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Working for the Betterment of Mankind

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On the path of devotion, we have spiritual role models who can teach us the way to eternal Vrindavan. We connect with them on a deep level because of the example they have set, and we wish to follow in their footsteps; but instead, we often gather bits and pieces from various books, and from things we have heard people say, to form the basis of our spiritual knowledge.



If we are serious spiritual aspirants, we will make the effort to truly learn from our role models; to follow their teachings without mixing our own confused ideas into the learning process. Similarly, we can always boast about how knowledgeable we are spiritually, but if our ideas have no solid foundation, in the way that they do for our spiritual masters, then it is of no use. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking that we can inspire the right changes in ourselves, let alone in others, without that depth of understanding and realisation. This superficial "knowledge" only helps to boost our ego, as we sit at our computers, in our living rooms or in coffee shops, sharing our "experiences" to get some recognition.

But the real difference between the common man and true spiritual masters is that they work for the betterment of mankind. They never use their knowledge to prove something or to gain recognition. That's why the Buddha says, "Those who are good and pure in conduct are honoured wherever they go. The good shine like the Himalayas, whose peaks glisten above the rest of the world even when seen from a distance."



Haridas Thakur: Humility and Harinaam, Part 2



In Issue 19 we began telling the story of one of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's most dear servants, Haridas Thakur. Here, we take a further look at his life and explore the sweet intricacies of his relationship with Mahaprabhu.

After giving his hut away to his disciple Hira, Haridas Thakur began to live in a cave. Later, he moved to Mahaprabhu's birthplace, Navadwip. Each night, in Shrivasa Angan, the courtyard of Mahaprabhu's dear associate Shrivasa Pandit's house, devotees drowned in the blissful ocean of Harinaam *sankirtan* in the company of Mahaprabhu himself. Haridasji also began attending these *sankirtans* every night.

Pleased with Haridasji's *bhajan* and humility, Mahaprabhu once said to him, "When you were beaten by the Muslims, I wanted to kill them, but I couldn't, because you kept praying for their wellbeing. It broke my heart to see how they attacked you, but although they tried to torture you to death, you only wanted the best for them. So, instead of killing them, I placed you in my heart and took their blows myself. Just see, you can still see the cuts and bruises on my back." (*Chaitanya Bhagwat, Madhya 10.38-44*)

This was why Haridasji felt no pain while being attacked by the Muslims, and why their beating didn't leave a single mark.

Haridasji replied, "O my Lord! If even the most insignificant soul remembers you, you always protect that person. But I am so sinful that I am unable to meditate upon you. So please grant me your eternal shelter and never leave me."

Haridas continued, "There is something else I wish to ask you; please grant me this blessing ..."

"Yes, Haridas," replied Mahaprabhu. "I will give you whatever you desire."

"My Lord, please allow me to always eat the leftovers of your devotees' meals. May honouring their remnants be my *bhajan*, birth after birth. I know that I am not worthy to ask for something so great. But please; let me be born as a dog in the home of your devotees, so that I can always guard them and have easy access to the leftovers of their meals."

"Haridas, my glories are increased by having a servant like you. I bless anyone who has spent even a day with you or who has spoken with you for even a moment, with the assurance that they will attain me."

Furthermore, Mahaprabhu declared:

तोमारे जे करे श्रद्धा से करे आमारे
निरन्तर थाकि आमि तोमार शरीरे

*tomare je kore shraddha se kore amare
nirantar thaki ami tomar sharire*

"Whoever honours you, honours me, for I always reside within your body." (*Chaitanya Bhagwat, Madhya 10.95*)

Sharing the Holy Name


Haridas Thakur is known as Naamacharya, the master or teacher of the Holy Name. Thus, it was only natural that Mahaprabhu chose him to accompany his dear Nityananda Prabhu, an avatar of Balram who came to assist Mahaprabhu during his pastimes on Earth. As a team, they spread the glories of Harinaam throughout the surrounding area.

Refusing the offer of food and other gifts from the people of Navadwip, they spent their days dancing, singing *kirtan* and guiding people from all walks of life to the path of devotion.

On one occasion, Mahaprabhu said to Haridasji, "I am very worried about the violent Muslims here who are killing Brahmins and cows every day. How can they be blessed?"

Haridasji replied, "Prabhu, please do not worry about them. Whenever they see something that is off-limits for them they say *haram* (forbidden). Thus, they unknowingly chant the name Ram (Ha! Ram!), and this fact alone will deliver them."

Mahaprabhu continued, "And then, how can other sinful people, who do not chant Harinaam, be saved from a downward path?"



Haridasji responded: "Through *kirtan*, you are blessing all beings at every moment. Your chanting will save them all. The animals, who cannot speak, are saved simply by hearing you; and the plants, trees and so on are saved just by the vibration of your chanting as it passes through their bodies."

In Puri

When Mahaprabhu moved to the holy city of Puri in Orissa, Haridasji also moved there. Haridasji always avoided going near the Jagannath Temple, because he was afraid the priests might touch him. This, he thought, would make them dirty and unable to perform their service. He also felt unworthy to enter the temple of Jagannath Dev for *darshan*. He never went for *darshan* of Mahaprabhu either, but simply remained in his hut, absorbed in Harinaam.

Nevertheless, compelled by Haridasji's love, Mahaprabhu himself would come to see Haridasji every day. He also arranged daily for Haridasji to receive Jagannathji's *prasad*.

Haridasji's Final Days

Haridasji was now old, and he was becoming weaker all the time. One day, when Mahaprabhu's personal servant, Govind, arrived at Haridasji's hut with Jagannathji's *prasad*, he noticed something strange. Haridasji was lying down and chanting Harinaam very quietly and slowly. When Govind requested Haridasji to rise and eat, Haridasji replied:

"Today I shall not eat anything. I am most unfortunate, for I have not been able to finish my rounds today." Then, just to honour the *prasad*, Haridasji rose and ate a single grain of rice before lying down once more.

The next day, when Mahaprabhu came to Haridasji's hut, he asked, "Haridas! How is your health?"

Haridasji replied, "My body is alright, but a terrible disease has struck my mind. Due to the weakness of old age, I cannot complete my rounds, and this thought is breaking my heart."

Mahaprabhu smiled and said, "Haridas, I know you are a great soul. You have come to this world with the purpose of blessing souls and setting an example for them to follow. Now you are elderly. There is no harm at all if you reduce the number of rounds you chant." Hearing Mahaprabhu praise him made Haridasji sad, and he started to cry. Seeing Haridasji crying, Mahaprabhu too began to weep. Bowing at Mahaprabhu's lotus feet, Haridasji said:

"There is one more thing that breaks my heart. I know that soon, you will end your manifest *lila* in this world. Please bless me that I die before I ever see that day."

Mahaprabhu was overwhelmed by Haridasji's request, and his tears became like rivers flowing from his eyes. In a trembling voice he said, "But Haridas! How will I live without you?"




Haridasji's Last Wish

Haridasji replied, "I know there are millions of great souls ready to serve you. It does not matter if an insignificant person like me dies." With his head resting on Mahaprabhu's feet, he said:

हृदये धरिमु तोमार कमल चरण
नयने देखिमु तोमार चाँद वदन
जिह्वाय उच्चारिमु तोमार कृष्णचैतन्य नाम
एइमत मोर इच्छा छाडिमु पराण

*hridaye dharimu tomar kamal charan
nayane dekhimu tomar chand vadan
jihvay uccharimu tomar krishna chaitanya nam
ei-mato mor iccha chadimu paran*

"Please grant me this blessing: that I may die looking at your lotus face, with your lotus feet on my heart and your Name - Shri Krishn Chaitanya - on my lips." (Chaitanya Charitamrit, Antya 11.33-34)



Mahaprabhu replied, "Krishn will surely fulfil any wish you may have, Haridas. But I just don't know how I can live without you . . ." With that, Mahaprabhu embraced Haridas and bathed him in his tears.

The next day, Mahaprabhu came to Haridasji's hut with all his companions and followers. They helped Haridasji to walk and take a seat in the courtyard of his hut, beneath the sacred tree called Siddh Bakul. Mahaprabhu started singing *kirtan* and the devotees danced around Haridasji. Haridasji, meanwhile, tried to gather the dust from their lotus feet and place it on his head.

Finally, Haridasji asked Mahaprabhu to mercifully come and sit near him. Then Haridasji took Mahaprabhu's merciful lotus feet into his hands and placed them on his heart. Looking up, Haridasji drowned in the grace of Mahaprabhu's lotus face and with his last breath exclaimed "Shri Krishn Chaitanya!"

Tears flowed continuously from Mahaprabhu's eyes as he felt the pain of losing his dear devotee combined with the joy of knowing Haridasji had entered eternal Vrindavan. The other devotees looked on as Mahaprabhu held Haridasji's body in his arms and danced, bathing it in the tears of his infinite love. As Haridasji's body became covered in the sacred water flowing from his eyes, Mahaprabhu felt the painful absence of the sweet nectar which he enjoyed through the love of his devotee.

The devotees followed Mahaprabhu who, with Haridasji's body still in his arms, walked to Puri's seashore as he glorified his dear one. With his own hands, Mahaprabhu bathed Haridasji's body in the sea, thus blessing its water with the touch of a great devotee.

Mahaprabhu declared, "Before the sea was a *tirth* (a holy place), but today it has become a *maha-tirth* (a great holy place) by the touch of Haridasji's body."

With their own hands, the devotees dug a hole in the sand for Haridasji's *samadhi* (tomb). They then covered Haridasji's body in fragrant sandalwood paste and flower garlands. Bathing Haridasji's lotus feet, they blissfully drank his *charanamrit* before placing his body in the *samadhi*. Finally, Mahaprabhu himself filled the *samadhi* with sand. The group rejoiced in the Holy Name once again as they sang and danced, circling Haridasji's *samadhi*, showering it with Harinaam.

Whenever a saint enters the eternal *lila*, a celebration or *mahotsav* is held. With his heart filled with love for the devotee he had just lost, Mahaprabhu personally went to the market near the gate of Jagannath Temple to beg for supplies. Many shopkeepers gave to him generously. But seeing Mahaprabhu begging hurt the devotees' hearts, so with some difficulty, they convinced him to let them take over the preparations.



In the end, a great celebration was held, at which Mahaprabhu served food to all the devotees in attendance with his own hands. All were immersed in the bliss of *sankirtan* as Mahaprabhu sang the glories of Haridasji, blessing everyone there to attain the lotus feet of Shri Krishn.

References

The Companions of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu by Dr. OBL Kapoor

Chaitanya Charitamrit

Chaitanya Bhagwat



Upcoming Events: August 2019



Hariyali Teej/Jhulan Utsav **Saturday, 3rd August**

Shriji wears a green dress. From this day until Raksha Bandhan, he gives devotees *sandarshan* on his swing. On this day, Shriji is offered a special *bhog* of water chestnut (*singhara*). For the duration of Jhulan Utsav, he is offered *malpua* (pancake made of plain flour, rice flour, and sugar). The last day of Jhulan Yatra is on the 15th of August, which is also Raksha Bandhan. On this day, Shriji's brow is marked with a *tilak* and a *rakhi* is tied on his wrist.

Pavitra Offering **Monday, 12th August**

Pavitra (a garland made of thread) is offered to Shriji by the Goswamis of the Temple on Dwadashi (the day after Ekadashi fast) after Srngaar Aarti to ask for forgiveness for any offences that may have been caused in his worship over the past year.

Janmashtami **Saturday, 24th August**

In the morning, a great bathing ceremony (*maha-abhishek*) of Shriji is performed, following Shri Roop Goswami's procedure outlined in his *Shri Krishn Abhishek Archana Vidhi*. At the end of the bathing ceremony, devotees celebrate his appearance day by greeting him in the form of singing (recital of *pad*s). Thereafter, the place of Shriji's appearance is worshipped. He is offered a special meal (*bhog*) of sesame seeds and sugar to warm him up after having bathed in cold milk. Shriji wears a new yellow dress on this special day.

Nandotsav **Sunday, 25th August**

Shriji wears a new yellow dress and gives a special *sandarshan* after Srngaar Aarti. There is *prasad* distribution to all the Goswami families. After morning *aarti*, local Brajwasi children come to "steal" the gifts which are thrown to them by the devotees.

