

less on the exhibition of pantomime dolls, which was an invariable and costly item of expense on all festive occasions. There were very few permanent Holy *Vigrahas* in Bengal at that time. The worship of the permanent Holy *Vigraha* became a tradition in Bengal only subsequent to the Advent of Sree Chaitanya and as the effect of His Teachings. Temporary images were the only objects of worship. Those images were immersed in water after the festivity in their honour was concluded, on the wrong assumption that the Form of Godhead is a material and temporary entity.

This posture of affairs filled the devotees with grief and despair. No one served Godhead, no one ever talked about Him, or took His Holy Name, or could be persuaded to listen to any discourse about Him. This was the blighted waste glutted with every form of luxury aggravated by the strenuous pursuit of worldly knowledge, which evoked the tenderest solicitude, of that small band of pure souls and impelled them to adopt every method that could be devised for rousing the deluded people to a sense of their eternal duty and thereby saving them from their impending terrible doom. But all their efforts for the amelioration of the spiritual condition of the people were misunderstood and responded to by the bitterest invectives, ridicule and cruel persecution! Yet those servants of Godhead did not lose their faith nor relax their efforts, although their very food did not taste in their mouths at the sight of the miseries of their kindred. The Bhāgavatas applied themselves to their devotions in the forms of the worship of Krishna, discourse about Krishna, and bathing in the holy stream of the Ganges. And all of them incessantly blessed the world, 'May Krishna soon bestow His mercy on all!'

CHAPTER II

FAMILY AND ELDERS

THE Advent of Sree Chaitanya was preceded by the appearance of a numerous body of pure devotees in different parts of the country who joined Him at Nabadwip in due course and became incorporated in His Activities. This galaxy of the stars of the first magnitude occupies the foreground of the picture that it is our purpose to offer. Sree Chaitanya is unintelligible without intimate knowledge of the doings of His associates. He is expressed in the only intelligible form in the lives of His *bona fide* devotees. These devotees were not so many *imitators* of Sree Chaitanya. Each of them has a great, living, individual personality; each *serves* Sree Chaitanya in his own way and helps to demonstrate the quality of unbounded catholicity and endless variety of manifestation in individual personalities of our only eternal function. The conduct of these devotees is even more instructive than the Transcendental Activities of Sree Chaitanya Himself Whom it was the function of these great souls to express by serving the Absolute Truth identical with the Personality of Sree Chaitanya under every form of circumstance and every manner of disposition, by the method of incorporated, subordinate service.

The Vaishnava authors always offer the esoteric view of those events. When Godhead Himself comes down into this world, He does not come un-attended by His eternal associates and Divine paraphernalia. They accompany Him to this world. The transcendental realm of the 'White Island' is the Eternal Divine Abode of Sree Chaitanya Who is identical with Sree Krishna and presents the Divinity's Own Benevolent Nature dominating over all other Divine Qualities.

The Lord Sree Krishna-Chaitanya dwells in the White Island, as does Krishnachandra in *Braja*, with all His elders, kindred, associates and complete entourage. When Sree Chaitanya deigns

to come down into this world, He comes in His Fullness, with all His elders, associates, servitors and realm. His advent is, therefore, preceded by the appearance of His elders. All these are a part and parcel of Himself and are in fact the extension of His own Divine Self. It is by their reciprocal means that the Lord manifests His own Full Personality. What the Lord is in His super-manifest Nature cannot and need not be known to any one except Himself. Others need know the Lord only to the fullest extent and in the fullest manner in which He chooses to manifest Himself to them individually. By the manifestation of Godhead to the individual soul, the latter is fully satisfied and, as a matter of fact, such an individual does not desire, nor does he think it necessary to know anything more, not merely for the time being but for all time.

The *jīva* to whom Godhead reveals Himself sees the same Divine manifestation everywhere and always, in His infinity of aspects. His cherished Divinity is to him verily an endless Ocean of perfect and exquisite bliss, free from every species of unwholesomeness, imperatively requiring his perennial loving service by His perpetual manifestations. The appearance of the Lord is for the purpose of making His devotees happy by affording them the Sight of Himself. The establishment of religion and the destruction of demons who appear as the enemies of Godhead do not require the Personal Appearance of Supreme Godhead Sree Krishna Himself. These functions can be, and as a matter of fact are ordinarily, performed by the Vishnu Avatāras, or sometimes even by the favoured among the pure *jīvas*, by His command. The establishment of the *samkīrtana* of Krishna, which is the Divine Dispensation of this *Kali* Age, is effected by the *Avatāra* for the Age, and it would not be necessary for Godhead to come down into this world for this purpose alone.

But there is a function which cannot be delegated, *viz.*, that of pleasing the devotees. *Love* for Himself can neither be conferred nor be satisfied by anything short of Himself. It was for the purpose of bestowing, on fallen *jīvas*, love for Himself in the perfect form that is found only in Goloka, that Sree Krishna, wearing the devotional mood and grace of Sree Rādhikā, appeared in this world in His Eternal Identical Form of Sree Krishna-

Chaitanya, with all His associates, elders and servitors eternally manifest in the 'White Island', the realm of Krishna's boundless and causeless Mercy.

In *Braja* Sree Rādhikā sets the model for the highest service of Krishna. In the 'White Island' it is Sree Krishna Himself Who performs the function of teaching all individual souls how Sree Rādhikā serves Sree Krishna in *Braja*, by putting on Sree Rādhikā's grace and devotion in order to enable Himself to serve Sree Krishna after the manner of Sree Rādhikā in Her highest Mood, *viz.*, during Her separation from Sree Krishna. The service that is rendered by Sree Rādhikā manifests itself in this world in *Braja* at the close of the *Dvāpara* Age. But in its direct manifestation it is not at all understood by mortals. It is only the Lord Himself Who can bestow this perfect loving devotion to Himself even on souls that are averse to Him on principle and thereby enable them to realise the true meaning of such pure devotion.

This explanation of the *real* purpose of the advent of Sree Chaitanya is fully corroborated by the Scriptures and by the Activities of Sree Chaitanya Himself. When Godhead Himself appears in this world, all His Secondary Manifestations automatically merge in Him. It was in this wise that there were born among men, by the command of Godhead, in advance of His own Appearance, the kindreds, associates and servitors of the Lord.

Sree Ananta, Siva, Brahmā, the Rishis and all the relations and associates of every Divine *Avatāra* were born as Vaishnavas. Krishna alone knows all who were born and their prototypes. Some of them appeared in Nabadwip, some in *Chattagrām*, *Srihatta*, some were born in *Rāhr*, in *Odra*, and the West. The devotees descending into this world from their transcendental realm appeared in various places, and, coming up subsequently to Nabadwip, were there joined together around the Person of the Lord. All the Vaishnavas were born in Nabadwip, except a few who appeared elsewhere.

The Elders who were first to appear were Sree Sachi, Sree Jagannāth, Sree Mādhendra Puri, Sree Keshava Bhārati, Sree Isvara Puri, Sree Advaita Āchāryya, Sree Sribās Pandit, Sree Chandrasekhar Āchāryya, Sree Pundarik Vidyānidhi, Sree Thākur Haridās, Sree Upendra Misra, father of Sree Jagannāth Misra,

with his seven sons, Sree Nilāmbar Chakravarti, father of Sree Sachi Devi, Sree Sree Prabhu Nityānanda, Sree Gangādās Pandit, Sree Murāri Gupta, Sree Mukunda and others.

Our records show that a certain Brāhmana of Western India, bearing the name of Sree Madhukar Misra, a devotee of Sree Sree Nārāyana, for some unknown reason, came to Sylhet and settled there. Sree Upendra Misra was the second son of Sree Madhukar Misra. Sree Upendra Misra was a Vaishnava, a great scholar, wealthy and possessed of an abundance of good qualities. Sree Upendra Misra was the father of seven sons,—(1) Kamsāri, (2) Paramānanda, (3) Jagannāth, (4) Sarbeswar, (5) Padmanābh, (6) Janārdan, and (7) Trilokanāth. Sree Jagannāth Misra, one of the seven sons of Sree Upendra Misra, migrated from Sylhet to Nabadwip, the emporium of all learning of the Age. The title of Sree Jagannāth Misra, earned by his *shāstric* scholarship, was *Purandara*.

At Nabadwip Sree Purandara Misra espoused Sree Sachi Devi, the eldest daughter of Sree Nilāmbar Chakravarti. With the intention of dwelling in the neighbourhood of the sacred stream of the *Bhāgirathi*, that has issued from the Feet of Vishnu, in the company of high-born Sree Sachi Devi, who was the embodiment of devotion to Vishnu, pure-hearted magnanimous Purandara Misra settled in Sree Māyāpur in the central 'Island' of the City of Nine Islands.

Sree Chandrasekhar Āchāryya was the maternal uncle (mother's sister's husband) of Sree Chaitanya. Sree Murāri Gupta, the author of *Sree Chaitanya Charit*, belonging to a Vaidya family of Sylhet, had migrated to Nabadwip. He was senior in years to Sree Chaitanya. Sree Pundarik Vidyānidhi, also known as 'Premanidhi' and 'Āchāryyanidhi,' had his paternal home in the village of Mekhalā about fourteen miles to the north of the town of Chittagong, where his sacred 'seat' still exists. His partner's name was Ratnāvati. His father was Vāneswar (or Suklāmbar) Bhatta and his mother's name was Gangā Devi. He was the disciple of Sree Mādhabendra Purī and was himself accepted as his *Guru* by Sree Gadādhara Pandit Goswāmi. Sree Chaitanya called Pundarik Vidyānidhi 'father' and bestowed on him the name of 'Premanidhi' indicative of servitorship of Godhead. Sribās and his younger

brother Sree Rāma left their home at Sree Māyāpur and removed to Kumārhatta after Sree Chaitanya's renunciation of the world.

Sree Nityānanda Prabhu, the Associated Facsimile of Sree Chaitanya, made His appearance in the village of Ekchākā in the country of *Rāhr*, not far from Mollārpur station of the E.I. Railway, within the modern district of Birbhum. Hāḍāi Pandit or Hāḍāi Ojha, the father of Nityānanda, was a good Brāhmana from Mithilā, resembling Vasudeva in the immaculate purity of his nature. The name of the wife of Hāḍāi Pandit was Padmāvati. Nityānanda made His appearance in this world on the *tithi* which is ever hallowed by His birth, that corresponds to the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Māgh*. As a child, Nityānanda startled all the neighbours by being constantly occupied in the company of His associates in rehearsing the events of the *Avatāras* of Vishnu. The details of these childish pastimes have been reverentially preserved. Their nature may be briefly indicated.

He made His playmates form themselves into *the assembly of gods*. One of the boys, representing the Earth, having complained to it of her unbearable sufferings under the crushing weight of iniquities, those children who acted as members of the assembly of gods repaired to the bank of the adjoining river and there prayed to the Lord Who rests in the Ocean of Milk. One of the boys, hid behind the tree, gives this reply of Godhead to their prayer, 'I will soon be born in the Home of Vasudeva at Mathura'. Sometimes personating the Divine *Avatāra* of the Dwarf, Nityānanda affected to deliver Bali. On another occasion He would fall into a swoon acting the part of Lakshmana in the *Leela* of Godhead's *Avatāra* as Sree Rāmachandra hit by the powerful dart of Indrajit. Then one of the boys, acting the part of Hanumān, hastened to procure the required curative herb from the Gandhamādana Mount and by that means effected His recovery. Such pastimes of the little Boy amazed all beholders who could not account for this extraordinary conduct of the little Child. Twelve years were passed in these pleasant activities under the roof of His parents.

Nityānanda set out on His long travels to all places of pilgrimage at the age of twelve. The incident that immediately led to

this long pilgrimage is thus stated. A certain *sannyāsin* became a chance-guest at the house of Hāḍāi Pandit. He begged of Hāḍāi Pandit to give Nityānanda to him; and, in order not to transgress against the rule laid down by the *Shāstras*, Hāḍāi Pandit found himself obliged, against his own wish, to hand to the *sannyāsin* the Darling of his heart Who was much more to him than even his own life. The grief of the parents, in being thus parted for good from their Child of twelve, knew no bounds. The nature of the renunciation of the world for the sake of Godhead must on no account be confounded with renunciation for any other purpose, which latter is an unpardonable and clear dereliction of one's duty. The renunciation exhibited by Godhead and His devotees redounds to the good of the whole world, and, most of all, of those very persons who appear, to the superficial observer, to be the greatest sufferers by their abandonment.

Lord Nityānanda, after thus leaving His parental home, travelled to all the *tirthas* in company of the *sannyāsin*, till the twentieth year of His age. The places He thus visited include Bakreswar, Vaidyanāth, Gayā, Kāsi, Prayāg, Mathurā, Brindābana, Hastināpur, Dwārakā, Siddhapura, Matsyatirtha, Siva-Kānchi, Vishnu-Kānchi, Kurukshetra, Bindu Sarobar, Pravāsa, Sudarsan-tirtha, Tritakup, Vishāla, Brahmatirtha, Chakratirtha, Prati-Srotā, Naimishāranya, Ayodhyā, Srīngaharpur, Kausiki, Pulastāsrama, Gomati, Gandaki, Mahendra-giri, Haridwār, Godāvāri, Benvā-tirtha, Sree Parbata, Sree Ranganātha, Hari-kshetra, Rishabha-Parbata, Kritamālā, Mādurā, Tāmraparni, Malayaparbata, Badari-kāsrama, Gokarna, Surpāraka, Kanyakānagara, Nirbindhā and all the countless holy sites. He journeyed to all those places in order to sanctify them by His visit.

At the conclusion of this long pilgrimage Nityānanda enacted the *Leela* of obtaining the only reward of pilgrimage in the shape of attainment of the privilege of the companionship of the true devotee, in as much as He now joined Sree Mādhhabendra Puri, 'the first shoot of the Purpose-Tree of Loving Devotion', from whom He accepted His initiation into spiritual life (or, according to some, He accepted His initiation from Sree Lakshmiapati, the Guru of Sree Mādhhabendra Puri). The meeting with His Guru is thus

described by Sree Ghanasyam Thākur, the writer of *Bhakti-Ratnākar*: 'Lakshmiapati, so famous in the school of Madhva, the owner of all good qualities, most dear to the Lord of Sree Lakshmi Devi, partook of his meal obtained by begging, interspersed with Krishna-talk, at the house of that Brāhmana. Nityānanda in the Form of Balarāma showed Himself to Lakshmiapati under the guise of a dream: 'A certain Brāhmana boy has come to this village in the garb of a *super-ascetic*; He will be your disciple; make Him your disciple by means of this *mantram*, and He spoke the *mantram* into his ear.' Nityānanda on meeting him repeatedly said to the *sannyāsin*: 'Do thou deliver Me by initiation by the *mantram*.' After initiation Nityānanda was given the Brahmachāri's name of 'Svarup' and has accordingly been sometimes called 'Nityānanda-Svarup' both by Sree Brindābandās Thākur as well as by Srila Kavirāj Goswāmi. Sree Nityānanda subsequently made His way to Nabadwip where He joined Sree Chaitanya.

Thākur Haridās made his appearance in this world in about the year 1451 A.D. (1372 Sh.), thirty-five years before the Advent of Sree Chaitanya, in the village of *Budhan* in the district of Jessore. He came of a Muhammedan family and in some manner, of which we do not possess any trustworthy record, obtained very early in life the mercy of a Vaishnava who initiated him into the religion of all souls. He, thereupon, left his parent's house and his kin, and came to Benāpole where he made a small hut and lived therein. His method of worship consisted in repeating, constantly and with a loud voice, the holy *mahā-mantram* of the sixteen Names of Godhead. He recited the *mahā-mantram* three *lakhs* of times every day. For this purpose he cut himself off completely from every form of worldly association. It was not long, however, before his practice found a malicious opponent in a local landholder of a most villainous character, of the name of Rāmchandra Khān. Rāmchandra Khān was as foolish as he was wicked and was incited to adopt the infamous method, described below, by the representations of a fanatical section of the Hindu residents of the locality who felt themselves scandalised by a Muhammedan presuming to adopt their language in taking the name of Godhead in the manner that

could pierce even the ear-holes of such a great personage as Rāmchandra Khān!!

Rāmchandra Khān did not believe that a person in the full bloom of early youth could have really no attachment for woman. He accordingly deputed a shameless harlot of great beauty, whom he subsidised for the purpose, to employ her seductive arts to compass the ruin of the young devotee.

This abandoned woman continued to offer herself regularly at the solitary hut of devotion of Thākur Haridās for three successive nights. She was kept waiting for the whole night by Thākur Haridās by the assurance that he would attend to her request after the utterance of the quota of the Names that he was under obligation to take daily, was completed. Towards the close of the third night that harlot, whose mind had been completely changed by listening to the Holy Name of Godhead from the lips of the great saint who was so completely unmindful of those irresistible charms of a young woman that are the cause of ruin of so many so-called Rishis of all ages and conditions, fell prostrate at the feet of Thākur Haridās and, with a contrite and chastened heart, implored him to enable her to worship Godhead in the pure manner that he himself did. The woman opened her heart frankly to Thākur Haridās and told him all about the infernal conspiracy and also of her own past life which had been utterly sinful.

Haridās said to her that she was fit to take the Holy Name of Godhead, and he accordingly initiated her into the life of the pure service of Krishna. Haridās then advised her to give away all her treasure to the pious Brāhmanas and devote herself to the worship of Krishna by constantly uttering His Name, living apart from all other people in the solitary hut which he had built for his own worship. Thereupon, bestowing his own hut on that woman, Thākur Haridās left Benāpole for good. That harlot became thenceforward a most renowned devotee of Krishna.

From Benāpole Thākur Haridās proceeded to Chandpur eastward of Saptagrāma, the residence of the father of the future Raghunāthdās Goswāmi who was at this time a little boy. The name of Raghunāth's father was Gobardhan Mazumdār. Hiranya was the elder brother of Gobardhan. They were employed under Sultan Hussain Shah to collect the revenues of Saptagrāma, which

totalled twenty *lakhs* of rupees of which twelve had to be remitted to the Royal Treasury, the collectors being entitled to retain for themselves the balance of eight *lakhs*. They were consequently among the richest persons of that time. Thākur Haridās put up with Balarām Āchāryya of Chāndpur who was the priest of Hiranya and Gobardhan. The boy Raghunāth Dās frequently visited Thākur Haridās. This was the cause of his obtaining the mercy of Sree Chaitanya later on.

At the request of Balarām Āchāryya, Thākur Haridās once presented himself at the gathering of Brāhmanas in the halls of Hiranya and Gobardhan who were patrons of Brāhmanas and pious persons. The Thākur was well received by both brothers. Presently, evidently in view of the practice of the Thākur, the assembly began to praise the taking of the Holy Name, some maintaining that the Name destroys sin, others contending that the Name confers deliverance from the bondage of the world. Thākur Haridās said that those secondary results are effected by the *dim reflection* of the Name. The effect of the Name Himself is to arouse love to the Feet of Krishna. *Emancipation* is the *trivial effect* of the *dim reflection* of the Name.

A Brāhmana by the name of Gopāl Chakravarti, who was employed by Hiranya Mazumdār in connection with the remittance of revenues to Gauḍa and who happened to be present, felt greatly chagrined to hear these statements of Thākur Haridās and asked the assembly not to be led away by the ridiculous effusions of an impostor, acting the part of a *sādhu* to deceive ignorant people, by endorsing the view that *emancipation*, which is not attainable in *crores* of births on the path of knowledge of the *Brahman*, is gained by the *mere dim glow* of the Name. This, he said, was impossible and intolerable.

When Thākur Haridās, with great calmness, quoted the Scriptures to show that emancipation, resulting from the *dim glow* of the Name, is trivial and is not accepted by devotees even when it becomes available to them, the Brāhmana's anger was so much inflamed by this exhibition of firmness that he shouted to Thākur Haridās that if he failed to prove from the Scriptures that emancipation results from the *dim glow* of the Name, was he prepared to have his nose cut off? The Thākur intimated his readiness to

submit to the bet proposed, whereupon all the assembled people and especially Balarām Āchāryya strongly condemned the outrageous conduct of Gopāl, and all of them, including Hiranya and Gobardhan, begged the forgiveness of the Thākūr for the insult that had been openly offered to him in their presence. Thākūr Haridās observed that Gopāl's anger was due to his ignorance of the Scriptures and he was, therefore, not to blame; and saying this, he left the place, resuming the loud chant of the Name of Krishna. It is recorded that for this offence Gopāl Chakravarti was afflicted with the worst form of leprosy in the course of three days and his nose fell off in consequence, and that although the Thākūr so readily forgave him, his offence was not pardoned by Godhead.

From Chāndpur Thākūr Haridās made his way to Sāntipur and presented himself at the house of Sree Advaita Āchāryya. The latter was very much encouraged by the appearance of Haridās and provided him with a suitable place for his devotional practices by finding out a cave in a retired part of the bank of the Ganges.

Thākūr Haridās lived in this cell and had his daily meal at the house of Advaita with whom he would talk about Krishna. Haridās expressed his fear that the conduct of Advaita in feeding him daily with the most unreserved hospitality might bring social troubles to him, he being a Muhammedan by birth. Sree Advaita Āchāryya, in answer to this, formally offered to Thākūr Haridās the meal cooked for the occasion of the anniversary of the *srāddha* ceremony of his departed father, that had to be given to the Brāhmanas according to custom, with the remark that 'by feeding you, *crores* of Brāhmanas are truly fed'.

It is said that the Thākūr was tempted a second time by a woman while he was staying at the cave at Sāntipur, and that this time the woman was no less than *Māyā* herself, the deluding power of Godhead, whose solicitations, which no *jīva*, from Brāhma downwards, can resist, produced on Haridās the only effect of increasing still further his ardent devotion to the Feet of Krishna. *Māyādevi* sought and obtained the gift of the Name of Krishna from Thākūr Haridās in lieu of her efforts to test the sincerity of the devotion of Haridās.

From Sāntipur Thākūr Haridās made his way to the village of *Fuliā* which was the residence of a strong community of Brāhmanas. *Fuliā* is situated three miles to the east of Sāntipur. Thākūr Haridās lived here in a cell on the bank of the *Bhāgirathi* as at Sāntipur and chanted aloud the *mahā-mantram* of the sixteen Names of Godhead three *lakhs* of times every day. The Muhammedans who lived in the neighbourhood were incited by the Brāhmanas of *Fuliā* to complain to the Kāzi about the behaviour of Haridās, which, they pointed out, was bound to produce a most undesirable effect on the *prestige* of the Muhammedan community and religion.

The Kāzi took this seriously and had Haridās brought to the presence of the Governor for trial. He was at first treated with great respect and allowed to visit the prison as he desired to converse with the prisoners. The prisoners, who did not expect in their midst a saint who was treated with respect by the keepers, thought he might obtain their release from captivity. They accordingly pressed round him and begged him to intercede with the Governor for their liberation. The Thākūr in reply *congratulated* them on their captivity and wished that their state of bondage might be prolonged. This filled the prisoners with dismay.

Haridās hastened to remove their mistake by explaining what he meant. He said that they were forcibly kept away from the pursuit of worldly objects in their state of captivity. This gave them a respite for the worship of Godhead. Because Godhead cannot be worshipped when one's mind is engrossed in the affairs of this world. They should avail themselves of this opportunity, so mercifully placed in their way, of turning their thoughts to Godhead; so that, having acquired the taste for such life, even after they were set free, they might continue to serve Godhead in the midst of the various temptations of the world. He did not really desire the prolongation of their state of captivity in the ordinary sense.

When Thākūr Haridās was produced before the Governor for his trial, he was offered a good seat in the court and the Governor pleaded, with every appearance of sincere good will, that he should revert to his own society, its customs and religion. Thākūr

Haridās replied: 'A man follows the path that appears to him to be the best. This is the dispensation of Providence. Under this law a man born in a high Brāhmana family sometimes embraces the Muhammedan religion. And although he was born in a Muhammedan family, God has been merciful to him and has shown him the path of the highest good. This path he intends to follow. If such conduct appears to the Governor to be deserving of punishment, he is prepared to undergo any consequences that it may involve.'

The Governor then began to revile Vishnu and threatened to punish Thākur Haridās with severe whipping till he would be forced to give up the heinous course. Thākur Haridās simply replied: 'Even if he is actually cut to pieces he would never for a moment cease to utter the Name of Hari with his mouth.'

The Governor, at the instance of the Kāzi, now carried out his threat by ordering Thākur Haridās to be whipped in twenty-two market-places of Āmuā *Mulk*. This barbarous order was duly executed. When Thākur Haridās appeared to be dead, the ruffians who had been employed to cudgel him, tried to throw his body into the Ganges. It is said that they failed to lift the body with all their efforts. This frightened the Governor and his aiders and abettors in this horrible sin.

The Governor now spoke kind words to Haridās. He was convinced that Haridās was a real *Pir* (holy man) and not a cheat as he had taken him to be. He was sorry for what he had done and even begged his forgiveness. He then ordered his men to liberate Haridās and assured him of immunity from all further molestation on his part, desiring him to do as he liked. Thākur Haridās returned to his cell at *Fuliā*, undaunted by this terrible proof of the implacable vindictiveness of his opponents.

On another day a snake-charmer was giving a display of his art at the house of a wealthy resident of *Fuliā* to the accompaniment of dance and music. Thākur Haridās happened to arrive on the spot and taking his stand on one side watched the performance which was a representation of a Feat of Sree Krishna, *viz.*, the quelling of the serpent Kāliya.

Overpowered by the associations awakened in him by the sacred theme, Thākur Haridās fainted away, and, when he was helped to regain his consciousness, himself joined in the dance, exhibiting all the external signs of the eight *sātvika* perturbations. The snake-charmer stopped his performance, and, with palms joined in the attitude of reverence standing motionless on one side, gazed with awe on the devotional activities of Thākur. This mood of Haridās was, however, soon over; and, after he had stopped, the snake-charmer resumed his musical performance. Those present were so moved by the occurrence that they devoutly took the dust of the feet of Thākur.

A Brāhmana, who happened to be in the crowd and had watched the whole affair, thought of acquiring a cheap reputation for sanctity by imitating the *sātvika* perturbations of Haridās that he had witnessed. He accordingly affected to swoon away and forthwith began to sing, dance, laugh and shiver, in imitation of Thākur Haridās.

The snake-charmer now behaved in a most strange manner. He, who had been so quiet and respectful towards Thākur Haridās, suddenly fell upon the unlucky Brāhmana with great fury and began to belabour him, with a cudgel that he snatched from one of his men, in a most merciless fashion. That Brāhmana, unable to bear the severe thrashing, took to his heels in a very short time. On being asked by the spectators the reason of his strange and violent conduct towards the Brāhmana, the snake-charmer replied that he had beat the Brāhmana, because by his hypocritical exhibitions he was trying to bring into contempt the conduct of the revered Thākur Haridās.

Another Brāhmana of *Fuliā* opposed the practice of chanting loudly the Name of Hari by Haridās on the ground that it was against the Scriptures. He denied that Haridās, who was born of a Muhammedan family, had any right to dabble in the philosophy and religion of the Hindus; that this very fact of a Muhammedan posing as a teacher of the Scriptures of the Hindus, portended the appearance, long before its appointed time, of the worst period of the Age of evil. 'This impostor has the effrontery of procuring the best food by begging from door to door, presuming

to teach the *Shāstras* to respectable people! If his explanation regarding chanting of the Name of Hari *with a loud voice*, is not found in the Scriptures, his nose ought to be cut off.' Accosted by the infuriated Brāhmana in the above fashion Thākur Haridās with a smile left the place to chant loudly the Name of Hari. That Brāhmana also met with the condign punishment of his offence by being smitten with the small-pox in the course of a few days, that cost him his nose.

Thākur Haridās now made his way to Nabadwip and there joined the congregation of the small group of Vaishnavas that was gradually forming round the figures of Sree Advaita Āchāryya, who had settled there as a teacher with his own Academy (*tol*) and Sribās Pandit who lived close to the Academy of Sree Advaita Āchāryya. At this time Thākur Haridās constantly travelled to different parts of the country with the object of preaching the *kirtana* of Hari to the people. Shortly after his arrival at Nabadwip, he joined Sree Chaitanya as one of His most devoted associates.

Sree Advaita Āchāryya, who was the acknowledged leader of the small Vaishnava community of Nabadwip at the time of the Appearance of Sree Chaitanya, was a person of vast erudition, possessed of great wealth and occupied a position of the highest respect in the society of Nabadwip. He appears to have been originally a native of the village of Nabagrām in some as yet unidentified part of Bengal. He subsequently settled at Sāntipur, whither he had come in course of a pilgrimage that he had undertaken after the departure of his parents from this world. At Sāntipur he married Sree Sitā Devi. Sree Advaita Āchāryya met Thākur Haridās for the first time at Sāntipur where he offered him the meal on the occasion of the annual funeral ceremony of his departed father, instead of giving the same to the Brāhmanas by seminal birth as is the custom of the *smārtas*.

Advaita built a small house at Nabadwip where he set up his Academy (*tol*) in which he taught different branches of the *Shāstras*. Advaita Āchāryya soon acquired the reputation of being one of the most eminent Professors of Nabadwip who upheld in all his teachings the pre-eminence of the principle of unalloyed devotion to Krishna, which he conclusively established by the

evidence of the whole body of the Scriptures. This marked him out from among the host of the other Brāhmanas who also taught the Scriptures at Nabadwip.

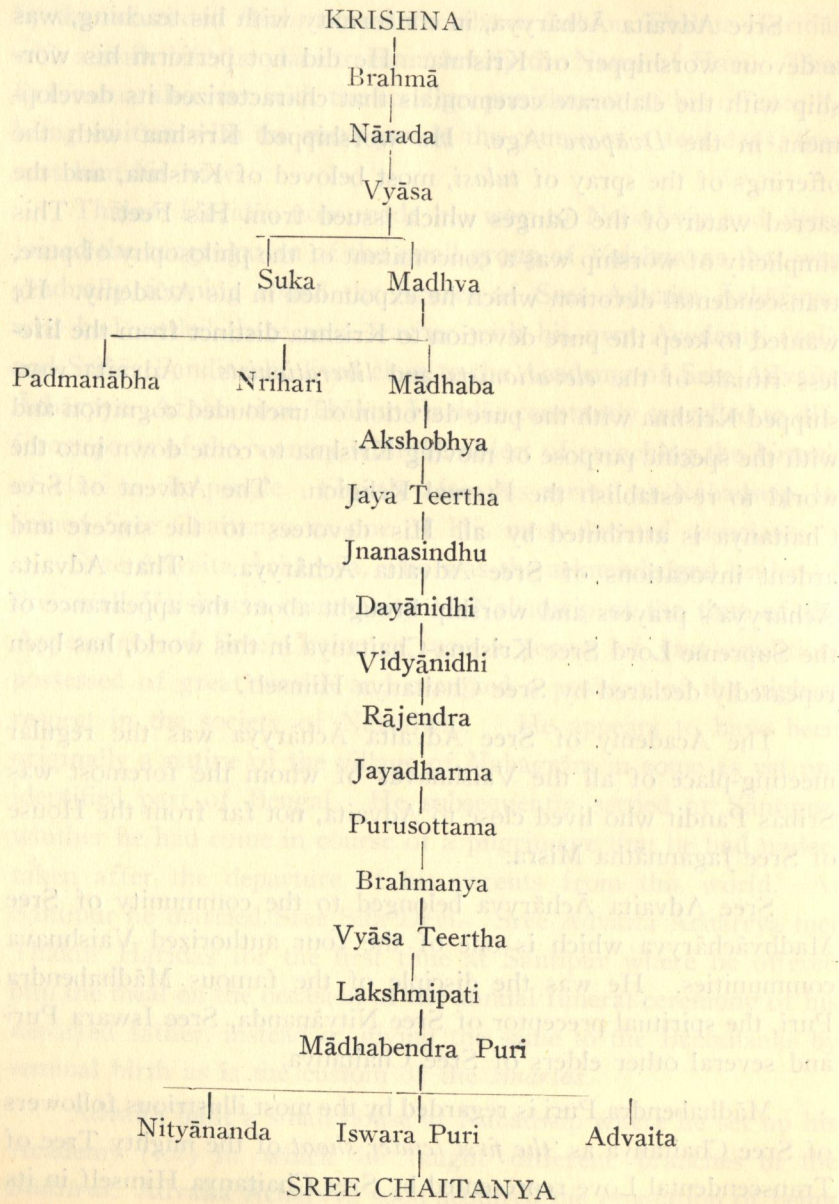
Sree Advaita Āchāryya, in conformity with his teaching, was a devout worshipper of Krishna. He did not perform his worship with the elaborate ceremonials that characterized its development in the *Dvāpara* Age. He worshipped Krishna with the offerings of the spray of *tulasi*, most beloved of Krishna, and the sacred water of the Ganges which issued from His Feet. This simplicity of worship was a concomitant of the philosophy of pure, transcendental devotion which he expounded in his Academy. He wanted to keep the pure devotion to Krishna distinct from the lifeless rituals of the *elevationists* and *liberationists*. Advaita worshipped Krishna with the pure devotion of unclouded cognition and with the specific purpose of moving Krishna to come down into the world to re-establish the Eternal Religion. The Advent of Sree Chaitanya is attributed by all His devotees to the sincere and ardent invocations of Sree Advaita Āchāryya. That Advaita Āchāryya's prayers and worship brought about the appearance of the Supreme Lord Sree Krishna-Chaitanya in this world, has been repeatedly declared by Sree Chaitanya Himself.

The Academy of Sree Advaita Āchāryya was the regular meeting-place of all the Vaishnavas of whom the foremost was Sribās Pandit who lived close to Advaita, not far from the House of Sree Jagannātha Misra.

Sree Advaita Āchāryya belonged to the community of Sree Madhvāchāryya which is one of the four authorized Vaishnava communities. He was the disciple of the famous Mādhhabendra Puri, the spiritual preceptor of Sree Nityānanda, Sree Iswara Puri and several other elders of Sree Chaitanya.

Mādhhabendra Puri is regarded by the most illustrious followers of Sree Chaitanya as 'the first tender shoot of the mighty Tree of Transcendental Love represented by Sree Chaitanya Himself in its full growth'. There is to be found no trace of the amorous love for Krishna in the School of Madhva prior to Mādhhabendra Puri. The disciplic succession of the followers of Sree Chaitanya, through

Mādhbendra Puri, is to be found in *Sree Gauraganoddesa*, *Sree Prameyaratnāvali*, the works of Sree Gopālguru Goswāmi, and also in the *Bhaktiratnākara*. The line of succession is as follows:—



We reserve the detailed discussion of the esoteric implication of the spiritual disciplic succession for a future chapter in connection with the doctrine of Sree Chaitanya.

The following particulars regarding Sree Mādhbendra Puri are found in *Sree Chaitanyacharitāmrita*. He went, unattended by any other person, to Sree Brindāvana. On his arrival there, as he was seated under a tree on the bank of the pool (*kunda*) of Govinda, Sree Krishna appeared to Mādhbendra as a cow-boy under the guise of offering him milk for appeasing his hunger. Led by a dream Mādhbendra then installed the Divine Form of Gopāla on the Gobardhana Mount. His sojourn to Puri to fetch camphor and sandal for Gopāla and the episode of *Kshira-chorā Gopināth* will be described later. At Mathurā Mādhbendra Puri accepted the alms of cooked food from a *sanoriā* Brāhmana, whose touched water is not accepted by high class *Smārtas*, in violation of the *smārta* practice which errs by applying *caste rules* to the devotee of Godhead and its notions of ceremonial cleanliness to food accepted by Krishna (*māhā-prasād*).

Mādhbendra Puri rebuked Rāmchandra Puri for his disrespect to himself, his spiritual preceptor, and blessed Iswara Puri for his whole-hearted devotion to preceptor by expressing the hope that he might attain to love for Krishna. Sree Mādhbendra Puri's utterance at his disappearance is cherished by all pure devotees. It runs thus: 'Thou Lord, Who art ever melted to kindness towards the humble, when wilt Thou, O Lord of Mathurā, be seen by me? My heart, Dearest, sad for not beholding Thee, grows delirious. Oh! What shall I do now?'

Sree Iswara Puri came of a Brāhmana family belonging to the village of Kumārahatta (near Hālīshahar Station of the E. B. Railway) and was the most beloved disciple of Sree Mādhbendra Puri. Sree Mādhbendra Puri, being satisfied with his devotion, blessed him saying, 'May you attain loving devotion for Krishna.' Sree Chaitanya did him the favour of receiving initiation in the ten-lettered mantra from him at Gayā. Govinda and Kāshiswara Brahmachāri, disciples of Sree Iswara Puri, joined Sree Chaitanya at Puri on the disappearance of Sree Iswara Puri.

The attitude, which the reader is expected to take up towards the associates of Sree Chaitanya, is put tersely in the opening verse of *Sree Chaitanyacharitāmrita*. "Sree Krishna-Chaitanya is Godhead Himself as is indicated by His Name Who means the

Self-conscious Principle, Krishna. Godhead sports in six Divine Forms, *viz.*, as (1) Krishna, (2) the Two Preceptors, (3) the Devotees, (4) the *Avatāras*, (5) the Manifestations, and (6) the Powers. In other words, the Spiritual Preceptors *are* Chaitanya-deva; the devotees such as Sribās, etc., *are* also Chaitanyadeva; the *Avatāras are* Chaitanyadeva; and the Powers *are* also Chaitanya-deva Who is himself Krishna's Own Cognitive Self, the Subjective Divine Personality Whose Essence is Pure Cognition. We shall discuss these truths in greater detail in the succeeding chapters.

I have tried briefly to put before the reader some of those considerations the substantive truth of which has to be realised by the disciple in order to be fit for studying profitably the holy narrative of the career of Sree Chaitanya.

I cannot do better than conclude this chapter with the cautious words of Thākura Brindābandās, 'Know for certain that the Activities of Chaitanyachandra, by listening to which the heart is purified, manifest themselves only by the grace of the devotees of Godhead. Who can know the Deeds of Chaitanya that are the hidden secret of the Vedas? I write only what I have heard from the lips of the devotees. I make my obeisance at the feet of all the Vaishnavas. May there be no offence committed by me by such attempt.'

CHAPTER III

BIRTH AND INFANCY

WHY Krishna comes into this world is known only to Himself. The invocation of the Lord by Sree Advaita Āchāryya is stated by devotees as the cause of the Advent of Sree Chaitanya. The spiritual Academy of Advaita was the gathering-place of all the Vaishnavas of Nabadwip. There they met daily and spent a greater part of their time in holy discourses about Krishna. They were regarded as a peculiar group whose ways and words appeared alike singular and distasteful to the people in the midst of whom they found themselves placed by Providence. This small group of devotees felt keenly for the miseries that their worldly-minded brethren brought upon themselves by their attachment to interests other than Krishna. They tried to instruct them about Krishna. But this only served to increase all the more their aversion to Krishna and His devotees.

It was this apparently hopeless state of affairs that led Advaita to the conclusion that the universal and stubborn godlessness that prevailed everywhere could only be relieved by Krishna-chandra Himself. Advaita believed in the efficacy of prayer that is offered by one who knows nothing except Godhead. He believed that the intolerable anguish, of those sincere devotees who daily gathered under his roof, caused by the extreme misery of the worldly people due to their bitter aversion to Krishna, must appeal to the Lord and have power to draw Him in no long time from His Eternal Seat of Goloka into this world, for the consolation of His own beloved ones. Advaita, who was well versed in the Scriptures, noticed all these favourable indications. He was so convinced of the impending Appearance of Krishna that in his prayers he began to call upon Him most ardently night and day to save the world by His speedy Appearance.