

Sri Bishnupriya Tattva

1

“kaliyuge bhakti murti devi bishnupriya,
Sri advaita prabhu taha kohe prokashiya.”

-(Sri Bishnupriya Mangal)

Meaning – “Sri Advaita Prabhu has revealed very clearly that in Kaliyug Mother Sri Bishnupriya Devi is Bhakti personified.”

Sriman-Mahaprabhu is called ‘prachchhana’ Avatar in Kaliyug. ‘Prachchhanna’ means ‘one who is concealed’. Our sweet Lord has tried His level best to keep His divinity enshrouded. Now let us discuss some facts about ‘prachchhanna avatar’. Srimad Bhagavatam says that there is no avatar of Swayam Bhagavan in Kaliyug.

“Chhanna kalou yadbhavastryugo’ya satvam” – (Srimad Bhagavatam 09.07.38)

Meaning – “O Bhagavan, you reside in Kaliyug having kept yourself concealed ; hence one of your names is Triyug.”

Sri Karbhajan Rishi said in reply to Nimi Raja’s question, that, Lord Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the prachchhanna avatar. He then described Mahaprabhu and said that Harinam Sankirtan is the Yugadharma. (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.05.71)

After Mahaprabhu had taken sanyas, one day He was accepting bhojan in the house of Advaita Prabhu. At that time, Sri Advaita Prabhu told him –

“Neelachale khao chouanna bar,
Ekbare anna khao shoto shoto bhar.
Tin jonar bhokhyo pindo tomar ek gras,
Tar lekhyai ei anna noy poncho gras.
Mor bhagye mor ghore tomar agomon,
Chharoho chaturi probhu koroho bhojan.”

Meaning – “My dear Lord, you eat the offering 54 times in Neelachal (Puri) ; in one sitting you eat hundreds of tons of rice. you gulp in one shot the amount of rice that can fill the stomachs of three people. So, going by that rule, the amount of rice I have served you, is not even five morsels for you. It is my good fortune that you have arrived at my house today. So no way, will I let you go without accepting all that I have offered you. Since I know Who you really are, you cannot fool me. So it is best that you give up your tricks and accept the bhojan.”

The same incident and similar dialogue had taken place in Sarvabhouma Bhattacharya's house. These instances prove that Mahaprabhu is non-different from Lord Jagannath and Sri Krishna. He is indeed the prachchanna avatar.

Now, if Sri Gouranga is Swayam Bhagavan, then is it possible that Sri Bishnupriya Devi, Whom he holds close to His bosom, and Who is eternally love-sporting with Him, is not His Swarup Shakti ? However, this is a secret that only those eternal servants of Nabadweep, who are steeped in Nadiya-Yugal Bhajan, are aware of. They have the tremendous kripa of Sri Sri Bishnupriya-vallabh. Due to this kripa,

and also due to their ardent begging, that one day Sri Advaita Prabhu revealed the truth about Priyaji (Tattva) in Srivas-angan (courtyard of Srivas Acharya). He spoke of this truth in a mysterious way to Prabhu Himself, so that only a few internal devotees could understand. Sri Kavi Karnapur Goswami, who is an ocean of mercy has penned it in his drama Sri Chaitanya Chandroday.

One day Sri Advaita Prabhu came to Nabadweep. Now, Sri Advaita Prabhu is one who, by the mercy of our sweet Lord Goursundar, is always immersed in the bliss of Sri Krishna Prem-ras. He is so powerful that, by offering tulsi leaves and Ganga Jal, he can bring the Lord of the Golok to Bhulok (earth). He is the right person to reveal the Lord's Swarup Shakti to us. Both Sri Nityananda Prabhu and Advaita Prabhu were engaged in the worship of only and only the Divine Couple of Nabadweep. As a result we find that Sri Advaita Prabhu, who is the Lord of Shantipur, revealed Sri Bishnupriya Tattva to us, while Sri Nityananda Prabhu got darshan of the love-sports of the Divine Couple of Nadiya in the house of Shachi Mata. This is the reason why Nitaichand was so overwhelmed in Prem.

Once when Mahaprabhu was in a jovial mood, He told the devotees, "Sitapati has come here; we are no more afraid of the summon of Death !" Hearing this, the devotees cried loudly in jubilation. Sri Sitanath turned the table on Him, and said – "I can't see any Raghupati here, I can see only Yadupati." Prabhu had a line of smile on His face, but remained silent. He wanted to change the topic, so He said – "you continue to stay in Shantipur, this makes me very sad." Without giving Advaita Prabhu a chance to reply, Srivas Pandit said, "Although Shantipur is most suitable for Advaita Prabhu to reside there, ever since you have appeared in Nabadweep, he has gained special affinity for this holy place. This is because your touch has made Nabadweep into the fountainhead of Bhakti-ras. This is also the sole reason why Nityananda Prabhu too is permanently settled here."

Srivas Pandit, who is the avatar of Narad Muni, is indicating that earlier Advaita Prabhu was a sadhak of shanta and dasya ras ; however now, by the mercy of

Prabhu, he has become a rasik bhakt, and is immersed perpetually in relishing Nabadweep ras. Sri Advaita Prabhu heard these words of Srivas Pandit very attentively, and was immensely happy. Undoubtedly they were very true. He continued to gaze at Prabhu's beautiful moon like face. Srivas Pandit, who is not only learned, but also a great orator, requested Advaita Prabhu to say something. Advaita Prabhu said, "At present Sri is residing in Nabadweep, hence you can get all siddhis here." Srivas Pandit replied jokingly, "But now she has passed away". Since Sri means Laxmi, Srivas Pandit was hinting towards the disappearance of Laxmi Devi. Prabhu was attentively hearing the conversation between Advaita Prabhu and Srivas Pandit. He became somewhat disturbed by the mention of the disappearance of His first wife. He could but give an appropriate reply. After all, how can the Lord's eternal consort 'pass away' ? So prabhu said, "Oye Srivas ! Sri means Bhakti. Where such soulful devotees like yourself are present how can Bhakti Devi disappear ? She is very much amongst you." Hearing this, Advaita Prabhu, who is in reality the incarnation of Mahavishnu, and is all-knowing, understood the deep feeling inside Prabhu's heart. By Prabhu's inspiration, he understood Sri Bishnupriya Tattva. Sri Gour Bhagavan manifested this very much concealed Tattva in his heart. Advaita Prabhu gazed very lovingly at the beautiful face of Bishnupriya-vallabh with eyes full of utmost reverence, and said – "Most certainly Sri and Bhakti are residing in Nabadweep. And who can be that Bhakti Devi other than Srimati Bishnupriya ?" Upon hearing this, Sri Bishnupriya-vallabh's happiness knew no bounds. However, He is the prachchanna avatar of Kaliyug. So He concealed His own feelings and said seriously – "Indeed ! Although there are many means to reach the Supreme, Bhakti is 'Bishnu-priyaa' (dear to Lord Vishnu), meaning, Bhakti is none other than Sri Bhagvan's Swaup Shakti."

Prabhu's somber reply made Advaita Prabhu so jubilant that he immediately got up and started dancing in blissful Prem. He laughed and said – "Prabhu ! That is why you have brought about the manifestation of Maa Bishnupriya, and have kept Her in your embrace". Mother Bishnupriya is Bhakti Devi personified. She is the condensed form of sandhini, samvit and hladini shaktis taken together. It is

due to Her Shakti that Mahaprabhu is Shaktiman. Sri Kavi Karnapur has recorded this in Sri Chaitanya Chandroday drama in the following manner –

Advaitah : ato'tra srivasah.

Srivasah : sat u tirobhutaiva.

Bhagavan : srivishnubhaktih sa bhavatsu satsu vartata eva.

Advaitah : idanim saiva vishnupriya.

Bhagavan : atha kim satsu gyanadi margeshu bhaktireva vishnoh priya.

Advaitah : ataeva bhagavanapi tamangichakara. – (Chaitanya Chandroday Natak 46)

Mother Ganga is happier to spread out on the earth rather than remaining closeted within the lofty locks of Shivji, although that is an extremely pure abode. In the same way, madhurya leela is more tempting than aishwarya leela. How can our sweet Lord Gouranga forego the relish of Madhur Leela ? In fact Gour-leela is glorious because it stems from His swarup Shakti Sri Bishnupriya. And Gour Leela is riveting around this Swarup Shakti alone. Just like Mother Ganga, Sri Sri Gour-Bishnupriya have come down from their own abode to this earth to relish the sweetness of Prem and spread this sweetness all around. Mother Ganga is happy to flow all over the earth so that people bathe in her and get deliverance. Similarly Gour-Bishnupriya too are happy when devotees come to know their sweet pastimes and Prem-ananda. Kavi Karnapur has stated this in the following verse in his Chaitnaya Chandroday Natak –

“aloukikito'pi cha loukikiyam

Lila hareh kachan lobhaniyaa

Mahesha-shirshadapi bhumi madhyancha

Gataiva gangamudamanatanoti.” 21.

Goudiya Vaishnavs should daily study Srila kavī Karnapur's Chaitnaya Chandrodāy Natak, because the aim of this book is to establish that although Sri Krishna Leela and Sri Gour Leela are different, they are non-different where Tattva is concerned.

Sri Advaita Prabhu is the one who made Sriman-Mahaprabhu manifest Himself in Nadia. Again he is the one who, in the presence of Mahaprabhu, revealed to us that Bishnupriya is Shakti Tattva, or that She is Mahaprabhu's Swarup Shakti. Gour is relishing joy by manifesting His Hladini Shakti in the form of Sri Bishnupriya. He is also nourishing His devotees through His Hladini Shakti.

Now let us take a glimpse into the childhood pastimes of Mother Bishnupriya.

2

Sanatan Mishra was a steadfast Brahmin, whose ancestors were originally from the Hindi belt. He was a Vedic practitioner. His father's name was Durgacharan Mishra. Sanatan's ancestors had migrated to Bengal from Mithila. Now, of course they were settled in Nadia.

In those days Nadia was very much different from what you see today. It was the home of supreme opulence. Wealth and education was strewn everywhere. All day and night you could hear debates and discussions on various books and topics.

Sanatan did not lack wealth. Neither did he have the darkness of ignorance. Indeed he was one of the rare few who were blessed by both Laxmi and Saraswati. It was as if both Shaktis were protecting the family of Sanatan.

However, something was amiss. There was no peace. His only brother – Kalidas – younger to him – suddenly departed from this earth. He was still young, yet he had leave due to the call from the other world. Sanatan's heart was full of pain. It was difficult for him to bear the viraha of his dear brother.

His heart bled profusely. Besides, Bishumukhi, his brother's wife got depressed, frustrated and mentally unstable in the viraha of her husband. Tears became her daily companion. your heart would ache if you saw her. Sanatan Mishra's wife Mahamaya would wipe her tears. She would drag her onto her lap, caress her and fill her with love.

Sanatan was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu.

He went to the Vishnu-mandir, and tried to forget all his heartache through pooja and archanam. By offering flowers at His lotus feet, he wanted to forget all his sorrows. All he sought was peace. After worshiping he came to his mother's room. He paid her obeisance.

Mahamaya was singularly devoted to her husband. She was bothered by everything that bothered him. Her sadhana-bhajan was simply to fulfill her husband's desires.

Wherever there is devotion, we find that the Lord showers His grace. Where there is devotional bliss, there reigns Divine kripa, and He manifests His majesty. Sanatan was a sadhana of vaidhi path. He meditated on Vaikuntha, and established himself in God Consciousness. His constant prayer – "O my Lord ! I am your eternal servat, please keep me in your service. Please keep me steadfast in your devotion."

The night was deep. The sky was asleep, and the earth too was sleeping.

Sanatan was absorbed in sleep. Mahamaya Devi was sleeping by his side. Both were absorbed in the lap of Nidra Devi.

Sanatan was seeing a dream in his sleep.

No, no, he was not seeing his worshiped Deity, Vishnu – but – he was seeing a supremely effulgent, incomparably beautiful, extremely powerful Mother figure.

He felt that the Mother was laughing and telling him – “I am coming to you, Sanatan ! I will take shelter in your house.” And immediately the Mother became a little girl and climbed his lap. Sanatan went to caress her – at once the dream broke, and he woke up.

Sanatan got up and narrated the dream to Mahamaya.

His words had a magical effect on Mahamaya Devi. She said – “I know that she, who is coming to us, is not ordinary. This is not a dream, it is a fact.”

However Sanatan and Mahamaya did not divulge this dream to anyone. They guarded this secret close to their heart.

Days passed.....so did the months.....

Gradually the features of a mother bloomed on the body of Mahamaya Devi. She was pregnant.

She was not keeping well. This was her first child. No wonder they were all worried. Day and night they thought of only one thing – what would happen ? What pain she may have to undergo ?

The month of Magh, Bengali Era 1415, Shukla Panchami.

The sky was clear, the breeze was laden with sweet fragrance. Serene moonlight bathed the earth.

Purity and auspiciousness abounded everywhere.

Mahamaya Devi had entered the delivery room.

Sanatan was sitting outside in the corridor. He was full of anxiety. He could not remain still at all. His heart was very much disturbed. There raged an ocean of worry in his mind. He started crying out to his dear Lord Madhusudan. Was He not the One Who pulled His devotees out of every kind of trouble ?

Call him, Sanatan ! Call him ! Empty yourself, pour out your heart, offer everything you have unto His lotus feet. He will surely soothe all your pains. He will lift you from all difficulties, and place you on a bed of flowers. He will bring you closer and closer to Him.

Sanatan did just that. He called Him with all his heart. The Lord is the shelter of the homeless, the consolation for every suffering suffering heart, a savior for the drowning – and Sanatan took refuge in Him. With tears flowing from his eyes, he exclusively surrendered himself at His lotus feet.

Only smaran, manan, and chintan.

Bind him with these three cords. He will surely extinguish all fires scorching you. He will sooth all sufferings. All pain will culminate in Him.

After all, it is He alone Who carries the achievements and responsibilities of His devotees. Has He not guaranteed in Gita – “yogakshemam vahaamyaham ?”

Smaranam causes vismaran. Remembrance of the Lord results in the loss of memory – the memory of sorrow, suffering, regret. The waves of sunshine start playing in the devotee’s life. His life becomes full of colorful rainbows. Happiness, peace, bliss.

Sanatan got the fruits of his prayer. His house started echoing with the auspicious sounds of ‘huludhwani¹’. The courtyard and house got full of laughter and celebration.

Sanatan went forward with slow steps.

He saw that the delivery room was resplendent. A serene light was dispelling darkness. This was the same Goddess of Light – whom he had seen in the dream. The Supreme Shakti, the Primeval Origin.

Mahamaya had lifted a little golden form to her bosom and was busy planting kisses all over her.

¹ A particular sound made by the women of Bengal to welcome good news.

Conch shells blew. Noblewomen lit incense and lamps. They came to bless the new born baby with auspicious gifts. This was no more a house, but a temple. An abode of holy pastimes.

The air was laden with fragrance. There was light everywhere. Musical voices echoed. Who had arrived today in Sanatan's house that waves of joy cannot stop themselves from flooding the universe ? All the neighbors and relatives were rushing in to see her. Little children came in hordes upon hordes to catch a glimpse of her.

They were Priya's own people, her group mates.

Jagannath's home was blessed by Gour – and today Sanatan's house was rejuvenated by Priya. The city of Nadia was bouncing in joy.

3

How sweetly babbles the girl ! She is hardly eight or nine months now. Sometimes she cries and at other time she laughs. After all, life comprises fo both tears and laughter. And it is through laughter and tears that the Divine One spreads His pastimes.

The devotee too cries in viraha when he is unable to see his Beloved. He implores, "you come to me, please come. My Lord, I beg of you – please give me darshan. Without you my world is dark. I know I belong to you, but I feel happy when I am full of 'you' - and when I am full of myself, I burn in grief."

When you manifest yourself fully within me, I attain purna Samadhi. Then there is none but you and me, me and you – and we float in blissful ras. Only laughter abounds – and there is absolute peace.

The sweet laugher and cry of an eight or nine month old is so mesmerizing as if it is showering nectar on the heart. Is this merely a babble ? No, this is a clear cut news – "I have come – yes, I have come with a supreme resolution. I have come

to make everyone cry by crying myself. This world will become tear-laden with my tears. I have come to teach how to cry for the Beloved.”

Two tiny feet....learning to walk. But can't. She falls, and then gets up again. She tries to walk slowly. The entire body wobbles. Sometimes she extends both her hands, as if she is seeking support from someone.

She does not get it. At once she falls down and starts crying. A cry of viraha and love-anger. She seems to say – “Since I have landed in this material market place, I will surely seek you out. Where will you hide ? Your image is clear in the mirror of my heart – so you have no choice but come to me.

Who am I without you ? You are the one who will make me whole.

If you do not make me complete then what is the use of my appearance ?If I have come, then most certainly I want you to be near me. No way I shall I let go of you.”

With forceful will, she wants to get up and start walking again. Her resolution is firm. As if she has taken a pledge.

She is eight months now. Time for Annaprashan². Sanatan was all excited and had great plans. He invited all the residents of Nadia – young and old. He wanted to tell the universe that the Universal Mother had arrived. He spent lavishly on the celebration. Countless guests arrived. The Brahmins and the Vaishnavs. The happy and the sad. The rich and the poor. No one was left out. Sanatan served one and all with love and respect.

Everyone took Prasad and darshan with joy and satisfaction. The feast was delightful and so was the darshan. The beauty of the beautiful one was spell binding. Nothing was lacking. Not a single mistake anywhere. There was only a shower of unbroken infinite bliss. As much as you see, that much your heart rejoices. Heart stealing effulgence. Her magnificence hypnotized all who beheld her. All gazed at her unblinking.

² The first time a baby is fed rice, a huge celebration that is almost as big as a marriage ceremony, is arranged.

What name to keep ?

Sanatan is a devotee of Lord Vishnu. He kept her name Bishnupriya.

Just as she is fragrant like divine flowers, so is her wonderful name.

After all, she is no ordinary girl. She will serve the best and sweetest delicacy on a handsome plate. The delicious most relishing Holy Name on the platter of the heart. She will teach the world to have faith and love for Naam ; she will instill in the hearts that it is Naam that gives both Bhakti and Mukti. The moment we gain love for Naam, all the doors of our memory will open – who am I ? Wherefrom have I come ? Where shall I go ?

From this self-introspection, one day this 'I' will get destroyed and we will be aware of only 'you' 'you' and 'you'.

The effulgence of Priya's beauty hypnotized everybody.

Whoever – be it the neighbors or the relatives – sees her – pulls her in his lap. Priya's splendor puts to shame the brightness of daylight. All want to caress her and hug her to the bosom. They smother her with kisses.

As soon as one takes her in the lap the heart becomes calm. All sorrow melts away, all suffering turns into ash. Every day so many people come to Sanatan Mishra's house simply attracted by Priya.

Mahamaya does not like this. She tries to hide Priya from all eyes.

But can one hide fire under ashes ?

Priya has descended to deliver the living beings. How can she go into hiding ? So she keeps coming out and gives darshan to all suffering souls. She continues being the gem of every one's eyes.

Bishnupriya grew like the phase of the moon.

Her sweet beauty scattered all around.

She was hardly seven or eight years old. Yet every part of her body sparkled with incomparable sweet beauty. Adorned with various jewelries she came to play with her friends.

Dressed colorfully, with gold bangles adorning her hands, she was a little paragon of loveliness. She sat with her sakhis, surrounded by all sorts of toys.

Kanchana and Amita were Priya's most favorite friends. They were bosom buddies. It was as if they were already prepared for the game of life.

There was another game that Priya loved the most – to bathe in the Ganga. She came daily with her mother for Ganga-snan. She also had steadfast devotion towards her mother and father. She was also devoted to her Griha-devata Lord Vishnu. Priya loved Him with her heart and soul.

It is true He hides in love. The One Who is the nearest, the dearest, we can get Him through love alone. We have to catch Him by surrendering wholeheartedly to Him. We have to offer our heart. Along with the heart I also offer you my body. After all, the body spontaneously follows the heart.

To get Him what do we have to give ?

Our heart.

However we have to give our heart completely. We cannot hold back even little bit. This is the reason we have to chant the Holy Name - to purify the heart. We also have to concentrate the mind at His lotus feet. We cannot give anything less. Neither can we give more than this, for we don't possess anything else. If we give our heart, we shall get Him Who is all-heart. The Supreme Being, who resides in everyone's heart.

Bishnupriya has arrived to teach us how to give our heart.

She has come to give us life, the extraction of her innermost self. We have to learn from her how to transmit colorful love in a loveless self.

This is why the Poornatamaa has come with the Poornatama. The Supreme Prakriti has come with the Supreme Purush.

Priya has now grown quite a bit. Her arms sparkle with gold, saffron, armlet, and bangles. Gem-necklaces adorn her neck, kundals oscillate on her ears, and bracelets jingle on her wrists.

Priya has just two addictions.

These two have mingled with her nature and gained oneness. The first one is worshipping Lord Vishnu in the Mandir. And the second one is to sit on the banks of the Ganga – calm and still.

Priya keeps gazing at the water.

This is Ganga.

Jahnavi with holy pastimes and holy water. Her waves display so many emotions – that of love and love-anger. Waves triggered with viraha and agitation. Suradhuni, the river of the celestial abode, the one who has sprung from the lotus feet of Vishnu – which ocean is she rushing towards – she alone knows.

Priya loves Gangaji.

As soon as she sees Ganga, she remembers the creator of Ganga, the Supreme Being. And this is the reason that one day Priya found the person of her heart on the banks of the Ganga.

Bishnupriya gazed with unblinking eyes.

There he is standing ! Looking at Ganga from far.

But – what is this ? He is not dark like Priya's beloved Lord Vishnu – he is so fair – Gouravarna – Gorachaand.

The one for whom Priya has wept so much, has spent tearful nights, so much viraha, sulking, prayers – he is standing right there.

That all-mesmerizing form – Madanmohan – one who can hypnotize the god of love. The heart rending cry of the devotee has dragged Sri Bhagavan to the dust

of this earth. He has come covered with the golden splendor of his Hladini Shakti. "ye yatha maam prapadyante tanstathaiva bhajamyaham". He has come to relish the love that resides in the heart of Srimati. Bhagavan has come to cry fervently at the doorsteps of all living beings. He has come in the assembly of devotees to fulfill certain goals.

"swamadhurjya aswadite, achori dharmā shikhaite, chira anarpita naam prem bitorite." He wanted to relish his own sweetness ; how maddened were the Braja Gopis and Srimati Radharani in his prem – he wanted to enjoy this by crying in Sri Krishna-viraha.

What is true Dharma ? How much fervently we have to call Him, then only we will get Him – he wanted to teach us, by following the path himself.

And that sweet Naam, that was hitherto carefully concealed in Golok, that supreme treasure – he would scatter freely all over the earth, and thus deliver all the fallen souls.

As a result the Supreme Being has come today in the form of Nabadweep Chandra.

He has come on the banks of the celestial river – Suradhuni. The Holy Land.

Bishnupriya gazed unblinking. She took him in with both her eyes – 'rup lagi ankhi jhure, gune monobhor' – his beauty made your eyes weep, and his excellences filled your heart.

She felt no shame, no bashfulness, she did not care what people would say. Priya's heart and soul had become Gouramay.

No words. Just gazing. That itself made Priya lose her calm, her patience. Bhaavs interacted with one another. Gora stole all of Priya's heart.

This is the supreme achievement. The best acquisition. It was as if Priya had been waiting all these extremely long years of her life for this auspicious moment.

Ki khone dekhinu gora kiba mor hoilo,

Nirobodhi gora rup noyone lagilo.
Chitto nibarite chahi nohe nibaron,
Basu ghosh bole gora ramani mohan.

“Ohh, why did I see him ? And even if I did, why did I go so berserk ? I do not know what is the matter with me. From then onwards, I can see only one form, and that is of the handsome Gouranga. I want to turn the heart away from him, but I am helpless. He does not leave my mind for one moment ! Basu Ghosh says – indeed Gouranga can hypnotize even the most attractive women.”

Gorachaand stole Priya’s heart and soul. She felt that it was worth being born as a woman. How can one forget such handsomeness ? If you try to forget the heart becomes more frenzied and jumps into the snare cast by that loveliness. Grand Beauty – manifested by that Supreme Being – how can one forget that beauty ?

Bishnupriya comes very often to the banks of the Ganga.

The first feel of newfound anuraag. It has as much pleasure as it has pain. Vishwambhar Gora’s golden form became the worshiped Deity for Bishnupriya. She meditated on him day and night.

Priya also thought of Shachi Mata in her heart. Will Shachi Mata never give her the opportunity to serve he son ?

Bishnupriya’s joy and sorrow evolved only around Gouranga. Day and night she would think of something – no one knew what. At times, her mind traveled to some unknown faraway land.

4

Grief has flooded Shachi devi’s heart.

Nimai has bade farewell to Laxmipriya. His aishwarya sports have ended. Now only madhurya. His mood transcended all the three gunas and went beyond the mode of goodness.

Aishwarya has no place in that madhurya leela.

Shachi Maa's home was barren. Some times this made her weep. Her son was matchless – in fame and excellences. He was the crest-jewel of glory in Nadia. Yet alas ! There was no one with whom he could share his life.

As much as she tried, she could not make her heart understand. She could not bear to see her lovely son unmarried. It became very much necessary to get him to tie the nuptial knot. Otherwise just like her eldest son, this boy too would break the shackles of the cage. Her heart bled even to think that her wonderful son did not have a wife beside him.

Shachi Maa felt her life was full of tears. Amidst this Nimai was the only gem that lit up her life.

He eldest son Vishwarup had left home long time back and had gone away.

That was a long story.

Shachi's husband was Jagannath Mishra. Huge pandit, whose heart comprised of Dharma. Not only this, he was absolutely free of false ego.

One after another, eight daughters had come in Shachi Devi's womb, but not one had lived. All she had was a big sigh of sorrow.

Jagannath Mishra called out piteously to his griha-devata Raghunath. He poured all his grief at the rosy lotus feet of Raghunath.

If we empty ourselves of all false ego, and call out to Him, He surely listens. We can get the best of treasures ; as a result, son Vishwarup came to her as the ninth child. Heart-stealing splendor, best in knowledge and qualities. However slowly he got attracted to the spiritual path. Instead of busying himself with school and studies, he preferred scriptural discussions and kirtans.

He had no attachment for home, and no heart in material activities. After all, he had come to announce the fore news. He had come to reveal the arrival of the Supreme.

So he could not stay at home. It was necessary for him to take to the road. He had to broadcast the great Appearance everywhere.

On the other hand, in the whole country, Sanatan Dharma was in danger.

The peaks of Mandirs were falling down, vigrahas were breaking into pieces. Foreigners had entered Bharat and were destroying her religion. They were even proudly proclaiming their barbaric activities. There was no one in the country who would protest and come forward to protect Dharma.

Only two qualities existed in human society - inferiority complex and hideousness. The good suffered in silence because they thought they were weak and powerless (= inferiority complex). At the same time, both the Sanatan Dharmis and Muslims had people who were engaged in nefarious activities (= hideousness). Dharma suffered due to the existence both these groups. All were busy in their own affairs. Due to this selfish tendency, lawlessness gradually spread in the country. He has declared with His holy lips – when Mother Earth reels under the burden of sins, the claws of adharma bludgeons her body, it is then that Swayam Bhagavan descends in the form of man – to establish Dharma, to spread the word of love and welfare.

That Mahapurush - great person - was Kamalaksha Mishra, now known as Advaita Acharya, the disciple of the great Vaishnav Madhavendra Puri.

Before departing from this world Madhavendra Puri had said – He will come, yes, He will – in Nava-Vrindavan, Sridham Nabadweep.

He had told his disciple Ishwar Puri, “It is you who will give in his ears the first beej mantra and the Kaam Gayatri.”

Guru is swayam Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar – Absolute Brahman. Acharya had full faith in Guru-vakya – the words of his Guru. That is why he placed Gangajal in his palm, and touching til-tulasi, he cried and shouted, with his face turned towards the sky.

“Come O Creator ! Dark times have engulfed us ! The rationalists are making and breaking you. Vedantins are preaching ‘I am God’. The atheists are saying you don’t exist. The vidharmis are declaring their religion to be the best. The peace-loving Vaishnavs are suffering inhuman torture. They are ridiculing and criticizing our God of Love.

O my dear one ! This is the reason you have descended repeatedly on this earth. I know you will come. If not, then why do I see the auspicious signs of your appearance all around me ? If you do not appear then all my sadhana is useless. All my heartfelt cry is nothing.”

Only a few devotees surrounded him. They had full faith in this sage. They kept on waiting. At times they would get disturbed and ask – “O Acharya, how much longer do we have to wait ?”

Advaita Acharya would lift both his hands towards the sky and say eagerly – “No more delay. He is coming ! He is coming very soon !”

Sri Advaita left Shantipur and came to Nabadweep.

The devotee’s cry shook Bhagavan’s seat.

Holi Purnima, Bengali year 1407, 1485 CE.

All who were desirous of gaining punya had gathered on the shores of Ganga. The river bank was echoing with the Holy Name. The spring breeze was laden with the sweet fragrance of sandalwood. The bees hummed. The cuckoos cooed. The laughter of the flowers stole your heart.

Nadia resides on the banks of the Ganga. Today all the beauty of Vindavan expressed itself in Nadia.

In one such auspicious day in one such auspicious moment he appeared.

Jagannath Mishra's house started echoing with the repeated sounds of the conch shell.

That sound reached the ears of Advaita Acharya. He started dancing in joy. His companions too danced – Srivas, gadadhar, Shuklambar.

Advaita and Srivas held each other in tight embrace. They were overcome with bliss. They danced like children. He has come – in deed he has !

Srivas's wife Malini Devi and Advaita's wife Sita Devi arrived together. Advaita told them – "Go immediately to Jagannath Mishra's house. Take with you the holy ingredients like paddy and durva grass. Sound the Hulu-dhwani. Go welcome the newborn with arati."

All noblewomen came forward. They came in hordes. One blew the conch, while someone else gave Huludhwani. The entire Nadia was flooded with joy. Shachi Ma gazed at her newborn baby with unblinking eyes. She felt as if the whole world was welcoming her baby.

The full moon of the Phalguni Purnima seemed to have descended in her lap. Lovingly Shachi Maa kept his name 'Nimai'.

But the neighbors did not like the name. They saw his wonderful brilliant complexion and said – "Not Nimai, Shachi Maa, keep his name Gour."

Shachi Maa looked at her baby in wonder.

The baby's maternal grandfather kept his name 'Vishwambhar'. He said he carried the weight of the universe. He was right.

Young girls called him in admiration – "Gorachaand !" Some called him "Gourahari", while because he was born under the Neem tree, mother kept his name "Nimai".

The list of his name is endless. Infinite names, since the beginning-less time. You can call him by any name – he will answer – provided you call him with love.

Nimai's naughtiness grew with his age.

His name was on everybody's lips. All were reeling under his pranks. Neighbors started complaining.

Women came and told Shachi Maa – "You better discipline your child. If you cannot, then tell us, we shall do the needful."

Shachi Maa lost her cool. Picking up a stick she ran behind Nimai. He climbed a heap of trash and sat on it.

Mother said – "Fie ! fie ! Come down !"

Nimai laughed.

He said – "First throw your stick away". Once mother threw her stick Nimai accompanied her to bathe in the Ganga. The neighbors who had complained in the morning came to give him sweets in the evening. The day they did not feed him something nice, they did not get peace.

Ages ago something similar had occurred in Braj. The Gopa-beauties would bring butter and cream for the son of Yashoda. That child also troubled them much. They too chastised Mother Yashomati in the same manner. Yet they rushed to her home daily with goodies in their hands. The only difference is he was dark, while this one is fair – Gouranga.

Today that Vrindavan has manifested itself in Nabadweep.

One day a nishthavan tairthik Brahmin arrived at Jagannath Mishra's house. He was a devotee of Bal Gopal. He had a rule – he would eat only what he cooked with his own hands.

Shachi Maa gave the bahmin rice, pulses, vegetables.

The Brahmin would cook on his own, offer his Bal Gopal and then take Prasad.

But what is this ? How many ever times he cooked and went to offer, Nimai came rushing and put the bhog in his mouth.

Again and again, thrice.

At last the Brahmin got irritated. Nimai said – “Brahmin, what can I do ? You are calling me with so much fervor, so much love, how can I ignore such a call from my devotee ?”

The Brahmin was wonder struck. What an extraordinary speech from an ordinary baby !

The Brahmin asked – “Who are you ?”

Nimai smiled and said – “See if you can recognize me.”

The Brahmin saw that the room was filled with ethereal lovely effulgence. What his long-time meditation, chanting, pooja had not yielded, today he got without any effort, in Shachi Maa’s house. He rolled at Nimai’s feet. His eyes overflowed with Love-tears.

Here, when Shachi Maa saw that Nimai was repeatedly spoiling the Brahmin’s bhोजan, she rushed at him with a stick.

The Brahmin quickly went forward and implored Shachi Maa with folded palms – “Mother, please keep your stick down. I realize that all these years I had been traversing the wrong path. Today my sadhana is fulfilled. I have seen my Ishtadev in your baby. Gopal himself has extended his hands and transformed my offering into Prasad. Today my life is blessed.”

The Brahmin smeared his whole body with Prasad, and embracing Nimai, danced in joy.

However Shachi Maa’s heart trembled in some unforeseen fear.

A mother wants her son as a child – not as God.

Vishwarup and Vishwambhar are the eyes of father and mother. They are their pillars of strength.

But one day, all of a sudden, Vishwarup told his mother – “Maa, you keep this text.”

Shachi Maa asked – “Why?”

- “When Nimai grows up, please give it to him.”
- “You give him with your own hands.”
- “I don’t know where I will be; maybe I won’t remember, but you will.”

Mother took the responsibility of the grantha.

Vishwarup too was glad to have transferred the responsibility.

In front of his eyes appeared the vision of a path of renunciation – a path that led to supreme peace.

His heart assured him – “No, I don’t want the path samsara-dharma. I want the Divine through sacrifice.”

On one cold wintry night he silently paid obeisance at the holy feet of his parents, from far. He also looked at Nimai. His eyes filled with tears. He could not stay any longer, and walked away with his friend Lokanath in quick strides.

Vishwarup took sanyas and left home forever.

Shachi Maa wept. Nimai swooned.

Jagannath Mishra could not bear this viraha. He left the mortal body at sixty.

All marital insignia wiped away from Shachi Maa’s body. The only adornment she had now were tears, a heart full of pain and her lovable son Nimai.

Nimai was her supreme gain. If we want anything, we have to lose something. If we want the Supreme, we also have to be ready to lose all. We have to empty ourselves. Be it any path. Whatever bhaav we may have – shanta, dasya, sakhya, vatsalya, madhur - we cannot reach Him unless we become destitute. That is why

Shachi Maa went forward in the path of vatsalya. Nimai was her heartbeat, the Pole Star in the sky, which determines the direction of all travelers at night. Especially for those who travel in the deserts. In Kaliyug, this life too is fraught with dark ignorance and scorching heat of threefold misery. So it is best we make Nimai our Dhruv star – our guiding light. All Shachi Maa could think of, was Nimai, whether she slept, or dreamt, or in a drowsy state.

At times people said – Shachi Maa, your Nimai is not a mortal, he is God. Shachi Maa herself had got such indications many times before. In a half asleep state she had heard the chime of anklets, the song of the flute, and the humming of intoxicated bees. Sometimes she got the fragrance of chandan and lotus.

Shaci Maa gets scared.

Let God remain in the heavenly planets. She preferred embracing her mud-smearred murk-stained son to her bosom.

Fervently she visited temples, and prayed – “My dear God, please keep my Nimai well. Please keep him always in front of my eyes.” She prayed ardently for the welfare of the Supreme Being !! How sweet is this vatsalya leela – incomparable are its expressions !

5

Gangadas Pandit was the best grammarian of Nabadweep. Within very few days Nimai mastered grammar. There was no one in entire Nabadweep who could beat him in grammar.

He mastered not only grammar, but also in philosophy, law and literature. Nimai became a matchless pandit in each and every subject.

Nimai was so proud of his accomplishments that he considered no one equal to him. He called his class mates and mocked them. He made fun of young pandits

senior to him. He endlessly troubled them by dragging into debates. He started scorching one and all by the fire of his learning.

Nimai had barely crossed adolescence when he attained the title of 'pandit' and opened his own Primary School. His fame as a pandit had spread everywhere. Students flocked to his school. His scholarliness enchanted them.

Nimai blew up in pride and arrogance. He would openly mock the pandits of other schools as 'fools'. He defeated all of them in debates. Out of fear, the pandits of Nabadweep started avoiding him.

Such a small name – Nimai. Yet it pervaded all directions. Everyone called him. People wanted him – be it in daily rites or non-daily ones. In majesty and in sweetness – Nimai was present everywhere. He seemed to encompass every region - bhulok³, dyulok⁴, golok⁵. Nimai was on everyone's lips. Nimai was in everyone's meditation. Where was he not present ? All of Nadia jubilantly celebrated with Nimai in the center.

One day Nimai met Srivas Pandit on the way. Young Nimai, who shone with the brilliance of learning, did not care for Srivas Pandit. He used to say that the religion followed by Srivas and his group had no foundation. How can one get the Supreme by forsaking prestigious paths, and simply singing the Holy Name ?

Srivas Pandit invited Nimai to join the sankirtan yajna in his house. Nimai accepted the invitation. Srivas told him, smiling, "One day you too will practice this path."

His heart spontaneously beat in response to Srivas's invitation.

Here, it spread like wildfire that Nimai Pandit is the height of arrogance. Too much study of the shastras has made his heart barren and dry like a desert. He has become aggressive. Nimai is a person to be feared.

³ earth

⁴ Heavenly planets

⁵ Where the Divine Being resides.

Shachi Maa keeps on gazing at her wonderful son with a heart brimming with love. Such gorgeous beauty is not good if left alone. No, no, she was determined to bring home a daughter-in-law. She started dreaming of a pleasant future.

She decided on a ghatak⁶. Banamali ghatak.

Shachi Maa asked him to fix a match for Nimai.

Banamali said – “What is there to worry in this? The match is already fixed.”

Shachi Maa was surprised. “Who is she ?”

“Why, Ballabhacharya’s daughter Laxmipriya.”

She has been Nimai’s playmate since childhood. She has adored him in Madhurya bhaav. Just like the Gopis in Braj. My pleasure lies in pleasing you. I come alive when you are happy.

Small girls worship on the banks of the Ganga after bathing. Laxmi too worshiped with them.

Nimai used to come rushing at them. He would stand in front of them, stick his chest out and say – “What will you gain by worshiping these devatas ? Come, worship me.”

Most of the girls ran away, while the others closed their ears and eyes.

But one of them would come forward. She was Laxmipriya. She would decorate Nimai with all her heart – with flowers, chandan, kumkum. Then she would place a garland round his neck. And gaze unblinking at his beauty.

Silent worship of the heart. Unhesitating self-surrender.

How could Nimai not accept her ? Laxmi too sat and thought of him in all sweetness.

Now the ghatak was making a match with her.

⁶ One who arranges a marriage. The ‘t’ in ghatak is pronounced as in ‘teach’.

Shachi Maa thought – “Would Nimai agree to marry his childhood playmate ?”

On the other hand the news had reached Laxmi. This is what she wanted.

She desired neither siddhi nor mukti. She did not want to merge into Brahman. Her only heartfelt wish – “I want you in Gopi Bhaav. If I get you, I have got all. You are my everything, the only gem in the universe.”

Motehr said to Nimai – “Orey Nimai, Banamali has brought a match for you. With Laxmi - that girl with whom you used to play lots in childhood – do you remember ?”

There was an innocent smile on his lips. “Why do you ask me ? Maa, whatever you decide is final.”

Mother understood that it meant he had given his permission. She gave Banamali the signal to go ahead. Banamali immediately fixed the match.

Ballabhacharya’s heart was flooded with joy. His house and courtyard echoed with happiness.

Ballabhacharya’s daughter would become Nimai’s beloved.

They looked made for each other. It wasn’t easy to get a pair like this. Laxmi’s heartfelt desire was at last fulfilled. Sri Krishna came to sport in her Vrindavan like heart.

All sorrow, all pain got wiped off from Shachi Maa’s heart. Her happiness knew no bounds. She had brought a daughter-in-law who illumined the house. Whoever saw her once, could not forget her.

Shachi Maa’s family was complete. It was not a family, but heaven. The Goddess Sri has arrived with all her majesty in their house.

It was deep into the night.

Shachi Devi was lying down and thinking about her good fortune.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door.

Opening the door, Shashi saw Nimai standing – beside him was Laxmi.

“So late.....what happened ?”

“Come, let’s go inside.”

Husband and wife entered the room and started massaging her feet. It seemed as if Laxmi Narayan were serving the feet of the ir mother.

Shachi Maa’s eyes brimmed with tears.

Who was more fortunate than she ?

Profound peace descended on Shachi Maa’s body and mind.

“Maa, I have to go.”

“Where ?”

“For touring Bengal. Please bless me.”

What could Shachi Maa answer ? Laxmi too was listening. A huge wave assaulted her heart. Her doe-eyes darted fearful and bewildered gazes. A few drops of tears rolled down from the corner.

Nimai left Nadia.

Entire Nadia gathered to bid him farewell and Happy Journey.

Nimai started touring Bengal.

This was merely an indication of the future, when he would traverse the length and breadth of Bharat.

Day after day passed.

Laxmi kept staring out of the window.

“If you had already decided to leave, then why did you get bound for two days ?”

Looking at the starry sky she heaved a sigh.

But how many days could she spend with a viraha-agitated heart ? All she could do was to weep silently.

On the other hand, Nimai was distributing education to every home in Bengal. He sat there and thought. He saw the world with new eyes. He had also started spreading Naam Sankirtan from then itself.

Here, Laxmi Devi could not bear the scorching heat of viraha-suffering any more.

She was the Happiness-personified Goddess of Fortune in the Divine realm. How could she bear this pain ?

Laxmi Devi, the bestower of good fortune, could not bear this grief.

She bade farewell to Prabhu’s family.

She used snake-bite as an instrument. Viraha from Prabhu came in the form of a snake and bit her. Her entire body turned blue.

Shachi Maa came running. However, she could not stop death.

Adorned with tulasi beads, Laxmi Devi proceeded on the path of Mahaprayan. Her body was floated in the Ganga.

After some days, when Nimai returned, he came to know what had happened. He did not grieve. He knew that all this had to happen.

He had performed the leela of touring Bengal to abandon the Goddess of Aishwarya.

A world-conquering pandit had arrived in Nabadweep. His name was Keshav Kashmiri. He had defeated all the pandits of Bharat in debates. People say that Devi Bharati resides on his throat. After starting from Kashmir, he had traveled various regions and had now come to Nabadweep.

At that time the best of the scholars resided in Nabadweep. If he could vanquish the pandits of Nabadweep, his conquest of Bharat would be complete. As a result Keshav Kashmiri had come with a retinue of disciples and followers to Nadia. He traveled in royal pomp and show-off. He had proudly sent out an invitation challenging the scholars of Nabadweep to defeat him in shastras and literature.

However, on hearing the merits of the digvijayi⁷ not a single pandit had the guts to stand before him, forget debating. They all left Nabadweep under some or the other pretext. Only the primary school teachers like Nimai, were left behind.

When Keshav Kashmiri learn how the pandits had left Nabadweep, he threw his head back and laughed in contempt and anger.

However Nimai was calm. He was no more arrogant. He had no pride of knowledge. What is the use of mouthing some verses and feeling proud about it? Why, even a parrot can do it! What good will it do the human society?

On the other hand, Keshav Kashmiri started mocking Bengal. The residents of Nabadweep were sad. They sighed in sorrow – “So! Bengal has to accept defeat, isn't it?”

A young pandit was teaching his students in the afternoon, on the banks of the Ganga. He radiated the effulgence of knowledge.

Keshav Kashmiri was going that very way. His students surrounded him. He was literally roaring as he went. His heart danced in joy – no one in Nabadweep dared to confront him – how nice! But wait – who is this exquisitely handsome resplendent youth? Keshav Kashmiri was highly attracted. He could not help but alight from his palanquin. He accosted the young pandit and asked – “Are you that same young grammarian, whose fame I have heard?”

⁷ World-conqueror

Hesitatingly Nimai replied – “You have heard wrong. It is true that I study grammar, but I have not mastered it so well as to be called a ‘grammarian’. I have yet to reach the end of the subject. I don’t even know how far it goes.”

Keshav Kashmiri threw a smile of pride at him – “You are too young, you know ? How can you finish the whole grammar at this age itself ? However if you wish to know or learn anything, you can ask me.”

Now it was Nimai’s turn to smile. It was time to break the digvijayi’s pride.

The youth asked – “I have heard you are an extraordinary poet ?”

Keshav Kashmiri replied – “Why, do you have any doubt ?”

“No, no. I just want to feel gratified by seeing the expression of your talent. So that I can proudly tell my friends that I met and heard you. That is, if it is not a trouble for you.”

Keshav Kashmiri felt very generous, and said with a slight wave of hand – “No trouble at all, my dear. Tell me what do you wish to hear ?”

Nimai gestured – “Right in front of us we have the flowing Jahnvi. Please can you make up a poem about her just now and recite it ?”

Keshav Kashmiri laughed. This pandit was really an innocent child - he did not know that such a topic was child’s play for him. Immediately, like a storm, he recited one hundred verses in glorification of Mother Ganga. Then he looked at Nimai with pride and asked – “Are you satisfied now ?”

Nimai replied humbly – “From your description, I am eager to discuss one or two verses with you.”

“Tell me, which verses do you wish to discuss ?”

Nimai Pandit then picked up four of the hundred verses and quoted them verbatim et literatim⁸. Suddenly Keshav Kashmiri’s face turned pale. One who could pick up just four verses from amongst one hundred verses, and then recite

⁸ Exact word ; word for word, letter for letter ; as it is.

them word for word, he was no ordinary being. His memory power instantly crushed Keshav Kashmiri's pride to dust.

Then the young pandit highlighted the grammatical mistakes in those verses.

Keshav Kashmiri's head bowed down. He was forced to accept defeat before the young pandit.

"Dear young man, you are matchless ! Today you have vanquished all my pride. I offer my heartfelt obeisance to you." However he still could not understand who this young pandit was, because some pride and arrogance was still lodged in his heart. It was necessary to wipe them fully.

Whole night Keshav Kashmiri could not sleep. In mind he offered prayers at the holy feet of his Ishtadevi Saraswati, who is the guardian deity of Vidya or learning. "Mother, what crime have I committed that you punished me so ?"

At dawn, Kashmiri saw a dream.

He saw that his worshiped Mother Saraswati was standing before him. She told him with a smile – "Dear child, the one who has defeated you, know him to be my Master. I myself worship Him. He is the Supreme Being. Why do you feel ashamed ?"

The sun rose. Kashmiri started running. He ran and threw himself down at the feet of the young pandit. "Please deliver me, O Master ! Tell me the path I should take." Kashmiri's profuse love-tears washed the Nimai's feet.

His heart spoke to him – "At these feet reside all siddhis. Everything is here – dhyan, gyan, mukti – whatever you want."

Nimai caught both his arms and lifted him. He directed him towards the Supreme Path. He brought him down from the peak of pride on to the plane of the earth. Keshav Kashmiri gave up all his pomp and went forth to abhisar with the Divine.

No arrogance. No pride. No ill will. Nimai had become calm, serene, sweet.

Whoever saw was enchanted. His beauty was mesmerizing. Broad chested, the effulgent sacred thread on one shoulder, thick glossy curly locks, big black beautiful bright eyes, silk garment, thin angavastra around the neck, and an innocent look on his face.

Even if you searched the entire universe, you would not find such breathtaking beauty.

But his home was empty.

Shachi Maa's heart burned. Tears pricked her eyes.

"God alone knows why it happened !" she sighed heavily.

Laxmipriya left for her abode, but how would she live ?

And who would keep Nimai bound to the home ?

Just when she was thinking like this, one day she chanced upon the girl of her dreams.

She had all-enchanting beauty. The fountainhead of loveliness. Incomparable effulgence. Outstanding. Second to none.

Who was this girl ? What was her description ?

Shachi Maa gazed at her unblinking.

The sky has countless stars. But amidst them – does it take time to point out the Dhruva-tara ? Similarly amongst innumerable women, there is but one Eternal Supreme Goddess. She is Paramaa Prakriti. How can you not recognize her ? She is ready for him since beginningless time.

Shachi Maa recognized her in a trice. Not only recognized her, but she was spell bound. The heart spoke on its own – "I have got her ! She is the one whom I am searching like a mad beggar."

7

“Now, now..... what is it they call youMaa ?”

She had met the girl on the banks of the Ganga.

Shachi Maa comes to Ganga daily. It is not as if she had not seen the girl once or twice ; but from far. She had felt as if the girl wanted to tell her something, but could not. Maybe she felt shy.

Today she was very near. Shachi Maa could not control herself. She had to find out her name.

From some days her mind was extremely disturbed. You could say she was almost depressed. She did not like anything. She could not concentrate on household work. She felt she wanted to give up everything and get out of it all.

Just then she saw that girl. And she got some unforeseen strength.

The girl too replied by paying obeisance. She thought to herself – “Here is the lady who can give her the opportunity to serve her beloved.”

Shachi Devi was taken aback. On asking her name, why did she pay obeisance ?

“Who are you Maa ?” Shachi Devi enquired again. Then she thought embarrassedly – “She did pranaam, but I forgot to bless her.” As soon as she remembered, she said – “May you remain married all your life. Be happy. May you get the husband of your choice.”

The girl’s heart, soul, senses all started dancing at the sound of Shachi Devi’s blessing. Her heart’s desire, her soul’s longing – everything got fulfilled – with that single benediction. Her face lit up with serene immaculate sweet soft smile.

She thought – “When Shachi Maa has soaked me with such wonderful blessing, right from her heart, then how can she push me away ?” She could read the

intense craving in Shachi Devi's heart that was full of maternal love. Her eyes shone with the purity of her innermost being.

You can feel a heart only with another heart. It did not take Shachi Maa much time to realize that this girl's relation with her son was eternal. Carried forth over very many lifetimes. That is why Shachi Maa's eyes too brightened in joy. As if the girl had fulfilled her heart's innermost need.

Both gazed at each other with hearts full of plea. Shachi Maa wanted to tell her something, but could not. That's why her heart grew heavy. Will she fulfill Shachi Devi's long time wish ?

Thoughts overwhelmed Shachi Devi. Now the time of joy had come. Now she would be freed from a lifetime of misery and tears. Will God not give her some respite from this heart full of sorrowful sighs ?

Both Priya and Shachi Devi exchanged hearts and went their way. None could express the desire. Yet their payers of longing manifested silently.

Not one day, but now they met daily. After her bath the girl paid obeisance to Suryadev. Shachi Devi too came to Ganga. Silent unspoken emotions got conveyed through eyes.

Shachi Devi uttered mantras of prayer with all her heart. They expressed the cry of her soul that seemed to rush out through an open door. The pure morning breeze of the Ganga touched both the hearts.

Priya stood with head bowed. Her heart seemed to be like an ocean in floods. It wanted to burst and establish her right. It wanted to gain the peace of acquirement. But everything rested solely on Shachi Devi's word. Will she never be able to offer her lotus like soft heart at his feet ?

So many words came to Priya's mind. They played like notes on a veena.

One day Shachi Maa caught her chin and asked lovingly – "Whose daughter are you ? What is your name ?"

A fountain of delightful nectar sprouted from the core of her heart.

“Priya. Bishnupriya.”

Ahh.....what sweet voice the girl has !

“Yes, truly she is Priya ! The one who has such lovely light in the eyes, such glow on the face – how can she be anything else but Priya ? So much beauty in one body – this is why she is not just Priya, but Bishnupriya. Devpriya, Parampriya”, thought Shachi Maa.

“And whose daughter are you ?”

“I am the daughter of Sanatan Mishra.”

“Ohh ! You are the daughter of Sanatan Mishra ! Then you are a girl of very rich house ! Bless you my dear. May you be happy. May you be Bishnupriya⁹.”

What did Priya hear today ? How did Shachi Maa know that she really wanted to be Bishnupriya – no.....Krishnapriya – no.....Gourpriya.”

Exclusive surrender. Singular dependency. Priya had offered her body, mind and soul at the lotus feet of Sri Gouranga. She wanted to adore with the soul the one who was the soul of the soul. How could it go in waste ? Whom she wanted to hold as her own, as her supreme most – whom she wanted to see in seclusion, in depth, in secrecy – whom she wanted to keep in remembrance, in dream, in meditation – this blessing was the best fulfillment of that vow.

From childhood to adolescence, from adolescence to youth – the one whom she had held in her anxious heart – a dream she had kept burning like a lamp in the nukunja-mandir – today that beautiful being seemed to answer her call.

There was a time when he had held the flute, anklets had adorned his feet, gem-necklace had decorated his neck, and the enchanting peacock feather flew on his crown. But now he wore flower garland, his eyes bore heart-stealing sad look, sacred thread around his shoulder, curly black-bee like thick hair, and enchanting divine golden effulgence all around his body.

⁹ Darling of Lord Vishnu.

In childhood Priya used to cry while offering flowers at the lotus feet of her Ishtadev Lord Vishnu. By His blessing, now at the threshold of youth, she was seeing the one who occupied the throne of her heart – Shyamsundar in the form of Gourangachandra. She offered as oblation her entire life, heart, body, and youth at the hallowed feet of that Timeless God.

Mother Shachi Devi too had raised a storm in Priya's heart. Her agitated mind was impatient. Priya was so agonized, as if she had jumped in the midst of a surging ocean. Does she have the wealth that can get him ?

Yes, for sure. She has a heart, perseverance and Naam. If you take Naam, you can get the touch of Naami.

Shachi Devi placed her hand on Priya's bowed head. After this she proceeded towards her home with a futile hope in her heart.

Throughout the day, in between all chores, Shachi had just one thought – only one person – Bishnupriya – who seemed to occupy her palace like heart.

But was it possible for her to get what she wanted ?

Sanatan Mishra was very rich. He had immense wealth. Priya lived in gandeur. Sanatan was a pandit in the service of the King. He was famous in Nadia. As if they would give their daughter to Shachi !

Nimai was poor. He had neither wealth nor majesty. On top of that this was his second marriage. No, no, no one in their right mind would give her their daughter. Shachi was dreaming the impossible. She was building castles in the air.

Tears rolled down her eyes.

On the other hand, Sanatan Mishra too could not get sleep. Daughter was growing up. He had to arrange her marriage. It was a very difficult job. Sanatan did not lack money. But there was such a dearth of good charactered boys – and he wanted one who would also be well educated. The combination was near impossible.

Sanatan quite often discussed this matter with Mahamaya. They talked about Priya.

Here Shachi Devi too had finally made up her mind. No harm in sending a proposal through Kashinath Pandit, was there ? At the most, they would refuse. Did it matter ?

Kashinath was Shachi Devi's neighbor. Shachi Devi loved him like a son. She addressed him as 'baap'¹⁰.

Shachi Maa confided everything to Kashinath. He heard all and replied – "Mother don't worry, you just leave everything to me. I will arrange all – you have nothing to be anxious about."

Shachi Devi felt as if a rock had gone away from her heart. Her mind was at peace. Kashiram Pandit was a trusted ghatak. He would surely fix the match.

In an auspicious moment Kashinath took the name of God and started for Sanatan's house.

Sanatan's family was small, but larger than that of Shachi. Sanatan's daughter Priya, his brother Yadav, his brother's wife Vishumukhi and his wife Mahamaya. Sanatan welcomed Kashinath with utmost respect. He offer him a seat, and asked him – "What's the matter ?"

"I want to have a word with you. Privately."

"Say."

"Please offer you daughter to Nimai Pandit. He is a most eligible suitor. Just like Radharani next to Kanha, Bishnupriya with Vishwambhar."

Sanatan Mishra became jubilant. He had nourished the same desire since long, but did not have the courage to express it. Nadia-famous Nimai Pandit. The only scholar to have defeated Digvijayi Keshav Kashmiri ! Which automatically made

¹⁰ In Bengal, a girl or daughter is respectfully addressed as 'Maa', while a boy or son is lovingly addressed as 'Baap' or 'Baba'.

him the most learned pandit in the world. He was also known for his haughtiness. On top of that he had a world-enchanting beauty. As if he would accept the daughter of Sanatan Mishra ! In fear Sanatan dared not bring the proposal to his lips. The saint poet has sung –

“aji shubho dine porosonno holo bidhi,
Jamata hoibe gorachand gunonidhi.
Ei mor monokotha rojoni dibos,
Prokot bodone kohi, nahiko sahos.”

Meaning – Sanatan thought to himself, “Today is auspicious indeed ! My fortune is shining on me. I cannot believe that Gorachaand, the treasure house of excellences, will be my son-in-law ! God alone knows how many sleepless nights and restless days I have spent imagining this day, yet I dis not dare to say it openly. Today is that good day. In deed I am blessed !”

His heart dancing in joy, Sanatan looked at Kashinath. With a choked voice he said – “Pandit ! It is my most good fortune ! I think Shach Devi is omniscient. She must have learnt of my wish and sent you here to fulfill it. Please wait, I have to ask Mahamaya once.”

Sanatan went inside. He eagerly called Mahamaya. “Shachi Devi has sent Kashinath with a marriage proposal for Bishnupriya with Vishmbhar. What do you say ?”

Joy overwhelmed Mahamaya. She closed her eyes and offered obeisance to Lord Vishnu with folded palms. Then she said – “Immediately you decide the date. Such a proposal comes to rare fortunate souls, please don’t let it slip. Arrange for the auspicious event as soon as possible. Please give some generous gift to Ghatak-thakur and bid him farewell.”

An extremely rare object is easily going to become theirs. There is no dilemma, no hesitation, only determination. Sanatan said – “Arrange the marriage as soon as you can, dear Pandit. If Shachi Maa accepts Priya, we shall be gratified.”

Kashinath too felt overjoyed. He had started from home with an auspicious aim, and now it was fulfilled. He had promised Shachi Maa he would return successful, and now he had achieved it. It is not as if Sanatan had merely accepted the proposal, but he had done so happily, enthusiastically.

As soon as Shachi Devi got the news, she went and told each and every one of her neighbors. She even called out to passers-by, and gave them this good news. "Do you know Nimai will marry Bishnupriya, the daughter of Sanatan Mishra?" Her heart felt as light as a feather. She felt as if she had spread her wings and was flying in the sky. The sorrow that had reigned like pitch dark night had at last ended. She was seeing the soft beautiful light of a new morning.

8

Sanatan called the ganak thakur¹¹.

He has to see 'panchang¹²' and 'pothis¹³', and fix the date of marriage. Besides this, he has to calculate so many other things – like – deciding the lagna, whether zodiac signs match or not.

The ganak thakur already everything. Sanatan's daughter's marriage is fixed – Sanatan will celebrate with all his heart. He will spend lavishly with both his hands. Whole Nadia will float in the flood of joy.

The ganak thakur started quickly for Sanatan's house. Whose marriage date he is going to fix – he bumped into him on the way ! Nimai was going with his students for Ganga-snaan.

¹¹ Respected astrologer

¹² almanac

¹³ scriptures

He was walking on the way, constantly engaged in discussion the scriptures. They were talking on various topics even while walking. The students were listening to his wonderful explanations with rapt attention, as if mesmerized.

On seeing Nimai, the ganak thakur's heart was full of bliss. He exclaimed in joy – "Nimai ! I am going to fix your weding date !"

".....my wedding ????"

Nimai could not understand what the ganak thakur was saying. He had not heard anything on this subject at all.

He said softly – "Why, I have not heard I don't know anything about this."

"But your mother has chosen this relation. Has she not told you anything ?"

A most surprised ganak thakur proceeded towards Sanatan Mishra's house. Nimai walked slowly in the direction of Ganga.

The ganak thakur was full of hesitation and dilemma. Should he go to Sanatan Mishra's house ? The groom himself did not know about his marriage. Then how would it be possible ? Why is Sanatan getting so worked up about fixing the date ? It was so useless and a waste of time.

However, he had to go to his house. Since Mishra had called him, it would look bad if he did not go. At least he would have to give him this news.

Ganak Thakur reached there.

Sanatan most reverently offered him a seat. He wore a broad smile on his face as he stood before him. He said – "Now let us start consulting the almanac."

Ganak Thakur laughed loudly.

"I can't understand why you are unnecessarily getting so worked up, Sanatan !"

"Means ?"

"First let the match get fixed."

“What do you mean ? Shachi Devi had sent the invitation herself, and promised her son in marriage to my daughter.”

Ganak Thakur pondered a bit. Should he say it ? Then he shook off his dilemma, and said – “Sanatan, I met Nimai on the way.”

“Oh ! Is it so ?”

“Yes, but he told me that he knows nothing about this.”

“Oh no !!!” Sanatan was stupefied. He could neither blink nor say anything. Sanatan stood still for some moments. Then he ran inside the house, calling out to Mahamaya.

With a trembling voice, he said – “My dear, all is lost !”

An anxious Mahamaya came and stood beside her husband. She asked – “What happened ?”

“ami kono kichhu oporadh nahi kori,

Okarone mor ador chhadila gourhari.”

- Chaitanya Mangal.

Meaning – Sanatan said – “I have not done anything. Without any reason, Gourahari has turned away from me.”

Such tremendous attack !

Mahamaya’s eyes brimmed with tears.

Sanatan too started weeping.

All of sudden, a fog of misery descended on the joyful house. Mahamaya could not find words. How would she console her husband ? How would she show her face to her sakhis ?

She had announced Priya’s marriage with Nimai to all her neighbors and friends. Now it would be difficult to show her face to them.

Nearly all arrangements were done, and now Nimai is saying like this.

Mahamaya remained silent. After a long time she said – “You do whatever you think fit. What can I say?”

Really, what can anyone say ? There is no consolation for this grief. There is no balm for this pain. This rejection was too much to bear.

Sanatan almost felt like fainting. He started weeping copiously.

“futkaar koriya kande, bole hari hari,
Tomare na paile biswambhar ami mori.”

Meaning – “Sanatan started crying loudly, and calling out to Lord hari. He cried – O Gourahari, if I don’t get you, I shall surely die.” – Chaitnaya Mangal.

Tears. Only tears.

Only fervent tears can move his heart. The heart will fill with trembles, perspiration, and goose bumps. After this causeless happiness will arise in the heart. This is the bliss of gaining the Supreme. The way to his heart is through tears. And once we cross the Vaitarani of tears, we get the infinite kingdom of Vaikuntha.

Let us offer our flower like tears at his holy feet. Let us wash His lotus feet. Let us make our innermost core so pure that it becomes fragrant like chandan. Then the tears that will flow from our eyes will bear the aroma of that chandan, and only then will he accept them.

We have to wash our heart with tears. And make it pristine pure, blemish-free, flawless. Krishna steals such a heart. That is why the prayer echoes within – “Hare Krishna !” This tearful Holy Name steals all taint, defects and negativity. The Holy Name fills the heart with countless cascades of serene luminescence.

Because there are tears, there is life. Viraha exists, and hence the thirst for union. Without tears, how can we get the joy of gaining something ?

That is why tears follow us all our lives. Birth brings tears, death brings tears, and attainment too is accompanied by tears. The path to the Supreme is paved with tears.

O Beloved ! In your search we spend the entire life crying. In one moment we feel we have got you, the next moment we have lost. After losing we cry again. Again you show your kindness and make us forget our loss. Thus continues this game of tears.

Sanatan and Mahamaya were thinking – “But why should we cry ? Is the one whom we want to make our son-in-law, an ordinary being, that we shall get him simply by shedding some tears ?”

He is the independent Purush. The Supreme Being. Brahma, Shiva, Indra – all are standing in attention, to get a single glimpse of his lotus feet. How can we, mere mortals, get him so easily ? So it is better to pacify the heart, and pay attention to Krishna-bhajan.

Mahamaya explained to her husband that nothing was in their hands. That everything in this world was interwoven like beads on a string. It is best to leave everything to him, and absorb in our sadhana. Immediately Sanatan came to his senses. The blindfold of Maya or illusion fell from his eyes. All pride and arrogance disappeared from his heart. He had no dilemma, no difficulty any more. At the zenith of sorrow, he surrendered to the One Who is Supremely our own. His heart became bright and peaceful.

Mahamaya consoled Sanatan. She said – “If this marriage does not take place, you will not fall down in any manner. You have nothing to worry. Nimai Pandit has disagreed to the marriage. Pandit samaj will accept that.”

Here, Bishnupriya sat silent and still like a transfixed flame of a lamp. She sat and listened to the conversation between her parents. “You are mine. Then why this game ?”

Priya was lost in Gour-dhyan. Her body was helpless, her eyes were unblinking. Her whole being was without any vibration – as if she had lost all existence.

Virahini Priya would not be able to hold her life any more.

Her face was pale. A thunderstorm was raging within her. Her eyes were shedding endless torrential tears.

Her heart simply cried out a single prayer.

“I do not want anything from you. Only please let me love you in each and every yug. With my entire being – with my heart, body and soul. Let me obtain you in the most intimate manner. I don’t want to enjoy you. I merely seek to call out to you with all my strength. I only pray for supreme Bhakti with all my heart. Even if no one else knows, but you sure know, that I am Gourpriya.

Whatever may exist in your heart – I am not saying I have the right to know it – nor am I so audacious. I only beg you to give me your Bhakti. I beg you to grant me infinite strength to bear this viraha.

I am waiting for you with an agitated heart. You do what you want with me. I have surrendered my body, mind and soul at your lotus feet. Who else but you belong to me?”

Priya sat with her whole being absorbed in Gouranga. Her mind was Gourmay.

Just then Bidhumukhi came and stood in front of Priya. She asked –

“What are you doing here alone?”

“Nothing.”

“Has anyone said anything to you?”

“No.”

“Come, mother is calling you.”

“Why?”

“There is news. Good news.”

Priya could not get up. She knew – there had to be this good news. But how could she stand in front of mother to hear it ? She felt so shy.

Yet a bit of sweet smile sparked on her rosy lips. As if the sun flower had beheld the sun, and was waiting eagerly to open out all her petals to him.

9

Nimai Pandit has sent news.

In fact he has sent the news on his own.

“Mother’s wish is my wish. I have not refuted the ganak thakur in any manner. Please - Pandit Sanatan Mishra should forgive in case of any misunderstanding.”

This good news has arrived that he would garland only Bishnupriya, and no one else. This bond is of lifetimes. How could he reject this bond ? As a result he has accepted it most eagerly. Priya got the joyous news from Bishumukhi. She came to her mother.

Mahamaya Devi’s words made it all the more clear.

Priya’s eyes became dry. Serene blissful effulgence radiated from her. Viraha results in Milan, and laughter follows tears. This is why Nadiavallabh has granted their desire.

There is no limit to the happiness in Sanatan’s house. The entire family started dancing in the mood of joyous celebration. The house glittered in wonderful light of bliss.

Mahamaya Devi held Priya close to her bosom. She kissed her repeatedly in joy. She blessed her – “Your good fortune has united us with Nimai.”

On the other hand, Shachi Devi's house too is flooded with happiness.

Nimai Pandit has himself seen the almanac and decided the date of his marriage.

All arrangement of the wedding started on a grand scale. After all, there were hardly any days left ! Such a huge wedding ! Entire Nadia got into a mood of jubilation.

Nimai Pandit's friend Mukunda-Sanjay. He was a rich Brahmin. He said – "I will make all the expenditures of Nimai's marriage. Nimai has opened his Primary School in my Chandi Mandap. He has become famous as the 'Vishwajayi'. So you have to grant me this right. I will spend as much as I can in his marriage."

Nimai could not stop him. However, another person did. He was Buddhimanta Khan, a Kayastha zamindar. He was the Raja of Nabadweep. He was singularly devoted to Nimai. He was talented and loved the spread of education. Sri Ananda Bhatta who had composed the famous book 'Ballaal Charitra' was his court poet.

Protesting against Mukunda-Sanjay, he said – "Is it an ordinary wedding ? Although Nimai Pandit is a Brahmin, we cannot accept a 'routine' wedding. I will arrange a wedding-feast fit for a Prince. All the residents of Nadia will open their eyes in amazement. I will carry all the expenses of this wedding."

Hearing this Mukunda-Sanjay laughed. He said – "Why not ? You spend all you like, I have no objection. But how does that deter me from spending ? I too will spend as much as I can afford." This time Buddhimanta Khan could not protest.

"That's fine. Let us spend together. Let people see and think – such a wedding has not happened in the past nor will it be repeated in the future. (na bhuto na bhavishyati). He is so famous, his beauty is allomenchanting. Let his marriage also be so opulent that people will talk about it for ages and ages," said Buddhimanta Khan.

The conflict was resolved. Both came together to organize a grand wedding. Everyone got into the mood of merry making.

Huge pandals were erected all over the house, in the courtyard and the gardens. The house was full of people right from the day of Shubha Adhivaas. Hordes of noblewomen have come – all have dressed in beautiful clothes and jewelry. They have come in groups to see Nimai.

Lights flooded the house. Plantain trees have been planted all around. Under each plantain tree there was a small kalash with mango branch in it. It is called 'mangal-ghat'. You could see exquisite 'alimpans'¹⁴, all over the house.

The guests sat in rows. Brahmins, Vaishnavs, sadhus, sajjans – all were invited. Countless people were simply engaged in enjoying.

Gradually the shadow of afternoon descended on the earth.

The invitees took their seats one by one.

And who sat amidst all the guests, illuminating Sanatan's house in wonderful radiance ? Gourangasundar, of course.

He dressed gorgeously in zari works. A beautiful angavastra was thrown across his torso. His black-bee like hair radiated the silver lining of the Shravan-clouds¹⁵. His sweet serene gaze bore the deep stillness of the Atlantic Ocean. His lips bore a glint of smile.

The invitees were offered garlands, chandan, and fragrant tambul.

The entire house echoed with huludhwani, and mangal-shankha. Nimai's shubha-adhivaas was well-performed.

Sanatan's house became vocal with the loud playing of music and huludhwani.

Bishnupriya sat, adorned with sparkling jewelry. She was so effulgent that the jewelry dimmed in comparison. What is more brilliant – the gems and gold, or Bishnupriya's resplendence ? The latter seems to win.

¹⁴ Decorative designs with rice flour mixed in water.

¹⁵ Dark rain clouds seen in the month of Shraavan.

Priya sat with her head bowed. Beside her sat two sakhis – Kanchana and Amita. They were very dear to her. The women of Nadia surrounded her – just as the zodiac signs circle the sun.

Mahamaya herself welcomed the guests, and looked after them. Sanatan performed the pooja himself. Then he worshiped the pitris and did Nandimukh. At last amidst huge jubilation and cheers, Bishnupriya's adhivaas was completed. Chaitanyamangal has described the same in the following words –

“deb pooja pitri pooja kore jothabidhi,
Odhibas kale joyo joyo nirobodhi.
Brahmonete bed pode baje shubho shankhao,
Anoned dundubhi baje bajoye mridongo.”

Sanatan Mishra and Mahamaya Devi did not know where he should keep so much happiness. He was so overwhelmed. He had no anxiety any more.

Bisnupriya became Gouragapriya.

Adhivas of both bride and groom was accomplished. Now the Supreme Swarupini would unite with the Absolute Infinite Swarup. Sanatan and Mahamaya's heart and soul filled with the surging waves of ecstasy.

10

The first golden ray of the sun spread on the bosom of the earth.

The dawn was pure, serene and sweet. A resplendent Arun dev started his journey on the seven horse drawn chariot.

Today Arun dev's heart wavered in joy. That is why this dawn was so sweet, so beautiful.

After all, how many such days had he seen ?

Ages ago he had witnessed such a day when Srimati Radharani had been searching Sri Krishna on a crooked path by the banks of the Yamuna. Her golden radiance had made him feel blessed.

Toady again he saw the same effulgence.

It was the day of Goursundar's 'gaatra-haridra'¹⁶. He would start for the wedding, dressed as a bridegroom.

As a result Arun dev was very happy. Not only he, but Suradhuni¹⁷ too was dancing in joy. She was filled with water till the brim.

It was Nimai's daily habit to wake at dawn and come for Ganga-snaan.

Soft golden sunrays caressed him. Suradhuni served her Lord by blowing soft breeze on his body. After bathing in the Ganga he paid obeisance to the rising sun. Tapan dev¹⁸ sat in the sky and smilingly admired the Lord's incomparable effulgence.

Then he returned home. Immediately on returning Nimai sat to worship Lord Visnu. This was his daily routine.

Here, Shachi devi went to Ganga. Many people accompanied her to perform Ganga puja and Shashthi puja. Shachi devi filled everyone's hands with pop-rice¹⁹, bananas, oil, sindoor and paan. This is the custom in Bengal.

One by one all rituals were completed.

¹⁶ An occasion when turmeric or haldi (haridra in Sanskrit) is applied on the body of bride and the groom. The turmeric is often mixed with fragrant elements such as camphor, chandan etc.

¹⁷ River Ganga

¹⁸ The Sun god or Surya dev.

¹⁹ Please do not confuse with puffed rice.

Nimai finished his puja and came out of the Deity room. Shachi Maa called the married ladies to bathe him. They had to give him a wedding bath. There were many rituals to be followed.

They came and surrounded him.

It looked as if the moon was bound by chakors ; devotees were sweetly babbling non-stop around the Divine.

The women started scrubbing Nimai's body. They felt they were standing in the confluence of joy and sweetness.

“anga theli poday keho dhaale ganga jol,

Joyo joyo hulahuli sumongol rol.”

- Chaitanymangal.

Meaning – “Some women deliberately fell on Nimai, by pushing one another. They were scrambling to pour Ganga-jal on him. The women kept on saying “Jaya !” and making huludhwani and other auspicious sounds.”

The women were indeed experiencing goose bumps due to the physical contact with Nimai. They were gleefully massaging him and drowning in pure innocent bliss. There was no limit to their joyful enthusiasm.

It was never ending nectarine bliss. It had no end, no obstacle, no intermission – only joy and sweet outbursts. They were neck deep in churning the ocean of ecstasy. Celebrate as much as you can. This is the unlimited elation of getting the Supreme. This joy has no beginning, no end. Drink as much as you want, yet you cannot finish this nectarine bliss.

The infinite joy of Nimai's inexhaustible sweet beauty soothed their scorching bodies ; it calmed, pleased and satisfied their racing hearts ; it gratified their soul.

Gora's loveliness mesmerized them. Tranquil steady jubilation absorbed their hearts. The touch of Gour-anga almost made them faint.

But he is the one, whose gaze darts arrows that can strike down Madan dev ! Then how can the Nadia-beauties behold Gour-roop, touch Gour-anga, and yet remain steadfast in their duty ? How was it possible ?

This is because while doing seva, they had a different bhaav altogether. They were pure serene Prem personified. The touch of Gour-anga did not arouse lust in them, but only unalloyed blissful Prem. Physical desire did not sting them, neither did they have the longing for material objects – all they had was unlimited bliss, and the jubilation of supreme contentment.

They did not crave for their own happiness.

Their only desire was to please Gouranga. Their only wish was to enhance his enjoyment.

That is why these Nadia-beauties had so happily and enthusiastically engaged in serving Gouranga.

They were excited and enchanted. They had lost their own existence and individuality. They performed Nimai's abhishek with all their body, mind and soul.

They gazed at him unblinking. Although they kept on gazing, they felt no satisfaction. Desire remained unfulfilled. Thirst remained unquenched.

From their core rose a voice – "The more I see you, the more you provoke me."

"The more I desire you, the more you come closer – with ever new beauty. You are gorgeous, you are sweet – you touched our hearts with infinite loveliness. That is why you are magnanimous – a greatness that knows no bounds, a magnificence that has no end.

Please keep us drowned. Keep us immersed in the bowel of your fathomless ocean of beauty. We want nothing from you other than the opportunity to love you.

What can we possibly want ? Millions of universes reside in a single pore of your body. It seems so silly to ask you for anything.....other than you. From millions of

stars to the tiny glow worm in the jungle – all mingle together on the shore of the peaceful ocean of Vaikuntha, dancing in the wave of your music.

So we have no demand, no need, we have only the contentment of getting you. If we have even a bit of material desire, you will extinguish it – we have that faith. You will wipe out all dirt. You will shower serene torrents of mercy and make us pristine pure.”

Nadia Leela thus spread like a joyful river travelling through simple souls and humble hearts.

They are not ordinary women. They are expansions of Bishnupriya, just like the dalliant women of Braj. They are in reality serving the crest jewel of the Gopis – that is Priyaji. This is also Brajranganiketan. The abode of jovial love sports. They are also Brajgopis. Nadia is now Ananda-Vrindavan.

One is smearing his body with turmeric and fragrant oil, while the other is massaging his hair. Someone has placed Nimai’s beautiful feet in her lap.

This made another one sulk. Why should she alone get the chance to serve his feet ? A seva that even the devatas long for ? She forcefully dragged Goursundar’s rosy feet from the first one and held them firmly to her bosom, as if she was installing her cherished Deity in the temple of her heart.

And why would she not ? After all, these feet have immense glory ! Yogis and Munis practice sadhana for countless yugas, and yet do not get their darshan. Shankar and Brahma are ever eager to serve those lotus feet, but do not get the opportunity.

Those lovely feet are the repose of unlimited peace, contentment and bliss. Nimai’s feet are the holy pilgrimages that are the shelter of everything that is auspicious. If we want to get those feet, we have to perform sadhana and bhajan. Whoever gets these feet even once, he becomes blessed, liberated, and realized. What else remains to be obtained ?

Gora’s feet madden everybody.

Oh, but it's gotten late now.

Shachi devi called a Brahmin. She told him to carry oil and turmeric to Sanatan Mishra's house. Until the bride gets the oil-turmeric, she cannot bathe.

The Brahmin started rushing with the oil and turmeric.

Huge merriment was going on there also. Priya's sakhis were surrounding her and exulting in joy.

Priya was smeared with oil and turmeric paste, and thus the gaatra-haridra ritual was accomplished.

The sun was going down.

Nimai started dressing up as the groom. The ones dressing him got busy. They started dressing him in their favorite style.

Buddhimanta Khan had passed strict orders. They had to dress Nimai in royal attire. So they did it.

Nimai's moon like face expressed the incomparable sweetness of his heart. His curly locks were styled in a novel fashion, and then topped with an expensive crown. He wore kundals on the ears, gem studded necklace, armlets, and an expensive golden silk dhoti, and silk kurta. His garment was embroidered with ruby and emeralds. Their exquisite design spread loveliness all around. Fragrant flower garland adorned his neck, while his entire body radiated the divine aroma of chandan. Noone in the whole universe had ever seen such gorgeous beauty.

This beauty agitates the mind, fulfills the heart, and makes the soul forget everything and drown in that ocean of handsomeness.

The Charmer of Nadia would go in royal outfit to fetch his charming priya.

The evening descended. The birds sang their last song of the day, and returned to their nests. At such a time Nimai ascended the royal palanquin of Buddhimanta Khan. Before starting he circumambulated his mother and paid her obeisance. Shachi devi blessed him with all her heart. He paid obeisance to the assembled Brahmins. The conches started blowing, huludhwani echoed, musical played. The sound of "Jaya ! Jaya !" reverberated in the sky. Nimai proceeded towards the house of Sanatan Mishra, where his beloved awaited him.

11

Can a night be so beautiful ? Prior to this, no one had seen how a night can decorate itself so very sweetly.

The dark blue sky was illuminated with moonlight. Cascades of light flooded the bosom of Mother Earth. Suradhuni spread perfume laden breeze all around. The trees were laden with fragrant flowers. Magpies, robins, cuckoos perched on foliage covered branches of the trees, thus enhancing the beauty of Mother Nature. Everywhere there was sweet music. Mother Nature too was celebrating in joy. They had joined in the festivity.

This night did not seem to be a night, but a well decorated young beautiful maiden, who had adorned herself with all her beauty-skills.

Music and excited voices announced the arrival of Nimai.

Sanatan Mishra came running. He stood in front of the palanquin. At once he was stupefied in utmost amazement. What is this ? Can a human being be so gorgeous ? His eyes were transfixed. He could not utter a single syllable. The depth of his heart churned and some wonderful inexplicable music resonated from it. His heart oozed delightful devotion. His whole being longed to fold his palms and glorify Gourangasundar.

Sanatan has forgotten himself.

One question repeatedly agitated his soul – "Who are you ?"

Sanatan thought, "I have to gaze nicely at you. I have to make you the center and fix my mind on you. Amidst everything, you are the One, the Beginningless, the Infinite. You are That. You are the highest realization of the soul. You are the One that the sages want to achieve by supreme sadhana."

The one whom sages can see only with Divine eyes deep seated in the mind, in some rare fortunate moment – Sanatan saw to this heart's content.

The one whom he had called out while playing during adolescence, the one whom he had worshiped in youth, the one whom he had offered his all in his mature age – with all his heart – the one in whose sadhana, in whose bhajan, in whose meditation – he had spent lifetimes, for kalpas and kalpas, today he had mercifully appeared before him. In his swa-roop, in his swa-vesh.....on his own.

Sanatan was floating in love-emotions. He felt like bowing his head at the lotus feet of Gouranga – he felt like placing his foot-dust on his head. He wished to feel supreme peace in his serene heart that was washed with meditation. He wanted his scorching heart to soothe.

The All-knowing understood everything. He inspired Sanatan to become conscious of his surrounding, and worldly customs. Yet Sanatan could not stop his emotions – in supreme happiness he embraced Nimai tightly to his chest. He lifted him in his lap.

Everyone was amazed. And full of love.

They were joyously beholding the wonderful sweet Milan of bhakti with Bhagavan.

Nimai was silent. He stood with his head bowed. In his heart he relished the supremely blissful leela.

Sanatan Mishra brought Gouranga to the 'var-sabha'²⁰ and seated him. Then he sat down next to him. He could not move his hand away from the body of Gouranga. He kept calling out loudly to everyone – "Hey you there ! This is the

²⁰ A room decorated specially for the groom and his friends.

bridegroom ! Come and see him ! I have lifted him in my arms and brought him here. You all welcome him !”

The noblewomen came forward to welcome the groom.

Mahamaya devi was in front. She blessed Nimai with paddy and durvaa grass. But she was startled. Everything got mixed up in her mind. Her hand started trembling badly.

The same question rose in her mind also. Who is he ? Nar.....or Narayan ? The limitedor the Unlimited ?

Mahamaya managed to bless Nimai with much difficulty.

Then she held a lamp close to his face and gazed at him. She saw his fresh golden resplendence. Was she performing arati - or simply beholding the face of her son-in-law ?

In countless yugas, saints have set aflame the most beautiful, the dearest, the most serene object of their lives to perform his arati. Today Mahamaya was performing the same, in the guise of welcoming.

One by one all the women welcomed him in the same manner. They seemed to shower him with never ending flow of sweet Bhakti ras.

The welcoming ceremony was over. Now, the auspicious moment for ‘mukha-chandrika’.

The bridesmen lifted and holding on all sides, brought a seated Bishnupriya in the presence of the groom. They made her circumambulate Goursundar.

Seven pradakshinaas were over. The Absolute Goddess bound the Master of the universe in seven bonds.

This was followed by the exchange of ‘shubha drishti’ or auspicious gaze, when the bride and the groom look deep into each other’s eyes.

The garlands were exchanged. Priya put the garland around Goursundar with trembling hands. She was feeling so shy, but her heart was full of incomparable joy. She had finally got her heart's desire.

Nimai face was lit up with serene beautiful smile. He gazed at Priya. However Priya was unable to look back at him. The shyness of the whole world seemed to envelop her.

Priya's sakhis prodded her from the sides – "Hey ! What's this ? Come on, lift your face and look at him ! Don't you know that love is exchanged through eyes ? And then, the heart speaks to the heart ?"

But how can Priya gaze at him ?

As soon as she tried to do it, she remembered the exchange of glances on the banks of Suradhuni. In a single darshan Priya had surrendered her heart and soul at the feet of Gouranga.

Those restless arrow-like glances darting from his eyes had struck her heart and captivated her forever. The exchange of everything – from auspicious glances to the exchange of hearts – all was over that day itself. Mother Ganga was the witness.

That is why, today, when that faraway Love had come close, when she was about to get the fruit of the sadhana she had performed since birth, Priya is bashful, she is numb.

However her heart was very eager. Even though her head was bowed, Priya was meditating on the moon-like face of Gouranga.

Priya's magnificent beauty illuminated the night.

And why not ? Priya was the sweetest of the sweet. Eyes were stunned on beholding her loveliness.

Both the beauties were the same. A single splendor radiated from both. It had bifurcated simply to enhance the leela. One Supreme with two bodies.

The priest started chanting the mantras. Sanatan himself was well versed in the mantras. So he chanted the mantras on his own and surrendered Priya in the hands of Nimai. He took the trembling delicate beautiful hands of the Supreme Beloved and placed them in the palms of the Supreme Being.

And all Nadiavasis saw this wonderful Milan with overwhelmed hearts and felt blessed.

“bishnupriyar ongo jini lakhborne sona,
Jholmol kore jeno torit protima,
Fonidhor jinni beni muni mon mohe,
Kopale sindur tulona dibo kahe.”

Meaning – “Bishnupriya’s complexion put countless times refined gold into shame. She dazzled like lightning. Her braid was so seductive like a serpentess, that it mesmerized the best of saints. The sindoor dot on her forehead was so enchanting, that I have no word to describe it.” – Chaitanya Mangal.

The ‘kanya-sampradaan’ was over.

Keeping Prajapati Rish, Anushtup Chhanda and Agni dev as witnesses, Sanatan bequeathed Priya in the hands of Nadiabinod.

Supreme Rasa-swarup united with Rasa-vallabhaa.

Adorned in bridal finery, accompanied by Nimai, and their friends, Bishnupriya proceeded towards the “baashor²¹” room.

²¹ It is a well decorated room, where the bride and groom are made to rest after the marriage ceremony is over. In this room, only the close friends of the couple are allowed to enter. The entire night is spent in fun and frolic.

Her heart overflowed. It brimmed with supreme joy. Her body felt numb. Her feet trembled. She could not take steps. Her whole being surged with an outburst of love. She was bathed in perspiration.

Suddenly her feet struck something.

An inaudible gasp of pain escaped Priya's lips. She halted on her path – her foot was hurt. The flower-soft sole was cut and bleeding.....when she felt a softer than soft touch on her foot. Unseen by the host of friends surrounding them, Nimai was pressing the cut with big toe of his right foot. He did it so expertly that the bleeding stopped, yet no one came to know what transpired between them.

His mere touch alleviated all pain, anguish and distress.

He looked at Bishnupriya's scared and anxious face. He smiled at her, as if to say – "Don't worry, I am with you."

But Bishnupriya's heart felt heavy.

Why this awkward incident ? What is this inauspicious indication ?

The supreme bliss radiated by the moonlight bathed sweet night faded in an instant.

Priya's heart trembled. Her whole being shivered in fear. Ohh ! Why did it happen ?

A hot sigh escaped her lips. The all-knowing Lord understood all. With a gesture of hand, he consoled her. His eyes told her, "That is nothing. It's a simple hurt due to carelessness. Please don't take it seriously and feel sad. Cheer up !"

Priya remained silent. Words were not needed. The heart spoke to the heart-reader. The words of love, spoken by the soul.

Priya's heart became vocal. Priya surrendered herself through the words of the heart – "Darling, you are my beloved in life after life, you are the Lord of my heart, my everything. You are my controller. You look after my well being. In joy and sorrow, in strife and troubles – who do I have but you ?

I have offered my body, mind and soul to you. I have nothing else to give. Your kripa is the only treasure I have."

The speech from the depth of Bishnupriya's heart melted the core of her beloved. He smiled and soothed Priya's scorching heart, the anxiety of her mind, the restlessness of her soul. Priya heard her beloved speak. His heart told her – "Come with me. Look, I am with you, why do you fear?"

All clouds faded from Priya's heart. Once again she was flooded with joy. She entered the abode of bliss.

The baashor-room was decorated in a superb manner.

The bed was divine. Flower garlands were put up everywhere. Bouquets of fragrant flowers adorned the room. The perfume of chandan and kumkum filled the air.

Nimai came and sat in the baashor-room. Priya sat next to him. All the friends were intoxicated with joy. It seemed as if honey bees were sweetly humming around two entwined flowers.

There were fountains of laughter. Showers of sweet exultation bathed every one. One of the sakhis asked – "Tell me dear groom, do you like our friend?" Another sakhi caught hold of Priya, and pushed her on to Nimai's lap. The room echoed with vibrant giggles. The baashor-room seemed to have transformed into the Raas-mandali of Brajbhumi.

Nimai was silent.

Gopivallabh simply gazed at their sweet endeavors.

Today they have forgotten everything – their identity, what they are saying, what they are doing. They are bewildered by their own sweet mischiefs.

A long time passed in this manner. At last the bride and the groom sat for dinner.

After dinner the blissful Ifun and frolic continued.

They were drowned in pure unadulterated ocean of bliss.

There was no end to this joy. There was no desire, no lust, and no filth in the heart. The Supreme Embodiment of Ras had washed their hearts clean and wiped every trace of dirt. His effulgence drives away darkness, his brilliance sets afire countless brahmandas – he has driven away the darkness from their hearts. They are dazzling in divine light. Their existence is burnt up in the enchanting joy of obtaining the Supreme.

The night passed in the blink of an eye. The honey-rich night turned into dawn.

Throughout the night, nobody had slept. There was not a trace of sleep. This night in Nimai's baashor-room was nectarine and unforgettable for all those fortunate souls who had attended.

When the eastern horizon turned slight pink, and the birds started warbling, it is then that they came to their senses.

Their hearts cried out – “O night ! Why did you have to pass so soon ? O dusky maiden ! Why are you so quick to leave us, so restless ? Please let us bathe some more in the pure company of Nimai ! O sweet darkness ! Please don't go away !”

12

A new morning followed the honey-filled night.

Nimai performed the 'kushandika' ritual.

Today is the day of farewell. Sanatan Mishra's precious princess would leave them and go with Nimai in the loving shelter of Shachi Mata.

Hence all hearts were heavy and everyone felt miserable.

Nimai finished his Prasad along with the guests. Bishnupriya partook of the Prasad in her husband's plate.

Afternoon was close. All were getting ready to leave.

Both of them stood together. The priests blessed them by chanting ht emantras. The noblewomen made the huludhwani.

Is it an ordinary Milan ?

The Absolute Goddess is united with the Lord of the Three Worlds. Whose heart would not overflow with happiness ?

Mahamaya gazed silently at Priya's face.

The sakhis surrounded them.

Their hearts were agitated. They had all turned pale in misery. Priya would leave them. Mahamaya's house would become empty.

All shed tears. They would have to let go of Priya who, they had nurtured with utmost love and pamper. Their hearts doubled in pain even to think of it.

Bidhumukhi, the widowed aunt, was standing nearby. She loved Priya very much. Today Priya was going away. Looking at Bidhumukhi's face, Priya started crying.

Bidhumukhi too wept. Then she came to Priya and wiped her tears.

Yadav and Madhav too started crying. They had lost their father in the beginning of adolescence. They know no one other than mother Bidhumukhi and didi Bishnupriya. Due to their heartfelt love, the boys had forgotten their pain and sorrow.

But today did would leave them.

The mere thought was making them shed torrential tears. Showers of tears were dropping from the corners of their eyes. Bishnupriya could not control herself any more. Her heart bled and her whole body trembled. She extended her arms and pulled the brothers to her lap. She wiped the tears from their eyes.

The servants of the house sat silently. They did not feel like attending to any work. They also stood here and there and shed tears.

It seemed as if the ocean of tears surged high in everyone's heart.

The news of Priya's farewell seemed to sadden not only her friends and family, but also the birds in the sky and the waves of Suradhuni. The warbling of the birds and the dashing of the waves held tearful notes.

Sanatan Mishra stepped forward holding paddy and durvaa in his hand. Mahamaya devi accompanied him. They blessed Priya, and drew her to their lap. They showered heartfelt kisses of blessings on their darling daughter. Tears wet their chin. Lamentation filled their hearts. They could not lift their gaze to look at her.

Now Bishnupriya openly bawled. With utmost love Sanatan embraced her and pressed her to his bosom. He consoled Priya, "Maa, don't cry. It is not good to shed tears in a holy occasion."

Bishnupriya, accompanied by Gouranga paid obeisance to the elders.

Dear devotees, please behold ! See with all your heart, the Joy of the Universe, the One Whom the devatas glorify, the sages extol.....that Divine Couple ! Install them in the center of your hearts. They are the supreme attainment of all your aradhana and all your tapasya.

Sanatan Mishra addressed Gouranga – "I have nothing to tell you. You are worthy in all aspects, and have accepted my daughter. You have blessed my home by becoming my son-in-law. Bishnupriya is extremely fortunate to have obtained you as husband. I am blessed – we all are supremely fortunate."

Sanatan Mishra's voice was choked. He took Priya's hand and placed it in Goursundar's. His eyes flooded with tears.

Then he controlled himself a bit and said – “Baba²², I am surrendering this son of mine to you. Priya has raised him since childhood. HE is very much devoted to her.”

Nimai consented. “Alright, I accept all responsibility of Yadav.”

Nimai went and ascended the palanquin.

Bishnupriya gazed one last time at her parents with tearful eyes, then slowly followed Nimai and got into the palanquin²³. The palanquins proceeded slowly.

They stood silently – and continued to gaze at the palanquins until they could see them no more. Then they wiped their tears and entered the house.

An endless river of joy was flowing in Shachi devi’s house.

Shachi Maa performed arati of the newly wedded couple and welcomed them into the house. Her heart was overflowing with happiness.

It is true she had lost one Laxmi, but now she had got Bishnupriya whom hundreds of Laxmis worship. The sad house was once more echoing with laughter, joy and peace. Shachi Maa had truly forgotten the tears she had shed in the past.

Priya too was full of happiness and contentment. She had got her desired husband, and the mother-in-law she had wished for.

Today was the night of ‘Pushpa-baashor²⁴’. After a long dark period of waiting, the time had come for Phul-shayya²⁵.

²² Equivalent to ‘dear son’.

²³ There were separate palanquins for the bride and the groom. So we should not feel that Nimai was less chivalrous because he got into first into the palanquin. Also it is unbecoming for the husband to shower affection on the wife in the presence of her family, since it is natural that her family is more loving and more caring towards her than the husband, and hence would look after her comfort more than he is capable of.

²⁴ Flower-moment ; it is the name given to the first night of the couple which they spend in a room decorated with flowers.

²⁵ The newly wedded couple lie on a bed of flowers, called “Flower-bed” or Phul-shayya.

Priya's sakhis have come and decorated the room with flowers. They have adorned the milk-white bed with petals of fragrant flowers. They have perfumed the room by spraying keyur and chandan water. They had made 'toran's of flowers, flower-garlands, and many other flower-decorations.

Today the milan of the universally extoled Nadiabinod and the source of 'rati' (divine passion) Bishnupriya would take place. All living beings would dance in joy. It would be the most memorable, the most adorable, the most venerable night of infinite happiness.

The moon has risen in the sky. The soft chandan-laden breeze is blowing. The air is fragrant with the scent of wild flowers. The whole world is illuminated. The sweet moon has lit up each and every pathway of the universe.

Suradhuni is gushing forward in ecstasy. Her happiness knows no bounds. The banks of Suradhuni are celebrating the good news. Her shores are resonating with musical waves. Mother Ganga is tonight surging in bliss.

Today that milan, which had begun on the banks of Suradhuni, is now consummated. Therefore Ganga is dancing in jubilation !

Soft and sweet breeze is blowing, serene fragrance of chandan is floating around. Daahuk-daahuki²⁶ are calling and so are the kokil²⁷ and papiyaa²⁸.

After all, how many such honey-smearred nights had the banks of the Suradhuni seen ?

The entire house was full of Priya's sakhis – of these Kanchana and Amita were the main. They were seated next to Priya, and decorating her nicely.

Today no gold and gem jewelry – only flower-ornaments, flower-decorations. Mingling the sweetness of their heart, with the fragrance of the flowers, they were decorating not only Priya, but also Goursundar.

²⁶ *Amaurornis phoenicurus*; [White-breasted Waterhen \(bird-couple\)](#)

²⁷ cuckoo

²⁸ *Hierococcyx varius*; [Common Hawk-Cuckoo](#)

The decoration was over.

All came to take darshan of the Divine Couple.

The elders gave their blessings and went away.

The women of Nadia came and started showering flowers.

The room became full of flowers. Serene Fragrance entertained the atmosphere. The newly wedded couple was congratulated amidst heaps of flowers, and there was great joy, sweet hullabaloo and excitement all around.

All the women and men of Nadia thought how blessed they were – they had not got darshan of such wonderful joyous pastimes ever before.

13

A few days passed.

The ones who had come from far to attend Nimai's wedding bade farewell one by one and went away.

Sri Advaitacharya Prabhu had come with his wife Sita devi.

Sri Advaita is the incarnation of Mahavishhnu and is Mahadev swarup. He is now residing as Sitanath in Shantipur. Pained by the suffering of the devotees he had called out to Bhagavan most piteously, and brought him onto this earth, that is full of sorrow.

He knew the swarup of Nimai. Yet he did not make it public. He holds the secret in his heart and waits for the day when Nimai will reveal himself on his own.

After attending Nimai's wedding, Sri Advaita Prabhu returned to Shantipur with his wife.

The days were passing in joy.

But in between Sanatan came to take his daughter. After all, this was the custom of Bengal.

Shachi devi could not control her tears. She did not wish to bid farewell to her daughter-in-law at all. She held Priya close to her bosom and showered hundreds of kisses on her. She said in a pined voice, "Maa, today my house has again become dark. Very soon I will bring you back. How can I live without you?"

Priya could not hold her tears back. Drops of water rolled down her beautiful eyes. Sanatan took his daughter and son-in-law, and returned home.

After a few days Nimai returned. He engaged in his occupational duties.

Shachi Maa's heart however, was getting stifled. Each morning she went for Ganga-snan, but she returned home late.

A few days passed in this manner.

Shachi Maa went regularly for Ganga-snaan, but took a long time to come home.

Nimai, however, learnt very soon why she got late. One day he told mother, "Maa, you go daily to 'kutum-bari'²⁹ to see your daughter-in-law, is it not? It doesn't look good."

Shachi Maa was surprised; how did Nimai know her secret? She asked – "How did you know? Who told you?" Nimai laughed and replied – "I know you! After all, you are my mother!"

"Tell me, what do I do? I cannot stay without seeing her."

"That's alright. Why don't you bring her home?"

"Shall I?"

²⁹ A respectable term for the house of one's in-laws.

“Why not ? Is there anything greater to me than your dignity ?” Hearing this, Shachi devi’s heart started dancing.

She lost herself in joy. She will bring Bishnupriya back. She looked up an auspicious date and sent Nimai to bring Priya along with him.

Nimai brought Priya.

Priya took all responsibility of Shachi Maa’s home in her own hands.

Shachi Maa was free now. Priya took deep interest in all household chores and performed them. If Shachi Maa attempted to do any work, she stopped her and said, “Maa, your age is not less. You have suffered so long, now it is time for you to rest.”

Shachi Maa could not contain her joy. She only gazed unblinking at Priya when she was busy with household work.

Priya got up from the bed long before the Sun-god peeped in the sky at dawn.

No one had got up then. Priya swept and smeared the earthen floor with cow-dung³⁰. Then she bathed and drew ‘aalponaa’ in Vishnu Mandir. After this she plucked flowers from the garden. Then she entered the kitchen. She served everybody, and was the last one to accept Prasad. Not only Shachi Maa, but the neighbors too were extremely generous in praising Priya. They said, “There is no daughter-in-law so wonderful as Priya. One is extremely fortunate to get such a daughter-in-law. You must admit that Shachi is blessed !”

When Shachi Maa hears her neighbors speak like this, her heart wells with joy and pride.

Impatient with happiness, Shachi Maa tells everything to her son.

Hearing this, Nimai becomes happy. He says – “I am busy with work day and night. I cannot serve you the way I would like to. But the one who fulfills that

³⁰ Since cow-dung has anti-bacterial and insecticidal property.

desire of mine – all my life I will remain her slave. I will never be able to repay that debt.”

Shachi devi’s heart overflowed with bliss. She said – “People feel happy to keep Laxmi-Narayan in their homes, but I am much more happy because my house has Bushnupriya-Nimai.”

Shachi Maa does not know that she is speaking a universal Truth. What she is saying is priceless. That the Lord of Golok is Himself residing in her home with His Supreme Consort. What else can be more joyous than this ?

One day Nimai was eating. Shachi Devi was sitting close by.

Priya stood behind the door. She was gazing steadfast, with unblinking eyes at her husband, scrutinizing him while he ate.

A question time and again peeped in her heart. Priya was wondering, did her husband like what she had cooked ?

Just then the all-knowing Nimai suddenly asked his mother – “So wonderful ! Maa, I’m sure you must have cooked.”

Shachi devi replied – “Why, my child, why should I cook ?”

“Then you must have surely supervised.”

Shachi Maa smiled sweetly and said – “She is a new bride. Of course I have to show her a little bit. Otherwise how will she know the ways of the house ? Hence I sometimes give her some instructions.”

Nimai laughed and said - “No wonder. That is why I felt, how come the dish has turned out exactly like yours.”

Bishnupriya’s body and mind danced in joy.

“Thank God ! He has liked it !” She was contented. “I only want to please you – this is my pledge life after life. It is my sadhan-bhajan for yugas and yugas. I want nothing else.”

Nimai was busy all day and night. He spent most of the day in the school, with his students. The students too were most happy to get a teacher like him. They had not seen such a scholar at so young an age. They felt blessed to get an opportunity to learn from him.

Nimai came home only at noon during lunch time. After eating, he returned to the school.

Bishnupriya wholeheartedly served her husband. She felt supreme joy when she performed any seva for him. She kept the water for washing the feet, close to his hands. She arranged his slippers and towel in the proper place. The bottle of oil was where it should be. He never had to search for anything.

The entire house was simple and neat.

After bath, Nimai would eat a few morsels and go out again.

Priya spent the whole day waiting to catch a glimpse of her husband.

All day and night, she wondered, why does her husband keep her at a distance ? Why could she not get him close to her always ?

One day, as she was thinking like this, an extraordinary agitation filled her heart.

Her eyes brimmed with tears. Was the proximity of her husband so very rare ?

Naam and Naami are non-different. For yugas and yugas, the tears of the devotee have made Bhagavan restless. Whenever the devotee has called out to him from the depths of the heart, he has never been able to resist. Goursundar too was unable to push aside the heart-rending call of his devotee. He came home running. The Lord is hungry for love, he wants nothing else. How can he not answer a lover's call ?

He rushed home and at once stood face to face with Priya. With a love-choked voice, he asked – "My dear, why did you call me ? I could not teach any more. I became helpless and had to rush to you."

Tears filled Bishnupriya's eyes. Her voice was choked with happiness. She thought to herself – "You love me so much ? Such unhesitating love for this wretched soul ? I did not have to call you even ! Mere remembrance brought you here. Does this mean, you have not forgotten me ?"

She slowly lifted her eyes at him.

Her whole being got filled with the incomparable resplendent beauty of Goursundar. Bisnupriyavallabh's loveliness flooded her body, mind and soul. A single word rose from Priya's heart – "I cannot stay without seeing you ! Please do not forget me."

Priya could not say anything more.

Her lips trembled. Her body became numb. Warm tears pricked her eyes. Slowly she sat down.

Gouranga lifted her in his arms. His beautiful smile lit up his face. He said – "How can I forget you ? You fill my body, mind and soul, do you not know that ?"

Nectarine pleasure filled Priya's whole being. She also felt a bit shy. She lowered her gaze and listened to him.

Prabhu told her, "I have to teach hundreds of students. They look at me with hope and expectation. They come from such far away lands merely to get the priceless gift of education. How can I disappoint them ? This is the only reason I remain out of home. May I leave now ?"

The Lord stood like an obedient person waiting for her permission.

Priya's heart was overwhelmed. She did not want to let go of him at all. But she knew she had to.

She sighed heavily and said softly – "Go and return soon."

Slowly the Lord went away.

Bishnupriya continued to gaze through the window. She kept looking for as long as he was visible.

14

Days pass.

The entire world seems full of supreme bliss.

But all of a sudden, there was a hint of sorrow. The vast joy was touched by a bit of sadness.

Priya overheard the news. Nimai was telling Shachi Maa – “Maa, father has brought me up with so much love and care. He has fulfilled his duties towards me, but what about my duty towards him?”

“What duty? Tell me.”

“I have to offer ‘pinda’ at the lotus feet of Sri Gadadhar, to satisfy the soul of father. Then his soul will get liberated. If I cannot do this much, then what sort of a son am I?”

A heavy breath escaped from Shachi Maa’s heart. She said calmly – “But child, it is a long way. It will take many days to go and come.”

“Yes, that is true. But should we neglect our duty because it is far?”

Only one year had passed after marriage.

Shachi Maa’s body and mind was full of distress. She felt a buzz in her head.

Nimai continued to speak – “Baba loved me so much. However I was unable to do anything for him. I remember my childhood. How much I have troubled my Baba. So many people came to him to complain against me. They used to insult him. Baba used to feel hurt. With an aggrieved heart he used search for me. He would suffer in the hot noon sun. After hearing so many complaints, he wanted to scold

me, yet after seeing my face, he was not able to say anything. I am not capable to repaying his the debt of his immense love. I simply want to execute the minimum duty possible for me."

Shachi devi's eyes too brimmed with tears, as she reminisced about the past. "But why raise the topic after so many days?" She asked.

Nimai replied sadly, "I feel so pained, Maa ! Had he been alive, I would have happily served his feet."

Nimai started weeping. Tears started rolling down his cheeks.

Seeing tears in her son's eyes, Shachi Maa too started crying. Her heart felt heavy.

Restlessly, she caught Nimai's hands and said – "Sorrow and misery have turned me into stone. I am living only due to both of you. Please don't remind of the past, and make me sad."

Nimai kept silent for a moment. Then he said – "Do you know why after so many days I am saying all this ? Because I heard that if we give pinda in Gayadhaam, the souls of our ancestors attain liberation. Maa, you please give me permission." Then he stopped a little and continued – "Maa, this material world is temporary. No one can say what will happen to whom. Therefore it was not right for us to have neglected such a great duty. Besides, I heard that lots of people are going."

Shachi Maa was worried.

On one side it was a bounden duty, on the other hand she had immense attachment for her son. How would she live so many days without seeing Nimai ?

She remained silent for some time, and said, "Since you want it, I won't stop you. But do try to return as soon as possible. And also offer one pinda in the name of your mother, although she is living."

Nimai consented and went inside. Bishnupriya was standing behind the curtain and hearing everything. She felt as tormented as a bird struck by an arrow. Tears rolled from eyes. Her heart was full of lamentation. Once she thought of stopping

him, but she knew she would not. When mother did not stop him, then how could she ? After all, he was going for a good cause.

Virahini Priya offered no resistance at all. She continued to silently bear the tortuous pain.

All arrangements for the yatra were done. The starting date was fixed.

Nimai will travel to Gaya Dhaam. Some others would accompany him. They would go and come walking. Nimai mesho³¹ Chandrashekhar Acharya too would go with him.

Shachi devi repeatedly warned them of the perils of the journey, and told them to be careful. In those days, it was difficult to go on a pilgrimage, since there were many dangers on the way, such as dacoits and wild animals. As a result, if people went on a pilgrimage, their family members got worried.

Everything was ready. Before starting Nimai called Bishnupriya to a secluded spot and said – “I am going to Gaya Dhaam. I will return as soon as possible. Please look after mother.”

Bishnupriya could not utter a single word. She only nodded silently. Two big tears rolled down her cheeks.

Priya’s tears dashed against Nimai’s heart. He drew Priya’s head onto the vast expanse of his well-built chest. He ran his fingers through her hair, and while caressing her, he said with a love-choked voice – “I cannot remain long without you. I promise to return quickly. Please be patient and serve mother.”

The shower of tears did not stop. Goursundar bade her farewell amidst the tears. Shachi devi accompanied her son till the banks of the Ganga.

And Priya threw herself on the empty bed and cried.

Priya’s vast heart harbored nothing but unending emptiness. Just a calm deep-embedded vacuum. Torment seemed to churn her entire being. It was the first

³¹ Mother’s sister’s husband

time they were being separated for such a long time after marriage. Priya got agitated. Huge waves of dears seemed to crash on her heart.

Suddenly a voice startled her. Beside her stood Kanchana. She told her in a quiet voice – “Priya, this sorrow does not become you. Your husband is Dharma personified. He is famous all over Bharat. You should support him all his righteous activities, then only you are fit to be called sahadharmini. Who can it be otherwise ?”

Priya’s weeping became less.

Kanchana laughed and said – “Shoi³², get up and sit. Wipe your eyes, and concentrate on your chores. He will return after a few days. Come with me, let’s go to Bishnu Mandir and decorate with flowers.”

Shachi devi returned after some time. She seemd to have emerged from an ocean of tears. Her hair was rough, and her face looked pale.

Priya’s heart became still when she saw her mother-in-lae.

How could she cry in front of her ? If she cried, then who would soothe her ?

As a result, Priya was forced to discipline her heart. She chastised herself and strictly controlled her emotions.

Concealing her feelings, Priya smilingly went about her work.

15

Nimai has travelled to Gaya Dhaam.

On the other hand, a revolution was stirring in Nadia.

Sri Advaita had left Shantipur and had come to Nabadweep. He had built an ashram on the banks of Gnaga. He could hear a non-stop voice in his heart - “He has descended on earth ! Yes ! Very soon He will reveal his swarup.”

³² An endearing Bengali term for ‘sakhi’.

On the other hand, after traversing the length and breadth of Bharat, Sri Nityananda Prabhu had reached Nabadweep. Advaita Prabhu's ashram was the hub of devotees. Srivas, Haridas, Gadadhar, Shuklambar. Tortured by the Kazi, Haridas had taken refuge there.

And Sripad Ishwar Puri was also there.

His Guru, Sri Madhavendra Puri, who was the best of devotees, had told Ishwar Puri before leaving this body, that the Supreme Being would appear very soon on this earth. He would come to Sridhaam Nabadweep. Madhavendra Puri had given the responsibility of giving Him the holy Ashtadashaakshara Mantra to Ishwar Puri.

Nimai had met him just before leaving for Gaya Dham. One day on the roads of Nabadweep, Nimai had seen a sanayasi who was serenity personified. He was uttering -

"twamivamahamajam shareerabhajam
Hridi hridi adhishtitam atmakalpitanam,
Pratidrishameva naikadharkamekam
Samadhigato'smi vidhutabhedamohah."

Nimai had not seen such tranquil beauty in all his life.

He had not heard anybody taking Krishna Naam so sweetly, nor had he heard anyone sing Bhagavan-Naam so devoutly.

Nimai had, of his own accord, gone upto that sanyasi, and introduced himself. Then very respectfully he invited him to his house.

The serene looking sanyasi too accepted his invitation.

After prasadam, Nimai sat to discuss the shastras with him. The sanysi told him that he was Ishwar Puri, a disciple of Madhavendra Puri.

After the preliminary introduction, Nimai broached on spiritual shastras. Sripad Ishwar Puri said – “I never wanted to seek God through scriptures. I know he is there. I want to establish a near and dear relation with him. I want to love him. I have written a book – Sri Krishna Leelamrita. I want to bind him in a loving relation. This book contains all that. I shall be grateful if you can do proofreading.”

Immediately all arrogance disappeared from Nimai. All the pride he had in scholarliness got extinguished. He said – “Alankar-shastra says that it is unfair to pick faults in Bhakti-granthas.”

Ishwar Puri laughed and said – “It is not wrong to correct grammatical mistakes.”

Ishwar Puri recited Sri Krishna Leelamrita in a very sweet voice.

Nimai listened in silence.

Ishwar Puri’s sweet recital played melodious jingle in Nimai’s mind, which transcended rhetoric and grammar. Nimai’s innermost being seemed to echo with the sweet strumming of that Krishnaprem-Raagini.

A storm overtook Nimai. The future Guru had sowed the seed of devotion in the heart of his future disciple. No one knew when that seed would sprout into a gigantic million branched tree and cover the earth with its shade.

Devout Vaishnavs have gathered in Advaita’s house.

All were absorbed in the Holy Name and Krishna-meditation. All of a sudden Sripa Ishwar Puri entered.

He gazed at the devotees and asked – “Can you tell me, whether this news is correct?”

Everyone looked at him.

“Has Nimai left for Gaya teertha ?” he asked.

“Yes, we have heard something like this.”

“Ishwar Puri became restless. He said with determination – “I have to go. I must leave today itself. I have a huge responsibility.”

With quick steps he left and immediately started for Gaya.

The assembled devotees were puzzled. What is this ? Why this sudden change in him ?

But, no one understood anything.

The Harinaam Sankirtan continued as before. Everyone once more floated in the river of Holy Name.

Some time passed in this manner. Suddenly some Vaishnavs rushed into Sri Advaita’s house.

Sri Advaita saw that they bore marks of injury.

They cried in unison – “O Acharya ! Please save us ! Please protect us ! Our Dharma will remain no more.”

Acharya was engrossed in Naam sankirtan. His mind had left this world and had travelled to some far away land. His body expressed goose bumps. His eyes were showering tears. However the heart-wrenching calls of the devotees brought him back. He opened his eyes and looked at them. He asked, “Tell me, how did this happen ?”

The devotees replied – “As per your instruction, we were singing Sri Krishna Naam sankirtan. The neighbors could not tolerate it. They came and beat us.”

Sri Advaita Prabhu trembled in anger. His garments were in disorder, his eyes resembled burning coals. He could not speak.

After a few moments he controlled himself. He gave out a roar of grief. The roar was so tumultuous that all directions trembled. The holy waters of Bhagirathi carried this roar with every wave. Sri Advaita Prabhu said –

“shuno srinibas, gangadhar, shuklambar,

Koraibo krishno sorbo noyono gochor.
Sobaa uchcharibe krishno aponi ashiya,
Bujhaibe krishno bhokti toma soba loiya,
Jodi nahi pari tobe ei deho hoite,
Prokashiya chari bhujo chokro loimu hate.
Pashandi katiya korimu skondho naash,
Tobe krishno probhu mor mui tanr daas."

Meaning – "Listen, you Srinibas ! Gangadhar ! Shuklambar ! I will make Krishna appear before your eyes. All of you take Krishna Naam loudly, and Krishna will come and talk to you. He will himself come and explain Krishna Bhakti to you. If I cannot make this possible then I will manifest four hands, take the Sudarshan Chakra, and cut up the sinners. Thus I shall prove that Krishna is my Master and I am His servant." – Sri Chaitnay Bhagabat.

16

After many days of hardship, the travel came to an end. Our Lord reached Gaya Dhaam. An entirely different bhaav awoke in Nimai. A wonderful transformation. He became calm, controlled, absorbed, and serious.

This is that holy place. Nimai paid obeisance with palms joined to his head. He did pranaam to Gaya Dhaam as soon as he touched Gaya Kshetra.

He reached Mandar parvat.

In supreme bliss he bathed in Chourandayak Nad to his heart's content.

He performed Dev and Pitri Tarpan. He climbed the Mandar Parvat in the accompaniment of the teertha-priests. After taking darshan of Lord Madhusudan, he came to the house of the teertha-priest.

The travel had exhausted Nimai. He felt ill and uneasy. He got fever. High fever. His students became anxious. Chandrashekhar too felt sad. All the pilgrims got worried.

Prabhu called them near. Softly he said – “Please don’t worry. Bring the footwash of the priests who are serving Lord Madhusudan. Pour it in my mouth. The fever will disappear.”

The devotees and students fell in dilemma. How can they give their teacher the footwash of the priests ? Is it not a sin ?

“Why, they are all Madhusudan’s servants, are they not ? They are his devotees, his refugees. They have offered their life and death to Madhusudan, and have surrendered at his lotus feet. Bring, please bring the footwash of those devout Brahmins. Otherwise this fever will not let me offer oblations to my father”, begged Nimai.

Leelamaya Prabhu was teaching his followers through this leela.

In the form of Sri Krishna, he had taught Sage Narad with the help of the footdust of Braja-Gopis, now in the form of Gouranga, he took the foot dust of the priests. With this he taught us to respect the Dhamvasis, and even those pandaas who seem to ‘harass’ us. We should know that it is due to our fault, and something lacking is us, it is because we have not understood the true principles of Bhakti, and they have no shortcoming.

The followers obeyed Nimai.

The result was surprising. The body that was burning in fever, immediately became ice-cool. There was no trace of fever.

The Lord smiled and said – “Did you see what immense glory the foot dust of the pandaas have ? We should not disrespect the pandaas.”

Chandrashekhar was dumbstruck. His eyes widened in amazement. He could not understand how Nimai, who was ever-playful, always ready to debate, brimming with laughter, neck-deep in the scriptures – changed so much ?

At last the suspicious day came. Ishwar Puri gave diksha to Nimai. He gave him the Gopivallabh-Mantra. After the holy event, both Guru and shisya enveloped each other in tight embrace. They floated in love-tears. AHA ! Such a wonderful moment. Life got transformed. Krishna-bhakta Ishwar Puri brought Nimai to the realm of sweet bliss.

Sri Krishna intoxicated Nimai. Krishna-chintan, Krishna-bhajan and Krishna-naam became Nimai's mool-mantra. His eyes drowned in flood of tears. He gazed at Chandrashekhar and said in a piteous voice – "You all please return. I won't go home. I shall go to Vrindavan. I shall seek my Sri Krishna."

Nimai was agitated. He could not bear the pangs of Krishna-viraha any more. This is agonizing. Excruciating. "O my darling ! Where are you ? Please give me darshan. Appear in my meditation. Set me afloat in your serene Shyam effulgence. Drown me ! Haa Krishna ! Haa Krishna ! Haa Krishna !"

Chandrashekhar fell in deep trouble. How would he return to Shachi devi ? How would he console her? Nimai was steadfast in his decision. He was saying – "Tell Maa that her Nimai has gone in search of Shyamsundar. Please tell her not to grieve unnecessarily for me."

Chandrashekhar said – "You are a pandit. You are learned, you are qualified. I sound kiddish if I try to explain anything to you. But still, I want to ask you – do you know your mother ? If you do not return home, your mother will not live. If a son like you, does not understand mother's pain, mother's sorrow, then who will ? Who will wipe her tears ? Her bosom is bludgeoned with countless wounds. Who will apply balm on her scorching heart ? Come, my child, let's go home. Your Krishna is everywhere. His seat is the entire universe. You perform Hari-bhajan after returning home."

On hearing Chandrashekhar, Nimai seemed to gain his senses. Chandrashekhar heaved a sigh of relief. All he wanted now was to return to a son to his mother.

What happened is like this – as we all know, Gaya Teertha is a treasure house of memories collected over countless yugas. Innumerable people had come here on various quests from beginningless time. Many have offered tarpan for their ancestors. As soon as Nimai had touched this holy place, his mood had undergone a sea change.

After bathing in the pure River Phalguni Nimai came and stood in front of Sri Vishnu Pada-chinha. In some unknown past Lord Vishnu had kicked the audacious Gayasur in his head. That Vishnu-padachinha existed till today, etched in the rock.

On seeing that glorious lotus foot, Nimai seemed to have turned into stone. As if he had a relation with that charan-chinha from lifetimes. Someone seemed to speak to him from some unknown land. Torrential tears started rolling down his eyes. He lost his cognizance. He fell unconscious there itself.

When he regained consciousness, he found himself lying in the lap of Ishwar Puri. Ishwar Puri had protected him by catching his falling body in his arms.

Nimai's heart underwent a huge transformation. The impudent playful Nimai wept loudly like a baby. He knelt before him and begged – "Gurudev ! Please show me the path."

Ishwari Puri too replied with folded palms – "I have been waiting for you only. I know who you are. I have seen my Supreme Ishta in you. It is my tremendous fortune that you have chosen me as your Diksha-Guru." He revealed the sweeter than sweet Krishna-Naam to Nimai.

As soon as Nimai heard that Holy Name, his entire body expressed goose bumps, and he resembled a fully bloomed Kadamba flower. The honey-ful Krishna Naam seemed to bring with it some unknown unfamiliar message. He had come to know of an eternal nectarine realm. Some forgotten extinct memory awoke in him. From then onwards, Nimai, lifting both his hands, only laughed and cried. The entire world with its animals and birds, fruits and roots, grass and creepers, moving and non-moving – all appeared worthless to him. All around he saw only the etching of the ambrosial Holy Name. Other than that Naam, all else were

false. He wanted to rush and embrace the whole universe in Prem. He colored the sky and earth by his touch.

However at last, this intoxicated state did calm down somewhat. He returned to Nabadweep with Chandrashekhar.

17

Nimai returned to Nabdweep from Gaya Dham. He was a different person altogether. The residents of Nadia had never seen this Nimai before.

He was rolling on the dust while paying obeisance to Shachi Maa. He kept repeating – “Sri Krishnaaya Govindaay aNamah.”

He embraced Bushnupriya like he was embracing his Shyam Manohar.

Bishnupriya started trembling all over. Her body was covered with goose bumps.

Nimai, who was known as the “King of Arrogance”, now went to the Sankirtan in Srivas’s house, uninvited. On the way, he openly recited, without any shyness –
“Haa Krishna Karuna sindho deena bandho jagatpate,

Gopesh agopika kanta radha kanta namo’stute.”

His eyes showered torrential tears, that wet the earth. The tears covered all visible world with mist.

Nimai’s harbored Krishna in his soul, he saw Krishna in the sky, his eyes held Krishna, his thoughts contained Krishna, There was Krishna in his meditation, while sleeping, dreaming, and waking, he saw nothing but Krishna. The three worlds contained only Krishna.

The topmost scholar of Nabadweep, the one who was so proud of his education, is now rolling in the dust of Srivas Angan, and crying.

The devotees asked him – “What is the matter Nimai ? Why are you crying ?”

But Nimai had very little consciousness. Nimai said – “When I saw Sri Vishnu Paada-padma in gaya, I remembered something from long lost yugas. I lost myself. As if I became one with the infinite and the unlimited. I felt the earth has no small and big, good and bad, near and far, mine and yours, high and low. There is no envy and violence. Whomever I see, I feel like embracing.”

The devotees become curious – “Then, are you That ? The One Whom we have been awaiting for aeons and aeons, for countless lifetimes ? Are you then, that cowherd prince of Vrindavan ? May be you have given up your shyam-anga and now appeared as Gouranga, to spread the message of love, to unite everyone with the cord of affection ?”

Nimai has returned from Gaya. The news spread like wildfire. Everyone came to see him. The students and well-wishers came, and so did Sanatan Mishra. All the faces bore the sign of amazement. There was only one question – who is this ?

They replied to themselves – “The Nimai whom we knew has bade us farewell. The Nimai we see now, is actually Shyamsundar, the Universal Friend. This Nimai is mesmerized with bhaav, he is Krishnamay. He is not that same Nimai anymore. This Nimai is constantly absorbed in the Supreme Being. Sri Krishna has manifested in him the Truth about Self, the Light of Self, realization of Self, and the form of Self. As a result, his lips cannot remain without Krishna Katha. His Krishna-kirtan is pouring nectar in our ears. If he hears Krishna Katha, he falls down unconscious. Again, Krishna Katha makes him return to consciousness. Nimai has gone beyond this material world ; now he remains busy with only that Supreme Being, who is above all debates and material perception.”

All of Nabadweep was speechless in amazement when they heard that Nimai Pandit would close down his school. Books made him shiver. When the students asked him questions, he would answer only from philosophical point of view, which had no connection with the subject matter. The students were bewildered.

He only keeps saying – “Chant Krishna-naam. There is no speech other than Krishna-speech. This Krishna-Naam is the only ‘success’ in life. Krishna-Naam alone is liberation.”

While saying this all, his eyes became misty. He heard the flute-song floating from afar, and jumped down on the road.

The students got depressed. They did not know what to do. Every day they came with the hope that they would see some improvement in their teacher, but alas ! Nothing of that sort happened. In fact his condition deteriorated. They loved him very much, so did not want to leave the school and take admission anywhere else. But how long could they wait ?

One day Nimai told them – “See my dears, I shall not trouble you anymore. Today I am revealing my heart to you. Someone is calling me all day and night. He seems to say – darling, you come to me. Come running to me.”

After this Nimai tied up his books, and said – “From today my education is over. I have realized that if I cannot forsake the burden of my degrees, and the pride of my education, I will not get my Shyamsundar.”

Nimai’s heart bounced on the waves of such infinite devotion. He had Krishna everywhere – inside and outside. The entire universe had become Krishna. He could not see anything but Krishna. On some days, he performed kirtan the whole night in Sribas-angan. And on certain occasions, he sat on the Vishnu-aasan, and said – “Perform my abhishek !”

The devotees worshiped him as they would have worshiped Lord Vishnu. They did his bhishek with karpur, chandan, kumkum and fragrant Ganga Jal. After this, they worshiped Nimai instead of the deity of Lord Vishnu.

Nimai embraced all the Vaishnavs.

When Nimai touched the devotees, they felt instant soothing – all the dust and filth of the material world, pain and sorrow – all disappeared immediately. Nimai’s touch aroused Divinity in human beings. A new wave of joy rushed in all the hearts.

Sometimes he was absorbed in himself, and at other times he would be in the mood of Radharani. He would lament – “Ha Krishna ! Ha Krishna !” and weep. Tears wet his chest.

The Vaishnavs were very happy to see Nimai in this new form.

The Nimai who used to start arguing the moment he saw a Vaishnav, has now become like a soft flower petal. On touching Gaya, he has become calm – he has become contented, he is now afloat in a Ganga of new bhaav. All his shastrik arguments are silent. His eyes now only brimmed with tears. On his serene face there reigned immense humility, it seems as if he wants to roll at every feet.

Today Nadia’s Vaishnav samaj is extremely blissful. Very satisfied. Srivas, Nityananda, Gadadhar, Shuklambar, Murari – all were absorbed in bliss.

Nimai was the Lord of their hearts. He was the pole star, that would guide them through this desert-like, dark material ocean.

All the material coverings had fallen off – Nimai was devoid of false ego. That is why the Vaishnavs were so jubilant. They had gathered around Nimai and were celebrating.

Nimai the scholar has bidden farewell. He has been replaced by Nimai, the beautiful Forgiver, serene, calm, and resplendent with bliss.

Nimai is intoxicated with Bhaav. He is absolutely absorbed in the Supreme Being.

18

Nimai was craving for Krishna-Naam. On the hand Shachi Maa too was very much disturbed. Why does Nimai not return on time, like before, calling out ‘Maa’ so sweetly ? Why is he always in Srivas’s house ? What does he do there ? What pleasure does he get ? What is so enjoyable there that he has forgotten iahome and family ? Even his mother ?

Mother's heart is really agitated nowadays. She could not tarry anymore. She could not hold her patience. She called out to him – "O my sweet child Nimai, please don't make me cry any more. I have made a seat for you. Come, my dear, come and eat. Have you forgotten hunger and thirst even ? Why are you appearing so different ? Where has your playfulness gone ? Where is that fountain of stories ? waves of loud laughter ? What has happened to you ? O my dear child, don't you understand how sad is your mother ?"

Shachi devi's voice got choked. Her eyes brimmed with tears. She could not control her tears anymore. She felt as if her tears would soak the earth. She has been tremendously hurt. This time Nimai has not even addressed her once as 'Mother'.

Nimai understood his mother's sorrow. He said – "Maa, I know I have hurt you. Please don't be sad. Many people had come from outside, so I could not return home."

While speaking, again the vision of Gaya appeared before him. He became absorbed. He spoke out aloud – "Aha ! What did I see, mother ? It was so beautiful that I could die for it."

Then with much difficulty he controlled himself and said, "Come Maa, give me to eat. Just now I am very hungry. Later on, I'll tell you everything."

Nimai finished his Prasad. Then he went and sat next to Priya in a happy mood. Priya felt as if she was blessed. Yet Shachi Maa was not content.

How could she feel contented ? How could her heart rest in peace ? Had she not seen Nimai's eyes ? In those restless eyes she had seen him waiting for someone. He seemed to search for something. He seemed to lack something, he seemed to have lost some dear possession. Shachi Maa grew impatient. Sometimes she felt miserable. She wanted to cry. But she was a mother, what if some inauspiciousness befell Nimai ? SO she controlled her tears. She thought her eyes were mistaken. After two days he would become like before.

She prayed day and night – please make my Nimai alright. Please keep him happy.

Shachi Maa could not concentrate on any work.

Bishnupriya also remained mindless.

This did not go unnoticed by Shachi Maa. She looked at Bisnupriya, and forced all anxieties out of her mind, and silenced it. She did not let Priya understand anything. She called Priya close to her, and lovingly tied her hair. Then she carefully decorated her. She prayed that Priya's beauty would entice Nimai.

But this dream was so futile ! Although she knew all, she refused to accept the truth, that physical beauty could never seduce Nimai. After sending Bisnupriya to Nimai's room, she waited anxiously.

The night was deep. The whole city was pin drop silent, and solitude. One or two nocturnal birds called out like security guards of a sleeping city. The breeze blew softly. There was unbroken silence all around.

Suddenly Shachi Maa was startled. She was woken from her reverie by Bisnupriya's anxious call. "Maa ! O dear Maa ! Wake up ! Wake up quickly !"

Priya called again – "Maa ! Dear Maa !"

Shachi Maa got up. She did not get the time to light a lamp even. She opened the door in the dark itself, and stood in front of Priya and asked – "Dear Bouma³³ ! What has happened ? What is this ? Why is Nimai crying ?" The sound of crying made Shachi Maa's heart lurch forward. With quick steps she entered Nimai's bedroom.

What an absurd scene !! Nimai had got down from his bed and was sitting on the floor. A lamp burnt in front of him. And Nimai was constantly shedding tears.

Like a woman-gone-crazy, Shachi Maa jumped on Nimai and engulfed him in her arms. With a trembling voice she asked him – "Baba Nimai, what has happened to you ? Why are you crying in this way ? Please tell everything to your mother. Don't keep any secret. Why are you so sad ?"

³³ A loving term for daughter-in-law

Nimai replied in a calm and controlled voice – “Maa, be still. These tears are not tears of grief. I have no pain. I am feeling great peace, and a ras-relish of immense magnitude.”

“But why are you crying, baba ?”

“My dear mother, this is not crying ! I have no pain. I am feeling immense peace, and a ras-relish on infinite magnitude.”

“But why are there tears in your eyes, baba ?”

“Maa, these are not tears, but shower of nectar. I was seeing a dream. In the dream I saw that Shyamsundar has come and he is standing near my head. He is playing the flute. Aha ! What remarkable beauty ! A garland of wild flowers adorned his neck. He wore an enchanting crown. Maa, this is how my Krishna looks ; he is the treasure of my soul. He is my sadhana, my vasana, kamana – my everything. I cannot forget him even for a moment.”

While talking, Nimai’s voice got choked. His eyes brimmed with tears. Once more he forgot the external world. He started telling Krishna Katha with a voice overwhelmed with Prem.

Bishnupriya stood in front, stupefied. Mesmerized, she listened to Nimai’s sweet speech. Shachi Maa and Bishnupriya, both were enchanted. They gazed unblinking at Nimai, as if they were possessed.

Krishna Katha has no beginning and no end. Even if you tell Krishna Katha for yugas and yugas, you will not be able to complete it. In the silent solitude of the night, only three persons were awake. Nobody else was there. Only Krishna Katha echoed in Nimai Pandit’s house.

Gradually the night deepened. Shachi devi looked at Nimai and said, “Baba Nimai, it is very late. Now you sleep a little, tomorrow we shall hear Krishna Kirtan once again from you.”

Nimai obeyed mother. He went to sleep.

In this manner night after night was spent. Krishna-chintan was his dhyana and gyan. He lost consciousness in Krishna-chintan. Bishnupriya silently wiped her eyes.

During the day, Nimai's house reverberated with Krishna Naam sankirtan. Young devotees assemble here. They sing stavas and Krishna Kirtan. Nimai loses external consciousness. He calls his students and says – "Dear ones, you should not harbor any hope about me. What has to happen has happened. I am unable to see anything else but Krishna. Krishna is the only Truth, all else is false. Krishna is the essence of all studies. If your heart cannot accept this, please take shelter of some other teacher."

He could not sit in the school anymore and teach the students. While teaching his mind would wander from one topic and land somewhere else altogether. He lost control of his body due to Krishna-chintan. His heart would start to talk. In an agitated voice he would ask – "Where is Krishna ? Where is my Pran-sakha ?" While talking he broke down in tears. He told the children – "You too meditate with me. Come on, chant with me – Krishna ! Krishna ! Krishna !"

Everyone became mesmerized by Krishna-Naam. They lost themselves in the honey-oozing ocean of nectar.

The famous Nimai Pandit of Nadia had to close down his school. And everyone – the teacher as well as his students – became inebriated with Krishna Naam. However, Shachi devi could not bear this change of mood. Young Bishnupriya started getting thinner and thinner by the day. Shachi Maa's heart wept and sighed all day. Just now Nimai is a thorn. But his eyes gazed beyond the horizon. His living self seemed to have got merged into some infinity. The people say – "This is surely due to gastritis. Shachi, lock him inside the room. Rub Narayani-oil on his head." However the devotees understood his real illness. Advaita, Srivas, Gadadhar and the other Vaishnavs realized in Nimai, the beautiful Beloved of their hearts. He is Swayam Bhagavan. But Shachi Maa's heart refused to accept. She was torn apart.

Different people say different things about Nimai. Priya too was heart-broken due to this Prem-vikaar of Nimai. One day she approached her mother-in-law. She said, "Maa, why don't we take him to some good doctor?"

Shachi Maa looked at Bishnupriya and started crying loudly.

Agitated, she asked Nimai – "Orey Nimai, how did you become like this?"

Nimai lowered his head, and gazing at the earth, he humbly replied – "True mother, how I became like this, I too am unable to understand. I don't like anything other than Krishna. My heart refuses to understand. Tell me mother, what do I do now?"

Shachi Maa's bad luck. She had lost everything, and had only one treasure – Nimai – and nowadays he too heard nothing but the flute-song that drives everyone crazy. Nimai had lost all attachment for home. Then would my Nimai also.....no....no....Shachi Maa could not think further. Tears rolled down her eyes. To lessen the suffering in her heart she too, like everyone else, started lamenting to the Compassionate One – "My dear Lord, You have taken my husband and son. You have made me an orphan. I had forgotten all my sorrow because I had Nimai. Do you want to snatch him also from me? Please don't steal him from me, My Lord. Please make him healthy and return him to me."

Shachi Maa had made so many plans. She had thought, Nimai would be enchanted by the youthful beauty of his new bride. This is the reason why she would decorate Priya to her heart's content and send her to Nimai. But all her labour would turn worthless in less than a moment. In stead of pulling Priya close to him, Nimai would start giving her long instructions – "This world is temporary, it has no value. In life only Krishna Naam is the infallible Truth." Sometimes, he would roar very loudly. Bishnupriya got scared. Her soft heart trembled. Yet she did not cease to serve him. She sat still near her husband, and fanned him. Sometimes she massaged his feet.

At times she spoke a few loving words with him. But the reply was heart-rending. Nimai told Priya very clearly – "Now I am no longer capable of either hearing or

understanding anything else. You only chant Krishna Naam to me. Let me hear and soothe my heart.”

Priya replied calmly – “I know only your name. I know only you. I know nothing else. You think quietly. You love your mother so much. You adore her. Do you not understand her sorrow ?”

Nimai answered in a detached voice – “Maa is not outside this world. He will look after mother also. His merciful gaze in on everybody. No one is deprived of his proximity.” Again Nimai fell silent.

Bishnupriya remained awake like a pillar od lamp near his head. Night after night was spent in this manner.

Dawn time. The eastern horizon becomes pink. The birds warble. Nimai wakes up. After performing the morning duties, surrounded by the devotees, again he gets inebriated with Krishna Naam. Nimai showered Krishna Naam on all - the trees, creepers, insects, worms, sky and earth.

Goursundar left all and got Krishna-intoxicated. A new flood overwhelmed Nadia. The deluge of bliss drove away all misery, all sins. The Vaishnavs most devoutly took Goursundar and started churning the ocean of Harinaam sankirtan.

But what was the state of Shachi Maa and Priya ? Their tear-stricken voice too joined in the melodious tune of Sankirtan, but that tune was full of pain, misery and disappointment.

19

Prabhupad Sri Nityananda had appeared in the village of Ekachakra. He had toured entire Bharat. He searched for his Beloved Lord. Although he roamed in many holy places he did not find him.

At last he came to Bengal. He had heard from the devotees that the Lord has appeared in Bengal. Therefore, Nityananda wandered from village to village and

searched for him. Where is his dearest One ? Absolute Brahman's Complete manifestation ?

One day he met Sripad Ishwar Puri.

"Whom are you searching, Sripad ?" asked Ishwar Puri.

"I am searching for my Sri Krishna. Where is that Premamay, Rasamay, Karunamay, Gopivallabh Krishna ? Where is my Shyamsundar ?"

"Where will you get him ? He is not here."

"Then ? Where is he ? Where is my Vanamali, where is my Brajanath, who fulfils all desires of his devotees ? Have you seen him ?"

"Yes, I have."

"Have you, now ? Really, have you ? Please, oh please, tell me where I can get him." Nityananda looked expectantly at Ishwar Puri.

The devotee's ardent prayer aroused mercy in Ishwar Puri. He confided in Nityananda – "If you truly crave for him, go this very moment to Nabadweep. He is there. His name is Nimai Pandit."

Nityananda rushed towards Nabdweep. It seemed as if an impatient river was surging forward to unite with her husband, the ocean.

Nimai met his dearest devotee Nityananda in the house of Nandan Acharya in Nadia. Seeing Nitai, Nimai remembered Balaram. This is Balaram's incarnation !! Two oceans embraced one another, and every house of Nadia got flooded with Krishna Naam. After a few days, Vaishnav devotee Haridas too came and united with them. Haridas stayed with Advaita and he also came to know the Truth.

A grand feast started in Nabadweep. Krishna Naam echoed everywhere, accompanied by musical instruments such as dhol, khol, kartaal, mridanga. Nimai embraced whoever did Krishna Naam. He was only 23 years old, yet his fame spread everywhere. His name itself was so fragrant that whoever heard it, was mesmerized. Pundarik Visyanidhi came running from the far away Chattagram.

Gouranga hugged him tightly. He said – “Pundarik, brother, you have come ! I was hoping since many days to have you by my side. Today my heart is soothed.”

Nimai set up an Ananda-Mela³⁴ in Nadia. The Nadiavasis started drowning in the flood of Naam-Kirtan-Prem ras. Why only Nadia, the Holy Name entered each and every house of Bengal. Every village, city, district, and every person’s heart became active. And why not ? The beloved whom they had been searching all along, had been meditating on, had been worshiping, they had got him in the form of Gouranga. Nityananda, Advaita, Gadadhar, Srivas, Narahari, Mukunda, Gangadas, Chandrashekhar, Jagadananda, Madhav, Govinda, Haridas, Pundarik, Bakreshwar, Saaranga, Basu Ghosh and so many other confidential devotees saw the real form of Gouranga. They said – “You are the beginning, you are without a beginning, you are the creator, the maintainer, and destroyer. You are the life force inside living beings. You are the most compassionate Supreme Being. The One for Whom we were waiting – He is you. We offer our hundreds of thousands obeisance unto you.”

That day something special occurred. After his bath and ahnik, Nimai has come to Srivas’s house. He was sitting and singing Krishna-kirtan. The devotees were surrounding him. All of a sudden, a serene beauty manifested in Nimai’s body. He looked Divine. An immense compassion was revealed in his face and eyes. Sweet effulgence covered him. Nimai was engrossed in bhaav, and he manifested his madhur swarup. On seeing his swarup the devotees were speechless in amazement. They could not believe what they saw. This was the all-mesmerizing beauty of Sri Bhagavan !! Everyone felt blessed.

Nimai ordered them – all of gather together and sing Naam Sankirtan. The devotees lost themselves in happiness. They immersed themselves completely in Sankirtan. Thousands of voices rose in unison, intoxicating the soul – “Jaya Prabhu Sri Gouranga !”

All decided – they would perform Abhishek of Prabhu. Immediately the devotees came forward. Someone started decorating him with chnadan designs. Anotehr

³⁴ A fair-ground of Divine bliss

one came forward and placed a garland round his neck. Auspicious sounds of the conch shell echoed in Nabadweep.

Sri Advaita and Srivas sent a messenger to call Shachi devi.

An agitated Shachi devi came running at once. She entered Srivas's house, accompanied by his wife Malini devi. Nimai's beauty stupefied Shachi Mata. She could not blink.

Nimai looked calm, still, serene and peaceful. Her soul and heart churned when she saw her son's swarup. This is not her son Nimai. This is the Supreme Being, the worshiped and adorable God.

Shachi Maa forgot her vatsalya bhaav. Her heart became still. Bhakti and prem ras started flowing through her. Unknown to her her, pious hands had joined. She stood alongside Malini and started performing arati of Gouranga.

After the arati, Nimai told the devotees – "Now please send Mother home."

Then again his thunderous tone rumbled – "Srivas, where is my Sridhar ?"

"Who Sridhar, Prabhu ?"

"Sridhar is a poor man, but he is honest. Every day he gives me plantain leaves."

Sridhar came forward. Prabhu asked him – "Sridhar, you are facing poverty, are you not ? Don't worry. I will not bless you such that you will not lack anything. I will grant you my ashta-siddhi."

Sridhar asked in a pathetic voice, "Prabhu, what will I do with ashta-siddhi ? You better go and give it to someone else."

"Then what do you want ?"

"I don't want anything Prabhu ! I prefer to remain poor. But if you really want to give me something, then I beg of you that – for life after life, you please reside in my heart. May I never forget your beautiful form, even for a moment."

"Ahh ! May Sri Krishna bless you !"

Now Prabhu called Murari.

Murari came and stood in front. He eagerly waited for the Lord to speak to him.

Prabhu said – “You are very dear to me, Murari. I love you very much. Therefore I am telling you, now you give up other spiritual studies and take instructions from Advaita Acharya in Prem Dharma.”

“Why Prabhu ? Are spiritual studies not good ?”

“Murari, it is not the question of good and bad. If you want the blessing of Gopivallabh Murari, then it is necessary to follow Prem Dharma.”

Murari was a natural worshiper of Lord Ramchandra. He now opened his eyes wide – he was about to faint. What was he seeing ? This is not Gouranga ! This is his own, most worshiped Sri Ramchandra, with his all-enchanting, mesmerizing, beautiful form. His complexion was like that of a newly budding durva grass. Murari forgot everything and paid sashtang dandavat pranaam to Nimai.

Now Prabhu called Haridas very sweetly and asked him to come near.

Haridas gazed at Prabhu like a thirsty bird.

“Ask for a boon, Haridas !”

“Prabhu, please destroy my false ego. May I never be bereft of your company and the company of your devotees. This is my only prayer. I seek nothing else from you.”

“Blessed ! Haridas, you are blessed ! May your wish be granted.”

Prabhu called all the devotees one by one. He fulfilled everyone’s desire. But he did not call only one devotee, and that was Mukunda. Why did he not call him ? Mukunda used to mingle with the Pandits and discuss Mayavad. As a result, Prabhu said, “Mukunda has to wait for one crore lifetimes.”

Mukund sat outside and heard this. He was not the least bit perturbed. Rather, he felt happy. His heart danced in joy. He said – “Let it take one crore lifetimes. But

now it is certain that I will get him. I am ready to wait for one crore lifetimes more.”

When Prabhu heard this, he wept. He could not keep Mukunda away from him. He called him near. Mukunda entered and stood before him with folded palms. He waited eagerly for Prabhu to speak to him.

Prabhu looked at him and said – “Orey, you are my devotee ! How can I turn away from you ? Someitmes you commit mistakes, so I only took your test.”

Nimai was like a wish-fulfilling tree. He fulfilled the desires of all his devotees one by one.

Gradyally the night became deeper. The devotees became restless. They could not bear this majestic form of Nimai any more. They looked at him and said, “Dear merciful One ! We cannot bear your effulgent spectacular majestic form any more. Please become our sweet and simple Shachinandan Nimai once more, so that we can behold you with more love.”

The sweet Lord Gourahari, who is ever ready to fulfill the desire of the devotees, satisfied them, by returning to his ususal easy-going, simple form. He fell down unconscious. The devotees call this Prabhu's “saat pahariya prakash³⁵”.

Prabhu was not returning to consciousness. It seemed like a near-death situation. The devotees started crying loudly. Did Prabhu leave us and go forever ?

There seemed no other way to bring him back. So Advaita Prabhu started singing Krishna Naam Sankirtan in a plaintive voice.

After a long time, the Lord opened his eyes.

The devotees felt happy. They heaved a sigh of relief.

³⁵ Manifestation for a duration of seven prahars.

20

Nimai has decided to take sanyas. One day, in front of his followers he said something very strange that only Nityananda Prabhu could understand. Nitaichand realized the secret in Prabhu's heart. He came to know that he would leave home versoon.

The sweet Lord sobbed in Sri Krishna viraha and said – "I cannot remain here anymore. I am longing to go to Vrindavan. Ohhh.....where is my kalindi, where is my Yamuna, where is my Vrindavan ? How I yearn to see Bahulavan, Bhandirvan and Govardhan, where I have eprfomred so many sweet pastimes !

Where are my beloved Lalita nd Radha ? I so badly want to see my parents Nanda and Yashoda ! How can I live without my friends Sridam and Sudam ? Ahhh.....the lovely Vrindavan, where my dear cows Dhavali and Shyamali run so lovingly !!"

In this manner Gourahari lamented and looked here and there in a love-crazy state.

Then, one day, he clasped Nitaichand's hands, took him to a secluded spot and confided in him – "Dear Nitai, I am revealing a secret to you. I have fully made up my mind to give up the life of a householder."

How could the Lord keep such a decision all to himself ? Although he tried hard to keep it a secret, the bhakti-vatsal Prabhu could not restrain himself and one day, he blurted out in front of a whole assembly of devotees – "Please my dear Vaishnavs, please tell me how to take sanyas !"

As soon as the devotees heard this, they fell down unconscious.

Gadadhar, Srivas, Murari and other prominent devotees could not bear this sorrow. They tried their level best to dissuade Prabhu from this resolution. However, although he heard the logic presented by everyone, he merely maintained a stoic silence.

Here, when Srimati heard the news of Prabhu's desire to take sanyas, she became most aggrieved and restless. She kept on crying constantly. Sakhi Kanchana tried to make her understand in many ways. But Priya only sobbed and softly told the sakhis – "Why am I feeling so restless today ? Oh, why do my right eye and right arm palpitate in this way ? I don't know what lies in store for me. All sorts of untowardly incidents are crowding my mind. It seems countless arrows are piercing my heart. Yes !! Now I know !! My beloved Gouranga is planning to leave me. I am telling you my dear friends, if this happens, then I shall most certainly enter the fire."

When the devotees heard this, they could not control their tears. The plight of Shachi Mata and Bishnupriya moved them so much that some of them started crying loudly calling out "Hari ! Hari !" All of Nabadweep seemed to drown in sorrow.

The most compassionate Gourahari could not bear their grief. As soon as he heard his devotees lamenting, he rushed to them and said – "Why do you worry so much ? How can I leave you all ? I am wherever you are." Saying this he lovingly embraced all of them. And not once, but again and again.

But he could not fool his mother; after all he was her son. She knew him only too well. Therefore Shachi Maa, still shedding tears, implored him, "My darling son, throughout my life I have suffered much. Yet I continue to live only because of you. As long as you are in front of my eyes, I shall continue to breathe, but if you leave me and go away, then be sure that I shall die."

Prabhu realized that indeed his mother would die. He took her in a corner and started explaining to her what he had concealed all along. He told her, "Maa, you don't remember your past births, but I do. You have been Aditi, Devahuti, Kaushalya and Devaki. Mother, please do not be so impatient. I shall remain for some more days with you."

Bishnupriya took Prabhu's Prasad and came to the bedroom. She saw her beloved sleeping. She slowly sat near his feet and started massaging them. However

Prabhu was only feigning. How could he sleep when his devotee was suffering so much ? Does he not know how much pain his darling his enduring ? Priyaji was most aggrieved to see Prabhu's Sri Krishna-viraha. Bhaktavatsal Prabhu never wants to give pain to his devotee.

In sleep Prabhu sometimes sighed "Ha Krishna ! Where is Krishna ?" and turned sides. Priya felt, maybe she was disturbing Prabhu's sleep. Slowly she got up, spread the end of her sari on the earth and lay down. She could not sleep due to anxiety. Her worry knew no bounds. All she could think of were the conversations of the devotees regarding Prabhu's sanyas.

21

After many days, one night, Bishnupriya put tambul-bida in Prabhu's mouth with her own hands, like she used to do daily, earlier. She started sobbing uncontrollably and lamented. She herself did not know what all she was speaking. Priya ji fell at Prabhu's feet and said – "O my beloved ! Where will you go leaving me ?" The sweet Lord lifted her and folded her in his loving embrace. He wiped her tears with his own soft hands, and made her sleep on his lap.

Our Lord is the King of the cunning. So he decided to first prepare Priya mentally for his sanyas, and then he would break the news to her.

Prabhu called all the devotees to his house. The way he instructed them along with Priyaji, in the knowledge of vairagya is unparalleled.

Priya ji was extremely aggrieved and agitated to see her pranvallabh's love-crazy state and detachment from the life of a householder. Prabhu who is the best of the cunning wanted to impart the instructions of vairagya to her in a gentle manner. As a result he arranged for such a Harikatha in his house. Prabhu is vairagya personified. The less fortunate do not get a vairagi-deha, nether do the less fortunate get darshan of a real vairagi. Srimati, who always love-sported on the chest of Gouranga, had also practiced extremely strong vairagya. And she had

done this under the instruction of Prabhu. Today he had called this secret meeting to impart the best of vairagya-gyan to his closest followers.

“alpa bhagye nohe dehe boiragya prokashe,

Alpa bhagye nohe guru choron probeshe.”

Meaning - “The less fortunate do not get a vairagi-deha, and neither can the less fortunate enter the holy feet of Sri Gurudev³⁶”. – (Sri Chaitanay Charitamrita)

Prabhu described the vairagya of Rishabh dev in great detail. Priya ji too was no less intelligent. She understood very well from all these talks that her days of sorrow were going to begin.

Thakur Sri Jayananda has described the then prem-symptoms of Mahaprabhu. On reading it, even a rock will melt. No language can describe the grief of Shachi Mata and Priyaji at that time. Even a million Ramayans put together will not be enough to narrate how much pain the devotees, Priyaji and Shachi Maa felt and how the Lord tried to convince and assuage their grief. The devotees said, “When our hearts are being ripped apart so painfully, then just think what may be happening to Priyaji and his mother. Is it possible for them to live ?”

Prabhu continued to narrate the glory of vairagya to the very young Bishnupriya and almost eighty year old aggrieved loving mother, under the pretext of lecturing the devotees. The Vaishnavs fell into incomparable grief. They thought – “It would have been better if the Lord would not have discussed all this in his own home. At least we would have been spared the sight of the two mothers suffering in pain.”

At last Prabhu came to the real point. He said – “As it is the people of Kaliyug blaspheme the Vedas. At present no one knows the real message of the Vedas. Also, in Kaliyug, people are afflicted by various pains and sufferings. Due to this, there is no righteousness anywhere. If I do not take vairagya, then who will

³⁶ Surrender at the lotus feet of the Spiritual Master , and perform Bhajan strictly according to his instructions only. This is called ‘entering’. Many of us perform Bhajan according to our wishes and what we fancy. Nowadays it has become fashion to go and collect informations from various sources and create our own concoction. This is not ‘surrender’.

preach the true Dharma and give succor to the fallen souls ? If I do not practice the Yugadharm of Harinaam Sankirtan then why would the people follow it ? I have to end the suffering of all living beings by showing the highest standards of Prem Dharma.”

Srimati was startled. She felt as if a thunderbolt had struck her. She fainted in the lap of Shachi Mata. Seeing this, Prabhu took a pledge. He declared in front of the grieving devotees, “May you forsake both material and spiritual worlds. You surrender all to me, and I shall take up your responsibility. I am accountable for my mother, my wife and all other devotees.”

Prabhu said, “A child who is bereft of her father, can continue to live due to the affection showered on her by her mother. However if a child loses her mother, she cannot survive. So Bishnupriye, if you do not remain here, then the Nadiavasis will die. You are closer to them I am. You have more importance than I have.”

Here, Prabhu explained the term “mad-bhakta-pujabhyadhika” told by Bhagavan in Srimad Bahgavatam. Priyaji is the topmost devotee of Sri Gouranga. Here Prabhu is revealing the glory of Mother Bishnupriya. He also instructed Priyaji about the sadhana-Bhajan she had to perform. However since her devotional practice would be very austere, and Shachi Maa would not be able to bear it, he told her not to practice such austerity till mother was alive. If she sees her young daughter-in-law following such stringent Bhajan, then she might not live. So he told her to follow such practice only after she left this body.

Priyaji etched Prabhu’s instructions on her soft heart in gold. These words became her life-mantra.

That night Priyaji did not meet Prabhu. He left the bedroom and went out. Srimati went to her mother-in-law’s room and sat there with a sombre face. Shachi maa saw her and understood that both her son and daughter-in-law were practicing strong bhajan. Mother started weeping.

After a long time, maybe the all-knowing Lord could not bear the crying of his mother anymore, and returned. He told his mother very softly, “Maa ! Ganga look

so lovely in the solitude of the night. I had gone to take darshan of Mother Ganga, and sleep happily on her banks.”

Shachi Maa’s heart overflowed with love. She said, “Nimai ! Please don’t do it next time. There are wild animals roaming at night. Who knows what calamity may befall you ? If something happens to you, how will I live ? Now you come and sleep with me.”

Premamayi Maa folded her son in her arms, and made him sleep like a baby.

The devotees saw Prabhu’s terrible vairagya and lamented in grief. They all sorrowed for Priyaji. All the Vaishnavs, along with Sri Advaita Prabhu, constantly thought of Shachi Mata’s sorrow, and floated in tears. Sripad Sanatan Mishra was so overwhelmed in sorrow that he started crying like a small child. Before returning to his house he could not speak a word with Priya – after all, what could he say ? He had no word to console her. Sripad Chandrashekhar Acharya slapped his head and sat on the road itself.

That night, by Prabhu’s wish, he and Priyaji had a meeting. When Priyaji entered the room, she saw that Prabhu was lying on the ground and shedding copious tears. Who can describe what she was going through at that time ? She felt as if someone was ripping open her heart. Priyaji went slowly and sat near his feet. When she saw the love-crazy state of her pranvallabh she started feeling dizzy. Then she controlled herself and said – “My dear Lord of my life, you said vairagya is your inherent nature. But my dear one, where will you go leaving me ? How could you even think of forsaking your maid servant ?”

A few drops of warm tears fell from Srimati’s eyes on Prabhu’s feet. Immediately he woke up. We find in Chaitanya Mangal –

“Bishnupriya’s eyes shed torrential tears, so much so, that the cloth covering her chest got wet, and her tears rolled down Prabhu’s feet. Immediately Prabhu was startled and he sat up. He asked so moved by her sorrow, that he asked her lovingly – Priye ! You are my life and soul; please, oh please tell me why you cry. Then Prabhu pulled her close to him, placed her on his thighs, and holding her chin with his right hand, spoke so very sweetly to her.”

Hearing these nectarine speech, the waves of love surged all the more high in Priya's heart. The more Gouranga caressed her, placing her in his lap, the more her heart raced fiercely. This is the natural law of pure love.

Bishnupriya kept on crying. Her sorrow was heart-rending.

Sri Gouranga broke the silence, and spoke with a voice trembling and choked in love.

He said, "Listen Devi Bishnupriya, today I am giving you a promise. Whenever you remember me, I shall appear in front of you. I may go anywhere, but don't you worry ! I vow to always remain with you. I am stating this truth very firmly."

The sweet Lord added further – "Dear Bishnupriya, is there any woman more fortunate than you ? Today you have done a great favor to humanity. The people who realize how much they are suffering due to the dangerous Kaliyug, will remain forever and forever grateful to you. In their hearts, your name will remain eternally etched in gold letters. Your sacrifice is unparalleled in the world. I am taking sanyas for the welfare of humanity. I cannot bear to see the pain and suffering of the living beings. Their grief is making me sick and pain-stricken. By granting me permission you have lessened my sorrow."

Srimati did not reply. She hid her face in her pranvallabh's chest and silently went on weeping. Prabhu wiped her face and caressed her. He said, "Bishnupriya ! Please do not cry. When you cry, my heart aches. Listen ! Listen, my darling ! I am not leaving right away. I have promised mother not to leave just now. When I do it, be sure that it will be with your permission."

Priya ji was very anxious, thinking about her prana-nath's sanyas-life. When one becomes a sanyasi, he has to walk on a harsh path. He has to live in thorny forests, and walk in the rain and the sun without umbrella. His body is subjected to the vagrancy of nature. Srimati thought, "Ohh, my beloved's face will get dry and pale ! His golden body will get burnt and become full of perspiration ! How can I bear this ?"

Therefore she told him, "Cursed is my body, that it continues to live while you are going to suffer so much ! Please listen to me - when you take sanyas, you are not allowed to ride vehicles, which means, you will have to go walking everywhere. Tell me, how will you walk on those thorny roads ? Your feet are as soft as Shirish flower³⁷. They are so soft that I feel scared to touch them, lest I should hurt you ! And yet, you will walk bare footed ? My dear, when you merely stand barefooted on the earth, my heart trembles in fear, that you may be in pain, because I can see bruises appear in your feet. Then what will happen when you travel with your soft rosy feet through thorny woodlands ?

I have seen that the mildest labor brings droplets on perspiration on your nectarine sweet face. Then how will you survive in thunderous rain and in the scorching heat of the summer ? Beloved, you are making me very sad in deed with all your talks of sanyas."

In spite of talking so much, Priyaji's heart did not become light. She tried to scare him, so that he abandoned the idea of sanyas.

She said – "I know nothing other than your feet. I have accepted your shelter. Now where will I go ? You are throwing me in the ocean ! Are you not scared of performing adharmas ? Is it righteous to forsake your mother who is so old that she is half-dead ? And what about your dear devotees such as Mukunda Datta, Murari Gupta, Srinibas and Haridas ? They love you so much that all will die if you go. Please remember that you alone will be responsible for their deaths. By leaving elderly loving devotees like Advaita Acharya, what great work are you going to achieve, just tell me that !"

She stopped to take a breath, and announced her final decision – "My dear jewel, take this from me - I shall never leave you. I shall never let you go. O best of Brahmins, wherever you go, this Bishnupriya will follow you."

³⁷ *Albizia saman*

Priyaji cast one look at Prabhu's miserable face and said, "Pranvallabh ! You are my all in all ! You are the pupil of my eyes, my life, my soul ! It won't do at all for you to bow your head and shed tears !

I am also a learned man's daughter and the wife of a scholar such as yourself. So don't think I don't know history. Why, when Raghunath went to the forest, did not Janaki go with him ? All the while she matched his step with hers. She left Ayodhya, and travelled all over the world with him.

Then, what about Dharmaputra Yudhishtir ? That great righteous man lost everything in the dice game, and was sentenced to vana-vaas. There also, the chaste Draupadi accompanied him. He took her with him in the deepest of the forests, and even in 'agyaat vaas'.

As for the story of Nal-Damayanti, that I have heard from your holy lips only ! You were never tired of narrating this story to me."

Prabhu heard patiently everything that Priyaji said. Now very softly Prabhu instructed Priyaji about renunciation.

He said, "None of the great men you mentioned ever took renunciation. They merely went to forest, and that is not the same as sanyas. In sanyas, no one has ever taken his wife along with him. If one takes his wife with him, then we cannot call it sanyas."

Saying this, the merciful Gourahari gazed at Priyaji with love. Then he opened his heart to her, and how he wanted to save the fallen souls of Kaliyug.

He said, "Priye, everywhere you run your eyes, you can only see living beings suffering due to the fruits of their karma. Whatever you see - moving and non-moving - all are as temporary as a drop of water on lotus-leaf. There is no relation and no life that is permanent. Be it life or youth or wealth, it will turn to ashes in a moment. Listen by dear pure Bishnupriya, please ponder in your heart, everything here is false. No one belongs to no one. One has no mother, no father, no child, no friend and no wealth, because at the time of death, none of these can help us. Only one person can protect us and that is Sri Krishna. So let us pray that, we do

not fall for His Maya, and get attached to material objects. Instead, may we remember Him always, and never forget Him.”

This is the first time Srimati heard directly from his mouth that he would take sanyas. She began to feel dizzy. Her eyes were shedding tears. Her chest was floating in water from her eyes. Prabhu once again lifted his face and cast a loving gaze at his beloved.

He said, “My darling Bishnupriye, you please stay in Nabadweep. After Nabadweep is the birthplace of your husband. Sanyas or vairagya itself means not to keep the company of women. I feel extremely sad that I cannot take you with me. Bishnupriye, please don’t be so impatient.

Listen my dear, mother has already given me permission. Now you too please permit me. Does not your happiness lie in my happiness ? Like mother, you too concentrate on Hari Bhajan.”

Bishnupriya called out loudly, her voice soaked in tears – “Maa ! Maa ! What did you do ? Forsaking milk, you drank water ! Rejecting amrit, you consumed poison ! You kept the glass bangles, while broke into pieces the diamond ones !”

Prabhu told her affectionately, “Bishnupriye ! I am your aparadhi. You please make your name ‘Bishnupriya’ worthwhile by engaging in Hari Bhajan. What is there in my feet. Forget my feet, and concentrate on the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. Serve Brajendranandan ; that will make me the happiest. Give up all other activities, and do not consider the duties mentioned in the Vedas, simply offer loving service unto the lotus feet of Sri Krishna.”

Pryaji cried non-stop and said, “You are my husband. You are my God. For me, you alone are Krishna. A woman has only one Dharma, and that is to serve her husband. I know only to serve you and no one else. I know who to adore you. I don’t know nay Hari Bhajan.”

Prabhu saw how much aggrieved Priyaji was. She was in pain. Her cry would break even a rock into pieces. Then he very lovingly and sweetly addressed his beloved as “Vaishnav-janani³⁸”.

He said, “My dearest, the one who helps her husband to execute his Dharma, is a true sahadharmini, and a chaste wife. Darling Bishnupriya, you are the wish-fulfilling creeper in Nabadweep. You have the power to grant the devotees whatever they wish. You are the Mother of Vaishnavas. Please ponder on this, that the welfare of Nabadweep rests on you. You can protect Nabadweep from destruction. You may be wondering how, so let me explain. Please listen carefully.

Kaliyug is like a poisonous snake. It will bite all living being sooner or later, and everyone has to suffer. Kaliyug is not letting anyone live happily and peacefully. It is affecting all – be it grihasthas or vairagis – with quarrel and anxiety. The only cure for this is non-stop Harinaam Sankirtan. If both of us do not remain here, then Sankirtan will surely come to a standstill. I want Nabadweep to be the center of the Naam Sankirtan revolution that I am going to spread in the whole world. I want the devotees of Nabadweep to become Mahants (spearheads) in this gigantic world project. But if both of us go away, and you do not remain here, then these devotees’ enthusiasm will soon die. All the Mahants and other Vaishnavs too will become detached from Naam Sankirtan. There will be conflict and in-fighting, for that is the nature of Kaliyug, and where there is slackening in chanting Harinaam, Kaliyug gets the opportunity to enter, and cause mischief. Then all my trouble will go in vain. So Priye, you have to remain here and as a mother, you have to give joy to your children. How ? By making them sing Harinaam Sankirtan daily, and by inspiring the world to chant Mahamantra. You will set the standard for Harinaam. A child whom her father has forsaken will not die as long as the mother is with her, but if the mother abandons a child, it is impossible for her to survive. Similarly the Bhajan-life of a devotee will never survive without your blessing and inspiration.”

Then Prabhu gave Mother further instruction with his holy lips how to chant Mahamantra.

³⁸ Mother of the Vaishnavas

He said – “My beloved, you must wake up at Brhama Muhurta and bathe daily in the Ganga. Place some Atap-rice on the floor. After saying each Mahamantra, you will pick up one Atap-rice and put it in a vessel. In this manner, after you chant for three prahars, you will cook this rice and offer Sri Krishna with a tulasi leaf. Then distribute that rice to the Vaishnavs and take the remaining as Prasad. You will make the devotees do Harinaam Sankirtna daily. If you obey these instructions, it is enough to make me happy.”

The Universal Mother wept in joy when she heard these instructions. Her warm tears washed the rosy lotus feet of the Universal Guru Sri Gouranga Mahaprabhu.

Now Prabhu very lovingly taught her the method of worship.

He said – “Please worship Mother Ganga and Lord Vishnu daily, and conduct Harinaam Sankirtan in Nabadweep. Also worship Tulasi Devi, Advaita and Nityananda – they are my treasures of my life. Please adore Haridas Thakur, Srinibas Pandit, Gadadhar Pandit, Sri Ramdas, Jagadananda and Bakreshwar. And my position is after all of them.”

Hearing these words from Prabhu, it escaped from Srimati’s mouth that hse would give him permission for sanyas. All of a sudden she uttered, “I will not stop you from your auspicious mission.” As soon as she said this, she realized what she had done. She started lamenting, “Oh, why did I have to say this. May my mouth get burnt ! I made myself lose all my precious treasure, my beloved husband is my only wealth, and I lost that ! Shame on me ! Why did I not die before I said this?” She continued to weep profusely.

Today she understood that her Pranavallabh would surely deceive her and go away. Now her most loving husband and lover was conversing with her like a serious instructor. She was sitting stupefied, and gazing at his face, unblinking. Srimati forgot all her sorrow due to his loving behavior. He said, “Priyatame ! Where will I go, leaving you ? I will happily spend more days with you. I am so fortunate to have got a wife like you.”

Srimati cried out, “You will spend some more days with me ? What are you saying ? I don’t understand. My dear Lord of my life, please don’t play hide-and-seek

with your maidservant. Tell me clearly what your intention is. Please don't lie to me."

Hearing this, Prabhu started caressing her all the more lovingly. He said, "My dearest, I will not hide anything from you. Sorrow is my friend for life. I cried lots, yet the people did not take Krishna Naam. Now I have to see if you and mother cry, then they will take the path of Krishna or not ? This is why I have decided to follow the harshest rules of sanyas. You and mother are the dearest to me. And I want to make you cry. To make you weep, and melt the hearts of these hard hearted Kaliyugis through your weeping, I have decided to leave home. The jivas of Kaliyug are such terrible sinners, that it is extremely difficult to destroy their sins. When your tears join mine, then only all the sins of the jivas of Kaliyug will be washed away. My darling, I have come to the earth for this purpose, please assist me."

The sky broke on Priyaji's head. She gazed at Prabhu and wept silently. Prabhu continued to spek, "Priye, seeing the suffering of the people, I cannot remain still any more. You are the dearest to me, you are my sahadharmini, please help me to save the living beings, please stand by me in my great mission."

Hearing these words of her Pranavallabh, Bishnupriya could not give any reply. She, who always love-sports in the heart of Gouranga, hid her face in his chest, and shed tears. She said, "Pranavallabh ! I could not serve your feet, how can I forego this sorrow ? Serving you is my greatest blessing. Tell me, what sin have I committed that I have to suffer in this way ?"

Now Prabhu also started weeping.

When a devotee is in sorrow, when a devotee feels miserable, then how can Gour-Bhagavan reamin at peace ? He had to say something more, but he could not. His eyes shed tears. He could not control himself any more. He quickly enfolded Priya in his arms and held her in tightest embrace.

He lifted her in his lap.

Enveloped in her Pranavallbah's Prem-alingan, Priyaji forgot all her sorrow. Sri Sri Gour-Bishnupriya together went to sleep. Jai Bishnupriya-vallabh ! Jai Prangour Bishnupriya !

22

In the following days Mahaprabhu drowned himself in the bliss of Harinaam Sankirtan.

One day he called Nityananda Prabhu in a solitary place and told him, "Sripad, I will take sanyas on this coming Sankranti, when Suryadev enters Uttarayan. After I leave, you call the people and reveal the news to them.

As per Mahaprabhu's order, Nitaichand told Shachi Maa, Gadadhar, Brahmananda. Chandrashekhar Acharya and Mukunda that Prabhu had made the final decision to take sanyas. Hearing this, all the devotees of Nadia came to meet him. The sweet Lord spent the entire day with the devotees, giving them instructions on Sri Krishna Bhajan.

The Lord spoke very sweetly to the devotees. He said –

"Whether you sleep or eat or awake, constantly think of Krishna and take his name loudly with your mouths."

Then prabhu gazed with compassion at all the devotees, and told them to go home.

He continued to enjoy satsang with a few intimate devotees. When it was second prahar of the night, Prabhu bade everyone farewell, and sat to take dinner-prasad. After dining, he accepted mukh-shuddhi (mouth freshener) and proceeded towards his bedroom. When he fell asleep, Haridas and Gadadhar, who were serving him, now fell asleep in the same room.

23

After taking Bishnupriya's permission for sanyas, Prabhu continued to live very happily with her for six months more.

He decided firmly to leave home in the Uttarayan Sankranti of Magh. That day was very auspicious.

“ei sankranti uttorayan dibose,

Nishaay cholibo ami korite sanyas.”

Meaning – Prabhu said – ‘In the night of this coming Uttarayan Sankranti, I shall leave home to take sanyas.’ – (Sri Chaitnaya Bhagabat)

Nimai told his mother – “Maa ! Today is a very auspicious day. Please feed the Brahmins and Vaishnavs nicely.”

He also sent messages through Niaichand to all the devotees of Nabadweep to assemble in his house for darshan. That day, all the close confidantes of Mahaprabhu got Prasad in his house. In the evening Prabhu went to the shores of Ganga and took her darshan to his heart's content. There was a time when he used to sit here with his students, dispensing material knowledge. Today he was distributing Krishna Katha in the same place, and holding sankirtan. Till one prahar into the night, Prabhu remained there, then he took another loving look at Ganga. He gazed calmly at the residents of Nabadweep. Then he held all the devotees in tight embrace and returned home. It was quite late by then. He conversed quite a lot about household affairs with his mother. Then he took dinner–prasadam and retired to the bed room. Today was his last day at home. However neither his mother nor his wife knew anything about it.

Gouranga smiled at seated Priya on his lap, just like the Universal Motehr Sri Sri Mahalaxmi resides in the arms of Sri Sri Laxmikanta.

Sri Vrindavan das Thakur, who is the author of Sri Chaitnaya Bhagabat did not know that Prabhu had decorated Priyaji with his own hands on that night, and she

had looked all-enchanting. He had spoken in very loving rasik manner with her. He had given her blissful love, and before leaving he had held her in loving embrace. Since Vrindavan das Thakur knew nothing about this, he had not mentioned it in his book. When he read Lochan das Thakur's Chaitanya Mangal, a doubt arose in his mind. He then asked his mother Narayani devi, who had been present in Prabhu's house on that night. Narayani devi told him that, it was true, and that she had been fortunate enough to behold Sri Sri Bishnupriya-Gouranga's leela with her own eyes, and had been purified. She said, "Not one word written by Lochan das Thakur is false, nor is it exaggerated."

Sri Lochan das Thakur has described Gour Leela from madhurya point of view, while Vrindavan das Thakur has narrated it from aishwarya point of view. Srila Lochan das Thakur's book was written while Srimati was still prakat. She did 'shravan' of this composition and had joyfully given her approval. Only after receiving the Mother's permission, Lochan das Thakur had done prachar of his book.

Mahaprabhu was thinking, "I am so hard-hearted ! I have sacrificed three people in my yagnya. Mother, Bishnupriya, and lastly myself. Now I will enact the last scene."

Priyaji slowly entered the room. As usual, she was carrying the ingredients of paan in her hand. She started massaging his feet. She was sitting expressionless like a stone statue, tears flowing from her eyes. Prabhu opened his eyes and asked, "Bishnupriye ! What has happened ? Why are you crying like this ? Why are you so restless ?" Priyaji sat silently. She could not speak. Sri Gouranga smiled and pulled Priya most lovingly towards him. He embraced her and seated her by his side.

Mahaprabhu spoke lovingly, "Priya, will you not give me tambul ? See, I have composed a sweet song for you, do you not want to hear ?"

Loved by her husband, the simple Bishnupriya put tambuk in his mouth. She placed a fragrant flower-garland round his neck. She started massaging his feet. Prabhu started singing –

“O my Priya, you are always in my heart be it in life, or in death. You are a lamp for the poor and a wish-fulfilling gem for my mind. If I don't see you, my heart is filled with pain. You are my dream, my desire. But for the sake of the living beings, I am leaving you. However I want you to know this, that you are my Love, my laughter, my joy. You are the mother of all the devotees, and it is by your blessings alone will they progress on the path of Bhakti. You are my glory, you are spiritual knowledge personified. You are like a gem-necklace because you are the source of my beauty. So I always glorify you with love.”

Priyaji got the hint of being away from the company of her loving husband. She started shedding torrential tears. She said, “While bathing in the Ganga I got some inauspicious sign. A thorn pricked my foot. I lost my nose-ring, and instead of singing sweetly, the birds were cackling harshly. Why do I see so many evil signs today ? My heart is palpitating. O Lord of my life ! Please protect me ! Please save me !”

Mahaprabhu is the King of the Cunning. He started expounding the scriptures to the simple innocent girl. He said, “All these incidents are not related to sorrow and joy. It is quite possible that a thorn may prick you some day, or you may lose a nose ring. The birds too may sound different, it's their wish, you know ? You should not worry about all these. Don't think of bad things, just chant Krishna-Naam. Only meditate on Krishna. Dear Bishnupriya, come let me decorate you.”

Priya ji said, “Can men dress up anyone ? Beautician is a woman's job.”

“O really ?” asked Prabhu, raising his beautiful arched eyebrows that resemble Kamdev's arrows. “Then it is important that I show you”, said he.

Lochan das Thakur has described the sweet scene in the bedroom so nicely that the devotee's heart will float in ras-madhuri.

He has written –

“Prabhu lay very happily on the bed, when Bishnupriya entered the room with a plate of tambul. Prabhu smiled and said, “Come, come 1” He pulled her towards him and seated her on his lap. Bishnupriya decorated him with chandan, and

drew tilak on his forehead with aguru and kasturi. Then she placed a divine Malati flower-garland around his neck. Saying many jovial words, she put tambul in his beautiful mouth.

Then Mahaprabhu, who is the King of all rasiks, started decorating Bishnupriya. He combed her thick and long and lustrous hair. He tied it into a bun and decorated it with malati flowers. He drew sindur dot on her forehead. Her face now looked so beautiful as if the sun was carrying the moon on his lap³⁹. Then he decorated the sindur with chandan dots. He lined her Khanjan like eyes with kohl, and brushed her eye brows such that they looked like the bows of Kaamdev. Next he decorated her breasts with aguru-kasturi paste, and tied a bright colorful kanchuki on them. He adorned her every body part with ornaments. With a tambul in her mouth, her dress-up was complete. The Divine Couple spread joy all around as they smiled at each other.

Prabhu gazed unblinking at Priyaji's universally hypnotizing beauty, and kissed her sweet lips. In a trice he had her in his strong arms. She looked as if an elephant had plucked a freshly bloomed lotus bud, and was holding it in his trunk.

Now Prabhu, who is the Topmost Rasik, spread ras all around by love-sporting with her. He made her happy by so many rasfull activities. Such love-sports that forget others, even Kamdev knows nothing about.

Priyaji looked so enchanting like a lightning dazzling on the enormous golden Sumeru Mountain⁴⁰. Even Madan dev was spellbound when he saw the passionate dalliance of the Divine Couple. Prabhu held his darling Priya all the while on his chest, and did not let her touch the bed even once, such was his artistic and expert love-making. The lovers seemed to have united in such a way that you could not make out two separate forms. Lips upon lips, chest upon chest – in this way they spent the entire night. At the end of love-dalliance, due to rasful exhaustion, the Divine Couple fell asleep." – (Chaitanya Mangal)

³⁹ Priyaji's effulgent face is being likened to the sun, while her sindur dot is being compared to the moon.

⁴⁰ Sumeru is a mountain made of gold, that existed in the ancient world.

Prabhu embraced Priya with his graceful arms, caressed her and made love to her. Priyaji, who was just a simple young girl, became overwhelmed with all the sweetness. She said, "My dear Pranvallabh ! All these days, I used to think of you as the King of Cunning, the crest jewel of all pandits and an expert kirtaniya. How did you learn to do such incomparable make-up, like a master artist ?"

Mahaprabhu replied, "Bishnupriye, shall I sing one more song for you?"

Priya ji said, "My darling, tell me, why are you doing like this today ? My heart is palpitating fast. Why are you being so playful ? Please protect me, oh please !"

But due to the loving caress of her husband, Priya ji fell asleep. Prabhu placed Priyaji's hand on his body, and was overcome with sleep.

Our mahajan poet has sung –

"nidrito bishnupriya shree baamchoron,
Parshe upadhanopori koriya sthapon,
Bokkhosthole nijo gondo upadhan diya,
Bahir hoile gora dar ughadiya."

Meaning – "Priyaji was sleeping with her left foot placed on Prabhu's body. Sri Gouranga softly removed it and placed it on a side-pillow. She had placed her head on his chest. He slowly lifted her face and kept a pillow underneath her head. Then he unfastened the door and went out."

Two hours of night were still remaining when Prabhu left his home.

Before he left, Prabhu took one last long and loving look at the face of his sleeping beloved. He drank in her beautiful face with his eyes. He gazed at her to his heart's content. Silent tears rolled down the corners of Nadiyabihari's eyes. He turned again and drew a soft kiss on the sleeping Priyaji's lips.

Then he turned towards his mother's room and did pranaam. Before the dark night could end, Prabhu quickly walked away from home. He walked as fast as he

could, and put more and more distance between him and the home. At last he reached the banks of the Ganga. He paid her obeisance and dived into her depths.

In this manner, the Lord of the three worlds left home, and took sanyas so as to save the suffering living beings of Kaliyug.

When Bishnurpiya woke up, her cries were so piteous that they tore apart the hardest rocks. Her cries reached the sky and she lamented like one possessed. Sometimes she would faint such that her pulse would stop. Then again she would get up and run helter skelter like a madwoman. Her clothes were in disarray and her hair came loose. She clasped Prabhu's garland to her bosom, and scream – "Please arrange a pyre for me, I want to burn myself."

Shachi Mata and Bishnupriya's body lay lifeless on the earth. It seemed although the bodies were present, the soul (Gouranga) had left them. Both Shachi Maa and Bishnupriya rolled on the ground and wept profusely. Shachi devi scream out the name of Nimai and cried. Her whole body was scorched in viraha.

When Shachi Maa saw Priyaji's miserable condition, she lifted her in her lap and wept, while Priyaji lay lifeless in her arms.

Sometimes Priyaji lamented inaudibly. Along with her the birds and animals of Nadia too wept silently. She said, "O my darling, you have plunged the residents of Nadia in grief. Ganga has lost all her charming beauty, the birds no longer warble sweetly, and even the waves seem to be crying, as they dash against the shore. I am accursed and doomed. It is due to me that you left Nadia, and now everyone, including the birds and animals are weeping for you."

She lamented further, "You left me here to continue living and remain stuck in Mother's heart like a spear. I don't want to show my sad face to anyone. What game did you play ? Can't you see your mother is dying ? Both of you brothers went away, leaving your mother to roll on the earth in grief ! You were supposed to feed her, yet you left her without food and water !"

Priya ji was crying and saying – "You can leave Nadia and remain far, but I cannot abandon your house, since for a married woman, this is the only shelter. The

moon of Nadia has disappeared, plunging it in darkness. Now I keep searching for you in this darkness. I go from door to door, crying, and asking for you. I am only yours, my Lord, and I am a simple innocent woman, what will become of me ? I cannot leave your house."

Priya ji spoke how much heart-stealing Gouranga is. She said, "Whoever sees you once, cannot let go of you ; then how can I bear your separation ? Everyone around me is only crying "Alas ! Alas !" , your mother is crying so loudly that all the cries have together clogged my ears. Tell me, who can I bear it ?

What can I tell you, how much I am suffering in this life ? Now your viraha has become the ornaments of my body. Anyway, there is no harm that I suffer so much, but at least give me shelter at your rosy feet at the time of death. This is all I seek from you.

I have very carefully worn Grief like a garland around my neck, and whosoever sees me, burns in sorrow, this is the only problem."

Priyaji hid her face in Kanchana's lap and wept profusely. As an honorable lady, it would be considered improper to cry loudly, so she stifled her sobs. This caused her all the more pain and she felt burning till her innermost core.

Shachi Mata too cried day and night in her son's viraha, so much so, that she almost lost her eyes. Srimati Bishnupriya's beauty and youth pained her all the more. She felt guilty that she had got her married to her son. She felt she was the cause of Priyaji's suffering. Like a madwoman Shachi Mata caught people on the way and asked – "Have you seen my Golden Moon Nimai ?"

At time sth eold lady would run to Srivas's house and searched – has her nImai arrived there by any chance ?

There were many sanyasis and vairagis who traveled to and fro Neelachal. Shachi Maa would catch them and enquire crying, "Have you see my Nimai ? Hve you seen a sanyasi whose name is Sri Krishna Chaitanya ? He is very young, and his complexion is like molten gold. He is extremely handsome. He constantly repeats

the Hare Krishna Mahamantra, and his eyes shed Prem-tears. Have you seen him ?”

Shachi Maa looked like one possessed.

Seeing the viraha of the two ladies, Advaita Prabhu became extremely disturbed.

In the book Advaita Pralash, it is written that –

“One day, after the naming ceremony of his twin sons, after he had finished the aratrik and was chanting Harinaam loudly, suddenly a Vaishnav came there. He started describing Prabhu’s whereabouts. The Vaishnav stated that after leaving home, Prabhu went to Katak Nagar (Katwa), and shaved his head. Then Keshav bharati gave him sanyas. He kept his name Sri Krishna Chaitanya. When Shachi Mata got the news, she was so saddened that she lost consciousness. She continues to gain and lose consciousness and fall anywhere at all. Sometimes she would scream “Nimai !” in such a plaintive voice that even a rock would melt, and at other times she would run helter skelter. At times she would rush to the Ganga to commit suicide.

As for Maa Bishnupriya, words fail to describe her sorrow. She sheds so many tears that they would have flooded the whole world.

After Advaita Prabhu had heard the devotee talking like this, he became paralyzed. He sat like a statue for three hours !!! Then he returned to normal, and started crying loudly. When his sahadharmini Sita devi came to know the reason, she too started howling. All of Advaita Prabhu’s followers drowned in sorrow.”

24

After Prabhu left home, Nitaichand assured Shachi Mata that he would surely arrange a meeting with Prabhu – at least once. Nitaichand tricked Prabhu into coming to Shantipur. Mahaprabhu was wandering in Raadhadesh in the garb of a sanyasi. He had not eaten for three days. He was proceeding towards Vrindavan.

The devotees believe that their heart-wrenching cry had surely pierced Mahaprabhu's heart. After all, he is the yajneswar of Sri Harinaam sankirtan yajna, is he not ? How could he ignore the day and night sankirtan yajna that was going on Shachi Mata's house in his absence, when all the devotees had gathered there and were crying out for him ?

The young sanyasi's life and soul were his old mother and innocent wife. His heart wept for them. When he met Nitaichand in Raadh, he flung himself on Nityananda Prabhu's body, remained still for some time, and then said, "Nityananda, go to Nabadweep today, let me see all the devotees in Shantipur." (Sri Chaitanya Mangal)

However he forbade Nitaichand to bring Priyaji with him. Prabhu instructed him – "You will bring everybody save one person."

On returning to Nabadweep, Nitaichand came to take Shachi Mata with him. All of Nabadweep was eager to accompany him. Malini devi and all other women of the city got ready to go to Shantipur. Shachi devi wanted to take her grief stricken daughter-in-law also with her. Then again, she thought, would she be able to bear to see her husband in the garb of a sanyasi ? But, with whom would she keep this doll-like girl ? After all, Nabadweep would totally empty. In whose house would she remain safe ?

Here, Priyaji was lying on the earth, in her husband's viraha, her eyes being full of tears. Would Shachi Mata take her to see him ? She was impatient to know this. A palanquin had arrived outside the house to carry Shachi Mata. Sri Nityananda Prabhu was requesting mother again and again to climb the palanquin. Sri Bishnupriya saw that all were getting ready to leave without her, then she could not remain still any more. In dirty clothes, uncombed hair, entire body smeared with dust, Srimati, taking the support of Kanchana sakhi, came and stood in the courtyard, tugging at Shachi maa's aanchal. Seeing her sorry state, Shachi devi's heart burnt like a mountain of dry cotton. Then Nityananda Prabhu, without wasting a moment, announced Prah's command to all the near and dear devotees present there. "Prabhu has forbidden.....Srimati cannot go"

Shachi devi started howling, and all the devotees present, also joined her in lamentation. It seemed Mother Earth would give way, the animals and birds too started crying in piteous tone, and the sky and the air too wept.

Srimati mourned, "Because of me Prabhu took sanyas. Now he has returned to Advaita Acharya's house, and women, men, children, the elderly and the youths – are all rushing in joy to take his darshan. But what crime have I committed that I do not have the right to see him ? If Fate had not made me his wife, I would have got the opportunity to see him. So it is my sheer bad luck that I am his wife."

Priyaji thought, if by not going there, her husband's Sanyas Dharma is protected, if he feels happy, then so be it. Her foremost duty was to make her husband happy. So she remained at home. However her tears knew no bounds. She kept on throwing herself on the ground and continued to cry. She thought of her Pranvallabh's strict sanyas, and chastised herself. She thought, "How much comfortably I am living, in such a nice house, in the comfort of a home and hearth, well-protected from the sun, rain and frost, while my beloved sleeps on the floor, has no proper shelter and is not allowed to wear warm clothes."

Maa Bishnupriya does not know anything about how the wife of a sanyasi who follows the strictest possible rules, should remain. If she asks her mother-in-law, she would be pained. So mother sent a letter to Prabhu, when he was in Advaita Acharya's house in Shantipur. Our saint poet Balaram das was a witness to this, and he has written –

Bishnupriya potre likhe kandiya kandiya,

Boloram das dekhe pachhe dandaiya.

Meaning – Devi Bishnupriya wrote a letter to Prabhu, all the while shedding tears.

Her husband is a sanyasi, therefore Bishnupriya too has donned the garb of a sanyasini. She does not know how a sanyasini is supposed to dress and what she should eat. Bishnurpiya had become a madwoman. She has taken off all her ornaments, and smeared ash all over her body. She sat absolutely quiet, her expressionless eyes held no tears.

When Kanchana sakhi saw this, she called Shachi Maa. Shachi Mata saw her and felt a sharp stab in her heart. This was the first time that in spite of seeing Shachi devi, Mother did not pull the cloth over her head. She kept staring fixedly at Shachi devi. Shachi Maa could not remain still anymore, and taking her daughter-in-law in her lap, she sat down there itself. She caressed Priyaji and asked "Maa ! Why are you feeling like this ? Your husband is making us cry by leaving home. However that is for the welfare of the world. Our tears will purify the world, they will wash the sins of all living beings. Please don't think opposite to that of your husband. Maa, cry.....cry as much as you want. I too will cry with you."

When Shachi Mata saw this heart-wrenching yogini-vesh of her daughter-in-law, she consoled her in a soft choked voice, "Our Bhajan comprises of crying only. Happiness lies in tears."

Shachi Mata could no more bear to see the sanyasini vesh of Priyaji. Therefore, all the while shedding tears, she entered her room.

Before bidding farewell to Shantipur, Mahaprabhu instructed the devotees – "Simply any devotee, be it Bishnupriya or Shachi Mata, if you adore Sri Krishna, I reside verily in your lap !"

25

When Prabhu was going to Vrindavan from Puri, he came to Nabadweep.

All over Nabadweep and the surrounding regions, word spread like wildfire, that the crest jewel of all sanyasis had come in the house of Vachaspati. Mahaprabhu then came from Vidyanagar to Kulia. All the teachers went to see him. Nabadweep wore a deserted look. The grief stricken Shachi Maa went to the shores of Ganga, accompanied by Bishnupriya. The eotehr side of Ganga was trembling due to lakhs of voices roaring "Jaya ! Nabadweepchandra ki jaya !" The gem lost by sorrowing Shachi Mata, the Pranvallabh of Bishnupriya, was lifting his long and graceful arms high above his head, and roaring "Haribol !" He could be seen above the heads of lakhs of devotees even from this side of the Ganga.

Maa Bishnupriya's chest was wet with tears flowing from her eyes. Her thin frame was shivering vigorously. Shachi Mata was hugging her to her bosom and standing there, gazing. Their old servant Ishan was accompanying them, keeping guard.

Prabhu stayed in Kulia for 5-6 days. After that he crossed the Ganga and came to Nabadweep to take darshan of his birthplace. The devotees thought may be bhaktavatsal Prabhu has come to give darshan to Priyaji. On crossing Ganga, Prahu came to Nrisimha Brahmachari's house wearing his wooden sandals. Shachi Mata went there and took darshan of her son. She wept so much that the earth became wet with her tears.

Shachi Maa returned home. With her she brought an armful of supremely blissful news – Nimai will come tomorrow to take darshan of his birthplace.

Bishnupriya was amazed. Prabhu would return home ! But why ? All he had wanted was to take darshan of janmabhoomi and janani, is it not ? Then, that is over. Now what ? She could not believe it. She simply could not accept this unbelievable announcement from Shaci devi.

Just then Kanchana arrived. She said – " What, dear sakhi ? Did I not tell you that he would come ? was I not right ? How can your Pranvallabh leave without giving you darshan ?" A slight smile appeared on Priya's lips. Simultaneously many questions speared in the corner of her mind – prabhu is a sanyasi. A sanyasi is not supposed to look at a woman's face. Then how will he look at his wife ?

Priya stayed awake the whole night. He had said he would come at night 2 O'clock. Ohhhh.....Priya's PranvallabhGoursundar would come.....

An immense crowd had gate-crashed into Shachi Mata's courtyard. Its boundaries were full and breaking.

The devotees were bringing Prabhu accompanied by kirtan. They were advancing towards Prabhu's house. Prabhu was coming to see his Janmasthan, not just Nabadweep, but his own house. This would be the last chance to see him. He would not come here again.

From behind the door, a calm, serene body fell before him. It rolled at Prabhu's feet. Ragged, tousled haired, with no adornment, miserable, teary eyed, trembling. She offered a deluge of tears as gift. Silently she offered her Prem-tears at Prabhu's rosy feet.

Sri Krishna had once told Narad Muni – "Dear Narad ! I do not reside in Vaikuntha, I live in the heart of my devotee."

And Nimaichand looked at the dust-smeared frame of that effulgent holy being, and asked, "Who ? Who are you ? What do you want ?"

The ocean of people had stopped their kirtan. All eyes had turned misty in amazement. There hung onely one question – how did Srimati garner so much courage to do this ?

It seemed to be a timeless moment in an unwritten chapter of a story of pain and misery going on for centuries.

Slowly Srimati lifted her head. The seven oceans seemed to have appeared in her eyes. Thousands of sleepless miserable nights seemed to have crashed on her lotus like face. From the fathomless depth of her scorching heart spouted forth a firm beginningless truth – "I am your servant Bishnupriya."

It sounded like a blood-etched signature on a rock.

Prabhu could not move his feet. He remained stupefied. Then in a constrained voice, Prabhu asked, "What prayer do you have ?"

Priya's voice trembled. Some big drops of tears rolled down her eyes. All the sounds of day-activites had stopped. Silence and calm had descended. Even Motehr Naturet felt the touch of Priya's painful heart. Every blade of leaf watched hypnotized.

Bishnupriya said, "All jivas of the universe got the touch of those rosy feet and gained succor. Will only Bishnupriya remain askance forever ?"

For some moments Gouranga stood with a bowed head. Then very calmly he said, "Bishnupriya, now you become Krishnapriya. Make your Bishnupriya name worthwhile.

Bishnupriya said, "I have no Krishna other than you, my beloved. To me you are Krishna, Vishnu – everything. I have none but you, whether at home or outside. Do I have to explain to you everything all over again?"

Bishnupriya stood in front of Prabhu with lowered face.

The devotee's heart-rending prayer was melting Prabhu. He was agitated on seeing the tears of a devotee. Softly he spoke, "O Pure one ! You know well that I am a sanyasi. I have nothing to offer you."

Slowly Prabhu took out his feet from his sandals. He told Bishnupriya, "Priya, please worship my sandals of mine, you will gain peace."

Bishnupriya eagerly lifted Prabhu's sandals to her head. She paid him obeisance. Tears rolled down her cheeks.

The devotees now broke into a thunderous roar. With absolute bliss they shouted with all the strength they could muster – "Jaya Bishnupriya ! Jaya Gourahari !"

Priya returned inside. She clasped the sandals to her bosom. She kissed them repeatedly.

These would be her companions for life, her life-time treasure.

Gorachand bade farewell from the earth of Nabadweep. He drowned all the residents of Nabadweep and himself in an ocean of tears. After all Gour had come to cry, he had come to make us also cry. Gouranga is Love-tears personified. His mool-mantra was to make others cry by crying himself.

26

When in the Gambheera Mandir of Neelachal, Sri Gouranga used to be absorbed in Radhabhaav, and cry in Krishna-viraha – at the same time, in the

Mahagambheera Mandir on Nadia, his Swarup Shakti, Sri Bishnupriya devi used to perform extremely difficult Bhajan of Sri Sri Goura-Govinda, under her Pranvallabh's instructions. What Mahaprabhu himself followed, he instructed that same vairagya-vidya to his Pranpriya. He taught her the same Bhakti-yog shiksha that he performed.

While in Neelachal, Mahaprabhu sometimes heard the news of nadiya from his devotees who came from there to meet him.

One day, Sri Jagadananda came to Puri and offered Prabhu this news of Maa Bishnupriya. He said –

“How much can I glorify Mother Bishnupriya ? Her bhakti and nishtha dumfounds me. She serves Shachi Mata in so many ways, that even thousands of people together would not be able to do such seva. Every morning she goes with Shachi Mata and performs Ganga snaan. After this she does not step out of the house at all. Even the moon and the sun cannot get to see her. The multitude of devotees, who go there for Prasad, can see only her holy feet, and never her face. None can get to hear her voice either. Her beautiful face is pale and eyes always shed tears.

Mother Bishnupriya takes as Prasad the remnants left on Shachi Mata's plate. Even this much she takes only so that she can carry on with her seva.

After completing her seva, if she gets any free time, she sits in a secluded place and constantly chants the Holy Name. She has extremely great ruchi for the nectarine Harinaam. Undoubtedly, Mother is the purest of the pure and is immaculate Prem personified.

Mother has the utmost nishtha for your holy feet. By her kripa alone, I came to know all this about her. Do you know, she has got a painting of you, and she has bathed it with Prem-Bhakti Mahamantra. She has kept it in a secluded spot, and serves it with lots of love. She has surrendered herself to your lotus feet. She has such unlimited excellences that even Sri Ananta Naag with his thousand tongues, cannot glorify her enough, then how can I tell you about her with one tongue ?

27

At the end of Ashwin, the devotees of Nadia were preparing to return to Nabadweep. On Ekadashi the devotees spent the entire day blissfully kirtaning in Prabhu's room. Then they decided to stay awake and continue the kirtan throughout the night. On dwadashi, the devotees did paaran in Prabhu's room and took leave from him. At the end of prasadam, Prabhu made all the devotees sit together in the courtyard.

He respectfully ordered Advaita Acharya to give Sri Krishna-bhakti to everybody right from Brahmins upto the Chandals. He should not leave out anyone. He ordered Nitaichand to go to Goudadesh and incessantly spread Prem-Bhakti in abundance.

After this strict directive to Nityananda, Prabhu tightly embraced Srivas Pandit. He put his arms around him, and with eyes laden with Love-tears he secretly whispered to him in a plaintive voice –

“I will dance daily during the kirtan in your house. Only you will get to see me, and no one else will see.”

While speaking like this, Prabhu remembered Nabadweep. All his pastimes came to his mind one by one. His sad mother, lonely wife, half-dead relatives and friends. Empty Srivas-anagan, Lackluster banks of the Ganga, one by one all the scenes appeared in his mind's eye.

He said, “Pandit ! Please swear by me that you will go to my suffering mother and pay her crores of dandavats on my behalf. You will tell her –

Forsaking her seva, I have taken sanyas ; thus I have not only been unable to perform any Dharma, I have destroyed whatever Dharma I had. My Dharma is to serve my mother, since I am the result of her love. Instead, I have behaved like a mad person. But then, a mother does not see the fault of her mad child. Please tell mother to forgive me. Why do I need sanyas ? Prem is my personal treasure. I

have monopoly over it. I could have distributed it even without taking sanyas. In fact ever since I took sanyas, my mind has become more diverted.”

While talking in this manner, Prabhu held Srivas’s next with both arms and started howling like a small boy. Sri Sri Nabadweepchandra was remembering Nabadweep. His suffering mother, virahini Bishnupriya – all were coming to his mind.

For four months of chaturmasya, the devotees had been relishing only Krishna-katha from Prabhu’s holy lips. They had been immersed in Sri Krishna-ras. Today when they witnessed Prabhu in an entirely different mood, their tender hearts got agitated. They understood that Prabhu is in deed a false sanaysi.

Prabhu continued to speak. He said, “By her orders, I am in Neelachal. I shall come some times to take darshan of her holy feet. Although I do go there daily to see her, but she thinks it is just a sfuran, and does not consider a reality.”

Prabhu spoke this much and the emotions of Prem overwhelmed him. So many days Prabhu had kept his mind in control, but he could not do it anymore. The barrage had crumbled. Prabhu was keeping on saying so many things – about his past, daily meetings with mother, and so much more. Prabhu said about mother – “Within she is happy, but she does not show it.”

All these are extremely mysterious secrets of Bhajan. When a sadhak reaches a state when he weeps in Bhagavad-viraha, actually he is happy within. Material people are not able to understand how viraha can result in joy, because they compare it with the separation felt by worldly people. However this world is a reflection of the Divine world. This means that it is inverted. Therefore, what is joyous there, is sorrowful here. If we don’t have faith in Divine pastimes, then we will not be able to feel all this in our hearts.

Prabhu was lying numb in the lap of Srivas Pandit. Govinda was waiting for Prabhu’s gesture. He was holding the silk cloth gifted by King Prataprudra. Prabhu had ordered for many types of Sri jagannath Mahaprasad. After some time, Prabhu surrendered all the objects in the hands of Srivas Pandit, caught his hands,

and said crying, "Please give this cloth to mother, and all the Prasad also. Then convey to her my obeisance, and beg her not to take any offence."

While speaking thus, Prabhu's voice got choked due to love-emotions.

Now let us discuss a few words about the most confidential Bhajan of Sri Sri Gour-Bishnupriya. King Prataprudra is a very loving devotee of Mahaprabhu. The expensive sari he has given Prabhu is definitely not meant for him. Many Pandits believe that Prabhu used to tie this sari as turban on his head during Janmashtami. But we doubt this, since Prabhu always refused costly or showy objects. He was sanaysi chudamani, who never made exceptions in obeying the rules. In fact he was the one who set the strictest rules for future generations of spiritualists to follow.

The King knew that Prabhu had a young wife at home. It was rare fortune to be able to serve her. Gour Bhajan is not complete if we avoid Maa Bishnupriya who is his life and soul. Complete Bhajan comprises of adoring the Divine Couple together (Yugal Bhajan). The cloth that the King gifted is of silk with gold zari work. He presented it to Prabhu on Janmashtami because he knew that Prabhu would send it to Nabadweep with his devotees. He also knew that Shachi Mata surely would not ignore her young daughter-in-law, and wear that sari. It would adorn the beautiful form of Sri Bishnupriya devi, who forever dallies on the bosom of Goursundar. This would enhance the beauty of the cloth. Shachi Mata would be overjoyed to see this. Since King Prataprudra is his anuragi bhakti, Sri Gour Bhagavan fulfilled the wish of his devotee.

Whether Maa Bishnupriya wore this cloth or not, is immaterial. However one thing is certain - she considered it a priceless gift from Prabhu.

King Prataprudra had got Prabhu's kripa. He gave this cloth to Prabhu thinking only of Priyaji's happiness. He tried to feel the Mother's pain, and somehow ease it little bit. This is why he gifted this cloth each year on Janmashtami, and Prabhu sent it to Nabadweep, for Bishnupriya, in the name of his mother.

Raja Praprudra was a blissful sadhak of the Divine Couple of Nadia. He was immersed in the meditation of Sri Sri Gour-Bishnupriya. Specially blessed saints

who have got Gouranga's intimate kripa gifted his madhur Bhajan to us. Srila Narottam das Thakur was the first one to install Sri Gouranga Mahaprahu's Yugal Vighraha in Kheturi. He arranged the grandest of grand feast in the honor of this installation. Great personalities such as Sri Sri Jahnaba Goswami, Sri Sri Achyutananda Prabhu, and many prominent acharyas of the Gaudiya Vaishnav sampradaya were present. Then who are we to either speak against, or not spread this form of worship ? In Ajmer, Rajasthan, this Yugal Bhajan is heard –

(A devotional song sung by an upasak of Sri Sri Gour-Bishnupriya Yugal Bhajan)

“gour he kopot sanyasi tumi,
Prachchanna haiya, asile nadiya, bharate punyabhumi,
Swarup dekhaile, nijon chhole, potite korile muni,
Kandakati tobo, madhuri boibhob, bede bhagobote shuni.
Anadi akhanda, tumi gunanta, shachir nayanmoni,
Ohe kopot sanyasi tumi.
Tomar gune bolihari jai
Bishnupriyar tumi hridikar, tinio tomar tai,
Milon bichched nahi bhedabhed, nityalilar thain,
Tumi achho yatha, bishnupriya setha, tothaay tomar aai,
Nitya sokha sokhi, nitya dekha dekhi, biriho sethaay nai.”

Meaning – “Dear Gour, O my dear false sanyasi ! You appeared in Nadia, in the holy land of Bharatvarsha. You appeared in such a way that none would recognize you as Divine Being. However you showed your true form to your devotees. You converted sinners into saints. You showed both your majesty as well as madhurya. You, who are the apple of Shachi Mata's eyes, are timeless, absolute. Your excellence knows no bounds.

I am ready to sacrifice my all for you. You are the heart of Bishnupriya and she is your heart. There is no difference in your milan and viraha – these are your eternal pastimes. Whereever you reside, so does Bishnurpiya, and your mother. Your sakhas and sakhis meet each other daily, there is no question of separation. I am ready to sacrifice my all for you.”

28

Sri Haridas Goswami has very beautiful drawn Mother Bishnupriya’s lamentation in the form of kirtans. In one such song, Priyaji says –

“My dear Moon of Nadia, only if you become me, then you will understand my sorrow. You have handed me the responsibility of serving your old mother. But tell me, what seva will erase the pain you have inflicted on her ?

I shall not talk of my own sorrow any more, for it will pain your heart. Even if it kills me, I won’t tell you. As it is my heart is laden with sorrowful tears. Will making you sad, lessen my grief in any way ?

I know I am only a servant, and you are my Master – how can I make your heart cry in pain ? Therefore, I vow never to talk about my misery.

You will make me cry, by never showing yourself to me.....ever again ! I know everything, still my heart refuses to accept it. Now I know that I have bound my heart to a rock, that is you, and I will not show you my ugly face. That is why I sit in the corner of my home and and chant the Holy Name. I wish to spend my life in sadhana alone.

You have carefully taught me very strict rules of Bhajan – how merciful you are ! My only sadhana is to concentrate on your holy feet. I will drink the nectar of your feet and distribute it to the devotees.

Why do they call you Nadia’s avatar ? You have immersed the Nadiavasis in Ocean of tears – hence it is not right name for you. Wherever you may stay, please don’t forget the Nadiavasis. They will never forget you, even if they die.

What news of Nadia can I give you ? My heart burns to tell you everything – the story of Nadia is so painful. The residents of Nadia, how many ever are remaining, have becoming like dead bodies. It is because you have flung us in the Ocean of Grief.

My dear Lord, I am a servant of your feet. I am yours and yours alone. If you snatch the position of a servant from me, then what will become of me ? How will I survive ? Why should I continue to live ? In what hope should I keep my life ?

What more can I say ? You are the Source of all excellences - now tell me, what sin have I committed, that you make me suffer like this ? You are the King of Nadia, and I am the mistress of your home. Then why should I be sad ? Yet, today no one is more unfortunate than me. There is no limit to my sorrow. In spite of gaining a treasure, I lost it. I am burning in infinite raging fire, and drowning in fathomless ocean of grief.

O my crest-jewel of all excellences ! Be happy ! I wish for nothing else but your joy. I have only one prayer – where ever you may remain, please remember this servant, and do not forget to give her the dust of your holy feet. It is my bad luck that you deprived me from serving you, is it not so ? But at least do this much mercy on me – shower your foot-dust on me.

Because I am your wife, I cannot even go to Neelachal. What more can I tell you ? Nothing ! What sin have I committed that Fate punished me in this manner ? Even if I die, this pain will not go from my heart.

You are said to be the embodiment of compassion. Then please be kind enough to take my life. My dearest darling, what is the use of me continuing to live ? I do not wish to live any more. You are the ocean of kindness, while I am the worthy recipient of compassion. Therefore show your kindness by taking my life. You are the source of my life – when you have abandoned me, then why should I care to live ? You have taken everything from me, now take this life also. I have nothing but this life, and this I have sacrificed at your holy feet.”

On the other hand, due to Nimai’s viraha, Shachi Mata’s frail and delicate frame started deteriorating day by day. Nimai’s beautiful moon like face used to be the

old lady's jap and tap. So how could she survive without him ? Srimati too had left all her chores, and was constantly engaged in serving her mother-in-law. Along with her Ishan and Banshivadan too served Shachi Mata. In this manner, one day, in the presence of all Nadiavasis, Shachi Mata left for the Eternal Abode.

Srimati was now all alone. Priyaji wore beautiful clothes, make-up and jewelry only for the pleasure of her mother-in-law. Therefore, after her disappearance, she rejected all of these. In Neelachal, Prabhu heard that Devi had taken up strict Brahmacharya, and is now dressed like a sanyasini.

Prabhu had not been contented to take sanyas himself. He had thought that if the people saw the Rajrani Bushnupriya dressed like a beggar, and Shachi Mata, the Universal Mother, suffering in sorrow, they would take Harinaam. That desire of Mahaprabhu had been fulfilled. Prabhu's descent in human form is now successful. Therefore he decided to return to his abode.

Prabhu saw that his Pranpriya, the Holy Mother, has followed in the footsteps of her Pranvallabh. She has made her own life an example to be emulated by others. His Priya has taught the jivas how to perform sadhana and the highest Bhajan by making every moment of her life exemplary. Therefore, our Patitpavan Doyal Goursundar was now satisfied and entered his abode.

The cruel news of Prabhu's disappearance spread like wildfire.

All the devotees started crying loudly in Gouranga's viraha. It was difficult to control them.

The effect the terrible news had on Priyaji is indescribable. We see in Banshi Shiksha Grantha –

"Bamshi and Bishnupriya wept like lunatics in Gouranga's viraha. Both of them gave up food and water. All they did was to cry out 'Haa Naath ! Haa Gouranga !'

"

29

After the disappearance of Shachi Mata, and also the terrible heart-shattering news about Mahaprabhu, everybody became like living corpses. Golden Nadia was devastated. Sri Sri Bishnupriya devi was rendered into a rock statue. She became a Mahayogini. She sat in a solitary room, bolted the door, and spent her days in harsh Bhajan.

Ishan Pandit had told Advaita Prabhu about the extremely difficult Bhajan of Mother Bishnupriya, in brief –

“After the disappearance of Shachi devi, Maa Bishnupriya wishfully bolted herself in a room and remained away from the devotees. No one could see her without prior permission. She followed extremely strict rules of Bhajan.

Before leaving for sanyas, Mahaprabhu himself had instructed Maa Bishnupriya of this Bhajan ; however she did not follow it till after the disappearance of Shachi Mata.

She bathed at dawn, and performed her ahnik. Then she took some rice grains and chanted Harinaam. She chanted till 3 O’Clock in the afternoon in this manner. She would chant one Naam, and place a grain inside an earthen vessel. At the end of jap, she tied a cloth on her mouth, and carefully cooked those many rice grains. She offered that rice to Mahaprabhu without any salt or accompaniment. She would sit there and plead him in so many ways to partake of that rice. Then she would offer achaman, and take only a handful of that Prasad. She would distribute the remaining rice to the devotees. Who can perform such difficult vow ?

When I (Ishan Pandit is saying) heard that she does not allow anyone to see her without prior permission, a thunderbolt struck me. I wondered how to get Mother’s darshan. Just then Gadadhar das arrived there. Some more prominent devotees like Sriram Pandit too came there, to take Prasad along with Damodar Pandit. They all entered the inner parts of the house with tears flowing down

their eyes. Then, by the permission of Maa Bishnupriya, they took this fallen servant inside.

I saw that Mother was behind a curtain, and only her holy feet could be seen. Due to extremely rare fortune, I got darshan of those lotus feet. Also by a drop of bhakta-kripa, I got little bit of her Prasad. Immediately I felt blessed, and all my anarthas were driven out.

I cannot describe the vast suffering that Mother goes through. Without having transcendental powers, it is impossible to live like this. When the devotees hear this, they cry. Then they feel it is due to Sri Krishna's will, and control themselves. I verily lack the power to describe the condition of Maa Bishnupriya. It will suffice to say that even a rock will shatter if it sees her.

30

Priyaji sat with her confidential sakhis, in the Gambheera Mandir, very deep into the night, and chanted Harinaam. When she completed three lakh names, she paid obeisance to her Prananaath, and wept. If a log of wood or a piece of rock heard her wailings, even they would melt. She said so many things to him. Her words would break anyone's heart. Both her sakhis felt immense pain when they heard her.

The book Prembhaktivilas says – "In Gouranga's viraha, Bishnurpiya became so much aggrieved that she suffered from amnesia."

One day in the Nadia-Gambheera, Gour-virahini Bishnupriya, who was in the state of divine lunacy, her hair being loosened, her robes slipping off, body smeared with dust, torrential tears rolling down her eyes, ran helter-skelter out of the Bhajan-mandir. She seemed to see Gouranga everywhere, just as the Radharani saw Krishna wherever her gaze fell – "tulasi kananam yatra tatra sannihoto hari". Then she fell down in a swoon. When her sakhis brought her back, she embraced them and sang – "Sakhi ! Tell me, where is my heart-stealing rasamaya Gora ? I keep searching for him here and there, and he keeps on running away from me.

My heart breaks and I burst into tears, but he does not look back. All the same, I continue to search for him, all day and night.”

In the Neelachal-Gambheera Mandir also, Gourangasundar lamented in Radha-bhaav – “Where is the Moon of the family of Nanda Maharaj ? Where is the one with the peacock feather ? Where is the one playing the melodius flute-song ? Where is the one radiating soft blue effulgence ?”

The one who has manifested this enjoyable beautiful leela of Divine Lunacy – is one Advaya Tattva, who has appeared as Shakti and Shaktiman in Nabadweep and Nadia respectively. Both are relishing vipralambha ras.

Another day, Gourvallabha herself brought up the topic of Krishna-katha in front of her sakhis. She said, “My Pranvallabh Goursundar loved krishna-katha very much. He instructed everyone to chant Krishna Naam.”

Her Pranath had kept the name “Krishna-pagalini” for skahi Knachana. Priyaji understood why it was so. She recited one verse from Srimad Bhagavat –

“ kastyangate kalapadayata venugita-
Sanmohitaryacharitanna chalet trilokyam,
Trailokya-soubhagamincha nirikshyarupam
Madgodvijadrumammrigaah pulakaanvibhran.”

Meaning – “Sri Krishna’s beauty is so sweet that it can hypnotize Kaam dev. It is condensed lavanya. A Braja-gopini who is aware of this, is addressing Sri Krishna’s form, and saying – “Dear Anga⁴¹, your matchless beauty and melodious flute-song causes goose bumps even on cows, birds, trees and animals. Then how can a woman not be mesmerized by your gorgeous beauty that spell binds the three worlds ? Is there any woman in this world who can remain still even after hearing your magical flute-song ? It is just not possible to have a woman who will not break her marital vows once she sees you and hears your flute.”

⁴¹ Sri Krishna’s body

Sometimes Priyaji spoke such lovely verses from srimad Bhagavtam, and immersed herself and the sakhis in Sri Krishna-katha-ranga.

We learn from Vaishnav principles that to attain the topmost goal, secluded Bhajan is most essential. Ishta-Bhajan is verily impossible without leading a solitary life. Mahaprabhu has instructed his very close followers that, "See to it that you do not spend your nights sleeping like useless people."

Therefore Priyaji too, after the disappearance of Shachi Mata, spent the nights in Bhajan, following the footsteps of her Pranvallabh, since he too spent his nights deeply absorbed in meditation in the Gambheera Mandir.

When Shachi Mata was no more, Priyaji gave up all ornaments, and good clothings. Keeping extremely strict vow of celibacy she started doing Gour Bhajan. After Prabhu's disappearance her Bhajan gained more momentum. It reached the zenith of intensity. She became a mahayogini, and started practicing her Bhajan behind closed door.

Whenever she remembered her Pranvallabh's harsh sadhana, she would chastise herself hundreds of times. Her Pranvallabh is travelling on difficult paths, he is living under trees, subsisting on alms, while she, being his ardhagini⁴², is living in a home, surrounded by servants and relatives ! Shame on her ! She is a delicate woman, she cannot leave home and go to a forest. But she could surely perform harsh Bhajan at home, is it not ? In that case, she was determined to do it. Thus, Gour-griha was transformed into Gambheera.

Nadi's Mahagambheera Mandir is the Maha-peetha-sthan of Gour-Prem. It is the fountainhead of the Ocean of Viprambha-ras. In this supremely great Maha-peetha-sthan, Sri Bishnupriya devi is Vipralambha-ras personified.

Gourvallabha⁴³'s ocean like viraha is very deep – fathomless, infinite, unlimited. It is impossible to find its shores. The Goddess had immersed herself in the rasful

⁴² According to Sanatan Dharma, after marriage, a man has to consider his wife as half his body. His body now comprises of his own body and also his wife's body. It means, he has to care for her as he would care for his own self.

⁴³ The darling of Gouranga, meaning Bishnupriya

ocean of Gour-viraha. In every moment, her tender heart has broken in to tiny fragments by the dashing and smashing of the huge waves of viraha-ras/ Her whole being had burnt in the fire like Gour-viraha.

Priyaji closed the door and performed Bhajan. No one had the right to enter the Bhajan Mandir. Earlier those devotees, who had the permission to go inside the house, now they too were barred from entering. She even ordered the main door of the house to be closed. The servants set up two ladders – one on the outer side of the wall, and one from inside. Using these ladders, the servants and Damodar Pandit brought Ganga jal, and other ingredients for seva-pooja. Srila Ishan Nagar and Srila Manohar das have described Priyaji's severe Bhajan in the book "Anuragvalli". Whoever reads it will surely start crying.

Mahaprabhu had engaged Bamshivadan in the seva of Shachi Mata and Priyaji. One night in their respective hosues, both Priya and Bamshivadan saw the same dream. Mahaprabhu was telling that, "I was born under a Neem tree and my mother used to breast-feed me under that tree. You use that same Neem tree to make my Deity, install it in this Nabadweep Dham, and serve it."

Prabhu also said, "Bishnupriya is Paraa-Shakti, and she is Mahabhaav personified. I order her to dissolve in my wooden Deity, since I am permanently present in it. There is special display of love in Aprakat-leela, since the two lovers become united."

Then Bamshi called the sculptor, and told him to make a Deity out of the Neem wood. The sculptor started weeping. He said, I am not capable of making such a beautiful vigraha. What if I make a mistake ? Bamshi replied – "Please do not worry. Nimai Thakur will give you that power. You simply pray to him." The sculptor paid obeisance to Prabhu and started the task. He sat in a solitary place and continued to carve. It took a fortnight to complete the Deity.

When the sculptor informed them that the Deity was completed, both Bamsivadan and Priya ji went to see it. The sculptor placed a garland around the Deity and drew chandan maerks on its body. Now the Deity looked so beautiful

that Srimati and Bamshi, both started crying. Priya ji cried out – “ Hear ! Hear ! I have got darshan of my Prananath !”

We should remember that Sri Gouranga and his Hladini Shakti Srimati Bishnupriya devi are the topmost treasures of sadhaks suffering in Kaliyug. They are our Param Aaraadhya in whatever condition we may be.

When Prabhu’s Deity-installation ceremony was over, Priyaji engaged the son of her brother, Sripad yadav Mishra, in nitya pooja and bhog-offering. Then she absorbed herself in secluded Bhajan.

Priyaji called her sakhis and servants and revealed her heart to them. She told them very lovingly, calmly and detached manner that now onwards they would not be allowed to enter Gambheera. She permitted only her two most confidential sakhis Kanchana and Amita to enter Gambheera. For all remaining devotees, the door would be closed henceforth.

Our Maa Bishnupriya who was purity personified, said, with tears welling in her eyes – “Dear Nadiavasis, please don’t feel hurt. Praananath instructed me to perform secluded Bhajan ; I am only following his instruction. Only if we do nirjan ekanta Bhajan, can our smaran become powerful. If we remain in sanga, even if it is bhakti-sanga, we cannot attain a very high level of smaran. And if our smaran does not become super concentrated, we cannot get darshan of our Loved One. Hence I have no alternative to nirjan Bhajan.

During daytime I shall keep a vow of silence (mouna-vrata). At night I shall relish Goura-leela. For this, I agree that I need devotee-association. Without devotee-association, how is it possible to do aswadan ? However, only two devotees will suffice, Kanchana and Amita. I don’t need a third one.”

Bamshivadan offered tulsi leaf and Gangajal on Sri Sri Mahaprabhu’s feet daily. He also served Priyaji with utmost love and reverence. Within few days, Bamshivadan left his body at Priyaji’s feet and entered Nitya Dham.

When Srimati heard the news of Bamshi's departure – Bamshi, who had been chosen by Mahaprabhu to serve her – Bamshi who had been her most sincere follower – she was deeply grieved.

Here, Sri Nityananda Prabhu sent Sri Advaita Prabhu's dear associate and servant Ishan Naagar to Nabadweep to get the news of Maa Bishnupriya. Ishan Naagar came and said, "Priyaji handed over the seva to the son of Yadav Mishra and with a joyous heart, continued with her nirjan-Bhajan. She did not take up vighraha-seva ; instead she chose to adore Gora through nirjan-Bhajan.

Sri Gouranga-priya reached the state of Divyonmaad. In deep nights, she sat in Gambheera Mandir, and chanted Mahamantra along with her confidential sakhis. She completed three lakh Holy Names daily. After this she would pay obeisance to Pranatha and start crying. Her prayers of surrender would have melted rocks and wood. She uttered so many words of lamentation from her heart. Her wailing was so piteous that it would have shattered a stone. The two sakhis were deeply pained indeed."

Bamshivadan was Sri Sri Bishnupriya devi's dear disciple. After his disappearance he had reincarnated in the form of his grandson. His name was Ramchandra. In this form, he had preached Gouranga Leela. Srimati never went anywhere from her Gambheera Mandir. Yet she often felt the desire to see Bamshivadan's grandson Ramchandra.

One day when Priyaji was seated in her Gambheera Mandir, she heard that Bamshivadan had reincarnated as his grandson. The baby looked exactly like him ! She was overjoyed. She felt a great desire to see this beautiful baby. However she did not feel like going out of Gour-griha. She started thinking – "What do I do ? How can I see him ?" Her sakhis Kanchana and Amita understood what she wanted, and felt sad. Their eyes grew wet.

Bamshi's house was very close to Gour-griha. Amita went there and saw that many prominent Vaishnavis had come there, namely, Sita devi, Jahnaba Maa and Vasudha Maa. When they heard that Priyaji too wanted to see the baby, they came to Gour-griha to fetch her.

This was the first time Priyaji was seeing Maa Jahnaba. When she saw her she covered her face and started weeping. It seemed the month of Shravan had descended in her eyes. Due to the presence of these lofty Vaishnavis, Gour-griha got transformed into an Ocean of Prem. Sita Thakurani lifted Priyaji in her lap, and caressed her with her loving hands. She spoke many consoling words to her. Even a stone would melt on witnessing this touching scene.

Then Priyaji controlled herself and told Maa Jahnaba – “My dear didi, this is our first meeting. At first sight itself, you have stolen my heart ! Nityananda is Gouranga’s elder brother. He is non-different from him. As a result you and I too are non-different. Although you are younger to me, your position is higher. You are my poojaniyaa. You are sad due to my sorrow. This shows how much you feel for me.

I am most unfortunate, and am suffering due to viraha from my husband. I need your blessing, since I am suffering from birth. Please shower your mercy on me, and bless me that I may no longer live on this earth. May I leave this body, uttering “Haa Gouranga !” May I get Gouranga’s lotus feet after this life.

I am no longer able to live in this Gour-griha that is devoid of Gouranga. I am a bride for a respectable household - where can I go ? I had one son – Bamshi – and he too left me. I heard that he has appeared as his grandson. I have a great desire to see him, but I don’t know what to do.”

At last, Mothers Sita, jahnaba and Vasudha secretly took her to Bamshi’s house in a vehicle covered with cloth.

When Maa Bishnupriya saw the baby, who looked exactly like Bamshi, she was overjoyed. She started sobbing. She saw that the baby was very healthy, and had strong limbs. So she named him ‘Raam’.

Mother Jahnaba told Priyaji, “Dear sister, please don’t indulge in too severe austerity and spoil your health. If your body perishes, then who will you perform Bhajan ? My husband has given me this instruction. Lord Gouranga never wanted us to perform any great austerity.”

Devi kept her gaze lowered and answered very respectfully, "Didi, you should always follow the instruction of your husband. However, my Pranvallabh's Bhajan is not unknown to you. Compared to the severe austerity he has performed, my austerity is negligible. My sweet Lord has taught the world the secret of deep Krishna-Bhajan by his own conduct. He has done this to uplift the suffering jivas of Kali Yug. I am only following in his footsteps. I too am doing this because I am determined to teach the people of Kali Yug how to perform Gouranga-Bhajan. He has taught the world how to do Krishna-Bhajan, I will teach the world how to perform Gour-Bhajan."

The Vaishnavis spent a long time in Ishta-goshti. Then Priyaji held Sita devi's feet and sobbed uncontrollably. Sita devi too lifted her in her lap and caressed her. She kissed her face and consoled her. Sita devi said, "My Nimai has come home in his Deity-form, to give you company. He could not bear to see your viraha anymore. Now you still your heart and serve him lovingly. Then you will see how joy replaces sorrow. You are intelligent, pure and the beloved of Gouranga. You have come to teach the jivas the highest form of Bhakti.

You are Gour-prem personified and you are the life and soul of Gouranga. The devotees of Gouranga are alive because of you.

Dear mother, you are Goura-shakti, and the Mother of all Vaishnavas. You are loving, caring and the crest-jewel of all women. If you are not there, then sankirtan will stop. The Vaishnavs will fall in illusion and in fights will arise.

You are the protector of the devotees of Gouranga, and the best of tapaswinis. Please safeguard Nimai's Vaishnav-soldiers."

Sita devi's loving words soothed Srimati's scorched heart somewhat. She told Sita devi – "Maa ! You have cared for my Pranvallabh like a mother. My mother-in-law has gone to the Eternal Abde. In her absence, O mother, your inspiring words have filled my dry heart with new vigor. I had lost all hope, but now you have given me light. My Pranvallabh has wandered all over the country like a beggar to alleviate the suffering of this terrible Kali Yug, while I am performing very little Bhajan, sitting at home. Even then, the devotees are unhappy with me. This

makes me so sad. Maa, please bless me, that my enthusiasm for Gour-Bhajan may double.”

Sita devi replied softly, “Maa ! I have no right to bless you. You kripa will uplift the jivas of Kali Yug from the darkest dankest pit. You are kripa personified. You please shower your merciful glance on jivas. Without your kripa, it is impossible to get Gouranga’s kripa.”

Sita devi also said, “The jivas of Kali Yug are suffering because they are full of sin. However, all their anarthas will be destroyed when they hear or read about your spotless character. Your severe brahmacharya vrata is the ideal Dharma for all sadhaks. You are pure, you are chaste. Your tears will wash away the sins of the greatest of the sinners. Sri Gouranga’s name will mingle with yours and be worshiped all over the world. There will come a day when Sri Gouranga-Bishnurpiya vighraha will be worshiped in each and every home. You are all-auspicious, you are Mahalaxmi. You are the eternal karunamayi mother. You please shower your blessings on the downtrodden and the wretched. This is your topmost sadhana, it is also the wish of your Pranvallabh.”

31

Our saints have described Maa Bishnupriya’s severe Bhajan in the following manner –

“Bishnupriya closed her eyes, and with tears flowing from them, she offered herself at the lotus feet of her Pranath. Her heart was so full of pain that she often fainted. Seeing her pain, her confidential sakhsi Kanchana and Amita suffered silently. If a stone hears Gambheera Leela, it will melt and turn into liwuid, then what to speak of those who do not believe in Dharma, and those who argue uselessly ? They will surely become her followers.

Amita and Kanchana always held her close to their bosom and served her in every possible way. Whenever she fainted, they lovingly brought her back. Their lips

always chanted, "Haa Gouranga Gunanidhi !" They never expressed their sorrow to anyone, especially not to Priyaji ; instead they always tried to cheer her up.

Hundreds of rivers flowed silently from Priyaji's eyes, only her sakhis could feel her pain. Nadia-Gambheera Leela is not something we can describe. It is a river of Prem that one has to delve into, in order to feel it little bit."

After her meeting with Jahnaba Maa and Sita devi, Priyaji did not talk much with anyone. She was silent most of the time. She grew thinner day by day. As it is she ate so little. Now she would take Prasad on some days, and on other days she avoided it entirely. On certain days she subsisted only on Prabhu's charan-tulasi and Gangajal brought by her brother Sripad Yadavacharya. She would daily worship Prabhu's sandals as her most adorable object.

32

Vrishabhanu-suta Radharani set the standard for nirjan-Bhajan. In Kaliyug Devi Bishnupriya is that same Radharani. Radhika went for abhisar in the deep night, while Priyaji spends her night in deep meditation of her beloved. Bishnupriya chanted the same Hare Krishna Mahamantra that rose out of the holy lips of Radhika. Thereby Priyaji showed us the way to attain all our desires, be it spiritual or material. Whenever we want anything, we should not worship any devi and devata, but we should take shelter only of Naam Prabhu. Naam Prabhu has the power to grant us absolutely anything, right up to Prem Bhakti.

Srimati Radharani's Bhajan and Maa Bishnupriya's Bhajan are the highest ideals for Vaishnavs. However they are treasures that are extremely secret and hence safeguarded, which is why so few people are aware of it.

In front of everyone, the sadhak does shravan kirtan like vidhi margis, while in nirjan, away from prying eyes, he does smaran-manan, following the Raag marg. The simple rule of Bhajan is, to cry out in anurag, from the depths of the heart. Opulent seva-pooja is not the criteria of Bhajan. Instead what he wants from us is

that, we should offer our whole being to him, and this includes not only ourselves but everything we possess. This is what Maa Bishnupriya did, and she is our ideal.

Gour-virahini Srimati Bishnupriya has expressed the same heart-stealing leelas in the Gambheera Mandir of Nabadweep as done by Sri Radhika. Now you find her in antardasha or internal state. This means she is unaware of external surroundings. Sometimes she is in half-external state, and sometimes in external.

Gourvallabha understood the misery of her confidential sakhis, so she embraced them, and expressed her heart-desires through an old Mahajan-song. When kanchana and Amita heard it, their joy knew no bounds. Today Priyaji has opened her heart to them, and instructed them about Gour Bhajan. She has said – “If you want Gour-govinda, then you have to forsake all respect, family honor, and all position. After this, you have to take shelter of his lotus feet. Then only will he accept you.

Srimati is saying – “Sakhi ! I have not been able to give up all this, which is why your Shachinandan Gourahari has not given me shelter at his lotus feet.” Saying this, she is holding Kanchana’s neck and sobbing uncontrollably. In this situation, sakhi kanchana started to sing a song from “Swapnavilas” –

“I saw a dream in which my beloved came and sat on the bed. I glanced at him through the corner of my eyes. Gora is the embodiment of Prem and he adores me so much, that he considers himself in my control. He tells me repeatedly with his sweet lips, that I am more than his life. Saying this, he joyfully gathers me in his lap. How shy it makes me !

He makes tambool with his own hands and puts in my lip. Then he gazes at me in happiness. Then again with those beautiful hands, he caresses my lips – ohhh – how wonderful it feel ! Saint poet Narahari says – My beloved is my heart-beat. How expert he is at charming a young lady !”

Gour-virahini is not able to remain still. She pressed her palm on Kanchana’s mouth, and bashfully lowered her face. Kanchana who knows her heart, has today revealed all. This sweet song is actually in Priyaji’s own words.

The virahini nayika can continue to live only through the realization of milan and sambhog-sukh in extremely absorbed meditation. It is the only antidote to the unbearable pain felt by viraha. We can see similar compositions by saint poet Vidyapati also, where Radharani is talking about her milan with Kanha in a dream sequence.

This incomparable leela ras is like a mixture of amrit and poison. In this Kaliyug, this leela ras has taken a form. This form is residing in Gambheera f Nabadweep. It is none other than Mother Bishnupriya. By her own example she is teaching the devotees to drink this wonderful potion of visha and amritam, to continue with Bhajan-life. Sri Rupa Goswami too has expressed this in his drama Vidagdha Madhav, second act, 18th verse –

“pidarbhirnav kalkutakatutagarvasya nirvasano,

Nihsyandena mudam sudha madhurimahankar sankochanah.

Premasundari nanda-nandan paro jagarti yasyantare

Jayante sfutamasya vakra madhura stenaiva vikrantayah.”

Sri Kaviraj Goswami has translated this verse very beautifully in his Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita –

“In this manner, day by day, Prabhu manifested his own bhaav in the company of Swarup and Ramananda. Externally he seemed to be suffering under the tortuous influence of poison, but inside his heart, he was in bliss. This is the miraculous effect of Krishna-Prem ! The relish of this Prem is like drinking hot sugarcane juice. Your tongue gets burnt, but you don't feel like forsaking it. The one who has felt this thing called Krishna-Prem, only he knows its contradictory impact, and how it gives the sensation of drinking both poison and amritam at the same time.”

After Prabhu's disappearance Maa Bishnupriya day and night floated in the Ocean of Viraha, and immersed herself in sadhan-Bhajan. She increased her nishtha, and severity of Bhajan. It is difficult for an ordinary jiva to even describe it. She became a sanyasini and mahayogini in the true sense.

33

On the Appearance day of Sri Goursundar, that is Gour Purnima, Naam Sankirtan Yajnya was going on all day and night in the Sri Mandir. A river of Prem flowed in Sri Gour-angan. Overwhelmed with Gour-Prem, the Gour devotees were dancing and singing in ecstasy. Suddenly the devotees saw that –

Kirtan koriya ase nagorir dol,
Koti chandraloke kori angina ujjol.

“The troupe of Gour-nagaris were singing kirtan, and advancing towards the courtyard. Due to their effulgence, it seemed as if millions of moons had descended in the courtyard.”

Behind the troupe of kirtanias, covered in a coarse cloth, virahini Sri Gourvallabha, was walking slowly towards the Sri Mandir. She looked extremely beautiful, with millions of sunshine emanating from her. Her beautiful resplendence filled the angan with a Divine light.

The very old Ishan came and cautioned the love-crazy kirtanias to be calm since the Holy Mother was approaching Sri Mandir, with her sakhis. Immediately after giving this notification, Ishan crashed on one side of the courtyard, and started wailing piteously. The devotees moved to one side and started repeating what the sakhis were singing –

“jaya shachinandana jaya gourahari,
Bishnupriyar pranath nadiya bihari.”

Taking the support of her two intimate sakhis, virahini Priyaji walked to the sanctum sanctorum. She was absorbed in Gour-Prem. She placed the end of her sari around her neck, and paid obeisance to her Pranvallabh. If we perform nice Bhajan, then only we can feel the wonderful sweetness of the union of Priyaji with her beloved. For the first and only time she was interacting with her beloved in public. Virahini Gourvallabha’s eyes were anointed with Gour-anurag, and they

were now shedding tears of Gour-Prem. Her love-tears were wetting her bosom. Her tears were seeking permission from her sakhis and servants to take leave. It was a heart-rending miserable scenario. All of a sudden darkness enveloped Shaci Mata's angan.

“probeshila Bishnupriya mandirabhyantare,

Podilo kobat tobe oti dhire dhire”

“Mother Bishnupriya entered the bowel of the Mandir, and very slowly the door closed behind her.”

Our Goudiya Vaishnav saints who have witnessed this agonizing scene has described it thus –

“In the time of Brahma-Muhurta, on Prabhu's Appearance Day, Devi Bishnupriya, on her own, dissolved in the wooden Deity. On getting the news of Priyaji's disappearance, all of Nadia plunged into grief. The devotees got extremely agitated in sorrow. All residents of nadia, be it woman, man, or immovable object – drowned in misery. Her eternal servants witnessed her disappearance-leela, which was a rare darshan even for the Vedas.

Each devotee took this leela as per her or his bhaav, and narrated it to the others who were not present there. The women of Nadia became crazy on hearing this news. They came to the Ganga, and started rolling on her shore. Even ladies from honorable families forgot shame, they abandoned their clothes and ornaments, and behaved like madwomen. The extremely old Ishan was stupefied. He could not speak at all. He fell in a swoon, and he looked like a dead body. How much the devotees tried to console him, and make him understand! But to no avail. Then after much time, he managed to stand up, and say something to the devotees.

Ishan Thakur had lost his life and soul. He wailed piteously –

‘O my dear Bishnupriyavallabh ! You have ended your leela in this world, and are now united as Yugal. You have now taken your Priya in your heart, and hidden her forever. You arranged it such that only you could see this leela. You cannot understand how much sorrow you have given to the Nadiyavasis. They are

dying in sorrow, you are seeing everything, yet choosing not to see ! You could not bear Priya's sorrow, hence you called her to you. You have taken the burden of her suffering, and now she is at peace."

Hladini Shakti is the swarup of Bhakti. We can give pleasure to Sri Bhagvan when Hladini Shakti nourishes us. That is why we have to first please Hladini Shakti. When Hladini Shakti does kripa on us, then only Sri Bhagavan will accept our seva.

Virahini Bishnupriya's Gour-Bhakti is the topmost. Therefore her kripa is essential for Gour-Bhajan. In Kaliyug, Maa Bishnurpya is Bhakti devi. Without worshiping her, without following her, and adoring her, we cannot hope to please Sri Gour Bhagavan. We have to remember this. All glory to Bhakti devi ! All glory to Bishnupriya !

All glory to Sanatan-nandini Gour-sohagini Devi Bishnupriya, who is glorified by the three worlds. All glory to Laxmi Swarupini Bishnurpiya who can give us Gour-Prem, who is all auspicious and the topmost pleasure-giver to Gouranga.

All glory to the Controller of Nabadweep, who is the most beautiful of all, who is adored by all devotees, and is the Hladini Shakti.

All glory to Bishnupriya who is Bhakti personified, who is Raas-vilasini, Bhuvaneshwari, and takes away the suffering of jivas.

All glory to the eternal peace-giver, the one who can give Bhakti, who is merciful to the humble, and the giver of nectarine Prem.

All glory to Rajrajeshwari Bishnupriya, the life and soul of Gouranga, who is sweet Prem-Bhakti personified.

If we do not take the sanga of real ek-nishtha Gour-bhaktas, we cannot learn about Gouranga Mahaprabhu, and we will not understand the truth about Gour-Bishnupriya. Without the blessing of Bishnurpiya, we will not gain true knowledge of Gouranga. The Gour-bhaktas have monopoly over the most confidential conjugal ras of Braj. Without taking their shelter and without surrendering to Gouranga, we cannot get full relish of Braj-ras. And to surrender to Gouranga, we need the kripa-ashirvad of Maa Bishnupriya.

Just as the greedy sadhaks of Braj-ras, who have drowned in madhur Bhajan of the Divine Couple Radha Krishna, have described the beautiful love-dalliance of Shyam-Shyamaa, the rasik bhaktas of Gouranga too have sung sweet songs about the love-sports of Nabadweep. Thakur Lochan das has narrated Sri Gour-Bishnupriya's yugal-vilas leela-madhuri in the following words –

“Goursundar is an enchanting lover who spreads various kinds of ras all around. What to speak of others, even Kamdev does not know so many arts of love-making. When he takes Priya in his arms, it seems as if a lightning is sparking on the golden Sumeru Mountain. Why, even Madan dev gazes mesmerized at the love-making of the Divine Couple of Nabadweep. He keeps his beloved on his chest, and makes love to her in such a way that she never touches the bed. Both become one in such a way that they don't turn sides even. Chest on chest, face on face.....this is the way they spend the night. Love-fatigue makes both sleep in peace.”

Only when we drown in the sweet Gour-leela, Braj leela will reveal itself to us without any extra effort.

In all of Gouranga's leelas, his Gambheera leela is the topmost. Sri Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami too has glorified the Divine Couple to please Gouranga. The leelas of the Divine Couple are in two parts – one is in Braj, and the other is in Nabadweep. Therefore, we need to study the Yugal Leela of Nabadweep also, and meditate on it.