

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH
NIRAÑJAN PRASĀD DĀS (1912-2008)

Initiated disciple of Śrī Nikuñja Gopāl Gosvāmī.

(His words are wholly representative of Sādhu Bābā's teachings)



Based on exchanges of letters and personal meetings with Advaita Dās

dui jane nīlācale rahibo ek sange, sukhe gowāibo kṛṣṇa-kothā range (CC)
ei dhvani nayana jhoruk anādi kāla

“You and I will stay together in Nīlācala
and blissfully spend the time speaking of Kṛṣṇa.”

May tears flow from my eyes forever at these divine sounds...

[From Advaita Dās' diary, about the first encounter with Nirañjan Prasād Das at Sādhu Bābā's Āshram]

November 27, 1982 — An elderly gentleman, wearing a neat white *dhoti*, shyly enters into my room. He speaks English. He is a teacher in the neighborhood and is deeply impressed that Bābā has accepted a Western *śiṣya*. He is charmed and interested. With his extraordinary friendliness and modesty he wins my confidence. He is the father of Kṛṣṇā, Bābā's first disciple. His name is Nirañjan Bābu. The first thing he tells me is: "You are very fortunate — that you have taken shelter of Bābā."

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GURU ISSUES

Advaita Dās: “Is Guru-sevā greater than *mālā japa*?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Both should be done, but Guru-sevā is greater. Don’t mind if I say this, but all this (your) knowledge is useless without Guru. Guru is *anugraha śakti*, *krpā śakti* (the power of compassion). (When you come to the pearly gates) Bhagavān will ask Bābā: 'Who is this?' and Bābā will say: 'This is my son'. He is the witness. Then you will be admitted. Otherwise not – who would recognise and accept you? If You have no Guru the Lord will stop you at the gate – “No Guru? No admission. Get out – who are you?” গুরু যাই বলেছেন তাই সব – What Guru has said, that is all. Otherwise you will fall down. Meditation on the Guru leads beyond the material modes - *satyaṁ śivaṁ sundaram*.”

On another occasion Nirañjan Bābu called the Guru রাষ্ট্রদূত (the Lord’s) ambassador.

- conversation October 2003

Advaita Dās: “It is said that once Śrī Rādhārāṇī gave Her *prasādi tāmbūla* to a disciple of Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī on Harivāsara day (*ekādaśī*). While chewing these betel-leaves he came to see Śrī Gurudeva, who rejected his disciple for eating *pān* on *ekādaśī*. Śrī Rādhārāṇī then asked Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī - "Is the law of the Gosvāmīs’ books even higher than Her grace?" Śrīpāda replied to Śrī Rādhārāṇī's lotus feet that Her natural mercy can never come in violation of *sadācāra* (regulative principles). He had rejected his disciple, knowing for sure that some test (of Rādhārāṇī) was hidden in the event. Śrī Rādhārāṇī replied: "I understood that you have become qualified as a genuine *ācārya*!" What is your opinion on this story?

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: So true this is! The order of Śrī Guru overrides all else and is truly the perfection of following the scriptures! Śrī Gurudeva is the all-auspicious *ācārya*. Look in Bhagavad Gītā (2.7): *śiṣyas te'ham śādhi mām tvām prapannam* - “I am Your disciple, instruct me – I am surrendered unto You!” This story fires up the powerful heart of a loyal disciple. Just see how great the glories of Guru are – Gopāl Bhaṭṭajī said even to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī – “Who are You? This is my disciple!”

- Letter, November 1997 and personal conversation October 2003

Advaita Dās: “Guru seems to be prominent in the statement *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* (Mahābhārata) “The path is that which the great souls have tread” (*śrutayo vibhinna* – “Scriptures say different things”) while the Bhagavad Gītā (ch. 16) again exalts the importance of scripture.” Whom should we follow?

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: *śāstra pramāṇa śirodhārya* – We carry the authority of scripture on our heads. We can make mistakes but the scriptures’ authority is flawless. Bābā also said wholeheartedly:

*tasmācchāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te kāryākārya vyavasthitau.
jñātvā śāstra-vidhānoktaṁ karma kartum ihārhasi*

“Therefore the scriptures decide what is to be done and what is not to be done. When one knows the rules of scripture one should act accordingly.” (Bhagavad Gītā 16.24)

If there is any doubt then ‘*mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*’ – follow the path of the saints. Now Bābā is *aprakāṭa* (unmanifest, deceased); when he was alive it is regretted that we were not fortunate enough to ask him many things. Now the many difficult problems and issues must be *dhyāna-sanniviṣṭa mane cintanīya* (deliberated with a mind absorbed in meditation) and are *antaryāmī guru-sāpekṣa* (dependent on the Guru within the heart).”

- Letter, May 25, 1996

Advaita Dās: In his commentary on Vilāpa Kusumāñjali, verse 58, Śrīla Ānanda Gopāla Gosvāmī said : “Whether *bhakti* is pleased with him or not, the devotee does not aim at that.” What does that mean?” Does it mean: “I will practise

whatever *upāsanā* my Guru has given me, whether it brings me perfection or not or whether it brings me *bhakti* or not?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: Yes. Such firm determination and *naiṣṭhika bhajana* will certainly invoke the mercy of the Lord.”

- Letter August 22, 2000

Advaita Dās: “It is often said that the Guru must come back again and again until all his disciples are liberated. What about this?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: 'The Guru comes back again and again, but only for the obedient disciple. He takes the disciple's *karma* at the time of *dīkṣā*, but not the sins committed after *dīkṣā*.”

Advaita Dās: “What about committing sin deliberately after *dīkṣā*?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: 'That should not be done. It is improper.’”

“Guru is the gateway to attain complete perfection in devotion, the basic philosophy of the scriptures is *bhaktir eva enam nayati bhaktir eva enam darśayati ca* – “Devotion only brings Him into reach, devotion only reveals Him.”

- Letter, November 20, 2000

“I was not a young man when I met the *sat*-Guru – When I was 60 years old I had this amazing vision – I saw the Guru - Guru, Guru. Whatever I had heard before that was at once erased. I erased everything. He pulled me to his lap – behold the vision of the Guru! After hearing Bābā’s lectures I gave up listening to all other lecturers.”

“To remember the Guru – that is human life. I have not seen Bhagavān – how will I remember Him? I have never seen Him, but I have got (seen) my Gurudeva.”

“Will I see the Yamunā, or the twelve forests? Can I do a 84 Krosh Vraja Parikramā without Gurudeva? If I would leave the footsoles of Guru and go to see Vṛndāvana I will not see or hear anything. If the Guru takes me by the hand I will see, otherwise I will not go. But I will not go there by leaving the Guru. Who (else) will show me? First the Guru must go there to show me, otherwise how will I go there?”

“My rare human life should be a success after getting the mercy of the lotus-feet of such a compassionate genuine Guru, who is a tangible form of Sadāśiva, a life-long *brahmacārī*, of whose arch-father Śrīman Mahāprabhu loudly told the whole world ‘*nāḍhār hunkāre more ei avatāra*’ – I descended to earth only because Advaita called Me.” The scriptures say *naratvaṁ durlabhaṁ loke* – “In this world a human birth is truly rare.” One is very fortunate to get it. Such a chance comes but once, and if it is lost, it is lost for-ever. This is frightening me. Lord forgive me and give me shelter at Your divine feet – this is my prayer.”

- Letter, July 25, 2002

Advaita Dās: “The third offence to the chanting of the holy name is *guror avajāna*, disrespecting or disregarding the Guru. Does that mean that doing *japa* or *harināma* without taking that holy name first from the Guru is also an offence to the chanting of the holy name?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Disregarding or disrespecting the Guru is a great offence to the chanting of the holy name. If you want to get the holy name from Śrī Gurudeva then where else will you get it from? It has to be received from the Guru, otherwise it will be fruitless. The scriptures say: *āśraya loiyā bhaje tāre kṛṣṇa nāhi tyaje, āśraṁ mora akāraṇa* – “Those who do *bhajan* after taking shelter (initiation) do not give up Kṛṣṇa. All else is useless to me.” Dhruva and Prahlāda also first accepted a Guru before they took to the Lord’s holy name. After this they had Kṛṣṇa’s *darśana*. This is the foremost motto – *guroḥ kṛpā hi kevalam*: The grace of the Guru is all. Scriptures say: *kṛṣṇa ruṣṭa hole guru rākhibāre pare, guru ruṣṭa hole kṛṣṇa rākhibāre nāre* – ‘When Kṛṣṇa is angry with you the Guru can protect you, but when the Guru is angry with you no-one can protect you.’”

- Letter, June 30, 2001

When I wrote Nirañjan Bābu about my misgivings about preaching Bābā’s glories, quoting a warning by Kavi Karnapūra in this regard, Nirañjan Bābu wrote back:

“I became ecstatic by learning that you will preach Bābā’s glories and are already engaged thus. Why do you consider scriptural statements such as *guror nāma na grhṇiyāt* (“One should not utter the Guru’s name”)? There will be no fault in this, because you are not doing this for spreading your own fame – this is for the benefit of all living beings, for the whole world. Indeed, you will benefit yourself to the utmost

too by preaching the glories of a saint!”¹

- Letter, November 12, 2002

Advaita Dās: In the Guru-meditation that Bābā gave us in his Concise Manual (Saṅkṣipta Paddhatī), what does the line ‘*vāmenotpala-dhāriṇyā śaktyālingita vighram*’ mean? In other words, who is the *śakti* that embraces his form, holding a lotus in the left hand?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “This is the awakened *kula-kuṇḍalinī śakti* that is born from Śrī Gurudeva’s divine body. Whoever has this transcendental power is a pure, genuine Guru (*sat guru*).”

Letter, July 25, 1996

“Although Bābā has physically left the path of our eyes, as soon as one enters his ashram the trees, vines, the sky, the wind, the specks of dust, the Bilva-tree (under which Bābā delivered his sermons), the courtyard and each Kṛṣṇacūḍā-flower (a reddish flower growing in the ashram) silently bear witness that Bābā is in his hut – his glance is there and his divine words (*vāṇī*) echoes over the yard. Sometimes he is Shiva and sometimes he is Rudra, that is his nature. With one hand he punishes and with the other he fondles and cuddles, drowning the individual in a pool of nectar. Such love as his cannot be found anywhere and cannot be forgotten. The life of anyone who is so fortunate to be touched by him will be blessed. Bābā has also lovingly told you “I live with thee.”

-Letter, October 21, 1999

Advaita Dās: “About pilgrimage, (Narottama Dās) Thākura Mahāśay has sung: *tīrtha yātrā pariśrama, kevala monera bhrama, sarva siddhi govinda caraṇa* – “The great efforts of pilgrimage are only a delusion of the mind. All perfection lies at Govinda’s lotus-feet.”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Pilgrimage is not bad, forgetting Kṛṣṇa is bad. You may perform pilgrimage and get honoured for it, but keep your mind fixed on Kṛṣṇa. When

¹ Śrīla Narottam Dās Ṭhākura Mahāśay sings about the Guru: *ebe yaśa ghuṣuk tribhuvana* – “Now let all the three worlds proclaim your fame!”

the key is lost, the contents of the whole box is lost, similarly when Kṛṣṇa is lost, all is lost. Although Bābā expired, he is hearing all. Also now.”

Advaita Dās: To console Nirañjan Bābu I write him the song: *vṛndāvane jābi jadi, guru bhajo nirabadhi go* – ‘If you go to Vṛndāvana, then worship the Guru non-stop’.

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “It is exactly so.”

- Conversation, Navadvīpa, October 2003

Advaita Dās: “Who is greater: Śrīla Ānanda Gopāla Gosvāmī or Bābā (his son)?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “There is no difference between them”. (Just then a very old widow passed by and mumbled: নন্দ মহারাজ বড় না কৃষ্ণ বড় ? (“Who is greater? Nanda Mahārāja or Kṛṣṇa?”))

- Conversation, Navadvīpa, October 2003

Advaita Dās: I once sent a color photo of Bābā to the ashram, and apologised that his face was developed too light. Nirañjan Babu however, blissfully tells me that the picture was not too light at all - it is right — **All White!** It is the Giriśa complexion! The complexion of Śiva!²

“(Considering how central Advaita Prabhu was to Bābā) See how much he loved you by giving you the name ‘Advaita!’”

“A-dvaita (your name) means ‘there is no other’. (If you think like this) he will come down into your heart. He must come down in your heart.”

- Conversation, Navadvīpa, October 2003



² *karpūra gauram tridṛṣam digambaram* (Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta 2.3.50) “Naked three-eyed Shiva is of camphor-gaura complexion (*gaura* means not just gold but also white)” *bhasmāvaguṇṭhāmala rukma-deho* ‘Shiva’s immaculate body is covered with ashes and is golden’ (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 3.14.25)

GAURA TATTVA

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Gaura is Kṛṣṇa, who experiences separation from Kṛṣṇa. This is the *svarūpa* (real form) of Gaura. Kṛṣṇa wants the full relish of love of Himself, He wants to experience separation from Himself and He wants to meet Himself. During His pastimes in Dvāpara-yuga, three desires of Him remained unfulfilled -

*śrī-rādhāyāḥ praṇaya-mahimā kīdṛśo vānayaivā-
svādyo yenādbhuta-madhurimā kīdṛśo vā madīyaḥ
saukhyam cāsyā mad-anubhavataḥ kīdṛśam veti lobhāt
tad-bhāvāḍhyaḥ samajani śacī-garbha-sindhau harīnduh* (CC.A.1.6)

1. Realising the greatness of the relish of Rādhā’s love as She suffers separation from Him. 2. Realising His own sweetness during such experiences of separation. 3. Realising how much happiness Rādhā feels when She experiences separation from Kṛṣṇa (*saukhyam cāsyāḥ mad anubhavataḥ kīdṛśam veti lobhāt*). In this connection Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja Gosvāmī has written in Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Ādi 4.103):

*ei mata pūrve kṛṣṇa rasera sadana;
yadyapi korilo rasa niryāsa carvana;
tathāpi nohilo tin vānchita pūran.*

“Although Kṛṣṇa, the abode of divine *rasa*, previously tried to extract this *rasa* and relish it, still He could not fulfil these three sacred desires.” Although Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of divine flavours (*akhila rasāmṛta mūrti*, BRS 1.1.1), He was unable to fulfil these three blessed desires – this was the main reason why He descended as Śrī Gaurāṅga. So to relish the sweetness of Rādhā’s love, the sweetness of His own form and the sweetness of Rādhā’s joy when She experiences Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepted Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s *mādanākhyā mahā-bhāva* and became Gaura. The only means He found to relish His utmost sweetness was (taking shelter of) this *mādanākhyā mahā-bhāva*, and no one else but Śrīmatī Rādhikā has it.. Hence Śrī Kṛṣṇa said: *ei prema dvārā nitya rādhikā ekali; āmār mādhyamṛta āsvāde sakali* (CC Ādi 4,139) “Only through this love of Rādhikā, that She alone has eternally, I can relish the full nectar of My own sweetness.” Again, Mahāprabhu laments in Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Antya 15, 65):

*koho sakhi! ki kori upāy?
kṛṣṇādbhuta bolāhok, more netra cātak,
na dekhi piyāse mori jāy*

Clasping Rāmānanda Rāya around the neck, Prabhu, absorbed in Rādhā's feelings, said: "O my girlfriend! What can I do? Kṛṣṇa is a wonderful rain-cloud and My eyes are like Cātaka birds (that can only subsist on rain-water)! If I don't see Him I will die of thirst! Tell Me O sakhi, how to attain Kṛṣṇa!"

How strong was Lord's eagerness, as He reached the limit of His feelings of separation from Kṛṣṇa, absorbed in Rādhā's feelings! How strong was Kṛṣṇa's desire to meet Himself! How mad He went over this! How wonderful are His pastimes – we must drown in the nectar-ocean of these pastimes. Nevertheless, we must stay aware of the philosophical truth, for that is the foundation of these pastimes. Gaura Līlā and Govinda Līlā are one – Kṛṣṇa Līlā. It is one Līlā with two currents. We must remember, after all – *ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa tanaya* "Our worshipable Lord is Kṛṣṇa in Vraja."

*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Yaśodā, has appeared as Gaura in Nadiya district in Bengal. But reversely, Gaura does not become Kṛṣṇa! Milk can turn into yoghurt, but yoghurt cannot become milk again. Gaura is not to be seen as separate – it is Kṛṣṇa that makes Gaura. *gaurībhūya hariḥ svayam vitanute rādhā padābja ratiḥ* (Caitanya Candrāmṛta 135) "Hari has Himself become golden. He who was not Gaura previously, but has now become Gaura, distributes love for Rādhā's lotus-feet (*manjari bhāva*).” Śrīla Kṛṣṇa dās Kavirāja (quoting Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī) has offered this blessing in the opening of his Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta:

*anarpita carim cirāt karuṇayā avatīrṇa kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala rasa sva bhakti śriyam
hariḥ puraṭa sundara dyuti kadamba sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya kandare sphuratu vaḥ śaci-nandanaḥ*

Śrī Hari has become Gaura – why? To bestow His mercy upon the fallen souls of the age of Kali by giving the bliss of devotion to Himself to them, teaching them *rāgānugā bhajan* and bestowing love for Śrī Rādhā upon them. (To prove that Mahāprabhu is not an equal merger of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa) The authors of the *sāstras* have

repeated again and again: *antar kṛṣṇa bahir gauram sangopāngāstra pārṣadam*. Just see, He is Kṛṣṇa (black) internally, but Gaura (golden) externally. And then there is this verse by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

*apāram kasyāpi pranayi jana vṛndasya kutukī
rasa-stomam hṛtvā madhuram upabhoktum kam api yaḥ
rucam svām āvare dyutim iha tadīyām prakatayan
sadaivaś caitanyākṛtir atitarām naḥ kṛpayatu*

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa was curious about the limitless and indescribable *madhura rasa* of one of His beloveds (Rādhā), so in order to relish it He took Her luster and covered His own black complexion with it. May this Caitanya-deva bestow His mercy upon us.” (Caitanyāṣṭakam)

And there is this definition of Gaura in Śrī Raghunāth Dās Gosvāmī’s Stavāvalī:

*harir drṣṭvā goṣṭhe mukura gatam ātmānam atulaṁ
sva mādhyamāṁ rādhā priyatara sakhivāptum abhitam
aho gauḍe jātam prabhur apara gauraika tanu bhāk
śacī sūnuḥ kiṁ me nayana śaraṇām yāsyati punaḥ*

“Aho! Will that Hari, who took birth in Bengal in another, golden form as the son of mother Śacī after seeing His own incomparable sweetness in a mirror in Vraja and becoming greedy to relish that sweetness just like His dearest girlfriend Rādhā, cross the path of my eyes again?” (Caitanyāṣṭakam – 1) The commentators explain that *gauraika tanu bhāk* means ‘possessed of a golden complexion’, not that He assumes the form of Rādhā.

*rādhā kṛṣṇa-praṇaya-vikṛtir hlādinī śaktir asmād
ekātmānāv api bhuvī purā deha-bhedam gatau tau
caitanyākhyam prakatam adhunā tad-dvayam caikyam āptam
rādhā-bhāva-dyuti-subalitam naumi kṛṣṇa-svarūpam*

"The transformations of love between Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are manifestations of the *hlādinī-śakti*. These two, although one soul, have manifested in this world in separate forms since ancient times. He, who is known as Caitanya, has

now manifest as Their union. Obeisances to Him, who is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, beautifully endowed with the feelings and lustre of Śrī Rādhā!" Here Svarūp Dāmodar Gosvāmī offers his obeisances to Gaura's svarūpa. *hlādinī śaktir asmād – deha bhedaṁ gatau tau* – two figures have now become one – *caitanyaḥkhyāṁ prakatam adhunā tad dvayaṁ caikyam āptam* – “two have become one with the name of Caitanya.” *rādhā bhāva dyuti subalitāṁ caitanyaḥkhyāṁ prakatam adhunā aikyam āptam*. One may ask here – “from this verse it appears that there is a *milita tanu* (merged form of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa) after all!” But Svarūpa Dāmodar cautions here – *rādhā-bhāva dyuti subalitāṁ – aikyam āptam*. How have They become one then? By accepting what? By Kṛṣṇa accepting (*subalitam*) the feelings and complexion of Rādhā. *naumi kṛṣṇa svarūpaṁ* – to that Kṛṣṇa, who became Gaura, I offer my obeisances. What does the word *aikya* mean here? The words *aikya* and *eka* are not the same. *eka* means ‘one’ and *aikya* means ‘one-ness’. Kṛṣṇa has not physically merged with Rādhā, only with Her feelings. *rādhā bhāva dyuti subalitāṁ* – He has become one with Her feelings and complexion only. *aikya* here means the same feeling. Not that they have merged. America and Russia may have the same opinion, but that doesn't mean they became one country. In principle Gaura is Kṛṣṇa – *kṛṣṇa svarūpaṁ*. Now what about *milita tanu*? *tanu* means body, but there is no bodily merger here, only acceptance of Rādhā's feelings and complexion. The Yugala, or Divine Couple, is another manifestation, that only exists in Vraja. It is They whom we are worshipping, the *mantra* of Vṛndāvana, but as far as Gaura is concerned, that one-ness is the one-ness of feeling. Unless that is there, how could Kṛṣṇa relish Rādhā-bhāva? He will relish it by accepting Her feelings, not by accepting Her body! If there were two bodies it would have been *Kṛṣṇa-lilā*. Are there also two bodies in Gaura-lilā or so? The commentary runs as follows: *kīdrk kṛṣṇa svarūpaṁ rādhāyāḥ bhāvaśca dyutiśca tābhyāṁ subalitāṁ yuktāṁ antar kṛṣṇa bahir gaurāṁ iti yāvat bhāva dyuti subalitātīvād aikyatvenotprekṣya* – “How is Gaura Kṛṣṇa-svarūpa? He is endowed (*subalita*) with Rādhā's feelings and glow, as the scriptures say: “Internally He is Kṛṣṇa, externally He is Gaura (golden).” Thus the one-ness described here is a mere *utprekṣya*, a figure of speech akin to simile and sustained metaphor in which it seems as if one thing has been transported to another, a comparison introduced by ‘as if’, ‘as though.’” The poets used this *utprekṣā* metaphor, like ‘Her face is like the moon.’ The face is not **really** the moon! So it is **as if** Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa became one. How beautiful this form is! It is never ever a *milita tanu*, merged body. The commentary makes clear that Rasarāja Śrī Kṛṣṇa is so deeply absorbed in Śrīmatī's feelings that it looks **as if** He became

endowed with Her. Hence this poetic metaphor called *utprekṣyā* was used with the words *aikyam āptam*. When the scriptures say *rasa-rāja mahābhāva dui ek rūpa* (Rāmānanda Rāy saw Rasarāja Kṛṣṇa and Mahā-bhāva Rādhā together in one form, CC Madhya 8) this is most certainly a oneness of feelings, not a physical oneness. If Kṛṣṇa had merged with Rādhā then from whom would Gaura feel separation? *rasa-rāja mahābhāva dui ek rūpa* means the desire to understand, ‘What is Rādhā’s love like? *kīdrśa prāṇaya mahimā*? How could Kṛṣṇa understand how much Rādhā loves Him? What is there in Me that She loves so much? *madīya saukhyam cāsyā* – if They are physically merged, then why would Gaura shed tears of separation? Separation from whom? What would be missing then? When will one lament ‘Alas! alas!’?

rasa-rāja mahābhāva dui ek rūpa – Here ‘*mahā-bhāva*’ means ‘endowed with *mahā-bhāva*’. He knows it is sweet, but He has not tasted it yet. Unless Kṛṣṇa relishes Himself He cannot understand Himself. Sweetness does not know its own taste!”

Does a man know how to weep? No, girls cry. A woman’s heart has feeling like no man’s heart has. Hence Kṛṣṇa accepted Rādhā’s feelings. It is like a lake of nectar in which Gaura floats!

Whose *bhajan* are we doing? We are doing *mālā bhajan* (chanting rounds), Gurudeva has given this to us, he told us to chant the holy name – did he tell you to do *japa* of *gaura gaura gaura* or so? Gaur Himself was chanting Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!

Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Hey!
Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Hey!
Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! rakṣa mām
Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! pāhi mām
Rāma Rāghava! Rāma Rāghava! Rāma Rāghava! rakṣa mām
Rāma Rāghava! Rāma Rāghava! Rāma Rāghava! pāhi mām

Tears flowed from His eyes when He said ‘Kṛṣṇa!’ Kṛṣṇa has come to worship *mahā-bhāva*. Who is Rādhā? *kṛṣṇa prāṇaya vikṛtir hlādinī śaktiḥ* – She embodies love for Kṛṣṇa and is His pleasure potency. She is the compact condition of love for Kṛṣṇa – Gaura wants to stir it to make it thicker and thicker. Bābā’s foremost teaching is that wherever there is separation there can be no meeting, wherever there is meeting there can be no separation, and if there is no separation there is no *prema*. Separation is the essence of *prema*. In *pūrva rāga* (the stage of love before actually meeting Kṛṣṇa) Rādhā chants ‘Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!’ She feels separation – where is there any question of

meeting? The pastimes of separation from Kṛṣṇa – that is Gaura-līlā! When the meeting has taken place there is no question of separation. Rāmānanda Rāy has clearly said to Mahāprabhu: *rādhār bhāva kānti kori angikāra; nija rasa āsvādite koriyācho avatāra* (CC Madhya 8.278) “Accepting the feelings and glow of Rādhā, You have descended to relish Your own flavours.” Mahāprabhu replied to this: *gaura aṅga nohe more – rādhāṅga sparśana...* “This golden body is not Mine – it was touched by Rādhā’s body (hence it became gold, but I am actually Kṛṣṇa).” *tār bhāve bhāvita kori ātma mon; tabe nija mādhyura kori āsvādan* (CC Madhya 8.287) “My body and mind are illuminated by Her (Rādhā’s) *bhāva*, and thus I taste my own sweetness.”

Why did not Mahāprabhu assume His real [Kṛṣṇa] complexion when He descended? Because people would recognise Him and His duties would have been obstructed by that.” *smāraṁ smāraṁ muhus tad vrajam anucalitaṁ bhāva sindhāvagahya* – “Constantly recollecting Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes He dove into the ocean of Vraja-feelings.” Kṛṣṇa is thinking of Kṛṣṇa – where is Gaura here then? Kṛṣṇa has come to dive into the ocean of His own ecstatic love. He was only named Gaura. Why? It is actually Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa cannot forget Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has come to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. In Vṛndāvana, on the bank of Yamunā He tells His comrade Subala: “Sing, sing O friend Subal! Sing again that sweet name! Sing! Sing! Sing that sweet name again! I will sing that name with My flute – you just sing! I will do *japa* of that sweetest name on My *japa mālā* – sing, sing, sing! What will he sing? Rādhe Rādhe! What will Gaura sing? ‘Kṛṣṇa!’ How much bliss is there in Kṛṣṇa’s name! Kṛṣṇa has drowned in the Rādhā-ocean. To drink this reviving elixir Kṛṣṇa has taken the name Gaura and – Aha! Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes are unforgettable! So Kṛṣṇa has come again, now to Navadvīpa, going mad over His own name ‘Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!’ He is doing *japa* of His own name. How amazing! Kṛṣṇa is saying ‘Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!’ How amazing! What a sweet pastime! What a wonderful music! What a wonderful worship! When this worship is realised one goes mad, crazy!”

“How confidential Gaura līlā is! It seems that Gaura is one person and Kṛṣṇa another, but what is the actual fact? Here is Gaura, there is Kṛṣṇa? Why? They are one and the same! Kṛṣṇa is crying in ecstasy when He chants His own name! He jumps into the ocean for this!”

Advaita Dās: In his commentary on Vilāpa Kusumāñjali (59), Śrīla Ānanda Gopāla Gosvāmī has said “It is not clear if Kṛṣṇa could fully grasp it when He came as Gaura. He will relish it forever and ever – otherwise Gaura līlā would not be eternal.”

Does that mean that Gaura will continue to seek the borders of Rādhā's *prema*, because there is no limit to that *mahā-bhāva*? If that is so, then why did Prabhu Sītānātha end Gaur-līlā by sending Mahāprabhu the riddle? If you say that Gaura's body could no longer tolerate the pain of separation from Kṛṣṇa anymore, so Sītānātha encouraged Him to end His pastimes, then that is it, the ultimate condition of Gaura-līlā? If Gaura did reach the limit of His pastimes, then could He gain anything further in a *nitya līlā* beyond the manifest pastimes? It had already become intolerable in the end anyway, hadn't it?"

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Original Supreme Lord, had a strong desire to understand the glories of Rādhā's love for Him. But how could He gauge that? Hence He became Gaura, with a strong desire to keep Rādhā's loving feelings within His heart. Although the desire was so strong He could not understand it even by becoming Gaura. Is there any vessel big enough to contain enough milk for a tiger to drink? No vessel can contain that! Such a vessel would certainly burst or explode! That is what happened to Gaurasundara. He sought for the limit of the ocean of Rādhā's *prema*, but could not find it. He was merely swimming in an ocean of feelings of love-in-separation. Sometimes He floated, sometimes He submerged. His heart burned in a slow fire of love-in-separation. This nectar of *prema* is an unbearable substance – it is like chewing hot sugar-cane (*tapta ikṣu carvana*), a mixture of poison and nectar, too hot to consume and too sweet to resist. Weeping and laughing are the ingredients of this mixture, but that ultimately led to exhaustion. But who would understand that? He who should understand was lost (in His own feelings). Meanwhile we see Gaura suffering intolerable pain. He was fixed in His *anurāga* (constant feelings of ecstatic love), so when He saw the Lord of His life in the (Jagannātha-) temple He could not stop His tears from flowing, He did not care about the dyke of His pain of love-in-separation – how much more could He tolerate?”

garuḍa stambha tale, āche ek nimna khāle;
se khāl bhorilo aśru jale (CC)

‘At the base of the Garuda Pillar within the Jagannātha Temple was a drain – that drain was filled with His tears.’ The ingredients of His love-in-separation were weeping and laughing. When feelings of separation are felt, divine visions are attained. The heart is touched – *jāhā jāhā netra pore tāhā kṛṣṇa sphure* (CC) “Wherever

the eyes go they perceive Kṛṣṇa.” Everywhere in the creation He is seen – on the land, in the water, in the sky. But unfortunately, whenever Gaura stretched out His hand to grasp Kṛṣṇa, He fled away! He could not catch Him! He jumped into the ocean, thinking it to be the Yamunā-river in Vṛndāvana, but He could not catch Kṛṣṇa there either! He was floating and submerging in the Yamunā. He could not cross that ocean to catch Him. The Supreme Lord Himself dressed like a devotee to understand the glories of Rādhā’s love for Him. Certainly *prema* will be understood when feelings of love-in-separation arise. *Prema* does not thrive unless there are feelings of love-in-separation. The nectar-ocean of Rādhā-*prema* goes on forever, why be afraid to enter it? There is no death there, no need to fear death in there – nectar bestows immortality (*a* = not, and *mṛta* = death) *makṣikā-o gole nā go porile amṛta hrade* – “Even a fly does not die when it falls in a lake of *a-mṛta* (nectar or immortality).” So, love-in-separation is the very life of *prema*. Hence separation is what we covet – it is eternally relishable. Still, how much longer could Gaura suffer the pangs of love-in-separation? How long His beloved devotees would have had to see Him suffering like that? Sītānātha, the *purohita* (priest or director) of Gaura-līlā felt great pain to see this; He could not tolerate this going on in front of His eyes anymore. There was no other option left to Him than to send the Lord out of the ocean of His manifest pastimes, away from the pathway of our eyes, by sending Him the riddle (*bāul-ke kohio*). Where will He go? To an unmanifest great ocean of *mahā-bhāva*. How many more ages will He float around there? Who knows? Oh when will the Lord of blessings be pleased with me? He is intrinsically Self-satisfied – when will this Self-satisfied Lord lose Himself, being greatly attracted to the love of Rādhā, and offer Himself again to Her as a beggar, praying for Her love with folded hands and tear-filled eyes – *dehi pada pallavam udāram* (Gīta Govinda) “Give me Your generous lotus-feet.” On that day He will collect His prize, His reward for suffering this intolerable pain of love-in-separation. The victory-flag of Rādhā’s *prema* will fly in the sky forever, and eternally people will sing:

*yadi gaura nā hoto, ki mene hoto
kemone dhoritām de?
rādhār mahimā, prema rasa sīmā,
jagate jānāto ke?*

“If Gaura had not been, how would life be now?”

Who could have shown the world the limit of the glories of Rādhā's *prema-rasa*?"

- Letter, November 3, 1998

“Rādhā is naturally the *āśraya* (shelter, giver) of *prema* and Kṛṣṇa is naturally the *viṣaya* or object of love. *kā kṛṣṇasya praṇaya janibhū? śrīmatī rādhikaikā* (Govinda Līlāmṛta) “Who is the birth place of love for Kṛṣṇa? It is Śrīmatī Rādhikā only.” But now, in Navadvīpa-līlā, this object of love has become the shelter, the giver of love. Thus Gaura got to carry an unnaturally heavy burden of love! On the other hand, in their songs the Mahājanas depict Rādhārāṇī's sorrow as follows: *eteko sohilo abalā bole; phāṭiyā jāito pāṣāṇ hole* “She could tolerate that much as a woman – if She had been a stone He would have burst!” But then this hope is given: *makṣikā-o gole nā go porile amṛta hrade* – A bee-like devotee will not die by drowning in this lake, because it is full of nectar – rather, he will become immortal!”

- Letter, December 21, 1998

Advaita Dās: “Some Vaiṣṇavas say that Gaura Līlā and Kṛṣṇa Līlā are to be remembered simultaneously.”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Śrī Gaura līlā is to be remembered and Śrī Kṛṣṇa līlā is also to be remembered. You have only one mind, how can you remember two *līlās* simultaneously? This is an *apasiddhānta* (wrong theory) that is nowhere to be found in the scriptures – it is some individual's speculation, which will cause confusion. Why? Open your eyes once and see! Śrīla Raghunātha dās Gosvāmī practises *līlā smaraṇa* on the bank of Śrī Śrī Rādhākunda! He had been serving Mahāprabhu for 16 years. Raghunātha dās is the great gift of Gaura. He gave the best example for all the Vaiṣṇavas – did he practise simultaneous *līlā smaraṇa* or so? *gaura guṇete jhure nitya līlā tār sphūre* “Those who are charmed by Gaura's attributes will perceive Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes” – this is Gaura's teaching. Look in Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta at the fruits of worshipping Gaura – look at Raghunātha (and the results of his 16 years of service to Gaura), see how he perceived Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes as a result. Where did he practise simultaneous *smaraṇa* of Gaura and Kṛṣṇa līlā?”

- Letter, July 2, 1997

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“Navadvīpa is just the birth place of Mahāprabhu, Nīlācala is the *uttama sthāna*.”

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Advaita Das: ‘Sometimes Bābā quoted the song *dhana mora nityānanda, pati mora gauracandra, prāṇa mora yugala kiśora*. Can you remember what he said about this?’

Nirañjan Prasād Das: Here Śrī Gaurāṅga is described as the husband and the Yugal Kiśora as the life-airs. Just as the wife does not like the husband’s body without its life-airs, but rather throws it out of the house, similarly Śrī-Śrī Gaurasundara doesn’t bestow His grace on people who don’t remember Śrī Śrī Yugal Kiśora.

- Letter, May 25, 1996

Advaita Dās: “In chapter 12 of Śrī Advaita Prakāśa it is mentioned that Śrī Kṛṣṇa Miśra Prabhu (the son of Advaita Prabhu from whom Sādhu Bābā descends) offered Campa bananas to Gaura with the mantra *Om Gaurāya namaḥ*. (This seems contradictory because Bābā does not give Gaura Mantra).”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Here he was making an offering to Śrī Kṛṣṇa with ‘Om Gaurāya Namaḥ’ in a particular mood, but in essence all offerings to all gods are ultimately destined for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is their philosophy. Moreover, it is forbidden for us to imitate them (Advaita Prabhu and his family) – instead, we should just obey them.”

- Letter, March 19, 1998

Advaita Dās: “Some time ago a devotee visited Boro Kunj (the abode of Śrī Kandarpa Gopāl Gosvāmī, Bābā’s eldest nephew) and he saw that only Advaita Prabhu is worshiped in the temple and not the rest of the Panca Tattva. He asked me why they don’t worship the whole Panca Tattva? What shall I say?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Answer him that Śrīla Advaita Prabhu is their family deity, the *prāṇa puruṣa* (arch father) of their dynasty. It is thus natural that they worship Śrīla Advaita Prabhu. This, however, is beside the point of why they don’t worship Pañca Tattva. If he is actually asking why they don’t worship the Pañca Tattva, then the answer is certainly that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is their worshipable deity – *pañca tattvātmaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ* “I offer my obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is embodied by the Panca Tattva.” (CC Ādi 1.14)

-Letter 4.12.96

In different personal conversations in the early 2000s, Nirañjan Bābu glorified Advaita Prabhu as ‘*sādhana* beast’, ‘Royal Bengal Tiger’ or ‘Advaita simha’, the lion-like Advaita Prabhu.



LĪLĀ SMARAṆA

Advaita Das: “Sometimes it is difficult to follow the proper sequence of the *aṣṭakāla līlā*. I may still be thinking of *prātaḥ līlā* while *pūrvāhna līlā* is already going on. I have read that the *sādhaka* should follow the sequence of the *līlās* properly – *eteṣu samayeṣvevaṃ yā yā līlā purodita; tāṃ tāṃ eva yathā-kālaṃ samsmaret sādhaḥ janaḥ*. Is there any harm in this?”

Nirañjan Prasād Das: This following of the *smaraṇa*-sequence may be done as much as possible. One should not bother too much about this - practise gradually leads to natural conduct – *abhyāsāt jāyate siddhi*. ‘Practise leads to perfection.’ This all depends on one’s *sādhana*. By the force of the *līlā*’s grace, all true endeavours and resolutions will bear fruit. In Bhagavad Gītā, chapter 2, verse 40, the Lord tells Arjuna:

*nehābhikrama nāśo’sti pratyavāyo na vidyate
svalpam asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt*

The Lord bestows fearlessness- any undertaking once started does not go in vain. Failures will not bring obstacles, and even the slightest practise will save from the greatest fears. The *sādhaka*’s *līlā smaraṇa* depends on divine experiences. When the *sādhaka* dives deep into the *līlās* he is absorbed in their deep purport and relishes their sweetness. Will he watch the clock when he loses himself in this sweetness? And when one watches the clock, then is there any *līlā smaraṇa* going on? The mind is one, and it has now drowned in the *līlā*. If one watches the clock one is simply following a rule (and is not transcendently absorbed). Anyway, when *rati* (attraction) arises in relishing the *līlā*, then where is there any question of rules and regulations? One will fold the hands and pray with tear-filled eyes: “O Lord, You are *līlāmaya*, absorbed in transcendental pastimes. You are so kind – now take your servant and engage him in Your service”.

- Letter, July 2, 1997

One is very fortunate to be able to practise *lilā smaraṇa* - *manera smaraṇa prāṇa* (Prema Bhakti Candrikā) “The very life of the mind is *smaraṇa*.” The life-airs of a Vaiṣṇava do not survive without *smaraṇa*. Let there be expertise in this – *smaraṇa*, *manana* and *dhyāna* is what is needed!

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Advaita Dās: What is the difference between *manana* and *smaraṇa*?

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: *Smaraṇa* means recollection, while *manana* means conception and absorption. *Smaraṇa*, *manana* and *nidhidhyāsana* – this is like the rumination of a cow. It causes us to enter into the *lilās* – this is *bhajan*. After swallowing the grass the cow not only chews it, she will ruminate, chewing the chewed. Why? A rey! Without this there is no *bhajan*! This creates spiritual power, and from that comes *rasa*, which must be relished. This is meditation, that is *bhajana*.

Conversation, March 2000

The life of a devotee is rarely attained. This is echoed in the voice of Ṭhākura Mahāśaya:

monera smaraṇa prāṇa, madhura madhura dhāma
yugala vilāsa smṛti sāra
sādhya sādhana ei, ei boi āra nāi
ei tattva sarva vidhi sāra

(Prema Bhakti Candrikā 60,61)

“The very life-air of the mind is the recollection of the ever-so-sweet enjoyments of the Divine Pair Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. This is the essence of all recollection. This is the means and the goal, and there is nothing else than this. This truth is the essence of all rules and regulations.” This was already echoed in the ancient times in the Padma Purāṇa:

smartavyam satataṁ viṣṇor vismartavyo na jātūcit
sarva vidhi niṣedhāḥ syur etayor eva kinkarāḥ

“There is only one rule - always remember Viṣṇu, and there is only one prohibition -never forget Him. All other rules and prohibitions are mere servants of these two.”

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“*prema* has a coating, so that you will not drown in the ocean of *samsāra*. It floats like butter.’

From Advaita Dās’ diary, January 1983 - Nirañjan Bābu daily visits me with some Vilāpa Kusumāñjali-verses he translated into English, to help me understand it. He looks at me with bright and friendly eyes when he brings it in and disusses it with me. Being an elderly Indian gentleman he is sometimes a bit shy to discuss these intimate subjects with me: "This (*mañjarī bhāva*) is very difficult, because we still have so many personal desires."



GENERAL BHAJAN-MATTERS

What is *bhajana*? Festivals and ceremonies are external customs, popular customs. Whatever the local populace eats, that’s what the deities eat (Rotis in Vraja, rice in Bengal, pizza in Italy and Tortilla in Mexico) – does that mean that *dharma* is gone? No. Dharma is there, intact. Whatever I do is on the order of my religion. And *bhajan*? That is one - Kṛṣṇa. The Lord reveals Himself to His devotees according to the way they love Him. Dharma is one, but it is relished and experienced in different ways. It is the same substance, but the shapes are different. This is *bhajan*. No need to run around between all these external ceremonies – ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss’. Be fixed in meditation and do *bhajan*. What else is there than this? In this *bhajana* is *rasa*, transcendental nectar. There are so many many senses in our bodies, as there are so many trees in a garden - they must all be fixed at one point.

*sthāvara jangama dekhe nā dekhe tār mūrti,
jāhā jāhā netra pore tāhā kṛṣṇa sphūrti* (C.C.)

“The *uttamādhikārī* does not see the mobile and immobile objects of this world – wherever his eyes go he says only the form of Kṛṣṇa.” The world is full of Kṛṣṇa – one need simply to fix oneself on this, on Kṛṣṇa. Sit on the lap of Śyāmā (Durgā) and call out for Śyāma (viz. be engaged in your material life and think of Kṛṣṇa at the same time). If you do this, then why bother running all over the place (visiting festivals and holy places)? Mahāprabhu told Raghunātha dās Gosvāmī – *antare*

vairāgya koro bāhire loka vyavahāra (CC) “Be inwardly renounced but outwardly act as the common man.” Renunciation is an internal matter, not a public show. External cultural differences may be there between various devotees, but *bhajan* is one. *Bhajan* has *rasa*, transcendental flavour. If it hadn’t, then who would practise it? The *bhajana* of Vṛndāvana is full of *rasa* – *bhaja govindam bhaja govindam bhaja govindam mūḍhamate!* Who said that? The greatest *jñāni!* Hence you may be a *jñāni*, a *yogī*, whatever – worship Govinda! Look at Mauni Bābā (a *yogī* who lived close to Sādhu Bābā in Prācīn Māyāpura)! He is a *yogī*, yet he worships Govinda! In the evening (during *ārati*) conches are blown and bells are rung, and he offers obeisances to Govinda. The universe is beautiful – everything is beautiful, it lies on the lap of the Lord. The world is the shelter of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. Sit down here and worship Govinda. If this world wasn’t there there would be no *ānanda*. Sit in the temple of this world and worship Govinda. How beautiful this world is with its six seasons, its variety of fruits. Just do *bhajan!* The world is beautiful but some selfish, uneducated people spoil it only. We are singing – *pañca putra saṅge nāce rāy bhavānanda – tin putra saṅge nāce sen śivānanda* – “Bhavānanda Rāy dances in the *kīrtan* with his five sons, and Śivānanda Sen dances in the *kīrtan* with his three sons.” (One can be a family man and yet fully participate in the essence of devotional life). We are simply making this beautiful world ugly ourselves.”

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What is *bhajan*? The progressive practitioner must follow the rules and carry out the different devotional items and ceremonies as far as possible. Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya says: *apakke sādhana rīti – pākile se prema bhakti*. “When devotion is raw it is called *sādhana*, or practise, and when it is ripe it is called *prema bhakti*, or loving devotion.” In the beginning the practitioner must carry out these items and ceremonies, later when he or she matures it will gradually culminate into *prema bhakti* and the external and internal condition of the practitioner will become identical. The practitioner will then be bathed in tears of devotional love, no more time to go to the Yamunā – *sarvātma snapanam vijayate nāma samkīrtanam*. The perfection Mahāprabhu spoke of in this verse will then bear fruit. This is the ultimate goal. But this is not cheap.

- Letter, July 25, 2002

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Advaita Dās: “What about the six Gosvāmīs?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: Look at our manual for worship. There is a Chay Gosvāmīr Vandana there (*hari haraye namaḥ kṛṣṇa*). Who wrote it? Śrīla Narottama Thākura Mahāśaya. Why? For all the practising devotees and aspirants. They will sing this song. Why? To gain devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Look at the auspicious invocation of Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta: *ei chay guru śikṣā guru je āmāra* – “These six (Gosvāmīs) are my six instructing teachers.” This invocation was written on behalf of all. They are the spiritual guides to all the conditioned souls, they will teach us how to do *bhajan*.”

- Letter, August 29, 1997

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Advaitadas: On the one hand Bābā has taught us “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.” Yet on the other hand Śrīman Mahāprabhu says in the Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Antya 20) *khāite śuite yathā tathā nāma loy, kāla deśa niyama nāi sarva-siddhi hoy* – “Whether you are eating or reclining, wherever you take the name of Kṛṣṇa, regardless of time or place, you will attain all perfection.” How can we understand this apparent contradiction?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: The verse *khāite śuite yathā tathā nāma loy, kāla deśa niyama nāi sarva-siddhi hoy* (C.C Ch.20) deals with Śrī Hari-nāma *kīrtana*, which is a public affair – anytime – anywhere – loudly or within oneself, but: *japa* on one’s *mālā* is a hidden thing, it must be done in solitude (*nirjane, ekānta*); it is the order of the scriptures and above all of Śrī Gurudeva. The scriptures (Haribhakti Vilāsa 17.58) say:

*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." *japānya-kāle mālām tu pūjayitvā sugopayet* – In times other than *japa*-time one should worship the *mālā* and keep it hidden." (Haribhakti Vilāsa 17.57) Look at our manual for worship for this.”

- Letter, December 4, 1996

Advaitadas: “On the one hand Bābā forbade me to study advanced literature on Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s intimate pastimes if I was too afflicted by lusty desires, and on the other hand he gave me elevated things like *siddha praṇāli* and Vilāpa Kusumāñjali at the very beginning of my *sādhana* path. How can I understand this apparent contradiction?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “There is no contradiction. I think it is but a loving অনুশাসন (advise, command) of a loving father (well-wisher) towards his beloved son, like the words of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa uttered to His friend Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra –

*klaibyaṁ mā sma gama pārtha naitattvayyupapadyate.
kṣudraṁ hṛdaya daurbālyam tyaktvottiṣṭa parantapaḥ*

“O Arjuna, it’s not befitting you that you lose your prowess now. Give up this paltry weakness of heart and rise!” (Bhagavad Gītā 2.3)

In this new endeavour one must proceed, trampling all the *anarthas* (unwanted bad old habits) on the path of *sādhana* (spiritual practice). That was Bābā’s basic desire. He was doing this just for your benefit (as encouragement).”

- Letter, May 20, 1999

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Advaita Das: “I have heard Bābā sometimes explaining the famous Caitanya Caritāmṛta verse *‘jībera svarūpa hoy kṛṣṇer nitya dās* in a *manjari bhāva* fashion, but I cannot clearly remember what he said. Have you heard him giving such explanations?”

Nirañjan Prasād Das: “I have neither asked him this nor did I hear him giving such an explanation. The following is just my assumption: the slogan *‘jīber svarūpa hoy kṛṣṇera nitya dās* is a general statement for all living beings in the countless universes. All of them are constitutionally servants of Kṛṣṇa. There are two kinds of souls – those who are bound by *māyā* (mundane illusion) and those who are free from *māyā*. Those bound souls, who are in the margin between matter and spirit, must serve Kṛṣṇa in allegiance to His eternal associates in Vraja, His servants, friends, parents and lovers. Only then can they become genuine servants of Kṛṣṇa. Those who wish to serve the lover of Rādhā should become maidservants of Rādhā. This is called

manjari svarūpa. When Rādhārāṇī bestows Her grace then Kṛṣṇa's service is deserved, otherwise not – *hari bhakti śrī kṛṣṇākarṣiṇi sudurlabhā* – “The devotion to Kṛṣṇa that actually attracts Him is rarely attained.” This cannot be attained even by doing *sādhana* forever. However, there is an easy way to attain the lover of Rādhā – *rādhikā caraṇa reṇu, bhūṣaṇa koriyā tanu, anāyāse pābe giridhārī* (Prema Bhakti Candrikā) – “If I decorate my body with Rādhikā's foot-dust I will easily attain Giridhārī.” Because *kā kṛṣṇasya praṇaya janibhu?* “Who is the source of Kṛṣṇa's love? *śrīmatī rādhikaikā* “It is Śrīmatī Rādhikā only” (Govinda Lilāmṛta) – **jay rādhe!**

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Advaita Dās: “Are Vilāpa Kusumāñjali's verses 70 and 82 about the day-time *abhisāra* (love journey) of Rādhārāṇī, or about Her nocturnal *abhisāra*? Or about both?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “About both.”

- Letter, March 11, 1997

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Advaita Dās: “Does Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī have rings on all of Her toes or not? Is Her face – like Her entire body – also anointed with vermilion?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “In the perspective of nourishing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes, the *sakhīs* dress and ornament Śrīmatījī in whatever way they deem necessary.”

- Letter, March 11, 1997

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Advaita Das: “In Vraja the *sādhus* told me that in spring there is no *māna* of Śrī Rādhā, because there is a feeling of meeting and fraternity then. Nevertheless I see this song of Dvija Haridās –

tatra mānam

vasanta — tāla daśa kusi

ritu pati rādhā mādhava saṅga

vividha vilāsa,

hori rasa raṅgita

ābire aruṇa śyāma aṅga

(Now *māna* in Vasanta—) "Rādhā and Mādhava play different *rasika* pastimes in the king of seasons (spring), like Holi. Thus Śyāma's body is reddened by *ābira* powder."

*aruñita śyāma, kalevara darapaṇe,
rāi-ko prati-bimba lāgi
bharama-hi āna, ramañī mane māniye
mānini bhelo virāgi*

"Rāi saw Her own reflection in Śyāma's reddened mirror-like body and mistook this for another woman. Thus She became angry with Śyāma and lost interest in Him."

*rasika su-nāgara, rāi-ko māna heri,
minati koroto koro-joḍi
pītāmbara gole, sādha-i pada-tale,
rāi roholo mukha mori*

"Seeing Rāi's pique, Rasika Sunāgara (the relishing great lover Kṛṣṇa) prayed to Her with folded hands. Pītāmbara thus humbly fell at Her feet, but Rāi turned Her head away from Him."

*priya sahaçari joto, koto je bujhāyato,
sukha soie kāhe viporita
dvija haridāsa, kohoto kāhe rokhasi,
prema-ki aichana rita*

"No matter how much the *priya sakhīs* try to make Rāi understand what had happened — They came for happiness, but They received just the opposite. Dvija Haridās says: "Pique is a part of the ways of love." (17)

rāginī suhai — tāla eka tālā

*e dhani mānini māna nivāro!
ābire aruṇa, śyāma aṅga mukure,
nija pratibimba nehāro*

"O Fortunate, angry girl! Give up Your pique! You are seeing Your own reflection within Śyāma's mirror-like body, which is reddened by ābira!"

tuhu eke ramañi, rasa-vatī śiro-mañi
kon aiche jaga māho
tohāri samukhe śyāma, ān sañge vilasabo
koichana rasa niravāho

"Which woman in the world is the crownjewel of *rasikas* like You? How could Śyāma ever sport *rasika* pastimes with another girl in front of You?"

aichana sahadari, vacana śravaṇe dhari,
sarama bharama mukha pheri
iṣata hāsi mone, māna teyāgalo,
ulasita doñhe doñhā heri

"Hearing such words of Her *sakhīs* Śrī Rādhikā understood Her mistake and turned Her face around. Slightly smiling, She then gave up Her pique. Thus They gladly looked at Each other again."

punaḥ saba jana meli, koroye vinoda keli,
picakāri lei nija hāte
dvija hari-dāsa, ābira jogāyato,
sakala sakhī-gaṇa sāthe

"Again everyone assembled to perform joyful pastimes, taking syringes in the hand. Dvija Haridāsa supplies them the *ābira* along with all the other *sakhīs*." (18)

So it seems that there is *māna* in Vasanta after all.....

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Nirañjan Prasād Dās: *māna* increases the joy of meeting and makes it very *rasika*. Priyāñi's *māna* makes the sweet spring pastimes even more honey-sweet. It causes *prema* to surge and creates a favourable condition for *prema*'s sweetness, depth and maturity of *rasa*. Hence devotee-poets see Priyāñi's *māna* also within the pastimes of meeting, and relish the sweetness of such pastimes. How can an ocean be beautiful without waves, and how could a *rasik* devotee survive without it? You said that you heard from *sādhus* in Vraja that there is no *māna* within meeting? What philosophy is that? How then could the *rasik* poet Dvija Haridās see *māna* within *milana*? This is what he saw: Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Līlā Puruṣottama, the Playful God, Rasik Sunāgar, the *rasik*

amorous hero – *sādha-i pada-tale, minati koroto koro jori* (“He sits at Her feet, begging from Her with folded hands”) – hence ‘*prem ki aichana rīti* (“Such are the ways of *prema*, pure love.”) *Prema* is so intense because there is *māna* – it makes it sweeter than sweet. *rasik* devotees drown in the recollection of this pastime in order to survive. Hence the Bhāgavat Rishi (Vyāsa) said: *muḥur aho rasikā! bhūvi bhāvukāḥ* (Ś.B. 1.1.3) “O Rasikas! All emotional devotees of the world! Drown in this nectar again and again!” Concluding we can say that sometimes there can be opposition (*vāmya*) and pique (*māna*) within the pastimes of meeting, for *prema* is a crooked thing – *premaḥ kuṭilā gatih*

- Letter, July 2, 1997.

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Vilāpa Kusumāñjali verse 79: Śyāma is intoxicated by amorous songs - He wants the bliss of *prema*, hence Śrīmatījī, who personifies love for Him, who is His pleasure potency and who is non-different from Him in the heart, delights Him, the Energetic (*śakti-mān*), with Her loving service by kissing and embracing Him. This makes Śyāma’s erotic singing a success, because it is normal to make the beloved happy by bestowing favors and presents to him or her. Rādhā, who is the embodiment of *mahā-bhāva*, binds Her heart’s beloved Rasarāja (Kṛṣṇa) with Her beautiful vine-like arms and Rasarāja also holds His pleasure potency within His long and strong rope-like arms. *Prema* is free from all personal desires and causeless, there is no question of age, caste, dynasty, honour or conduct there.”

- Letter, November 4, 1997

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Advaita Dās: In our concise manual of worship Bābā has revealed his *siddha praṇālī*, but when he gave me *siddha praṇālī* in person he told me not to reveal it to anyone. How can I understand this apparent contradiction?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: The *siddha praṇālī* chart published in our concise manual is the one received in *guru paramparā* – it is necessary for the disciples to know it. But the personal *siddha mañjarī svarūpa* that Śrī Gurudeva mercifully bestows at the time of initiation is the one that Bābā has forbidden you to reveal. That special relationship with the Guru should not be revealed to anyone and everyone. One harms only oneself by revealing such inner matters to the outer view. The more one keeps this hidden, the purer the heart will get – one’s power increases.”

- Letter, July 2, 1997

Advaita Dās: ‘In some *siddha praṇālīs* (given by other Vaiṣṇava Gurus) devotees are given a *bhāva* towards Kṛṣṇa, like *svādhīna bhartṛkā* (independent lady-love), *khaṇḍitā* or *proṣita bhartṛkā* (lady-love whose lover has departed) etc. In other *siddha praṇālīs* we can see *mañjarīs* getting *vāma bhāva* (feelings of opposition towards Kṛṣṇa), *vāma mṛdvī* (gently opposed) or *dakṣiṇa prakharā* assigned or bestowed to them. Those things are not seen in our *siddha praṇālī* though. So I understand that we are all endowed with the feelings of our group-leader Viśākhā? That means we all have her feelings of *adhika madhyā* (moderately opposed to Kṛṣṇa)? I see in Ujjvala Nīlamanī (8.19): *atra yūthe viśākhādyā bhavantyadhika madhyamā*. “In Śrī Rādhā’s party Viśākhā is also an *adhika (vāma) madhyā sakhī*.” Or is it so that *manjarīs*, who are eternal *brahmacārīṇīs*, only relish the flavours of service and have no specific feelings that a *sakhī* has?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “The *manjarīs*, who are eternal *brahmacārīṇīs*, have no other desire but to serve the Divine Pair. They are particularly engaged in the service of Rādhā. This pure feeling of theirs is indicated in verse 16 of Vilāpa Kusumānjali. The *sakhīs*, however, are the array of Rādhā’s own physical expansion (*kāya vyūha*).”

- Letter May 20, 1999

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When Kṛṣṇa plays His flute – Aha! What condition the *gopīs* end up in then? All this (world) is external! Just Kṛṣṇa and His flute song (is what is real)! How beautiful is Kṛṣṇa! How colourful! How sweet His smile! How sweet His flute song! *madhuram madhuram madhuram* (Kṛṣṇa Karnāmṛta).

*sahāyāḥ guravo śiṣyā bhujīṣye bandhavāḥ striyaḥ
satyaṁ vadāmi te pārtha gopyaḥ kiṁ me bhavanti na*

“Truly I tell you, O Arjuna! What are the *gopīs* not to Me? They are My friends, teachers, pupils, servants, assistants and wives!” What are the *gopīs* not to Me? They are everything to Me! Everything!

*man māhātmya mat saparyāṁ macchraddhāṁ man manogatam
jānanti gopikāḥ pārtha nānye jānanti tattvataḥ*

“O Pārtha, the *gopīs* know My greatness, My worship, faith in Me, and My mentality. Others cannot know these things in truth.”

Uddhava went to Vṛndāvana, sent by Kṛṣṇa to console His mother and father, thinking: “I am an ocean of learning, and Kṛṣṇa has especially sent a great intellectual like me to enlighten these villagers.” But when he came and observed the Vrajavāsīs’ scorching love-in-separation he was stunned – what should he tell them? Tell them some great philosophical issue? Nanda and Yaśodā were just crying ‘Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!’ He could not even tell them to stop crying – it would have been an offence to them and to their great love for Kṛṣṇa. They are weeping for Kṛṣṇa and I should say ‘Don’t cry?’ Although he was the topmost scholar – he drowned in the Vrajavāsīs’ love, like Kṛṣṇa Himself had. Kṛṣṇa had actually sent him there just to see and learn how to weep for Him – “Go and see how My Vraja-relatives weep for Me!” This Vṛndāvana – what else should I think of but that? Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, also in your apartment, everywhere. Kṛṣṇa is drowning in the ocean of Rādhā’s love. Rādhārāṇī’s breasts are Kṛṣṇa’s shelter. Tears stream from His face when He speaks about Her. He is speechless. *smāraṁ smāraṁ muhus tad brajam anucalitam bhāva sindhāvagahyaḥ* – What the Lord is thinking of? Kṛṣṇa is weeping in Navadvīpa! Kṛṣṇa sings: *āmi mālāte japibo nām! bol suba!l bol bol!* “I will do *mālā japa* of this name, O Subal, sing to Me, sing to Me!” What name will He do *japa* of? ‘Rādhe Rādhe Rādhe!’ And Rādhārāṇī? She says ‘Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!’ Who is Bhagavān? Rādhā or Kṛṣṇa? Tell me. *nirguna brahma* becomes *saguna brahma*. Water (the formless Supreme) turns into ice (the Supreme with form) by *bhakti*. The Christians say God is formless, the Muslims say that God is formless, the Buddhists say that God is formless – we say He has a form. Kṛṣṇa becomes stone – He is lost in Vṛndāvana! Where is He in Vṛndāvana? Rādhārāṇī will tell you. If She gives the key to His temple, you can have *darśana* of Kṛṣṇa. There is Caran Pāhāri in Vraja – Kṛṣṇa’s flute song made the stones melt. Then, when Kṛṣṇa stopped playing His flute, the stones got hard again. The signs are still there of His feet. What *līlā* can be sweeter than this, tell me? What else should be recollected? When a fly falls into a lake of nectar, will he die? There is no death then. There is no death for a devotee. He has come and then he will go there (to Kṛṣṇa). He will become an associate of Līlā Puruṣottam (Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme God of Play).”

Advaita Dās: “What is the meaning of the word *saḍukṛṇ* in (the last verse of) Śankarācārya’s Moha Mudgar?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “*saḍukṛṇ* is the root of the verb 'to do' – *nahi nahi saḍukṛṇ karaṇe*. Here Śrīpāda Śankarācārya is saying in the end: Whatever path or

philosophy you may follow, in the eleventh hour (at the time of death) there is nothing else to do but worship Govinda. So here he firmly tells all the living beings, either past, present or future – *bhaja govindam bhaja govindam bhaja govindam* – ‘Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda’. *nānya panthā vidyate ayanāya* – there is no other escape route!”

- Letter, Dec.4,1996

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*barhottaṁsa-vilāsa-kuntala-bharaṁ mādhurya-magnānanam
pronmīlan-nava-yauvanam pravilasad-veṇu-praṇādāmṛtam
āpīna-stana-kuṭmalābhir abhito gopībhir ārādhitam
jyotiś cetasi naś cakāstu jagatām ekābhirāmādbhutam*

“May that wonderful divine light, whose head, covered with curly locks, is beautified by a captivating crown of peacock feathers, whose countenance is immersed in a current of sweetness, who is of awakening youthful beauty, whose flute brings forth a stream of nectar, who is worshipped on all sides by cowherd girls with big breasts, and who pleases the whole universe, be manifest in our consciousness!” (Kṛṣṇa Karnāmṛta 4)

“Kṛṣṇa walks over the gravel road of Vṛndāvana towards the meadows. How does He use that road? All the *gopīs* are lying down to let Him walk comfortably over their soft breasts. By having Kṛṣṇa’s feet touch My breasts, that is the best way to serve Him – *gopībhir ārādhitam*. How do the *gopīs* worship Kṛṣṇa? By allowing Him passage over their breasts!”

Human life is the worst life without Govinda. Listen, I will tell you:

*mora vapu citta mana, sakala indriya gana,
kṛṣṇa vinā sakala viphalā* (CC Madhya 2.30)

“My body , mind, heart and all of My senses – they are all useless without Kṛṣṇa.” These are Mahāprabhu’s own words! He speaks about Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana! Why? Why has the Lord Himself accepted the life of an ascetic? What has He not sacrificed for this? We are saying: “Prabhu, have mercy, have mercy!” You are begging Me for mercy? Am I not giving you mercy? It will come to you like a rain in the desert. You need not come to Me for mercy!”

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Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Raghunāth Gosāi sits on the bank of Rādhākūṇḍa, crying: *kothāy vā kon kunje thāko! dekhā diye prāṇ rākho!* “(Rādhe!) In which *kunja* are you staying? Save my life by revealing Yourself to me! *āmi kṛṣṇa kṛpār bhikārī noy – āmi jār dāsī tār pratyāśī, āmi kṛṣṇa kṛpār bhikhārī noy!* I am longing only for She whose maidservant I am! I am not a beggar for Kṛṣṇa’s mercy!”

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Advaita Dās: “Is there any way in which you can inspire a child to Kṛṣṇa bhakti?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “If a child does not want to do *bhakti* you can do nothing.”

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Advaita Dās: “How to practise non-violence?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Non-violence is very hard. It must be practiced as far as possible. Mahāprabhu let the tigers dance and chant, but we cannot do that. We must avoid aggressive, harmful creatures, like scorpions, as much as possible, and only if that is not possible, then *ātmānām satatam rakṣet* – “One must always protect oneself.” (One can take defensive action) They must suffer their *karma* (when we kill them in self-defence). The more elevated the *sādhaka* becomes, the more he will give up such self-defence.”

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makṣikā-o gole nā go porle amṛta hrade (“When a fly falls in a lake of nectar it does not dissolve”) – and that lake is filled with the nectar of *hari-nāma* – this confidence is there. When the bee-like devotee falls in that lake he will become immortal – his mortal body becomes immortal. Look at all the nectarean fruits of Śrī Harināma – 1. *ceto darpana mārjanam* (cleansing the mirror of the mind), 2. *bhava mahā davāgni nirvāpanam* (extinguishing the big forest fire of material life), 3. *śreyah kairava candrikā vitaranam* (expanding the moon-light on the white lotus of well-being), 4. *vidyā vadhū jīvanam* (giving life to the bride of transcendental knowledge), 5. *ānandāmbudhi vardhanam* (expanding the ocean of transcendental bliss), 6. *prati-padam pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam* (giving the relish of the full transcendental nectar at every step), 7. *sarvātma snapanam* (showering the whole self). So, all victory to the congregational chanting of the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa! After all, Mahāprabhu is called *tri-satya* (*namas tri-kāla satyāya*), His words are true in past, present and future.

In the Yoga-scriptures this nectar is also mentioned. When the *suṣumnā nāḍī* (the topmost *yoga*-channel) joins the *sahasrāra* (crown-*cakra*) in the head, then nectar starts flowing within the body of the practitioner. This causes the *yogis* to merge into *samādhi*.”

- Letter, June 30, 2000

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Beware of praise! For example, one man dances, careful! Behind his back is an ocean, an ocean of praise! This caution is given for those who will think of other things than Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The Lord, however, has personally given this assurance of safety to His devotees – *kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhakta pranaśyati* (Gītā 9.31) “O Arjuna! Declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes!” It is said: *māre kṛṣṇa rākhe ke, rākhe māre ke?* “If Kṛṣṇa wants to kill you, who can protect you, and if Kṛṣṇa wants to protect you, then who can kill you?” Take Prahlāda Mahārāja – his own father did everything to kill him, but because Kṛṣṇa protected him he could not be killed. And on the other hand, look at Kamsa - he did everything to protect himself, but Kṛṣṇa killed him anyway. The assurance of the Lord (‘My devotee never perishes’) only counts for His devotees, not for others.”

- Letter September 28, 2001

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Advaita Dās: “What books should a follower of Sādhu Bābā read?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: ‘Caitanya Caritāmṛta is a very good book. It is second to none – *kṛṣṇa dāsa kavirāja rasika bhakata mājha* (Prem Bhakti Candrikā) “Kṛṣṇa dās Kavirāja is the foremost of *rasika* devotees.” Govinda Līlāmṛta (also written by Kṛṣṇa dās Kavirāja) is also very good. Haribhakti Vilāsa is good....” (Sādhu Bābā himself gives a further shortlist in his biography ‘Sādhu Bābā’s sacred memory’) Otherwise:

*ananta-śāstram bahulāśca vidyāḥ svalpaśca kālo bahu-vighnatā ca
yat sāra-bhūtaṁ tad-upāsaniyam haṁso yathā kṣīram 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 devote our attention to the essentials, just as the swan extracts only the milk from the water." (Canakya-nīti-darpanam 15.10)

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The author of Rādhā-rasa-sudhānidhi was a *sannyāsī*, a *brahma-vādī*, the Guru of 30,000 *sannyāsīs*. He taught *so'ham* – ‘I am the Supreme’. But Mahāprabhu said: “No, I will not let that pass! It is *tasyāham* – ‘I belong to Him/Her’. There is distinction between service and the servant. I don’t want to be Rādhā, I want to be Her servant!”

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Advaita Dās: “What is real universal love?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “A poet says –

*jīber mājhe debatā peyechi
bolte pāri nā bhoye
āmār cokhe ek hoye geche
jībāloy debāloye*

‘I found my Lord within the living beings, but was afraid to express it. In my eyes they became one – the abode of the living being within the abode of God.’

jībe sammān dibe jāni kṛṣṇa adhiṣṭhāna (CC) “Honour the living beings, knowing them to be the abode of Kṛṣṇa.” *sarvaṁ brahma-mayaṁ jagat* - “The world is full of Brahman.” When one can see the whole world like that one comes to universal love.”

Advaita Dās: “Then we must also love the enemies of our Guru and our Lord?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: The scriptures reply to this: *asat saṅga tyāga – ei vaiṣṇava ācāra* (CC). “The Vaiṣṇava must give up bad company.” Certainly those who hate the Guru and the Lord are bad, so the scriptures say we should cast them far away from us. Indeed, it is a sin even to pronounce their names – they should be forgotten entirely.”

Last two questions answered in letter, June 23, 1998

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Advaita Dās: What was Bābā’s opinion on *sannyāsa*? No kind of *sannyāsa* is prescribed or mentioned in the Goswāmīs’ books. Is that why Bābā was not officially initiated into *sannyāsa* or so?

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “What you learned and commented about *sannyāsa* is correct. Particularly in this Kali age the scriptures forbid *sannyāsa*. In Caitanya

Caritāmṛta, Ādi chapter 17 we find this verse from Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa, Kṛṣṇa Janma Khanda –

*aśvamedham gavālambarṁ sannyāsam pala paitṛkam
devarena sutotpattiṁ kalau panca vivarjayet*

“In the Kali age five things are forbidden – horse-sacrifice, cow-sacrifice, *sannyāsa*, offering non-vegetarian oblations to the forefathers and having a son procreated by one’s brother-in-law.” You could see at Bābā’s personal conduct what is *sannyāsa* and you have heard of those principles in detail. The six Gosvāmīs embody Śrīman Mahāprabhu’s heart’s desire, look at the conduct of Śrīpāda Sanātana Gosvāmī:

*karaṅga kaupin loiyā, cherā kanthā gāye diyā
teyāgibo sakala vishoy
kṛṣṇe anurāga hobe, vrajera nikuñje kobe,
jāiyā koribo nijāloy*

“I will give up all sense enjoyment and wear a loincloth and torn quilt only, using just an earthen waterpot for all my bodily comforts. When will I go to the *nikunjas* of Vraja to make them my abode, out of passionate love for Kṛṣṇa?”

Now that is *sannyāsa*, that is the topmost renunciation, that is the beauty of *bhajan* in the sweet surrounding of Vṛndāvana!

- Letter, August 22, 2000

Advaita Dās: What was Bābā’s opinion on living in Vraja? On the one hand I see Mahāprabhu telling Jagadānanda Pandit:

*mathurā gele sanātan sange rohibe; mathurār swāmī saber carane vandibe.
dūre rahi bhakti kori sange na rohibā; tāñ sabār ācār ceṣṭā loite nā pāriyā.
sanātan sange koriho bon daraśan; sanātaner sanga nā chāribe ek khon
śīghro āsiho tāhā nā rohio ciro kāla.. (CC Antya 13)*

“If you go to Mathurā (Vraja) then stay with Sanātan Gosvāmī and offer your obeisances to the feet of all the brāhmins of Mathurā from a distance. Do not associate with them because you cannot imitate or comprehend their conduct. See the forests of Vraja in Sanātan’s company and never leave his association for even a moment. **Come back quickly and don’t stay there too long..**”

On the other hand we see Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda's instructions *kuryād vāsaṁ vraje sadā* – “Always reside in Vraja.” It seems contradictory. What was Bābā's opinion on this?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Living in Vraja is excellent. One who lives there is very fortunate indeed. The apparent contradiction is based on the individual qualification of the *sādhaka*. The six Gosvāmīs gave the greatest example of Vaiṣṇava conduct. The *bhajan* of the devotee depends on individual qualification. Indeed, how can one become expert in *bhajan* without the company of totally renounced devotees who are steeped in *bhajan*? Bābā said: *bhāveṣu vidyate deva na tu maṭhe na mandire* – “The Lord lives in one's feelings, not in monasteries or temples.” Everything centers around purity of heart and intent, and one associates with pure devotees accordingly – *yādṛśī bhāvanā yasya siddhir bhavati tādrśī* “One attains perfection according to one's personal sentiments.” The highest perfection lies there, in a pure heart. This is the constant companion of everyone's life.”

- Letter, August 22, 2000

Advaita Dās: (I had a letter-head with a picture of only Rādhā on it) “Someone told me that a picture of Śrī Rādhā without Śrī Kṛṣṇa is wrong, it is like a picture of Durgā. Is this true?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “A picture of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa together would satisfy the people. The heart of *bhajan* is the worship and service of Rādhā alone –

*rādhikā carana reṇu, bhūsana koriyā tanu, anāyāse pābe giridhārī.
rādhikā caranāśraya, ye kore se mahāśaya, tāre mui jāo bolihārī*

(Prema Bhakti Candrikā, Thākura Mahāśaya)

“Decorate your body with Rādhikā's foot-dust – then you will easily attain Giridhārī. Whoever takes shelter of Rādhikā's lotus feet is a great soul and I praise such a person!” I understand that this letter-head is giving you much personal joy, and in this respect I endorse it, but to present yourself properly to the ordinary populace it would be better to have a picture of the Divine Pair together.”

- Letter, March 19, 1998

Advaita Dās: “The Vedas say *eko’ham bahu syām* – I was One, I became Many, but at the same time it also says *anādir ādir govinda* – The form of the Lord is beginningless. If that is so then how did He become many from One?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Actually He is both one and many from beginningless time onwards. Being manifold is part of His constitution. There is no beginning at all in Śrī Kṛṣṇa! He is eternal and He is Self-perfect (He never attained perfection, but was always like that). His body is eternal and transcendental. He is the root cause of all divine manifestations and Personalities of Godhead. There is no difference between His Self and His body and each of His senses can perform the function of each of the other senses. His body itself is also all-pervading. All this is possible by His inconceivable power. Though He has a human shape He is still all-pervading. He showed that in His childhood-pastime of eating clay, in His pastime of being bound to His mother’s grinding mortar, and in His various pastimes in the citadel of Dvārakā, where He married 16,108 queens at once in one form and then revelled with them in 16,108 identical forms. Look at the Rāsa līlā, where He dances with all the *gopīs* at once in as many forms as they have! *eko’ham bahu syām* – “I was one, I became many.” Look at His pastime of Brahmā stealing His cows, in which He assumed the forms of each cow and cowherd boy that was kidnapped – and so many other examples are there!”

- Letter, December 21, 1998

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Advaita Dās: “I have a question about qualification for hearing Rāsa-Līlā. Śrī Śuka Muni narrated the Rāsa-līlā to an audience of *yogīs, karmīs, jñānīs* and *aiśvarya bhaktas*, but on the other hand Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī warns – *dadhadbhir yogyasya śravasi paramāpyam na sadasi* (Gopāl Campu 1.23.1) “This most delicate subject should be narrated to a qualified person, and not in large assemblies.” How to understand this apparent contradiction?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “When Mahārāja Parīkṣit was about to die he asked Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmīpāda, the son of Vyāsa and the crown-jewel of *parama-hamsas*, a life-long naked *brahmacārī*, what is the greatest welfare for the soul. Śrī Śukadeva responded by narrating the Śrīmad Bhāgavata to him. This was the first time the Śrīmad Bhāgavata was preached to the world, through the mouth of Śrīmat Śukadeva. The world had not heard about the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is also known as Līlā Puruṣottama, the God of Play. The world became blessed, and along with Mahārāja

Parīkṣit the whole assembly of *devarṣis* (celestial sages), *rājarṣis* (royal sages), *brahmarṣis* (seers of Brahman), fruitive workers, *yogīs* and *jñānīs* became most blessed too. How there could be anything wrong with the audience? They witnessed the establishment of a new type of *yoga*, named *bhakti yoga*. The existence of the formless Brahman was discovered by *yogīs* and *jñānīs*, and after such a long time they saw a loving God assuming a shape due to the touch of the topmost love of His devotees. The formless God can be compared with liquid water which gets frozen by the great chill of devotion, and the ice that thus comes to exist is called the form of God. On that day, after such a long time, these sages heard from Śuka's mouth about the Supreme Brahman that assumes a blissful transcendental shape that is playful. This is the conclusion of Vedānta philosophy. Thus the world became blessed and the Bhāgavata scripture itself (1.1.3) boldly declares:

*nigama kalpa taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka mukhād amṛta drava samyutam
pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayam
muhur aho rasikāḥ bhuvi bhāvukāḥ*

“O Rasika, sensitive devotees! This Bhāgavat is the ripened fruit of the wish-yielding tree of the Vedas and it has fallen on earth from the mouth of a parrot (or Śukadeva Gosvāmī) – drink this nectar for ever and ever!”

Furthermore, Śrīmat Śukadeva told Parīkṣit in the assembly-

*pariniṣṭhito'pi nairguṇye uttama śloka vārtayā
grhīta cetā rājarṣe ākhyānaṁ yad adhītavān*

“O saintly king! Although I was initially attached to the quality-less Brahman my mind became attracted to the stories of Kṛṣṇa, who is praised with choice verses, so I began to study the stories of the Lord.” (Ś.B. 2.1.9)

Now let us briefly summarise the situation:

The inquirer = Mahārāja Parīkṣit

The speaker = The crown-jewel of *parama-hamsas* Śrīmat Śukadeva.

The question = What is to the benefit of the person about to die?

Difficult question = The *karmīs*, *yogīs* and *jñānīs* in the assembly.

The original question (the benefit of a person about to die) kept Mahārāja Parīkṣit wondering without any outcome, and the *yogīs*, *jñānīs* and *karmīs* he had gathered around him began to wonder about this too. In this way they turned from an ordinary audience into a qualified audience (since they began to share Parīkṣit’s inquiry with him). That solves the question about the recital of the Bhāgavata. Śrī Rādhe.

- Letter, June 30, 2001



DĀMODARĀṢṬAKAM

Advaita Das: ‘How do we experience the Dāmodarāṣṭakam, which Bābā wants us to sing or recite during the holy month of Kārtik?’

Nirañjan Prasād Das: “The Supreme Absolute Truth, who is beginningless, yet the beginning of all, the cause of all causes, whose divine glories are sung by gods like Brahmā, Varuṇa, Indra and Rudra, on whom the great seers and mystics meditate age upon age without finding the end to Him – that Supreme Absolute Truth is Gopāla, Mother Yaśodā’s beloved blue gem, in a cowherd hamlet in Śrī Vṛndāvana (Vraja). Such is the philosophy of Vedānta.

These are the events - Every morning Mother Yaśodā prepares butter, yoghurt and milk for her Gopāla to eat. She forgets the whole world while singing the glories of her Gopāla! One day Gopāla woke up and wanted to suck her breast, so He came out of His cradle and looked all over for her, crying. When He heard the sound of the churning of curd He went there and His mother suckled Him, thereby neglecting a pot of milk that she had on the fire. As soon as the milk started to rise, to boil over, she took the jewel of her house (Kṛṣṇa) from her breast, seated Him somewhere and went to save the milk.. Gopāla was very angry at being thus neglected and He entered His mother’s storehouse to break a pot of yoghurt, which then spilled all over the courtyard. This His offence caused the Dāma-bandhana pastime, in which He was punitively bound up with ropes by His mother. We must consider here Who was bound up by mother Yaśodā, and how it was possible for Him to get bound up. The whole universe trembles when He merely makes His eyebrows twitch – *vāyuś calati mad bhayāt*. The Lord says: “The wind blows out of fear of Me.” God is full of six godly attributes (beauty, wealth, renunciation, knowledge, fame and power), yet all these powers are defeated by the love of His mother. Alas! The Lord is greedy for the love

of His devotees only! His endless prowess is swallowed by this love. Although He is Almighty, He accepts bondage at the hands of His mother, the Queen of Vraja. Although He is worshipped by all, He blissfully carries the shoes of His father Nanda on His head. The *gopīs'* feelings of loving possessiveness towards Kṛṣṇa is even greater – they manage to enslave and bind Him. Blessed is our Lord, blessed is the love divine of the *gopīs!* The Lord is only ensnared by *prema*, divine love. Has such a thing ever been heard of by anyone in the past? Has anyone ever seen this before? Blessed is Vṛndāvana, which is filled with divine flavours of loving sentiments (*rasa*) towards Kṛṣṇa! The *gopīs'* hearts are filled with this *rasa*, and our *rasika nāgara* (Kṛṣṇa, the hero of divine flavours) is filled with this *rasa*. Hence the Upaniṣads say *raso vai saḥ* – “He surely is Rasa.” This nectar-ocean ocean of *gopī bhāva* can be contemplated age after age, there will be no end to such contemplation. The more you meditate on it the deeper you will dive, you will drown in it. Hence Rūpa Gosvāmī has warned: *mā prekṣiṣṭhā tava yadi bandhu saṅge'sti raṅga* – “Don't look at Govinda playing His flute if you want to enjoy fun with your friends!” And now I was only speaking of Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes! Mother Yaśodā thinks that Kṛṣṇa is her little child and she prays to Lord Nārāyaṇa that her son will be treading the straight path. Although Garga Muni repeatedly told Yaśodā that her son is *nārāyaṇa samo guṇaiḥ* (Ś.B. 10.8.19), equal to Lord Nārāyaṇa in attributes, mother does not hear it really, for her heart is filled with motherly love towards Kṛṣṇa. Mother Yaśodā thinks: “Whatever Garga Muni says, it's alright, Kṛṣṇa is just my little child!” Blessed is mother Yaśodā! Blessed is her motherly love divine for Kṛṣṇa!”

- Letter, June 23, 1998

Advaita Dās: “In our manual for worship it is prescribed to recite the Dāmodarāṣṭakam daily in the month of Kārtik, but a person who worships Kṛṣṇa with the feelings of a *manjari* may not feel attracted to this. Should it still be recited daily in Kārtik?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “One can recite the Dāmodarāṣṭakam daily in the month of Kārtika. Those who are in the mood of *manjaris* can still relish this pastime as observers of mother Yaśodā's motherly love for Her son. She is, after all, the very form of *vātsalya rasa*. All these rules can still be practised as secondary alternatives.”



VIDHI-MATTERS (rules and regulations)

Advaita Dās: “When one has actual, tangible deities is it proper or acceptable to worship them mentally (in case one is unable to worship them physically)?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “When an actual, tangible deity is there They must be physically worshipped and mentally one must remember Their forms, attributes and pastimes. When an installed deity is not there one can just render mental service, meditating on Their forms, attributes and pastimes. Basically, Caitanya Caritāmṛta teaches:

*mane nija siddha deha koriyā bhāvan,
rātri din seva rādhā kṛṣṇera caraṇa*

“Within your mind think of your *siddha deha* (spiritual body) and thus worship Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s lotus-feet day and night.” Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu gives the following instruction:

*smartavyaṁ satataṁ viṣṇor vismartavyo na jātūcit
sarva vidhi niṣedha syur etayor eva kinkarāḥ*

“Always remember Kṛṣṇa and never forget Him – all other rules and prohibitions are subservient to this.”

- Letter, November 4, 1997

Advaita Dās: “For how long is the Jhulan festival observed? The Vrajavāsīs do it from *tr̥tīyā* until full moon, the Gauḍīyas do it from Ekādaśī to Pūrnimā, again others only on Pūrnimā. How do we observe it?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “We render this service like the Gauḍīya devotees, from Ekādaśī until Pūrnimā.”

- Letter, November 20, 2000

Advaita Dās: “When the time to break Ekādaśī on Dvādaśī has expired, is the Ekādaśī-*vrata* then totally lost?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “One must break Ekādaśī on the prescribed time, but if that time has expired one should beg forgiveness at the feet of the holy name (chant to atone).”

- Letter, November 20, 2000

Advaita Dās: “If grains are accidentally offered to Śrī Gurudeva on Ekādaśī, then what is the atonement?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “One should then do *hari-nāma japa* and beg forgiveness to the holy name. He is very kind, he will surely forgive you, this firm faith you must have. Don’t fear.”

Advaita Dās: “How are Śrī Janmāṣṭamī and Rādhāṣṭamī celebrated? With feelings of sorrow out of separation, for that may be the reason why we fast, or do we celebrate with feelings of elation?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Śrī Janmāṣṭamī and Rādhāṣṭamī are celebrated with feelings of elation in honour of His auspicious visit to the Earth, and in that mood we fast. Śrī Hari-*kīrtan* and *japa* are being done.”

- Letter, November 20, 2000

Advaita Dās: “If flowers and Tulasi leaves are not available can they be offered mentally?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Yes.”

Advaita Dās: “If we are busy travelling or working on a job, there may be no time or opportunity to do *āhnikā* (daily rites of *mantra japa*, oblations etc.). Is that a bad thing?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “If you have no time to do *pūjā* or *āhnikā* due to work or business then leave it. Beg forgiveness, there will be no offence. You can mentally recollect your *mantras* too. Actually the mental practise is primary.”

- Letter, November 3, 1998

While on a journey one can also just wash hands and feet, put on clean cloth or a woollen garment and do one's *āhnikā*.

Advaita Dās: “In our manual for worship it is prescribed to offer oblations to the Sun-god – is that not contrary to the Viṣṇu-*niṣṭhā* (loyalty) of the Vaiṣṇavas? After all, Bhagavad Gītā 7.20 says: *kāmais tais tair hṛta jñāna prapadyante'nya devatā* – “Those whose knowledge is stolen by desire worship other gods.” Otherwise, does it have any connection with Rādhārāṇī's daily worship of the Sun-god?

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “The oblations are offered to the Sun-god to be enthused in loyalty to Śrī Kṛṣṇa by remembering the Kāma Gāyatrī. All moving and non-moving beings are petitioned to receive their blessings, so that we can attain devotion to Kṛṣṇa – *tomarā bāndhava mora, ei āsīrbād koro braje jeno pāi braja nāthe*. Those oblations are offered to receive blessings to attain Viṣṇu-*niṣṭhā*. The verse *kāmais tais tair hṛta jñāna* refers to selfish desires for a wife, sons, wealth etc. This is rejectable, but not the desire for loyalty towards Kṛṣṇa and devotion to Him. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī only invokes the Sun-god so that She can meet Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *tila ādh nā dekhle jāy re moriyā* – “If I don't see Him for even half a moment I will die.” That is why She does this.”

- Letter, March 11, 1997

Advaita Dās: “If I accidentally put a *prasādī* cloth on a large pile of clean clothes and garments, then the whole pile of garments became *prasādī*? The whole pile of clothes then have to be washed? And also the shelve on which they were lying has to be washed? How far does this contagiousness go? The walls, the whole house is then also *prasādī*?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “We are man, a kind of creature in His creation with advanced form and wit. This much. We are not *devatā*, so we shall have to follow *śāstra* and abide by the manners and custom of the ancestors.”

- Letter, September 28, 2001

Advaita Dās: “If I touch the deity with my hand is my hand then *prasādī*?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “The hand is not *prasādī*.”

- Letter, July 25, 1996

Advaita Dās: During *bāhya pūjā* (external worship) must we offer the deity's *prasādi* flowers, incense and lamps to the Guru or must we offer these things *amanīya*?

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: The articles must be offered first to Śrī Kṛṣṇa – the flowers and Tulasī-leaves are then stuck to his head.”

- Letter, June 30, 2001

Advaita Dās: “Can we and should we take an oath on the Bhāgavat or Gītā in a court case like the Christians take an oath on the Bible?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “It is not good to take an oath anywhere and everywhere. Such an oath must only be taken to uphold the truth, in rare cases.”

- Letter, March 19, 1998

Advaita Dās: “A massage of oil and a rubbing off with powder should only be given to the deities in the winter (or in one's *smaraṇam*), or the whole year through?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Only in the winter.”

- Letter, January 25, 2000

Advaita Dās: “In Vraja I heard that if one does not do one's *āhnika* for 5-6 days, due to disease, *māyā* or any other reason, one should take initiation again. I have not seen such a rule in the scriptures though. What is the atonement for not doing *āhnika* for a long time, due to disease?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “The scriptures say *āture niyamo nāsti* – ‘In emergency cases there is no law.’ When one is unable to practise then Hari can still be remembered mentally – this destroys all sins. To get re-initiated is exaggerated and improper. It is forbidden in scripture. Remember you once quoted this slogan from Śrīpād Śankarācārya – *guror anghri padme manaś cen na lagnaṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ* “When the mind is not fixed on the lotus feet of the Guru, then what is the use of it all? Remembering the Guru is the very life of the *sādhaka*.”

- Letter, March 19, 1998

Advaita Dās: “Concerning *japa* - What is a *pherā* and what is a *granthi*?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “One *pherā* is a string of 108 beads (one ‘round’) and a *granthi* is 4 of these *pherās*. This is the minimum amount of *nāma japa* that a *sādhaka* should do daily. After that, the more the better.”

- Letter, September 2, 1998

Advaita Dās: “It is prescribed that this one *granthi* must be done sitting cross-legged on an *āsan*. The other extra rounds one can also chant sitting on a chair or so?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “Yes.”

- Letter, September 2, 1998

Advaita Dās: “If one fails to chant a nice quota of *japa* can one still get the grace of the Guru? How important is it?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “If one is too busy in basically devotional activities one may chant less rounds, no need to worry – the Lord will forgive it. One should generally sit down on an *āsana* and do a fixed number of rounds of *japa*. This is the rule. There is no need to count mental *japa* (without beads) or *kīrtana*. Keeping count is not overly important.

- Letter, June 23, 1998

Advaita Dās: What to do during a solar- or lunar eclipse? In Vraja I heard that an eclipse is inauspicious and one should stay at home and close the doors, windows and curtains. On the other hand Śrīmad Bhāgavata (10.82) narrates that *sādhus* bathed at Kuru-kṣetra during a full eclipse. So what do we do during an eclipse?

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “During a solar- or lunar eclipse one should do *harināma japa* and *kīrtan*. When the eclipse is over one must take a bath.”

Letter, January 25, 2000

(Tapan Kumār Adhikārī, another prominent student of Sādhu Bābā, adds to this that during eclipses one should also refrain from deity worship and cooking)

phone conversation June 23, 2010

Advaita Dās: “Can we drink water on the main fasting days like Dol Purnimā, Śrī Janmāṣṭamī and Śiva Rātri? When it is time to break the fast (in the late evening on Dol Purnimā and Nṛsimha Caturdaśī) what can be eaten? Only Ekādaśī-*prasād* like fruits and milk or also grains like bread and rice?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “One can break the fast either with fruits and milk or with grains like rice. Only on the long fasting days like Janmāṣṭamī and Śiva Rātri the fast should be broken with grains the next day. Caranāmṛta, fruits and milk can be taken at midnight, on the other days these things can be eaten on the prescribed time of that day. Abhiṣeka on Dol Purnimā is done in the evening, on Janmāṣṭamī at midnight. The scriptures say that all these vows are observed from ages 8 to 80. On Bābā’s disappearance day no fasting is observed. After *abhiṣekha* one takes *prasāda*.”

- Letter, November 20, 2000

Advaita Dās: “Why the *mantra* is secret and the Holy Name public?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “*Mantra, tantra* etc. and the means to practise them are grave things, and must stay like that – hence they are to be kept secret; it is forbidden to reveal them all over the place to unqualified persons. On the other hand, the glories of Hari-nāma and Kṛṣṇa-kathā are to be upheld. It is not forbidden to preach the glories of Hari-nāma. Japa and meditation, though, must be done silently.”

- Letter, June 30, 2001

Advaita Dās: “In our manual-of-worship oblations to the forefathers are prescribed. If one’s elders and forefathers are not Hindu or Vaiṣṇava, is this still to be done?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “This *tarpan*-oblation is offered for the sake of all living beings, and the soul has no race or caste. The soul is not a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Buddhist. This *tarpan*-oblation is offered for the well-being or liberation of all living beings, all the way up to Brahma-loka, for as long as Kṛṣṇa consciousness does not come to the souls that are bound by *māyā* they cannot become liberated, but will have to keep on rotating in the wheel of birth and death. There is no caste or race in the soul, nor is anyone our relative.”

- Letter, June 23, 1998

Advaita Dās: “How long should we keep the *bhoga*-offering to the Lord on the altar?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “The loving devotee should offer his food to his beloved Lord. He will point it out in the heart of His beloved devotee.”

- Letter, March 19, 1998

Advaita Dās: “In the absence of an actual Tulasī-plant can one also worship a picture of Tulasī? If so, how is such a picture to be worshipped? Are lamps and incense also offered to Tulasī during Ārati? If so, then when? Before or after Sītānāth, the Guru and the devotees? Or is Tulasī to be worshipped separately?”

Nirañjan Prasād Dās: “In the absence of a Tulasī-tree one can also worship her mentally. It must be done separately, after the worship of Sītānātha, the Guru and the devotees.”

- Letter, March 19, 1998

Additional rule:

For Janmāṣṭamī’s *abhiṣeka* Giridhārī is bathed at midnight, the deity in the temple at midday.

- Namitā Sāhā, August 22, 2011

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During our last goodbye Nirañjan Babu energised me by quoting Sanātan Dās ‘গুরু পাদপদ্মে রহে যাঁর নিষ্ঠা ভক্তি; জগত তারিতে সে ধরে মহাশক্তি’ “Those who are fixed in devotion to the lotus feet of the Guru, bear the great power of delivering the world.’