



SPECIAL SECTION

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura (1838–1914)

In honor of the anniversary of the passing of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, which coincides with this issue of *Back to Godhead* (June 21), we present this special section on his life and teachings and the discovery of his family's deities, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava.



Praise for the

An appreciation of the gifts of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

This is a translation of part of a speech delivered on September 2, 1993, the 155th anniversary of the birth of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. On that day a public meeting was held at the Dinabandhu Sahoo Law College, Kendrapara, Orissa, to glorify Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, whose portrait was installed in honor of his being the first law graduate of Orissa.

*namo bhaktivinodāya
sac-cid-ānanda-nāmine
gaura-śakti-svarūpāya
rūpānuga-varāya te*

“I bow down to Śrī Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who is the embodiment of the energy of Śrī Gaura-sundara [Caitanya Mahāprabhu] and a great sadhu in the line of the followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhuṣāda.”

ŚRĪ Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was born with the name Śrī Kedarnath Dutta on September 2, 1838. He appeared in the village of Ula, in the district of Nadia, West Bengal, which was his maternal uncle's home. But the house of his forefathers is in the village of Choti in the Kendrapara District of Orissa. Choti is the *śripāt*, the native place of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and he resided here.

Having been decorated with the dust of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's lotus feet, this is a very sacred place. But most people have not known about it. This place is now coming to everyone's notice because of the blessings of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Getting the strength of that blessing, the research scholar Dr. Fakir Mohan Das has been working to reveal this place to the



Highest Mercy

by Śrīla Gour Govinda Swami

world. Without such blessings, no one can do this work. Śrīpāda Fakir Mohan Das may face much opposition, but after resisting this opposition strongly, he will surely establish the real truth.

BEST WELFARE WORK

What is the best welfare work for the world? Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda has expressed the following in his monthly journal *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*:

Showing kindness, *dayā*, to living entities can be divided into three categories:

Deha-sambandhini-dayā means showing kindness to the material body of the living entity through *sat-karma*, auspicious deeds. Giving food to a hungry person, supplying medicine to a patient, giving water to a thirsty person, and supplying winter clothes to a poor person suffering from the cold are acts of kindness to the material body.

Manah-sambandhini-dayā means showing kindness to the mind by giving knowledge.

Ātma-sambandhini-dayā means showing kindness to the soul, and it is the best *dayā* of all. By such kindness one attempts to save a person from all worldly sufferings by giving him devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Some persons consider acts of kindness to the body to be very auspicious. Others, who are learned persons, emphasize acts of kind-



ness to the mind. But pure devotees of the Lord act for the eternal welfare of the living entities by preaching devotion.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura exhibited the topmost type of kindness or welfare work, but how many people understand it? How many people glorify the qualities of such Vaiṣṇava sadhus and *mahājanas* [great persons]? Even learned persons do not understand the work of the Vaiṣṇavas.

We see that those who have done or are doing something for the welfare of the body or mind are highly glorified. But who is speaking the glories of those doing welfare work for the soul? How many people have spiritual knowledge? How many people realize the soul? How many people have the vision to see the soul? The *sādhumahājanas* have dedicated their whole lives for doing welfare work for the soul. By their blessings, spiritual vision has been received by many persons. Who knows and glorifies these sadhus and *mahājanas*? In this material world, no one speaks about their great works and efforts.

MIGHTY PEN

Śrīla Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda left this world on June 23, 1914. He dedicated his whole life to preaching Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism [devotional service in the line of Lord Caitanya] and spiritualism, or *bhāgavat-dharma* [eternal service to God]. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said, *yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata*: Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself descends along with His followers to reestablish the principles of religion. Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda is the embodiment of this verse. In this age of skepticism and fruitless nihilism, he exercised his mighty pen to reestablish *sanātana-dharma*, eternal religion. Inspired by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas [spiritual masters], he wrote book after book, refuting materialistic views based on nihilism and atheism. By speaking on the eternal *Vedas*, on civilization and education, he enlightened many conditioned souls who had forgotten their real spiritual identity.

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edge there is no means to bring the living entities, who are oppositely attracted, towards *para-tattva*, the Supreme Truth. Gauḍīya gurus such as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sānatana Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī did the work of spiritual masters by analyzing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and commentaries on it. The *Bhāgavatam* is the essence of the eternal Vedic sound and the mature fruit of the desire tree of the Vedic literature. Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda nicely strung together the teachings of these Gauḍīya gurus in easy and simple language. Therefore, after the six Gosvāmīs [leading disciples of Lord Caitanya],

Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda is known as the Seventh Gosvāmī.

Following in the footsteps of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, in 1884 Bhaktivinoda reestablished the Visva Vaishnava Sabha (World Vaishnava Congregation) and preached the Vedic religion—*Upaniṣads*, *Vedānta Sūtras*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—as well as the life and philosophy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. His son Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswami Prabhupāda inherited these bright qualities from him and preached this great ideology of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism throughout the Indian subcontinent, from the Himalayas to the oceans and abroad.

GREAT CALL

Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda wrote more than one hundred books, both original works and commentaries, in English, Sanskrit, and Bengali. His numerous devotional songs, immersed in divine love born of full surrender, reveal his deep love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. These songs have inspired all types of people, from ordinary conditioned souls to highly elevated devotees. His books of devotional songs, such as *Śaraṅāgati*, *Gītāvalī*, and *Kalyāṇa-Kalpataru*, are food for the soul and are very praiseworthy in human society. In this age of short-lived sensual pleasure and false renunciation, these books are Bhaktivinoda's great call for those who are thirsty to get a taste of Vaikuṅṭha [spiritual] love. Who can imagine the kindness he has shown?

Conditioned souls, being victims of illusion and the repetition of the cycle of birth and death, are prone to commit errors. The material world created by the Lord is our testing place. Here at every step we are continually being tested by *māyā*. To pass this test one has to hear the devotional message spoken by *mahājanas* like Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

Bhaktivinoda's teachings should be preached more and more. If the leaders of present-day society sincerely desire the welfare of humanity, they should deeply cultivate and introspectively reflect upon these teachings. Please practice these teachings in your life and teach them to the world. This will surely bring auspiciousness and

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the unlimited blessings of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda.

I pray for his blessings as follows:

*ādadāna sṛṅgaṁ danter idam yāce
punaḥ punaḥ
bhaktivinoda-pādābja-reṇuḥ syāt
janma-janmani*

Keeping straw between my teeth, I pray repeatedly that life after life I may be a particle of dust at the lotus feet of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda.

*Jaya! Śrī Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhakti-
vinoda Ṭhākura ki jaya!* ☀

*Śrīpāda Gour Govinda Swami, an
ISKCON guru and a native of Orissa,
passed from this world in 1996.*

