.”



Devaprayāga

The *sannyāsī* sat down to relax a bit. While discussing different topics with Bābā he stuffed a Kalki (vertical pipe) with *siddhi* (hemp), lit it and passed it on to Bābā. Bābā had trouble holding the pipe in his fisted hands, but somehow he inhaled and passed the pipe back to the *sannyāsī*. When all the hemp was burned to ashes, the *sannyāsī* emptied the pipe onto Bābā's hands and rubbed the ashes into them, saying: “Now go and take hold of the creepers and climb up. Don't be afraid, I will follow you beneath.” After ascending for a while Bābā looked down and saw that the *sannyāsī* had disappeared – his hands had also become completely cured! Understanding what had happened Bābā breathed out deeply and cried: “Ha Karunāmoy! Now I understand it all!” In this way he reached Deva Prayāga. Late at night, as Bābā was sleeping he dreamt that Satya Nārāyana came to him and said: “Bābā, you lectured so nicely before Me so I decided to help you out...” Then the dream broke and Bābā woke up.



Rudra Prayāga

After staying at Deva Prayāga for a while Bābā proceeded to Rudra Prayāga. Bābā decided not to stay in any inn or temple, because too many people gathered there, having all kinds of big feasts. Bābā considered this a great obstacle to *bhajana*. Pilgrimage should not be just performed for filling the belly and enjoying the tongue. The Lord would not allow Bābā to do anymore *bhajana* if he got entangled in this. He feared he would get burned with fame and distinction. He thought to himself: “*Sādhu Sābdhān* – beware O saint! This subtle attraction to power and wealth causes the fall-down of a mendicant! A *sādhaka* who is captivated by wealth and prowess is just like a sensual person who is kicked by the threefold material misery – his spiritual practises are a waste and his life will be full of despair and stagnation. Bābā was very vigilant and analytical about his spiritual welfare – he decided to go where there would not be large popular gatherings, so he went to a remote forest near Rudra Prayāga. In a mountain cave he sat down in meditation, forgetting the external world and diving deep into the inner world. One day two children came to him and said: “*Bāpuji!* What are you doing here all on your own – what do you do to eat and drink? How long have you been here?” Bābā replied: “O Lālā! I am doing just fine here.” After a while one of the two boys came back with a jug of milk and some *rotis*, placed it before the cave and called Bābā. Bābā came and asked the boy: “Lālā, who are you, where do you come from?” The boy replied: ‘One *sādhu bābā* sent me here with this food and drink for you – take it!’ This story showed Bābā’s complete dependence on the Lord’s providing him with every need. Bhagavad Gītā says (9.22) –

ananyas̄ cintayanto mām̄ ye janāḥ paryupāsate

teṣām nityābhiyuktānām yoga kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham

“Who ever constantly worships Me, exclusively meditating on Me,
I will provide him with all his needs and will preserve what he has.”

After this, Bābā departed for Kedārnāth, where it was terribly cold, even more so than in Badrikāśram. Kedārnāth is very far from Rudra-Prayāga – some 50 miles. Bābā stayed in Rudra Prayāga for just a month or so. From there he travelled for 10-12 miles to Agastya Muni's ashram. Nature is very beautiful there. Here each tree and vine bestows a pacifying glance upon the minds of the wise sages who engage in penance here. The mountain peaks kiss the sky here and a snow-white garland of clouds stretches out above them. Such scenery reminds one of the calm and grave Shiva Shambhu absorbed in meditation. When Bābā beheld this beautiful scene he was unable to proceed and he lost all sense of time. Bābā became absorbed in this view and in the whole scenery there. Later, as he returned to external consciousness, he saw a heap of fruits, roots, garments and blankets before him. This made him speechless; after all, nobody ever came to this remote place. From there he moved to another location where there were rows of Rudrākṣa trees. Bābā became absorbed in this beautiful scene and lost external consciousness. How wonderful Bābā was to behold – His fair complexion made even more radiant by the touch of snowflakes, His matted locks reaching down to his knees, wearing just a loincloth. Bābā felt as if someone was throwing a string of Rudrākṣa beads at him. When he came to external consciousness he saw that such a string was indeed now hanging around his neck!

The next day Bābā moved on and arrived in Gupta Kāśī where he stayed for 3 days. There was a lovely temple there of Lord Shankar. It was pinching cold, and snow and ice stuck to his body even in the daytime. Arriving in a place called Rāmpurā, Bābā became acquainted with a fierce looking naked mountain-*sādhu*, wielding an axe and keeping an ashram within a cave. He treated Bābā on tea made from the leaves of the trees, so that he could recover from the severe cold. The *sādhu* did not let Bābā go for one month. When Bābā desired to move on to Kedārnāth the *sādhu* sent two of his disciples along with him as bodyguards, wielding axes. Kedārnāth is covered with ice and snow for 6 months a year and is the place of descent for all the pilgrims. Bābā stayed there for 25 days. It is said that any devotee who offers prayers there, meditates or mutters his *mantras*, achieves enlightenment. Meanwhile Bābā's two companions

did not want to leave him anymore. They were astonished at the miracles Bābā performed and his Shivaite powers. They saw Kedārnāth Shiva Himself in Bābā.



Kedarnāth

Now Bābā desired to go to Tunganāth. From an inn which was 12,072 feet high one has to climb and again descend for 3 miles. It is so cold that there is no sign of vegetation like trees even. The two servants were at once willing to accompany Bābā as he expressed his desire to go there. They had taken full responsibility over Bābā's service. They wandered on and around the Tunganāth for a week. The *pūjāris* there knew Bābā and supported him wherever they could. They served him diligently, considering Him Prabhuji, the Lord Himself. After one week Bābā wished to descend to Kedārnāth again with the two servants. Two days before the final descent from Kedārnāth, in the middle of the night, the two servants could not find Bābā anymore and they became very worried. On the third day, deep in the night, when they were overcome by sleep, suddenly Bābā appeared from somewhere and woke them up, saying: "Even here you sleep!" They were amazed to find Bābā there suddenly. Even now nobody managed to penetrate into the mystery where Bābā had been these two days. The next day they descended, and, after an affectionate farewell, Bābā continued towards Gomukhī on his own.

This time Bābā went out in search of the unknown. He sought out a hidden place within the Himālayas in the paramount bliss of full introspective absorption. In a mountain cave he became absorbed in the ocean-like beautiful form of Ghanaśyāma, who captivates the eyes. His great wish was to spend the rest of his life there in that cave of Gomukhī. It was as if his journey had come to an end, but as he sat down on

his *āsana* to meditate he heard an old *sannyāsī* with a divine body roar: “Don’t sit here anymore – you have a responsibility for the fallen conditioned souls, being the descendant of the merciful Sitānātha, the *avatāra* of Mahāviṣṇu, the repository of all living beings!”

Thus, after approximately 8 years in the Himālayas, Sādhu Bābā returned to Navadvīp Dhām in the autumn of 1969. He moved to Prācīn Māyāpur as a lone *sādhu* on January 17, 1970. In the beginning there was only jungle there and Bābā slept out in the open, tolerating rain, heat, wind and cold, using a brick as a pillow. Later there were two straw huts, one for Bābā and one for Madangopāl.



Sādhu Bābā's First Darshan – Nirañjan Prasād Dās

In 1970 my elder sister, who was a *sādhikā*, told me about a new *sannyāsī* who had settled down in the outskirts of Prācīn Māyāpur, adjacent to the Bhajanashram. She insisted that we go there to see him. Because she insisted so often I went there one time on my own, in secret. And yes, on first sight I felt great divine bliss – my entire mind and body were purified simply by seeing him. I realised the truth of the great words: *gangār paraśa hoile paścāte pāvan; darśane pavitra koro ei tomār gun* (Śrī Narottama) “By touching the Ganges one becomes purified in the long term, but simply upon seeing you, one is purified. Such is your glory.” Today I had achieved the fruits of seeing a *sādhu*! I was stunned to see his radiant powerful body, his matted locks that hung down to his knees, his broad chest and his overall stout body. This astonishing sight reminded me of ancient days when India was full of such seers and sages. He was like a lion cub - a *brahmacārī*, a *sannyāsī* deep in meditation, with a sharp gaze, a lovely voice that indicates a great personality, the repository of invincible power with powerful, luminous eyes. Such beautiful personalities may be observed here and there, but I had never seen such a luminous form, so well nourished by spiritual power. He could have been in his sixties but yet he could also have been just in adolescence – I was left wondering.

The other day I went to see him with my elder sister, and on the way we decided to ask him a question about the passing away of Haridās Thākur. When we arrived

there Bābā began discussing the topic before I had even asked him about it! Speechless, I thought: “How could he have figured out what question was on my mind?”

On another day we were eager to find out about whether or not to offer Tulsi leaves on Mahāprabhu's feet. We arrived at 9 pm. and it turned out that Bābā was practising *mauna*, a vow of silence, for a month on end. Only after 10 p.m. he would speak, and only if it was important and relevant Hari-kathā. But as we arrived, Bābā was writing on a slate: “Bābā, why don't you read the 15th chapter of Caitanya Caritāmrita's Madhya Līlā?” Then he gave us his copy of Caitanya Caritāmrita. I could not immediately catch the point so I began to read the chapter he indicated and found (verses 7-9):

*ghore āsi prabhu kore nām sankīrtan;
advaita āsiyā kore prabhura pūjan
sugandhi salile den pādya ācaman;
sarvānge lepaye prabhur sugandhi candan
gole mālā dey māthāy tulasī manjarī*

“When Prabhu returned to His abode He performed *nām sankīrtan*. Advaita then came to offer worship to Him. He offered *pādya* and *ācaman* with scented water and anointed Prabhu's whole body with fragrant sandal paste. He hung a garland around His neck and **placed Tulasi-buds on His head.**”

As soon as I read that Bābā clapped his hands to indicate we found the statement. We were stunned – Bābā truly embodied the Antaryāmī (God as the inner overseer), as he knew without telling what question we came to ask him!”⁵

Līlā Dās: “Once Bābā sat under the Bael-tree when the sky grew dark with rain-clouds. Bābā just stared at the sky and when the rain came down it showered all directions but would not fall within the boundaries of the ashram.”⁶



⁵ Narrated in a letter to Advaitadās, February 22, 1999

⁶ Personal conversation, Śrī Rādhākund Dhām, October 13, 2005

Yoga-kṣema – Sītānāth's Utsav

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Not long after starting his ashram, Bābā expressed the desire to hold an annual festival for the birthday of Advaita Prabhu, Sītānāth's Utsava. I said: “Bābā, how will you hold a festival with only 1 Rupee and 25 paisa in your hands?” How was that possible? But you know what happened? Just then one riksha after the other came, and one donor after the other came to offer assistance. While Bābā was doing Kṛṣṇa-kathā one after the other donor came and interrupted him. Bābā's storehouse was filled within a short time. (As Lord Kṛṣṇa promised in Bhagavad Gītā, 9.22:)

*ananyas cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teṣāṃ nityābhiyuktānāṃ yoga kṣemaṃ vahāmyaham*

“Who ever constantly worships Me, exclusively meditating on Me,
I will provide him with all his needs and will preserve what he has.”

This is how the Guru shows the glory and power of the Lord. Why would Sītānātha's descendant not be able to accomplish a festival for Sītānātha?



The glories of Bābā's lectures

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “After hearing Bābā's pāṭh, how can anyone be attracted to any other lecture? This is the pond where the swan-like saints like to swim and eat the lotus stems! After eating such delicacies will they ever be attracted to anyone else's remnants? Bābā's words and their deep meanings form a Vāṇī Citra – a verbal picture. When he speaks of Vṛndāvana he takes you there –

*tvaṃ rūpa manjari sakhi prathitā pure'smin
pumsaḥ parasya vadanam nahi paśyasīti
bimbādhare kṣatam anāgata bhartrikāyā
yat te vyadhāyi kim utacchuka pungavena*

“O my dear friend Rūpa Manjari! In the township of Vraja you are reputed for your chastity. You don't even look at the faces of other men! How is it then that, since you don't have yet a husband, your cherry-lips have been bitten? Has this been done by the best of parrots perhaps?” (Vilāp Kusumānjali – 1)

This is the picture of Vṛndāvana – the sight of Tulasī Manjarī, the wonderful picture of flowering Vṛndāvana. No one can paint such pictures! All the high class persons of Navadvīpa were speechless. Even Bābā's own father was stunned. From his very childhood he called Bābā 'Śukadev'. It was as if he saw Vṛndāvana and then verbally served this transcendental delicacy to the audience. Bābā himself also lost all external awareness while lecturing. Afterwards he would ask: “What have I all said?” Thus one can learn what is a *sādhaka*, what is *sādhana*, what is meditation, and what is *samādhi*.

When Bābā gave *pāṭha* in Navadvīpa there were fans roaring loudly on either side of him because he was sweating so much of ecstasy. Later he decided to stop giving *pāṭha* to avoid accumulating fame.



Kṣepā Bābā (frenzied saint)

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “It was on Ekādaśī, February 23, 1975, when I took my brother-in-law Vrajen to meet Bābā for the first time. Vrajen was very eager to have Bābā's darshan. When we arrived Bābā was busy speaking with others. When I introduced my brother-in-law to him, Bābā said: “Bābā, take this Vrajen along with you tomorrow for Dvādaśī and come take some *prasād* here.” So the next day we blissfully came to the ashram, at around 1:30 p.m., but when we arrived there we saw a great mess – the preparations of rice and vegetables for Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Madangopāl were scattered all over the courtyard; plates and cups were lying around all over the place. We were speechless. I decided to stay and discretely sent Vrajen back home. I had witnessed such scenes before, but it was the first time for Vrajen – he was totally non-plussed. The residents of the ashram were all cowered out of fear. I quietly asked them what had happened but they could also not explain. What **could** they say – this

is **Shiva Līlā!!** No one would utter even a peep, only one or two would give a hint. At that time there were two small huts under the Bel tree, and Bābā had locked himself into one of them. Fearfully and carefully I called out to him – ‘Bābā – Bābā...’, but I got no answer. Then, when I said ‘Jay Rādhe’ a deep voice from inside said: “After four.” What to do now – this was a great dilemma. Bābā was scheduled to lecture on Śrīmad Bhāgavata at the house of Dhīren Sāhā of Moti Rāy Bāndh. It was about time to go there and Bābā had not eaten anything! I then began to do *harināma kīrtan* near the other hut, planning to continue until Bābā emerged out of his hut. After about an hour I got a sore throat from singing, and then Bābā could not but come and catch hold of both of my hands. Since Bābā had been so terribly angry with the ashram-dwellers I fell at his feet and begged him for forgiveness on their behalf, with tears in the eyes. Bābā’s anger subsided somewhat and with a peaceful voice he called out: “O rey! You are going through so much trouble, and Madangopāl has not eaten anything. Quickly offer a little *bhoga* and take *prasāda*, all of you.” Then he went out to give his lecture, taking me with him. It was so astonishing. That day his lecture lasted for nearly 2 hours and even afterwards he was surrounded by the devotees having blissful *iṣṭagoṣṭhi* (spiritual discussion). Nobody there knew what had happened in the ashram, though. I sat at some distance to observe Bābā better – he showed no sign of exhaustion, rather his bodily lustre only increased by his engagement in Kṛṣṇa-*kathā*. I realised that with Prabhu everything is possible – does it matter whether he eats or not? His mind and body are not aware of eating or fasting, sleeping or remaining awake. At one point he is Rudra (the furious god Shiva) and at the next moment he is Shāntam Shivam Sundaram – the beautiful serene Shiva.



On another day the exact reverse display

One day I went for my usual visit to the ashram, and I saw there that Bābā smiled more sweetly than anyone else in the world. He smiled so beautifully while his crooked matted locks were wrapped like waves all around his head. This scenery is not of the world, however. Such a smile cannot be understood by us, it is from beyond this world, from the deep bottom of the ocean of nectar-flavours of devotion. Who will understand? Embracing Gopāl with both hands, Bābā hugged Him at his chest. This is the smile of a man who is mad with love of God, the love sung of by the great poets. This is the great eagerness to make the Lord one's own as is described in the song *prāṇa more yugala kiśore!* It is as if Kṣepā Bābā floats on the billowing waves of the ocean of *bhāva*, divine feelings, pulling all those who are behind him with the strong current of these waves. Sometimes I saw him again as a cute little child, crying out 'mother, mother' when he wanted to be dressed or fed. I have seen him motionlessly sitting on his *āsana*, his complexion turning blackish, then again emitting golden rays. His face would sometimes shine pinky like the newly risen sun."⁷

⁷ Kṣepā Bābā and The Reverse Display both narrated to Advaitadas in a letter August 2, 1999

Hypocrisy

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “One disciple asked Bābā: “What is a hypocrite?” Bābā replied: “Withdrawing the hands, feet and other active senses and dressing oneself as a renunciant is alright, but if one ponders on sense enjoyment for 23 out of 24 hours then one is a hypocrite. One is not on the shore of a sense enjoyer and also not on the shore of the renunciant – one drowns then. Leave one shore and come to the other – make a choice.” Then he quoted:

*karmendriyāni samyamya ya āste manasā smaran
indriyārthan vimūrhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate*

“One who controls the active senses, but whose mind remembers the sense objects, and is bewildered by them, is called a hypocrite.” (Bhagavad Gītā 3.6)

Those who say one thing and do another, who pretend to be pure but are actually absorbed in sense objects have surely practised in *māyā's* marketplace. Many people falsely dress like renunciants and make a big public show of tears and ecstasy. They will burn in hell forever. Choose which side you want to be on – *māyā's* family or Kṛṣṇa's family. Why should you leave a good position to sit on an *āsana* and renounce like a monkey or a cat? A cat is pretending to be peacefully sitting around but when he gets his opportunity and nobody watches, he will jump and attack. A monkey lives in the trees and looks simple, but that is only external. His inner feelings are not at all renounced. Why stand with your feet in two worlds? You will pollute this pure religious tradition by falsely dressing like a renunciant. You know why I became a forest-dweller? Because there are no hypocrites here in the woods. Even a thief here will not speak lies.⁸ What will you gain by just dressing like a *bhakta* just to enjoy some facilities? Will you make your birth successful with self-deception? You have now taken human birth, make your choice! Go to Kṛṣṇa, fix Your mind on Him, He is so kind! When a child cries the mother is obliged to come and give him her milk. The Lord is like a cow that comes running like mad after her calf when it runs away. Why worry? Just call out to Him! You have now taken a human birth, now you can attain God. That's why you got the human birth anyway. As a human being you should

⁸ *vadhyā me dharma-dhvajinas te hi pātakino'dhikāḥ* “I came to kill those who pretend to be virtuous. They surely are worse than sinners.” (Lord Baladeva in Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.78.27)

call out to God. There are millions of species of life, but the human species is the best – why are you wasting this precious life then? You think it will come again?”

Bābā vowed: “Kali will penetrate everywhere, except in this Ashram. This is not a place for hypocrisy, crookedness and diplomacy.”

Kṛṣṇā Dās: “Bābā told us not to read books (published or written) by hypocrites.”

Advaita Dās: “Bābā called doing *kīrtan* for payment: ‘Selling the Name.’”

Advaita Dās: “When I return from a trip to Puri I tell Bābā how the railway police in Orissa beats up boys that travel without a train ticket. Bābā says: “Very good – and when they’re finished they can send them to me and I will beat them up again!!”

Bābā also forbids his merchant disciples to cheat their customers. He wants his disciples to be honest and law-abiding.

Advaita Dās: “Once a young man wanted to join the ashram and openly told Bābā it would be a great place for him to get meals without having to work. Bābā turned him down.”

Gopāl Candra Ghosh: “Nikuñja Prabhu was outspoken - he spoke the hard truth and many people did not like that.⁹ He was very unhappy at so many weeds sprouting next to the main trunk of the Sampradāya. He compared it to seeds that fall off a Banyan tree and form so many separate little trees all around the main tree. Once he sat in the house of Nṛsiṃha Ballabh Gosvāmī (a great and prominent Vaiṣṇava lecturer of the 1960s and 1970s who lived in Tatiya Sthāna in Vṛndāvana) and I heard him say from a distance: “Tell me, what can I do? Here, in Navadvīp, in Shāntipur, everywhere I see all kinds of neo-branches of our tradition pop up. Why did Rūpa and Sanātana come to Vṛndāvana to surrender to Rādhārāṇī’s lotus feet, saying ‘Rādhe Rādhe’? Why did Raghunātha dās Gosvāmī go through so much hardship on the bank of Rādhākuṇḍ, wailing ‘Hā Rādhe! Hā Rādhe!’ praying his Vilāp Kusumānjali and drinking just a cup of butter milk once a day? They could do that because they had so much taste for *bhajan*! Ever since there are such big feasts, big crowds of people gather, concrete cottages are built, and huge amounts of money are collected our *sampradāya* has become corrupted.” He was very unhappy with that. He told me: “I don’t want to stir up any controversy within our tradition, but we need to investigate our roots, how things used to be and how they should be.” People used to taunt him and oppose him at that. Behind his back they would complain: “Prabhu is speaking bitter words.”

⁹ *ārjava*, or straightforwardness, is described in Bhagavad Gītā as a sign of knowledge (13.8), the treasure of godliness (16.1) and the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa* (18.42).

Nikuñja Prabhu, however, was outspoken and straightforward and went exactly his way. The words he told the devotees then still stand true now.”

Advaita Dās: “Despite having differences in opinion, however, Bābā never made personal attacks on his opponents or engaged in personal insults.”



Bābā's musical skills

Gaur Dā: “Once, in the dead of night, at 2 a.m., Madangopāl told Bābā: “I want to hear you play Sitar”. At that time the ashram was a wilderness without any buildings. Bābā woke every *bhakta* in the ashram, saying: “Get up, Madangopāl wants to hear me play!” He sat down here and began to play when a snake came and coiled all around His tummy and His arms. Bābā complained to the snake: “Madangopāl wants to hear me play, how can I play like this?”, so the snake let go of His arms and just wrapped itself around His tummy. Bābā played for two hours and then He told the snake to leave Him.¹⁰

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Bābā had a Dotār (two stringed instrument), Sitār (six-stringed instrument) and a Viñā (stringed instrument with two bodies), all placed next to each other. He would blissfully sing self-composed songs on the Dotār in Bāul-tunes. The next moment I saw him becoming indifferent and taking the Sitār to play it, without any external awareness. Clutching the instrument with his chin, he would sing and make captivating sounds with the Sitār. Suddenly there would be an interruption to the tune, because the Sitār would be moistened by a stream of Bābā's tears. I was just a spectator – *avadhūtas* move, speak, laugh, cry and dance on the direction of the Antaryāmī, fully independent from the world or from religious traditions. They are beyond reason and argument, and can also not be caught by that. The course of their lives is mysterious and confidential. Rules and prohibitions are their servants instead of the other way around.”¹¹

¹⁰ Narrated on Sītānāth's utsava on February 10, 2011.

¹¹ Narrated in a letter to Advaitadās August 2, 1999

Lilā Dās: “Bābā told me my daughters (who lived in Calcutta) should sing for Madangopāl. They sang in my house while Bābā played the *tāblās*.”¹²

Advaita Dās: “Sometimes Bābā came to lead the (*tārak brahma, mahā mantra*) *kīrtana* after evening-*ārati*. He was a virtuoso *mṛdaṅga*- (clay drum) player and he sang like a cuckoo. His voice was as deep as the rumbling of clouds.”



Fame

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “The *nāma, japa* and meditations of the saints are hidden from the eyes of the people – it is all done within - establishment of their own name and fame is disgusting to them. I have seen that our Guru-brother Rākhāl Dā from Mednipor loudly chanted the holy name after completing his morning duties and Bābā came running up to him, telling him: “Look, Rākhāl Bābā, don’t let the neighbors know that there is a *sādhu* living here by chanting so loudly. Chant softly – the name will come to them, but keep your most beloved things hidden from others. If not, the inner power will be lost. Aim at the inner world, otherwise your ego will grow.”¹³

When Bābā was in the Himālayas he stayed in a mountain cave. In the afternoon some *sannyāsīs* came to listen to his *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. One day a snake entered the cave and approached Bābā’s seat. Bābā said: “Mother, don’t bite. Come here. Come here.” The snake submissively bowed down to Bābā and retreated. The *sannyāsīs* exclaimed: “Bābā you are Shankar! You are Shiva Shankar! You are a Devatā” (Shiva also controls snakes). The next day Bābā left that place, not to return. *pratiṣṭhāra bhoye puri gela polāiyā*¹⁴ “Mādhavendra Puri (the Guru of Advaita Prabhu) fled as soon as he was about to become famous.” Bābā never revealed such glories to outsiders.

Namitā Sāhā: “When the man that installed the water tank in the ashram suggested to Bābā that he should put his name on the water tank so people will notice the ashram from afar, Bābā cut him by saying, “Why don’t you put your name there instead?”

¹² Narrated to Advaitadās in person at Rādhākūṇḍa, October 13, 2005.

¹³ Narrated in a letter to Advaitadās, August 2, 1999

¹⁴ Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya-lilā 4.147

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Mauni Bābā was a *sādhu* who lived just down the road from Bābā's Ashram. He practised different types of *sādhana*. One day he was bitten by a snake on the first floor of his Ashram. The doctors who came to cure him said: “We are helpless. Call this *sādhu* over here.” Bābā came and miraculously cured him by just caressing the wound with his hand and said: “Bābā, do not fear – the poison is gone now. You can eat and take rest now.”¹⁵ When he came back to his own ashram I saw Bābā's whole body turn completely blue. I got scared and called a servant, who gave Bābā a *lotā* of water to drink. After that Bābā's condition and also Mauni Bābā's condition returned to normal. But Bābā never went out to broadcast his miracles. Nobody was told. Many *sādhus* make a big business out of their miraculous accomplishments, but Bābā kept quiet about his. He was totally averse to profit, adoration and distinction“.¹⁶

“The festival for Advaita Prabhu was a priority for Bābā, who otherwise preached: “Reduce external festivals and ceremonies as much as possible. Mahāprabhu said *antarmānā hoiyā* – “be internally active.”¹⁷ If you go out, your mind will also go outwards. If you hold too many ceremonies and festivals your fame will spread.”

“The very word Bābā in place of Gurudeva is so closely related to us and more sweet to us. Bābā himself also likes to be addressed as 'Bābā' instead of Gurudeva.”

Advaita Dās: “There is absolutely no mood of awe and reverence towards Bābā within the ashram — he refuses to be called *mahārāja* or *bābājī*, just *bābā*. It is all very intimate“.

Kṛṣṇā Dās: “Bābā never bestowed titles like *mahārāja*, *bābājī* or *mātājī* on his disciples.”

“Bābā said that all knowledge and perfection lies in the *mantra* that he gives you.¹⁸ The holy name is within everyone, but ordinary persons cannot hear it. Rich people always fear robbers. Only a person who looks penniless is safe from robbers.

¹⁵ Advaitadās: “When Bābā told me this story in private I replied: “Bābā, you are after all Nīlakaṇṭha (Lord Shiva, who drank the poison from the milk ocean)!”

¹⁶ Letter from Nirañjan Prasād Dās, September 10, 2002

¹⁷ Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya līlā 22,159

¹⁸ *jagāda ca nijam sarvam idaṁ preṣṭhaya te'dadam sarvam etat-prabhāvena svayam jñāsyasi lapsyase* “Śrī Guru instructed me in the rules of practising my *mantra* and meditating on it. He said, ‘I have given you, my dear one, everything. Whatever other secrets there are you will learn it spontaneously, by the power of this *mantra*.” (Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta 2.3.6) *yo mantrāḥ sa gurūḥ sākṣāt* (Vāmana Kalpa, quoted in Hari Bhakti Vilāsa 4.353) “The *mantra* is directly the Guru.”

Similarly, don't make a big show of your *sādhana* – keep it to yourself. You will be safe from self esteem.”

Advaita Dās: “Once a prominent Vaiṣṇava asked Bābā: “How many *lakhs*¹⁹ of name are you doing?” Bābā replied: "দেখো বাবা, আমি কিছু ভজন টজন করি না - আমি শুধু ঘুমাই ও খাই" “Look Bābā, I don't do any *bhajan* at all – I'm just eating and sleeping.”²⁰

Bābā wrote in the Saṅkṣipta Nitya Karma Paddhati: “The mind is the main domain of our spiritual practice. When this mental treasure is externally exposed one is deprived of the desired *siddhi*. Śrī Śrī Narottam Dās Thākura Mahāśay has said: *rākho prem hṛdoye bhoriyā* – ‘Keep this *prema* within the heart.’ And to teach the whole world, Śrīman Mahāprabhu told Śrī Raghunāth Dās Gosvāmī: *markat vairāgya nā koriho lok dekhāiyā* – ‘Don't practice the renunciation of a monkey, just to show off to the people.’

“Bābā once told me *pratiṣṭhā śukariya biṣṭhā* – ‘Fame is like hog-stool.’²¹

“About Vaiṣṇava-missions that attract many followers worldwide by offering them instant *sannyāsa*- or *brāhmaṇa*-hood (without the candidates being born as *brāhmaṇas* or even as Hindus in the first place), Bābā once told me: "If I would go there (to the west) and tell them: “Hey! Keep a distance from me!”²² - how many followers would I attract then?"

“Bābā often told me that preaching is mostly done for profit, adoration and distinction. Once Bābā was visited by some Americans from a University, who interviewed him and recorded it. Bābā had not invited them and was unhappy about the visit, afraid it was going to make him a famous Jagat-Guru. Thus he showed he was totally averse to profit and fame. So many Indian Gurus hanker to go to America to become rich and famous! Afterwards, when sister Kṛṣṇā asked Bābā about Advaita Prabhu's prayer to Mahāprabhu - *more yadi bar dibe prabhu viśvambhara; strī śūdra adhamere āge kṛpā koro* "O Prabhu Viśvambhara! If you want to offer Me a boon, then first bestow Your mercy to the women, workers and the fallen (pariahs)", Bābā calmly replied that he already has specimens of all these here in his courtyard (and that is

¹⁹ *lakh* – *lakṣa* or 100.000 names of Kṛṣṇa, equalling 64 rounds on beads.

²⁰ *ahaṁ mamādi paramo nāmi so'py aparādha kṛt. kiṁ ca nāmi eva viśaye yo'haṁ-mamādi-paramaḥ. ahaṁ bahutara-nāma-kirtaka* "To think 'I' and 'mine' to be the greatest in connection with the holy name is the 10th offence to the holy name" – *ahaṁ bahutara nāma kirtaka* 'I am chanting more' (than you). (Haribhakti Vilāsa 11.524)

²¹ *abhimānaṁ surapānaṁ gauravaṁ śuddha raurabam; pratiṣṭhā śukariya viṣṭhā tṛṇi tyaktvā hariṁ bhajet* - “Self-esteem is (poisonous) like liquor, pride is pure hell and fame is like hog-stool - one should give them up like blades of grass and worship Hari.”

²² Euphemism in India for ‘you are untouchable’. Thus a candidate's humility is really put to the test.

enough).” Bābā then gently shakes his head and mulls: "জানো? শ্রীমন্মহাপ্রভু কত বড় দান দিয়েছেন?" ‘You know, what great gift Śrīman Mahāprabhu has given?’



Japa

Advaita Dās: “Bābā tells me that it is not good to make a show of *japa* in public. *nāma japa* should be done at home, sitting in a lotus position with a straight back and lowered head. He said: জপার্থে শ্রীশ্রীহরিনামের মালা লইয়া পথে ঘাটে হাটে বাজারে লোকসংঘর্ষে পাদুকাপায়ে, গল্প জুড়িয়া তাম্বুল চর্বণ করিতে করিতে চলা নিষেধ । তাহাতে শ্রীশ্রীনামের মর্যাদাহানী হয় । নামে রুচি তো কস্মিন্ কালেও আসে না বরং অহং অভিমান বৃদ্ধি পায় এবং শ্রীশ্রীনামের চরণে মহা অপরাধ ঘটে - “It is forbidden to take one’s *japa-mālā* out on the road, to the market, to the bathing-places, to public gatherings, wearing shoes, talking to others or chewing betelnuts – it will be disrespectful to Śrī Harināma. In this way *ruci* for *hari-nāma* will never come, rather there will be an increase of ego and it will create a big offence at the lotus-feet of Śrī-Śrī Hari-nāma.” One should not go on *parikramā* (when one visits a holy place) with one’s beads, because each time one sees a saint or a temple one has to bow down and touch one’s beads to the ground, and that is a great offence to the sacred chanting beads.²³ In this connection Bābā often quoted this verse from Haribhakti Vilāsa (17.131):

bhūta rākṣasa vetālāḥ siddha gandharva cāraṇāḥ
haranti prakāṣaṁ yasmāt tasmāt guptaṁ japet sudhiḥ

"The ghosts, Rākṣasas, Vetālās, Siddhas, Gandharvas and the cosmic wanderers take the (benefit of the) *japa* of the public chanter. Hence the wise must do *japa* in secret."

Bābā tells me: “There are three kinds of *japa*— *vācika* (vocal), *upāṁśu* (muttering) and *mānasika* (mentally). *upāṁśu* is 100x better than *vācika* and *mānasika*

²³ Haribhakti Vilāsa and Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu mention 32 ritual offences (*sevāparādhas*), one of them being *eka haste praṇāma*, offering obeisances with one hand. This offence is being committed each time one bows down to the floor with one’s beads in the hands.

is 100x better than *upāṁśu*²⁴. Haridāsa (Ṭhākura) was doing one lakh verbally, one muttering and one mental, each day.”²⁵ He also said that ‘If one loses sight of the target one will not reach it by chanting 100,000 names of the Lord a day either.’ Bābā means with this that while taking the name of Kṛṣṇa one must keep the mind fixed on His divine play, attributes and forms.”²⁶

To encourage me in *mantra japa* he says: “Once when I was in Vṛndāvana’s *kuñja* (family home) I was doing *puraścāra* till 4 p.m. every day.”



Bābā's social conduct

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Bābā loved to be outside of the world’s sight – he would vanish if too many outsiders would gather in his ashram. Yet again, whenever he wanted it he would re-appear and entertain guests with spiritual discussions hour after hour. He had no agenda of what to do or not to do, nor did he have any budget or financial planning of the festivals he held. He would not solicit donations, nor would he consult anyone on these matters. He would let matters flow naturally and not worry at all. I have seen him hiding or withdrawing himself behind a tree or in his hut in the middle of his self-organised, crowded festivals. He would sit there all on his own and

²⁴ Haribhakti Vilāsa (17.161-162, quoting Nārasimha Purāṇa and Yajñavalkya) says: *tri vidhā japa yajñāḥ syāt tasya bhaven nibodhaya; vācikaś ca upāṁśuś ca manasaś ca tridhā mataḥ mantraṁ uccārayed vyaktāṁ japayata sa vācikaḥ; kiñciccabdaṁ svayaṁ vidyād upāṁśuḥ sa japaḥ smṛtaḥ. upāṁśu japam uktasya tasmācchato guṇo bhavet; sahasro mānasaḥ prokto yasmād dhyāna samo hi saḥ* - "There are three kinds of *japa*— vocal, muttering and mental. Loud chanting of the *mantra* is called vocal *japa*, whispering is called *upāṁśu* and mental chanting is called *mānasik japa*. Whispering is a hundred times better than loud *japa* and mental chanting is a thousand times better. This is equal to meditation." Verses 132-3 say: *pralapan vā japed yāvat tāvan niṣphalam ucyate. vadan na gacchan na svapan nānyām kim api samsmaran na kṣuj jṛmbhana hikkādi vikalikṛta mānasaḥ mantra siddhim avāpnoti tasmād yatnapuro bhavet* “If one talks while doing *japa* the practise will be fruitless. *mantra-siddhi* is not achieved if one talks, walks, lies down, or has one’s mind upset by thinking of something else, yawning, sneezing or hickuping.”

²⁵ *prati-dina tin lakṣa haridās kore; manane jihvāy ār uccaiḥsvare* (Advaita Prakāśa, 7.152)

²⁶ Most of these *nāma-sādhana*-instructions can be found in Sādhu Bābā’s manual ‘Sankṣipta nitya-karma paddhatī’.

no one had the courage to go near him. Then, when *prasād* was served to 8-10,000 people he would suddenly re-appear, smile gently and raise his right hand in benediction, before leaving again. The fact that he could achieve such huge tasks so easily is a sign of his self-realisation and complete shelter at the feet of his beloved Lord. He did not collect any funds but said: "I just had this desire and it was accomplished – I don't know anything else." Kṛṣṇa's glories are *yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmyaham* ("I carry what My devotees lack and preserve what they have" - Bhagavad Gītā 9.22) and Bābā's glories are *sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*. ("Such a great soul is very rare." - Bhagavad Gītā 7.19)"²⁷

Advaita Dās: "I was fond of going out of the ashram, but Bābā did not like it. He warned me that downtown Navadvīpa was swarming with Bāuls and Sahajīyas. He also told me not to eat anywhere outside the ashram. Bābā then showed a remarkable higher vision. When I asked him: "Bābā, then how do I recognise sinful food?" He said, in English, "You can smell it..."

In 1982, when I had lived in Sādhu Bābā's ashram for just 1-2 days there was a small feast and some devotees from the Prāchin Māyāpur Bazar pushed a spoon into my hand and asked me to serve. They were very *saral*, simple - they never saw a foreigner before. Bābā was sweet and gentle as always. Though Indian *sādhus* usually teach *sadācāra* by yelling and screaming, he gently told me – "Advaitadās, why don't you put the spoon down and sit down to take Prasād?"²⁸

Nilā Ratan Dās: "One day a rich business man offered obeisances to Bābā. Bābā said: "No, go away." They were staying in the Bhajan Ashram, just behind Bābā's ashram, and were proud of their wealth. Gopāl does not accept that. They told Bābā: "Bābā, we want to build a huge temple here for you instead of the humble hut you have now." Bābā replied: "My Gopāl is a prince. I'm keeping Gopeśvara here in case He needs anything. You need not do anything here. If you want to spend your money on anyone then spend it on the poor widows that stay at the Bhajanāshram."

²⁷ Narrated to Advaitadās in a letter August 2, 1999

²⁸ Serving *prasāda* is not a menial service for novices but is for senior devotees to do. *svarūpa-gosāi, jagadānanda, dāmodara; kāśīśvara, gopinātha, vāñinātha, śaīkara; pariveśana kare tāhā ei sāta-jana* (CC Madhya 12.163-4). Śrīman Mahāprabhu Himself served the *viraha*-feast for Haridās Thākur - *sabāre bosāilā prabhu yogya krama kori; śrī-haste pariveśana koilo gaurahari* (CC Madhya 11.199) *prabhu bale — boso tine koriye bhojana; ācārya kohe — āmi koribo pariveśana* - Śrīman Mahāprabhu said, "Let Us sit down in these three places, and We shall take *prasāda*." Advaita Ācārya said, "I will serve *prasāda*." (CC Madhya 3.67)

Rādhā Carāṇa Deslā: “Bābā would be very angry with rich disciples who were so proud to think that they had purchased him with their financial support. Once he went by plane to Assam for a week to lecture - the ticket cost a lot of money, but guess what happened after 3 days? Bābā said: "Bhāi (brother), I am leaving". The devotee who paid the ticket said in shock: "What are you doing? I paid so much money for that plane ticket!" Bābā said: "Bhāi, have you purchased me by paying that money? I don't want to leave my deities (any longer)." So he left right then - he had no interest in money at all. He would tell people to do this and do that, and if they would ask him how much it may cost he said: "Oh I have no idea about that - if you like you can do this for me, but I don't know anything about the costs." Bābā had a very rich merchant disciple who spent a lot of money on him, but still Bābā got into a fight with him and said: 'You are so rich, you think you purchased me? Don't come to my place anymore with this false esteem!"²⁹

Bābā never kept a donation-box anywhere in the ashram.

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Once Bābā's elder brothers came to attend the Sītānāth Utsava and Bābā told them: “Why are you here? You are *brāhmaṇas* – I have no caste, I don't live here – I stay in the sky. I know no borders or bondage. I am a free soul, like a bird. Go and don't take *prasād* here. We make no distinctions here – you are *brāhmaṇas!*” He had no attachments.³⁰

“Bābā was totally different, he was totally aloof from the Hindu calendar. Someone would remind him of some auspicious day on the calendar by saying: “Bābā, today is....” Bābā interrupted him by saying: “O boy, give this up.” Another one said: “Bābā, today is *amāvasyā*.” Bābā replied: “I don't care!”

Advaita Dās: “In 1985, during his last trip to Vraja, Bābā sits on a dais in Dāmodara's house in Vṛndāvana when a guest asks him why he gives *dīkṣā* in *kāma gāyatrī* instead of *brahma gāyatrī*. I expect him to answer that only born *brāhmaṇas* qualify for *brahma gāyatrī*, but instead he answers ‘*brahma gāyatrī* cannot bestow *kṛṣṇa prema*.’

²⁹ Interview with Advaitadās, Rādhākuṇḍa, November 26, 2004.

³⁰ In India, and particularly in Bābā's family, great reverence is given to elders and *brāhmaṇas*. Bābā's behaviour was thus extraordinary. Bābā was not a sycophant. Bhagavad Gītā (12.16) confirms that the *priya bhakta* is *anapekṣā*, independent from public opinion.

- Conversation, Navadvīpa, March 26, 2000

Tapan-kumār Adhikārī: About undue social criticism Bābā said: “Though the king of elephants shines brightly, and is praised by good men, the dogs bark at him. Who is harmed by that? (Why should he care?)”³¹



Bābā like a child

*kusumita vanarāji śuṣmi bhṛṅga dvija kula ghr̥ṣṭa-saraḥ sarin mahīdhram
madhupatir avagāhya cārayan gāḥ saha paśupāla balaś cukūja veṇum*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.21.2.)

“Having entered the forest – the lakes, streams and mountains of which were resonant with the sweet warbling of birds and the sweet humming of bees, intoxicated by rows of trees in full bloom – and pasturing the cows in the company of Balarāma and the cowherd boys, the honey-sweet Śrī Kṛṣṇa sounded His flute.”

(Bābā mused:) “Bābā, the flute of Vṛndāvana, the flute of Kṛṣṇa is calling out (the Sanskrit word *kūjana* really pertains only to bird-calls) – I know that birds do *kūjana*, but here it is said that the flute is doing *kūjana*. If I knew their language I could understand the birds’ songs. Kṛṣṇa’s flute is doing *kūjana*.... if I knew the language.....” Bābā used to speak like that...³²



Bābā and Pilgrimage

Gopāl Candra Ghosh: “Once on some Vāruṇī day (Śatabhiṣā constellation) Bābā was in Śambhu Kunja, near Gopeśvara Mahādeva Mandir in Vṛndāvana, in the house

³¹ *karindre bhr̥jamāne’pi stuyamāne supuruṣaiḥ bukkanti sārāmayāś cet kā kṣatis tasya jāyate*

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s ‘Siddhānta darpana’ (8.1). Narrated at Rādhākuṇḍa, October 8, 2011

³² Narrated by Nirañjan Prasād Dās, Navadvīpa, March 2000.

of his Vrajavāsī disciple Kanhāiyalāl Sharmā, with a Bael leaf on his head. Meditating on Gopeśvara Shiva he prepared a really cool drink (with *bhāng*) and offered it to Him. He did not drink much of the *prasāda*, just a little, exclaiming: “Madan Gopāl! Jai Madan Gopāl!” We came to offer obeisances to him and he offered us this *prasād*. I was afraid, saying: “I will get high.” But Bābā said: “No, no! You just take the *prasād* of Mahādeva!”

“On another occasion, in the Gopeśvara Mandir in Vṛndāvana, on Shiva Rātri, Bābā put some *ganjikā* (hemp) in a chillum (vertical pipe) and took a drag from it. Then he put it down again and, while his eyes changed somewhat, said: “You know, Prabhu Sītānāth is the direct incarnation of Sadāśiva. Some of his attributes have also descended through our dynasty, so I am also in this mood sometimes. Not often, but sometimes. I don't do this to get high, but for the love of Mahādeva. We do this only rarely. As we descend from Sītānātha we can do this, others cannot.”³³ I once saw Bābā standing up to his waist in the Yamunā, doing his *japa*, wearing his matted locks loose. When he gave *pāṭha* I saw such big goosebumps on his body – I saw all the eight *sāttvik* transformations of divine ecstatic love on his body – goosebumps, shivering, tears, change of complexion, stuttering voice etc. “³⁴

Girirāja Bābā: “In 1978 Bābā performed a Govardhana Parikramā and saw the Rāsa-līlā in Govardhana.”

Mathurā Prasād Pāndā, Rādhākunda: “In 1973 Bābā went to Barsana and Nandagrām to celebrate Holi, along with Boral Ghāt's Boro Haridās. They distributed clothes, little balls of *bhang*, *laḍḍus*, *kṣīra* and *puris* to 125 Vrajabāsīs. All the Vrajabāsīs had great love and respect for Sādhu Bābā.”

Rādhā Caraṇa Deslā, Bābā's *tīrtha brāhmaṇa* in Rādhākunḍa – “Bābā not only used to have *prasāda* at my home (*roṭi*, *dāl* and *gur*), but he would also hold small *utsavas* (feasts) there with up to 50 people attending. In my house Bābā would keep an earthen pot containing up to 5 kg. of yoghurt, I said to him: “Bābā, give us some leafplates to eat from”, but Bābā said: “No, no no, you have to eat with your hands, just like Gopāl used to do!” So he distributed it with his hands. He made *roṭis* with his hands too, just like a Vrajavāsī. Bābā would not touch the sacred *kuṇḍas* with his feet, he had his disciples pouring buckets of the sacred water over him while sitting on the shore, after

³³ Nirañjan Prasād Dās: Bābā forbade us many times to imitate him: “আমি যাহা করি তাহা করিও না - আমি যাহা বলি তাহা করিও” – “Don't do what I do – do what I say.” He told us to follow the scriptural injunctions. Those who imitate him will be deprived of Mahāviṣṇu's mercy.”

³⁴ Interview, Vrindavan Research Institute, March 10, 2004

offering prostrated obeisances to the ponds and performing *ācamana*. Kṛṣṇa dās Madrasī Bābā would always come for Bābā's *darśana* when he was at my home. He had great love and respect for Bābā. They would only speak of purely devotional topics. Bābā sometimes spent the night at my home, upstairs. He never stayed in Vraja longer than 3-4 weeks at a time. Bābā was the most Shivaite member of his family. He did not perform *daṇḍavat parikramā* of Rādhākuṇḍa himself, but his elder brother Govinda did."

Rākhāl Haridās: "I went with Bābā to Vraja after Dola (**mid march 1982**). With 26 disciples Bābā went by bus from Vṛndāvana to Rādhākuṇḍa, where he took *prasād* with his *pāṇḍā* Rādhācaraṇa. Rādhācaraṇa did Kuṇḍa-*pūjā* with Bābā and everyone took a *kuṇḍa-snāna*. Bābā then went on Girirāja Parikramā. From 2.30 to 5 p.m. we walked to Mukhāravinda, where the *pāṇḍās* did Pūjā for Bābā. Sometimes Bābā went by riksha³⁵, and the *bhaktas* walked by his side. Somewhere on the way, perhaps at Jātipurā, Kāśīnāth, Bābā's Brijabāsi disciple, rented rooms in a Dharmshālā for all the *bhaktas*. Bābā had some *parothās* brought from a shop and distributed to the *bhaktas*. At 3 a.m. they left and went on to Rādhākuṇḍa, and from there they returned to Vṛndāvana, perhaps at 8 a.m. During the same trip Bābā also rented buses to go to Gokula and Barsānā, one trip a day."

Bābā in Puri - Rākhāl Haridās: "Once, in the month of Kārtika, Bābā went to Puri, where he went to the Jagannātha Mandir, Totā Gopīnāth, Ālalanāth, Totā Puri's ashram and Vijay Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī's Samādhi. The *pūjārī* of Totā Gopīnātha was a disciple of Bābā, named Jagannātha. He said: "Today you will all get Gopīnātha's *prasāda*." Bābā told Jagannātha: "Don't cook for Gopīnātha - I will cook!", so he cooked a feast himself – *rasā*, rice, *śāka*. Nowhere in India you can find a sitting Kṛṣṇa-deity like Totā Gopīnāth. Mahāprabhu here merged into His knee and thus disappeared from the world. Bābā rebuked the *pūjārī* for killing a snake in the deity room. The *pūjārī* said: "Bābā, I could not do the *pūjā* without killing the snake", but still Bābā said: "That will not be auspicious for you." (Snakes serve as Shiva's necklace) After this, Bābā went by taxi to Alalanāth."

Tapan Kumār Adhikārī: "In **July 1985** Bābā embarked on his last trip to Vraja, by plane. He went to Jaypur to buy deities of Kālī for the Ardha Bārī Kālī temple in Navadvīpa. He stayed there for 4 days and had darshan of Govinda's evening-*ārati*

³⁵ Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says in Gopāla-campū (Pūrva 18.20): *nātrāpy aṅghri-krāmitāvaśyakatvaṁ svacchandtvād yānam apy atra diṣṭam* – "It is not required that Govardhana-*parikramā* should be done on foot. One can also take a vehicle (and obtain the same result)."

every day there. Then he went to Puṣkara and he took a bath in Rādhākuṇḍa. One time he went for darshan of Govinda Ji in Vṛndāvana when a beggar asked him for 75 paisā in alms. Bābā laughed loudly and said: “Prabhu Sītānātha has given fourteen generations of *ācāryas* as alms – now again I must give 75 paisā as well?”

Kṛṣṇā Dās: “Bābā would not stay in Vraja for more than 20 days at a time. He made the Vrajavāsīs perform Rāsa Līlā in the yard of Śyāma Vinodinī Kunja. He loved the Vrajabāsīs and also gave them things, but then they would come back again and again for more. So to avoid offences he would not stay too long.”

Advaita Dās: “Bābā never bought or built a house anywhere in Brajabhūmi.”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Bābā stressed purity of mind and heart (*bhāva śuddhi*), quoting *bhāveṣu vidyate deva na maṭhe na ca mandire* – “The Lord dwells in one’s feelings, not in monestaries and temples.”

“*Sādhus* came to visit Bābā from the Himālayas and asked him: “Bābā, this (Navadvīp Dhām) is hidden Vṛndāvana?” Bābā said: “Yes, this is Vṛndāvana, hidden Vṛndāvana.” Look at the birds, the Bel trees, and the *kuñjas*.”

Advaita Dās: “Bābā wisely told me: “It is better to think of Vraja in Holland than to think of Holland in Vraja.”³⁶ When I settled down at Rādhākuṇḍa in September, 1984 Bābā congratulated me by postcard, writing me: ধন্য তুমি, কুণ্ডেশ্বরীর কৃপা পেয়েছ। একটা কথা মনে রাখ কিন্তু - ‘Blessed you are that you have attained the shelter of Kuṇḍeśvarī. However, be cautious of this –

*vṛndāni sarva mahatām apahāya dūrāt vṛndāṭavīm anusara pranayena cetaḥ
sattāranī kṛta subhāva sudhā rasaugham rādhābhīdhānam iha divya nidhānam asti*

(Rādhā Rasa Sudhānidhi – 9)

Cetaḥ! “Oh mind! Dwell in Vṛndāvana! (Here Bābā makes the point that mental residence in Vraja is essential). *sarva mahatām* – “All Vraja’s residents are saints”, but...

³⁶ *sa golokaḥ sarva-gataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇavat sarva-prāpañcīkāprāpañcīka-vastu-vyāpakaḥ.....śrī-kṛṣṇa-lokas tad-virahiṇā śrīmad-uddhavaṇāpi samādhāv anubhūta ity āha—śanakair bhagaval-lokān nṛ-lokaṁ punar āgataḥ. vimṛjya netre viduraṁ prītyāhoddhava utsmayan (bhāgavat-purāṇa 3.2.6)*

“That Goloka is present everywhere, pervading all mundane and spiritual things like Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself....Even Śrīmad Uddhava experienced Kṛṣṇa-loka in *samādhi*, while not being there, as described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavat 3.2.6: "Gradually he returned from Bhagavān's world to the human world. Rubbing his eyes, Uddhava lovingly told Vidura in amazement..." (Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā 106)

apahāya dūrāt – “Keep them far away.”

Q: Is that not an offence?

A: No it isn't, otherwise the word *mahatā* (“great souls”) would not have been used.

Q: Why then keep them at bay?

A. 1. In order not to find faults in them and to continue to appreciate them.

2. In order not to get entangled and to peacefully do *bhajan*.

3. No mutual hurt will arise if there is any difference of opinion or style of worship.

“There is a great divine treasure there named Rādhā, a vast ocean of nectar-rasa and good feelings that redeems the saints!”



Bābā's Yogic powers

Kiśorī Dās, a disciple of Śrīla Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī, who was very fond of Bābā as the youngest son of his Guru, had gone to Navadvīp's main market in the morning, where a person who was not dear to Bābā offered him a gift for Bābā. Afraid to offend Bābā, Kiśorī declined. Through his yogic powers, however, Bābā could understand what was happening while staying in his ashram (which is very far away from Navadvīp's main market). When Kiśorī returned to the Ashram, Bābā asked him: “Why didn't you accept that gift?” Kiśorī said: “What do you mean, Bābā?” Bābā: “This person wanted to give you a donation, why didn't you accept it?” Kiśorī: “Bābā, how could you know that?” Bābā roared with laughter: “Hāhāhā – when you rise to this level you can see all kinds of things you cannot see down there!”³⁷

³⁷ Narrated by Niranjan Prasād Dās in person in Navadvīpa, March 26, 2000 and further explained in a letter, September 28, 2001. Śrīmad Bhāgavata (10.61.21) exactly illustrates this pastime - *anāgatam atītam ca vartamānam atīndriyam viprakṛṣṭam vyavahitam samyak paśyanti yoginaḥ* - "Yogis can see what has not yet happened, past, present, beyond the senses, remote or blocked by physical obstacles."



Vaiṣṇo Devi in Kashmir

One day Bābā sat on the bank of the Yamunā at Keśī Ghāt, where he was sought out by Kiśorī Dās. Despite the deep loving relationship between the two as spiritual son (Kiśori) and physical son (Bābā) of Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī, they had an argument over whether or not to go on a pilgrimage to see Vaiṣṇo Devi in Kashmir. Kiśorī was a bit offended about the exchange, but kept it to himself. Some time later Bābā intuitively felt that Kiśorī had secretly departed for that pilgrimage, so at once he sat down in a *kuñja* in meditation. It is not easy to have *darśan* of Vaiṣṇo Devi. For a part of the trek one must crawl through a narrow tunnel. When Kiśorī emerged at the end of the tunnel he saw a huge half-naked figure with long matted locks rising above him, holding a Trident in his hand. His eyes were blinded by the dazzling figure! As he came to his senses he realised that it was Prabhu and he rolled at Bābā's feet, begging forgiveness and exclaiming: "Jay Sītānāth! Jay Sītānāth!"³⁸

"Once in the ashram Bābā sat down to take *prasāda*. I (Nirañjan Bābu) also arrived there, and, although Bābā did not see me, he felt my presence and wanted me to be there, to give me some *prasāda*. Taking a big *laḍḍu* in his hand, he said: "Call Bābu over here – Come here, sit down." Then he fed me the *laḍḍu*. Bābā's filial affection touched me very much and I shed tears."

³⁸ Narrated by Niranjan Prasād Dās in a written note, winter 2001-2002. Vaiṣṇo-devī did penance to have Śrī Rāma for a husband, but as He could not marry her due to His chastity to Sītādevī He promised her she would have Kalki for her husband instead. She is waiting for that now.

Advaita Dās: “Rādhānanda was a colourful personality, a young boy wearing long *jaṭās*. Once in Vraja he had a vision of Bābā, although he had never seen him or heard of him, and he headed straight to Śyāma Vinodinī Kuñja, led by his intuition, where Bābā promptly gave him *dīkṣā*.”³⁹

Bābā also appeared in a dream to his disciple Ṛtu Bijoy in the 1970s before ever meeting him, and Ṛtu Bijoy, who lived at Rādhākuṇḍa, told the then-Mahānta of Rādhākuṇḍa, Jaya Nitāi Dās Bābā, about the *sādhu* with the long beard, the Ganesh-tummy and the long matted locks. Jaya Nitāi Dās Bābā said “It can only be the youngest son of Ānanda Gopāla Gosvāmī.” Ṛtu Bijoy took *dīkṣā* in Navadvīpa, however.⁴⁰

Nirañjan Prasād Dās – “Amar Bannerji, the then manager of the Bhajanashram, was very anxious to hear Śrīmad Bhāgavat Kathā from Bābā, but regretted that he had no time to attend due to his occupation, so he bought a tape recorder and asked Bābā to speak on it, but Bābā did not comply with his request. He wanted his audience to attend in person, not to lay back in private and get proxy enlightenment through a machine. One day Bannerji Bābu sent his small son to Bābā with the tape recorder, and out of compassion towards him Bābā finally spoke, but the text did not come on the tape. First it was thought that the machine was defect, but when Bābā spoke again in it, it would again not work. When Nirañjan Bābu was asked to speak the same verse into the recorder, it was recorded. Sitting under the Bael⁴¹ tree, Bābā laughed and said: “You must come to me and hear. Without my consent nothing will be recorded on this machine.” All present were astonished at this.⁴²

Nilā Ratan Dās: “When I was still a small boy, around 1978, Bābā used to come to our house in the middle of the night, at 1 a.m. or so. He had no idea of time and wore only a loincloth. Our father woke us all up to have *darśan* of Sādhu Bābā. In those days there was no habitation on the way from his ashram to our house behind the Prācīn Māyāpur market. There was only jungle. We bowed down to Sādhu Bābā and were in ecstasy to see him. The neighbors also came to see Bābā. A basket of Sinhārā (pudding made of waterfruits) was brought and my little sister Svapnā (just a toddler then) embraced Bābā. This caused Bābā's loincloth to loosen. When we saw

³⁹ Narrated by Rādhāraman Dās, 1983

⁴⁰ Narrated by Ritu Bijoy Dās, Rādhākuṇḍa, October 9, 2006

⁴¹ The Bael or Bilva tree is sacred to worshippers of Lord Shiva – its leaves are a favorite offering to Shiva. It is significant that Sādhu Bābā held his sermons under such a tree in the courtyard of his Ashram – Shiva is said to live under a Bilva tree too.

⁴² Explained in letter September 28, 2001 and in person in March 2000 and October 2003

this we thought “What a disaster, we committed an offence!” We followed Bābā and when we came to the ashram he was sitting on his usual seat under the Bael tree, where he said: “Since yesterday your little girl has some trouble.” And indeed she became ill, so Bābā at once sat down in meditation at night at the base of the Bilva tree. We had a picture of Mother Kālī in our house at that time. After two, three days Bābā came and said to the Mother: “Mā, is there any need for me as long as you are here?” Bābā placed a Gandharāja flower at the picture and our little girl was cured. I asked Bābā: “Bābā, where did you get this flower from?” Bābā said: “It is all a question of desire – I wanted it, Gopāl gave it to me.” Bābā always saved us from all dangers. Another one of our girls got diarrhoea. Without informing the doctor we went to see Bābā at 2.30 a.m. Bābā said: “Bring a torch and come with me.” He picked some leaf from the jungle that was still there at the time and handed it to me, saying: “Give this to your little girl and stop worrying.” Our little girl was going to the toilet 20-25 times a day, but after giving her the leaves she was cured. Then, however, she could not pass urine, so we went back to Bābā, who said: “Go back home folks – whatever I gave will work.” And indeed, she was fully cured.”⁴³

Swarūpa Goswāmī - “Me and Nikuñja Dādā once engaged in installing deities in the Ārdha Mandir in Navadvīp and we took turns in giving *pāṭha* (lectures) there. However, Nikuñja Dādā fell ill and discontinued giving *pāṭha*. Hearing this, I gave up my *pāṭha* too and came to Nikuñja Prabhu's ashram to see him. When I offered *praṇāma* Nikuñja Prabhu said: “I heard your *pāṭha*. I am hearing it.” I thought: “Where is the Ārdha Mandir and where is Nikuñja Prabhu's ashram? He is *alaukika śakti-śālī!*” (Someone with extraordinary powers)

Svarūp Goswāmī – “In Sonār Gaurānga Mandir there was a lady from Kolkata who gave 500 Rs for Baba (this was in 1985 – it would be 10.000 Rs now). I asked her: “What if Nikuñja Prabhu will not accept the money?” She replied: “In that case, go to the Bazar and buy ingredients there for Madangopāl's *bhoga*.” I went to Sādhu Bābā's ashram, offered *praṇām* to Sādhu Bābā and asked him: “What can I give to Madangopāl?” Sādhu Bābā said: “I do not want anything. We have no lack of anything here, but if you want to donate something then give something to Go Mātā (there were cows in Sādhu Bābā's ashram then).” I still had a desire to buy things for Madangopāl in the Bazar, so I went to the bazar with someone who may have been a disciple of Sādhu Bābā and bought ghee, daal, sweets, vegetables and so. When I came to Sādhu Bābā's ashram, however, they told me that Sādhu Bābā was not there – he had left for

⁴³ Narrated in person in Navadvīp, October 2003. Bael flowers and leaves cure childrens diarrhoea.

Vṛndāvana. I explained them I had bought these ingredients on the lady's request and had brought it here. A tall man with *jaṭās* (matted locks) who lived in the ashram at the time (everyone in the ashram had *jaṭās* at the time) replied: "I will offer the sweets because otherwise they will go bad, but the vegetables I will not offer. If Bābā returns from Vṛndāvana and gives permission I will offer them." I agreed and left.

Three days later I had a dream in which Nikuñja Prabhu stood before me and told me: "I do not accept such gifts from merchants and especially not from unknown women. The vegetables will be sent back to you, and then you can offer them to your own Thākurji." Just then a boy came from Sonāra Gaurānga Mandir and said: "Oh sir! Wake up! Someone came from Nikuñja Gopāl Prabhu's ashram!" I woke up and saw the same tall man with the *jaṭās* carrying a big bag. He told me that Sādhu Bābā had returned to His ashram the previous night, flying in by plane from Delhi to Kolkata. The *jaṭā*-wearer told me: "Bābā had asked me: "Did anyone send anything to the ashram in My absence?" I said yes. Bābā said: "Did you offer this?" I said: "No, I did not offer it." Bābā said: 'Good. Send it back to whoever sent it' and wrote a letter saying: "Bhāi Swarūp, I am unable to accept such gifts from unknown merchant women. Nitāi Dā will be able to accept everything. Please forgive me for any *truṭi* (flaw). Iti Nikuñja Gopāl." I had seen Him in a dream just minutes earlier! Simply by His *darśan* you are purified. The world is empty and blind without such great souls."⁴⁴

Gaura Dā: "Some time in the late 1970s or early 1980s Sādhu Bābā was going to leave for Vṛndāvana by train. Though the train would depart at 11.45, Bābā was still in the ashram at around 12. The connecting train from Howrah to Mathurā had to be caught in time in Calcutta. Bābā did not seem to be bothered, so the devotees were wondering if they will make it. When they arrived at Navadvīpa station the train was grounded, while the station-master was in panic, wondering why the engine did not work. Still, the train would not move. Then Bābā tapped the front of the carriage and said in his loud, husky voice "Is everyone (all my disciples) on board? Go! Off you go!" And guess what, the train was fixed and off they went."

Bāblu saved from snakebite twice over -

Gaur Dā: "In the past, when there were no buildings yet in the Ashram, only jungle, once a boy named Bāblu visited Bābā with his mother. Bābā told his mother: "This boy will meet with an unexpected death." This frightened Bāblu naturally, and

⁴⁴ Swarūpa Goswāmī lecture, Sitānāth's utsav, Sādhu Bābā's ashram, 8 february 2011

his mother asked Bābā “What can we do about this?” Bābā replied: “Everything will be alright.”

One day, during the annual festival for Advaita Prabhu, which lasted for 15 days in those days, although it was winter, Bābā was perspiring and we were fanning him with hand-fans. There was no electricity yet there. In the evening, as Bābā performed his *āhnika* (daily Vaiṣṇava rituals), suddenly a snake appeared and bit Bāblu. I went to get a rope (to block the poison from spreading), but within half an hour Bāblu had died. Bābā then said: “Let no one enter the ashram now”, though at that (festival) time thousands of people would come and attend. He then told me to give some water to Bāblu. I said: “Bābā, what is the use of that? He is already dead!” Bābā said: “Then pour it into his mouth.” One hour later Bāblu got up, and Bābā asked him: “Bāblu, are you in any distress?” He then told me “Bring another glass of water.” I brought it and Bāblu drank it. No one was there – Bābā did not want to show his glories through any media. He said: “I am the incarnation of Sītānāth – Sītānāth has come in secret this time. I am Sītānāth, I will go again in solitude, too.” The next morning Bābā could not get up – He was in great agony, so he told me to make 1 liter of Ucche-juice (Ucche is a bitter Bengali gourd) and to bring Dhātura, a kind of psychedelic fruit. If one eats even one piece of that fruit one goes crazy. One of Bābā's disciples brought a whole bag of it, of which 3 liters of juice was made. Though one fruit was enough to make a man crazy, Bābā drank 3 liters of it! Within half an hour, that same morning, Bābā was well again. Bāblu left at 6 that evening but Bābā said: “তোমার এই ভাগ্য এখনও হয় নি” “You will still have more trouble.” Two months later Bāblu was again bitten by a snake. Bāblu came straight over to the ashram and collapsed at the gate. Bābā told us: “Bring Bāblu here.” Bābā cured him then and there with his mere glance – he needed no strings, no *mantras* and no pouring of water.”

Gaura's eczema –

Gaur Dā: “One day I got eczema over my whole body. It was festival time and Bābā ordered me to get flowers from Calcutta. Bābā did (apparently) not know that I was sick, but actually he was just testing me. I had to take the night train and my mother told me: “Gaura! Why did you not tell Bābā you are sick?” I went anyway, taking the night train. I had not slept all night, so I went home and took a bath. Suddenly Bābā called me to the ashram. When I arrived there Bābā had just finished his morning bath and he asked me to wipe Him dry with a chador. I told him: “But you have already received that service!” Bābā said: “No, no you dry Me off!” After

that He told me to take *prasād* and I went back home. When I took my shirt off I saw that my eczema was totally gone and I wept loudly.”⁴⁵

Kṛṣṇā Dās: Bābā cured many chronically ill people who suffered from tuberculosis, cancer, piles, hernia and so many other illnesses, keeping them alive for many days – for him everything is possible.”⁴⁶

Nirañjan Prasad Das: “Whatever blessings or curses Bābā pronounced, all came true.”

Advaita Das: “In December, 1983 I have personally seen a great scholar and *bhajanānandī* from Navadvīpa, who had tried to seize authority over one of Bābā's disciples, come and beg forgiveness to Bābā on his knees. His *bhajan* had become completely blocked because of his indiscretion towards Bābā. Bābā forgave him.”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “One day in 1984 a *sādhaka* from Haridvāra came to visit the ashram in the company of an elderly *brāhmaṇa sādhu* from Hoogly district. Bābā was not there, so they were very disappointed, having gone through great hardship to reach his ashram. When they saw a photo of Bābā, the *sādhu* from Haridvār exclaimed: “Yes, that's him! I saw him bathing in Brahmakund just the other day!” The ashram-residents told him, however, that Bābā had not been to Haridvār for years. The *sādhu* would not believe them; he insisted he had seen Bābā with his own eyes. After some time Bābā arrived in the ashram. The *sādhu* rolled in the dust of his feet and said: “Bābā I see you bathing in Haridvār's Brahmakund sometimes.” Bābā just smiled and changed the subject. The mystery remains unsolved.”⁴⁷

Nilā Ratan Dās: “One day, towards the end of his life, Bābā was sitting inside the ashram when he said: “Go and look at the temple of my Madangopāl.” It appeared that a merchant had left some fruit there as a donation. (There is a wall separating the inner compound from the temple yard) We gave the fruit to Mother Cow. We were astonished – how could Bābā know that something had been placed in front of the Mandir?”



⁴⁵ 3 narrations narrated by Gaur Dā, February 10, 2011

⁴⁶ Narrated to Advaitadās in a letter, July 19, 2006. Bābā is after all, Vaidyanāth - Śiva, the master-doctor.

⁴⁷ Narrated to Advaitadās in a letter, November 20, 2000

The link between the disciple and the Guru

Tapan Kumār Adhikārī: “One day in 1985, during Bābā’s last visit to Śrī Vṛndāvana, Rebati Mukherjee, a disciple of Bābā, asked him: "বাবা, সৎগুরু কি করে পাব?" “Bābā, how does one find a genuine Guru?” Bābā replied: “প্রাণপণে হরিনামের আশ্রয় গ্রহণ কর - হরিনাম তোমাকে ঠিক জায়গায় পৌঞ্জিয়ে দেবে – হরিনাম তোমাকে একদিন সৎগুরু পাইয়া দিবে, সৎগুরু পৌঞ্জিয়ে দিবে” “Wholeheartedly take shelter of *harinām*, and *harinām* will show you the right place. *harinām* will bring you to the genuine Guru. Śrī Guru will enter through the open door. I just need to open the door to the Guru once I receive *sat guru*.” Bābā rhymed: গুরু করবে চেকে জল খাবে ছেকে পাপ হেলিবে দেখে” – ‘*guru korbe checke, jol khābe cheṅkhe, papa helibe dekhe*’ – “Test him before you accept him as Guru, filter the water before you drink it (test the Guru’s *siddhānta*) and see how the sin dissolves.”⁴⁸

Tapobroto Mohanta: “I was a very young man when one of my duties in the ashram was to water the plants. Bābā told me to turn off the electric generator after watering the plants. (The water was coming from the tank whose supply was pumped up from the ground electrically). It was already dark when I finished watering. At that time there was no wall separating the Bhajanāshram and Bābā’s āshram and the generator was actually in the land now a part of the Bhajanashram’s ground. Around the generator was a deep ditch, so I had to stretch my arm fully to reach the generator’s switch. When I did that I thought that I was sort of electrocuted, so I called out-loud “Bābā! Bābā!” as a last ditch call for help. When I came back to consciousness I was lying on the ground. Stunned, I went back to my room in the ashram. When all this happened Bābā was in another temple giving a lecture. Later on, Bābā arrived and from the ashram-gate Bābā loudly called out to me and said “What happened to you, Kumkum? I was giving lecture and you disturbed me; my body shook when you called for me!” I was shocked. Then Bābā told me that that’s what Guru-disciple link was all about. I gave prostrated obeisances to Bābā and knew that Bābā saved my life. That moment I realized that the link between the Guru and disciple transcended the physical.”

Advaita Dās: “In March, 1995, 9 years after Bābā’s disappearance, I lived alone in an apartment in the Netherlands. I had just received 7 photos of Bābā from the ashram by post and spread the photos on my bed. As I was preparing to leave my flat to visit someone suddenly Bābā’s divine presence emanated from the photos. It was as if Bābā permeated my entire flat as well as my body with his divine presence. I

⁴⁸ Narrated by Tapan Kumār Adhikārī, during Sītānāth’s annual Utsab, January 30, 2012

experienced that Bābā was my owner and controller, fully, but that until now I had never realised that. How does it feel to be someone's property without being used to that? As if gasping for psychological air I said to the divine presence: “পারি কিনা জানি না বাবা” (I don't know if I can do that (full surrender) or not, Bābā).” After a short while the divine presence diminished. I could understand then that Bābā was not just an Indian or even an Indian *sādhu* – he is an all-pervading power! I could remember that he told me once in 1982: ‘I will sometimes appear before my beloved ones after I disappear from this world.’ And I understood the purport of this famous verse –

*akhaṇḍa maṇḍalākāram vyāptam yena carācaram
tat padam darśitam yena tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ*

“I offer my humble obeisances unto Śrī Guru who showed me that full circle, by which all moving and non-moving beings are pervaded.”



Bābā on household life

Nīla Ratan Dās: “Bābā blessed the *grhasthas* that if they would humbly acknowledge their inability to perform any *sādhana*, he would be the engine to pull them to the spiritual sky. But the family man must be fully surrendered to Bābā for that. He must touch the lotus feet of the Sat-Guru; then it will be the job of the Guru to bring him to the spiritual world. “Come here, remember the Guru, then let whatever happens happen.” Bābā is everything. One must hear Bābā's instructions. Bābā said: “That is your *bhajana*, that is your *pūjā*. Work all day and remember Gopāl. The responsibility of pulling you to the spiritual sky will be mine. You must hold on to the engine. A job means working for Kṛṣṇa. *pañca putra saṅge nāce rāy bhavānanda* (It is sung in the Vaiṣṇava community - ‘Bhavānanda Rāy danced in ecstasy in the *kīrtan* with all of his five sons. The whole family was a devotee and thus he did not suffer spiritual deprivation in household life’)” Bābā preferred humble family men over proud renunciants, even if they were doing big quantities of *sādhana*. The family men humbly accept their own failure – “I cannot do *bhajana*, I have no time.....” Bābā used

to avoid those who made big claims of doing so many *lakhs* of *nāma*. The family men must see their family and job as Kṛṣṇa's family and job and touch the genuine Guru.”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Bābā said that household life is not bad – it is good. He said: “My householder disciples are my earnest servants, the true relatives of my Madangopāl. As they attend to their wives, sons and daughters they make Madangopāl the proprietor of their households. They can always come to me to frankly confess their transgressions, be it out of fear or out of devotion, and beg forgiveness. I am very pleased if they shed tears and lament about their plight. Why you make your family life difficult by considering it just family life? The Lord is your relative and your family. Perform your daily duties while surrendering yourself at the lotus feet of the Lord, meditating on Him while externally performing your duties and playing the role of a worldly man. Just as the ladies in Indian villages can balance many pots of water on their heads while walking and talking with each other, similarly one can work hard to earn one's living and at the same time remain perfectly fixed 24 hours a day in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is what we have to do.”

Bābā used to rhyme শ্যামার কোলে বসে শ্যামকে ডাকবি – *śyāmār kole bose śyām-ke ḍākbi* “Sit on the lap of mother Nature (Durgā or Śyāmā) and call out for Kṛṣṇa (Śyāma).” Mahāprabhu told Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī: *antare vairāgya koro bāhire loka vyavahāra* – “Be innerly detached and externally act like the common man.”

Bābā was musing, thinking of Mahāprabhu: “I cannot understand Your pastimes – you sent the six Gosvāmīs into severe renunciation, although they were very rich and powerful, and at the same time You sent Advaita Prabhu, who was a renunciant, into household life. Thus You showed the world what a thorny forest household life is, how hard life gets when one is attached. Why did He perform such a wholly contradictory act? I think it was because only Advaita Prabhu could take the poison of the householders' sense enjoyment in His throat (as Shiva took the poison from the Milk Ocean into His throat).”

Bābā's householder disciple asked: “Bābā, how can we be devoted to the Lord?” Bābā replied: “Take shelter of Śrī Guru's lotus feet, believe Śrī Guru's words, earnestly do *bhajana* according to Śrī Guru's instructions, then surely the goddess of devotion will be pleased with you. *'sādhya-vastu' 'sādhana' vinu keho nāhi pāy* ⁴⁹ “Without practising no one can attain spiritual perfection.” Those who must work all day should at least in the evening do some *japa* and meditation, for the *śāstras* provide us with

⁴⁹ Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 8, 197

this hope: *krome krome pāye lok bhava sindhu kūle*⁵⁰ “Slowly and gradually the people will reach the shore of the ocean of material existence.”

Advaita Dās: “On the other hand I heard Bābā say: “How can a householder peacefully practise his *mantras*? The radio is on, children are crying and pulling at him, his wife complains and hassles him for money...” On another occasion I saw him challenging visiting householders: “Who are happy? You or us (singles living in the monastery)?”

One day a couple places a misformed baby in front of Bābā, expecting his usual compassion, but Bābā sternly sends them away. I ask him why and he replies: “They have created this child in some perverted way. That’s why it is so misformed.”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Bābā’s Shivaite anger could be as hard as a thunderbolt or he could be Āśutoṣa, Shiva who is easily pleased, and softer than a flower.” বজ্র কঠিন রুদ্ররোষ অপর দিকে দেখেছি কুসুম কোমল আশুতোষ

Once during darshan I tell Bābā about ideas I previously learned of procreation - conceiving a child in spiritual consciousness, after doing one lakh of *nāma*, praying for a child during the conception. Bābā laughs loudly, saying: “It is totally impossible to do this in a spiritual consciousness. One must be lusty for this. Look,” he says while holding his own skin, “this body (although it may be from the highest aristocracy) is a product of my parents’ desires. How can a marriage be spiritual? It is a bodily matter.”

Bābā tells his householder disciples that they should name their children after Kṛṣṇa – ‘Nowadays Hindus give their children names like Binky and Tinky – nonsense! Parāśara Muni told Ajāmila: “You are so sinful, the only hope there is for you is if you name your children after Nārāyan. Call out to them and you can still be saved.”⁵¹

Within the ashram there is no question of marriage: The one married couple that lives in the ashram must sleep separately and was told that they made a mistake getting married at all.

A young man regularly visited the ashram, wanting to marry one of my Guru-sisters. Bābā approved of the match, but also told him: “Look, you should approach the Guru for the highest benefit (higher than having a wife) - *tasmāt guruṁ prapadyeta jijñāsu śreyam uttamam.*”⁵²

Bābā disapproved of unmarried relationships between men and women. One time a foreign couple came to visit the ashram and the man introduced the woman to

⁵⁰ Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 16.237

⁵¹ Overheard from Bābā personally by Advaitadās in Vṛndāvana, October 1984

⁵² Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.3.21

Bābā as *āmār bondhu*, 'my friend'. Knowing what the man meant with 'friend', Bābā politely did not verbally condemn this but he looked extremely displeased.

Bābā was not in favor of mixed marriages, saying it would lead to many cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings between the families and within the marriage. Children born from such a match would also not be able to clearly identify with either one of the parents' culture and race. Bābā taught: 'Better not to marry at all, and if you do, then marry someone from your own tribe.'⁵³

Kṛṣṇā Dās: "Bābā said that marriage is an emergency, it is not to be done lightly or whimsically. One must first do one's very best to be single and celibate; if that is **really** impossible, only **then** one should start thinking of marriage."

Advaita Dās: "One day (in April, 1984) I sit with Bābā on the bank of the Ganges and I ask him: "Bābā, I heard that celibacy is only important on the *yoga* and *jñāna*-paths, and it does not really matter for the *bhakti*-path so much. Is that true?" Bābā said: "No. You see, whether you are a *yogi*, *jñāni* or devotee, your vital juice contains all the most powerful ingredients of your body. That is lost if you are not celibate, whatever path you tread."

On abstinence Bābā wrote in 'Saṅkṣipta Nitya Karma Paddhati': "Celibacy means preservation of *vīrya* (genital fluid), which is the ingredient of peace. Regardless whether one is a householder or a monk, the more *vīrya* one preserves, the more peace one will find."



Bābā, however, was the perfect *tyāgī*

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: "Looking at Bābā it is clear that he tore apart the web of household life and went off to pursue his own desired path with the power of a tiger, casting a Rudra-glance of rejection towards Māyā, who can make the impossible possible, and treating her with the contempt of *nāhaṁ tvam̐ ṛṇam̐ manye* – "I don't consider you to be even a blade of grass." Who is able to stop such a powerful course of dispassion? When beholding Bābā it seems that his divine light has scorched

⁵³ *grhārthī sadṛśīm bhāryām udvahed ajugupsitām. yavīyasīm tu vayasā* (Ś. Bhāg. 11.17.39) "A *brahmacārī* (student) who wishes to marry should choose a girl from his own species/caste/class, who is of unblemished character and who is younger than himself."

hundreds of Cupids to ashes. His lotus feet have trampled the temptations of women and money and offer the world the blessing of *mā bhai* – “Do not fear.”

vikāra heto sati vikriyaṃ te yeṣāṃ na cetāṃsi sa eva dhīrāḥ (Kumāra Sambhava, Kālidās) “A person who is undisturbed although there are causes for agitation, is called *dhīra* or calm.” Once Mahādeva was absorbed in meditation when Pārvatī came to render service to him, but Mahādeva remained calm still. He did not prevent her from rendering service to him. This is the hallmark of a heroic *sādhaka*. Bābā was such a heroic *sādhaka*. He used to say: “How can you become a hero without engaging in combat? Combat makes one a hero, and when the hero is victorious he is a true hero when he loves the one he defeated.”⁵⁴

Advaita Dās: “During my time in Sādhu Bābā's Ashram, I was surprised to see the prominent role given to ladies in the Ashram. All *kīrtans* were led by ladies, all deity worship was performed by them as well as all of the cooking. When I inquired about the reason, my Guru-sister Tulsi explained: ‘Bābā said that there are already so many Ashrams where boys and men can perform their *sādhanā*, but where is the place where girls and women can perform *sādhanā*? Hence this will be a lady's Ashram.’⁵⁵

Namitā Sāhā: “Bābā is after quality before quantity. Bābā is after sincerity rather than showing off. When a rich supporter gave him a wad of cash Bābā set it on fire, but when a very poor person gave him a coin he'd put it on his head and made a dancing motion.”⁵⁶

Advaita Dās: “Bābā addressed all women and girls as माँ *mā*, mother.⁵⁷ He told me in November 1982: “I could not be so close to these women here unless I see myself as a girl too.”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Bābā had the pleasing attitude of a child. Once he said: ‘You know why I have become a renunciant? Whom did I want to make king by becoming a beggar? It was to make Gopāl a king that I became a beggar. Seeing the smile on His face, His ecstasy, I felt this real filial bliss.’

Advaita Dās: “In July, 1983, my friend Rādhā Ramaṇa came from Vraja to take me to Puri for Rath Yātrā. Bābā gives us each Rs.10 (quite an amount of money then). A poor man then comes and donates Rs.10 to Bābā. Bābā returns it and tells him: “You

⁵⁴ ‘Loves the one he defeated’ - Bābā was dealing very affectionately with women.

Explained by Nirañjan Prasād Dās in a letter to Advaitadās, September 28, 2001

⁵⁵ Phone conversation, Guru Pūrṇimā, July 15, 2011.

⁵⁶ Conveyed by Malati Ocfemia, March 23, 2008.

⁵⁷ *mātr-bhaktiḥ para-strīṣu* - „Be devoted to others' wives as to your mother” - Śrīmad Bhāgavata 4.16.17

are too poor. I cannot accept this.” I apologise: “Bābā I am the disciple, you are the Guru – I must give money to **you!**” Bābā: “Not at all! Here, take it!”

Prabhu Sitānātha's three glorious attributes – devotion, knowledge and renunciation – are said to be embodied by the three sons of Śrīla Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī. The eldest son embodied devotion, the middle one knowledge and the youngest one, Bābā, renunciation.



Guru tattva

Bābā wrote in the ‘Saṅkṣipta Nitya Karma Paddhati’: “First one takes shelter of *nāma* (takes *harinām* initiation) and then, when one has attained *sadācāra* (purity in conduct) one becomes eligible for *mantra dikṣā*. সদাচার ব্যতীত মন্ত্রগ্রহণ করিলে সে মন্ত্র নিষ্ফল হয় ও মঙ্গলদায়ক নহে - If one takes *mantra* without keeping *sadācāra* the *mantra* will not work and will not bestow auspiciousness. *dikṣā* is the root of all *japa* and *tapa* (spiritual practises). Taking *dikṣā* from a genuine Guru bestows all perfections. The *japa* and *pūjā* of an uninitiated person is fruitless, like planting seeds on a stone. Such a person will not attain a fortunate destination. Hence one must certainly take *dikṣā* from a genuine Guru.”

Advaita Dās: “Seeing how studious I was, Bābā presented me an expensive, thick blue notebook. Once he looked through my notes and stressed the importance of *guru bhakti* by pointing at *ślokas* he saw there, such as Raghunāth Dās Gosvāmī's *gurau goṣṭhe goṣṭhālayiṣu sujane bhū-suragaṇe* (“O mind! Love the Guru, Vraja, the Vrajavāsīs, the saints and the *brāhmaṇas!*”) and Rūpa Gosvāmī's *śrī gurupadāśraya kṛṣṇa dikṣādi śikṣānām viśrambhena guroḥ sevā*. (“Take shelter of the Guru's feet, take initiation and teachings from him and serve him with trust”) He stressed the *viśrambhena guroḥ sevā*, serving the Guru with trust.” Bābā rejected the culture of having so many Gurus: ‘*dikṣā guru śikṣā guru ṭikṣā guru* – Guru is one. This confuses the mind, causes speculation and destroys *guru niṣṭhā*.’⁵⁸ He also told me the main cause for falldown is offending the Guru.

⁵⁸ *śrī gurvājñayā tat sevānāvirodhena ca anyeṣāṃ api vaiṣṇavānāṃ pūjanam śreyah anyathā doṣaḥ syāt. yathā śrī nāradoktau - gurau sannihite yas tu pūjayed anyam agrataḥ. sa durgatim avāpnoti pūjanam tasya niṣphalam* (Bhakti Sandarba 238) “It is good to worship other Vaiṣṇavas only if it is on the order of Śrī

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Bābā stressed the power of the Guru’s words with this verse

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*udayati yadi bhānuḥ paścime dig-vibhāge
pracalati yadi meruḥ śītatām yāti vahniḥ
vikasati yadi padmaṁ parvatāgre śilāyām
na bhavati punar uktam bhāṣitam sajjanānām*

“The sun may rise in the west, Mount Meru may move itself, fire may get cold and a lotus flower may sprout from a mountain rock, but the words of the saints will never be redundant or superfluous.” (Vikrama-carita, 245)

Bābā preached: “In a garden there are so many trees; similarly there are so many Gurus out there that we may want to listen to. One moon, however, gives more light than so many stars.⁵⁹ What is the use of running from Guru to Guru, from holy place to holy place? There are so many types of worship, but actually they are one and the same. The Lord will reveal Himself in the form that you meditate on and that you love most.”

Advaita Dās: “Bābā taught us Guru-*niṣṭhā* with this popular narration from Mahābhārata – “One day Droṇācārya took all his pupils along to a tree with a bird sitting in it. First he ordered Duryodhana to aim his bow at the bird. Then he asked him: “What do you see?” Duryodhana said: “I see the tree, the branch on which the bird sits and the bird itself.” Droṇa said: “Move over. Arjuna, come here and fix your arrow. What do you see?” Arjuna said: “I see the bird.” Droṇa: “Anything else?” Arjuna: “Nothing else.” Droṇa: “Fire!” This is how the disciple must be exclusively fixed on the order of the Guru.”

Guru and does not contradict his service. Otherwise it is a fault, as is said by Śrī Nārada: “Whoever worships others in front of the Guru attains a bad destination and his worship will be fruitless.” The opening words of Caitanya Caritāmṛta are *vande gurūn*, “I praise my Gurus (*gurūn* is plural).” How then is the Guru still one? It is explained a little later: *mantra guru ara joto śikṣā-guru-gaṇa* (CC Ādi 1.35) “There is one *mantra-guru* and so many *śikṣā gurus*.” So we go around and whimsically choose *śikṣā-gurus* that will tell us all kinds of things that we want to hear but that may contradict the *dikṣā-guru's* teachings? No, because who these *śikṣā-gurus* are is explained immediately in the next two verses: *śrī rūpa sanātana bhaṭṭa raghunātha śrī jīva gopāla bhaṭṭa dāsa raghunātha ei chay guru śikṣā guru ye āmār* “Śrī Rūpa, Sanātana, Bhaṭṭa Raghunātha, Śrī Jīva, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Dāsa Raghunātha - these six Gurus are my *śikṣā guru*.” Of course they are *śikṣā-gurus* through their brilliant books and their splendid personal examples.

⁵⁹ *ekas candraś tamo hanti na ca tāraś sahasraśaḥ* (Hitopadeśa)

Bābā sometimes lamented the lack of appreciation and gratitude of some of his disciples, mockingly paraphrasing them: “Yeh, I got something from my Guru, some *mantra* or so...”

Kṛṣṇā Dās: (In regards to what *sādhana* we shall and shall not practise) "গুরুদেব আমায় যাই দিয়েছেন তাই আমার সব" “Whatever Gurudeva has given me, that is my all-in-all.”

About worshiping the Guru’s physical frame – once as Bābā was changing cloth to use the bathroom, he invited some guests to ‘come along and see what the Guru is made of’. This is not the Guru – Guru is a *tattva* (principle). Guru lives in his words - not in his body.



Gaura Tattva

Bābā quoted from Caitanya Bhāgavata that Advaita Prabhu was the one who first proclaimed Mahāprabhu as *avatāra* and He was also the first one to do *pūjā* of Gaura, but not with a separate Gaura-*mantra*, but with the famous *mantra*;

*namo brahmaṇya devāya go-brāhmaṇa hitāya ca
jagaddhitāya kṛṣṇāya govindāya namo namaḥ*

“I pay my obeisances to Govinda, to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the God of the *brāhmanas*, the benefactor of the *brāhmanas*, the cows and the whole universe.”

Thus Advaita Prabhu saw no difference between Gaura and Kṛṣṇa. Bābā also disapproved of the notion that Mahāprabhu is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *milita tanu* (a physical merger of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa), quoting Svarūpa Dāmodara’s definition of Mahāprabhu in the introduction to Caitanya Caritāmṛta: *rādhā bhāva dyuti subalitam naumi kṛṣṇa svarūpam*. “He is Kṛṣṇa, accepting the feelings and glow of Rādhā.” So He is not both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but just Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa Dās: “Bābā once said: ‘Go to Dhāmeśvara (the main Mahāprabhu Temple in downtown Navadvīpa), take down His *kaupin* and see for yourself.’ (If He is male or female, Kṛṣṇa or Rādhā)

Bābā explained: “Kṛṣṇa came as Gaura, but Gaura does not become Kṛṣṇa, just as milk, once turned into yoghurt, cannot be made into milk again.”

Advaita Dās: “When I tell Bābā of the Pañca-tattva-*mantra* I chant before each *mālā* of *tāraka brahma nāma*, Bābā says: “This all unnecessary.⁶⁰ Just practise what I gave you.”

Tapan Kumār Adhikārī: I was offering *bhoga* with *brahma gāyatrī* but Bābā told me to stop that and to use the 18-syllable *Gopāla-mantra* instead - এই গোপাল মন্ত্র ও কামগায়ত্রী এত জোর, তাই গৌর নিতাই ইত্যাদি মন্ত্র কোনও দোরকার নাই – “This *mantra* is so powerful, that there is no need at all for Gaura-, Nitāi- or any such *mantra*.”

Advaita Dās - On Gaura Purṇimā, at midday, Madan Gopāla is taken out of the Mandir at Sādhu Bābā's Ashram, painted with a gold film and renamed Gaura Gopāla. For this Gaura Gopāla *kīrtana* and *abhiṣeka* are done. Bābā said: “For Gaura's pleasure we do *abhiṣek* of Kṛṣṇa on Gaura Purnimā and for Gaura's pleasure we do *abhiṣek* of Kṛṣṇa on Janmāṣṭamī.”

When I ask Bābā: “But without Gaura's mercy we cannot get Kṛṣṇa, so don't we need a Gaura-*mantra* then?” Bābā replies almost apologetically: “But I have not gotten such *mantras*, where shall I get them from?”

Sādhu Bābā's Ashram was a Vraja-island in a Gaura-ocean. While all over Navadvīpa devotees greeted each other with ‘*jaya nitāi*’ or ‘*jaya gaura!*’, in Sādhu Bābā's Ashram one was always greeted with a hearty ‘*jaya rādhe!*’

Bābā tells me that Navadvīp dhām Parikramā is not an ancient custom – it was only started this (20th) Century by the Gauḍīya Math.

When I asked Bābā more about Gaura being in the spiritual sky or not, Bābā said: “There is no Gaura there. But Gaura-*līlā* is eternal in the way that it traverses throughout the mundane universes. In each universe there is a planet earth, on which there is a Navadvīpa-*dhāma*, where Gaura-*līlā* goes on, like a firebrand.”

Once Bābā kindly asked me to take part in a *pārāyaṇa* (public recital) of Caitanya Caritāmṛta and offered me the choice between its Ādī-, Madhya- and Antya-*līlās*. He was very pleased when I chose for Antya-*līlā*, which deals with Mahāprabhu's pastimes in the Gambhīrā at Jagannātha Puri. He confirmed that it is the highest stage of Gaura-*līlā*.

When I ask Bābā where Mahāprabhu's actual birthplace is – here or in Māyāpura, Bābā just smiles and points to the ground – it is here in Prācīn Māyāpura.

⁶⁰ *Pañca-tattvātmakam kṛṣṇam* (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Ādi 1.14) – “Kṛṣṇa consists of the *pañca tattva*.” By worshipping Kṛṣṇa one worships the Pañca Tattva. The various *pañca tattva mantras* were composed in the 19th or 20th century only.

Once in Vṛndāvana I ask Bābā: “Bābā, there is this verse in Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Ādi 8, 12):

*heno kṛpāmoy caitanya nā bhaje ye jana;
sarvottama hoile-o tāte asura gaṇana*

“Whoever does not worship this merciful Caitanya is an *asura* (godless person), even if he is (otherwise) the greatest person.”

‘Does this apply to us (because we do not worship Mahāprabhu separately from Kṛṣṇa)?’

Bābā replies: “No it does not, because we worship Kṛṣṇa under the auspices of Śrīman Mahāprabhu.”

Once I visited a devotee in Māyāpura who worshipped Gaura-Gadādhara deities, dressing Them like Gaura-Gadādhara one day and like Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa the other day. When I came back to the ashram and told Bābā about it, Bābā said: “If the original is already there, then what is the use of a reflection?”



Advaita-tattva

Bābā glorified his *prāṇa puruṣa* (arch-father) Advaita Ācārya as follows: “Advaita Prabhu did not accept the obeisances Mahāprabhu offered to Him, although He was just a toddler then and Advaita Prabhu was the Gurudeva of His parents! Where can such a devotee be found? He offered a seat to the Lord with a handful of flowers. He roared for the Lord to descend and offered handful of flowers to the Ganges while chanting Lord Hari’s holy name. He offered Ganges water and called out for the Lord – no one in the universe could do that but Him! It is the Advaita-lion! *adbhuta ceṣṭitam* (CC Ādi 6.1) “Advaita’s activities are astonishing!” Who will give affection to the living beings? He is the angry God (Shiva). Shiva is very angry, but also easily pleased. He is as easily angered as He is satisfied. Now (in the form of Advaita Prabhu) He has become Hari-Hara (both Viṣṇu and Shiva) *advaitam harinādvaitād ācāryam bhakti śamsanāt* (CC Ādi 1.13) “Advaita is not different from Hari. He is known as *ācārya* because of His propagation of devotion.” “Whose glory

and excellence is all this (Gaura-*līlā*)? Not Gaura's but Sītānātha's! We don't say this to play down Gaura or so – Gaura Himself said *nādhār hunkāre mora ei avatāra*: “Advaita's shouts have brought Me down to earth.” Sītānātha was the Gurudeva of His father and mother, but He thought to Himself ‘I am a devotee, and I want His lotus-feet.’ Hence He performed this drama (pastimes) with the Lord together to teach the world devotion.”

Advaita Dās: “Bābā's *sītānātha-niṣṭhā*⁶¹ was complete. On Lord Nityānanda's appearance day I timidly asked him if he knew it was *trayodaśī* today. Bābā asked around and just confirmed it was *trayodaśī*. No celebration at all!

“When I set out for a foreign journey Bābā consoles me: “Millions of universes emanate from each of Prabhu Sītānātha's pores – wouldn't He then be able to protect a tiny soul who is surrendered to Him?”⁶²



One disciple asked: “Bābā, what is *bhakti*?” Bābā replied: ‘Self-manifest love for God, through which God is bound to the devotee's love. That is why devotion is greater than the Lord Himself, it is the Lord's pleasure potency, a lake of nectar where the greatest swans (*paramahamsas*) swim. Deep, intense devotion is called *prema*. *bhaktake nācāy premā kṛṣṇake nācāy, āpanā nācāy tīne nāce ek thāiy*⁶³ “Prema makes the devotee dance, it makes Kṛṣṇa dance and it dances itself – thus all three dance in the same place.” All will take one form! The shapeless Brahman assumes a shape, that's why I tell you – practise devotion!” Someone else asked: “Bābā is there something like a God? Can anybody claim such a thing?” Bābā: “Tell me, do you exist?” “Yes, I exist.” “If you exist, then you must also have a father.” “Sure I do.” Bābā: “Similarly, if the universe exists there must also be a creator of that universe. Thus it must be accepted that there must also be a God. Who other than the mother can tell a child who its father is? You will find God through Śrī Guru, he will give you the essential knowledge with which you can find God. Worship God, because that is the duty of the living beings. জগতের

⁶¹ *sītānātha-niṣṭhā* – exclusive loyalty to Advaita Prabhu.

trayodaśī - the 13th day of the lunar quarter.

⁶² As Sadāśiva He can easily destroy the universes again, too.

⁶³ Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya līlā 18.18

পিতা কৃষ্ণ যে না ভজে বাপ! পিতৃদ্রোহী পাতকীর জন্মে জন্মে তাপ! *jagater pitā kṛṣṇa, je nā bhaje bāp!*
Pitri-drohī pātakīr janme janme tāp! “Kṛṣṇa is the father of the universe, O boy! If you don't worship him you are like a traitor of your father and you will suffer from such a sin birth after birth!”⁶⁴



Entries from Advaita dās' diary

September 10, 1982 — My best friend Rādhā Ramaṇ had once told me that according to Haribhakti Vilāsa a Guru should come from a *brāhmaṇa*-family, preferably the family of Nityānanda or Advaita Prabhu. Today he takes me for my first *darśan* of Nikuñja Gopāla Gosvāmī as possible Guru, in a small house next to Vṛndāvana's bhajanashram, named "Śyāma Vinodini Kuñja" or "Advaita Bhavan". It is the same house where I met Govinda Gopāla Gosvāmī three months earlier— he turns out to be his elder brother. Rādhāramaṇ told me before that this *sādhu* does not believe in *bheda buddhi* between Gaura and Kṛṣṇa. He worships Gaura as Kṛṣṇa, in other words he does not worship Gaura as a separate Godhead. Hence he also does not give *dikṣā* in Gaur-*mantra*. Bābā is corpulent, highly effulgent, has a long matted beard, long *jaṭās* (matted locks) and gigantic Tulasī-beads around his neck. He greets us very spontaneously—"Jay Rādhe! Jay Rādhe!" I like him at once. When we are back out, I tell Rādhā Ramaṇ: "Wow, he's really amazing!" "I told you so!", Rādhā Ramaṇ says.

(From August 12th I had been on a 84 Krosh Vrajamaṇḍala Parikramā which was to last until September 27, but I fell ill on the way, so I returned to Vṛndāvana on September 1. I see this as Bābā's arrangement. If I had completed the *parikramā* I would not have met Bābā, who was scheduled to leave on September 27.)

September 20, 1982 — After 10 days of illness I go again for *darśana* of Bābā Nikuñja Gopāla Gosvāmī, who is reclining on the courtyard of Śyāma Vinodini Kuñja. Bābā hardly knows any English, but an interpreter is found. My first question to him is: "Do you think it is good that they are introducing *varṇāśrama* in the West?" Bābā says in English: "This is a very bad thing – *catur varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa karma vibhāgaśaḥ* (Gitā 4.13) “The four castes and ashrams have been created by Me (Kṛṣṇa).“ Then I ask him: "Is Gaura separately worshipable?" Bābā replies: “Who is

⁶⁴ Caitanya Bhāgavata, Madhya khaṇḍa 1.202

Gaura? Gaura is Kṛṣṇa. If Kṛṣṇa Himself is there, then why worship Gaura separately? How can you concentrate on two deities? You have only one mind.” It appeals to me. I get a flyer of Bābā's upcoming Vrajamaṇḍala *parikramā*, planned in February 1983; the flyer is headed by a verse from Rādhā Rasa Sudhānidhi (14):

*rādhā karāvacita pallava vallarīke
rādhā padāṅka vilasan madhura sthalīke
rādhā yaśo mukhara matta khagāvalīke
rādhā vihāra vipine ramatām mano me*

“Let my mind find pleasure in the play-forest of Rādhā, where the sprouts and vines are touched by Rādhā's hands, where the ground is sweetened by Rādhā's footprints and where the birds madly sing Rādhā's glories!”

The altar in this *kunja* is brilliant. The small deities of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā Madana Gopāla are not just beautiful, but also excellently served. There is a board in front of the deities with Their legs painted on it in a sitting posture, so that They don't have to stand on the altar all the time. There are some life-size portraits on the altar, one of a beautiful Bengali couple (Bābā's parents) and one of a boy in *dhotī* (Advaita Prabhu, whom I have always seen depicted as an old man with a long grey beard). Bābā tells me there is no Gaura-*līlā* running parallel to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* in Goloka. In the following days Bābā assures me there is *siddha praṇālī* and Ekādaśī in his house, so I decide to take *dīkṣā* here.

September 24, 1982 — I come to Bābā at midday and ask for *dīkṣā*. Bābā consents to give it tomorrow. Later I hear that Bābā wants to postpone it to 27th September.⁶⁵ Bābā asks me to hand in a notebook and I ask him for a new name. I get a photo of Bābā, of Advaita Prabhu and a colour photo of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā Madana Gopāla.

September 27, 1982— My *dīkṣā*-day. After taking Yamunā-snāna early in the morning I put on a neat *dhotī*. At Bihārijī Mandir I buy a flower garland and then proceed to Advaita Bhavan. Bābā takes me into the front room, blinds the windows and whispers two *dīkṣā-mantras* in my right ear. After that he also gives me the *mahā mantra*. I must repeat each word of each *mantra* three times over. After this he makes *tilaka* on the twelve designated places on my body with the emblem of the Advaita-*parivāra*: a stem on the forehead and a Banyan-leaf on the nose and arms. After that

⁶⁵ 25 September was a demoniac constellation, *mūlā*, while 27 September was the auspicious constellation *uttarāṣāḍhā*. *gurukṛpā!* How kind is the Guru!

Bābā takes a Tulasī-mālā in the hand to hang around my neck, but when he sees that I already have one he leaves it. Bābā had already written the *dīkṣā-mantras* in my notebook in both Bengali and English, adding to it: "Your present name is Adwaita dasji Maharaj"⁶⁶. *dīkṣā* is only two Kṛṣṇa-*mantras*⁶⁷, as I had expected. I ask Bābā what the rules for an initiated devotee are, and he tells me: "Be chaste, vegetarian and teetotaler".⁶⁸ I offer Bābā the flower garland, but it is entangled, so that doesn't work. Then I give him the Rs.15 *guru-dakṣiṇā* that I managed to collect but he doesn't want to accept it. Instead he says in English: "I don't need this. I want your heart." Bābā also says: "Our caste distinction is only towards the body, not the soul." I receive a Bengali folder with an *arcana paddhati* that explains the rites for practising the *mantras*. I also ask Bābā for *siddha praṇālī*, but he finds that too early— "That you will get later." Before leaving for Navadvīpa, Bābā tells me: "If you have any questions on *bhajana* then consult my brother."

In **October 1982** my friend Madhusūdāna, resident of Navadvīpa, writes me: "Nikuñja Gopāla Gosvāmī is a great devotee, an expert lecturer, a good musician and a nice person. Concerning the one-ness of Gaura and Kṛṣṇa, don't worry, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī says: *śacī sūnuḥ nandīśvara pati sutatve* — "O mind! Know the son of mother Śacī to be the son of the king of Nandīśvara (Kṛṣṇa)!" Later that month Madhusūdāna writes me that my Guru is calling me to Navadvīpa. He offers me to stay in his house.

November 8, 1982 — After I arrive in Navadvīpa, suffering from blood-diarrhoea, Bābā sends my *guru-bhāis* to Madhusūdāna's house at Gokulānanda Ghāṭ

⁶⁶ Sādhu Bābā was not exposed to Vaiṣṇava-groups where all devotees get new names at initiation. Usually people had a name-change when they took *sannyāsa* (Nimai/Caitanya f.i.), or (re-) converted to Hinduism (Rūpa-Sanātana f.i.). So when I asked Sādhu Bābā for a name, he took it like that. Needless to say, I did not deserve the Maharaj-title. It was not a *sannyāsa*-initiation. Sādhu Bābā neither took nor gave *sannyāsa*.

⁶⁷ *kāma gāyatrī* and *kāmabīja* initiation comes directly from Advaita Prabhu, as stated in Prema Vilāsa, chapter 19: *mahāprabhu advaitere korilā ādeśa dīkṣā mantra mādhave koro upadeśa. śrī advaita prabhu mahāprabhura ājñā mate mādhave karṇe mantra lāgilā kohite. āge harināma koilā arthera sahite. rādhā-kṛṣṇa mantra pore kohilā karṇete. kāma gāyatrī kāma bīja upadeśa koilā. artha jānāyā sab tattva jānāilā.* "Mahāprabhu ordered Advaita Prabhu to give *dīkṣā mantra* to Mādhava dāsa. Following Mahāprabhu's order Advaita Prabhu spoke the *mantra* into Mādhava's ear. First He gave him *harināma* with its explanation, and after that He spoke Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-*mantra* into his ear. He instructed him into Kāma Gāyatrī and Kāma-bīja and explained their meaning."

⁶⁸ Bābā was totally independent. **Never**, before, during or after *dīkṣā*, he ever asked me if I had ever taken *dīkṣā* elsewhere.

with a free *chādor* and sweater. A few days later they come again with more gifts. I don't know how to thank them for all this.

November 11, 1982 — My first visit to Sādhu Bābā's Ashram. Prācīn Māyāpur is a beautiful, green suburb of Navadvīpa. When we enter the yard of the ashram Bābā exclaims: "Rādhe Rādhe!"— I fall at his feet. We are very happy to see each other again. There are no peacocks or red monkeys in Bengal, like in Vraja, so Bābā brought them to his ashram, to re-create Vraja here. The peacock is in a big cage opposite the Gopāl Mandir and the monkey, named Rām, is on a chain and can jump on a pole and in a tree from there. The wonder is that Bābā can just hold Rām on his arms, and can caress him. (Red monkeys are killers) That shows Bābā's gentle and sweet character. Behind the main building is a small goshala, where some cows and a calf are served and there is even a dog, named Bolā. I notice that some men and women in the ashram wear *jaṭās*, matted locks - it is because Advaita Prabhu is Sadāśiva, although I had always learned that He is Mahāviṣṇu. He is both actually, and because Bābā descends from Advaita Prabhu or Sadāśiva, he and his followers also wear *jaṭās*. Madhusūdana tells me that the men of Bābā's family descend from Śiva and they take their wives from *kālī-varṁśas*.

Bābā narrates: "One day Balarāma and the other cowherd boys went to mother Yaśodā and said: "Ma, we saw Kānāi eating clay." Ma then went to Gopāl and asked Him: "Gopāl, is that true or not?" Gopāl said: "No Mā, they're all lying!" Ma: "Then let me see. Open Your mouth." Kṛṣṇa then opened His mouth and showed that there was instead some stolen butter inside." Bābā smiles sweetly as if the butter lies within his own mouth.

I ask Bābā for an explanation of the *dikṣā-mantras*. As always, Bābā excels in simplicity— no elaborate stories. He says that *kāmadeva* stands for Kṛṣṇa playing (*deva*) completely *svacchanda* (*kāma*), that He maddens the *gopīs* with love with His beauty (*puṣṭabāṇa*) and that He becomes so ecstatic during amorous pastimes that He passes out, losing bodily awareness. This disembodied intoxication makes Him *anaṅga*, the unembodied one.

When Bābā speaks (to others) about breathing exercises I ask him if this is *bhakti*. Bābā: "If *prāṇāyāma* can help you meditate on Kṛṣṇa why wouldn't that be *bhakti*?"⁶⁹

⁶⁹ *tasmād kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet* (Bhāg 7.1.31) 'Somehow, by any means, fix your mind on Kṛṣṇa.' There are many glorifications and prescriptions of *prāṇāyāma* in Hari Bhakti Vilāsa, namely 3:101, 116, 270-1, 309, 5:72-88, 129-133, 8:422-3, 500 17:150-2 and 199.

December 1, 1982 — Bābā enters into my room and places a small booklet before me, 'Vilāpa Kusumāñjali' by Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī. He tells me to memorise it and possibly to translate it into English. He says it is a very important booklet and that his father Ānanda Gopāla Gosvāmī's *pāṭhas* on it were famous. “Any verse from this book can immerse you in an ocean of nectarean meditation. Dive deep – there are jewels on the bottom.⁷⁰” In 104 prayers this booklet gives a complete description of all *mañjari sevās* and *līlās*, briefly but very sweetly.

December 3, 1982 — My Guru-brother Nārāyan-dā comes into my room and says Bābā calls me upstairs on the balcony. Bābā sits there on the floor, wearing his spectacles and completing writing on a huge sheet of paper. He has filled it in singlehandedly. He hands it to me and explains to me how it works. It is the *siddha praṇālī* I so much desired. I bow down to Bābā in gratitude and ask him: “Must I memorise all this?” Bābā: “At least your own *svārūpa*, the Guru’s *svārūpa*, *parama* Guru’s *svārūpa* and Prabhu Sītānātha’s *svārūpa*. Keep this between the two of us – don’t reveal this to anyone, not even to your friends!” I am surprised and honoured that he gave it to me so soon, for when I took *dīkṣā*, just 2 months ago, he said I should first be purified by *bhajana* before becoming ripe for *siddha praṇālī*.

As Bābā had already revealed, Prabhu Sītānātha Himself is present in all four *rasas*: *sakhī-bhāva* (Viśākhā), *dāsī bhāva* (Rati Mañjarī), *sakhya bhāva* (Madhumaṅgala) and *vātsalya bhāva* (Paurṇamāsī). Bābā: ‘By practising meditation on the *siddha deha* and *siddha sevā* the *siddha deha* is gradually developed. Whatever you always think of you will attain as you end this body.’

*yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvan tyajantyante kalevaram
tam tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tad bhāva bhāvotaḥ (Gītā 8.6)*

Above the *siddha praṇālī* he has written:

*mane nija siddha deha koriyā bhāvana
rātri dine kore braje kṛṣṇera sevana*

“The mental practise is to meditate on one’s own *siddha deha* and thus serve Kṛṣṇa in Vraja day and night.” (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 22.156), and:

⁷⁰ It is not for no reason that Nirañjan Bābu called Bābā a *jahurī* জহুরী – jeweller.

*ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa tanayas taddhāma vṛndāvanam
ramyā kācid upāsanā vrajavadhū vargeṇa yā kalpitā
śāstram bhāgavatam pramāṇam amalam prema pumārtho mahān
śrī caitanya mahāprabhor matam idam tatrādarō naḥ para*

The worshipable Lord is Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda of Vraja.

The abode in which we worship Him is Vṛndāvana.

The delightful method of Worship is that of the cowherd wives of Vraja (the *gopīs*).

The holy scripture the Bhāgavata is the spotless authority.

The greatest pursuit of human life is *prema*, love of God.

This is the opinion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

This deserves our highest respect, care and love.

Bābā says it is written by Śrīnātha Cakravartī, a *śiṣya* of Advaita Prabhu, and explains the entire *gauḍīya siddhānta* in a nutshell.

About *siddha praṇālī* and the first verse of Vilāpa Kusumāñjali Bābā says: "Rūpa Mañjari was not married. The word *anāgata* here means 'your husband has not come yet, you are still a virgin. The *kinḅarīs* have no *kuñjas* of their own because the *sakhīs* are hostesses to Kṛṣṇa and make Him enjoy, while the *mañjarīs* have a service function, and therefore don't need their own *kuñja*. We all serve in the great *kuñja* of Viśākhā-devī because Advaita Prabhu is Viśākhā."

Bābā also explains the ***tāraka brahma nāma in mañjarī bhāva***: "The whole *mantra* deals with Hari and Kṛṣṇa, not with Rādhā, for we serve Her by singing this *mantra*, to relieve Her feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa and to remind Her of Him. Hence *hare* means *hari*, not *harā*. Kṛṣṇa is All-attractive, Hari removes all of Rādhā's attachments to Her marital vows and Rāma is Her *ramaṇa*."

Returning to the ***kāma gāyatrī*** Bābā explains why should we meditate on a Kṛṣṇa-*mantra* while we have more love for Rādhā? Ānanda Gopāla Gosvāmī explained that with a Rādhā Rasa Sudhānidhi verse (259) —

*dhyāyaṁs taṁ śikhi piñcha maulim anīśaṁ tan nāma saṅkīrtayan
nityaṁ tac caraṇāmbujaṁ paricaraṁs tan mantra varyaṁ japan
śrī rādhā pada dāsyam eva paramābhīṣṭaṁ hṛdā dhārayan
karhi syāṁ tad anugraheṇa paramodbhutanurāgotsavaḥ*

“I always meditate on Kṛṣṇa, who wears a crown of peacock feathers, I always sing His name in *saṅkīrtana*, I always serve His lotus feet (the deity) and repeat His best of *mantras*, holding the desire for the supremely cherished service of Śrī Rādhā's lotus feet in my heart. When will that great festival of divine love arise in my heart by His grace?”

I compose an English ode to Bābā and save it in the light-blue notebook that Bābā had given me. In it I praise Bābā for giving me the clue to *gaura tattva* and *mañjarī bhāva*. Nirañjan Bābu discovers it, takes it home and composes a Bengali version.

December 24, 1982 — Nirañjan Babu has completed his Bengali ode to Bābā and drags me, against my will, before Bābā on the courtyard and begins to read my English ode to him. Tears roll down Bābā's cheeks and he lifts his lotus hand in blessing.

December 25, 1982 — When I tell Bābā about the Christmas-feasts on animals in the west, he folds his hands in horror and says: “All religions are good and true, but our *sanātana dharma* is the best and the original religion” Then he quotes the opening words of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata - *janmādyasya yataḥ* (“From whom (Vāsudeva) it all emanates”).” Then when I suggest, as I learned in my previous ashram, that no westerner can take his next birth as a human being again, Bābā begins to roar of laughter with shuddering tummy.⁷¹

⁷¹ Westerners act according to their own level of understanding, Indian standards do not apply to them. Vijaya Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī taught: “মানুষের কর্তব্য সকলের এক না হইলেও দেশগত, সমাজগত, কালগত নীতি এবং যে যাহা কর্তব্য বলিয়া স্বীকার করিয়া নেয় তাহা পরিষ্কার অন্যায়ে বোধ না হাওয়া পর্যন্ত সর্বতোভাবে প্রতিপালন করা আবশ্যিক | যাহা কর্তব্য বলিয়া মানিয়া লইব, তাহাই আমার ধর্ম | মূল ধর্মনীতি প্রতিপালন না করিলে যে প্রকার অনিষ্ট হয়, অপরাধ হয়, দেশগত, সমাজগত ও কালগত স্বীকৃত কর্তব্যের বিরুদ্ধ চলিলেও ঠিক সেই প্রকার পাপগ্রস্ত হইতে হয় | অতএব যে যাহা কর্তব্য বলিয়া বিশ্বাস করে, সরল প্রাণে সত্য বলিয়া স্বীকার করে, তাঁহার তাই ধর্ম, তাঁহার তাই অবশ্য পালনীয় | কোথাও লোকে মতস্য মাংসাহার কর্তব্য বলিয়া স্থির করেন, আর কোথাও বা জঘন্য পাপ বলিয়া বিষবৎ ত্যাগ করেন” - ১২৯৪ “Although not every human being has the same duties, obligations and ethics, there is morality according to country, society and time. Whatever is thus considered decent is accepted, and unless and until it is understood and realised to be wrong and unjust it should certainly be followed. Whatever I believe to be my duties and propriety that is my religious principle. If one doesn't follow one's fundamental religious principles one meets with woe and commits sin according to one's local, social and temporal customs and ethics. Whatever obligation and ethics one believes in and accepts with a simple heart, that is one's religious virtue and should certainly be followed. In some places the eating of fish and meat is established custom and at other places it is rejected as a sin as if it is poison.” Vijay Krishna Goswami, June 1891.

Later Bābā explains the huge cultural and economic differences between India and the west as follows: “This here is *tapo bhūmi*, a place of penance, meant for self realisation, and your region is *bhoga bhūmi*, a place for enjoyment.”⁷²

Bābā asks me to once write an English book about Prabhu Sītānātha in English. For this he gives me the booklets 'Advaita Prakāśa' by Īśān Nāgar, 'Advaita Mangal' by Haricaran Dās and 'Advaita Bālya Sūtra' by Lauḍīya Kṛṣṇadās, to use as sources. Bābā explains: “Advaita Prabhu is not the ordinary *guṇāvatāra* Śiva, He is Sadāśiva who eternally dwells in Vaikuṅṭha and who is the fountainhead of all the universal destroyers Śiva.”⁷³

Bābā says about race: “Everywhere there are good and bad people.” One time I ask him about the Bhāgavata-verse which says that the dog-eater that once holds the Lord's name on the tip of his tongue has performed all pilgrimages, penances, sacred baths and Vedic studies – *aho bata śva-paco to garīyan yajjihvāgre vartate nāma tubhyam* etc. (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 3.33.7) Bābā says: “Oh, this is all glorification!”⁷⁴

⁷² It is often wondered how it is possible that westerners, who have a degraded lifestyle compared to Indians, enjoy so much, as if they enjoy good karmic reactions. The answer is given here by Bābā – it is not a matter of *karma* but of purpose. The purpose of western regions is to enjoy and the purpose of India is to reach enlightenment through *tapasyā*.

⁷³ *śrī mahādeva lokas tu saptāvaraṇato bahiḥ; nityaḥ sukhamayaḥ satyo labhyas tat sevakottamaiḥ* "But Śrī Mahādeva's world is outside of the seven layers of matter that cover the universe. It is eternal, blissful, real and attainable by His devotees." (Vāyu Purāna) *sadāśivākhya tan mūrtis tamoguṇa varjitā* "Unlike the ordinary Śiva, Sadāśiva is beyond *tamo guṇa*." (Laghu Bhāgavatāmṛta 43) *śivaloke vaikuṅṭha dhāmi* "Śivaloka is Vaikuṅṭha-dhāma." (Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa)

⁷⁴ Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments on Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.1.22, which is Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's comment on its twin verse: *tasmād durjātir evety atra savanāyogyatve'pi kāraṇam iti tad-yogyatā pratikūla-pāpamayīty arthaḥ. na tu tad-yogyatvābhāva-mātra-mayīti. brāhmaṇāṅām śaukre janmani durjātītvābhāve'pi savana-yogyatvāya puṇya-viśeṣa-maya-sāvitra-janmāpekṣatvāt. tataśca savana-yogyatva-pratikūla-durjaty-ārambhakam prārabdham api gatam eva kintu śiṣṭācārābhāvāt sāvitram janma nāstīti brāhmaṇa-kumārāṅām savana-yogyatvābhāvāvacchedaka-puṇya-viśeṣa-maya-sāvitra-janmāpekṣāvad asya janmāntarāpekṣā vartata iti bhāvaḥ. ataḥ pramāṇa-vākye'pi savanāya kalpate sambhāvito bhavati na tu tadaivādhikārī syād ity abhipretam vyākhyātam ca taiḥ sadyaḥ savanāya soma-yāgāya kalpate. anena pūjyatvam lakṣyata iti* - “Therefore bad birth itself is here the cause of being unqualified for Soma-sacrifice and that means possessing sin that is antagonistic to qualification for that, not merely having an absence of qualification for that. Even though there is an absence of bad birth in being born from the seed of *brāhmaṇas* there is still the necessity for a *sūrya*-birth (sacred thread initiation), which possesses the merit suitable for qualifying one for Soma-sacrifice. Therefore though the *prārabdha* that caused the bad birth that is antagonistic to suitability for Soma-sacrifice is gone, like *brāhmaṇa*-boys who because of absence of cultured practice have no *sūrya*-birth and must await a *sūrya*-birth that possesses the merit that can cut to pieces their absence of suitability for Soma-sacrifice, **he [the dog-eater who chants the name of**

One day Bābā told us the following true story: “One day Vijay Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī was wandering over the bank of the Yamunā with his followers, when he told one of them: ‘Go and look there on the shore’. There was a skeleton lying there. Gosvāmī said: “Look here, on its bones – the entire *hare kṛṣṇa mantra* is imprinted on it. Just see how much *bhajan* this person has done in his or her lifetime!”

When Bābā wished to present himself as a crazy person he said: “You see, my name is Nikuñja.”

During the preparations for Prabhu Sītānātha's annual *utsava* a construction worker falls off the scaffold alongside the ashram-building. As he lies squirming of pain on the ground Bābā goes to him, lifts his hand in blessing, and says: “Look, you listen to disco- and cinema-music day and night. If you had died now, what would you have thought of?”



Prabhu Sītānātha's utsava in Sādhu Bābā's ashram is the biggest festival in the world commemorating Advaita Prabhu's advent, annually held in the month of Māgh (January-February). 14 days of *kīrtana*, *līlā-kīrtana*, *pāṭha* and *prasāda*. There is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *aṣṭa-kāliya līlā-kīrtana*, like Sūrya Pūjā and Puṣpa-cayaṇa Līlā, in the afternoon (instead of *gaura he the kīrtaniyas sing rādhe*), *rasa-kīrtana* in the evening, and at 5 p.m. Bābā himself gives *pāṭha* on the life of Advaita Prabhu. I notice that Bābā does invoke Gaura in his *maṅgalācaraṇa*⁷⁵ Also during the *ādhivāsa kīrtana* he starts with a few lines of *śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma śrī rādhe govinda*.

February 20, 1983 — Prabhu Sītānātha's birthday. There is a 24-hour *kīrtana* and outside the ashram, on a large field, a huge amount of *prasāda* - *khichuri* and tomato juice - is freely distributed to a large crowd of poor people that come from all around. Along with his friend Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī from Śrīvāsāṅgana, Bābā affectionately tours the field.

Kṛṣṇa] must await another birth. This is the position. Therefore, in the statement of authority [Ś.B. 3.33.6] the words *savanāya kalpate*, "he becomes fit for Soma-sacrifice," are intended to mean **he becomes respected or honored, but not that he has actually become qualified then and there (to perform that sacrifice).**" *tad-anantara-janmany eva dvijatvaṁ prāpya tadādy-adhikārī syād* „He only becomes really qualified by taking a *brāhmaṇa*-birth **in the next life.**”

⁷⁵ *Maṅgalācaraṇa* - recital invoking auspiciousness before a lecture commences.

February 21, 1983 — To complete Sītānātha's *utsava* a huge *nagara-kīrtan* is held from the ashram, through Prācīn Māyāpur to downtown Navadvīp. It is already dark when we arrive downtown. Bābā walks in the dark streets of Navadvīp, his bearded countenance only illuminated by an oil lamp, singing loudly: *dayāl prabhu sītānātha e bār āmāy doyā koro* “O compassionate Lord of Sītā (Adwaita Prabhu)! This time be kind upon me!” It is a magnificent sight to see Bābā as my '*kīrtana*-hero', loudly banging the huge *karatālas*. All the residents of Navadvīpa stream out to see him.



One morning Bābā calls for all his *mantra śiṣyas*⁷⁶ in the ashram and asks us: “Why are we doing *tāraḥ brahma nāma* (*the hare kṛṣṇa mantra*) loudly (in *kīrtana*) and our *dīkṣā mantras* secretly?” We modestly wait till Bābā himself provides the answer. “Because the *tāraḥ brahma nāma* is in the eighth, vocative case – *hare kṛṣṇa! hare rāma!*, and the *dīkṣā mantras* are in the fourth, dative case – *kṛṣṇāya, govindāya.*” I ask Bābā if this is the flaw in the philosophy of the Nitāi Gaur Rādhe-Śyāma-group.⁷⁷ Bābā says: “Certainly.” I then ask: “But Bābā, what about the verse *khāite śuite yathā tathā nām loy; kāla deśa niyam nahi sarva siddhi hoy* (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya līlā 20.18) “Whether eating or reclining, whenever and wherever one utters the name of Kṛṣṇa, all perfection will be achieved.” Bābā points out the word *nāma* in that verse – it pertains to *tāraḥ brahma nāma*, not to *mantra* as *dīkṣā mantra*. This *mantra* should only be practised silently, in solitude, after bathing and putting on *tilak*.

Bābā says that *āsana*, or proper sitting on the floor in lotus position, is the root of all religious life. Those who are used to sitting on chairs will have a hard time later to have their heels tolerate *āsana*, for proper meditation.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *mantra śiṣyas* – Disciples that have received 2nd initiation, initiation into Kṛṣṇa mantra.

⁷⁷ The Nitāi-Gaura Rādhe Śyāma group claim that the *hare kṛṣṇa mantra* is only to be chanted in *japa* and if chanted in *kīrtana*, then someone must keep count. This, however, is a rule only for *dīkṣā mantra*, which needs to be in the dative case, start with a *bija mantra* and end with *svāhā* or *namah*.

⁷⁸ There was not a single table or chair in Sādhu Bābā's ashram. Sādhu Bābā sat cross-legged on an old brown pillow, and only during *pāṭh* (when he gave lectures) he sat on a wooden *vyāsāsana*, but then still cross-legged.

gopī-bhāva

Advaitadās: “In my previous ashram *gopī bhāva* is wholly forbidden and ridiculed, but Bābā simply quotes the Caitanya Caritāmṛta-verse "*ataeva gopī-bhāva koro angikāra*"- “Therefore, accept the mood of the *gopīs*.”

On the other hand Bābā said that one who has too many lusty desires (and is factually not celibate) should not study books on Kṛṣṇa's intimate pastimes.

During Sītānātha's festival in 1983, Bābā sat under a canopy on the yard of the ashram, while the kettles were filled with boiling preparations for the next feast, surrounded by a broad circle of *śiṣyas*, like the moon surrounded by stars, and he explained why Rādhārāṇī's *bhaktas* still use the prescribed Kṛṣṇa-meditation-*mantras*, quoting Vilāpa Kusumāñjali's verse 100:

*hā nātha gokula sudhākara suprasanna
vaktrāravinda madhura smita he kṛpārdra
yatra tvayā viharate pranayair priyārāt
tatraiva mām api naya priya sevanāya*

“O Lord! Nectar Moon of Gokula! O You who melt with compassion with Your satisfied lotus-face and Your sweet smile! Wherever You lovingly enjoy with Your beloved Rādhā, let me also be there to render Your favourite services!”

In other words, without serving Rādhārāṇī we do not serve Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa's service is included within Rādhārāṇī's service.

Once Bābā argued: “It is said *jīber swarūp hoy kṛṣṇera nitya dās*⁷⁹ – why not Rādhā's *nitya dāsī*? The answer is that Rādhā's maidservants also render service to Kṛṣṇa, because only Rādhā can ultimately please Kṛṣṇa, so they serve Him through Her.”

One morning Bābā came out of his room and said that all *sādhana* is completed simply by clapping the hands and saying 'Rādhe Rādhe'⁸⁰

One evening, in early 1984, I sit next to Bābā in the dark under the Bael-tree when some children come with lanterns and begging bowls. One of the girls wears a

⁷⁹ This is a verse in Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Madhya 20.108), meaning: ‘It is the natural position of the soul to serve Kṛṣṇa.’

⁸⁰ *rādhā nāmaiva kāryam hyanudina militaṁ sādhanādhiśa koṭis tyājyā* (Rādhārāsa Sudhānidhi - 144)
“Simply by daily chanting of Rādhā-*nāma* millions of *sādhana*s become rejectable”

sārī, and when they leave, after Bābā had given them his usual loving attention, I say: “That was *kumārī*⁸¹ Rādhā.” “No”, Bābā said, “such is *mañjarī svarūpa*.”

Bābā was very fond of this song by Narottam Dās Thākura and he often sang it to us in its entirety –

vṛndāvana ramya sthāna, divya cintāmani dhāma
ratana mandira manohara
āvṛta kālindī nīre, rāja haṁsa keli kore
tāhe śobhe kanaka utpala

“Vṛndāvana is a lovely place, made of divine thought-gems,
where the captivating temples are made of jewels.
On the water of the Kālindī river lordly swans play,
and beautiful golden lotus flowers float about.”

tāra madhye hemapīṭha, aṣṭa dale veṣṭita,
aṣṭa dale pradhāna nāyikā
tār madhye ratnāsane, bosī āchen dui jane
śyām sange sundarī rādhikā

“In the middle of that river is a golden platform surrounded by eight petals,
that are like eight lotus petals, one each for Kṛṣṇa’s leading heroines.

In the middle of that platform two persons are seated –
Śyāma and His beautiful Rādhikā.”

Generally though, Bābā was very frugal with *gopī-kathā* – he avoided the topic, even when asked about it. Once he sat in front of the straw hut (where I lived myself at the time), surrounded by some disciples, and I asked him about some details of my *siddha svarūpa*-service. He briefly replied: “Yes, you can do all these things”, and then immediately changed the subject by saying: “Come *sakhi*, it is time for *abhisāra* now.” He said this at 11 in the morning, when Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa go out daily to meet Each other (*abhisāra*). Basically, he instructed me fully on these things on the day he gave me *siddha praṇālī* and practically never again.

⁸¹ *Kumārī* – maiden, or little girl.

On another occasion I asked Bābā how to understand these mysterious verses of Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Antya 4, 192-193):

*dikṣā-kāle bhakta kore ātma-samarpaṇa; sei-kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kore ātma-sama
sei deha kore tāra cid-ānanda-moya; aprākṛta-dehe tāra caraṇa bhajoya*

“At the time of initiation the devotee surrenders his very self – at that time Kṛṣṇa makes him equal to Himself and makes His body transcendental. In such a spiritual body he can serve Kṛṣṇa’s lotus-feet”

Bābā explains that this does not mean that our material bodies suddenly become spiritual – the last line of the verses clearly shows that this deals with the devotee’s spiritual body, whose seed is planted by Śrī Guru at the time of initiation.

Kṛṣṇā Dās: “Bābā did not want any opulence in or around the Ashram, no big shiny marble buildings – “There should be *mādhurya* here. Birds should be there, trees and flowers – a really peaceful environment.”⁸² Even now Sādhu Bābā’s ashram is an abode of peace (*śānti*) and silence (*mauna*). There are no tapes constantly playing lectures or mikes blaring loud *kīrtans* into the sky.



Bābā on *arcanā*

Akṣaya-ṭṛtīyā (in the month of May) is a major celebration in Sādhu Bābā’s Ashram because on this day Sādhu Bābā installed his deity of Śrī Madangopāl. The deity was crafted by a sculptor (*śilpī*) in Vṛndāvana exactly according to Bābā’s wishes and indications. When Bābā saw Madangopāl’s face he told the *śilpī* that he did not like it and the *śilpī* reshaped it on his request.⁸³ Bābā also had the name ‘Rādhā’ written on Madangopāl’s chest, to indicate we do worship Him in *mādhurya rasa*, despite the fact that He is a Laḍḍu-Gopāl, normally a deity for *vātsalya-rati bhaktas*. This Laḍḍu Gopāla spreads out His hand to receive the *prema bhakti* of His devotees.⁸⁴ Bābā

⁸² Personal conversation, Sādhu Bābā’s Ashram, March 2000.

⁸³ Narrated by Namitā Sāhā on Akṣaya ṭṛtīyā, May 6, 2011

⁸⁴ Narrated by Tapan Kumār Adhikārī at Rādhākund, October 2011.

explained the absence of a Rādhā-deity in his Śrī-Mandir by pointing out that the name Rādhā is engraved on Gopāla's chest. Each year on Akṣaya tṛtīya an *utsava* is held in Sādhu Bābā's Ashram, where Madangopāl is bathed (*abhiṣeka*) with milk and anointed tip-to-toe with *candana* (sandalwood pulp). All the main disciples of Sādhu Bābā attend this *utsava*.

Tapan Kumār Adhikārī: “(In the Madangopāl deity) Bābā experienced Kṛṣṇa's childhood as adolescence as depicted in the third verse of Kṛṣṇa Karṇāmṛta:

cāturaika-nidāna-sīma-capalāpāṅga-cchaṭā-mantharam
lāvanyāmṛta-vīci-lolita-dṛśam lakṣmī-katākṣāḍṛtam
kālindī-pulināṅgana-praṇayinam kāmāvatārāṅkuram
bālam nīlam amī vayan madhurima-svārājyam ārādhnmaḥ

"We worship that dark bluish young boy, who is the one limitless resting-place of amicableness, who causes the *gopīs* to slow down their gait with the rays of His restless glances, glances made restless by waves of ambrosial shimmer that are worshipped by Śrī Rādhā, the Supreme Goddess of fortune, who is very fond of the gardens on the bank of the Yamunā, who is the root cause of all Cupids and who is the independent kingdom of divine sweetness."

Bābā stressed the word *bāla*, or child, was there and so He reconciled the child-form of Kṛṣṇa in His temple with the *divya kiśora mūrti* we actually worship. Furthermore Bābā stressed mental worship (*mānasī sevā*) over external worship in the temple, so even though Smt. Rādhārāṇī is not abundantly visible in the temple, She is overwhelmingly predominant in our meditations.”⁸⁵

Advaitadās: “Bābā explains that only householders can worship deities because if a *sādhu* dies or gets sick no one can serve the deity. He will be guilty of *aparādha*, whereas when a married man dies or gets sick his wife and children can take over the service.” I respectfully submit to Bābā that he himself is not married, yet serves a *mūrti*. Bābā: “If an unmarried person desires to do *arcanā* he can worship Gopāla. When Prabhu Sītānātha was a *brahmacārī* He served Gopāla. Śrīla Mādhavendra Puripāda ordered him to marry and serve the dual deity of Rādhā and Madana Gopāla. By the

⁸⁵ Phone conversation, September 7, 2009

blessings of Śrīla Mādhavendra Puri he would take the *sevāparādha*⁸⁶ of the first 14 generations of his dynasty upon him - *aparādha na loimu puruṣa caturdaśa* (Advaita Prakāśa 5.16). So after me one more generation is coming.”

“Although Bābā was far from a ritualist, he requested Nirañjan Bābu to compile a concise manual of ritual (*arcanā paddhati*) containing songs to be sung, *mantras* to be recited, oblations to be offered and fasts to be conducted by his disciples. It was called ‘Saṅkṣipta Nitya Karma Paddhati’ and was published on Akṣaya Tṛtīyā day in 1984, the installation-day of Madangopāl. It contains not only ritual but also Bābā’s basic teachings.

Nirañjan Prasād Dās – “Bābā did not encourage deity worship – he said that one should deeply realize that the deity is God Himself and that one must be keenly aware of the possibility of committing *sevāparādha*. He preferred the worship of pictures over the worship of statues and images, because worshipping pictures can only benefit and not harm the worshiper. A lapse in worship of a picture will not have reactions like a lapse of worship of a statue. His altar was simple – there was not a myriad of deities, pictures or images – just Gopāl, Śrī Gurudeva and Advaita Prabhu. That is enough. So many images will just create confusion. It is the mental faith and reverence that counts – one must actually be able to concentrate mentally on the deity. "একনিষ্ঠ না হলে ভজন না যায় রক্ষণে" *Eka-niṣṭha nā hole bhajan nā jāy rakṣaṇe* – “Without one-pointedness *bhajana* cannot be maintained.”

Tapan Kumār Adhikāri: “(For regular devotees) There is no need for *prāṇa pratiṣṭhā* – *dikṣā* automatically grants *adhikāra* for *arcanā*.”



The importance of a pure diet

Advaita Dās: “Bābā apparently gives *hari-nāma* easily. I notice, however, that many people who eat fish also ask him for *hari-nāma*. When he asks them to become vegetarians first they make faces as if he asks them to take *sannyāsa*. Some say they cannot give up fish and will also not take *hari-nāma*, but they do want a photo of Bābā.

⁸⁶ *sevā aparādha* – 32 offences to the deity which are listed in Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu and Haribhakti Vilāsa.

Bābā declines and I ask him why. Bābā smiles and says: “They will offer fish to my picture.”

Bābā wrote in the Sankṣipta Nitya Karma Paddhati (‘Concise manual for eternal worship’) – “First of all everyone needs to become a *sad-ācārī* (person of pure conduct). Eating *prasāda* (food sanctified by being offered to Kṛṣṇa) is a major part of *sad-ācāra*. When for urgent reasons one is unable to take *prasāda*, one must at least and most certainly be a vegetarian. Without a pure diet it is impossible to have a pure consciousness. The mind will become upset by eating cruel and violent food, and with an upset mind one is wholly unqualified to perform any *sādhana* (spiritual practise). When the mind is restless the intelligence will be topsy-turvy, and then not only pure *bhakti* is destroyed, but indeed one's very human birth is. In the Bhagavad Gītā (6.34) Arjun told Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

*cañcalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dr̥dham
tasyāham nigrhamam manye vāyor iva suduṣkaram*

“O Kṛṣṇa! The mind is so restless, agitating, powerful and obstinate – it seems harder to check than even the wind.”

Hence the first priority in *sādhana bhajana* (devotional practise) is a pure consciousness. Without that one cannot even commence *sādhana bhajana*. The basic practise to attain a pure consciousness is to take shelter of the *tāra brahma hari nāma* (The divine saviour-name of Lord Hari, *hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare; hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare*) which was preached by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”

In connection with this, I remember when I asked Bābā why Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī lost their caste, he replied: ঔঁরা তাঁদের অন্ন খেয়েছেন ত? “They ate the grains of the Muslims.”

When I went on a distant journey from the āshram I asked Bābā if I should touch food-articles I wanted to eat to my neckbeads for sanctification. He said that that was alright, or alternatively I could travel with (dried) Tulasī-leaves and place a leaf on the article before eating it.”



Bābā on intellect

Advaita Dās: “Whenever great scholars came to visit the ashram and either displayed their big knowledge or approached Bābā with highly intellectual questions, Bābā responded by kindly reminding them that the most sublime realisations are achieved simply by Śrī Guru Kṛpā (rather than through independent intellectual pursuits)⁸⁷. Bābā told me privately: “All this studying!⁸⁸ I read only a few books – Rādhārāsa Sudhānidhi, this here Vilāpa, Kṛṣṇa Karṇāmṛta, Bhāgavata, Gītā.” I: “Bābā. Govinda Līlāmṛta?” Bābā: “Well allright.”

Another time Bābā kindly warned a travelling preacher, who often travelled all over Bengal, to read the Bhāgavata to just two sleeping widows: “Look Bābā, *bhāgavata-kathā* does not awaken in the heart of the worldly.”

Once, during Kārtik of 1984, in Vṛndāvana, I asked Bābā if it was alright if I studied Sanskrit. Bābā did not forbid it but showed indifference: “ভাষা শিখিতে - তাতে কি?” “What is there in learning a language?”

Bābā’s refutation of *māyāvāda* was also simple but sublime –

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ saccidānanda vigraha
anādir ādir govinda sarva kāraṇa kāraṇam*

All the points are there – Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme God, His body is *sac cid ānanda*, full of awareness, reality and bliss, He is beginningless yet He is the beginning of all and He is the cause of all causes.” (Brahma Samhitā 5.1)

Bābā teaches that since *bhakti* is the ultimate conclusion of the Bhagavad Gītā, the twelfth chapter, which exclusively deals with this, is essential and should be memorised. He rhymes – “Gītā is the *śāstra* (scripture) Nāma is the *astra* (weapon against *māyā*).”

⁸⁷ *pustaka-pratyayādhitam nādhitam guru-sannidhau; sabhā-madhye na śobhante jāra-garbhā iva striyaḥ* - “The scholar who studies books with his intellect and analysis without studying from the Guru does not shine in an assembly of truly learned men, just as a woman pregnant from a paramour is not honored in society.” (Canakya-nīti-darpanam 17.1)

⁸⁸ *ananta-śāstram bahulāśca vidyāḥ svalpaśca kālo bahu-vighnatā ca;
yat sāra-bhūtam tad-upāsaniyam haṁso yathā kṣiram ivāmbu-madhyāt*

"The scriptures are infinite and the branches of knowledge are many. Our time is limited and our lives full of obstacles. Therefore we should worship the essence, just as the swan extracts only the milk from the water." (Canakya-nīti-darpanam 15.10)

Bābā did not like his disciples wasting their time in disputes of any kind. Once, when I was going all over Navadvīpa and Māyāpur, trying to solve disputes, Bābā impatiently told me: “Is everything now OK between the three of you? Now do *bhajan!*” Bābā spoke the last words with a strong tone of urgency in his voice.

When Bābā sees me writing Bhāgavata-verses in a notebook he gave me, he recommends Rādhā-Vinoda Gosvāmī's Bhāgavata-commentary to me, because he is in our line.



More of Bābā's Rudra Bhāva

Gaura Dā: “In the month of Śrāvaṇa (August) it is the custom to do Shiva Pūjā each Monday. Bābā told us we were going to the Gaṅgā to get some water to use for *arcanā*. When we arrived, Sādhu Bābā told us that we can do *pūjā* now to Shiva. We did not understand what Sādhu Bābā meant because there were no Shiva-lingams there. Then we saw Sādhu Bābā on a lotus position seemingly floating above the water, so we poured the water for Shiva Pūjā over His head instead.”⁸⁹

Tulsi Sāhā: “Bābā had mentioned a few times that after his passing He will be inside the Shiva-lingam in the āshram. This Lingam gets worship each time Madan Gopāl get worshipped.”

“Once, a snake slithered to the direction of Sādhu Bābā's feet, while He gave a lecture, and licked his toe. Everyone was afraid that the snake might bite Bābā and kill him. After doing that the snake glided away quietly. Such was Bābā's communication with snakes.” Tulsi witnessed this when she was still very young, when the ashram was still like a forest. Bābā told them not to tell this to anyone because they will not believe these things.⁹⁰

Gaur Dā: “One time, when there were no buildings yet in the ashram, only wilderness, there was a fierce rainstorm going on, so Bābā assumed the form of Naṭarāja (Shiva, the king of dancers) and began to dance, looking in such a fearsome way that I got scared by watching it. We stood and watched in complete silence, and

⁸⁹ Heard in March 2008 in Sādhu Bābā's ashram. Confirmed by Gaur Dā on February 10, 2011, in Sādhu Bābā's ashram.

⁹⁰ Narrated during Sitānāth's utsava in February 2008

when Bābā completed the dance the rainstorm had completely vanished and the sky was clear.⁹¹

Advaita Dās: “One day an elderly couple came to take *prasād* at Bābā's place, a personal invitation. They had brought a new outer cloth for Bābā as a present. However, they demanded to be served *prasād* by a *brāhmaṇa* only. Bābā was incensed – it had to be seen and heard to be believed. Bābā roared so loud that the couple fled with only their life. Bābā threw the cloth they presented angrily in the dust on the ground. Such a phenomenon was new to me, so I asked him in my broken Bengali why he was so angry. Bābā found my bungling so charming that he began to laugh and he forgot his anger.

One day in June, 1983 I also became the fortunate recipient of Sādhu Bābā's *rudrāveśa* (explosion of divine wrath) – earlier I had made a somewhat scornful remark about Indian people spending so much time on the toilet. One day Bābā came from the toilet and saw me standing at the end of the brick-path leading to it. He began to roar: “Oh and what was it you said, Advaita Dāsa, about Indians on the toilet??? আমিও ভারতীয়! I am also an Indian! Who are **you**?”

Śiva Rātri is a main festival in Bābā's ashram, since Bābā appeared in the family of Advaita Prabhu, who is Sadāśiva. Many people, women and children included, come to do Śiva Pūjā, offering Bael (Bilva-) leaves, milk and flowers. A day and night of fasting is observed and the ashram-servants are engaged in an all-night *tārak brahma nāma kīrtan* in front of Gopeśvara Mahādeva.

Once, when a group of devotees of goddess Kālī from Prācīn Māyāpur came for Bābā's darśan Bābā told me: “You know that we are the greatest Shāktas? Kṛṣṇa is called Kālā (the black one), so then Rādhārānī is Kālī (His female counterpart) - *rādhā pūrṇa śakti kṛṣṇa pūrṇa śaktimān*”⁹² “Rādhā is the full *śakti* (energy) and Kṛṣṇa the full energetic.”

I discover the true meaning of the second offence to the chanting of the holy name – *śivasya śrī viṣṇor ya iha guṇa nāmādi sakalam dhiyā bhinnam paśyed* – “To see difference between the glories and names of Śiva and Viṣṇu.” When I ask Bābā about it he brings his hands together and says: “Śiva and Kṛṣṇa are – One.”

When looking at Bābā with his matted locks, half-naked figure and his forehead sometimes adorned with vertical tilak one might think ‘here is a Shaiva sādhu’, but when anyone asked him the way of perfection he would simply say ‘*nāma*’ (chanting

⁹¹ Narrated on Sītānāth's utsava on February 10, 2011.

⁹² Caitanya Caritāmṛta ādi-līlā 4.96

the divine name of Kṛṣṇa) and when anyone asked him about the goal of life he would simply say '*prema*'.

February, 1984 - For some reason, Bābā has been overcome with anger for a few days now. In the evening, after *ārati*, Bābā comes on the courtyard of the Mandir while we are about to commence *Tulasī-ārati*. He angrily says something in our direction, but I cannot hear what. Nimāi starts singing the *Tulasī* evening song, making Bābā run towards us, saying: "You rascal! How dare you commence the *kīrtana* while I'm speaking?" and starts hitting punches here and there. Nimāi is knocked to the ground, I hear his big cymbals crashing to the ground. Bābā spares Hemā Di, he does not beat women.⁹³ As Bābā knocks down Bishu and Nāru I manage to escape unhurt. Shivering of fear I hide behind the iron gate of the courtyard. Later Krishna Di consoles me by serving me some sweets in the kitchen. The following day a Guru-brother from outside, who hears the news, says in awe: "He is Rudra Himself."



Bābā's dressing code

Advaita dās: "Bābā taught: "Externally a male devotee should dress like a male, being the servant of Sītānāth (in the manifest pastimes of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, that take place right now, us being in the branch of Advaita Prabhu). Only mentally a man can dress himself as a maidservant of Rādhārāṇī. Nowadays there are Vaiṣṇavas who dress themselves in loincloth to serve the Mahāprabhu deity and then shift to the deity room of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa dressed in *sārī*, being male devotees. That is not correct. For a male devotee to wear a *dhōṭī*, the original male dress in Gaura-*līlā*, is important to nourish the self-identification of 'I am a servant of Advaita Prabhu'". He was sorry to see his Indian disciples wearing trousers and reminded them of their heritage by showing that nowadays foreigners wear *dhōṭī*, Hindu dress, while they, as Hindus, had adopted western dress. He also said: "Even if one's garment is dirty because of engagement in the Guru's service, it is a *bhūṣana* (ornament), not a *dūṣana* (stain).

⁹³ *praharanti na vai strīṣu kṛtāgaḥsvapi jantavaḥ* "People do not beat women, even if they have done wrong" (Mother Earth to King Pṛthu, Śrīmad Bhāgavata 4.17.20)

Śrīman Mahāprabhu told Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī: *bhālo nā poribe* – “do not dress in any vain or fancy way.”

After I joined the ashram Bābā gave me a *lom vastra*, woollen cloth, for big toilet.⁹⁴

Bābā was very liberal and tolerant. For the first 4 months that I lived in the ashram I was wearing a different outer garment than the type that Bābā had prescribed for his male students, but Bābā did not say a word to correct me. When a third person made me attentive of my error, however, and I asked Bābā to provide me with the proper dress, Bābā showed great satisfaction. It reminded me of Mahāprabhu who said nothing about the fancy blanket that Sanātana Gosvāmī wore unless and until he himself recognised the error.

On another occasion I had my head shaven outside of the ashram, without Bābā's permission, and when I appeared for Bābā's *darśana* in the afternoon, Bābā jokingly said: “Advaita dās – I can see the moon shining on your skull!”⁹⁵

I have seen Bābā walking around with a woman's petticoat on and I have seen him sitting all alone on his courtyard in the pouring rain, wearing only a loincloth, looking all around him just like a child.

About saffron cloth Bābā told me: “There are 51 Śakti-pīṭhs in India, that represent the 51 parts of Durgā after she was cut to pieces by Lord Nārāyan. Each of them represents a *yonī*⁹⁶ of Devi that menstruates once a year. On such a day the *sannyāsī* must dip his garment in the *pīṭh* to colour it red. It should not be a chemical dye from a shop. If even one drop of sperm touches that cloth, it will pull the *sannyāsī* bearer to hell.” Since we do not have *sannyāsa* Bābā does not give us *kaupina*-underwear (loincloth held up by a waist-rope) but a *lengoti* instead (the same combination but sown together).

When I drag on and on about saffron cloth, white cloth and pants, Bābā gets tired and says: “OK saffron, white, pants, ultimately whatever you wear it is the devotion that counts!”

⁹⁴ *yad vastram puriṣam yena kāritam mūtram vā maithunam vāpi tad vastra parivarjayet. āvikam tu sadā vastram pavitram* (Haribhakti Vilāsa 4.61) “Garments that were worn while passing stool or urine or having sexual intercourse must be changed. But woollen garments (*āvika*) are always pure.”

⁹⁵ Bābā preferred his celibate students to wear matted locks (*jaṭā*) and beards, or at least long hair. Householders were given full freedom in hairstyle, but Bābā did not want anyone to shave their skulls, except for health reasons.

⁹⁶ *yonī* – female organ.

Bābā, a humble and perfect gentleman (সভ্য বাবা)

Although he was the highest class *brāhmaṇa*, Bābā would first go to the cleaning woman or any type of lower class person, including me, with folded hands to beg permission to take *prasād*. (At the same time he strictly followed the Vedic rules by not eating after or in the presence of anyone else) He would address ordinary carpenters with ‘*mahāśaya*’ (Sir) and sign his letters just with ‘Nikuñja Gopal’, never adding his Gosvāmī-title to it. He would accept obeisances from disciples that were older in age than him, or from Vrajabāsīs, only reluctantly and even then he would bow his head in embarrassment. One day a Vrajabāsī visited the Ashram – Vrajavāsīs rarely come to Bengal – and Bābā personally bowed down to him, told us to do the same, and then seated him on a raised seat to feed him *prasād*.”

May, 1983 - Once a *bābājī* passes by my *kuṭīra* to steal flowers and vegetables from the garden. Angrily I tell Bābā, who is detached: “Let them do it...”

December, 1983 — Returning from Vraja I hear that *śṛṅgāra*⁹⁷ is stolen from Gopāla's Mandir, in broad daylight. Still Bābā does not report to the police— “*sādhus* don't do that – otherwise they are just as bad as the thieves.” Kṛṣṇā Das: “I told Bābā that the theft took place at midday. Bābā replied: “Gopāla has given it to them – you should know that for sure – their necessity is greater than mine.’ After that he fell silent. He never mentioned it again.”⁹⁸

October, 1984 - Bābā comes to Vraja for Niyam Sevā, and stays with his elder brother in Śyām Vinodinī Kunj. I ask him why he, like other *sannyāsīs* and *sādhus*, does not renounce his *brāhmaṇa*-thread. Bābā humbly replies: “They are all great *mahātmās*, but we are just simple householders.” While he was a rare case of life-long abstinence!⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Śṛṅgāra* – ornamentation for the image in the temple.

⁹⁸ Narrated by letter to Advaitadās by Krishna Dās, April 10, 2001.

⁹⁹ *bhakti-vārtānabhijñā-buddhiṣu sādharmaṇa-vaidika-karmānuṣṭhāna-lopo'pi mābhūd iti loka-saṅgraha-parāṇām grhasthānām darśitam sandhyopāstyādi-karmāṇi vedenācoditāni me pūjāṁ taiḥ kalpayet samyak-saṅkalpaḥ karma-pāvanīm* – “In order not to untimely destroy the faith in ordinary Vedic fruitive rituals in ordinary people, who are unintelligent and ignorant of pure *bhakti*, the pure devotee *grhasthas* give them the example – as it is said in Śrīmad Bhāgavata (11.27.11) : “Completely satisfied, he should perform my worship, which destroys *karma*, along with performing his various prescribed duties mentioned in the Vedas, such as chanting the Gāyatrī-*mantra* at the three junctures of the day.” (Bhakti Sandarbha, 284)

Penance

My health is very bad, but Bābā denies that health is unimportant for a *sādhaka*, quoting ‘*śarīram ādyam khalu dharma sādhanam* – “The body is certainly the priority when it comes to religious practise.” (Kumāra Sambhava, 5.33)¹⁰⁰

Some of my friends are observing the annual Nirjalā Ekādaśī exactly according to *śāstra* – no grains on the preceding day, no food or drink at all on the Ekādaśī day, no sleep on the following night and again no grains on the following day. I ask Bābā why we don’t do that too. Bābā says: “You see, your brothers and sisters would never be able to render all these services in the Ashram if they would follow such severe vows.” In the ‘Sañkṣipta Nitya Karma Paddhati’ Bābā taught: “For *niskīñcan paramahānsas* (swan-like saints who have nothing in this world) *nirambu* (fasting from both food and water) is the best, but those who are unable to do that can eat substitutes like potatoes, fruits and milk products.¹⁰¹”

Bābā is expert in everything. He even gives me medicinal injections, even on Ekādaśī. One of my Guru-brothers objects, but Bābā says it is alright.¹⁰²

Bābā disapproved of severe penances or dry renunciation. He rhymed: বেটা - খা, পর, ভজন কর - ‘*khā, por, bhajan kor*’ – ‘My child, eat, dress and do *bhajan*.’ However, for a *brahmacārī* living in Vraja Bābā has stern instructions: “If the *sādhus* prod you up, saying: ‘Come on, come on, there is a feast going on over there!’ then you must say with folded hands: ‘My Gurudeva has forbidden me to go to feasts.’ For Niyam Sevā (Kārtik vows) Bābā was again liberal: “Any vow in Niyam Sevā must be connected to the holy name.”

Bābā says he and his brothers each excelled in one of the three attributes of Sītānātha – *bhakti* (devotion), *jñāna* (knowledge), and *vairāgya* (renunciation). His eldest brother in *bhakti*, his middle brother in *jñāna* and he himself in *vairāgya*.

¹⁰⁰ *api kriyārtham sulabham samit-kuśam jalānyapi snāna-vidhi kṣamāṇi te
api sva-śaktyā tapasi vartase śarīram ādyam khalu dharma-sādhanam*

“Are Samit sticks and Kuśa grass required for rituals, easily available? Is the water here suitable for your bathing? Are you practising austerities according to your strength? Because, the human body is the primary means of pursuing Dharma.” - Kumāra sambhava 5.33.

¹⁰¹ The actual list of items includes many items that are only available in Bengal.

¹⁰² *aṣṭaitānya vrata-ghnāni āpo mūlam phalam payaḥ. havir brāhmaṇa kāmya ca guror vacanam auśadham* (Haribhakti Vilāsa 12.40, quoting Mahābhārata Udyoga Parva) “Eight things do not break a vow of fasting - water, roots, fruits, milk, ghee, a *brāhmaṇa*’s desire, the Guru’s words and medicine.”

Early in 1984 Bābā tells a true story of renunciation: “One day a rich man named Lālā Bābu was blissfully reclining on the bank of the Ganges in the late afternoon when he heard a fisherman’s daughter calling her father: “Father, wake up! It’s time! The day is almost over!” Hearing this, Lālā Bābu was struck with the realisation that his life was also slowly coming to an end. At once he left his grand estate and extended family to go to Vṛndāvana and do *bhajan*, to the astonishment of his relatives.”



January, 1984 – One day a guest suggests that one must walk over to the Ganges to take a bath for purification (all residents of Navadvīpa live at the bank of the Ganges), but Bābā disagrees – “All ground- and well-water in a range of 15 miles is Ganges water – thus all of Navadvīp daily takes a Gaṅgā Snāna.”

November, 1984 – Shortly after the assassination of Indirā Gandhi I ask Bābā how it is possible that such a person can rule a holy land like India for so long. Bābā pointedly replied: “In the ancient days there were demoniac rulers like Kamsa too, weren’t there?”¹⁰³

December, 1984 - Bābā sends me a postcard from Navadvīp to Vraja, telling me that in his opinion Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa meet at different places all over Vraja each day.

July, 1985 - Bābā comes to Vraja again, for the holy month of Śrāvana. This turned out to be his last trip to Vraja. He and his elder brother invite me for a feast they will cook themselves for their guests. As Bābā prepares *puṣpānna*, I ask him which *grantha* is the greatest, the Gītā or the Bhāgavata. Bābā says “The Bhāgavata, because that not only contains the whole philosophy, as the Gītā does, but also all the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and all the other *avatāras* as well.” The *prasāda* brings me into a celestial bliss, which lingers on the rest of the day.

I tell Bābā about my experiences with *mauna* at Rādhākuṇḍa. Bābā is very pleased. I ask ‘what if someone comes when I do *mauna* – shall I speak then?’ Bābā: “No one will come. Let Them (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa) come.” This was his last word to me, a final blessing.....

¹⁰³ This is significant in relation to the utopian ideas that many, especially western, devotees, have of the ancient Vedic civilization. Its principles were perfect, but human beings aren’t.

July 20, 1985 — Bābā's last day in Vraja. He goes for *darśana* from Śyāma Vinodinī Kuñja; I ask him 'whose *darśana* will you take, Bābā?' Bābā smiles warmly and says with glistening eyes 'Bihārijī.' He takes a riksha from the Bhajanashram. I want to place my head on the pedestal of the riksha before his feet, so he tells the *rikshawālā* to wait a while. He blesses me by gently placing his hand on my head. Then he rides out of sight and out of my life. This is the last time I ever saw him.....



Bābā's pastime of departure

Gopāl Candra Ghosh: "Nikuñja Prabhu freely took all the suffering of mankind upon himself, he took many people's disease and other suffering, so disease came to him as a result. In the past Ramakrishna Paramahansa said to Girish Candra Ghosh (a follower of his, who was a hopeless drunkard): "Give me all your sins." As a result he got cancer and died. In the same way Nikuñja Gopāl Gosvāmī took all the sins of many people on him - I have heard this and I know it for sure. He lifted many people upon the road to elevation and took their ailments upon him; thus disease also came to him. His father Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī never did this - he blessed his followers and told them to offer obeisances and get purified through the practise of *bhajan*. Nikuñja Gopāl Gosvāmī, however, vowed to take the people's sins upon himself. Although he suffered so much as a result, he was always happy and satisfied."

Nirañjan Prasad Dās: "Bābā said that his physical disappearance meant he would remain present, be it veiled by a curtain. Despite severe pains he reclined on his death bed in ecstasy. Very expert doctors would come and Bābā told them: "What are you doing? Whom are you treating?" He had no idea that he was in his material body. The doctor said: "Bābā, you treat yourself - we cannot understand your condition." Coming outside, they asked us: "What is he, a *yogī* or so?" A *yogī* he was, for sure. He went in full consciousness, laughing and speaking."

"On the last full day of Bābā's life Kishori Dās and I were standing by as Bābā said: "Hey! You know what this place is? This is a crematorium (a place where Lord Shiva resides)! This is a crematorium! You know where I'm going? I'm going over there! (Points at Madangopāl's Mandir) I came to this world to give, not to take

anything. Don't tell anybody that I'm here, don't mention my name to anyone. Keep me in mind, that's all." Bhaktas: "Bābā, we have your picture here....." Bābā: "O boy, what will a picture do?" On that final day he said: "Hey Kishori! You recognise a Guru? You know who I am? I am not born, I do not die! Ask your Gurudeva (Śrīla Ānanda Gopāl Gosvāmī) how he has gotten me. The manuals people check before they give *mantra*, what day they give it – I don't care about all that. For me Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians are all one. You know where I dwell? This is a crematorium, a crematorium! Dig in the ground and you will find skeletons."

Golok Ghosh: "Bābā left on his own timing, by his own free will. He said: "I have 72 hours left. I will go in 72 hours." And in 72 hours he indeed went....."

As a result of liver cancer, Bābā entered into the eternal pastimes of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Madangopāl on Monday, October 20, 1986, at 7.30 a.m. amidst disciples who were performing *kīrtan*.

Bābā was cremated on sandal wood at the Ganga Ghāt - 7,000 people attended. In his diary a note was found: "I don't want to take my next birth as a *brāhmaṇa* anymore. I want to be born as a Vrajavāsī in the village of Pucchari (a tiny village halfway the Govardhan Parikrama)."

Kṛṣṇā Dās: "Although Bābā said before his departure: "I have no birth or death, you need not perform final rites for me", still we followed the social custom of *antyeṣṭi* and someone was found to perform it. Half of Bābā's ashes were strewn in the Gangā, the other half by me, one year later, in the Yamunā."

No one will occupy Sādhu Bābā's *uttamāsana* (*vyāsāsana*) after his departure. Before his departure he told Krishna Dās: "You will give *mantra* on my behalf, but you will not become Guru. Only I will be the Guru, and when you depart I will point out the next mediator who will pass down my *mantra* on my behalf." Thus Sādhu Bābā's legacy is safeguarded.

Thus ends the hagiography of Sādhu Bābā Nikuñja Gopāl Gosvāmī. Compiled by Advaitadās 2003-2015. All accounts by eye-witnesses stand independently from each other.



বাবার আশীর্বাণী

Bābā's blessings on the world

সবাইকে বলবে - "তোমাদের মনের মত হয়ে আমরা চলিব না - আমাদের মনের মত হয়ে চলিতে পার তবে এখানে এস"

Bābā said: "Tell everybody – "We will not follow your opinion; but if you can follow our opinion then you are welcome here."

“যেখানে যাও বা থাকো না কেন, আমাকে মনে রাখিলে তোমার সর্ব সিদ্ধি পাওয়া যাবে“

“Wherever you go or stay, if you keep me in mind you will reach all perfection.”

Nīla Ratan Dās: "In many temples in Navadvīp one is not allowed to see the deities without giving a donation, but Bābā would not only give free darshan, he would also seat all the poor folks and feed them. He loved them as if they were his own children."

Advaitadās: "Though many orthodox sādhus believe that only a born Indian Hindu can attain perfection in this lifetime, when I ask Bābā if I can also attain Kṛṣṇa, he exclaims: এক শো বার "You bet!"

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: If you can believe Bābā's words তবে অমৃত লাভ হবে - You will attain amṛta (immortality or nectar)."

মা ভৈ – mā bhoi - "Do not fear" – Bābā's blessings to householders who have no time for bhajan, yet are surrendered to him.

Satinātha Dā: "When I approached Bābā for some words when I was troubled, Bābā told me that my problems are like being in a room with a thin veil separating me from the other side of the room, and when the beneficial wind blows the veil away I can then go to the side I was previously unable to reach. It is like this: all things will come to pass."

Bābā (quotes the Bengali saying) জলে কুমীর ডাঙ্গায় বাঘ - jole kumir dāngāy bāgh - "In the water are crocodiles, on the land tigers" (Scylla and Charybdis - the

material world is either the fire or the frying pan) – Where will you go for shelter?
I am here, I will remain here – seek my shelter!”

Bābā has always said that his presence will always be felt in the *ashram*.

