

Caringly educating

Sri Gaudiya Darshan: 40 years
shedding light to the world

AN INTERVIEW WITH HIS DIVINE GRACE SRILA BHAKTI
SUNDAR GOVINDA DEV GOSWAMI MAHARAJ

Question: Who first started the Sri Gaudiya Darshan Magazine and why?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: In the time of Prabhupāda Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura Śrīla Guru Mahārāj preached all over India. He was a very successful preacher and everyone respected him. By the wish of Kṛṣṇa when Śrīla Guru Mahārāj came out from the Gauḍīya Maṭh many of the senior devotees also came out at that time and they started to preach. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj did not join with them but he helped them. In particular he helped his Godbrothers such as Śrīpād Jājāvar Mahārāj, Śrīpād Goswāmī Mahārāj and Śrīpād Keśava Mahārāj, but finally it was his wish to stay alone in this Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh. There is no doubt that his wish was always for preaching. He was always preaching Śrīman Mahāprabhu's glories and Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura's glories, and everyone would come to hear from him and receive inspiration. They felt that it was Śrīla Prabhupāda himself explaining to them about Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

When Śrīla Guru Mahārāj started his preaching in Śrī Chaitanya

Sāraswat Maṭh he lived in a hut. It was then his intention that he would preach to those who came to him, but he would no longer go out from the *Maṭh* to preach. At that time Śrīla Guru Mahārāj showed us that his health was not so suitable for preaching. But his wish to preach was very strong. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj received some inspiration that it was the desire of Prabhupāda Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswatī Ṭhākura and Śrīman Mahāprabhu that this *sampradāya* would run through him. Many of the disciples of Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākura continued their preaching, but mostly it was the earnest desire of Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākura that the preceptorial line will run through our Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj also was looking for someone to continue that line.

When Śrīla Guru Mahārāj gave me the chance to stay at his lotus feet he received some inspiration: “Perhaps this boy can continue the preceptorial line.” He therefore gave some nourishment to me. I was not so qualified. Actually I was unqualified, but he tried to make me qualified.

Preaching Necessity

I joined in 1947, and presently I noticed that regular periodicals were being published from maybe three or four other *Maths*. After seven years, through affection and causeless mercy I had some capacity to publish a magazine, and I also felt very much necessity for our own magazine. I felt that a monthly magazine for our preaching purpose would be very nice, so I approached Śrīla Guru Mahārāj with this proposal.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was very enthusiastic and I requested that he give an article each month. Also I approached Śrīpād Madhusūdan Mahārāj, Śrīpād Jājāvar Mahārāj and others who were capable to contribute articles. At least in every issue one article must be Śrīla Guru Mahārāj’s article, and one I can collect from Śrīla Saraswatī Ṭhākura’s writings. And

if Śrīpād Madhusūdan Mahārāj will give one article, then I will get at least three strong articles each month, and in this way the dignity of the paper must be higher than others' magazines.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was very enthusiastic and said, "This idea is very good. If you can continue, then try to do this." I then began.

It is the teaching of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj that we shall proceed under the guidance of Śrī Guru-Vaiṣṇava, and it is my nature that I always keep the Vaiṣṇavas upon my head. In that way I considered Śrīpād Madhusūdan Mahārāj to be highly qualified, and if he would take the editor's position our magazine would receive universal appreciation. That is, we are living in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, and this magazine is for Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh, but our editor is from another *Maṭh*. Thus everyone can see that our vision is that we are giving position to those who are really qualified. They will see that we have a broad view. Not only that, but we decided that we shall glorify other Vaiṣṇavas' characters, and give news of other Vaiṣṇavas' preaching also. We did that, furthermore we published their activities with pictures. We tried to glorify the mission and character of all the Godbrothers who were very affectionately connected with Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. In that way our Sri Gaudiya Darshan had a broad 'international' vision.

Broad Vision

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj agreed and said to me, "If Śrīpād Madhusūdan Mahārāj will accept the position of editor it will be very good, but you must put your name there as joint editor." Therefore Śrīpād Madhusūdan Mahārāj and myself were joint editors, Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was the Founder Āchāryya, and Śrīpād Jājāvar Mahārāj and Śrīpād Paramahaṁsa Mahārāj were advisers of the Sri Gaudiya Darshan.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj as far as possible gave an article each month. Śrīpād Madhusūdan Mahārāj, Śrīpād Paramahansa Mahārāj and others also gave.

Sri Gaudiya Darshan began as a monthly magazine. For the first few years the magazine was very strong and ran well, but lastly all the burden for the running of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh came upon my head. I was practically alone and my time was very short, therefore the magazine became a little weaker later. Also Śrīla Guru Mahārāj showed his health to be less strong and it was very difficult for him to give articles regularly. But we tried to continue.

Guide-line giver

We always held a very neutral position. In the Sri Gaudiya Darshan, glorification to others connected throughout the whole *sampradāya* was given where it was warranted, also guide-lines were given when required. Everyone knew Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was their guide and they accepted his advice. In this way Sri Gaudiya Darshan gained a high reputation.

All the articles were either in Bengali or Sanskrit. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj sometimes composed in Sanskrit, and especially at the beginning of each new year Śrīla Guru Mahārāj would generally compose some Sanskrit *ślokas*.

Also I must name one good compositor, Khapanaka Prabhu, who helped untiringly for hand-setting the type of the magazine. He was a disciple of Śrīpād Keśava Mahārāj but with Śrīpād Keśava Mahārāj's permission he was living with us. Then, like now, many devotees from other *Maṭhs* would come and stay with us from time to time. They were disciples of other Mahārājs but they would come in order to serve Śrīla

Guru Mahārāj.

At first we printed the magazine from an outside commercial press, but after some time I felt the necessity to print from our own press. We then acquired a press and began publishing from it. It was larger than the machine we have here today. Khapanaka Prabhu finally took charge of our printing press. He greatly helped with the Sri Gaudiya Darshan, but gradually I became exhausted and actually it was not possible to continue. After fourteen years of monthly printing we then printed it quarterly, and Khapanaka Prabhu helped then also. We did not stop printing altogether. We printed it as a quarterly publication for a further three years, then finally we printed each year one or two special issues as souvenir editions such as for Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's *Vyāsapūjā* and for *Śrī Gaura-Pūrṇimā*.

Actually the cause of our finally stopping the regular publications was for a very unhappy reason. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj from time to time gave an article. One such article was entitled *Śrī Rathayātrāya Rūpanuganucintan*. This explained what the followers of Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī will think about the *Rathayātrā*.

At that time the Māyāpur Śrī Chaitanya Maṭh started a *Rathayātrā*, but that was very painful for Śrīla Guru Mahārāj because it was offensive to the *Rūpānuga-cinta-dhārā*. This is very high *siddhānta*. Mahāprabhu explained that the meaning of *Rathayātrā* is that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī takes Kṛṣṇa from Kurukṣetra to Vṛndāvan. But Māyāpur is the birthplace of Mahāprabhu who is non-different from Kṛṣṇa. So from Māyāpur, where are they taking Mahāprabhu? They cannot take Kṛṣṇa out from Vṛndāvan, nor can they take Mahāprabhu out from Māyāpur. This is the thinking of the *Rūpānuga* followers, and this was explained in that article by Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. However I did not give Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's

name as the author because we knew that some other parties may try to contradict this thinking, and if a conflict will come, I shall face that but I shall not push Śrīla Guru Mahārāj to the front of any conflict. If I put Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's name and anyone will give any objection, that will be offensive for them, therefore I put the name of one of my Godbrothers. We wanted to show everyone what is the proper *siddhānta*, but in the battlefield we shall not push our Guru to the forefront. I shall go to the battlefield if necessary, but not that I will make my Guru go there.

Then from a completely different *Math* some very ugly criticism and objection came to us through their magazine. In the next issue of our own magazine we replied to their objections. I was given help with the answer by Śrīpād Dāmodar Mahārāj, a Godbrother of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj. I did not directly appear in the battlefield, but I gave the front position in the name of Śrīpād Dāmodar Mahārāj, and he also contributed to the reply. He was certainly a good writer, and on the grounds of the principle involved we tried to fight. But in a very ugly way objection again came from that other section and it was published in their magazine. They insulted Śrīla Guru Mahārāj directly.

Respectful dealings

Always we had very respectfully given comment in our articles, but they responded with an arrogant personal attack to Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, so I went and told them not to criticise in this ugly way.

I explained to that party that the article wasn't even directed at them, but especially at the Māyāpur *Math*, so why should they come forward and directly try to criticise Śrīla Guru Mahārāj? Anyhow they did not listen.

They said bad things about my Guru so they expected I would say bad things about theirs, but I could never do that. I tried to show that if anyone wants to criticise, they can, but in an honourable, respectful way without losing humility. Especially in this case, the article is Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's article, so must be treated in a respectable way.

I told them this many times, but even after hearing from me that this article was from Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, they again and again continued to criticise Śrīla Guru Mahārāj in writing in their magazine. I could not give such type of insult to them in our magazine. I know many faults of their *Maṭh* but we cannot tell such things and make our Sri Gaudiya Darshan into a dustbin.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj asked me what I would do, and I replied to him that I will stop the printing of the magazine rather than walk into that dirty realm of insults. Furthermore I was exhausted. I wrote most of the articles but put the author's name as Hari Charan Prabhu, Kṛṣṇa Sharan Prabhu, Kṛṣṇa Mayī Didi, Saṅkarī D.D., etc. Sometimes they would write an article but mostly I wrote the articles in theirs and others' names and I became exhausted.

I was therefore already tired when this ugly criticism came. So, when Śrīla Guru Mahārāj asked me what I would do I told him I would stop the publication.

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj asked them to stop sending their publication to our *Maṭh*, and until today it is not coming here. Later I heard that the *sannyāsī* involved came and apologised to Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, but Śrīla Guru Mahārāj expressed to him, "I will not take offence myself because it is not for me, but for our *sampradāya*. It is an offence to Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī because it is his *dhārā* that we are continuing, and Mahāprabhu instructed Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī not to take Kṛṣṇa out from Vṛndāvan:

**kṛṣṇere bāhira nāhi kariha vraja haite
vraja chāḍi' kṛṣṇa kabhu nā yāna kāhānte**

(Śrī Chaitanya-charitāmṛta Antya:1.66)

So in Māyāpur where are they trying to take their *Rathayātrā*? My question is, where are they trying to take the Lord? We have no objection to them doing Mahāprabhu's *Rathayātrā* on another day. On a horse-drawn carriage Mahāprabhu can travel anywhere, but the mood of *Rathayātrā* is of taking Kṛṣṇa from Kurukṣetra to Vṛndāvan."

Śrīla Guru Mahārāj said to them that they criticised in writing in their magazine, therefore their apology must come in the same way: in writing in their magazine.

Question: So, in recent years the Sri Gaudiya Darshan has been continuing as an occasional publication, but now you wish to have it restarted as a regular periodical. Please tell us why you want it restarted, and what articles you wish to be included?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Actually we never completely stopped printing the Sri Gaudiya Darshan. It was printed occasionally and we have much regard for this title Sri Gaudiya Darshan as the paper of Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh. It is like our flag, therefore we cannot stop publishing it. It is alive. You will see that always we have tried to focus on some new light of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's conception. In the previous issues, as much as possible we have done in this way.

Within the last twelve years many books have been published for our *Maṭh* in English, Bengali and many other languages, and there also the devotees can see Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's conception. There is much to read in these books. Now in particular my wish for this Sri Gaudiya

Darshan is to present topical subjects and news of all the devotees' activities here and abroad. For a long time our preaching has been international.

After Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj returned from his successful preaching in the West, Śrīla Guru Mahārāj became very happy and enthusiastic and he gave much respect to Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj. In Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh every day Śrīla Guru Mahārāj preached, but he did not go out from the *Maṭh* except perhaps three or four times yearly. He would go out on special occasions such as to Śrīpād Mādhava Mahārāj's *Maṭh* in Calcutta where yearly they would hold one or two large week-long meetings. Śrīpād Mādhava Mahārāj would eagerly await Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's presence at such meetings. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj would go there every year. In addition Śrīla Guru Mahārāj would go to the Appearance-day meeting of Śrīpād Goswāmī Mahārāj at Śrī Gauḍīya Saṅgha, 23 Doctor's Lane, Calcutta.

Unique giver

Mainly it was only to Śrīpād Mādhava Mahārāj's *Maṭh* and Śrīpād Goswāmī Mahārāj's *Maṭh* that Śrīla Guru Mahārāj would go to for preaching, but always he preached from his room upstairs in Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh. Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was a very enthusiastic preacher and many devotees had the opportunity to see how enthusiastic he was. Up until 1987 Śrīla Guru Mahārāj continuously preached here, and his preaching continued, though not as fully as before, until a few months before his disappearance in August 1988.

Actually during the whole day Śrīla Guru Mahārāj would preach, but seated at one time he would often preach for two or three hours. The preaching tendency of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj was of a very unique type.

In March 1986 during his lifetime Śrīla Guru Mahārāj gave me the full charge of this *Maṭh* as *Āchāryya*, and we continued to produce publications. From abroad we also received publications for our *Maṭh* such as those from Śrīpād Bhakti Sudhir Goswāmī Mahārāj and others.

We continued to publish Sri Gaudiya Darshan at least yearly, and after Śrīla Guru Mahārāj's disappearance regular periodicals began from several of our branch missions including London, South Africa, Australia and America. I was very enthusiastic to see the arrival of all these English magazines. In addition to the quarterly magazine from Australia, a weekly magazine called 'Mission News' is now in its 45th week.

Enthusiastic disciples

We are disciples of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj therefore we are very much enthusiastic to publish books and magazines in order to preach his message and glories. You can see that our preaching tendency is continuously proceeding, so when from the Western world five or six periodicals became manifest, naturally our feelings came that why is this not also possible from Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh? The only cause was a lack of manpower. But if we can publish, then the mission all over the world will receive some guide-lines. Śrī Chaitanya Sāraswat Maṭh is the parent *Maṭh* of all the *Maṭhs* in our society, and for their guide-line it is very good if again we can publish regularly the Sri Gaudiya Darshan. This is what is in the heart of us all here. We are all enthusiastic to again publish Sri Gaudiya Darshan because it will be in honour of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj so automatically remembrance of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj will come.

In particular it is my intention that Sri Gaudiya Darshan will be a vehicle to keep devotees around the world connected together. They will

get to know what each other are doing and especially they will hear from this central *Math*, the central source of guidance of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj for us all. This is one form of association for the devotees through which everyone everywhere may feel some energy and enthusiasm in their spiritual service-journey to their transcendental destination.

It is very good if we can make this magazine, but I am getting older day by day therefore a new generation must take charge. If it is possible to make this periodical it must give pleasure to the heart of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and I must be very happy.

If this Sri Gaudiya Darshan will come out in the Bengali language it will especially give nourishment to the Bengali section of devotees, and this is my eager desire. In English it is very good, and it will be more widespread if we can publish it in Bengali also, so our local devotees will gain more nourishment. At first Sri Gaudiya Darshan was in the Bengali language, and at that time I did not know English.

Question: Do you have any message for the devotees?

Śrīla Govinda Mahārāj: Always we are messengers of Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and Mahāprabhu. Our message is one always: practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness without offence to Guru and Vaiṣṇava.

**smartavyaḥ satataṁ viṣṇur
vismartavyo na jātucit
sarvve viddhi-niṣedhāḥ syur
etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ**

This is from *Padmapurāṇa* and it gives one ruling and one prohibition: always remember the Lord, and never forget Him. All rules and regula-

tions are under this guide-line.

If I see anyone doing even a little *sevā*, my feelings towards him come as though I am a slave of him. That is my feeling. But in my life I have also seen many wrong things, therefore I am also a little cautious. I have been cheated in many ways, but my nature is still that if anyone will do even a little *sevā*, I give my full support to him. In that way I am always trying to continue my *sevā*.

Where there is no life, there is no *sevā*; that is ‘dead *sevā*.’ It is *karma*. It is not for our fame that we are trying to publish Sri Gaudiya Darshan. Our intention is that this Sri Gaudiya Darshan will give happiness to our *Śrī Guru-varga* as well as nourishment to the newcomers and other Vaiṣṇavas. When a mission is big a periodical newsletter is necessary from the headquarters of the mission, but I cannot do everything alone, also I am getting old. I cannot promise, but anyhow I shall try to give one article for each edition.

Good for all

Preaching is our life, and through preaching we can practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness very happily. Mahāprabhu gave congregational chanting as the best policy. Now you try hard, and if you can continue it will be very pleasing to our *Guru-varga*, I have no doubt. We want to do something good for our friends and the newcomers. Whoever will get some faith through this magazine, he must be benefited, and we must receive the blessings of our *Guru-varga* that we are doing something good for others. Mahāprabhu said:

**bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma yāra
janma sārthaka kari’ kara para-upakāra**

(“One who has taken his birth in India as a human, should make his life successful and work for the benefit of others.”)

So, this is really a good attempt to do good for others through this magazine. Sri Gaudiya Darshan is blessed by Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and blessed by all other exalted devotees like Śrīla Swāmī Mahārāj. You have seen his letter expressing how much he was very pleased with me to see Sri Gaudiya Darshan. Also Śrīpād Sakhī Charan Ray Bhakti Vijaya Prabhu, one of the best devotees of Śrīla Saraswatī Thākura, was very pleased and sent a letter expressing this. Letters came from every corner but it was perhaps my fault that I did not publish them all in Sri Gaudiya Darshan. In one way it was necessary to publish all the letters that were giving praise to the magazine, but if I felt there was any praise to myself I did not publish such material, but where there was praise to Śrīla Guru Mahārāj, I published that. From so many quarters, many praised me: “Oh, now Govinda Mahārāj is doing this: Govinda Mahārāj has started Sri Gaudiya Darshan.” But it was impossible by me to publish that.

With what we have, we shall continue happily, and with this Sri Gaudiya Darshan it is my hope that really we can succeed in giving happiness to Śrīla Guru Mahārāj and our *Śrī Guru-varga* as well as nourishment to the newcomers and other Vaiṣṇavas. By the cooperation of all the devotees, I think it must be possible.

(End)