



THE
GUARDIAN
OF DEVOTION

ALL GLORIES TO ŚRĪ GURU AND GAURĀNGA

THE GUARDIAN OF DEVOTION

*A
Chronicle
of a
Transcendental Relationship*

His Divine Grace
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Sridhara Deva Goswami**
Founder-Acharya of Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math



*śrī guru-gaura-gāndharvā-
govindāṅghrīn gaṇaiḥ saha
vande prasādato yeśāṁ
sarvārambhāḥ śubhaṅkarāḥ*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master, unto Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrimati Rādhārāṇī, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Govinda, accompanied by their respective associates. All invocations become auspicious by their mercy.

Foreword

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, the post-graduate study for Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas begins with the invocation *vande gurūn*, “I offer my respectful obeisances unto the spiritual masters.” Therein, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī reveals that the fully blossoming spiritual conception comes to embrace a plurality of *gurus*.

The scriptures in general present a very broad and universal conception of Śrī Guru, laying stress on the spiritual substance—that divine current of nectar that flows down to this plane from the highest domain through the inspiration that is found in the heart of a real Vaiṣṇava. To deny divine revelation through another agent in the name of being chaste to one’s *guru* can be offensive and even suicidal.

As *guru* is the functioning principle of Divinity revealing Himself in this world, according to our different stages of realizations, He may appear in different forms. The chastity of a disciple is demonstrated in recognizing the divine presence of Śrī Guru wherever it is found, and bowing his head at the lotus feet of the agent through whom Divinity is so kindly revealing Himself.

The true chastity of the Vraja *gopīs* was shown in their answering the flute-call of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the dead of night, although apparently abandoning their husbands to do so (*yā niśā sarva-bhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti samyāmi*). So while some are sleeping in the bodily conception of Śrī Guru, others are awakening to the

inner dimension of his divine personality. His Divine Grace Śrila Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāja writes in *Śrī Guru and His Grace*, “We must not identify our *guru* with the appearance we perceive with our physical senses. Our inner identification of him will be clarified according to the growth of our vision. When our vision increases and takes shape from material to transcendental, his look will also change accordingly. Otherwise, what we see will be based on a material conception. And to force the material conception onto Divinity is a crime, it is ignorance, it is erroneous. We have to free ourselves from the snare of identifying reality with the physical form presented to our senses. By eliminating the external conception, we have to enter into the internal, and that will be all-important to a progressive disciple, if we want to go to the inner world of substance.”

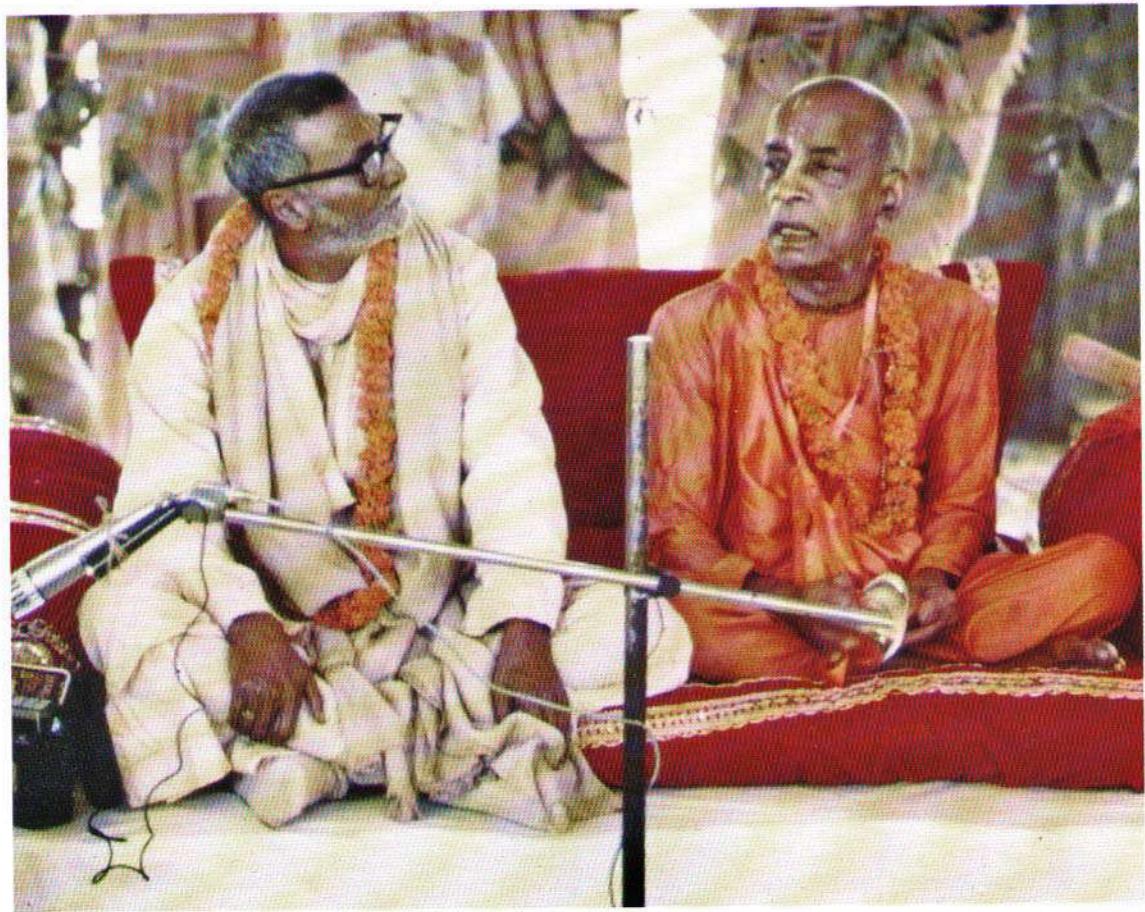
In proportion to the depth and intensity of our inner hankering for a connection with Divinity, our conception of *guru* will expand. In separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* began approaching even the trees and enquiring, “Where is Kṛṣṇa?” Śrila Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Thākura writes, “The reflected form of the lotus feet of Śrī Guru in different receptacles constantly reveals many new matters for our instruction.” For those whose divine eye is awakened, they will find traces of Divinity everywhere and in everything.

It is our hope that the readers of this small booklet will approach the contents with an attitude of humble submission and an open heart. And we pray that their attachment to the lotus feet of Śrī Guru may be increased.

Bhakti Sudhīra Goswāmī



Om Viṣṇupāda
Paramahaṁsa Parivrājaka-cārya-varya
Āṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad
Bhakti Rakṣaka
Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāja



Editor's note: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī is affectionately addressed by his disciples as "Śrīla Prabhupāda," and His Divine Grace Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja is known to his disciples as "Śrīla Guru Mahārāja." However, since they both refer to their spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, as "Guru Mahārāja" and "Prabhupāda" throughout the text, in order to avoid ambiguity we have referred to them by their sannyāsa names.

Śikṣā Guru

"Our relationship is very intimate..."

Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda and Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāja first met sometime in the year 1930 in Allahabad, India. In a taped conversation recorded in a 1973 meeting at Śrīdhara Mahārāja's *maṭha* at Navadwipa Dhāma, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī recalls: "So, we are very fortunate to hear His Divine Grace, Om Visṇupāda Paramahāṁsa Parivrajakācārya Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja. By age and by experience, in both ways, he is senior to me. I was fortunate to have his association since a very long time, perhaps in 1930, something like that. At that time, he did not accept *sannyāsa*; he just left home, and as a *vanaprastha*, in his white dress, he went to Allahabad.

"[To Śrīdhara Mahārāja] Mahārāja, I think you remember the incident when you went to Allahabad? On that auspicious occasion, we were connected. There is a long story, it will take time, but I had the opportunity of associating with Śrīdhara Mahārāja for several years. Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda liked him to prepare me.

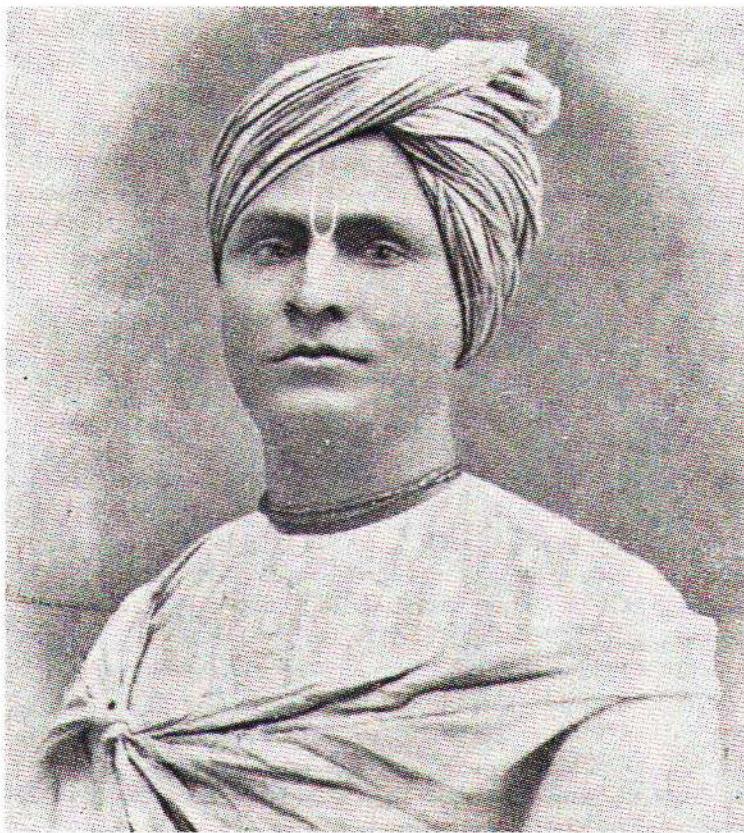
"Śrīdhara Mahārāja lived in my house for many years, so naturally, we had very intimate talks and he was my good advisor. I took his advices, instructions, very seriously because from the very beginning I know that he is a pure Vaiṣṇava, a pure devotee, and I wanted to associate with him and tried to help him also. Our relationship is very intimate."

Herein, we find the history of a transcendental relationship between these two pure devotees of the Lord. Addressing Śrīdhara Mahārāja as “His Divine Grace” and Oṁ Viṣṇupāda—forms of address for one regarded as a spiritual master—Bhaktivedānta Swāmī has transcended the norms of social etiquette and superficial formality. Intimately associating together for a concentrated period of over five years, often for five to seven hours daily, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī considered that “Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda liked him to prepare me” for his future expansive missionary activities in the Western world. While remembering their intimate talks, specifically in regard to *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīdhara Mahārāja recalls the depth in penetration of their discussions. “Once while discussing the verse *dadāmi buddhi yogam tam yena māṁ upayānti te* [BG. 10.10] ‘I give them the understanding by which they can come to Me.’” I submitted to him that here, *upayānti* is indicative of *parakiya rasa* [paramour relationship]. On this point he agreed with me, saying, ‘Yes, at this point there cannot be anything but the *parakiya rasa* of Vraja. The conclusion of *Bhāgavad-gītā* must come to this.’”

Recognizing Śrīdhara Mahārāja as “a pure Vaiṣṇava, a pure devotee” since the beginning of their relationship, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī most highly valued his instructions and advice. He would often consult with him regarding the spiritual significance of his failing business and family relationships.

An example of how Bhaktivedānta Swāmī tried to help Śrīdhara Mahārāja in his preaching work is seen in his appreciating Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s uncanny ability for extracting the essence of the scriptures. He helped to finance the publication of Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s original Sanskrit-Bengali work entitled *Prapanna-jivanāmrta: The Nectar of Surrender*. The book, as well as containing original Sanskrit verses composed by Śrīdhara Mahārāja, is a compilation of verses from various Vaiṣṇava scriptures such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and includes excerpts from the works of Rūpa Goswāmī. It is divided according to the six divisions of surrender.

Constantly associating, whether in Allahabad, Calcutta, or other parts of India, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī and Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s relationship continually developed. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī continues to recall their meeting:



*"O Sāragrahi
Vaiṣṇava soul,
thou art an
angel fair..."*

"In my householder life I had opened an office in Bombay for our business. The Bombay Gauḍiya Math was established by Śrīdhara Mahārāja and myself. We made two parties for begging, collecting alms. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, myself, and Bhakti Saraṅga Goswāmī Mahārāja. So, I took them to my chemist friends and I collected about five hundred rupees. Śrīdhara Mahārāja would speak, I would introduce, and Goswāmī Mahārāja would canvass."

In the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-lilāmṛta*, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswāmī writes, "Abhay would often accompany Śrīdhara Mahārāja and his assistants at preaching programs, where he would play the *mṛdaṅga*. And when Śrīdhara Mahārāja fell ill, Abhay led the other devotees on preaching engagements, performing *kirtana*, playing *mṛdaṅga*, and giving lectures on the *Bhāgavatam*."



While still in Bombay, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī and Śrīdhara Mahārāja were the receiving party for a Gauḍiya Math *sannyāsī* upon his return from Europe. Although dismayed by his changed appearance which was missing the *tridāṇḍa* of a Gauḍiya *sannyāsī*, the *sikha* of a Vaiṣṇava, as well as the traditional robes, they still eagerly inquired in regard to the preaching field in the West. The *sannyāsī* remarked, "They ask questions that cannot be answered." Concerned, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī inquired further as to the nature of those questions. One after another Śrīdhara Mahārāja answered them all. At last, the *sannyāsī* was left dumbfounded and Bhaktivedānta Swāmī boldly declared, "Today, Europe has been defeated by Asia!"



During the lifetime of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Śrīdhara Mahārāja once composed a poem describing the ontological positions of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and the line of disciplic succession stemming from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura was so pleased with the poem's ontological depth and its happy style that he remarked, "Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written this through him. Now I am satisfied that although I may go, at least one man remains behind who can represent my conclusions." In further appreciation of Śrīdhara Mahārāja's writings, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura informed the editors of the Gauḍiya Māṭha's periodicals, "If you include articles written by Śrīdhara Mahārāja, the quality of your publications will be greatly improved."



After the disappearance of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the Gauḍiya Māṭha gradually diverged. With full knowledge of the events surrounding the disintegration of the Gauḍiya Māṭha, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī told his disciples in the same 1973 conversation, "Our relationship is very intimate. After the breakdown of the Gauḍiya Māṭha, I wanted to organize another organization, making Śrīdhara Mahārāja the head."

Reciprocating the appreciation, Śrīdhara Mahārāja advised the leaders of the Gauḍiya Sangha to confer the title "Bhaktivedānta" upon the then Abhay Caran. Later, his *sannyāsa-guru*, Śrīpāda Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Mahārāja, one of the seniormost disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and the first *sannyāsa*-disciple of Śrīdhara Mahārāja,



gave *sannyāsa* to Abhay Caran, retaining the title "Bhaktivedānta," and conferring the *sannyāsa* name "Swāmī."

Additionally, when Bhaktivedānta Swāmī returned to India in October of 1967, after his successful preaching initiative in America, he stayed with Śrīdhara Mahārāja in Navadvipa, and observed his Vyāsa-pūja celebration. At that time, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī wrote a letter to a disciple saying, "Yesterday, we have all come to Nabadwipa dhāma. This place is an establishment of one of my Godbrothers. It is a very nice and extensive place, and my Godbrother B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja has spared one entire house for our stay. He has also agreed to cooperate with our society. We shall observe his birthday celebration, and the *brahmācarīs* shall learn how to celebrate the spiritual master's birthday." Shortly afterwards, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī asked Śrīdhara Mahārāja to be the president of his newly formed society—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

"Now I am satisfied that although I may go, at least one man remains behind who can represent my conclusion."

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī

Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja is in the third row on the right.



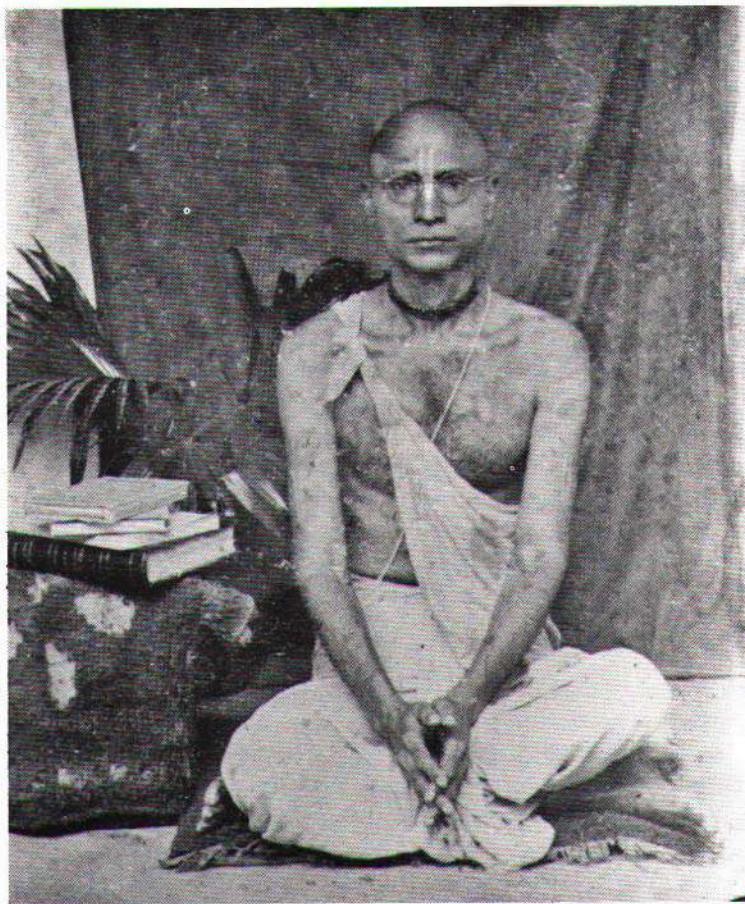
During the Vyāsa-Pūjā celebration, one of Bhaktivedānta Swamī's disciples saw Bhaktivedānta Swamī and Śrīdhara Mahārāja fully absorbed in a deep discussion in Bengali. The disciple inquired from Bhaktivedānta Swamī what was the nature of their talk, and he replied, "If I were to tell you, you would faint. Śrīdhara Mahārāja has very high realizations."

That Bhaktivedānta Swamī continually regarded Śrīdhara Mahārāja as his advisor throughout his life is clear in the following letter written by him to one of Śrīdhara Mahārāja's disciples, Śrīpāda Govinda Mahārāja. Concerned about his failing health, he had written Śrīdhara Mahārāja asking whether he should continue living in the United States or return to India to live his last days in Vṛndāvana. After receiving Śrīdhara Mahārāja's reply, he wrote, "What Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja has directed, I take it on my head. He is my always well-wisher. After the departure of Prabhupāda it is appropriate that I should accept his direction. I got direction from him that I shall live in this country forever."

Sometimes it is said that one's preaching contribution can be judged according to the number of temples established, devotees converted, and books published and distributed.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja travelled and preached extensively all over India, personally accompanying Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura for many years. Nearly fifty years ago, he established the Śrī Chaitanya Saraswata Math on the banks of the Ganges in Nabadwīpa Dhāma, which is now a thriving institution. His followers have established temples in major cities throughout the world. His Sanskrit and Bengali writings have been appreciated by both scholars and devotees for their originality, depth of realization, and happy poetic style. Published and widely distributed throughout the world, they are now available in English, Spanish, Hindi, Portuguese, German, French, and are being translated into other languages.

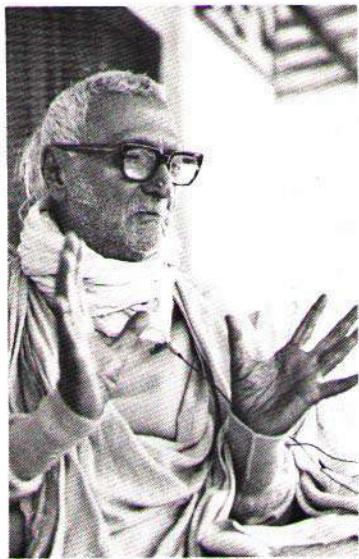
Throughout his life, Bhaktivedānta Swamī always maintained the highest respect and confidence in Śrīdhara Mahārāja. He considered that whenever it was not possible for his disciples to proceed directly under his guidance, that they should take direction from Śrīdhara Mahārāja. He once wrote in a letter to one of his students, "Because you are my disciple, and I think, a sincere soul, it is my duty to refer you to someone who is competent to act as a *sikṣā-guru*. For spiritual advancement of



*"I consider
Śrīdhara
Mahārāja to be
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guru, what to
speak of the benefit
you can have by
his association."*

*Bhaktivedānta
Swāmī*

life, we must go to someone who is actually practicing spiritual life. So, if you are actually serious to take instructions from a śikṣā-guru, I can refer you to the one who is the most highly competent of all my godbrothers. This is B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, whom I consider to be even my śikṣā-guru, so what to speak of the benefit that you can have by his association. So, if you are serious about the advancement of your spiritual life, I will advise you to go to Śrīdhara Mahārāja. It will be very good for your spiritual benefit, and I will feel that you are safe. When I was in India with the others, we lived with Śrīdhara Mahārāja. You can also make arrangements for your other Godbrothers to go there in the future. So, live peacefully with Śrīdhara Mahārāja, and thereby you will be spiritually enlightened."



In this passage, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī describes Śrīdhara Mahārāja as “the most competent of all my Godbrothers,” “someone competent to act as *śikṣā-guru*,” and in an astounding statement, he declares, “I consider Śrīdhara Mahārāja to be my *śikṣā-guru*, so what to speak of the benefit that you can have from his association!”

What Bhaktivedānta Swāmī means by *śikṣā-guru* is best explained in his own words. In his purports to the *Ādi-līlā* of *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, he states: “One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswāmī states that there are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service and the other is he who invokes the disciple’s spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions. There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.” (CC. *Ādi* 1.47)

Although it may be said that Bhaktivedānta Swāmī encouraged his godbrothers in general, no one anywhere can produce a similar statement of endorsement. The fact is that Bhaktivedānta Swāmī possessed the highest respect and appreciation for Śrīdhara Mahārāja, and Śrīdhara Mahārāja is unparalleled in his understanding and admiration of Bhaktivedānta Swāmī, as evinced in the following eulogy:

“So our Swāmī Mahārāja has done a miracle! Thākura Bhaktivinoda conceived and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura began to translate this conception into action. And we find that through Swāmī Mahārāja, in his last days, it has been fulfilled to such a great extent. We are happy, we are glad, we are proud!”

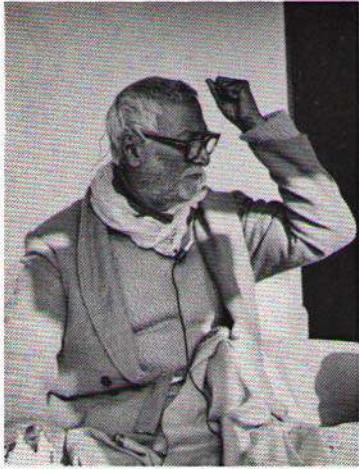
In response to this, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī with great humility, his voice choked with emotion, tearfully replied, “So, by *guru* and *Vaiṣṇava*, whatever position I have got it is by *guru*’s mercy and the blessings of the *Vaiṣṇavas*. Otherwise, how I may have? So, I wish that Śrīdhara Mahārāja may bestow his blessings as he was doing always, and may *guru mahārāja* help me so I can do some service. By his grace it has become successful. I have no credit. I do not know how things are



happening, because I am not at all qualified: *chadiya vaiṣṇava seva, niṣṭara payeche keba*. [Without serving an ideal Vaiṣṇava, who can be delivered from the clutches of *māyā*?]

And after the disappearance of Bhaktivedānta Svāmī, Śrīdhara Mahārāja declared, "I consider him to be *śaktiyavesa avatāra*, and it is confirmed in his writings on his spiritual journey through the Atlantic. How he landed there in America, and the nature of his beginning the movement, his

Śāstra-nipuṇa: scriptural genius. Nyāsiśvaraṁ srīdharam: crown jewel of sannyāsīs.



intense degree of dedication to Kṛṣṇa and dependence, and how much he made himself empty of any other desire than the order of his *gurudeva*—quite empty that Kṛṣṇa came down to help him, and it is corroborated that Kṛṣṇa worked on his behalf. In his poem, *Prayer to the Lotus Feet of Kṛṣṇa*, we find him pleading with Kṛṣṇa, “My dear Brother, Your good fortune will come to You only when Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī becomes pleased with You.” Seeing his *gurudeva* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as Rādhārāṇī’s delegation and his order as Her divine service, he humbly submitted that he did not feel himself worthy or fit to discharge the divine service, so he enlisted Kṛṣṇa in the service of his *guru*. He had completely dedicated himself to the purpose, he was so earnest in his prayer to Kṛṣṇa that he may discharge the duty that he has been given by his *guru maharaja*, that divine force, power, came down to help him. Otherwise, it is impossible. It is not a thing of the ordinary level that anyone will do, but the highest thing has been taken down to the lowest position so extensively. It cannot but be the divine power, embodied and in a great intensity and magnitude! So, *śaktyaveśa-avatāra*, I cannot but take him to be so.”



With such appreciation, there should be little doubt why Bhaktivedānta Swāmī had implicit faith in Śrīdhara Mahārāja. He had even heard directly from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura of the exceptional qualifications of Śrīdhara Mahārāja. In their last known recorded meeting in 1977, just prior to Bhaktivedānta Swāmī’s leaving this mortal world, we find him imploring Śrīdhara Mahārāja to take up residence at his temple in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura.



The conversation that ensues is a transcript of their taped conversation of March 1977.

Bhaktivedānta Swāmī: I do not know for how long I will be able to carry on. So, I came to see Śrīdhara Mahārāja.

Devotee: If you all go away, then the world will become dark.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: [to Bhaktivedānta Swāmī] It is so wonderful that the will of the Lord becomes manifest through someone.

Bhaktivedānta Swāmī: I want very much, Mahārāja, that you come and stay at Māyāpura. Because Prabhupāda always desired that you preach. He told me quite a few times, “Why don’t you pull him out?” [They both laugh.] You know, I also tried to some extent before, but somehow or other it did not



*The two foremost
disciples of Śrī
Śrīla Bhaktisidd-
hānta Sarasvatī
Thākura at the Śrī
Chaitanya
Saraswata Math
in Navadwīpa
Dhāma.*

work out. Now, why don't you come and stay at Mayapura? Śrīla Prabhupāda told me also, "Śrīdhara Mahārāja is one of the finest preachers." I want to take you everywhere. At least at the place we have in Mayapura, people are coming from all over the world. Why don't you come and stay there? If you just agree, then whatever kind of building you want, I will arrange it for you. They are trying to build a house for me. So both of us will stay there. And whenever you want, you can come here to your *māṭha*.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Yes, as long as I am alive to fulfill Prabhupāda's desire.

Bhaktivedānta Svāmī: This is my earnest desire. Since you could not go around the world and preach, at least stay there and people will come to you. I shall make that arrangement. If you stay, then it will be helpful to me also. Sometimes I need to consult with someone but there is no one. There is no one that I can consult. I feel this deficiency very greatly.

Devotee: If he stays in Māyāpura, then, all kinds of people will get to hear from him.

Bhaktivedānta Svāmī: Yes, that's right.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Yes, people from all kinds of cultural backgrounds will come there.

Bhaktivedānta Svāmī: Yes, and they are already coming. And in that house I will make arrangements for an elevator so that you won't have to go through the difficulty of walking up and down the stairs. You won't even have to move a step yourself. I'll make arrangements for a car and a lift. My disciples are telling me that they will build a house for me. So, both of us will stay in that house. Most of the time I am travelling around, so if you are there, then they can get some guidance. So, Mahārāja, *please*, give me the order and I will make all the arrangements for you.

That Planetarium [The "Temple of Understanding"] also will be built under your direction. My idea is to combine the Indian culture and the American money—the lame man and the blind man policy. I tell them also that this will be very beneficial for the world.

Here, in their final meeting, Bhaktivedānta Svāmī prophetically refers to his imminent disappearance and reveals that it is in this connection that he has come to see Śrīdhara Mahārāja. In friendly jesting, they discuss Śrīdhara Mahārāja's reticence regarding large-scale preaching work. Of himself, Śrīdhara Mahārāja has remarked, "I did not want to become a big person. That is not my nature. I did not want to move around with many people. I am just satisfied with whatever I have. My spiritual thinking is my life. The conclusions of the scriptures, the advices of the *mahājanas*, to relish them and practice them and to discuss them in a small confidential circle, that is the main goal of my life." In the Ninth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Bhaktivedānta Svāmī, quoting Dhruva Mahārāja, writes: "My dear Lord, I am fully satisfied with whatever you have given me. I have nothing else to ask from



You, for I am fully satisfied to be engaged in Your service.' This is the mentality of a pure devotee who does not want anything material or spiritual from the Personality of Godhead. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is therefore called *kṛṣṇa-bhāvanamṛta-saṅgha*, the association of persons who are simply interested in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa."

Bhaktivedānta Swāmī testifies to his having personally heard Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī mark the high qualifications of Śrīdhara Mahārāja, whom he had once requested to go to the West. In this regard, Śrīdhara Mahārāja once remarked, "My *guru mahārāja* wanted me to go to the West for preaching, but I don't consider myself a fit person to preach in the West. Because, you see, I can't follow your intonation. So, [laughing] I must listen clearly, then I shall tell. So, in this way, I told that if you order, I must go, but I don't think that I am fit to preach in

the West. Anyhow, it was stopped, and Goswāmī Mahārāja was sent to the West." When Śridhara Mahārāja had been selected, one of his godbrothers came to him and revealed the reason why Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Ṭhākura had chosen him to preach in the West. This godbrother explained, "Do you know why Prabhupāda wanted you to be sent to the West? He said, 'Because he can't be converted.'"

And just twenty-four hours before his departure from this mortal world, Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati Ṭhākura called for his beloved disciple Śridhara Mahārāja, and asked him to sing the song of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura: *Śrī-rūpa-mañjari-pada* (the lotus feet of Rūpa Mañjari are my treasure). Śridhara Mahārāja recalls: "So I did, hesitatingly. My nature is always hesitating, pushing back. Then, Kuñja Babu asked me to stop. I was not a good singer, so as soon as he suggested, I stopped. Then, Kuñja Babu asked Puri Mahārāja of Kalna, 'You sing.' So he began. Then, Śrīla Prabhupāda was a little disturbed. 'I don't like to hear the sweet tune of the song,' he said. Then, he stopped, and I had to begin again with *śrī rūpa mañjari pada, sei mora sarīpada*. He wanted me to sing that song. That is the fulfillment of life of everyone of us, to be *rūpānuga*—followers of Śrī Rūpa."

Senior godbrothers who witnessed this exchange have described it as a "mystic transmission" in which Śridhara Mahārāja was given admittance into the eternal entourage of Śrī Rūpa Mañjari. Śridhara Mahārāja's humble vision, however, is that he was posted as the gatekeeper, the guardian of devotion (*bhakti-rakṣaka*), to protect the storehouse of conclusive truths about the full-fledged theistic conception of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

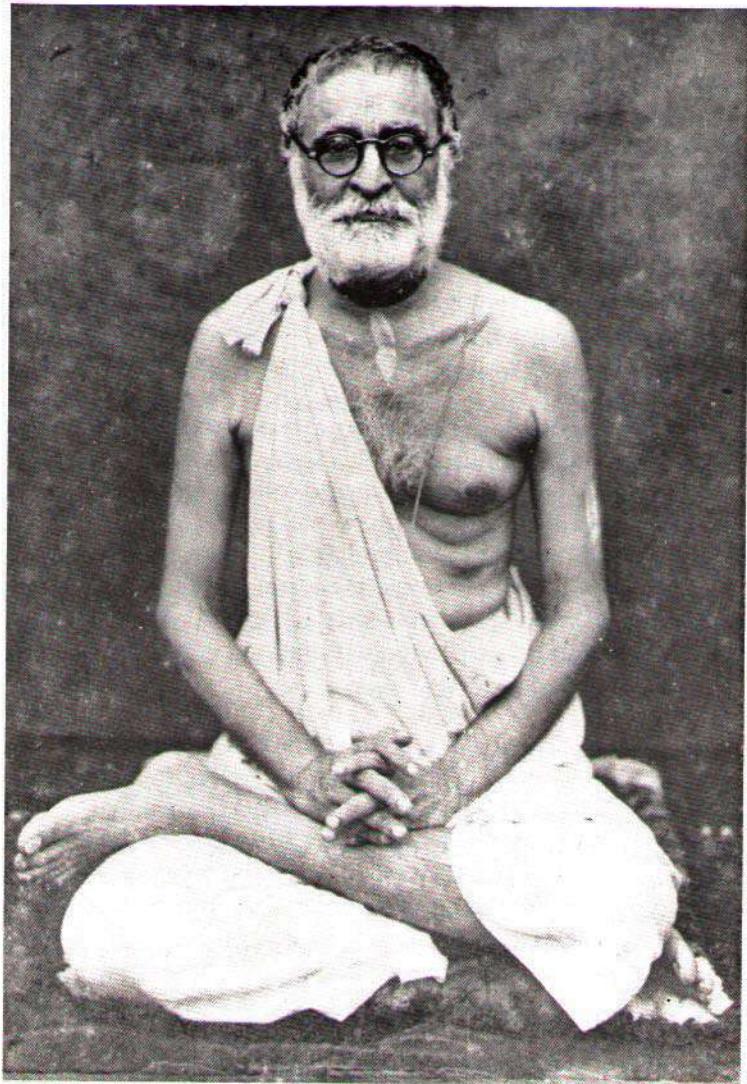
Further expressing his appreciation for Śridhara Mahārāja's "high realizations" in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Bhaktivedānta Swāmī says, "I want to take you everywhere. At least at the place we have in Māyāpura, people are coming from all over the world. Why don't you stay there?" Sometimes it is wondered why Śridhara Mahārāja apparently did not take up Bhaktivedānta Swāmī's offer. Śridhara Mahārāja explains, "I said, 'Of course I shall try to help you. Sometimes I shall go and stay there with you.' But I really did not think at the time that I shall survive him."

Finally, Bhaktivedānta Svāmī refers to "that planetarium." Śrīdhara Mahārāja is very fond of Sanātana Goswāmī's most famous work, the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmr̥tam*, in which devotees, devotional service, and Kṛṣṇa are described very scientifically. On the basis of this transcendental literature, Śrīdhara Mahārāja had contemplated an elaborate preaching exhibition, showing graphically, with the use of dioramas depicting the varieties of material and spiritual planetary systems, how the ultimate spiritual destination is Kṛṣṇa's own abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana. Due to insufficient funds, Śrīdhara Mahārāja humbly submitted his idea to Bhaktivedānta Svāmī, who approved, saying, "It will be built under your direction."

And just prior to his departure from this mortal world, Bhaktivedānta Svāmī advised his senior disciples that in his absence, when the necessity arose to consult higher authority, that they should consult Śrīdhara Mahārāja.

In conclusion, we humbly submit that the transcendental relationship between Bhaktivedānta Svāmī and Śrīdhara Mahārāja be viewed and respected in terms of their eternal spiritual positions, and long-standing appreciation and affection for one another.

Since the departure of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda, the "Guardian of Devotion," His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Deva Goswāmī Mahārāja, has repeatedly protected the teachings of the disciplic succession from perversion and misrepresentation as he has done for more than half a century, and has come to be recognized as a *jagad-guru* or world-ācārya.



Although outwardly he was like a lion, inwardly he was very very sweet, yet it could be traced only in his internal sweetness. Outwardly, the way of love was worshipped by him with grandeur, and awe and reverence, but his object was the simple and beautiful, divine love of Vṛndāvana, and his temperament in establishing that in the world was just like a lion's. After his departure I described his life in one *śloka*. If he were living today, I think he would say, that Śridhara Mahārāja has imprisoned me in a cage of poetry.

Prabhupāda Pranāma

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

nikhila-bhuvana-māyā-chinnāvicchinna-karttrī¹
vibudha-bahula-mrgyā-mukti-mohanta-dhāttrī²
śithilita-vidhi-rāgā-rādhya-rādheśa-dhānī³
vilasatu hṛdi nityam bhaktisiddhānta-vānī⁴

With his first step, he vigorously cut asunder the whole plane of exploitation, and with his second, he has put a stop to all the calculations of the different scholars with their different conceptions of salvation, liberated stages. With his third step, he has minimized the hardness and stiffness of the rules and regulations of calculative devotional service, by a touch of the divine love: crossing Vaikunṭha, he has given us the worship of Rādhā and Govinda.

Calculation, the rules and regulations, awe, reverence, all these things are minimized, checked, slackened with the softness of Vrndāvana within, and with the hardness of a devastator without, he created havoc in the materialistic world, fighting with one and all. Singlehandedly fighting against the whole world, and cutting asunder everything—that was his external attitude. And his second attitude was to put a stop to all scholarly researchers and doctorates of different departments, and to stop their boasting research; and third, to minimize, to slacken the grandeur of the worship of Nārāyaṇa. He caused the domain of love to descend into this plane with the service of Rādhā-Govinda, establishing the flow of divine love from the heart as all in all. With that we come to serve our object of worship, and he represented the service of Rādhā-Govinda as the highest attainment. That was his history. The real existence of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda is in *bhaktisiddhānta-vāṇi*, his divine teachings. May that *bhaktisiddhānta-vāṇi* dance eternally within the core of your heart.



Brahma-gāyatri

The meaning of the *brahma-gāyatri-mantra* must bring us to the conclusion of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The *gāyatri-mantra* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are one and the same. It is the very gist of the *Vedānta-sūtra*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the elaborate commentary of *gāyatri* (*artho'yaṁ brahmaśutrāṇāṁ, bhāratārtha-vinirṇayah, gāyatri-bhāṣya-rūpau'sau, vedārthaḥ parivṛṇihitah*). The meaning of the *gāyatri-mantra* must be in the line of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. If we analyze how this is possible, we shall uncover the steps between the *gāyatri-mantra* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

What is the meaning of *gāyatri*? The word *gāyatri* is a combination of two Sanskrit words: *gānat* (what is sung), *trāyate* (gives deliverance). This means, "a kind of song by which we can get our salvation, relief, emancipation." *Gāyatri* is known as *Veda-mātā*, the mother of the *Vedas*. And *Gāyatri* has produced the whole *Veda*. If we examine the Vedic conclusion from its most condensed aphorism to its most extensive expression, we shall find that it begins with *omkara*: the Vedic syllable *Om*. That truth is expressed as the *gāyatri-mantra*, then it appears in the form of the *Vedas*, and then as the *Vedānta-sūtra*. Finally, the Vedic conclusion is given its fullest expression in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Since the meaning, the purpose of Vedic knowledge progresses in this line, the *gāyatri* *mantra* must contain within it the meaning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, that is, that the *Kṛṣṇa* conception of Godhead is the highest.

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ଭାବେଦକ୍ଷୁଳେ ବସନ୍ତାନ୍ତୁଜାଆବିଭୈବକାରାଧନା-ଶ୍ରୀପୂର୍ବମ ।

This must be the meaning of the *gāyatri-mantra*, but the problem is how to extract *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—the Kṛṣṇa conception—from within the womb of *gāyatrī*. I heard that Jīva Goswāmī has given such an interpretation, but I could not find where it is written. I heard that he has given the meaning of *gāyatrī* leading to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Anyhow, the tendency awakened in me to draw the meaning to the Kṛṣṇa conception. The general meaning of *gāyatrī* is “that song which grants liberation.” Now, liberation must have some positive meaning. Liberation means not freedom from the negative side, but positive attainment. This is the definition given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *muktir hitvānyathā rūpam svarūpena vyavaṣṭhitih*—until and unless we attain the highest possible positive position, *mukti*, salvation, has not been effected. Mere withdrawal from the negative plane cannot be called liberation. Hegel has said that the object of our life is self-determination. We must determine our normal function in the organic whole—not mere emancipation from the negative side, but participation in a positive function in the domain of service. This is considered to be the highest attainment of life. This is the meaning of *gāyatrī*.

The word *gāyatrī* comes from two Sanskrit roots: *gānat*, and *trāyate*. *Trāyate* means positive attainment to the final stage (*sva-rūpena vyavasthitih*). And *gānat* means not mere sound, but musical sound. That musical sound which grants us the highest positive deliverance indicates the *saṅkirtana* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the flute-song of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The purport of the *brahma-gāyatrī-mantra* is as follows: The first word is *Om*. *Om* is the seed *mantra* which contains everything within it. *Bhūr* is where we are—*Bhū-loka*—the world of our experience. *Bhuvaḥ* is the world of mental acquisition. It is the support, the background of our experience. Our present position of experience is the effect of our mental acquisition. That we are here in the world of experience is no accident; we have acquired this position by our previous *karma*. The physical sphere, this present world of experience, is only the product, the outcome of our previous mental impulses. And the subtle world of previous *karma*, the mental sphere, is known as *Bhuvahloka*.

The next word in the *mantra* is *svaḥ*. Above Bhuvahloka is Svah-loka. The mental world (Bhuvahloka) means acceptance

and rejection: what to do and what not to do—"I like this, I don't like that." Svāh-loka, however, is the plane of decision, the world of intelligence (Buddhiloka). Our intelligence tells us, "You may like this, but don't do that, for then you will be the loser." That plane, the plane of reason, is known as Svāh-loka. In this way, this material world is composed of three general layers, *bhūr*, the physical world, *bhuvaḥ*, the mental world, and *svaḥ*, the intellectual world.

Of course a more detailed analysis will reveal seven layers: *Bhūr*, *Bhuvaḥ*, *Svaḥ*, *Mahā*, *Jana*, *Tapa*, and *Satyaloka*. This has been dealt with in detail by Sanātana Goswāmī in his *Bṛhad-Bhāgavatamṛtam*. Here, these seven strata have been summarized in three planes of existence: physical, mental, and intellectual. And these three planes of experience have been summarized in a word, *tat*.

The next word in the *brahma-gāyatrī* is *savitur*. *Savitur* generally means *sūrya*, the sun. And the sun means, figuratively, that which shows or illuminates, that by which we can see. The three gross and subtle strata within this world are shown to us by a particular thing, *savitur*. What is that? The soul. Actually, the world is not shown to us by the sun, but by the soul. What really gives us perception and allows us to see gross things? It is not actually the sun that helps us see; we see with the help of the soul. This is found in *Bhāgavad-gītā* (*yathā prakāśayaty ekah kṛtsnam lokam imāṁ raviḥ*). The soul expresses this world to us just as the sun does. The sun can show color to our eyes, but the ear can reveal the sound world, and the hand can reveal the touch world. So, really in the center is the soul. It is the soul who gives light to this world, who gives us an understanding of the environment, the world of perception. All perception is possible only because of the soul. Here, the word *savitur*, which generally means "sun," can only mean soul, for the soul, like the sun shows us everything.

All seven strata of our existence—represented by *bhūr*, the physical plane, *bhuvaḥ*, the mental plane, and *svaḥ*, the intellectual plane—have here been reduced to one entity: *tat*—"that." "That" is shown by the "sun" which in this context indicates the soul. Here, "soul" means "individual soul." The individual soul is the cause of his world. Not that the mind is in the world, but the world is in the mind. Berkeley has said that the world is in the mind. Here it is being expressed that

—
তর্গা ধারমসদা বিবরণকৃতকৰণং প্রকাশলোক প্রাপ্তি অধীঃ কৃতিরঃ
—

everything is seen with the help of the sun. If there is no sun, everything is dark—nothing can be seen. So without light, nothing can be seen. And in a higher sense, “light” means the soul. The soul is the subject and the soul’s object is the seven planes of experience within this world.

The next word in the *gāyatrī* mantra is *varenyam*. *Varenyam* means *pūjā*: worshipable, venerable. This indicates that although within this plane—the objective world—the soul is the subject, there is another domain which is to be venerated and worshipped by the soul. That is the Supersoul area.

That worshipable plane of transcendental existence is known as *bhargo*. *Bhargo* means the supersubjective area, the area of the Supersoul. This is mentioned in the first verse of *Śrimad-Bhāgavatam*: *dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakarī satyam param dhimahi*. Śrila Vyāsadeva says that here he is going to deal with another world whose pristine glory is so great that by its own ray, all misconceptions are brushed aside. The subject is the soul, and its object is all these worlds of experience. And the supersubject is the venerable area which is superior to the subject, the soul, that is the supersubjective area.

The word *bhargo* means “more subtle than the soul” and “holding a more important position than the soul.” So this means the Supersoul, the *Paramātmā*. In general, of course, the word *bhargo* ordinarily means light. Just as an x-ray can show us what the ordinary eye cannot see, *bhargo* is *svarūpa-sakti*—higher, more powerful light that can reveal the soul. And that energy—*bhargo*—belongs to whom? It belongs to *deva*. What is the meaning of the word *deva*? *Deva* means, “who is beautiful and playful,” that is, Śrī Kṛṣṇa: reality the beautiful. He is not a nondifferentiated substance, but is full of *līlā*, pastimes. *Deva* means pastimes and beauty combined, and this means Kṛṣṇa.

His domain is *bhargo*, brilliant, and it is *varenyam*, to be venerated by the *jīva* soul. What is the nature of that *svarūpa-sakti*? That is the *vaibhava*, the extension of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. She holds the full service responsibility and the energy to serve Kṛṣṇa. *Bhargo* is no less than the *vaibhava*, the extended body of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī which contains everything for the service of Kṛṣṇa. *Bhargo* represents *Mahābhava*, the predominated moiety, and *Deva*, Kṛṣṇa, is *Rasarāja*, the predominating moiety.

देवस्तुत्याकृत्यावाच्य-श्लो-विषयः
देवस्तुत्याकृत्यावाच्य-श्लो-विषयः

धीरार्द्धाधनमेव नानादितित्तदाधापदः
 धीरार्द्धाधनमेव नानादितित्तदाधापदः
 धीरार्द्धाधनमेव नानादितित्तदाधापदः
 धीरार्द्धाधनमेव नानादितित्तदाधापदः
 धीरार्द्धाधनमेव नानादितित्तदाधापदः

The flute-song of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, expressed as the *gāyatrī mantra*, is reminding us and engaging us in our service. And what is our service? Our service must be to surrender ourselves in the service of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī—to accept the suggestion of Rādhārāṇī. The *gāyatrī mantra* will excite us to be mindful about Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's lotus feet, to obey Her orders. She is mainly representing the whole serving area. So to try to engage ourselves in Her service, under Her order—to accept Her direction and to obey Her—that is the service of Śrī Rādhā. In this way, the meaning of the *gāyatrī mantra* has been drawn to *rādhā-dāsyam*, self-determination (*sva-rūpena vyavasthitih*).

In the meantime, the partial representations in *vātsalya* and *sākhyā rasa* are also part and parcel of the original mellow of conjugal love, *mādhurya rasa*. The *vātsalya rasa* devotee will serve Nanda and Yaśodā, the *sākhyā rasa* devotee will serve Śrīdhāma and Sudhāma, but ultimately, the whole system in one conception is included in Rādhārāṇī.

Rādhā-dāsyam, the service of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the ultimate meaning to be extracted from the *gāyatrī mantra*. That is the supreme end of our life. It cannot but be so. *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* is the ultimate, or full-fledged, theism to be extracted from the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, and so many other scriptures. All the revealed truth rises to its acme, to its highest position, in the conception given by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* teaches us that the highest realization, self-determination, is to be found in the service of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, that under Her guidance we may serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We must directly put all our energy at Her disposal and devote ourselves to Her service. She actually knows how to serve Kṛṣṇa. We aspire for a direct connection with Her service.

What is the meaning of the purport of *bhargo*? *Bhargo vai vṛṣabhānūjā-ātmā-vibhava-eka-ārādhana-śrī-pūram* Bhānu means the sun, or "who shows us by light." Rādhārāṇī is the daughter of Vṛṣa "Bhānu." So I selected the word "bhānu." To represent her personal extended self, I given the word "vai-bhava. Vaibhava means "what comes out as resourcefulness" or "extended self." *Prabhava* is the central representation, and *vaibhava* is the outer extension. The very gist of *svarūpa-śakti* is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the whole *svarūpa-śakti* is Her extended self. The town of Her beautiful service, that is, the country, abode of Her beautiful service—the whole *svarūpa-śakti*.

In the *gāyatrī* mantra, we are requested, *bhargo devasya dhīmahi*: "Come meditate." What sort of meditation is possible in that plane of dedication? Not abstract meditation, but service cultivation, *kṛṣṇānuśilanam*. *Dhīmahi* means to participate in the spontaneous flow, the current of devotion in *Vṛndāvana*. And what will be the result? (*dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt*). The capacity of our cultivation will be increased. As we serve, a greater capacity and willingness to serve will be given to us in remuneration just as interest is added to capital in the bank. ('*dāsa' kari' vetana more deha prema-dhana*) In this way, our dedicating principle will be increased again and again. *Dhīmahi* means *ārādhana*, worship. It cannot but be explained in terms of *ārādhana*, *pūjā*, *seva*—worship, adoration, loving service. "*Dhi'*" is derived from the word *buddhi*, which generally means that which we cultivate with the help of our intelligence. But here, "*dhi'*" is a reference to that venerable intelligence which descends into this plane to help us cultivate service. So, *dhīmahi* does not mean abstract meditation, but devotional service. This is the underlying meaning of the *gāyatrī* mantra.

Gāyatrī, the song for deliverance, also means *saṅkīrtana*. *Kīrtana* is also sung, and it also improves us towards the highest goal. The *saṅkīrtana* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also reinstates us in our highest serving position. So *brahma-gāyatrī* in connection with Mahāprabhu comes to mean *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. Then it reaches *Vṛndāvana* and the flute-*kīrtana*. And when we enter *Vṛndāvana*, we shall find that the sweet sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute helps to engage all the Lord's servants in their respective duties. When the flute is sounded, the *gopīs* and others are adjusted in their respective duties. At night, the *gopīs*, hearing the sound of the flute, will run to the *Yamunā* thinking, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa is there." And when Yaśodā hears the song of Kṛṣṇa's flute, she thinks, "My son is there. He is coming home soon." In this way, the sound of the flute engages all the servants of the Lord in their respective positions and inspires them to be mindful of their service.

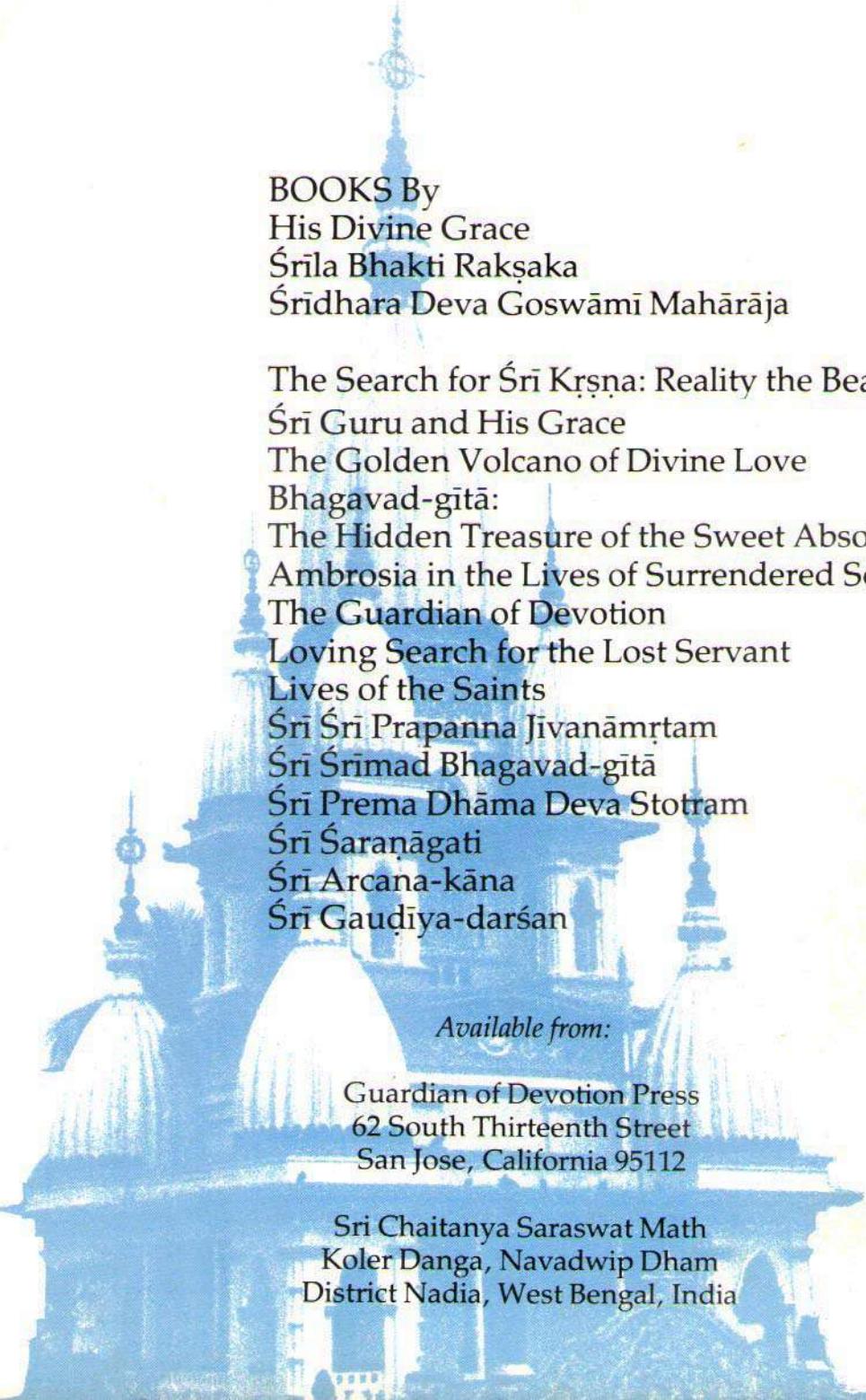
In my commentary on the *gāyatrī*-*mantra*, I have written, *dhīr-ārādhanam eva nānyad-iti-tad rādhā-padarām dhīmahi*: All other services are represented fully in Rādhikā. Like branches they are all part of Her. *Mādhurya rasa* is the chief or *mukhya rasa*, the combination of all *rasas*. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is *Mahābhava*—She represents the entire serving attitude.

गायत्री-गृहलीष्ट-कीर्तनाधनं राधापदं धीमहि ॥

Just as rays of light extend from the sun, the whole internal potency is an extension of Mahābhava, Śrī Rādhikā. She has developed Herself into such a beautiful area of brilliance, of internal energy, and thereby She serves Her Lord. All these necessary things have sprung from Her. To help Her in serving Her Lord, they all come out. When the entire internal energy is condensed in a concise form, it is Mahābhava, Rādhārāṇī. And when Rādhārāṇī wants to serve, She extends Herself in limitless different ways. And with some contribution from Baladeva and Yogamāyā, the whole spiritual world, including Vṛndāvana, Mathurā, and Vaikuṇṭha, evolves to assist Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

In this way, I have drawn out *rādhā-dāsyam* as the meaning of the *gāyatri-mantra* and have tried to represent it in Sanskrit verse.

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ଗାୟାଗ୍ନୀ-ଭାଷାକ୍ରମପାଇଲେ ବେଦାର୍ଥଃ ପରିଦ୍ୟାନିତଃ ॥



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